



**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 March 4, 2025 Minutes via Zoom**

<b>COMMITTEE INFORMATION AND ATTENDANCE</b>					
<b>NAME</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>TRUSTEE</b>	<b>1/7/25</b>	<b>2/4/2025</b>	<b>3/4/2025</b>
Kalitan, Marlyn Chair	Kalitan Consulting	X	X	X	X
Abrams, Larry	BookSmiles			X	X
Willmann, Michael, Vice Chair	WMSH	X	X	X	X
Allen, Mikala	One-Stop				
Beach, Patti	Goodwill			X	X
Chisolm, Victoria	Literacy Volunteers of America		X	X	X
Cirii, Frank	Camden County One Stop	X		X	X
Clark, Justin	Office of Adult Literacy (NJDOL)		X	X	X
D'amato, Greg	Pine Hill School District				
Dann, Carol	HopeWorks Camden			X	
Daunoras, Heidi	Pine Hill School District		X	X	X
Rashawn Davis	Book Smiles				X
Deprey, Brynn	NTIA				
Fithian, Danielle	Goodwill				
Floyd, Kwame	Teacher Apprenticeship Network		X	X	
Fugee, Antoinette	Cooper Healthcare			X	
Green, Aurella	Camden County College				X
Jenkins, Timothy	Camden Board of Education				
Johnstone, Brent	Fathers365				
Knopf, Dick	Marketing Professional Services			X	X
Mauro, Jennifer	Goodwill	X	X	X	X
McKelvey, Christopher	Councilman, Clementon Borough		X	X	X
Petty-Ford, Shawneeq	HopeWorks Camden				
Robinson, Terrenny	Net America				
Sinclair, Nidia	Camden County One-Stop				
Staples, Akeiff	Fathers365				
Stewart, Queen	Volunteer UP				
Randall, Angela	Camden County OEO		X	X	
Thompson, Ryan	MidPenn Bank	X		X	
Michelle Rohan	WDB		X	X	X
Richelle Harbinson	WDB				X
Swartz, Jeffrey S.	WDB		X	X	X
Williams, Leslie	WDB				
Vaughn, Debra	WDB			X	X

**Welcome & Approval of the Minutes**

Marlyn Kalitan, Literacy Chair, opened the meeting at 8:30am. She asked for a motion to approve the February 4, 2025 minutes. A motion was made by Richard Knopf and seconded by Michael Willmann. By majority vote to the affirmative, the motion carried, and the minutes were approved.

**Quick recap**

The meeting focused on the formation of the Pathways to Literacy Committee and the Read Across America event, with discussions on improving future events and promoting literacy programs. The committee also explored strategies for distributing books to underserved areas, including daycare centers and schools, and the potential of leveraging community organizations and educators for distribution programs. Ongoing literacy initiatives, upcoming events, and the need for improved reading scores in underserved areas were also discussed.



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**Next steps**

Jeff to reach out to Carmen Rodriguez about getting Larry in front of the Camden County Superintendents' group.

Frank to discuss with Brian Ferguson about setting up a book distribution area in the One Stop lobby.

Jeff to explore reaching out to Christine about setting up a book distribution area at the Board of Social Services.

Jeff and Michelle to update literacy data using recent school district information from the Department of Education.

Jeff and staff to continue attending local high school career days and career fairs.

The Workforce Development Board to process applications and worksite agreements for the Summer Youth Work Experience Program.

**Summary**

**Pathways to Literacy Committee Formation**

The committee discussed the official name change of the Pathways to Literacy Committee, which was approved by the Executive Committee. The focus then shifted to the Read Across America event, which had not gone as well as hoped, with only three kids attending. The committee acknowledged the event's shortcomings but expressed gratitude for those who attended.

**Summer Youth Program and Book Distribution**

In the meeting, Jeffrey discussed the Clementon library and the committee's ongoing efforts to promote it. He expressed gratitude to Heidi for connecting them with the Superintendents. The library in Clementon may not reopen but will be used by the township. Jeffrey and Marlyn also discussed ways to utilize the library's book collection, including potential revenue generation. Larry, from Book Smiles, shared his organization's resources and discussed the goal of distributing thousands of books to children in Camden County. Jeffrey proposed a county-wide book giveaway event, potentially at a strategic location with good accessibility.

**Camden County Book Distribution Proposal**

In the meeting, Larry expressed the desire to distribute books to underserved daycare centers and food pantries in Camden County, with a focus on specific locations such as Lindenwold and Camden. A proposal was made to distribute books in multiple locations to cater to people with transportation issues. Michael suggested a more strategic approach to the committee's activities, including a resource catalog for adults with literacy concerns and awards for NGOs and corporations that are helping. Frank proposed organizing book fairs in the poorest school districts in Camden County. Heidi supported this idea, mentioning the success they have had with events where they know families are showing up. Larry agreed with Frank's proposal, emphasizing the need for administrators to see the merit in their product and suggested that distribution could be facilitated by having parents and grandparents come in to distribute books to the kids.

**Engaging Volunteers in Schools and Daycares**

Larry discussed the challenges of engaging volunteers in schools, particularly teachers, and the potential of leveraging the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) for distribution programs. Heidi suggested identifying educators already involved in community events and organizing parent involvement. Larry then introduced Rishawn Davis, who coordinates their



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daycare delivery program, which has been more successful than their school-based initiatives. The committee agreed to focus on building connections with educators and community members in schools and daycares.

**Daycare Delivery Program's Reach and Expansion**

In the meeting, Larry reported that their daycare delivery program had distributed around 80,000 books since March and aimed to reach underserved areas like Camden County. He mentioned that the program was popular and well-received by daycare directors and teachers, who appreciated the opportunity to help children build their own libraries. Richard asked Larry about potential gaps in the program's reach, to which Larry pointed to the data from high-free-and-reduced-lunch areas. Heidi added that even areas with a lower percentage of free and reduced lunch families still struggle with poverty due to rising costs. The committee discussed the program's effectiveness and the potential to expand its reach.

**County Expansion and Library Initiatives**

At the meeting, Larry presented the committee with a discourse about the counties they have covered in their daycare searches. He mentioned that Camden, Gloucester, Burlington, and Mercer counties have been targeted. Larry also mentioned their recent expansion into Philadelphia, noting that they have nearly reached the same level of facilities and books in just two months. Heidi and Michelle discussed the idea of setting up small libraries in apartment complexes, with Larry suggesting Trevor Shaw, who already does this in Lindenwold. Jeffrey offered to help Larry contact the Camden County superintendents' group, and Larry emphasized the need for improved reading scores in underserved areas.

**Camden County Literacy Initiatives, Upcoming Events**

The committee discussed ongoing literacy initiatives and upcoming events. Frank mentioned placing books in the lobby for waiting families and continuing GED testing programs. Jeffrey announced a quarterly meeting on March 19th featuring a presentation on transportation in Camden County. He also highlighted upcoming events including the Hope Summit and career fairs at local high schools. The committee planned to update their literacy data using recent school district information. Jeffrey provided details on the Summer Youth Work Experience Program for Camden County residents aged 16-24.

**Adjournment**

Marlyn asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made by Heidi Daunoras and seconded by Richard Knopf. By majority vote of the affirmative, the motion carried, and the meeting adjourned at 9:18am.

Respectfully submitted by: Michelle Rohan, Committee Coordinator