



Supporting the Development and Retention of a World Class Workforce

Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director

Matthew Verney, Board Chair

LITERACY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, JULY 5, 2022
ZOOM MEETING

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE INFORMATION AND ATTENDANCE									
NAME	ORGANIZATION	TRUSTEE MEMBER	1-Feb-22	1-Mar-22	5-Apr-22	3-May-22	14-Jun-22	5-Jul-22	
Brahl, Ken CHAIR	Ravitz Family ShopRites	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Beach, Patti	Goodwill		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Chisolm, Victoria	Literacy Volunteers of America						X		
Cirii, Frank	Camden County One Stop	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Dann, Carol	HopeWorks Camden		X		X		X		
Daunoras, Heidi	Pine Hill School District		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Druce, Jennifer	Camden County Library						X		
Egrie, Gabrielle	Watermark Communities					X	X		
Fithian, Danielle	Goodwill		X						
Fugee, Antoinette	Center for Family Services, Inc.								
Hill, Lauren Dr.	Camden County College		X	X	X	X	X		
Kalitan, Marlyn Vice Chair	Kalitan Consulting	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Knopf, Dick	Marketing Professional Services		X		X	X	X	X	
Mauro, Jennifer	Goodwill					X		X	
McKelvey, Christopher	Councilman, Clementon Borough		X	X	X	X	X		
Mitchell, Danielle	RobinsNest Inc								
Norman, Tahja	Orchards Family Success Center					X			
Rutzler, Eugene	Literacy Needs Assessment Intern				X	X	X	X	
Sinclair, Nidia	Camden County One-Stop					X			
Soira, Lizette	Orchards Family Success Center		X	X					
Strobl, Holly	Councilwoman, Clementon Borough								
Young, Jennifer	Verizon		X	X	X	X	X		
Levitt, Alex	WDB		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Swartz, Jeffrey S.	WDB		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Vaughn, Debra	WDB		X	X		X			

WELCOME

Ken Brahl, Chair, opened the meeting at 8:30am, greeting the attendees and asking for a motion to approve the minutes for the June 14, 2022. Dick Knopf made the motion, seconded by Heidi Daunoras. By unanimous vote to the affirmative, the motion carried, and the minutes for June 14, 2022 were approved.

ONE-STOP & LEARNING LINK UPDATES

- Frank Cirii was on vacation and there was no One-Stop representative present to provide an update in his absence. Ken Brahl referred the committee to the One-Stop update that Frank provided at the Quarterly Board of Trustees meeting that was held on June 22, 2022.

LITERACY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Eugene Rutzler, Literacy Needs Assessment Intern, provided an update on his reports for the 2022 Literacy Needs Assessment.

- The addition of maps to the LNA report should be completed in time for the August committee meeting.
- An outline of the index findings and conclusions can be found on page 10 of the updated report provided for the meeting. The largest changes were highlighted:
 - Lindenwold – Lindenwold’s score improved from an 8 to a 6. Their HS graduation rates improved, bringing them up from “notable” to “bordering.”

- Consistent with the previous report, Bellmawr, Pennsauken and Camden City are three areas still most in need of attention. The biggest drop was from Bellmawr, dropping from a previous score of 5 to a 7. Bellmawr and Camden City appear to be most in need of attention.
- Heidi Danouras cited efforts to improve attendance and literacy efforts as the driving factors for the improvement in the Lindenwold graduation rates. Lindenwold has a full bi-lingual instruction program and sheltered instruction is provided. She stated that initiating programs in the community that recognize literacy needs at early stages, meeting the students where they are is important. Adapting currently used plans to meet their literacy needs and creating supportive, positive relationships with their families, food security and mentorship and ESL programs is vital.
- Dick Knopf suggested to Ken that some of Heidi's counterparts should be invited to the next Literacy Committee meeting to share ideas and input on methods to improve literacy efforts in the school districts needing improvement. Ken asked Alex to be sure to extend meeting invitations to people who may benefit from the LNA information and suggested strategies going forward.
- Heidi Danouras highlighted that school attendance during COVID contributed to the lowered graduation rates, because high school students were working or assisting their own families with childcare, and she suggested that it was time for education to recognize that college is not an option for all students. She told the success story of a high school student who took initiative during the pandemic, completed an online business course and with the help of a mentor, he started a successful business re-selling sneakers, and he graduated from high school. She noted that, from a workforce perspective with the increasing need for tradespeople, the pathways to trades and employment opportunities and entrepreneurship that is based on their own personal interests and skillsets must be considered for students who are not college bound. Ken agreed that the push for trades education needs to be given serious consideration in school curriculums.
- Jeff suggested creation of a chart to highlight the findings of the LNA study and host a gathering with the mayor's association that includes a presentation of the updated LNA report and discussion of the schools addressing student literacy deficiencies by utilizing strategies shown to be effective in improving outcomes and student success rates. Handouts with demonstrated strategies for literacy success would be provided.
- Jennifer Mauro agreed with Heidi's comment about more concentration on trades education and less on 4-year institutions. She raised questions as to whether adult literacy was part of the LNA report. She cited issues adult illiteracy in the home, children not being able to complete homework because there is no assistance at home and bullying in the schools, as factors for the students having difficulties keeping up in school. Jennifer suggested that there are opportunities for industries and schools to create educational and technical skills training partnerships that enable students to move from high school to well-paying employment. Ken asked if there was a way to quantify how many people have dropped out of an educational system and what adult-education programs are successful in pulling people back. Jennifer commented that there are a lot of people with barriers to seeking out adult education. She suggested that the census data may provide diploma or equivalency rates by age group.
- Marlyn Kalitan expressed frustration that her daughter, who teaches ESL in Camden, told her that the parents have to give approval take their children out of ESL class and refuse to do so. Their reasoning is they don't want people to know that their child does not speak English so poorly that they have to be removed from class and possibly be bullied. In response to Jeff's idea about meeting with the mayors, Marlyn wondered if mayors, in general, are hands-off on education issues as she sees in Cherry Hill. Ken commented that in such cases, if elected officials are not receptive to information to improve literacy in their communities, the best approaches may be through the local library systems.
- Ken asked Alex to share the pdf of the new LNA draft with meeting attendees and told Eugene that his work would be used as a platform to work from for the future.

COMMITTEE UPDATES/COMMENTS

- Jeff thanked Marlyn and Suzanne (ShopRite) for their outstanding efforts for the work-readiness training of the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP).
- Marlyn thanked Leslie and Alex for preparation of the SYEP work-readiness handouts and curriculum.

- Patti Beach noted that the Helms Academy offers a flexible schedule for basic skills studies for youth and adults. Services are available virtually and in person at multiple locations, for those who may not be able to access the Learning Link during their operating hours. Helms Academy is a certified testing site.
- Jennifer Mauro stated that Goodwill's Stratford facility offers flexible scheduling with free participation and is a certified testing site. ESL instruction is offered virtually and in person. She invited meeting attendees to Goodwill's first post-Covid graduation at the Camden County Boathouse, on July 7th at 11:00am.
- Dick Knopf commented that there remains a need to add someone from the business community to the committee. Jeff responded that he is always looking for the person who has the passion and the vision and will be a great fit for committee positions.

ADJOURNMENT

Ken asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Heidi Daunouras made the motion, seconded by Dick Knopf. By unanimous vote to the affirmative, the motion carried, and the meeting adjourned at 9:48am.

NEXT MEETING

The next Literacy Committee Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 2, 2022, at 8:30am. Meeting materials and Zoom conferencing information will be distributed prior to the meeting.

Submitted by:
Debra Vaughn
Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director