



Volunteer Manual

Washington English Center
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Improving the Lives of Immigrants through Education

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Executive Director	2
ABOUT WASHINGTON ENGLISH CENTER	3
Our Mission	3
Staff and Contact Information	3
WASHINGTON ENGLISH CENTER PROGRAMS	4
Class Terms	4
ESL Classes	4
Citizenship Exam Prep	4
Computer Literacy	4
Free Programs for Registered Students	4
WEC VOLUNTEER OFFICE HOURS	4
VOLUNTEER PLACEMENTS	5
VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES	5
Co-Teaching Teams	6
Course Materials	7
Teacher Observations	7
Class Logs and Attendance	7
Purpose of Class Logs	7
Class Log Instructions	7
Absences and Substitute Requests	8
Volunteer Dismissal	9
INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY	9
STUDENTS AT WASHINGTON ENGLISH CENTER	10
Student Attendance	11
Student Class Change Policy	11
Graduation	11
Appendices	12
Appendix A: Washington English Center ACCESS Teaching Standards	12
Appendix B: Lesson Plan Template	14
Appendix C: Lesson Planning Worksheet	15
Appendix D: AM Class Logs	18
Format	18
Sample AM Class Log	18
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	19



Letter from the Executive Director

We are so grateful you have chosen to volunteer at Washington English Center. We hope that this is a rewarding and enriching experience for you. WEC could not serve the hundreds of students we see each day without the support of our amazing volunteers.

Volunteers make WEC unique and special. Many organizations and schools provide English as a Second Language classes but our volunteer model means our classes are led by teachers who are devoted to our mission. The dedication and commitment of our volunteer teachers provides a welcoming and supportive environment that is truly appreciated by our students.

WEC has a small salaried staff and a tremendous corps of volunteers (approximately 300 each term). If you are interested in participating in other WEC activities or committees (developing teacher/student resources, office support, social media or fundraising), please let us know. We can always use your help!

Your feedback is as important to us as is your service. If you have any problems, suggestions, ideas or concerns regarding the organization or your role as a volunteer, please let us know.

This manual is designed to give you a brief overview of our program, our students, resources available to you at WEC, and general guidelines for volunteering. Please read it carefully and keep it for future reference.

Thank you for becoming a part of Washington English Center. We are honored you have chosen to give us your time and support. I hope it will be as valuable to you as your service will be to our students and to us.

Gabriela Mossi
Executive Director

ABOUT WASHINGTON ENGLISH CENTER

Washington English Center (WEC), formerly Language ETC, was founded in 1993 to provide English and literacy training to low-income adult immigrants. Since 1993 our volunteer teachers and tutors have provided students with the education and support they need to build a better future for themselves and their children. Our commitment is to provide high-quality educational services to all low-income immigrants in the Washington area, regardless of ability to pay. With over 2800 annual enrollments and over 1500 individual students, Washington English Center, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, is one of the largest non-profit ESL providers in the Washington D.C. area.

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide excellent and affordable English classes and other workforce programs to immigrants using volunteer teachers.

Staff and Contact Information

Full Time

Executive Director - Gabriela Mossi, gmossi@washingtonenglish.org

Deputy Director - Elizabeth Madjlesi, emadjlesi@washingtonenglish.org

Director of Curriculum and Instruction - Jessie Ebersole, jebersole@washingtonenglish.org

Program Coordinator - Laura Lee Randolph, lrandolph@washingtonenglish.org

Office Manager Weekends - Claudia Belloso, cbelloso@washingtonenglish.org

Office Manager Weekdays - Clodoaldo Lopez, clopez@washingtonenglish.org

Part Time

Director of Employment Services - Yadiilka Marquez, jobs@washingtonenglish.org

Administrative Assistant - Jose Fernandez, operations@washingtonenglish.org

IT Coordinator, Antonio Ricci

Telephone (202) 387-2222

Website washingtonenglish.org

Facebook facebook.com/washingtonenglish

Twitter [@DCEnglishCenter](https://twitter.com/DCEnglishCenter)

Instagram [@washington_english_center](https://www.instagram.com/washington_english_center)

WASHINGTON ENGLISH CENTER PROGRAMS

Class Terms

Fall	September (after Labor Day) – early December
Winter	January – early-April
Spring	April – end of June
Summer	mid-July – end of August (6 week term)

ESL Classes

Beginning - Advanced (13 Levels)

Weekdays AM (M-Th) Intensive	10 am - 1 pm
Weekdays PM (M-Th)	7 - 9 pm
Weekends (Sat-Sun)	2 - 5 pm
Sunday Conversation	10 am - 12 pm

Citizenship Exam Prep

Monday-Thursday	6 pm - 7 pm
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Computer Literacy

Beg/Int Level Students

Tuesday & Thursday	6 pm - 7 pm
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Free Programs for Registered Students

Employment Services	By appointment
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One-on-one Tutoring	1 - 2 pm (M-Th)
*begins the 2nd week of term	6 - 7 pm (M-Th)

Conversation Clubs*	6-7 pm (M-Th)
*begins the 2nd week of term	1-2 pm (M-Th)

**Days of the weeks on which conversation clubs occur are subject to vary by term due to volunteer availability. Club times, however, remain the same across the year.*

WEC VOLUNTEER OFFICE HOURS

Monday- Thursday: 9 am - 9 pm

Friday: Closed

Saturday: 1 - 5 pm

Sunday: 9 am - 5 pm

VOLUNTEER PLACEMENTS

While WEC reviews applications and welcomes new volunteers throughout the year, we open volunteer sign-up for specific teaching and tutoring assignments about six weeks before the beginning of each term. When sign-up opens for a particular term, you will receive a link to a sign-up form via email. This sign-up form gives you the opportunity to mark availability and make co-teaching requests for the upcoming semester. WEC staff works to meet as many requests as possible and will follow up with you directly if we're unable to meet your request. All volunteers must complete a background screening before receiving a volunteering assignment.

WEC conducts background screening through GoodHire who will be performing criminal records checks.* We screen every volunteer for the safety of our students, our staff, and other volunteers. This information will remain private and confidential and will be reviewed only by the WEC Executive Director and Deputy Director. By providing your email address and submitting the sign-up form, you consent to provide GoodHire with the necessary information to complete this screening. Once you have submitted the sign-up form, you will receive an email from GoodHire to provide your name, address and social security number. Please respond to the GoodHire email as quickly as possible, as we will not be able to make your teaching assignment until the screening has been completed.

*If you are an international candidate and do not have a social security number, please contact Liz Madjlesi at emadjlesi@washingtonenglish.org for information about next steps.

VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

Please arrive on time for class. Ideally, it is best to arrive 45 minutes before class so you have time to review any notes in the class binder, read announcements, and prepare for teaching. If you are running late, please call the office and your co-teacher as soon as possible to let them know.

Submit a class log to your team. Weekday AM teachers will submit logs via email and copy the Deputy Director and Director of Curriculum & Instruction to all team emails (see Appendix D). Weekend and PM teachers will submit class logs via Google Sheets (see [sample log](#)).

Take attendance during every class. We are required to submit attendance records as part of our reporting to funders. You will do this in your respective class binder and through *ProActive*, our online database (you will receive more information about *ProActive* after you are scheduled to teach).

The dress code for volunteers is “smart casual.” Please be thoughtful about how you dress for class; we have a wide variety of students and physical appearance can be meaningful in different ways. Jeans, tennis shoes, and t-shirts are fine but please avoid any clothing that might be perceived as provocative.

Cell phones belonging to both volunteers and students should be silenced during class time. When appropriate, we encourage both students and teachers to use cell phones for educational purposes.

Please do not tape anything to the classroom walls, as removal of the tape will mar the paint and plaster. To display maps or other materials, you may either tape them to the black/whiteboard or hang them on the cork board strips on the wall.

Please return the furniture in the classrooms to the way you found it. Often, classroom furniture must be rearranged to accommodate various class activities; however, since other groups use our classrooms, the rooms must be returned to the place it was found at the end of class. Please place desks in rows that face the blackboard or whiteboard at the front of the room.

When you leave the classroom:

Move the classroom desk and chairs into rows

Close all windows

Turn off the lights

Turn off the air conditioning/heaters and close the blinds (in summer)

Please be aware that many activities take place in a **church building**. There may be other meetings or classes, church services, and other activities going on in rooms adjacent to, above or below your classroom. If you are planning a class activity that may be disruptive to others, please close your door. Please also note that daytime classes, tutoring sessions, and conversation clubs should be complete by 2:30pm. Evening teachers and students should be out of classrooms by 9:00pm and out of the building by 9:15pm. Weekend teachers and students should be out of classrooms by 5:00pm and out of the building by 5:15pm.

Co-Teaching Teams

WEC uses a team teaching model in which each course is taught by a team of teachers and **every class is led by two teachers** from the team. While volunteer teachers make a commitment to teach only one day per week, students attend scheduled classes on each day of their program and will have **4-8 teachers working with them on a weekly basis** (2 per class/day.)

It is important to work with your co-teacher on how you will present the lesson as a team (role playing or “modeling” dialogues, having one teacher present a lesson while the other helps individual students, etc.). Maintaining a cohesive and consistent learning environment through communication, responsibility, and reliability is very important within each team. For more information about co-teaching, please see Ashley Lipp’s [blog entry](#) on co-teaching.

WEC uses a team-teaching approach for several reasons:

- It exposes our students to a variety of teaching styles and types of English
- It allows us to pair experienced teachers with new teachers to foster a mentoring relationship
- With two teachers in the room, teachers are better able to target instruction to students at different proficiency levels.

Course Materials

WEC will provide every teacher with the materials they will need for each term. One of the materials teachers are provided with is a textbook for the course that they are assigned to teach. WEC reuses these textbooks every term and we ask that volunteers **treat them gently, do not write or highlight inside them, and return them to WEC on or before their last day of class.**

WEC also provides teachers with a course syllabus and other ancillary materials to aid instruction.

Teacher Observations

WEC staff strive to observe as many volunteers as possible each term, in order to provide support and suggestions to teachers. If you are observed, you will receive individualized feedback in relation to Washington English Center's ACCESS teaching standards (Appendix A). We prioritize seeing new teachers and classrooms using new textbooks; however, if you know you would like to be observed and receive feedback, please email jebersole@washingtonenglish.org, and we will make sure to include you on the observation schedule.

Class Logs and Attendance

After each class or at the end of the class, one of the co-teachers must use the WEC class log formats to submit a brief description of what was covered in class to all the other teacher team members. Teachers must also report attendance via wec.proactiveschool.com. These tasks can be rotated or one co-teacher can assume responsibility for doing this for the entire term.

Purpose of Class Logs

- to provide the next team of teachers with an idea of what went on in your class so that they can prepare the next lesson
- to inform all the team members of any issues or problems in the class
- to keep WEC staff informed so that they can provide support if needed

Class Log Instructions

Weekday AM

Format and Sample: see Appendix D

Deadline: email sent **by 5pm** to co-teachers, Liz (emadjlesi@washingtonenglish.org), and Jessie (jebersole@washingtonenglish.org)

Weekday PM and Weekend

Format and Sample: [sample log](#)

Deadline: update Google sheet **by the end of class** (*you can either end class a few minutes before 9pm or have one teacher complete these tasks while the other finishes teaching the final moments of class*)

Absences and Substitute Requests

Planned Absences: For a planned absence, please inform me of the date and duration of the absence as soon as possible! Steps to follow:

1. ALWAYS notify your Program Coordinator of your absence.
2. Contact your co-teacher:
 - a. **If your co-teacher wishes to teach alone**, let us know that you will be absent and that you do not need a substitute
 - b. **If your co-teacher wants to teach with a substitute**, attempt to switch teaching days with other members of your team before requesting a substitute
 - c. If the previous two options are not viable, contact us for a substitute.

Unplanned Absences: In the event of an unexpected absence, please inform the office and your co-teacher as soon as possible. Efforts will be made to find a substitute within your team first and then from our larger group of volunteers. In the event of an **last-minute unexpected** absence when your co-teacher is also absent, please contact the office directly by phone (202-387-0023) and email by email (emadjlesi@washingtonenglish.org).

Volunteer Dismissal

If an issue or problem pertaining to a volunteer is brought to the attention a WEC staff member, the Deputy Director and/or Program Coordinator will discuss the issue directly with the volunteer and other concerned parties. Depending on the issue and the outcome of the incident, a volunteer may be asked to take specific actions to address the issue.

WEC reserves the right to dismiss any volunteer for any reason including:

- Cultural insensitivity
- Repeatedly arriving to class late or unprepared
- Not showing up at all without warning
- Being rude to students and/or co-teachers
- Inability to follow the assigned curriculum and lesson plans
- Inability to adhere to ACCESS teaching standards (see Appendix A)
- Inability to adhere to any WEC policies and procedures included in this manual

WEC is committed to providing volunteers, students and staff with an environment that is free from discrimination and unlawful harassment. Activities that will not be tolerated: 1) actions, words, jokes, or comments based on an individual's sex, race, ethnicity, age, religion, or any other legally protected characteristic; 2) unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. WEC encourages any affected party to bring any incidents of harassment to the immediate attention of the Deputy Director or the Executive Director via a written statement or to request an in-person meeting.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

In the event of inclement weather, updates will be posted to our website and social media accounts. When in doubt please call our main number, 202-387-2222, and/or check our website at www.washingtonenglish.org.

Washington English Center generally follows DC Public Schools for AM classes—if they are closed, it is likely we will not have daytime classes. Depending on the weather, we may also cancel evening classes. Please note however, that a two hour delay for DCPS typically **does not** change our schedule.

STUDENTS AT WASHINGTON ENGLISH CENTER

Our students range in age from 17 to 86. You will have students with very different life experiences and knowledge. This can be a great source of conversation topics as students share their thoughts at different stages of their lives.

Students come from over 90 different countries and speak a variety of languages. While the majority are Latino, our student population is increasingly diverse. Both our presence near many of the embassies and recent changes in immigration patterns have brought us students from Central and Eastern Europe, China, Southeast Asia, and Africa. This can lead to truly mixed classes and makes teaching a very rich experience, as you have lots of different traditions and experiences to draw on. As a teacher, you are likely to learn something new in every class.

Students have various levels of education. Almost half our students have less than 7 years of education. Some grew up in countries where there was no public school system while others had their education interrupted by war or civil unrest. Students may be barely literate in their native tongue; some may have basic literacy skills that are transferable to English. Some students are fluent in languages that use a different alphabet (Chinese, Amharic) which makes learning English even more complicated. Some students have studied English in their native countries and have the ability to read and write English, however, they may struggle with listening and speaking. WEC classes focus on reading, writing, speaking and listening. It is very important to remember the range of levels in your classroom when you are preparing a lesson plan (and keep it as simple as needed).

Students may have the type of jobs in which hours may change suddenly or where unexpected overtime is required. This may affect attendance and punctuality. There may be students on your class roster who never appear or who attend irregularly or arrive late. Some students drop out before the end of the term. **Most classes are smaller at the end of the term than at the beginning.** Don't take this personally. Students appreciate your efforts and may have to drop out for work-related reasons beyond their control. Students may transfer from one level to another or from one time (i.e. day program to evenings) to another. Please be sure that students know of this option if needed. Staff will also try to alert teachers of transfers as much as possible.

Students may be parents and have sick children or responsibilities for elders that can interfere with class attendance and punctuality. A teacher can help by reminding students that he/she can use their workbook/ CD at home to keep up with the class if they can't be here. Welcome students back when they return. **A welcoming and warm environment in which students feel they are learning ensures they will attend class as much as possible.**

Student Attendance

Student attendance must be tracked as part of our funding requirements. **Volunteers must record attendance DAILY.** While we encourage punctuality, we also respect that our students are adults and have outside obligations to family, work or otherwise. Students should be allowed to enter the classroom upon their arrival and should be integrated into class activities at that time. Students who are present for any portion of the class, should be marked present for that day.

Once you are assigned to teach a class, you will receive more information about our attendance management system and instructions for submitting attendance after each class.

Occasionally a student informs staff when they register that they might not be able to attend class on a regular basis due to their life situation. WEC will try to inform the teachers so that some extra support can be arranged for the student.

Student Class Change Policy

Class changes are allowed after a student has been attending class for at least 2 weeks and all teachers agree that a class change is warranted. To begin the class change process, teachers must talk to a student first. If a student agrees to a class change, teachers must bring the student to the Volunteer Office where the Director of Curriculum and Instruction will discuss the change with the student and administer a placement exam if necessary. If a student is uncertain whether a class change is right for them, they have the option to observe a class at a different level before making a decision. Class changes are not final until approved and processed by a WEC staff member.

Graduation

Graduation ceremonies are held in the auditorium or in individual classrooms (depending on availability) on the last day of classes each term. Graduation is very meaningful to our students and is a rewarding experience for volunteers; all students and volunteers are encouraged to attend. WEC provides paper products for a buffet lunch or dinner; students bring food to share with other students and teachers. WEC staff will include information about graduation in a weekly email near the end of the semester. Many students regard the meals they bring to graduation ceremonies as their way of thanking their teachers. Your attendance allows them to thank you for your service and the impact you have made in their lives.

Appendices

Appendix A: Washington English Center ACCESS Teaching Standards

Achievement (of goals): Each lesson should be focused on a specific goal or goals, which should answer the question “What can students do at the end of class that they couldn’t do before?” These goals, which can be found in your textbooks as well as on the syllabi, should be written on the board and communicated to students at the beginning of each lesson. All of the activities in class that day should contribute to the students’ achievement of the goal(s). Return to the goals at the end of the lesson and check them off. Ask a few students to demonstrate what they can do. This creates a nice sense of accomplishment for students.

Centered on Students: Research shows that adult ESL students learn best when they are given ample time to engage with their peers and practice new language (as opposed to listening to teacher-led presentations). With this in mind, it is essential that teachers aim to spend less than 30% of class time doing teacher-centered activities and 70% of class time engaged in **student→student interaction** in activities such as pair/group work, dialogues, hands-on practice activities, etc.

Corrective Feedback: Providing corrective feedback can be tricky but is a very important part of language learning. Some general guidelines for corrective feedback are:

- Focus on correcting errors that are relevant to the material you are covering in class that day or has been covered earlier in the semester.
- If many students are making the same error, take a few minutes to give a “mini-lesson” on the concept they are struggling with.
- Consider correcting errors in a variety of different ways, focusing on ways to elicit student-generated corrections (recasts, asking for clarification, prompting them to think about the correct form, making a questioning face until they self-correct, etc.)
- Remember, as a teacher you see giving feedback as neutral—it’s part of your job. However, students will often feel it as a criticism. Try to balance “correcting” with praising students for their effort or empathizing (e.g., “ohhh, anybody could make that mistake, but...”)

Explanation: Knowing that students will not comprehend everything teachers say, it is very helpful for students when teachers use alternative ways of explaining concepts and keep language input at an appropriate level for the students in your class. Some of the best ways to do this are modeling concepts and activities, using visual supports, giving plenty of examples, and presenting the same material in a variety of different ways. Also, keep your pace of speaking slowly and consider writing key concepts and instructions on the board for visual learners.

Sequencing: Good lessons follow a specific order of activities that allows students to gradually build towards achieving the goal of that day's lesson(s). Proper sequencing is helpful to students because it ensures that they are adequately challenged throughout the lesson without becoming overwhelmed. The lesson plans in your textbooks do a great job providing guidance on how each lesson should be structured. Generally, this sequence should be:

1. Warm-up/Review
2. Presentation
3. Practice I (less complex task done with teacher's guidance)
4. Practice II (more complex task done more independently from teacher)
5. Application (most complex task done independently from the teacher, as authentic or situational and relevant to students' real lives as possible)
6. Wrap-up/Evaluation

Silence and wait time: Language learners benefit tremendously from having ample time to process information in their second language. Native speakers tend to become uncomfortable after about 2 seconds of silence, whereas ESL students **may need up to 8 seconds** to respond to a question.

The concept of wait time also applies to assigning students independent practice: teachers should always be available to answer student questions, but it can make students anxious if a teacher approaches them to look at their work soon after assigning it.

Appendix B: Lesson Plan Template

Unit: Lesson:	Lesson Goal(s): <i>(write these on the board at the start of class!)</i>	
Stage	Procedure & Steps	Notes/Comments/ Materials needed
Warm-up (5-10 minutes)		
Presentation (10-20 minutes)		
Practice & Expansion (20-30 minutes)		
Application (15-20 minutes)		
Evaluation (5-10 minutes)		

Appendix C: Lesson Planning Worksheet

[Co-teaching Blog Entry](#)

Objective: Students will be able to...

Lesson and Page Numbers:

Warm-up/Review activity (*review relevant material and get students thinking about the topic*)

Student Behavior: _____

Teacher 1 responsible for: _____

Teacher 2 responsible for: _____

Presentation Idea (mini-lesson, introduce key concepts) *Knowing that students will not understand everything you say, how can you present the material in a way they will understand?*

Student Behavior: _____

Teacher 1 responsible for: _____

Teacher 2 responsible for: _____

Modeling Idea (demonstrate how to use the concept) *Knowing that students may not understand the written instructions, how will you model the activities in the book?*

Student Behavior: _____

Teacher 1 responsible for: _____

Teacher 2 responsible for: _____

Practice Activity *Students will do activities in textbooks for practice. Where can you look for additional practice activities?*

Student Behavior: _____

Teacher 1 responsible for: _____

Teacher 2 responsible for: _____

Evaluation/Wrap-up *Look back at your lesson objectives. How can you assess if students have met those objectives?*

Student Behavior: _____

Teacher 1 responsible for: _____

Teacher 2 responsible for: _____

Self-evaluation of lesson plan: (check all that apply)

- All of the activities in our lesson will help students accomplish the lesson goal.

- Both co-teachers are being utilized during our lesson in a way that is beneficial for the students.

- Our lesson includes a warm-up, presentation, practice, application activity and evaluation.

- Our lesson allows students time to practice new language with classmates and independently.

- At least 70% of the activities we have planned are student-centered

- Our lesson has an assessment activity that give us an opportunity to collect **objective** information to report to our teaching team about students' progress towards accomplishing today's goal.

Appendix D: AM Class Logs

Format

Logs should be entered into the body of your email- not included as an attachment.

Topic/ Lesson Identify topic/lesson very briefly

Attendance Provide attendance numbers so the team has an idea of attendance patterns. Some teachers prefer to list each student by name, but that is not required.

Class Overview Provide the topics you dealt with and the specific pages in the textbook and student workbook that you used. If you used other handouts/worksheets, describe them. If you did not cover all of the material in the syllabus, or you moved ahead, be sure to mention this.

Evaluation Let the next group know if you think the students got the material and can move on after a brief review. If you think many/most struggled with the material and need a more extensive review, note this.

Reflection/

Follow Up Any issues/observations that you see in the students and their learning, things that the team should know or be aware of, ask the next teacher to go over homework if you assigned homework, tutoring support, and etc.

Sample AM Class Log

Teachers: Laura and Ashley

Date: Feb 4

Topic/Lesson: Unit 2 Lesson F, CASAS Review

Attendance: 2 Students- Minadac, Nehemias

Class Overview: For warm-up, we reviewed numbers, including 1-20 and then added 30, 40, 50, and 100. We stressed pronunciation and the difference in syllable stress between teen numbers and -ty numbers, that is, thirTEEN versus THIRty, fourTEEN versus FORTy. We then played bingo with the numbers we removed, and both students had a chance to chose and call out numbers for the group.

We reviewed a CASAS prep worksheet that had many numbers. We went over the format of the multiple-choice questions.

We showed students a simplified schedule, and asked the questions outlined in the teacher's guide: What class? What teacher? What room? etc. We then did the same with the WEC brochure and then classes in the book on page 28. Students completed the multiple-choice questions with guidance from the teachers.

We completed the first activity on p. 29, and asked students to complete the word search as homework.

Evaluation: Stressing pronunciation, especially syllable stress, helped the students pronounce quite well and lots of repetition was helpful and needed. The CASAS prep questions and multiple-choice questions in the book are coming to the students as they practice the format. They recognized the classroom objects vocab quite well, especially considering we didn't spend much time on it.

Follow-up: We assigned as homework the word search on p. 29 and pp. 28-29 in the workbook.

November 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the Washington English Center Volunteer Manual and agree to abide by the policies and procedures described in the Manual.

Please initial each statement:

_____ I agree to regularly monitor my email for correspondence from WEC.

_____ I agree to take attendance in the ProActive database for every class I teach.

_____ I agree to send a class log to my teaching team by the time specified in the "Class Logs" section and agree to follow the format laid out in the appendices.

_____ I agree to follow the course syllabus I was given and the lesson plans provided in the teacher's version of the textbook for my class.

_____ I agree to follow the ACCESS Teaching Standards.

_____ I agree to be observed by staff on a regular basis and am receptive to any feedback they may provide.

_____ I agree to a volunteer commitment of 11-12 weeks without exceeding 2 absences.

_____ I agree to keep any and all student information found in the ProActive database confidential in order to respect the privacy of Washington English Center students.

_____ I agree that pictures taken at training, events, or in the Washington English Center classroom, can be used by the organization for promotional purposes.

Volunteer Name

Volunteer Signature

Date

Please print, initial, and sign this page and return it to Deputy Director, Liz Madjlesi or Program Coordinator, Laura Lee Randolph before your first day of class.