

# LITERACY MATTERS

JUNE 2016

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



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## Our Staff Team

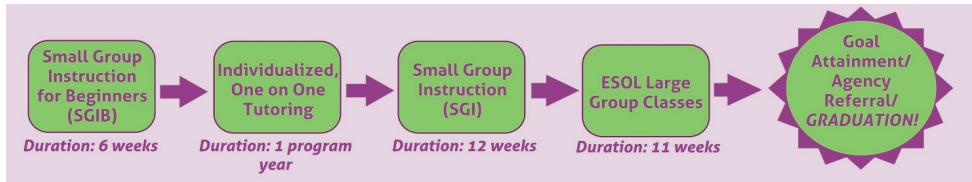
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## GOING OUTSIDE THE COMFORT ZONE

With the month of June comes the end of the school year. Here at Literacy Nassau, it means the end of post-test season. With the student path established last fall (see graphic below), we need to be intentional about improving the language skills of our English language learners.



Change often presents great opportunity and opens doors to growth for both tutor and student. It also enables Literacy Nassau and its tutors to provide services to as many of the highest needs students as we can. This month, we thought we would give you an inside look at the process from the perspective of some of our staff members.



**Umama:** A few years ago, when I started learning Spanish, I heard a quote, "Do one thing that scares you every day." It continues to resonate with me and attests to the idea that we need to go outside of our comfort zone in learning a new language. My fear was talking to people and making mistakes. Luckily, I had a friend who was willing to help me for free. I worked with him on and off for about a year, practicing whatever I learned in my everyday life. I would look up words every day and try to use them. I would tell people to repeat or slow down when I didn't understand. He encouraged me by giving me resources and I would add my own strategies to help me learn better. Eventually, I noticed that I was starting to go out on my own and didn't need to talk to him as often as I thought I did. We need to encourage adult learners to accept all those nerves and feelings of fear and use that fear as a motivator to help themselves learn.



**Alison:** One of the most difficult conversations I had with my student was explaining that I had taken her as far as I could. While she had partially achieved her goal by working in the classroom as a paraprofessional, she still yearned to lead her own class here in the U.S. as she had done in India. In her case, we worked together to help her locate resources through the UFT to help her prepare for the teaching certification exams. While I no longer actively tutor my student, I have made the commitment to still be there for her as a resource, and it's always fun to see her! (cont'd. page 2)

## THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

Kids grow up so fast. I remember cradling my 4-year old, Haley, as an infant, feeling like I would be frozen in that moment in time forever. (Maybe it was the sleep deprivation!) Now, all of a sudden, my baby is negotiating big girl stuff, and honestly, I don't like it one bit.

We bike a lot as a family. We've gotten into this groove where Chris takes Haley in a trailer on his bike and I take Julianne in a trailer on mine - and we go for miles. The kidshave always loved it - until recently. For her 4th birthday, Haley got it in her mind that she needed a bike with training wheels. I thought, "She's 4! That's way too little for a big bike like that. She's still so tiny. She can't be ready." Chris (who is often the voice of reason in our house) told me to take a good, long look at her. Haley's really tall for her age, and she's coordinated. When I saw her in the bike shop doing laps around the aisles like a natural, I realized: I was the one who wasn't ready, not Haley. What a shame it would have been if I had held her back because I was more comfortable keeping her close.

Keep that in mind when we call you to tell you your student is ready to move on to the next level. Just because it's comfortable in the bike trailer, doesn't mean you should stay there forever.

*Karen*



Haley quickly became an avid bike rider, once I was willing to embrace the notion that she was actually ready for her first big girl bicycle.



## GOING OUTSIDE THE COMFORT ZONE (CONT'D.)



**Ocaria:** There comes a time in our language acquisition that we go from learning new words and phrases to actually using them and incorporating them into everyday conversation. As a 1-to-1 tutor, you have become so comfortable with your student and worked hard to build a rapport based on trust. Because of this trust and level of comfort, it could prevent the student once again to step outside of their comfort zone and speak to others and practice! As the manager of the small group program, I want to reassure the 1-to-1 tutors that in the small group, students get that opportunity to practice all that they've learned from you. Students often tell me how happy they are that they can practice with their peers and listen to different accents and pronunciations. After the 10-week program, they move onto learning more intensive grammar, group work and projects in our ELL classroom instruction. This gives them the skills they need to pursue other educational opportunities outside of Literacy Nassau. Let's keep contributing to this positive cycle of growth!



**Barbara:** Adult language learners are not all the same. We have different aptitudes and preferences for how we learn language best. Aptitudes can be physiological, such as well-developed auditory discrimination, which means that the sounds (pronunciation) of another language can be heard and replicated easily. Other aptitudes can be psychological, such as the hesitancy (reluctance, shyness, fear) to speak "in public." Literacy Nassau is fortunate to have exceptionally caring volunteers who want only one thing: for their students to be successful with English. It is not uncommon for our students to experience less than optimal opportunities to practice and use their English speaking skills outside of the two hour weekly lessons with their tutor. Enter: small group instruction - - the solution for speaking more English!

The Literacy Nassau pathway for learners allows a student who has progressed from the beginner to intermediate level to become immersed in a small, dynamic class of 6 to 8 students maximum. In these classes students are presented with authentic opportunities to practice and use spoken English in a non-threatening, yet empowering environment. As a volunteer tutor you have done everything humanly possible to prepare your student for the next step in his/her English language journey. Similar to all human beings who must move from one growth phase of their lives to another, leaving the comfort zone of the one-to-one tutor nest, and flying to small group instruction will allow students to take responsibility for their own learning and successfully continue their journey.

## TUTOR SPOTLIGHT: IN STEP WITH JOAN WHITESIDE

*(submitted by Alison Orme)*

Joan Whiteside has been a tutor with Literacy Nassau since 2013. She worked for an Episcopal Church in Baldwin for over 20 years before retiring. She is currently studying Italian and says that helps her to understand the challenges her student faces. She enjoys teaching and prefers working with adults to teaching kids. Joan is currently working with her second student who is a young woman from China.

**Alison:** I hear that you had what potentially could have been a sticky situation with your student at the library. Please tell us about how you handled it.

**Joan:** During one of our earlier sessions at the library, a library patron came over and said to me, "You can't do that here. You should leave." We continued to work together at the library when two college students kept staring at us. I decided then that we needed to change locations. Because of the hospitality that their culture is known for, my student's husband offered for us to meet at the house. I didn't think it was a good idea so I politely declined and suggested Starbucks instead. We now meet there and it provides some great speaking opportunities for my student.

**Alison:** I love that you meet at Starbucks. There is always the opportunity to encourage her to strike up a conversation with the person sitting next to her. Could you tell us a little bit about your student?

**Joan:** Jing Jing is extremely shy. She tells me that she has no friends. She knows how to drive but doesn't drive anywhere because she doesn't have her license. She doesn't leave the house much and she has a baby due in the fall. She is a very good speller. 95% of the words that she knows she can spell correctly.

**Alison:** What strategies do you use when lesson planning?

**Joan:** I focus on simple phrases to help her to communicate better. I use the environment for ideas to expand her vocabulary and give her real-life situations. I try to encourage her to engage in life here on Long Island.

**HOURS, HOURS, HOURS!!** 😊

**As we come to the close of our fiscal year on June 30th, we'd like to remind you to submit the hours you have tutored your student on a monthly basis. We are mandated by the state to report student hours as part of our funding. Hours can be submitted by emailing your Literacy Specialist or on our website at [LiteracyNassau.org/hours](http://LiteracyNassau.org/hours).**

## SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT: RTS FOUNDATION

We are so excited to share that we recently received a grant of \$35,000 from the RTS Family Foundation! The grant is for operating expenses to help us offset some of the costs of running our Small Group Instruction program. The RTS Family Foundation funds a large number of wonderful charities, mostly in the New York and New Jersey area. The Foundation has been extremely supportive of Literacy Nassau in the past and we are grateful for this continued support as we grow and expand our program. We look forward to keeping the Foundation apprised of our progress!



## SUMMER IS ALMOST HERE... GO ON A FIELD TRIP!

(submitted by Kim Nau)

My favorite saying about language is "If you don't use it, you lose it". Often we hear our tutors tell us that their students are reluctant to speak English outside of their tutoring sessions. In some cases, their tutor is the only person that they communicate with in English. I will share some ideas on how to get your students to speak English outside of instructional time.

One way to achieve this goal is with a field trip. Instead of meeting in the library, consider exploring and meeting out in the community. Put your student in a situation where he/she needs to speak English. Meet your student at the supermarket and assign tasks to complete: "Ask the grocery clerk which aisle the bread is located in" or "Ask the grocer which vegetables are on sale this week". While on the checkout line they can ask the customer in front of them about an item in their shopping cart: "Is that broccoli? How do you prepare it?" Prior to this activity you can have your student(s) create a shopping list using supermarket circulars to prepare for the trip.

Keeping your student's financial budget in mind, you can meet at a coffee shop and have them order items in English. They can ask the barista "What coffee would you recommend?" or "What time do you close?" Create extra opportunities for speaking English by having them ask a customer: "Do you have the time?" This is also an opportunity to introduce small talk. You can bring a newspaper and discuss current events together. Speak to your Literacy Specialist about borrowing copies of adapted newspapers that we have for English language learners.

Most of our tutors and students meet at the library. The library has a wealth of authentic language-learning opportunities so please take advantage of them. You can have your student ask the librarian, "Do you have a current copy of the newsletter?" Review the newsletter with your student and choose an event or workshop that you can attend together. Most of the programs at the library are free to library patrons. If you decide to attend a library event or show together, create listening comprehension questions for your student(s) to complete afterwards. If your student does not have a library card, encourage him/her to ask the librarian how to apply for one.

Many libraries offer free museum passes, which you can reserve in advance, enabling you to visit one of Long Island's many local museums. Museums include the Nassau County Museum of Art, the Vanderbilt Museum and Planetarium, Old Westbury Gardens, the Cradle of Aviation, Old Bethpage Village Restoration, and more. What a great way to immerse your student in local history and culture! You can prepare your student for museum trips by offering conversation questions including, "Which exhibit did you like best?" or "What did you find most interesting?" Students can even be encouraged to write up a short report afterwards to summarize the trip.

Practice the vocabulary in advance of the field trip to set them up for success. You can also assign speaking tasks for homework. If you cannot go on a field trip, have the student(s) practice their speaking skills by making phone calls in English. They can call the DMV or the post office to ask a set of questions. Be sure to practice a variety of question styles: open-ended questions (who, what, where, why, when) and direct (yes/no) questions. They can also keep an "English Everyday Journal". In their journal they can write one way each day they met their goal to speak English.

Prior to conducting a field trip, offer your students a role play activity to help them feel comfortable with the language necessary to achieve the task. When out in the community, be there as their emotional support to decrease their anxiety but allow them the opportunity to speak English. At first they might feel uncomfortable because they will be out of their comfort zone but that is fine. They will learn by making mistakes. If they cannot remember the way to say a word in English correctly, let them struggle and try to figure out another way to say it. This is how they will learn.

Try one of the activities listed above and let us know if it worked for you.

## TWEET TWEET

(submitted by Karen Micciche)



Because we are in the age of technology, Literacy Nassau has a Twitter account. I hate social media personally, so I am not the face behind our Facebook or Twitter pages. But every now and then, something cool happens because of social media. Most recently, our Syosset Next Chapter Book Club finished an extremely long book - so to congratulate them publicly, we tweeted about it. Well, wouldn't you know - the author of the book tweeted us back! Check out the pictures below!



Congratulations to the Syosset Next Chapter Book Club for conquering the 320 page book *The One and Only Ivan!* They were thrilled to get their certificates of completion!



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Happy birthday to all of our tutors born in June!

- |                       |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Janet Bazuro          | Judy Beckman      |
| Stephen Bendernagel   | Susan Bevilacqua  |
| Mel Breshin           | Margaret Cibulsky |
| Marilyn Clarke        | Marla Cohan       |
| Nadine Connors        | Carol Davan       |
| Carol Fletcher        | Edward Garfinkel  |
| Daniel Goldschmidt    | Coleen Graziose   |
| Robert Greenberg      | John Guerin       |
| Maureen Hogan         | Lisa Kornberg     |
| Paulette Lalljee      | Muriel Leonard    |
| Carolyn Meditz        |                   |
| Irene Meier           |                   |
| Maureen Miller-Calamo |                   |
| Edward Paley          |                   |
| Celeste Pomerantz     |                   |
| Kathryn St. Juste     |                   |
| Matilda Tobin         |                   |
| Frank Vendinello      |                   |
| Eileen Watts          |                   |





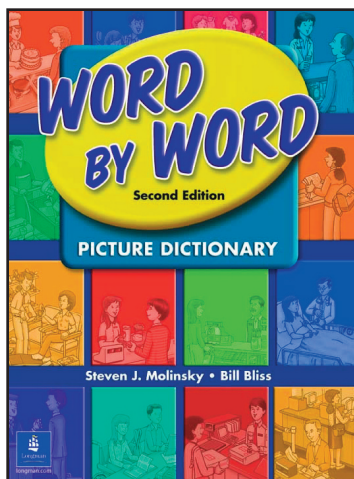
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### CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to our newest tutors who recently completed a Tutor Training Workshop with us! They are:

- |                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Lauren Bernat         | Adrienne Brosseau  |
| Judy Caputo           | Regina Dallesandro |
| Eileen D'Antonio      | Rachel Dicker      |
| Denise Dressler       | Delia Espinal      |
| Maura Feeney          | Eleanor Feingold   |
| Kelly Funari          | Betsy Fundh        |
| Lauren Gilbert        | Avra Hammerschlag  |
| Patricia Hanlon       | Sandy Heiman       |
| Ellen Hogan           | Steve Krasney      |
| Marie Levy            | Mary Lindquist     |
| Mohandi Maharaj       |                    |
| June Maisonet         |                    |
| Deidre McElhatton     |                    |
| Carolyn Meditz        |                    |
| Andrew Mihopulos      |                    |
| Joseph Mogavero       |                    |
| Susan Risberg         |                    |
| Maxine Schmerzler     |                    |
| Elliot Shulman        |                    |
| Addy Skolnick         |                    |
| Valquiria Soares-Cruz |                    |
| Dodi Spielman         |                    |
| Patricia Szendrey     |                    |
| Jeanmarie Tener       |                    |
| Suzanne Valls         |                    |
| Steve Young           |                    |



## SAVE THE DATE!

LITERACY NASSAU'S ANNUAL  
*WINE PAIRING DINNER*  
WILL BE HELD ON  
TUESDAY, JULY 26TH, 2016  
AT **LA STRADA** IN MERRICK.



TICKETS ARE \$95  
PER PERSON.  
ADVANCE TICKET  
PURCHASE  
REQUIRED.