

Marketing Toolkit



Introduction

Welcome to the Marketing Toolkit!

Marketing is an important part of raising awareness and building up your program. You could have the best and most effective adult education programming, but it does you no good if nobody knows about it. Marketing is essential to building student enrollment, recruiting volunteers, appealing to donors, and advocating with policy makers. This toolkit will help you lay the foundation to successfully market your program and achieve your goals.

Inside this Toolkit

On the following pages, we will highlight how to use the core marketing channels to achieve your goals:

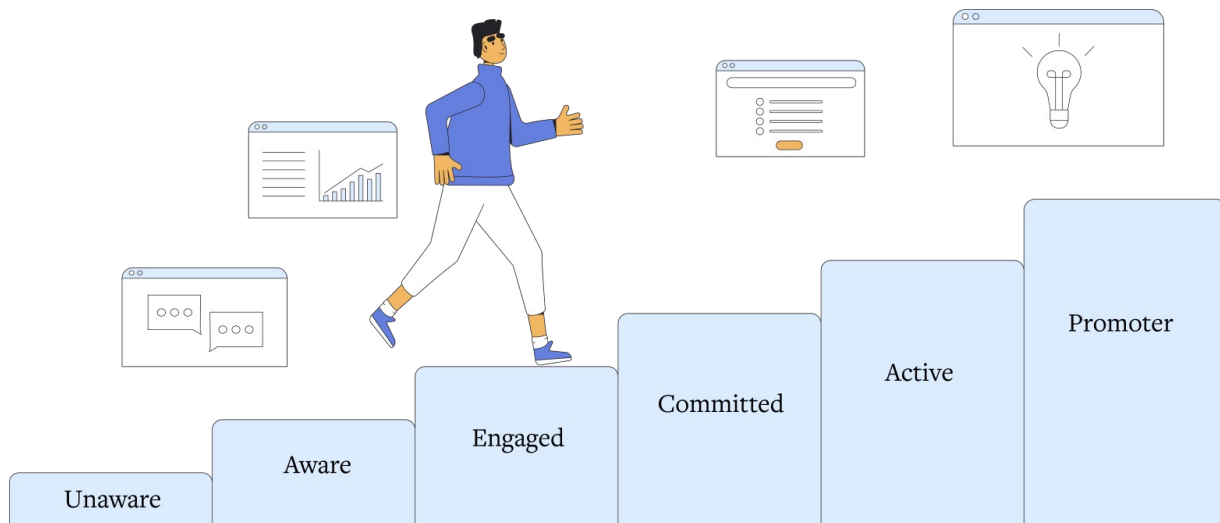
- 1. Marketing Basics**
- 2. Website**
- 3. Email**
- 4. Social Media**
- 5. Storytelling**

Marketing Basics

Audience and Purpose

Everything you do to market your program should have a specific purpose with a specific goal. Once you have figured those out, the next step is to determine which mode of communication will help achieve your goal.

Before you promote anything, ask yourself: Who am I talking to, and what do I want them to do? One way to answer that question is to consider the Ladder of Engagement.



You will want to tailor your content—and your goals—to each audience engagement level. For example, high-interest content about your cause in general excites existing followers and draws in new followers when they see it shared online. But, if you're promoting your next fundraiser, you're likely talking to people who know about your program and have opted in to receive your emails, etc. Your messaging here will likely be more personal.

Think: Are you going to immediately ask someone who is unaware of your organization to make a large donation? Probably not. But that doesn't mean that you can't bring them up the ladder to become a regular supporter.

Let's break it down:

Unaware/Aware: These people do not know about your program. The goal is to grab their attention and raise awareness of your cause. Make them aware and want to know more about who you are and what you do.

Channels: social media, paid ads, flyers, PSA campaigns

Engaged/Committed: This group made the decision to stay connected. They regularly visit your website, subscribe to your newsletter, register for webinars, and support your work. The goal is to keep them engaged through quality content and resources. Make an emotional connection with them to commit them to supporting your program through their own time or money.

Channels: email, website, blog, in addition to the previous channels

Active/Promoter: You've made these people believers. Your communications will grow to include targeted messages that only they receive. This group is more likely to volunteer, donate, and advocate for policy changes. This is the group that can help you make a difference.

Channels: annual appeals, impact reports, direct mail, in addition to the previous channels

The Foundation: Your Brand

Think of your program as a brand. Your brand should have a consistent message and look across platforms to build recognition among your audience. You want people to be able to see any of your marketing efforts and immediately know it's coming from your program and link it to your cause.

What is your core message?

Who you are: _____

What you do: _____

How you do it: _____

What your program believes: _____

The answers to these will serve as the core of your messaging. Use iterations of this to describe your program and as your purpose or reason for your marketing efforts.

Logo

What does your brand look like?

Your logo is the most recognizable aspect of your program. Use it across your communications, from press releases to flyers to your website.

- Keep it simple yet representative of what your organization does.
- Avoid too many colors—you will want to make sure it translates to black and white without losing meaning.

Font and Color Palette

Choose a font that you will use consistently across your website and other communications. When you choose a font, consider readability and how you want people to think about your program. Some fonts come across more serious and professional, while others are perceived as more light-hearted. Maybe you want a mix depending on the purpose. ProLiteracy, for example, uses a combination of the serif and sans-serif versions of the same font, which you can see displayed on our [website](#). This font combination is used in all our marketing efforts—social media images, flyers, videos, etc.

What font will you use? _____

In addition to your typeface, you may want to establish a color palette that is consistently used for marketing purposes. Consider some primary colors that are at the core of who you are, with some accent colors that you can use sparingly to highlight and draw attention to details.

Primary colors _____

Accent colors _____

Website

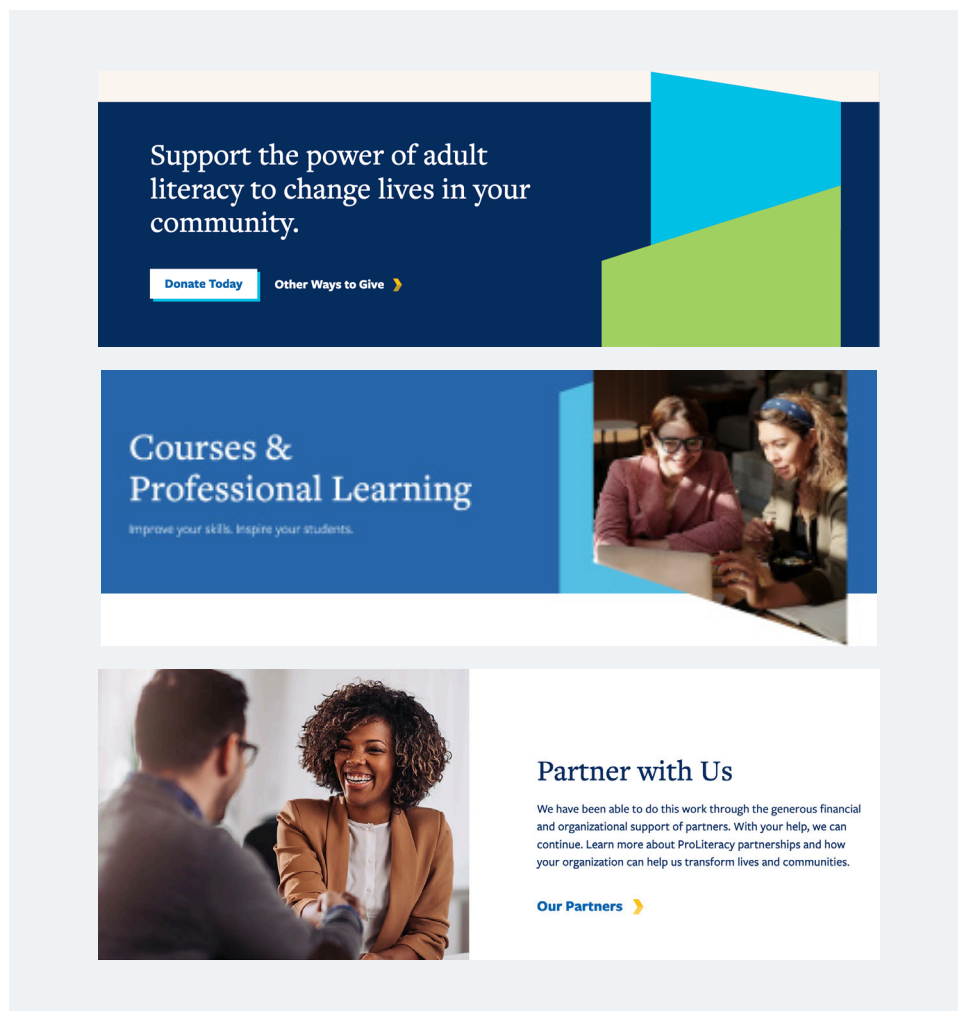
Your website is the public face of your program. It's the #1 place people will go to learn more about you. You want to make sure it clearly represents who you are and what you do.

Content

The information you include on each page of your website needs to serve a purpose. It needs to meet the need of the person who came to that page to find something.

- Use a consistent tone across every page that is professional, yet conversational. Use the key messaging you crafted in the Introduction of this toolkit as a guide for writing your content.
- Be informative but not overwhelming. Give your visitors the information that will intrigue them to want to know more, but don't bombard them with large blocks of text. Give them the option to click and learn more if they want.
- Keep in mind what your goal with each page is and what you want your audience to do. Is it to download a resource or infographic, donate to a specific cause or program, subscribe to your newsletter, or sign up to volunteer? Each page should include a compelling call to action (CTA).

Here are a few examples from the ProLiteracy website that call for users to improve their skills, partner with us, and donate.



Stay Up-to-Date

There's nothing worse than going to an organization's website only to see it still has the event calendar up from February 2021. An outdated website leads to a loss of credibility for an organization.

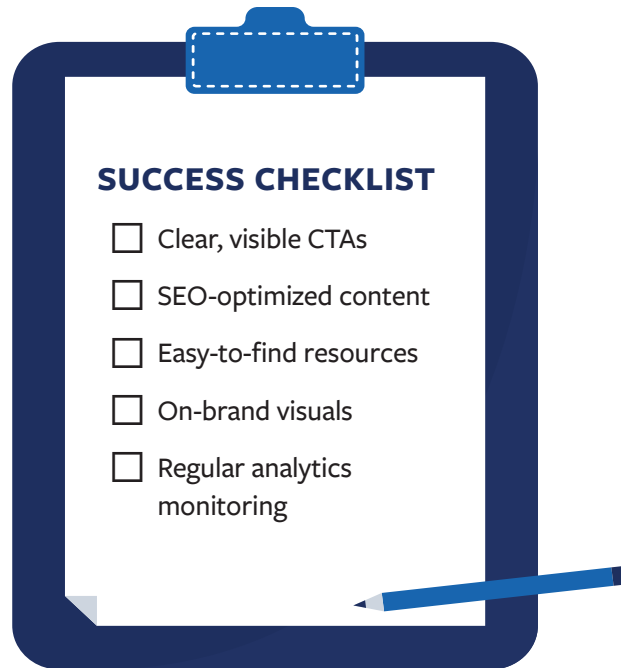
- Ongoing maintenance and optimization of your website ensures consistency, functionality, and user engagement.
- Keeping your website fresh and purging outdated information gives your program more credibility and higher placement in search engine results. If you have a blog, be sure to regularly post to it.
- Before adding any new section to your website, ask yourself if you have the bandwidth to maintain it. If the answer is "no," it's probably better not to add it at this time.

Use Your Website to:

- **Increase awareness:** Highlight who you are, what you do, and how you do it. Include your mission statement if your organization has one.
- **Engage audiences:** Provide easy access to resources, events, and tools.
- **Promote your impact:** Showcase successful initiatives and student stories using photos and blogs.
- **Support fundraising:** Encourage donations and partnerships.
- **Capture leads and visitor information:** Give website visitors the option to opt-in to your newsletters and communications by providing their email address. Use this information to send targeted emails, increase engagement, and build your following.

Attracting Traffic

- **SEO:** Search Engine Optimization (SEO) improves a website's visibility on search engines like Google.
 - Using keywords helps search engines better understand your content and rank your website higher in search results to attract more organic traffic when people search for related topics. Use the free Google Search Console to understand what keywords people are using to search and find your site.
 - Include varying content types on your website. Mix it up between text, photos, infographics, blogs, and videos.
 - Update content regularly, even just swapping a photo or revising a paragraph, to tell search engines that your content is fresh, which places it higher in the search rankings.
- **Analytics:** Use Google Analytics to track the behavior of your visitors. Pay attention to what is driving them to your website, what pages they visit most, and what content is most popular. Use this information to inform your messaging.
- **Social Media Integration:** Add buttons to your social media channels and encourage visitors to follow you on social.



TIPS

- Remember, those who are visiting your website are those who are Aware and above on the Ladder of Engagement.
- A lot of people view websites on their phones, which is another reason to avoid large blocks of copy. On a smaller screen, big chunks of text can be overwhelming.
- AI tools can be helpful to write content, but be sure to review it closely and edit it to meet your exact needs. Industry experts suggest that human-written content still ranks higher on search engine results.
- Google Ad Grants for nonprofits offer qualifying organizations the chance to boost their content in Google search results for free. Learn more: <https://www.google.com/grants/>

Email

Email has become one of the most efficient marketing outreach tools, taking over paper mailings. But our inboxes are becoming increasingly filled with emails vying for our attention. You want your audience to know they can trust you with their email address and that you will use it responsibly. So, before sending an email, take time to consider a few things first.

Who are you emailing?

Your email audience are those individuals who are engaged with your organization as customers and have decided to opt in to receive your emails to stay connected. Use email as a tool to keep them engaged.

Why are you emailing?

The goal of your email marketing is to provide your audience with information they find useful and will act on.

- If you're sending emails that do not have value to your audience, they likely won't read it, and your email risks becoming inbox clutter. You also risk your organization's reputation. If you send a lot of emails that are not useful, your audience will stop opening your emails all together.
- Send your contacts relevant and practical information that they can use and engage with—new resources, upcoming events, or funding opportunities, for example.
- Every email should include a call to action (CTA)—what you want them to do with the information—that is clear and direct, like Sign Up, Download the Report, or Donate.

Consider creating a newsletter for general announcements, resources, and event promotion. Saving this sort of information for a monthly newsletter will result in a robust and useful email that your audience will look forward to and engage with.

For high priority information, however, a standalone email is still valuable.

To prevent your audience from getting email fatigue, ask these questions before sending a standalone email: How important is this? Can it wait until the monthly newsletter?

Crafting Your Emails

Keep your emails to the point. Don't overwhelm readers with too much information or large blocks of text—remember, they may be reading on their phone. You want to give them enough information to want to know more and click on the links within your email.

- Make emails visually appealing with clear photos and bulleted text.
- Include only one CTA per email, unless it is a newsletter with multiple items. Be specific in your prompt: Save your seat, Download now, Sign up.
- Use attention-grabbing subject lines that tell the recipient what the email is about and what you want them to do. Avoid words that email servers flag as spam: Free, Guaranteed, Bonus.
- Utilize AI if you need help crafting the content of an email with a specific tone.

Social Media

Social media is an important part of your marketing strategy. This is where you have the most potential to reach new supporters and convert them on the Ladder of Engagement, from unaware to aware of your organization and your cause. It's also where you can grow involvement, buy in, and engagement among those who already follow you. How do you do that?

On social media, you'll want to create content for audiences at every level of engagement.

Unaware/General Public

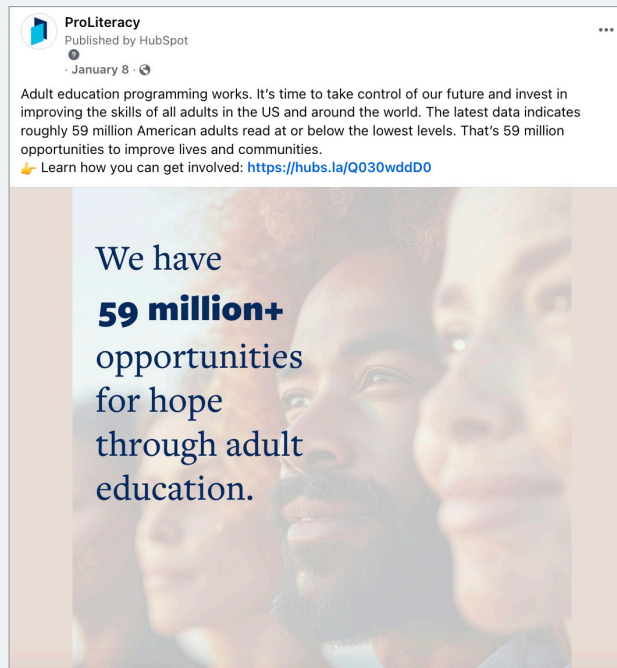
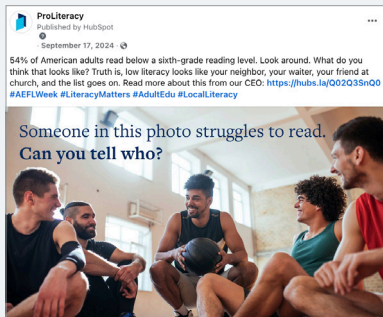
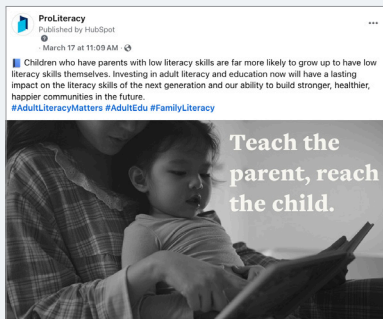
Social media provides the opportunity to reach those who are not yet aware of your program or what you do. You can also use social media to reach potential students and motivate them to enroll.

The key here is to create shareable posts. High-interest content about adult literacy and your program will motivate your followers to share, which will reach their personal networks and new audiences. Once your post reaches new audiences, you'll want them to want to know more about you.

The goal is to get them to follow you and then visit your website and subscribe. How can you do this?

- **Localize the issue.** Share stats about adult literacy, including adult literacy in your community. Point out how adult low literacy impacts everyone and what your program is doing to build a stronger community.
- **Put a face to adult literacy.** Share short, easily digestible impact stories about the power of adult literacy. This can be a quote from a learner, an image of an adult learner with a stat, or maybe a short video.
- **Make emotional connections.** Probably the biggest reason someone will decide to act on your post is because you connect with them and make them care—whether through happiness, pride, shock, sadness, or urgency.

EXAMPLES:



Engaged/Committed

This audience knows you, has taken the steps to follow you, and probably subscribes to your communications to stay informed. Beyond your high-interest, general awareness posts, this group will be following your social media because they have identified that you can provide a value to them when you share about

- training opportunities and webinars
- useful resources
- volunteer opportunities
- upcoming events

Post these items with clear call-to-action links that take them to your website: Register, Volunteer, Learn more, Download.

You can also use social media to learn more about your audience. Ask them to complete surveys or to answer questions in the comments. Start a conversation.

Active/Promoters

This group is bought in and following you, sharing your posts, regularly visiting your website, and seeking out opportunities for themselves. They follow you on social and find your posts valuable; this group will likely be the group that you'll reach out to more and expect more from their engagement.

- Success stories and blogs are typically longer narratives that will be of interest to those who are bought into your cause. This group will take the time to access your blog and read more because it builds their understanding.
- This group will be most willing to promote advocacy efforts and participate in fundraisers supporting your organization. They might even be interested in hosting their own fundraiser on social media to benefit your cause.

What to Consider

- **Length of post:** Don't get caught up in FOMO (fear of missing out). You have about 8 seconds to grab someone's attention. Don't worry about trying to say everything in one post. Grab their interest and give them the chance to learn more if they want.
- **Images:** Use engaging photos and videos of students and tutors in your program or participants in an event. Be sure your photos are clear, and your subjects are not too far away. You can also create engaging graphics featuring a student quote or a statistic that will grab people's attention.
 - For graphic images, be sure to stay within your brand guidelines for color and font use.
 - There are many design programs like Canva or Adobe Express that provide design templates and easy graphic creation specifically for social media.
- **Frequency:** Spread your posts out so that you are consistently posting but not inundating your audience.
- **Analytics:** As long as your account is set up as a business/nonprofit, you will have access to each platform's analytics dashboard where you can track how many people view, click, and engage with your posts. Use this data to see what works best and how you can improve your social media practices.



TIPS

- Be sure to set up your account as a business/nonprofit for full access to the features of each platform, including ad centers and analytics.
- You can utilize paid social media advertising to reach a wider audience within your local area for a reasonable cost. For community-based organizations, a feature like this might be useful for promoting your events or showcasing volunteer opportunities.
- Algorithms influence what shows up in social media feeds. The more interesting a platform determines a post is, the more highly it will place it in others' feeds. It gauges this through engagement, comments, shares, and link clicks. Consider this when creating social media. Ask yourself if this post is something that would stop you in your scrolling
- There are free web-based platforms that allow you to plan and schedule social media posts ahead of time. Many of these platforms also work for mass email purposes. You can also schedule posts within each social media platform.

Story Telling

Storytelling is key to connecting with your audience, inspiring them to act, and building trust. It is an important part of any marketing strategy because it adds a human element that audiences connect with. Your audience might be donors who want to see how their money is making an impact; it might be policymakers who see better communities through adult literacy; or it might even be potential students who are motivated to enroll after hearing a success story of someone they can relate to.

Like your other marketing efforts, you will want to ask yourself what your goal is and how you will use a story before you create it—are you raising awareness, recruiting volunteers, fundraising, reaching potential students, or advocating for policy changes?

Crafting a Story

Once you know what the purpose is, each story should:

- 1. Introduce who the story is about. Use details that humanize your subject and make them relatable to your audience.**

Example: Diane is a single mom who loves nothing more than cheering for her son Oscar on the soccer field. He's now 12 and has played the sport since he was in kindergarten. It's been one thing they've always bonded over, and Oscar has become quite skilled over the years. About two years ago, however, Oscar was cut off by an opposing player during a playoff game. He fell and fractured his ankle. Little did Diane know this would change her life.

- 2. Present the challenge your subject faced that aligns with your program's mission.**

Example: At the hospital, Diane was handed what seemed like a hundred forms to complete with her son's information and history. "It was really overwhelming. At that time, I hadn't told anyone that I couldn't read well. I struggled to understand the questions. I didn't know how to write or explain the reason we were there." She worried about not knowing what she was signing to give consent for surgery. She didn't know how much it would all cost. "I worked full time, but I didn't make much. I was afraid of how I would pay the bill or how much it would be," she said. She knew Oscar deserved better.

- 3. Describe how your program worked with the main subject to solve the challenge.**

Example: The next week, Diane visited the local library and asked about reading classes. That's how we met Diane. She enrolled in our Level 2 Adult Basic Education class and has been a shining example of perseverance, never missing her twice-weekly class.

- 4. Show how your program's impact solved the challenge.**

Example: Over the past two years, Diane has gained confidence as she's advanced in our program. Both her reading and writing skills are now at Level 5. "In fact, I've had to go back to the hospital for my own procedure, and I remembered when those same forms seemed so scary. Now they seemed like no big deal." With stronger skills, she's also been able to land a stable job and makes enough money to feel secure, something she says she hadn't felt in a very long time. And for Oscar, he's back on the soccer field. In fact, Diane now volunteers with the team, keeping parents informed about games and practices through email.

- 5. Present a clear call to action.**

Example: For 31 years, our program has empowered adults to make positive changes in their lives. For Diane, it took an unexpected visit to the hospital to push her to take the first step toward making a change. She's still here because she feels encouraged by the upward path her life has been on as a result of her improved literacy. Help us continue to serve those in our community like Diane by giving them the skills to take control of their lives. Donate today.

While Diane’s story is broken down to represent each part of a story, you can tell a story in a variety of ways, depending on who your audience is and where they stand on the Ladder of Engagement.

A story can be as short as a photo accompanied by a few sentences that tell about someone’s success and makes a point about the impact of adult education. This option might be good for social media and to reach those who are unaware of your organization. Short-form stories are also good for email, when you want your audience to take notice and take action in a relatively quick amount of time.

- Photos, graphics, or other visual content creates initial interest to draw people in but also leave a lasting impression by making the story more memorable.



Meet Theresa: Theresa left school in eighth grade to work in the fields in Georgia with her mother and never went back. Years later, married with five kids, Theresa was laid off from her job and knew that if she wanted to find another job she would need to improve her reading skills. She enrolled in adult education classes reading at Level 1. Ten years later, she’s about to take her final exam to earn her GED credential.

A story could also be told in long form text—like on a blog or in a direct mail appeal. Stories in this format, for example, might share the success of a student or tutor and how your program allowed them to reach these personal achievements. Long form story telling will be geared toward your engaged audience who will take the time to read and see how their commitment to your organization is changing lives.

STUDENT STORIES

She met her tutor Tetrick, and at that moment over 10 years ago, Kristina became part of the Dominican family, and she started to overcome her past educational obstacles.

Kristina had been diagnosed with dyslexia in the second grade when it was recognized that she wasn't learning. She repeated the grade and was placed in a special education class. In her new class, learning was overshadowed by other kids' behaviors.

"I wasn't raised that way," she said. "I wanted to learn!"

Kristina moved grade-by-grade through school in special education classes and some mainstream classes. She went on to attend the Detroit High School for the Fine and Performing Arts.

"It was like [the movie] Fame, everyone dancing. But it was small, and I was in mainstream classes, except for English," she said. "They worked with me and graduated me!"

Despite her desire to learn, her dyslexia made it a challenge as she pursued higher education. At Dominican, she started to see progress.

"Dominican has overwhelmed me with a bunch of love," she said. "My tutor helped me overcome my disability. She hung in there and took her time."

Kristina worked on her reading and writing, and then one day a lightbulb went off.

"It was like, oh my god," she said.

She earned her associate's degree from Wayne Community College in 2008.

While at Dominican she started attending Marygrove College to work toward a bachelor's degree, taking a class here and there.

Then, her husband passed away in 2014, and after a few years, she returned to Marygrove and took two classes a semester.

Her dedication and hard work was recognized, and she was offered a job in the computer lab at Dominican. When Kim needed an assistant to match new students with tutors, Kristina took on that role, even becoming a mentor for Marcella, who jokes that Kristina has a "tonic ear for the world."



Kristina can, maybe better than others, understand where new students are coming from.

"I give my testimony to every single student," she said. "Education doesn't need to be the typical four years."

(Continued on page 15)



STUDENT STORIES

Literacy Center Uplifts Students with Unending Support
Students become staff at Dominican Literacy Center

AT DOMINICAN LITERACY CENTER in Detroit, Michigan, a ProLiteracy member program, staff members Kristina Matthews and Marcella Davis never doubt that anyone who comes through the door has the potential to succeed.

They should know:

Kristina's story

Kristina graduated high school and went to Wayne State University while working full time. It was too much and so she left and enrolled in Wayne Community College. While she had many credits in a lot of different disciplines, she had no clear path. She knew she wasn't strong at reading and writing, and she was never able to perform in her studies at the level she wanted.

So, she did what no one does anymore. She pulled out the phone book.

"I looked for Dominican in the yellow pages," Kristina said laughing.

She went ahead and called. Within a month Dominican Literacy's Executive Director Kimberly Williams called Kristina and told her that she had a tutor for her.

ProLiteracy VOICES

Don't be afraid to use video as another way to tell a story. No one says it better than the subject of your story, so let them tell it themselves. Don't let the idea of creating a video scare you. Smartphones take great video and there are a lot of free programs that you can use to edit your video if needed. Share your videos on social media, on your website, or even put them on a big screen at an event to drum up support for your cause.

Benefits of Storytelling

By creating narratives that highlight the power of adult education, you can effectively communicate your mission, inspire action, and cultivate lasting support from your communities by:

- **Connecting emotionally:** Stories evoke emotions that resonate with audiences when they see human impact. They help you build empathy and understanding. Emotional connections can motivate people to take action to support a cause through engagement, donations, volunteering, or advocacy efforts.
- **Building trust and credibility:** By sharing stories about real people, you build trust with donors and stakeholders who can see your work in action through individuals' stories. Sharing real-life experiences and testimonials illustrates the integrity and effectiveness of your program, encouraging continued support, more involvement, and larger contributions.
- **Enhancing awareness:** The biggest value of storytelling is that it allows you to communicate your mission and your work in a relatable way. Depending on how you tell your story—short form, long form, etc.—you can use stories to reach new audiences who want to be part of your mission. Among those who are already engaged with you, success stories solidify your credibility as a worthwhile organization. This reputation can attract more supporters and lead to more resources.
- **Simplifying complex issues:** In adult education, we can deal with complex issues. No two students are the same, nor are they at your program for the same reason. It's important to use their stories to help humanize the mission. Putting faces to the adult literacy and education mission allows it to become relatable. Storytelling makes it easier for your audience to grasp the impact adult education has on a person's life and on their community.



TIPS

- Sprinkle in facts about adult literacy and education into your narrative to show the scope of the issue
- Stories can be about student successes, your volunteers, your instructors, a supporter, etc. Everyone involved with your program has a story for why they are involved and how it impacts their life. The stories are there, you just need to uncover them.
- Storytelling can be a catalyst for enrolling new students. A study by the Adult Literacy & Learning Impact Network found that 63% of potential learners would be motivated to improve their skills after hearing a success story of someone who had been through a program.
- Be sure any person you feature clearly understands how you intend to use their story, photo, etc. and that they are OK with it. It's a good idea to have a standard media release form that they can sign consenting to the public use of their image, story, etc.