



LITERACY MATTERS

MARCH 2018

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



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THIS IS ONLY A TEST

(submitted by Sara Izquierdo)

Spring is post-testing season for our tiny group and on-on-one students. For us, this means running around to all of the libraries in our region, meeting students and tutors that we've only known through e-mail, updating records and filling out reports. We need to make sure every student is tested and that the "Post Test" number in our data system reflects that. We need to measure how many students make "Educational Gain" and ensure that our numbers are living up to what we laid out in our grant applications. Around the office, post-testing is a numbers game.

In anticipation of post-test season, I e-mailed tutors last week to let them know I would be scheduling tests soon. The response I got reminded me that for students and tutors, post-testing is not a numbers game. You are nervous for your students and, like proud parents, want to show off what they've learned and what you've taught. Your students are feeling pressure to validate the work they've done, they don't want to disappoint you. They feel judged.

So I think we need to get on the same page when it comes to post testing. We know you and your students are working hard. Some will score higher on their test than they did last time, some will not. Learning a language is a slow process, and progress takes time. That said, we want to make a difference and testing is one way to measure that difference. So understand that as an organization, we need to show we are making progress and meeting goals. Every one of our hundreds of students contributes to that progress in the big picture.

Here's a little information about the test and how to prepare. Most of our students take a standardized test called the Best Plus 2.0. This is the description of the test from their website: "BEST Plus 2.0 is an individually administered, face-to-face oral interview designed to assess the English language proficiency of adult English language learners in the United States." Students are asked a number of questions about themselves, so they need to know their personal information, question words, and practice listening. They are also asked questions about picture prompts, so that is something that you can work on so they get used to the format, although you can't work on the specific content. Most importantly, make sure you work on asking and answering questions. Any work on speaking and listening that you do together is going to help prepare for the test.

Sometime soon your Literacy Specialist will be calling you or your student has already been tested. Either way, this is only a test you and your students are doing great work.

THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

This week, my uncle passed away. He suffered from debilitating dementia, which initially presented itself neurologically in his speech. He slowly lost his capacity to turn thoughts into words. My aunt told me that after he passed, she found an unopened note tucked into his Navy uniform that he wrote for her years ago. It was intended to be read in the case of his death, and it brought her such joy to read his thoughts and to hear him share his love for her one last time.

It makes you think about the power of words. Words enable us to share our thoughts, offer comfort to each other, or provide important information. Too often, we are careless with our words. We say things we don't mean or take for granted the things we mean to say and put off saying them at all. This month, I challenge you to pay closer attention to your words. Choose them wisely. Be intentional about how you use them. Say things that will make your corner of the world a happier, brighter place, because believe me, without words, darkness ensues.



Pictured above, my beloved Uncle Jesse holds his grand-niece (my daughter, Haley) during their first Christmas together. May he rest in peace.

Karen



A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF A LITERACY NASSAU STAFFER

(submitted by Kelly Siry)

When meeting new people I am often asked the typical question, "What do you do?" After being asked that question dozens of times, I've realized that my answer always varies. It usually starts off with, "I work at a non-profit organization called Literacy Nassau," and then goes off in all sorts of directions from there. There is no streamlined response I can give because working at Literacy Nassau I wear so many different hats, none of which is more important than the next. So I decided to give each of you a "snap shot" of what a typical week in the life of a Literacy Nassau staff member looks like.

Monday:

Morning: I met with Anabel to fill out N-400 application. She is a 74 year old woman from Haiti who is looking for help becoming a United States citizen. After many years living in the U.S. she has decided to apply, and we can help her - all at no cost.

Afternoon: I went to the library to post-test an SGIB class. At post-testing we are able to ascertain how much progress our students have made and what their next steps in our program should be. It also gives us a chance to get to know our students and help them set goals for their future.

Tuesday:

Morning: I met Richard at the soup kitchen to register for our program. Often times we travel near and far and to unexpected places to enroll new students. In one such case, I traveled to a soup kitchen to meet with a potential Basic Literacy student who also happens to be homeless.

Afternoon: I spent time fundraising. Some days I spend huge chunks of time reaching out to local businesses, corporations and individuals to ask them for support and donations to Literacy Nassau. I love telling people about the wide variety of services we offer our patrons and that any type of support can truly change a life.

Evening: I had a Tutor Training Workshop. Our staff strives to offer volunteer trainings at times that are convenient for all our volunteers. We schedule nights and weekends each quarter. At these trainings, potential volunteers meet with knowledgeable staff members who guide them through all of our volunteer training opportunities.

Wednesday:

Morning: Today I visited a Next Chapter Book Club. We try to make site visits to all of our classes and clubs on a regular basis. When visiting a Next Chapter Book Club, I love to chat with the members and follow along with them as they read.

Afternoon: I spent the afternoon scheduling Tutor Training Workshops and In-Service Trainings for the upcoming Spring Program Guide. Scheduling is a tremendously important skill for a Literacy Nassau staffer. It is quite a challenge juggling so many different kinds of tasks throughout the week, and since each one requires my full attention, "multi-tasking" is less likely. We spend a lot of time reaching out to libraries throughout the community to schedule classes and tutoring sessions. We also make arrangements for students and tutors to meet. Since we serve over 1,000 students and almost 600 tutors, trying to marry everyone's schedule is like trying to solve a jigsaw puzzle.

Thursday:

Morning: Today, I substitute taught an ONA Advanced Class (All of our advanced classes are taught by staff.)

Afternoon: I observed one of Karen's Orton Gillingham lessons. (Some of our staff members are pursuing their OG certification. On top of readings, lesson planning, and coursework those staff members also privately tutor children with dyslexia. I am considering pursuing this in the future.)

Friday:

Morning: I attended a staff meeting. (At least once a month all of the Literacy Nassau staff meet to discuss ways to make our program bigger and better. We also use these meetings to plan events we hold throughout the year.)

Afternoon: I hosted a new student registration at the Library. (Every 3 months we hold registrations throughout Nassau County to give new students the chance to enter our program.)

Evening: I coordinated and chaperoned a trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. We run several educational trips per year for our students.

These are just a few examples of things we do in a typical week. The best part of working at Literacy Nassau is that no two weeks are ever the same! We are constantly meeting new people whether it is students, tutors, librarians or donors.



Students at a recent Nutritional workshop!



A trip to the Botanical Gardens with our ONA students!

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: RAQUEL MARTINEZ

(submitted by tutor Jeffrey Miller)

Raquel Martinez recently celebrated her fourth anniversary in the United States. She has a daughter and a son who also live in the New York area. She communicates frequently with her mother, sisters, and brother. They still live in Venezuela. Venezuela was once a rich country but now 80% of the population live at or below the poverty line. Raquel has been my student since May of last year.

Q- Raquel, in the last eight months your English reading level has advanced 1 and a half years. What drives you to work so hard in class, and to do the best job you can do on all your homework assignments?

A- I want to learn English to be a member of the community and because I will have the opportunity to be a citizen. I also love the idea of helping not only people who speak my language, but all Americans. I want my future grandchildren to be Americans and I must show them the whole American experience. Because I am going to be a citizen, I must know American history very well.

Q- How has your study of English in the tutoring program of Literacy Nassau helped you land a large promotion at work?

A- I feel that the tutoring program was enough to give me the necessary edge to get the job.

Q- I understand that recently you were approached at the West Hempstead Library to teach Spanish classes. Why do you feel a desire to do that?

A- I am teaching a Spanish conversation class. (I am also taking a citizenship class online). For me, it is like returning what I am learning and also I use teaching this class to practice my English with the students.

Jeffrey Miller has been a tutor for many years. He's always looking for new materials to improve upon his lessons and he tutors in our office weekly. Thank you for your commitment!

In-Service Trainings @ Literacy Nassau
Call your Literacy Specialist at (516) 867-3580 or register online at www.literacynassau.org/current-volunteers

Writing Activities for Various Learning Levels
Ideas and resources for fun informal writing activities
Monday, February 26 from 10:00am- 12:00pm

PLEASE REMIND YOUR STUDENTS - CITIZENSHIP DRIVES
Monday, March 12 from 10:00am-4:00pm at Shelter Rock Library/Albertson. Appointment required. Call Kelly Siry at (516) 867-3580 x21

Tuesday, March 27 from 1:00-7:00pm at Literacy Nassau in Freeport. Appointment required. Call Cindy Cabrera at (516) 867-3580 x15

RESOURCE CORNER: VOA LEARNING ENGLISH

(submitted by Cindy Cabrera)

Providing an authentic language experience for your student is vital in their English language learning process. Many times we find our students practicing only when they come in for their session. There are so many videos, TV shows and movies that you can choose from for your student to watch and listen to the English language. This is a great additional resource that will engage your student and provide them another opportunity to learn English.

One of my most utilized online tools is VOA Learning English. I recommend looking at the section called "Let's Learn English" which I use most often. Within this section there are various lessons that display the lives of young Americans and it includes instructions for speaking, vocabulary, and writing. They also provide printable worksheets, assessments, and lesson plans for the teacher.

Another section of this website is "Current News Articles." This area is divided into three levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. The articles highlight vocabulary words for each different level. They also have video clips that go along with the article; this is a helpful tool because it reinforces the vocabulary in the article and the student can hear it pronounced properly.

The website also includes a section called the VOA Learning English Word Book which you may download for free. This goes along with the videos and articles on the site. They also provide theme videos and articles such as the U.S. Constitution or People in America. I highly recommend that you explore this wonderful website and have your student use it to practice their English everyday.

Visit learningenglish.voanews.com



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Literacy Nassau's not the only one celebrating a birthday! Warm wishes to the following tutors, born in March:

Alissa Belize – Marilyn Benson – Joan Borruso – Lyn Burros – Arianna Caradonna – Claire Deroche – Linda Diamond – Nancy Doyle – Eleanor Feingold – Alan Freeman – Charlotte Gabriele – Mary Greenfield – Carol Horvat – Dilia Kamensky – Margaret Kemp – Robert Lanzisera – MaryLou Laurie – Dena Lempert – Maureen Lonergan – Mindy Mangot – Harri Meyers – Joyce Mongitore – Deborah Monteko – Carol Morris – Ronnie Packer – Aruna Paingankar – Ammu Paulose – Louis Pulido – Lauren Quinn – Janice Raven – Charlene Serenita – Sophia Shapiro – Mary Smith – Vickie Stanco – Gladys Stuart – Peter Walsh – Carolyn Zaremba – Kathleen Zuar



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Challenge 2018

\$50 per tutor (special pricing)

Thursday, March 15th
Chateau Briand, Carle Place
6:00pm - 9:00pm

To attend contact Karen at
kmicciche@literacynassau.org
or register online at
www.literacynassau.org

(UN)SCRABBLE 2018 TICKET CONTEST

(submitted by Kim Nau)

If you are reading this, you are probably obsessed with anything related to literacy, as are we. The staff at Literacy Nassau loves books and word puzzles. We are having a word scramble contest and the winner will receive one free ticket to our annual unSCRABBLE gala on March 15, 2018 at the Chateau Briand.

Here is a clue: When you unscramble the two-word phrase below, you will have the key to achieving success with almost any student:

rysetulnsomi icanhget

Please e-mail knau@literacynassau.org with your answer to the word scramble. If we have multiple winners, we will pull the winning name at random. Please email your response to me March 8th. The winner will be notified via email.

Remember, even if your not a winner, as we celebrate our 50th anniversary you and you're guests are invited to come to (un)Scrabble for \$50 a ticket. Don't miss your opportunity to come play a fun twist on this classic game and win one of 26 amazing raffle basket filled with prizes.

Good luck and we hope to see you there!