



# LITERACY MATTERS

JANUARY 2021



Literacy Matters is a recurring publication of Literacy Nassau, Inc.

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## REFLECTIONS ON VIRTUAL LEARNING

(submitted by Kate Quijano)

It's hard to believe that we have been providing virtual instruction for eight months now. I remember when I thought it would be a quick two weeks and then back to normal. That has not been the case and we have learned so much about working with our students remotely in that time. Our dedicated tutors didn't give up when we had to close our physical doors. They continued working with students, reaching out to other tutors for support, and refining their craft of teaching.

Virtual instruction caused us to change our methods while still providing the best instruction we could for our students. Our registrations are now one on one Zoom appointments with a Literacy Nassau staff member who interviews the student and places them in the appropriate level class. Tutors reach out to their classes using e-mail, phone calls, and text messages. Most also meet virtually, using Zoom. Instead of breaking up into partnerships or small groups in the classroom, the break out feature on Zoom has been very effective in providing grouping opportunities. We have also begun offering "Conversation Classes" since many students said they were stuck at home and didn't have many opportunities to just practice speaking English with others. The con-

versation tutors meet weekly with their small groups and facilitate an open-ended conversation and a chance to practice using the skills they are learning in their regular ELL classes.

Tutors are still making connections and getting to know their students. Based on suggestions from students and tutors, we are also starting to offer workshops/webinars on specific topics students have interest in. We are currently offering a Health Literacy and a Workplace Literacy workshop run by volunteer tutors, as well as a series of Nutrition workshops run by Cornell Cooperative Extension.

We asked some of our tutors why it was important to them to continue teaching virtually and to share some of their experiences. Here are some highlights of our current virtual programs:

"I have been working with my student, a 19-year-old girl, throughout the pandemic over the phone. It had never occurred to me to do this. I mail her copies of all of the materials that we are using and twice a week for one and a half hours we do our reading exactly the same way we did when we met in person. We do writing exercises also. I give her sentences to write, and when she completes them, she takes a picture of her work and sends it to me over

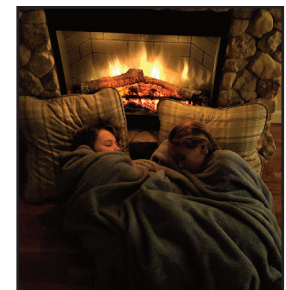
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## THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

I'm sure I am not the only one who was overjoyed to see 2020 finally come to a close. The new year brings us a unique gift: the chance to take stock of who we are and what we've got and decide what changes we'd like to make. These changes come in the form of resolutions: promises that demand our integrity. Sadly, we often abandon these resolutions by the second or third week of the year. In doing so, we also abandon our integrity. Think about it: you would really think twice before breaking a promise to a friend, a co-worker, or a family member. But we break promises to ourselves like it's nothing. If 2020 has taught us anything, it's the importance of taking care of ourselves. Promises to eat healthier or get a physical or to make it a point to exercise could be the difference between life and death, as we've learned. So this year, make yourself a priority and think long and hard about your New Year's resolutions. Then, challenge yourself to have the integrity to keep them.

*Karen* 😊



In the wee hours before the start of the new year, my girls curled up by the fire and fell asleep. It was a quiet, somber way to end a long and difficult year.



## REFLECTIONS ON VIRTUAL LEARNING (CONT'D)

over the phone so I can check it. She recently went to Virginia for two months to visit a relative and we didn't miss even one session. I am learning how to be a remote tutor and am enjoying this new skill."

### Janet Baram (Basic Literacy Tutor)

"One of my students, who is from Colombia, went back to Colombia to have dental work done. (She determined it would be more cost effective.) For the past few weeks, she has been Zooming into class from her home in Colombia."

### Daniel Henick (ELL level 3 Tutor)

"Our adult Basic Literacy class has been powering through the Covid-19 lockdown as we've been meeting virtually since March when the Elmont Library closed to the public. Some of the members of our group had limited or no access to a computer and spotty cell service which made ZOOM too great a challenge. So, prior to each class we would send the materials out for the learners to print or view on their phones as they called into a conference call-in line for each class. Our adult learners have an amazing, positive spirit and work very hard during class and also practice independently. In July, the group requested that we add a 45-minute mini-session in addition to our weekly 90-minute session. We are so proud of the great progress they are making. Of course, there are challenges with a 90-minute class on a smartphone, but we've established routines and they have awesome stamina.

During this pandemic, we've become a consistent part of each other's lives and we enjoy each other and have grown closer. When we recently reflected on our remote classes during lockdown, we realized that we have spent so much more time together virtually than we ever had in-person and we all look forward to the time when we are all back together at the Elmont Library. In our most recent class, we read 'The Drum', a Tale from India, and the moral of the tale is that when you are kind your good deeds come back to you. It seemed poignant for so many reasons but most importantly because the learners are so kind with each other, and we feel so blessed to have these wonderful people in our lives.

Here are reflections from some of the learners in our group:

**Gail M.:** 'I thought it was going to be really difficult when we tried our phone session the first week. But we found out it actually became easier by each class we had. And because we already knew

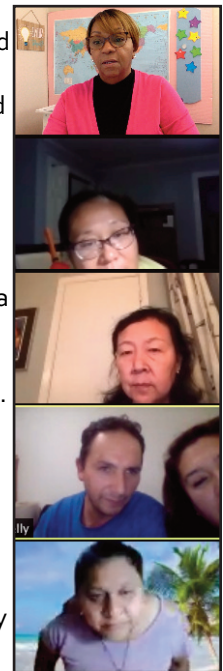
each other it worked out okay. For me, I think having class at home has made it even easier because I have my kids to take to different places.'

**Sara F.:** 'For me, it's been a little more difficult on the phone because sometimes it's hard to hear some of the words and sounds when we do our phonics practice. And it's hard sometimes when we are reading, and our phone drops out and we have to call back! But I am really happy we are meeting two times a week and I feel like I am getting better and better.'


**Stephanie N.:** 'It has been a little harder on the phone and I really would like class to be in-person. But I still feel that it is still helping us all read better.'"

### Diane and Mark Vineis (Basic Literacy Tutors)

"It was important to continue teaching because my students are always in the process of working on their goals. I have the best students. They are excited about coming to my virtual classroom. I can tell because they are always smiling and showing interest in being in class. I love to teach adult learners because they are inspired by their goals and aspirations. At the beginning of class, I asked each student this question, 'Why do you want to learn English?' All of them answered the question the same way. But, in different ways: 'I want to get my first job in America.' Or, 'I am studying English because I have to take an exam.' Or, 'I have been working in the frozen food department since I came to this country 5 years ago, and I want a job in a warm place.' Or, 'I need help completing job applications and to speak properly at an interview.' And many more answers like these. One of Malcolm Knowles' theory on adult learning, is 'Readiness to Learn – Many adults have reached a point in which they see the value of education and are ready to be serious about and focused on learning' (Andragogy-Adult Learning Theory, Knowles). My students are showing up every week. And I am also glad to help them in their endeavors."



**Evelyn Chevalier-Richards (ELL level 1 Tutor) and her ZOOM class pictured above**



### Warm Birthday Wishes!

Leslie Arluck – Mildred Aronson  
Jonathan Baker – Irene Baydarian  
Debbie Buglisi – Jill Ditchik – Frank Dorf  
Connie Egelman – Josephine Feldman  
Marleen Fenton – Dorita Gibson – Janet Gordon – Samantha Gordon  
Latoyra Graves – Mara Jacobowitz – Ruthann Kennedy  
Jan Kerr – Carol Kessler – Emma LaPrince – David Leibenhaut  
Robin Lovell – Rose Lowe – Kiana Mahabadi – Michelle Malone  
Michael Marrin – Roseann Martz – Marcia Mayer  
Christine Merola – Harriet Morosoff – Marion Polizzi  
Honey Prager – Alice Scharf – Patricia Searby – Paula Silverman  
Addy Skolnick – Dara Sullivan – Janet Trajbar – Nina Wachsman  
Kourtnee Wallace – Kailey White – Gerard Wisla



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## READING WITH NANA

(submitted by Iris Grover, Board Member)

My daughter Lauren, her husband Pat, and their son Hunter live in Boston. In September, Lauren asked me if I would like to read with Hunter on Facetime once a week. I said, "Sure, how about twice a week?" Hunter is 7 and in second grade, bright, knowledgeable, boisterous, and fun, and we have a close relationship. He doesn't need help learning to read - he's reading Harry Potter on his own - but reading together would be fun, and as a retired reading teacher I could help him learn new words and use advanced comprehension skills such as critical thinking. Most important, he and I would get to spend time together and his parents, who are both working from home, could have some quiet, uninterrupted time to work.



Although Lauren and I thought we'd begin with the Percy Jackson series, Hunter decided on a huge book about dogs, because he wants to find the perfect pet. We have also been sharing riddles and brain teasers, which make us laugh and also help with memory, word usage, and lateral thinking. In Hunter's words:

"Every Monday and Thursday I do Facetime with Nanny. The first thing we do is usually different each time, and then we tell riddles and brain teasers to each other. Then we read a book together. We got the same book, *The Complete Dog Breed Book*, so we can take turns reading each page. It tells about each dog's personality, its coat type and color, its origin, and what kennel club it belongs to. I'm learning a lot about dogs and a lot of new words.

After that we usually get into a conversation about something different. And all that is why I really love Nanny time! Here are some of my favorite riddles and brain teasers:

1-Imagine you're in a tiny rowboat in the middle of the ocean, far from any land, surrounded by hungry sharks. What do you do?

Answer: Stop imagining!

2-What are you doing by jumping off a cliff without a parachute?

Answer: Jumping to a conclusion.

3-Lynn likes grapes, not potatoes, squash, not lettuce, peas, not onions. Following the same rule, does she like pumpkins or apples?

Answer: Pumpkins. Lynn only likes things that grow on vines.

4-You're in an old broken down mansion with no plumbing or electricity. Would you enter a room with a flaming inferno, one with an electric chair you must sit on, or one with an angry silverback gorilla that has you as its target?

Answer: The electric chair - there's no electricity in the mansion!

5-If a chicken says all chickens are liars, is the chicken telling the truth?

Answer: Chickens can't talk!"

## MY PATH TO ORTON-GILLINGHAM

(submitted by Melissa Sansobrina)

Ten years ago, I could not have predicted the paths that life would take me on. For most of my adult life I was a scientist, having received my PhD in Biological Sciences in 2007, and working in cancer research labs from 1999-2010. I thought I would be a lab scientist forever but, in 2010, I had to put my career on hold to care for the unexpected medical needs of my (then) infant daughter.



Thankfully, my daughter's medical condition improved, but during elementary school it became clear that her reading skills were significantly lagging behind her peers. When school interventions failed to help her, I stepped back into the role of "researcher" and found a private tutor that specialized in the Orton-Gillingham methodology. From my first meeting with the tutor I was certain that OG techniques could help my daughter. The systematic, explicit, and evidence-based methods made perfect sense to the scientist within me. I became a "true believer" in Orton-Gillingham almost immediately and sought to become OG-trained myself.

In 2019 I was privileged to be accepted into Literacy Nassau's AOGPE Associate-Level Training Program, and I became certified by the Academy in November 2020. The training itself has been rewarding on many levels. It is wonderful to now be able to understand the English language in a systematic way, and impart that knowledge to students. It is an honor to work with children and help them to with their reading and spelling challenges.

Surprisingly, OG training has taught me a great deal about patience, too. Our world is so focused on getting to the next thing that we very often rush through the basics. The direct and systematic nature of OG requires that instruction is given one step at a time, and reinforces that the best learning exists in an environment that allows for careful practice and continual review. These are lessons I try to be mindful of in other aspects of my life, too.

Since my certification, I have been working as a tutor for Literacy Nassau. My favorite part of being an OG tutor is seeing the look of happiness on a student's face when they "get it". Knowing that our work together has brought a child confidence and happiness is the greatest reward of all! Being an OG tutor may not have been the path I thought I would take a decade ago but, now that I am here, it is the only place I want to be.







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# Literacy Nassau's Book Review Contest

This pandemic has provided more time than ever for reading and we want to know which great reads you have uncovered during quarantine!

Submit a review of your favorite book and your entry will be submitted in a raffle to win an Amazon Fire Stick!  
The winner will be chosen randomly.

**Deadline is: January 31st**

Email your entry to:  
[mail@literacynassau.org](mailto:mail@literacynassau.org)

Reviews may be published in next month's newsletter.



NEW YEAR

# 2021

MY RESOLUTIONS ARE:

Karen: In my Master's program, I have written 3 novels in the past 18 months. This year, I would like to find an agent so that I can (hopefully) become a published author.

Kate: I am getting ready to move, so I want to plan ahead for where everything will go in the new house and to pack in a very organized way.

Kim: I always enjoyed being on the go, but the time at home taught me how to appreciate being still. I plan to enjoy life with the ones I love by being more present.

Rena: To get organized! We have all been home a lot, and so the house gets messy and I want to take time to make it more pleasing and organized.

Anne-Marie: I would like to spend more time reading and enjoying other hobbies.

Jessica: This year, I plan to eat healthy and be more active.



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