Agenda

Conversation Circles

Computer Labs

Questions

Conversation Circles

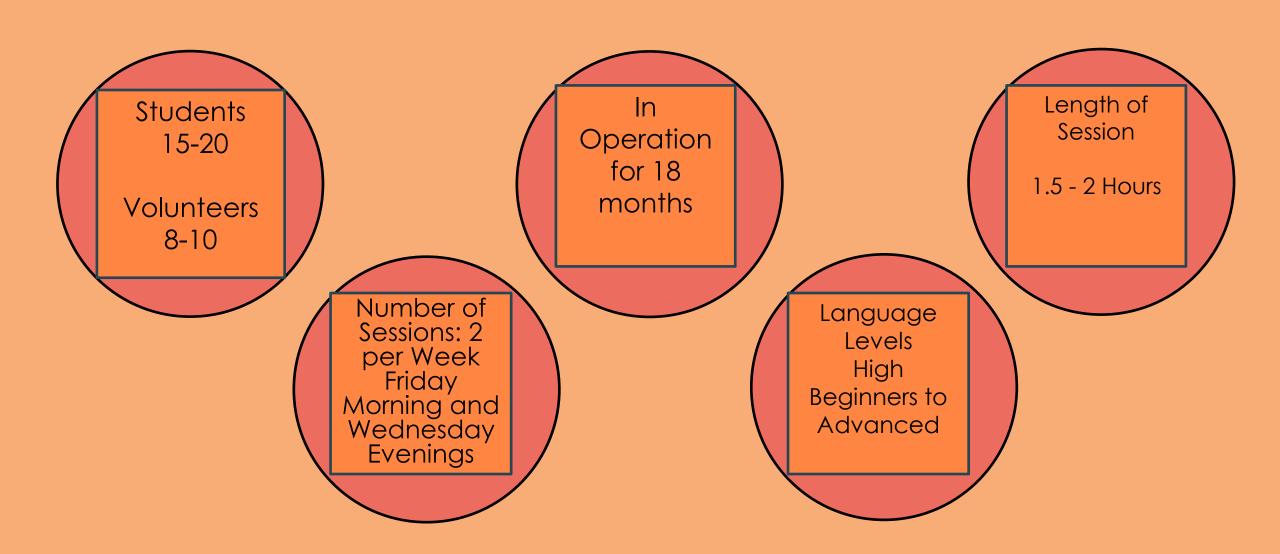# CONVERSATION GROUPS: AS CULTURAL EXCHANGE

HARLEEN KOCHAR: LITERACY PROGRAM COORDINATOR, NEVINS MEMORIAL LIBRARY METHUEN, MA

THE NUMBERS

Students
15-20

Volunteers
8-10

In
Operation
for 18
months

Length of
Session

1.5 - 2 Hours

Number of
Sessions: 2
per Week
Friday
Morning and
Wednesday
Evenings

Language
Levels
High
Beginners to
Advanced

GETTING STARTED

Space
- Libraries
- Churches
- Community Centers
- Health Organisations

Leaders
- Staff
- Volunteers
- Student Leaders

Training
- Volunteer Orientation
- Tutor Training
- Interview

Student Recruitment
- Waiting Lists
- Health and Human Services
- Adult Learning Center

SCHEMATICS FOR ORGANIZATION

Facilitating

Focus on Sharing

Cultural Exchange Focus on Community Cohesion

Teaching: Language Learning Activities

Healing Circle: Promotes sharing of personal issues

Talent Showcase: Students and Volunteers present a Talent

A BALANCED APPROACH

Alternating Between Language Learning and Conversation

Coaching students to prepare informational write-ups to present to the group

Celebrating Holidays, Birthdays and Other Milestones for Group Cohesion

Engaging Students With Breakout Groups and Bringing in Volunteers for One-on-One Support.

The group often rallies together to help a member prepare for proficiency tests like TOEFL

A TYPICAL SESSION

The session begins with the leader introducing a topic.

Some students team up with volunteers to brainstorm and dive deeper into the subject, while others work independently.

After preparing, everyone gathers together for sharing

As we wrap up, a fun homework assignment is handed out. Example Students will prepare a 3-5 minute talk about a movie, TV show, book, or an intriguing news story to share in our next gathering.

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

Multiple Volunteers in each session help cater to different language levels

We recruit volunteers from our existing tutors and the general public.

Most of our volunteers are retirees looking to create a meaningful community

Volunteers enjoy the cultural exchange aspect of the group and learning about other cultures

Encourage discussions about cultural distinctionswe never shy away from the tough conversations.

Many tutors attend with their students.

TRAUMA INFORMED CULTURAL EXCHANGE

An understanding of the Trauma due to displacement and exile.

Especially for students from countries like Afghanistan, Haiti, etc

Embodying patience and compassion in all class activities

All homework activities are considered optional

Establishing trust and empathy is essential.

CHALLENGES

- The Excitement of Uncertainty: We never quite know how many students or volunteers will join us, adding a thrilling element of surprise to each session.

- Embracing Diversity: Being Able To Cater To All Levels of Language Proficiency

- Keeping the Learning Fresh: We're always looking for innovative new lessons to captivate our students and keep their enthusiasm alive.

- Growing Pains: As our numbers expand, we're actively searching for larger spaces that can accommodate our vibrant community of learners.

- Continuous Need for Strong Leaders

ENGAGING STUDENTS WHO ARE WAITING FOR A TUTOR

Many of our students find the conversation groups to be more appealing than traditional tutoring.

The blend of personalized attention, opportunities to socialize, and the inclusion of homework assignments creates a highly engaging and attractive option for them.

This approach not only enhances their language skills but also fosters a sense of community and connection among participants.

THANK YOU

Harleen Kochar (she/her)

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Computer Labs

International Learning Program

COMPUTER LEARNING – LILIANE MCFARLANE

FEBRUARY 18, 2025

Neighborhood House of MKE and ILP

❖ Neighborhood House of Milwaukee, parent organization
  ❖ Community-based education and support services
  ❖ Almost 80 years old

❖ International Learning Program
  ❖ Adult refugees and asylees with legal permanent residence status, and their families
  ❖ 43 years
  ❖ Evidence-based English as a Second Language and basic adult education
  ❖ Citizenship courses for those who reach 5 years or more
  ❖ Department of Justice recognized and accredited organization
    ❖ 1 of only 6 such sites in the Milwaukee area
    ❖ Approved to provide naturalization/immigration legal services

Services Provided

❖ ESL – English as a Second Language courses

❖ Digital Literacy – computer literacy

❖ Citizenship – educational courses, naturalization application support and services

❖ Wrap around services – case work, job searches, interpretation, cultural experiences, etc.

❖ Piloting a driver's education program

Neighborhood House
OF MILWAUKEE

Population/Languages Served

❖ Arabic (1%)

❖ Burmese (16%)

❖ Congolese (20%)

❖ Karen (27%)

❖ Rohingya (34%)

❖ Somali (2%)

❖ 2024 Registered students
 ❖ ESL - 164
 ❖ Citizenship - 87

Computer Literacy Classes

❖ Computer lab setup
  - ❖ Partnership - Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC)
  - ❖ Computers, printer, server and computer tech specialist provided by MATC

❖ Computer literacy class
  - ❖ ESL teacher-led class
  - ❖ 30 minutes – 1-hour long sessions
  - ❖ Volunteer supported

Computer Literacy Classes (cont'd)

❖ For students at levels 0 - 1
- ❖ Less structured
- ❖ Introduction to computers and computer peripherals
- ❖ Introduction to MS products
  - ❖ Excel and Word
- ❖ Sites:
  - ❖ Learning Chocolate, ESL Games online, Starfall, and typing.com

❖ For students at levels 2 and up
- ❖ Have basic literacy
- ❖ Lesson plan with handouts
- ❖ Sites:
  - ❖ Learning Chocolate, Blackboard – MATC learning platform, myvote.wi.gov, IXL

Class Activities

❖ Lots of 1-on-1 support with help of volunteers

❖ Demonstrating how to use the mouse, dragging, clicking, etc.

❖ Encourage students to work together

❖ Encourage exploration of websites or applications

❖ Using email to send messages

❖ Usage of subscription applications like IXL

Drop In Students

❖ Labs available throughout the school day

❖ Administrative staff available to respond to questions

❖ Students waiting are encouraged to use the computer

❖ Signage of various websites printed on walls

❖ General login name and password used for all the computers

Concerns & Successes

CONCERNS

❖ Attendance of students

❖ Students at different levels of technological knowledge

❖ Many students not having computers to work with at home

❖ Vast technical terms to teach

SUCCESSES

❖ Level 2 and up students using their emails more

❖ Those with personal computers are attempting English programs at home

❖ Working with their children on research assignments online

❖ Some students use the lab outside of their regular class to practice

Opportunities

❖ Large screen to project what teacher is doing with keyboard or what is on their screen

❖ Larger more spacious classroom

❖ Dedicated IT specialist to teach a course

❖ Consistency and frequency in teaching

Neighborhood House
O F   M I L W A U K E E

Thank You

❖ For further information

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Questions?

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Thank you!

Thank you to our in-kind sponsor,
Community Shares of Wisconsin

To see our full winter conference schedule
and register for sessions:

Join us for The Big Share on March 4th