

Teaching Our Teachers got started when one member of our Curriculum Committee was sitting in a class that should have been interesting, inspiring and uplifting and was just the opposite. As he sat with his head in his hands he wondered what the problem was. It was not the material, although the room and the furniture in it were not the most comfortable, that was not the problem. The problem was the instructor.

A nice gentleman who knew the subject matter, who had lived the material for 50 years or more, but was not a trained teacher. He did not know how to motivate a class, how to get the class involved, how to make the class as enthusiastic about the subject as he was down deep inside. He certainly didn't project his enthusiasm, but it was there. Other members of the class were voting with their feet and leaving the class and not coming back.

He droned on and the student seethed. And the idea for a class to help teachers teach began to form. As the disgruntled student began to discuss his idea with other members of the Curriculum Committee it was suggested that a few retired master teachers were in the ranks of our members and they should be contacted.

During this time we also contacted a couple of other LLI's to see if they were doing anything similar. Most of the feedback was in the form of instructions of where to park, how to operate the phone system, how to get copying done, etc. Important stuff, but not where we were going. Since we do not pay our instructors, other than to provide vouchers for tuition, we felt incumbent to help them do the best teaching we could.

While this was being done, serendipitously one member of the committee ran into a retired education professor. He joined the effort along with three of our master teachers and over a number of meetings created an outline and series of notes to present a class for our amateur instructors.

We held two sessions of the class. Each lasted about 3 hours. In all about 26 potential instructors attended. Subsequent follow up showed that they found the class very useful and that they incorporated the material into their teaching repertoire.

Subsequent to the class we assembled all the notes into a little booklet that we have distributed to all new instructors. In addition we have distributed it to some people who have shown interest in other programs.

It would be wonderful to report that the class and booklet have turned our teaching staff around. It has helped. In some cases quite a good deal. In some cases not at all. We are reviewing the content and presentation of the class again. Hopefully to improve what happens in the class room.

Although we do routinely ask class members for evaluations of classes and teachers, those people who drop out of class long before the class ends do not get the evaluation sheet. This spring we surveyed the membership, on-line, about this very subject, among many others. Our survey got an outstanding 40% response rate and gave us a wonderful

insight on what we were doing, both well and poorly. It will take us weeks to digest all the material. So Teaching our Teachers is a case of teaching ourselves. We are learning how to motivate people with the basic background on a subject to present that material in an interesting, exciting way to adults who are interested in learning about the world around them.

From Dan Kappel
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