



Workforce Development Board
County of Middlesex

LITERACY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 12, 2019
550 Jersey Avenue
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
9:30 a.m.

Attendance

Present: Gloria Aftanski, Roseann Bucciarelli, Ana Class-Rivera, Jill D'Amico, Jasmina Dizdarevic, Myrna Garcia, Jessica Hudson, & Melissa Bernstein (Member Alternate)

Staff & Guests: Shamara Gatling-Davila; Hsien-min Chen & Kavita Pandey

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 9:40am. Gloria asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Review of Minutes from December 11, 2018 Meeting

Ana made the motion and Roseann seconded the motion to approve minutes. The minutes are to be filed as is.

Update from Libraries/Literacy Agencies

Jill from South Brunswick Public Library started the programs in mid-January and they will continue through the end of April/beginning of May. The classes are designed to run like semesters and will be a total of 64 hours of instruction; 4.5 hours a week. A total of 56 participants were registered. There were no resident restrictions for who could sign-up. Very basic information was used to register (name and address). The retention has been ok. About ten people did not return. The new semester will start in May and most likely end in August. Registration for that semester will start soon. The retention is expected to be lower due to school being out and parents not having childcare. Soft skills workshops will start in May as well which will include: Networking, business presentations, resume building and career classes. The soft skills workshops are already offered at the library, but in the future they will be geared more for the participants in the semester programs. If the grant is available again in the future, it would be ideal to offer the programs on the school year schedule.

Jessica from New Brunswick Public Library reported New Brunswick is on their 2nd cycle. They run 4 cycles a year and each cycle is between 6 and 8 weeks. English for Beginners class has been extended to 8 weeks. There are currently three different programs under the ESL Umbrella of Programs: English Conversation Group (which started in January) Intermediate/Advanced Group, English for Beginners and English Conversation Café (open to all levels of ESL). English for Beginners has 5 classes per week. A total of 217 participants has attended at least 1 class since the beginning of the grant. English for

Beginners currently has 53 participants attend at least one session. The English Conversation Group has 18 participants to attend at least one session and the English Conversation Café has 52 participants attend at least one session. Text messages are sent to all participants the day before class as a reminder.

Middlesex County College is in the middle of the Academic Semester and the Continuing Education Semester. Academic ESL program is currently on Spring Break. In the non-credit area, the college is offering ESL I, II, and III which are beginner and intermediate through the more advanced levels of vocabulary and word building, conversational English, and pronunciation. Through the Literacy Grant, the college is offering ESL Intermediate and Adult Basic Skills, which are both free. Pre-Academic ESL is the bridge between taking ESL for personal or professional enrichment and the ESL academic programs. This semester the programs are being offered at the Edison Campus. There is a morning and night session offered 4-days a week for the semester. There are about 25 people in that program. The non-credit ESL programs are at capacity. New cycles start every month and a half so people are not waiting too long to start. Criteria for the non-credit programs is a basic placement test to target the level the person should start. For the pre-academic program, they take the ESL placement test just as any other college student. The test scores determine placement in pre-academic or college program. If the scores are extremely low, they are placed in the non-credit program.

Literacy NJ has expanded their program to add more classes in the office. Unfortunately, the Edison location fell through this year. To make up for that location, classes are held, in the morning, four days a week in the office which is attached to the Menlo Park Mall. Beginning and intermediate classes are now offered at the office. The conversational classes are still offered at the various libraries in the county. There is an upcoming program for tutor training. Tutor training will have a hybrid model this year. Ten hours of the training will be in person and some will be online at the Metuchen library. The trainings will be held on Thursday April 4, 11, 18, and 25 from 6-8:30pm. Literacy NJ is hosting a literacy conference on April 27th at the College of NJ to celebrate its 40th Anniversary. NJALL Conference is May 10th at Brookdale Community College.

Feedback Regarding Google Doc Directory

Jasmina is asking for feedback and suggestions from those that have started using the google doc. Roseann is requesting additional lines for her tab. It might be helpful to have a reminder calendar in the google docs to keep everyone updated on events. Jasmina will send the folder for event flyers to be uploaded.

Updates about V.I.T.A (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)

Gloria distributed fliers in both English and Spanish to advertise the VITA program. United Way currently has 88 tax preparer volunteers. The goal with the IRS is to complete 2,300 federal tax returns. For the past 10 years only the federal returns have been accounted for because that is what the IRS

counts. People that have their federal taxes completed also have their state tax completed so the numbers are practically doubled. The refunds have also increased. There are new sites in Perth Amboy due to wanting to increase the number of low income residents receiving free tax preparation. A couple of events were held at the Perth Amboy Adult High School, Community Childcare Solutions, the Perth Amboy Community Center. There has been an increase in the amount of drop-off returns. The Tax-A-Thon that was held in February resulted in about 75 tax returns being completed.

Ideas on Ways to Implement Literacy Strategic Plan Goal #1

Goal #1 is focused on meeting the unmet needs of those in the county. One unmet need is services for undocumented people in the county. United Way, New Labor, Unity Square, Sacred Heart Church, the public libraries along with Puerto Rican Action Board and Jewish Renaissance Foundation are a few of the local agencies that do not require citizenship documentation to serve the community. United Way's Nurse Family Partnership Program has had issues due to various contributing factors.

New or Old Business

Robert Masterson is still running the instructor led computer training. The final cycle is June 10, 2019. He teaches computer training and basic computer literacy through Microsoft Word and Excel. The sessions are: Three weeks, Monday through Friday, 9am to 1:15pm.

The United Way is hosting an Immigration Conference on April 30, 2019, at Middlesex County College Edison location. The presenters are being finalized. So far on the itinerary is the Regional Director for the US Citizenship and Immigration Services, I.C.E, Legal Services of NJ, the American Friends Service Committee, the Board of Social Services, Churches Improving Communities, and the NJ Attorney General. A flier with details on how to register for the conference will be sent out at a later date.

Adjournment

Meeting Adjourned.

<p>NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2019 – 9:30AM ROOM G 550 JERSEY AVENUE, NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ 08901</p>
