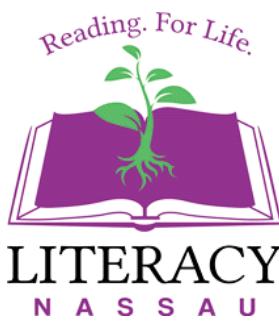


LITERACY MATTERS

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2025



Literacy Matters is a recurring publication of Literacy Nassau, Inc.

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TRAINING TEACHERS

(by Karen Micciche, Executive Director)

Since becoming a Fellow of the OGA, my work has multiplied exponentially, and I've found that I spend most of my time doing something I never imagined I'd enjoy: training public school teachers.

I am currently working with 6 cohorts of elementary school teachers! Three of them are Classroom Educator, two are Associate level, and one is Certified level. They come from a variety of backgrounds and specialties, but all share one common thread: they're committed to leveling the playing field for children in our schools who struggle to read, write, and spell.

Many of them have come to the table experienced with box curriculum reading interventions, such as Wilson or SPIRE. As they've learned how to develop individualized lesson plans and treat their lessons as therapy sessions to remediate students' dyslexia, the revelations they've had have been astounding. For example, one of my Classroom Educator trainees commented, "I can't believe I never learned about cognates in school. This is going to change everything about how I teach sound production in my kindergarten class." Similarly, an Associate level trainee recently noted, "I think I knew many of these phonics rules, but I definitely never taught them to my kids. I've been on autopilot for so long that I never realized how much was missing in the curriculum." And this, from a Certified trainee, spoke volumes: "I'm just

so grateful to be part of the solution to a deep, systemic problem that for so long has seemed insurmountable. The answer is in the effort: every session, every child brings us closer to real change."

It's been so meaningful to work with teachers who have been frustrated for so long. I remind them regularly that they are positioning themselves to be the exact kind of teacher they've always dreamed of: the kind who a child remembers years after they've left the school system. "You'll see," I've said. "One day, these kids are going to look back and consider that one teacher who changed everything for them, and it'll be you they call to mind."

As a mom, I'm so grateful to be able to lend my expertise in support of other parents whose children are manifesting the struggles associated with dyslexia on a daily basis. It's amazing to be at the helm of a new wave of literacy intervention at the district level. Once you learn about the science of reading and the power of OG therapy, you can't "un-see" it. Teachers go into the profession because they have a genuine heart for helping kids, and it's been a privilege to work with teachers who've humbled themselves to admit that they know what they're doing in the classroom isn't working. They want more. The kids deserve more. And at the end of the day, that's why I started this journey in the first place - to create systemic change.

I can't wait to see how my investment in the field continues to grow!

FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi everyone,

What a season it's been for me. In addition to all the work I'm doing in schools, I've also been navigating my own daughter's academic struggle. After years of trying different things, using OG outside of school and more sporadically than I'd have liked, we finally referred Julie to the CSE this fall, and I had my very first CSE meeting on the other side of the table - as a parent instead of as a provider - this November.

Talk about anxiety! Even though I was incredibly prepared, I was terrified. It gave me a new lens into what parents go through trying to advocate for their kids. In the new year, we'll be rolling out some new initiatives here at LN, and I can't wait to spearhead them since they'll all be focusing on parent support.

Let my struggle pave a smoother path for those who come after me. Onward!



Karen

CONTINUING OUR ORTON-GILLINGHAM TRAINING

(submitted by Kate Quijano, Senior Program Director)

After completing a full week of initial OG training over the summer, our OG trainees were assigned a practicum student who they will meet with three times per week over the course of the school year. During this time, they will video-record themselves teaching ten times so that I can observe their sessions and provide feedback and suggestions to grow as OG practitioners. I love having this opportunity to see the progress that both students and trainees are making from one video to the next.

Trainees will also attend five additional full day Saturday trainings throughout the rest of the year. Our first Saturday training focused on incorporating fluency strategies into their OG lessons. I modeled several strategies and they got a chance to role play as tutor and student. We planned ways to individualize these strategies to each of their students based on their current abilities and needs.

Trainees were then introduced to the student profile, one of the assignments that they will have to submit to the Orton-Gillingham Academy at the end of the year when they apply for Associate level certification. The profile gives a background on the student they are working with, analyzes their formal and informal assessments, and explains where and why they began instruction with their student. They had the opportunity to review each required section, view some samples, and then begin working on their own, with time for guidance and feedback.

I am looking forward to our next training in December which will focus on vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension and how to best incorporate these into the OG lesson.



Each group was assigned a part of the OG lesson plan. They discussed ways to build automaticity in that section and how it impacts the students' overall reading rate and fluency.

ESL TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

(submitted by Christine Brennan, ESL Tutor)

I am a retired New York City teacher and have taught for about 30 years. At first, I was nervous about teaching English to adults because it is brand new to me. But after a few classes, I truly enjoy it! Teaching involves a lot of planning. When teaching adults, I can ask them what they are interested in learning and that information helps guide my lessons.

My adult learners are the best part of my job! They all come prepared ready to learn. The 9 students that I have speak Spanish or Haitian Creole. We have a lot of laughs together. We are learning a lot from each other. I encourage my students to tell me right away if they do not understand or need help in any way.

I am very fortunate to be working at the Uniondale Library. Everyone has been so kind and accommodating at the library. I also have the pleasure of working with two volunteers. Mary teaches with me on Wednesdays and Janet on Fridays. I have learned so much from them these few months. They both have a wealth of information to share with me because they have experience teaching adult learners. I am very grateful to have them at my side. They are both warm, caring and

knowledgeable.

My students love to play games together and they can be very competitive. When lesson planning, I make sure we have some kind of game to play to reinforce the lesson of the day. Such games are Vocabulary Hangman or Memory. When learning prepositions, I brought in some superhero figures and had students place them in various places in the room and ask questions. For example, where is the man? He is in the box. He is under the chair. He is between the pencils. We had a lot of laughs and fun while learning prepositions!

I try to build a strong connection with my students. I share pictures and stories of my family and include my experiences as much as I can when teaching. I encourage my students to do the same. They are quick to show me pictures of their weekend and what they have done. We will soon be starting a new unit, Family and Friends, and I am planning to have everyone do a presentation by showing family and friend pictures. This is a fun way to practice the new vocabulary while getting to know each other better.



I look forward to building more connections throughout the rest of the school year. I am grateful for this opportunity to teach adult learners, something I thought I would never be interested in doing. I am eager to see the growth they have made as we move into post-testing time in December.

MY TEACHING JOURNEY

(submitted by Carol Davan, ESL Teacher)

I began my journey with Literacy Nassau in 2001, right after I retired from full time teaching in the Hicksville Public Schools. I had intended to pursue part time employment as an adjunct professor but needed something to do while waiting for an opening to occur. I started as a Basic Literacy tutor at Nassau County Correctional Institution and then took on an additional student, meeting weekly at the East Meadow Library. When I started work at LIU Post and Molloy, supervising student teachers, I limited my involvement to a single student.

I worked with Johnny for ten years and watched him progress from a non-reader to one who was capable of reading and writing. During our weekly sessions, he expressed how his gradual mastery of the written word was life changing and he gave me insight into the difficulties of the adult learner. I was thrilled when he received the Student of the Year award from ProLiteracy Worldwide and I was able to accompany him to the national convention in Tucson, Arizona.



As Literacy Nassau began to change its teaching model from one tutor with one student to small group instruction, I began to work with the ESL population. This has been a most interesting and rewarding experience for me. The diversity of my classes along with the commitment of these adult students is both challenging and inspirational. They come from many different educational backgrounds and are dealing with other issues in addition to their struggles in learning English. It motivates me to find new and fun ways to make their learning enjoyable. Recently, they watched a YouTube video which enabled them to draw a haunted house. The audio instructions coupled with the accompanying demonstration gave them the confidence to listen and follow directions and they all went home with a spooky Halloween decoration.

My current class, which meets in the Hicksville Library, consists of 20 students, ranging in age from 22 to 79. They are from Afghanistan, China, El Salvador, India, Pakistan, Peru,

Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine. They are a very congenial group and help each other when they are able to offer assistance. I've been lucky enough to have Sal Morici as my volunteer this year. Sal is retired from AT&T and is an invaluable resource to me. Not only does he assist with his advanced technology skills but plans parallel lessons to accommodate those students who are speaking and writing above the beginner level.

Building relationships with our students, without appearing intrusive, is key to motivating them to attend class. One of my hobbies is making greeting cards so I make a personal card for each student's birthday and recognize them in class on the day closest to their actual birthday. They are delighted to be remembered in this way. Since we meet on Wednesdays and Fridays, I begin each session by encouraging the students to speak about what has gone on during the days they are not in class. I use the information that they share to check in on them regularly. They have also learned to check in on each other and Sal and me as well. Sal's been unable to attend class for several weeks as his mom was in the hospital and they ask about her progress. We have formed a supportive classroom community in a very short time.

When I speak to the students about their goals for this year, everyone prioritizes learning to have conversations in English. With this in mind, I try to plan activities to enhance the lessons that are provided in the Ventures material that we are using. Ventures offers collaborative assignments which can be downloaded from the Cambridge One website. These activities require them to complete the assignment in groups of two or three. They need to talk to each other in order to finish the task. In addition, I am always searching Pinterest and Ellii for other ideas to give them practice in speaking. It is gratifying to observe how the students are able to speak about their activities outside of class with more confidence than when we started in September.

Our students never leave the classroom without thanking us for the time we spend with them. I always remind them that we are equally grateful for the opportunity to conduct our classes. We are able to learn so much about the customs and uniqueness of the countries our students represent. Although I have spent my adult life in the field of education, my experience at Literacy Nassau has been the most enriching.





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Happy Holidays

The office will be closed beginning
Tuesday, December 23rd.
We will be back on January 5th.



**Hoping the magic of the holidays
brings you peace, love, and happiness!**



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