



Supporting the Development and Retention of a World Class Workforce

Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director

Robert Weil, Chair

LITERACY COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, MARCH 6, 2018

ATTENDANCE – LITERACY COMMITTEE

MEMBERS		9-May-17	6-Jun-17	11-Jul-17	8-Aug-17	13-Sep-17	10-Oct-17	14-Nov-17	3-Jan-18	6-Feb-18	6-Mar-18
<b>Brahl, Ken CHAIR</b>	Ravitz Family Shoprites	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Abrams, Barbara	Jewish Family & Children Service of Southern NJ	X	X		X		X				
Dann, Carol	Camden County College			X			X				
Del Vale, Jennifer	Hispanic Family Center						X				
Goodman, Steve	Volunteers of America			X	X	X		X	X	X	
Hale, Dawn	The Arc of Camden County			X	X	X	X	X			
Kalitan, Marlyn	Kalitan Consulting	X	X		X		X		X	X	X
Knopf, Dick	Marketing Professional Services	X			X	X	X	X		X	
Maguire, Laurie	Camden County One-Stop, Workforce Learning Link	X				X				X	X
Lee, Mimi MLIS	NJ State Library										X
Lisa, David	Camden County Library System										X
Martinez, Dr. Marilyn	Intrum Dean, CCC									X	X
Page-Soncraut, Jeanne	Business Service Rep, LWD									X	
Peters, Annie	Sambulance							X			
Pryor, Regina	DOL-Employment and Training		X		X	X	X				
Rimby, Donna	Clementon Memorial Library					X	X				
Strobl, Holly	Council Women, Clementon Borough			X	X		X				X
Young, Jennifer	Verizon		X								
Swartz, Jeffrey S.	WDB, Executive Director	X		X	X		X	X	X		X
Varallo, Kathleen	WDB, Admin Assistant	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Williams, Leslie J	WDB, Comptroller										
Robert Weil	WDB Chairman										X

WELCOME

Ken Brahl, Literacy Chair called the meeting to order at 8:36 am, welcomed attendees and asked for round table introductions. He welcomed Mimi Lee, Diversity and Literacy Consultant, New Jersey State Library, David Lisa, Associate Director, Camden County Library System, and Bob Weil, WDB Chair.

Ken said that as a Committee, we have met with Literacy Consortium Partners to find out what we can do to help them in their offerings of Literacy Services around the County. We are revisiting this outreach again this year. We also want to make sure that the citizens of Camden County are aware of what help is available to them. According to the Literacy Needs Assessment, prepared by our committee, there are literacy concerns throughout the County.

Ken said we've began by partnering with the Clementon Memorial Library to host a Family Literacy Day. Ken gave a brief explanation of the Family Literacy Day for guests of the meeting. It was decided, by the committee

to create a family friendly event that would bring children and parents together with the idea that reading to a child can help increase literacy skills. Each child receives one or more free books and activities while the parents are given information about job readiness and literacy help that are offered in the local area. We are planning to repeat this event at Clementon and another library of choice in the county.

He asked Mimi to expand on some other ways we could help us make the link to some of the underserved libraries that do not have the staff or resources to improve their ability to be able to offer Literacy Help. We have read and researched that the Library is an important asset to any community. The first instinct for an individual is to go to the Library for computer help but how can we make the link between the customers who may need help with Literacy. We also want to connect the dots and wrap that help around job readiness. We want to motivate and help any individual needing help and steer them in the right direction toward their career goals.

Ken addressed the questions to the committee and asked for an open discussion. David Lisa, Associate Director Camden County Library System said we have eight Library Branches around the County, two of which are located in Camden City. The main branch in Voorhees. We have done studies that show the amount of foot traffic in our Libraries. Last year we recorded about 350, thousand people visit our main branch in Voorhees, an incredible amount of people taking advantage of a variety of different services. In the last twenty years our services have expanded beyond print media to computer and technical activities. We are now offering digital download services. The office of Literacy Volunteers is located within the Voorhees branch. We also do a great amount of "English as a second language (ESL) tutoring. Many customers are using the library to go online to augment their job search.

Mimi said that the Camden County Library System is one of the most progressive systems around the State. They offer a really wide range of Literacy and Diversity Programs. Any Library wanting to start supportive service can consult with the State Library. At the State Library, we try to provide continuing education that keep current librarians up to date on literacy help programs. The State Library is not a physical location that is open to the public. It is in place to support Library systems by creating training programs for staff. She works with the Department of Labor and other state agencies as well. The department of Labor created a Library Grant program. The grant provides funds to help Libraries with workforce development programs such as the Career Connections platform. This is a centralized website that was built for the State as a resource for job seekers and employer recruiting. The site also provides links to work-readiness and training information as well as resources for ESL and Adult Basic skills.

Mimi spoke of one such grant applied for by the Camden County Library Systems for a Books and Cooks Mobile Culinary Literacy Program. The Camden County Library's Books and Cooks program allows the library to engage with residents through food, cooking, nutrition and culinary literacy. It was created when library staff realized that a community they serve, Camden City, is a USDA designated food desert. This, coupled with Camden's low literacy and graduation rates, was the driving force behind the program. Students will learn how basic literacy and ESL students are served through the program and how the Books and Cooks program is teaching literacy through cooking -- a universal language. Other libraries have applied for ESL programming.

She noted that there is no State funding specifically for Literacy. Funding is released by the Department of Labor with a focus on creating work-readiness programs that result in jobs. She noted that some of the population of those needing help may be older individuals who are not looking to work. They simply want to read to their children or help with their homework. We are not sure if the funding will be made available by the newly elected administration. New Jersey has been very generous in supporting the Library system. There is a Library law that promises funds for library training and programs. New Jersey Libraries are the top innovators in developing services at the top and local levels. The key to reaching out to those marginalized groups is for local libraries or organizations' to have a really aggressive out-reach program. Literacy is only part of service to the underprivileged. There are so many other needs that can be touched upon. In doing so, it's not only the Library's job, it is the entire community. School's relationship with the Library and of course the community colleges. We also need to work with immigrants and refugees on a local level. It is not only the Library-hood, it is the entire outreach system and have other types of literacy within it. Prior to her career at the State Library, Mimi worked in the public library system. She is originally from Soule, South Korea. She attended Florida State University and went on to serve the Library system in Queens, New York. She also worked with the Atlantic City Library. She spent five years in out-reach in Atlantic City. Within her career, she has seen a lot of policy in the Library system as a whole and gained a strong background in ESL services. People from other backgrounds struggle just to read a medical prescription. These are minor concerns to understand. Any outreach program should be inclusive of multi-cultural aspects.

The committee discussed the overwhelming issues and concerns facing today's workforce population. It is surprising that the only funding for Libraries comes through Workforce Development. Ken asked committee examined its direction toward future out-reach and where we should focus our time. Mimi said the real experts are the people here in this committee. The Literacy Needs Assessment is a great start that uncovered some of the concerns in Camden County. Looking at other Counties or Municipalities for innovative program that could be repeated. The ongoing conversation is important and creating a wider awareness to the importance of the local library as an extension of work-readiness, ESL training and other general resources for the community. David Lisa said he would provide contacts to underserved Libraries within the County system.

Kathleen brought handout to the awareness of the committee. Literacy Volunteer Training that begins April 24<sup>th</sup> at the Voorhees Library, Registration/Orientation begins on Tuesday, March 24<sup>th</sup> at the Camden County College for Adult Basic Skills Classes (ABE, formally GED), and an expanded Literacy Services Guide, worked on by the Committee, to ESL, GED and ABE classes around the County. She also gave the Committee an article by Sue Halpern entitled, "Libraries Are a Space Where Everyone Belongs. Copies of this information is available be emailing the Camden County Workforce Development board at [ccwib@cwib.com](mailto:ccwib@cwib.com). Mimi said she would be happy to attend the Literacy Meeting more often as her schedule allows.

NEXT MEETING: The Literacy Committee will meet on Tuesday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018 at 8:30am the WDB office.

Submitted by

*Kathleen Varallo,*

Administrative Assistant