



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Supporting the Development and Retention of a World Class Workforce

Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director

Carl A. Donato Jr., Chair

**Pathways to Literacy Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 3, 2026
Zoom Meeting at 9:00AM**

ATTENDANCE

NAME	ORGANIZATION	TRUSTEE	1/7/25	2/4/2025	3/4/2025	4/1/2025	5/6/2025	6/3/2025	7/1/2025	8/5/2025	9/2/2025	10/7/2025	11/6/2025	12/2/2025	1/6/2026	2/3/2026
Kalitan, Marilyn Chair	Kalitan Consulting	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Abrams, Larry	BookSmiles			X	X	X	X	X								X
Willmann, Michael, Vice Chair	WMSH	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Arreola, Enrique	Center for Family Services							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Beach, Patti	Goodwill			X	X	X		X	X	X						
Boaten, Roberta	NJ Dept of Health														X	X
Chisolm, Victoria	Literacy Volunteers of America		X	X	X	X	X									X
Cirii, Frank	Camden County One Stop	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X			X	X
Clark, Justin	Office of Adult Literacy (NJCOL)		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Daunoras, Heidi	Multiplicity Consulting LLC		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Donato, Carl	WDB Board Chair								X	X	X					
Rashawn Davis	Book Smiles				X											
Fithian, Danielle	Goodwill					X										
Floyd, Kwame	Teacher Apprenticeship Network		X	X												
Tiffany Probasco-Francis	Rowan University							X			X	X		X	X	X
Green, Aurella	Camden County College				X			X			X				X	X
Knopf, Dick	Marketing Professional Services			X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mauro, Jennifer	Goodwill	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			
Randall, Angela	Surviving in Strength		X	X				X	X	X		X	X			X
Rafferty, Joanne	Volunteer Literacy Advisor														X	
Thompson, Ryan	MidPenn Bank	X		X												
Hamilton, Karen	BookSmiles											X				
Emily Loughlin	BookSmiles													X		
Richelle Hardison	WDB				X											
Swartz, Jeffrey S.	WDB		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Williams, Leslie	WDB															
Vaughn, Debra	WDB			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

WELCOME

Michael Willmann, Vice Chair, opened the meeting at 9:00 AM, and asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the January 6, 2026 meeting. Motion was made by Dick Knopf, seconded by Heidi Daunoras. By majority vote to the affirmative, the motion carried and the minutes were approved. Attendees were reminded of the meeting time change from 8:30 AM to 9:00 AM for the start of all future meetings.

One Stop Career Center Update

Frank provided an update on activities at the One Stop Career Center.

- Reported increased numbers due to federal legislation changes affecting Work First clients
 - The One Stop is managing increased client volume while working to expand work experience program slots
 - Transportation remains a critical barrier for many clients
- Board of Social Services is identifying able-bodied adults with grants (over 760 identified)
- Explained the consequences of non-compliance with work requirements - clients only get 3 months of inactivity before losing benefits for 3 years
- GED testing continues (81 tests scheduled for December, 72 administered, 9 no-shows/cancellations)
- Announced Summer Youth program with 100 slots for work experience positions (8-12 weeks)
- Noted budget strain with adult education funds running low halfway through the grant year
- The One Stop will participate in the following upcoming events:
 - County Town Hall - February 5, 2026



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- Job Fair at Cherry Hill Mall - May 15, 2026

Strategic Planning Subcommittee Report

Michael Willmann presented the report from the Strategic Planning Subcommittee. He outlined six key components of the strategic plan:

- Updating the Camden County Literacy Needs Assessment (currently using 2010 census data)
- Target audience research for committee members and families of school-age students
- Identification of existing literacy support programs nationally
- Identification and collaboration with natural partner organizations
- Outreach to Title II and Title III organizations
- Creating a compendium of literacy facts/factoids for advocacy
- Heidi emphasized that distributing books is important but needs to be paired with programs that encourage deeper reading in an age of TikTok and AI
- Jeff noted the challenge of competing with smartphones and social media for children's attention
- Larry stressed the importance of getting books into homes, stating "Product in the home, the rest will follow"

The committee will continue developing the strategic plan with input from all members. Focus will be on both book distribution and programming to encourage reading.

BookSmiles

Larry Abrams discussed the challenges of distributing books from Book Smiles.

- Announced Book Smiles is moving to a 14,000 square foot facility in Cherry Hill
- Projected distribution of 3-4 million children's books annually
- Expressed concern about having books but lacking distribution channels
- Suggested using volunteers from Frank's program to help with physical aspects of book distribution
 - Frank noted transportation barriers for many clients who could volunteer

The committee needs to develop strategies to distribute books effectively throughout Camden County.

Transportation remains a significant barrier to distribution.

Empowerment Expo Discussion

The committee discussed future plans for community expos.

- Jeff: Recapped previous event in Clementon and asked for input on future locations
- Michael: Suggested continuing events in Clementon while exploring additional locations
- Heidi: Supported expansion to other locations based on needs assessment
- The committee will consider holding events in multiple locations to reach more people. Goals will be more clearly defined for future expos.

Committee Expansion and Outreach

Discussion about expanding committee membership and outreach.

- Michael: Suggested identifying and inviting government agencies and NGOs with interest in literacy
- Roberta: Proposed partnering with faith-based organizations and maternal health NGOs
 - Members will identify potential organizations to invite to future meetings
 - Jeff and Deb will compile a comprehensive list of potential partners

- Tiffany: Suggested creative programming ideas like literacy materials for public transportation

Literacy Promotion Strategies

Discussion about strategies to promote literacy in a digital age.

- Michael suggested using influencers to create videos about reading that would appeal to youth
- Jeff proposed a two-pronged approach targeting both parents and children
- Tiffany shared information about Aura V, an 8-year-old Grammy winner, as a potential influencer
- Aurella emphasized the need for quick tips for parents, noting that even 10 minutes of reading is valuable
- Heidi highlighted the issue of trust, noting people often trust unverified social media content over facts

The committee will explore using influencers and factoids to promote literacy. Materials should be multilingual to reach diverse populations

Challenges

- Transportation barriers prevent effective distribution of books to communities in need
- Competing with digital media (smartphones, social media, AI) for children's attention
- Reaching non-English speaking families with literacy resources and information
- Identifying and engaging with all potential partner organizations across Camden County
- Changing attitudes toward literacy in an increasingly digital world
- Limited resources for adult education programs at the One Stop Career Center

Critical Success Factors

- **Distribution Infrastructure:** Develop effective systems to distribute millions of books annually throughout county
- **Engaging Programming:** Create programs compelling enough to compete with digital entertainment options
- **Cross-Sector Partnerships:** Forge strong collaborative relationships across government, nonprofit, and faith sectors
- **Cultural Responsiveness:** Ensure all materials and programs are multilingual and culturally appropriate
- **Resource Sustainability:** Secure sustainable funding streams and reliable volunteer base for long-term impact

Action items

- **All Committee Members**
 - Think of a person who might help the committee's mission and invite them to join
 - Review the literacy factoids list and provide feedback or additional facts
- **Debra**
 - Send out information about the March 17th Nonprofit Summit at Rowan University
- **Enrique**
 - Finish survey draft and send to Heidi for review



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- Translate the survey once finalized
- **Heidi and Michael**
 - Continue work on target audience research and questionnaire development
- **Larry**
 - Attend National Book Access Association virtual conference
 - Share insights from the conference with the committee
- **Jeff and Deb**
 - Continue identifying natural partner organizations for literacy initiatives
 - Include literacy emphasis in the regional plan for South Jersey counties

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Dick Knopf, seconded by Heidi Daunoras. With a majority vote to the affirmative, the motion was carried and the meeting adjourned at 10:10 AM.

The next Abilities Committee meeting will be held on Zoom on Tuesday, March 3, 2026 at 9:00 AM.

The next quarterly board meeting will be held on March 18, 2026 at 9:00 AM on Zoom.

Respectfully submitted by Debra Vaughn, Executive Assistant