



Workforce Development Board  
County of Middlesex

## **LITERACY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, December 8, 2020  
Zoom Conference Call/Video  
9:30 a.m.

### **Attendance**

**Present:** Gloria Aftanski, Roseann Bucciarelli, Nicholas Cammarano, Jasmina Dizdarevic, Jennifer Goodin, Jessica Hudson & Jessica Tomkins

**Staff & Guests:** Shamara Gatling-Davila, Barbara Basker

### **Welcome and Introductions**

The meeting was called to order at 9:35am. Gloria asked everyone to introduce themselves.

### **Review of Minutes from September 8, 2020 Meeting**

Jennifer made the first motion and Roseann seconded to approve minutes. Jessica Hudson abstained from voting due to not being present at the last meeting.

### **Update from Libraries and Other Literacy Agencies Present**

**Roseann from Middlesex County College:** Close to 90% of the credited and non-credit courses are being offered remotely. Most of the classes are live remote meaning they take place with an instructor at a specific time/date. The students login at those specific times. There are a handful of courses that are offered in-person. Those are the courses that require some form of certification like Allied Health, Phlebotomy, Nursing, etc. Social Distance guidelines are being followed for all in-person courses. Most of the county college staff are still working remotely. A pre-approved staggered schedule is in place for those that need to work from the office.

There are about forty-five (45) ESL students registered for the live remote course in the Fall. That number is down compared to pre-COVID19 semesters, but the most ESL remote interest since COVID-19. The five (5) ESL courses span over various levels of difficulty. Tracey Montani is still offering virtual work readiness courses and HSE prep. There are about 15 students in the HSE program.

**Jen from JFS:** Citizenship classes are offered via Zoom since the libraries are closed. With most of the community partners still working remotely, it has been difficult recruiting new people. JFS staff work from the office, but the office is not yet open to the public. Even though remote courses are convenient, most clients want to return to in-person services.

**Jessica from Literacy NJ:** Jessica wants to discuss citizenship with Jen. Since all services are still remote, there is room to collaborate or assist each other with recruitment. Enrollment is also down for Literacy NJ. They are currently serving about 55% of their normal enrollment. ESL population is back in Union County. Services have been remote since March 2020. The various forms of communication are: Text, Zoom, and Goggle Classroom to keep everyone informed. Volunteers are now being trained remotely. This has been successful during the pandemic.

**Jessica from Rutgers Grad School:** Over the summer, Rutgers had a pilot program to work on ELL classes for adults. This fall, Rutgers partnered again to discuss principles of language learning. Professional Development Models were created for partners and instructors. There are sixteen (16) teachers facilitating classes and thirty-three (33) students. Small groups were formed and if needed, lesson plans were redesigned. Lessons were created to share and collaborate with partners. One of the perks of this Bilingual (English and Spanish) program is the feedback to ensure it is aligned with community interest. This program is different from others because it was designed alongside English Language Learners. The next project is community-based, family, math nights, to support families.

**Nicholas from Perth Amboy Public Schools:** In Perth Amboy, on Oct 30<sup>th</sup>, he received notice the schools will remain remote until Feb 4<sup>th</sup>. As a result, all adult programs continued remote. In house testing for the adult program took place November 10-12<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, November 14<sup>th</sup> in the morning. Social Distancing was required for testing over 100 students for best literacy. The school is seeking approval before break to offer monthly in-person testing. Adults interested in attending the daytime class tested for CASAS in the morning and afternoon adults tested in the afternoon. People were asked to complete a survey and temperatures were taken prior to entering the building for testing. Students were given hand sanitizer prior to being assigned to their classrooms. Classrooms were sanitized afterwards. Bathrooms were locked but opened if necessary and cleaned afterwards. Aztec testing took place in October, but for only about ten (10) people. Chromebooks have been distributed for those in need.

**Middlesex County Office of Career Opportunity:** Staff primarily work remotely. The in-office days have declined to one (1) day a week instead of 2/3 times. The office is still closed to the public. Jasmina and Shamara are working on the Workforce Development Board's Annual Report. Last quarter of PY2020 the literacy numbers were down in the WLL. The hurdle lies within helping those with no technology at home. The instructors are still offering remote learning. With low enrollment, the instructors, to an extent, can accommodate one on one learning, but many people that require 1 on 1 do not have access to technology at home. ELITE Youth numbers are down, but they still make up most of the literacy numbers.

### **Census 2020 Updates**

**United Way of Central Jersey (UWCJ)** Gloria reported there were three (3) target communities that did not exceed their 2010 Census rates. Those three towns are New Brunswick, Perth Amboy and Jamesburg. Most of the other hard to reach areas did exceed their 2010 rates.

**UWCJ VITA Program:** Agencies are not providing space for face-to-face tax prep. UWCJ is working to find the best and safest way to provide tax documents to the volunteers. The building is closed to the public so using the office is not an option. The current plan is for tax documents can be dropped into a drop box near the entrance of the UWCJ building or scanned and uploaded into the electronic Dropbox. One of the ten tax preparers will contact the client, complete the paperwork, and once completed, discuss results with the client. If the client agrees with the decision, the taxes are filed electronically. With that being said, the next hurdle is finding the best way for the returns to be signed electronically knowing technology is a barrier for so many.

### **New (Review of Membership Structure) and Old Business**

The process of committee membership, designated representative(s) and guests for the meetings were discussed. It has been suggested that pre- and post-literacy assessments be discussed at a future meeting. The Literacy Strategic Plan/Goals will be emailed to everyone again for review. Any updates or revisions will be discussed at the next Literacy Meeting. It was expressed the next official Literacy Strategic Plan update will not take place until new legislation is released with requirements.

### **Adjournment**

Meeting Adjourned.

<b>NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, MARCH 9, 2021 – 9:30AM LOCATION/VIDEO CONFERENCE PLATFORM TO BE DETERMINED</b>
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