



Ask Chris

This month Chris Turner answers a question about job skills and the Learn to Earn program.

My student needs help developing job skills. We don't have time in our lessons to do this. Do you have any suggestions?

~ Overloaded Tutor

Many students need extra help learning a whole array of skills beyond reading and writing. In fact, the National Institute of Literacy, defines literacy very broadly to include communication skills, interpersonal skills, decision-making skills and lifelong learning skills. In order to help students work on some of these skills, without taking up valuable lesson time, we have started an exciting new project called Learn to Earn.

Just this week, for example, one of our students told me how she had to turn down a receptionist's job that would have paid \$9.00 an hour. Not only was this job better paid than the minimum wage jobs she was used to, but she thought it wouldn't wear her out as much so that when she came home in the evenings she would be able to do more with her children. Unfortunately, she was frightened that her literacy skills weren't strong enough to be able to take telephone messages. With the Learn to Earn project, we will not only help people to develop the practical skills they need to get ahead—everything from how to take a telephone message to how to answer difficult interview questions—but even more importantly, we will be helping them learn HOW to learn.

Students can participate at several levels, working independently, working with their literacy tutor and/or working with an additional job mentor. To begin with, students fill out a self-assessment of their skills. Then in consultation with one of the Learn to Earn volunteers, they set some specific short-term goals. We will provide tools to help them meet their goals, either with their tutor or with a job mentor. For example, if a student needs to work on time management, we can provide calendars, tips and checklists.

Starting in April, students will have an opportunity to work in small groups, with job mentors. This will give them a chance to receive encouragement from each other as well as to receive expert guidance. We have some great new material, including an excellent video series, that we think will be both motivating and exciting for students to use.

For students and tutors who do not have the time to come to extra sessions, we will also be experimenting with using email to provide additional materials to help students meet their job-related goals. If your student wants to improve his or her job prospects, encourage them to consider participating. Give me or Yasmin Shah a call at 251-0911 if you want to find out more.