



Supporting the Development and Retention of a World Class Workforce

Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director

Robert Weil, Chair

LITERACY COMMITTEE
 MEETING MINUTES
 TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2020
 ZOOM MEETING AT THE WDB OFFICE, 1111 MARKKRESS ROAD, CHERRY HILL, NJ

ATTENDANCE – LITERACY COMMITTEE

MEMBERS		5-May-20	2-Jun-20	7-Jul-20	1-Sep-20	6-Oct-20
Brahl, Ken CHAIR	Ravitz Family Shoprites	X	X	X	X	X
Patti Beach	Learning Link, Camden County One-Stop Career Center	X	X	X	X	X
Cirii, Frank	Local Area Operations Director, Camden County					X
Dann, Carol	Hopeworks Camden	X			X	X
Daunoras, Heidi	Pine Hill School District	X	X			X
De, Shyamoli	Director, Volunteers of America	X				X
Fugee, Antoinette		X				
Hill, Lauren Dr.	Director, ABS, Camden County College					X
Kalitan, Marlyn Vice Chair	Kalitan Consulting	X	X	X	X	X
Knopf, Dick	Marketing Professional Services	X	X	X	X	X
Lisa, David	Camden County Library System					
Mitchell, Danielle	RobinsNest Inc	X				X
Petteyford, Shawnee	Hopeworks					
Sayles, Keith	Camden County College, Camden City Campus	X				
Strobl, Holly	Council Women, Clementon Borough		X	X		
Young, Jennifer	Verizon	X	X	X	X	X
Swartz, Jeffrey S.	WDB, Executive Director	X	X		X	X
Varallo, Kathleen	WDB, Administrative Assistant	X	X	X	X	X

WELCOME

Ken Brahl, Literacy Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:37am. The Committee discussed personal challenges of adjusting to remote learning and hybrid schedules at local schools. The Committee welcomed back Dr. Lauren Hill, Director, Adult Basic Skills, Camden College. The Committee also discussed challenges of CASAS Testing of adult basic skills. Some members agreed to stay on after the meeting to discuss more about the differences between TABE and CASAS testing.

ONE-STOP & LEARNING LINK UPDATES

Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director, WDB reported the local area received its WorkFirst funding allocation announcement on Friday and the information was submitted to the Camden County Board of Freeholder, meeting agenda in order to process approvals. He said the funding will allow us to start a new program year that will run from October 1, 2020-June 30, 2021. Vendor Services providers will receive their contracts asap.

Patti Beach, Instructor, Learning Link, One-Stop, reported the One-Stop is slowly moving forward to provide all services virtually and by-appointment only. County staff is back to work. There have been three new customer additions to the Learning Link and all testing is being conducted in person by appointment. Ken asked if the Unemployment Division (UI) opened up again. Jeff said that UI is not seeing customers in person. All customers are still being directed to web and call center access. He said the latest numbers reported of unprocessed or issues with claims are ranging around 40,000. This is still a concern because customers are continuing to contact or show up in person at the One-Stop for help. All other One-Stop services can be accessed virtually. Counselors are available to meet with customers by appointment on a case by case basis. Most One-Stop referrals come through the Board of Social Services so this has been a challenge due to state waivers being extended. In other words, the Board customers are not being required to participate in work activities due to the current state of emergency remaining in place.

Follow this link to the Camden County One-Stop Career Center -Virtual Services Directory:

<https://www.camdencounty.com/service/employment/job-training-placement/>

LITERACY SHARING & BOOK DRIVE UPDATES

Kathleen Varallo, Administrative Assistant, WDB, reported on ideas discussed at the last meeting about pop-up libraries and book distribution via the Booksmiles organization. She did some research and found that the pop-up libraries are working with Booksmiles. Kathleen included a link to an article highlighting that partnership. She also sent a list of links to the committee she thought might be helpful to share including the One-Stop Virtual Services Directory. (Noted above) Kathleen asked Patty if the One-Stop successfully completed the process to be able to administer the High Set Test (GED) on site. Patty said that customers are currently being referred to another testing site. Carol Dann, Hopeworks, said students are tested onsite at Hopeworks. A proctor is assigned to view the testing online.

Kathleen asked Heidi Daunoras, Director Curriculum, Pine Hill Schools, to report on Pine Hill's success with the Booksmiles initiative. Heidi was happy to report her son has become very involved with the program. She said her son sponsored a book bin in Berlin Borough and as a result, 2000 books were collected as well as other donations. Total collections over the summer were over 2500 books. She said 4000 books are awaiting Pine Hill's local "Backpack and Book Drive-through Giveaway" tomorrow, October 7th. Heidi said the next steps of the plan is to get smaller book libraries distributed to local apartment complexes where the highest concentration of families who do not have access to books and may still be on full remote learning. Jeff asked Heidi if she would distribute the One-Stop Virtual Services Directory flyers. Heidi said she would try to include the flyer with tomorrow's distribution. Heidi asked if there was a Spanish version of the flyer. Kathleen said it has been requested and she will also send the flyer out again to the committee. Ken complimented Heidi's efforts and said it was a phenomenal program. Heidi said she grew up with a healthy love of reading and raised her son instilled with the same and is proud of the way her son took to the Booksmiles organization. He truly cares about young children having access to books. She also noted that several other young people stepped up to help and it's not just adults helping during this crisis.

Ken asked Kathleen to report on recent communications with Jordan Grabelle and “Letters of Love.” Kathleen reminded the committee that Letters of Love include a handwritten note to the receiver and are packaged along with instructions about how to creatively play a game with the alphabet cards also included. These packages have been given away at the Literacy Committee’s outreach at library events and National Night Outs. Jordan contacted the WDB with a supply of packages for donation. Kathleen said Holly Strobl, Councilwoman, Clementon Borough, connected with Jordan and will be picking them up for distribution in her local area. Ken was happy that the committee is able to help out in the community with outreach events being cancelled during COVID response efforts. The Committee has made some good connections over the years and it is paying off now during these times.

Ken asked if Frank Cirii, Local Area Operation Director, had any news to add to Jeff’s One-Stop update. Frank reported the One-Stop is submitting resolutions for paperwork for funding approvals. Funding has been pro-rated for a nine month program year. He also reported that the Virtual Services Directory is being handed out every Friday at the food distribution events sponsored by the County at various locations around the County. The directory is also being messaged at County Drive-through Immunization sites. These sites will continue for the next three months and the One-Stop will be hosting an event as well in the parking lot.

Frank also reported that Patty Beach has been working very hard to advance systems in the Learning Link. Customers are seen digitally first and scheduled for testing appointments in person. Staff is following all social distancing and safety measures including temperature screening at the entrance. Most all services are being handled remotely first and then by appointment as needed for processing documents, onboarding and eligibility. The safety plan is working well and staff is looking forward to more referrals. Patty said the Learning Link is looking into making application to become a High Set (GED) testing site. She said there is lot of reading and preparation involved and the application is quite extensive. Frank said that both Nidia Sinclair, Director, Resource Center, and former Youth Manager, Dr. Lauren Hill, both agreed it would be a great step for the Learning Link and a natural progression toward keeping customers engaged in the process toward training grants and career development. Customers will be able to gain a credential with the assistance of Learning Link services and that is a win-win for the customer and can be counted toward One-Stop performance measures.

US CENSUS 2020 UPDATES

Frank reported there has been an extension announced for filling out the 2020 Census to the end of October. Some local areas are a bit underreported probably due to COVID. Jim Rhodes, Deputy County Administrator, is the lead in Census efforts and there is still a lot of information on the county’s website. It is still a high priority until the end of the month. There was a push over the last ten days due to fears it would not be extended and there was a court case as well. Frank encouraged the committee to keep promoting the Census and reminding those who have not yet filled it out to do so as soon as possible. The County is focused on getting the best compliance rate possible and he reminded everyone that county funding is dependent on Census Data. Follow this link for more information: <https://2020census.gov/en.html>

Frank shared some of the Camden County Census Response Statistics. As of last week Camden County’s response rate was 70.6% and that was 27% behind the 2010 response rate of 71.3%. He said the extension to October 31, should help improve the response rate.

Dick Knopf, Independent Business Consultant, complimented the work of the committee saying he was impressed with all the activity even in light of the current crisis and considering public meetings have been halted. The Committee discussed some of the budgetary savings due to less traveling to and from meetings. Jeff also noted that attendance to committee meetings has improved due to virtual access.

FINANCIAL LITERACY UPDATES

Dick asked how Financial Literacy efforts were progressing. Ken asked Kathleen to report. Kathleen reminded the committee that Financial Literacy was mandated, in 2019, by the State, to be taught in the High Schools. The Literacy Committee took on the effort to make sure it is promoting career readiness and soft skills to be included in the curriculum. The Committee continues to share curriculum whenever possible with area schools. She said she will continue to share links to tools and teaching materials on subjects of financial literacy, career exploration and readiness. There are some great power points and student exercises contained in the links she recently sent out to the committee. There are also teachers serving on other WDB committees and some that contact the WDB for data requests and information. Things like reading a contract, virtual resumes and resume writing are important tools for students entering the workforce. Follow this link for more information <https://www.vaprojectlife.org/for-professionals/youth-skills-for-life-curriculum-3/>

Danielle Mitchell, Family Success Centers, asked about the links. Kathleen said she is including them in the meeting minutes and sending them along with meeting materials. She also noted that Khan Academy provides free online learning. The organization also offers tips for parents on how make the best out of remote learning. She felt this online learning site could be shared with Adults, as needed, for basic skills remediation. Follow this link to Khan Academy for more information <https://www.khanacademy.org/>

Kathleen also reported she is posting the achievements and outreach efforts of the WDB Committees on all social media platforms to create awareness to the public that they are active and assisting in the community even though they are not meeting in person. As an example, she will start out the post with “The WDB Literacy Committee is working with the Booksmiles Organization to collect books for distribution to families in Camden County” She encouraged everyone to follow the links she will include in the minutes to like and share posts for the Camden County Workforce Development Board.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ccwib>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/camden-county-workforce-development-board-800681156/>

Ken thanked the committee for the great attendance and all they are doing in the to promote literacy in the community. Ken said the next meeting falls on Election Day, November 3rd. Jeff suggested the meeting be moved to the following Tuesday, November 10th. All agreed. Jeff also invited the committee to attend the regional chamber’s Education and Workforce Development Conference scheduled virtually on Tuesday, October 13th at 9:00am. Jeff, Ken and Bob Regensburger, Lockheed Martin, WDB Member, will be speaking on a panel. Jeff said the WDB will share the link to that event as requested by committee members. Ken encouraged all members of the committee to vote on Election Day, November 3, 2020. He closed the general meeting. Some committee members stayed on the call to discuss their personal concerns and experiences with CASAS testing.

NEXT MEETING: The next Quarterly Board of Trustees Meeting will be held via Zoom on Wednesday, December 16, 2020 at 8:30am. The Literacy Committee will meet on Tuesday, November 10, 2020 at 8:30am. The WDB will send out meeting materials and Zoom conferencing information prior to the meeting.

Submitted by

Kathleen Varallo,

Administrative Assistant