

NALA-GRAM

A Newsletter for Tutors and Volunteers

September 2015

From the Director's Desk

How is NALA Doing?

When my friends ask me how things are going at NALA, I just stop and look at them. How do I put it into words? We're busier than ever: students multiplying--tutors abounding--NALA is doing great! Last week two classes had eleven students in each, and one had seventeen! The countries our students come from are an amazing array: Bangladesh, Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Cambodia, Laos, Philippines, Japan, China, South Korea, Venezuela, Brazil, Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, Italy, Russia, and of course, the U.S.

NALA is fortunate to have several excellent teachers of English as a Second Language—and from the paragraph above you can see why we need them. Fluency in the student's first language is not necessary; it would be nearly impossible with the twelve different languages represented. While it would be helpful at times to know the student's first language, that is not a prerequisite.

What is necessary is a grasp of principles and strategies for teaching English to non-native speakers. We are doubly fortunate that we were selected to receive training from the Texas-based **English Forward** Training Team in August in an excellent workshop. Fifteen tutors from NALA attended, in addition to people from the community. We feel recharged, energized, and prepared to teach our multi-lingual students.

American students here to improve their reading or math are also a high priority at Joplin NALA Read. We recognize that it takes courage to say "I need to improve my reading and math skills." We are grateful for the tutors who have taken special training to know how to teach reading to adults. We're excited about the progress made by these adults.

Just as we went through a training to teach English as a Second Language (ESL), training is available to learn how to teach adults to improve their reading. In fact, Joplin NALA Read will hold a Tutor Training Workshop Saturday, September 26 from 9:00 to 3:30 p.m. at our facility, 123 S. Main. Veteran tutors and those wishing to brush up on their skills may attend, as well as new tutors just learning the ropes. Be sure to let us know you're coming so we can have enough handouts and snacks. Especially snacks. A forty-five minute lunch is on your own; we have a refrigerator. Call us at (417)782-2646 or e-mail us at joplinnala@123mail.org to let us know you're coming.

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Student Spotlight

Salma and Amna Moustafa

With so many countries represented at NALA, it is difficult to choose just one student to shine the light on. I have chosen Salma and Amna Moustafa from Egypt for a couple of reasons. Salma and her sister Amna are a unique pair in their artistic ability and command of English. In fact, Salma has an exhibition of her art featured at the Spiva Art Center during September—you will want to check it out! She received 1st prize and Amna 2nd prize during the Art Walk sidewalk chalk contest in August and will show their works on Thursday, September 17th at 6th and Main during downtown Joplin's Third Thursday.

Both young women speak quite fluent English, and both continue to come to classes to further improve their English language skills. Amna is the adventurous one, driving in Joplin with no fear. She joined our Program Coordinator, Joan Doner, for a radio broadcast on September 8, International Literacy Day, something many Americans would be reluctant to tackle. The sisters exhibit a gentle, courteous manner and yet are bold in their artistic endeavors. We are glad to have them at NALA and a part of our family while they are in the U.S.A.

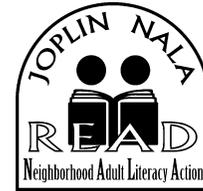
Teacher Feature

Janet Bemo

Janet Bemo comes with years of experience teaching English in Southeast Asia. Fluent in Chinese, Japanese, and Laotian, Janet brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to her class. She challenges her students to do their best, but she does it in such a kind way that they are eager to respond. I hear laughter and excitement from the group as she teaches. She is especially good at getting them to interact in English, and that produces the laughter, I suppose. Volunteers like Janet keep our NALA program vibrant and dynamic, and we appreciate their gift of time and skill. Thank you, Janet!

Tutor Workshop

GIVE THE GIFT OF A LIFETIME



TUTOR WORKSHOP

WHEN

Saturday, September 26, 2015

9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

WHERE

Joplin NALA Read

123 S. Main Street

WHO

YOU – if you want to enrich someone's life!

COST

FREE

RSVP

Phone: (417) 782-2646

Email: joplinnala@123mail.org

If you are currently a volunteer tutor, but have not attended one of our workshops, this is for you! The workshop will cover your role as a volunteer, facts & myths of adult learners, goal setting with your student, teaching strategies, the student orientation process, boundaries training, and critiquing a tutoring session. We hope you will attend and invite a friend!

HELP SOMEONE LEARN TO READ

Tutor Resources



Making Sense of English Spelling – Part 1

When it comes to spelling, students and teachers alike raise questions. The first question might be: why don't we spell words in English the way they sound? One difficulty with that relates to our 26-letter alphabet which represents 45 different sounds—more if you allow for different accents across our country. The next question would be-- which accent will we use for the spelling? Southern? Eastern? Midwestern? or some variation in between? Those barriers alone prevent spelling from sound.

A more serious objection is that words carry over in families of meaningful units. The word *sign* relates to *signify* and *signature* although it's pronounced differently. Another example is *please*—*pleasure*--*pleasant*. It is vital to preserve that connection of meaning in word families because reading well requires quick recognition of meaning, not pronunciation.

I cringe at the specter of having to pronounce words in order to access meaning. "I'se gwine ta go furder dan dat" makes me say every word if I'm to understand the sentence instead of reading for meaning in a chunk – "I'm going to go further than that."

Some literary genres use dialect, but imagine if we were to begin always spelling English the way it sounds, even if we chose a fairly standard accent. We would have to learn to read all over again, and we would lose the connection of related words. Once you know that *phone* is the Greek word for sound, you can see the connection between *telephone*, *dictaphone*, *symphony*, *phonetics*. Later when you learn the additional parts connected to *phone* in those words, you've gained access to a vast new vocabulary.

So I've answered questions you may not have been asking. The question you want to ask is: how do I teach spelling? Here are some tips.

1. Not skill and drill but guidance to see the patterns.
 - a. For example, long *a* at the end of a word is usually *ay*—allow students to discover this rather than just telling them by asking for words ending in the long *a* sound, putting them on the board and observing the pattern.
 - b. Have them observe and discover the silent *e* pattern (lake, cube, rose).
 - c. Then give them words that illustrate the pattern "When two vowels go walking the first one does the talking" (boat, meal, wait).
2. Use word sorts where they handle words and put them in categories: way, may, say, tray etc. Mad, flat, cap, and grab go together, as do fall, ball, tall, stall. Mixing those twelve words up and having student handle the cards to put them in categories reinforces their understanding of patterns better than circling words on worksheets. Active observation and discovery rather than memorization and drill.
3. Word searches for patterns, flip charts, and spelling notebooks.
4. Help students learn one word by showing the analogy to a word he already knows. If he spells it *natcher* but he knows *picture*, show him how *nature* and *picture* are similar.
5. Emphasize what student did correctly: *reck* is almost right, just needs one more letter: a *w* for *wreck*.
6. Encourage student to **think – look – say – think -- write**.

Finally, our curriculum series, *Patterns in Spelling*, is very helpful in putting these tips into practice.