

Volunteer Literacy Tutor Conference 2025 Workshop Schedule



Registration: 9:00-9:25 am – Building 9

Check-In, Refreshments, Announcements

Session 1: 9:30-10:45 am – Building 7

Workshop A, Room 103

Keeping Diversity Alive (Roundtable)

Presented by Patrik McDade

The Trump Administration has banned policies that support diversity, equity, and inclusion. Even this conference theme is now counter to U.S. Government imperatives. We are going to talk about what that means for those of us who embrace multiethnic communities.

Applicable to both ESOL and Adult Basic Skills (ABS/ABE) learners

Workshop B, Room 105

What do Grammar and Geography Have in Common?

Presented by Liliana Heller-Mafrica, Ed. D

This is an interactive lesson of geography and English grammar wrapped in one. Using the forms BE and its various uses, students listen to and read along a brief description of North America and the USA. They practice speaking English to talk about states location, characteristics, and classification. As they write simple sentences they notice and learn about English language word order, and the various uses of BE including description, place of origin, age, weather, and time.

ESOL, Entry & Lower Levels

Workshop C, Room 110

Tutoring at Local Organizations - Perspectives from Volunteers (Roundtable)

Presented by Lisa Palm, Heidi Dryden, Sue Rossiter

Are you starting to be a volunteer tutor? Or are you looking for some new opportunities? Our Panel Discussion of real volunteers will share experiences from 4 ESOL programs— Clark College, Portland Community College, Beaverton Literacy Council, and Multnomah Library.

ESOL, All Levels

Workshop D, Room 114

Reading Practice Activities for Early Literacy Learners

Presented by Amy Grant

In this workshop you will explore and practice easy ways to support literacy development in early-literacy learners. The activities help develop letter-sound awareness, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and word recognition. The activities can be done in-person or on Zoom.

ESOL and Adult Basic Skills (ABS/ABE) learners, Beginner

Session 2: 11:00 am -12:15 pm – Building 7

Workshop E, Room 103

Buying a Stamp - Designing Fun and Creative Homework

Presented by Lisa Palm

Are you looking for fun assignments between lessons? Come create activities that relate to your classes such as buying stamps, taking pictures of street signs, or making small talk with a cashier. Many examples will be shared for all levels.

ESOL, All Levels

Workshop F, Room 105

Structured Literacy and Teaching the Foundational Skills in Reading Instruction

Presented by Julie Hiefield, Susan Farra and Peggy Murphy

What are the foundational skills in literacy and how does one teach these skills to adults? Members of the Portland Literacy Council and the Language and Literacy Fund will discuss these questions. These two nonprofits piloted a program (Fall, 2024, with funding support from the Blosser Center for Dyslexia Resources) in which participants learned how to tutor and support students with low (or no) literacy skills using structured literacy best practices.

ESOL and Adult Basic Skills (ABS/ABE) learners, Beginner & Lower Levels

Workshop G, Room 110

Quick and Captivating: Low-Prep ESOL Activities for Engaged Learning

Presented by Heidi Dryden and Deborah Thompson

In this workshop you will learn and practice simple go-to activities to use with your students to teach grammar, writing, speaking, and pronunciation. We use a variety of jazz chants, and dictation exercises to keep students engaged and actively learning whatever grammar point or vocabulary you are focusing on each lesson. These activities could be an introduction, main lesson, or review of another lesson. Come give them a try and add them to your teacher's toolkit.

ESOL, All Levels

Workshop H, Room 114

English Lessons for Beginning Level Students

Presented by Virginia Nelson

After reviewing several ways to deliver English language instruction to entry level students, participants will develop exercises to use on Monday.

ESOL, Speaking/Beginners

LUNCH: 12:15-1:45 pm – Building 9

Luncheon & Student Speakers

Session 3: 1:45-3:00 pm – Building 7

Workshop I, Room 103

Citizenship Study Support for Students and Tutors

Presented by Eric Dodson

Participants in this workshop will learn how to help learners who are preparing for their citizenship interview understand the basic naturalization process, how to prepare for the personal information portion of the interview, and additional legal and social resources.

ESOL, All Levels

Workshop J, Room 105

What do Grammar and Geography Have in Common?

Presented by Liliana Heller-Mafrica, Ed. D

This is an interactive lesson of geography and English grammar wrapped in one. Using the forms BE and its various uses, students listen to and read along a brief description of North America and the USA. They practice speaking English to talk about states location, characteristics, and classification. As they write simple sentences they notice and learn about English language word order, and the various uses of BE including description, place of origin, age, weather, and time.

ESOL, Entry & Lower Levels

Workshop K, Room 110

Cultural Awareness Panel

Presented by Lorie Wigle and Edit McDonald

Join PLC Executive Director Lorie Wigle, PCC Coordinator Edit McDonald, and ESOL students from five different countries. The students will introduce themselves, talk a little about their home country's culture and describe their English learning experiences. The balance of the session will be interactive with tutors asking the students questions. This is an opportunity to hear firsthand what works and doesn't work from the learner perspective.

All Levels

Workshop L, Room 114

10 Pillars of Progress

Presented by Patrik McDade & Ramin Tohki

This workshop will share, demonstrate, and discuss evidence-based techniques to measure and accelerate language learners' progress. We will look at ongoing assessment, needs and goals, conversation, context, realia and more.

ESOL, All Levels

2025 Presenter Biographies

Eric Dodson has taught Citizenship and English classes with SOAR Legal Services for the last eight years, which included four presidential administrations, five federal elections, and hundreds of learners who have become citizens. In addition, he teaches English to Speakers of Other Languages at Portland Community College in Southeast Portland where he lives with his family.

Heidi Dryden is an Adjunct teacher at Clark College, is on the board for PLC as Tutor Education Co-Chair and runs the Portland ESL Network. She loves culture and languages. She has lived in Mexico, Honduras and studied a semester in China. Heidi works hard to make her ESOL classes active and fun and to equip English Language Learners to use their whole brain to learn.

Susan Farra is a member of the nonprofit Language and Literacy Fund. With a special interest in adult education, she has been a volunteer instructor of the "Foundational Literacy Skills" class offered at Portland Community College since 2012.

Amy Grant is an ESOL teacher, teacher-mentor, and instructional designer at Beaverton Literacy Council and Afghan Support Network. For the last five years she has focused solely on working with learners and teachers at the pre-beginning/early literacy level. She has a master's degree in Learning Design and Technology, with certificates in Online Teaching & Learning, Learning Experience Design, and TESOL (CELTA).

Liliana Heller-Mafrica teaches at Portland Community College and is an enthusiastic bilingual/bicultural education leader with expertise in effective dual language teaching and learning methodology, curriculum development, and second language proficiency assessments. She has a Doctoral degree in Educational Leadership in Organizational Development. Liliana's hobbies include reading, hiking and kayaking, travel, world cultures and music.

Julie Hiefield is a Literacy Specialist with the nonprofits Language and Literacy Fund and Language Skills Therapy and at Edison High School in Portland. Edison supports students with learning differences such as dyslexia, ADHD and other complex learning challenges. Since 2012, the Language and Literacy Fund has supported post-secondary students through classes offered at Portland Community College. The classes "Foundational Literacy Skills" are open to all students who struggle with reading, spelling and writing.

Patrik McDade is the founder and program director for People-Places-Things, building language and culture bridges in our communities. He received a Teaching English as a Second Language certificate from PSU and has taught in many countries. He has facilitated language skills development in immigrant and refugee communities since 1996. Through his work with People-Places-Things, he is shifting the dialogue about the role of language teaching and culture learning for building a more inclusive America. He is currently focusing on building language internships online, in person, in the US, and abroad.

Peggy L. Murphy is a retired technical writer and an active adult literacy advocate. She has served on the Board of Directors of Portland Literacy Council since 2010 and is a Past President of the Council. She is the Program Director of PLC's new foundational literacy skills program that serves native-English speakers and manages PLC's GED scholarship program. A graduate of Portland State University, she holds an Oxford Certification in TESOL/TESL/TEFL Teacher Training.

Virginia Nelson has enjoyed teaching ESOL, pre-K through adult, and newcomer through advanced levels, for 50 years. She has written textbooks and presented at conferences, but what she most likes is seeing students enjoy learning English. She especially enjoys teaching students at the entry/basic level. She currently volunteers with Tigard Informal English Language Learning for Adults (TIELLA).

Lisa Palm is the Volunteer Tutor Coordinator at PCC Cascade Campus and has her own business teaching beginning level ESOL to adults. She volunteers with Portland Literacy Council and Portland ESL Network. Lisa received her TESOL certification from University of San Diego. Having served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in The Gambia, West Africa, she continues to love studying languages and empowering adult language learners.

Deborah Thompson is an ESL tutor at Clark College where she leads conversation circles and works with students one-on-one. Prior to moving back home to Vancouver, WA, she taught ESL to adults in Los Angeles for over 35 years. She specializes in conversation, pronunciation, grammar, and helping students enjoy the process of learning a language.

Ramin Tokhi is a language learner who works with Patrik as a business partner in the non-profit sector. He founded Tours in 2020, where they serve over 500 language learners a year. He enjoys learning languages and helping others do the same.

Molly Walter is a Citizenship teacher with Lutheran Community Services Northwest, as well as a Literacy Specialist working with Catapult Learning Inc.