



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

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## GURU KRUPA FOUNDATION SUPPORT SPANS OVER A DOZEN YEARS

(by Kate Quijano, Senior Program Director)

For the past 13 years, Literacy Nassau has been fortunate to partner with the Guru Krupa Foundation, a private foundation whose principles and philosophy include "helping those less fortunate than yourself, support(ing) causes related to the acquisition of knowledge, and preserving the heritage and knowledge that has already been acquired." At Literacy Nassau, this three-pronged mission has manifested in many ways -- most recently, with an expansion from specific program support to more robust, general operating support.

The partnership began in 2012. Newsday had just published a 2-page article about the services Literacy Nassau was offering, resulting in an unexpected surge in demand for those services. At the time, tutoring was entirely provided by volunteers who required training, which meant there was an urgent need to raise funds to run more tutor training sessions.

Instead of panicking, Karen Micciche saw the interest as a call to action. "I took up a letter-writing campaign. I targeted local foundations that I knew were doing really wonderful things, and sent them the article, hoping they might be willing to support us by funding additional Tutor Training Workshops."

One of the foundations that responded was Guru Krupa Foundation (GKF). Said Mukund Padmanabhan, the founder of GKF, "We have always prioritized projects

that bring literacy to the people who want it, so the request from Literacy Nassau seemed to fit right into our priorities. I attended one of the literacy workshops and was very impressed with the dedication of the volunteers and commitment of the students."

With funding from GKF, Literacy Nassau was able to bring a new Tutor Training Workshop to Hicksville, which helped cut down the waiting list in that community. That initial support expanded to more workshops during the following two years, and subsequently to Small Group Instruction (SGI), a specialized multi-tiered program that would match students with tutors in a group setting.

In fact, GKF has worked alongside LN to create and implement other programs designed to help people reach their goals. From 2016-2020, our highest level adult learners were supported by GKF in both internship and externship programming designed to deliver meaningful employment experience, coupled with job skills, across a program year. Most recently, GKF spearheaded the first English Immersion program for children ever offered by Literacy Nassau, which has been successfully running for the past 4 years.

Their support has not been restricted to specific programs -- when COVID threw a wrench into the works, GKF contributed to capital improvements that allowed pairs and groups to comfortably meet outside.

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## FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi everyone,

I'm a sucker for New Year's resolutions. Every year, my family and I sit around discussing all the ways in which we want to become better versions of ourselves for the year ahead, and this year was no different.

Along with the usual (eat healthier, work out regularly), my resolution this year is to dig in to work-life balance. For many years, I've struggled with this, almost considering it a badge of honor to overwork myself. It dawned on me recently that in 2026, Haley will start high school - and 4 years later, she'll be gone. So it's time for me to start being more available, juggling less and showing up more, and prioritizing my family. That means: If you see me at the office past 5:00 on a day other than Tuesday, remind me it's time to go home. If you get an email from me at 9:00 at night, remind me I should be helping my girls wind down for the evening. Also... if you write to me over the weekend and I wait until Monday to get back to you, congratulate me. It means I'm sticking to it.

Wishing you and yours a happy 2026!



Karen ☺

## CLASS SPOTLIGHT: FREEPORT EVENINGS

*(submitted by Chris Fields, ESL Teacher)*

Hello everybody, my name is Chris Fields. I am from Queens, New York. I have been an educator for over 10 years. I spent the first 10 years of my adult career working in non-profit starting off as a summer camp counselor then moving up to coordinator as well as after school coordinator and then moving my way up to director. During that time I worked for the Department of Education as a parent coordinator, where I discovered my love and passion for the classroom. My adventurous spirit led me to the Dominican Republic to teach English in the countryside. I enjoyed living there for about half a year, followed by a teaching stint in Costa Rica and then Colombia. I immersed myself in the rich culture, the food, the music, and the beautiful language dialects of Latin America and the Caribbean for about two years — and it felt like I was living in a dream. After teaching and living abroad, I returned home to become a public high school teacher in New York City, which is what I presently do during the day.



What brought me to Literacy Nassau is my love and passion for teaching as well as connecting and building with others. I believe having the opportunity to work with these adults can be life-changing for both them and myself. We have already learned so much from each other and built so much community in such a short time. I love learning about other people and their cultures, and I hope to visit some of the homes of where my students come from at Literacy Nassau. Right now I have about five students who come consistently. Their home countries are Algeria, Peru, Guatemala, and Colombia. Some goals they have are to practice English and become more confident speakers.

One lesson that I found to be entertaining for my students was a lesson we did on building our English Dictionaries. In the back of my students' notebooks, they have all sectioned off the back of their book for a dictionary. Here we jot brand new words, words students want to learn and their meanings for future reference. To begin putting this together, we watched a film on Netflix that had no verbal communication, however the language was conveyed via subtitles. During the film, students were to write down new words and their definitions. After the film, students shared the new vocabulary words on the whiteboard. We then practiced the words and found the definitions.

I think one way I build strong relationships with my students is through creating a safe environment. Everyone is a learner in my classroom, including myself. I am learning from my students. My students are learning from each other and they are also learning from me. However the class is a community in which we all contribute. I try to bring a lot of energy and humor to the classroom and that seems to work. We also play games and try fun activities.

I think a personal connection that my students and I have has been during what I call conversation time. There have been a few lessons where we have just engaged in having conversations with each other, led by the students. While they talk I write down key vocabulary words, grammatical corrections and phrases, and we practice having a conversation in English with each other and it is a fun time. We speak about each other's countries and lives and whatever comes to the minds of the students because they lead the conversations. It is a very fun activity that I think has built a strong bond with the class. We have learned so much from each other and about each other, all while practicing structuring sentences, grammar, and building vocabulary. This activity also offers additional time for students to build that dictionary section in the back of the books that I referred to earlier. I love to promote to them that they need to build up a strong vocabulary to help them create the phrases they want to in the long run. I also share my own struggles with living in Latin America and learning Spanish and trying to navigate, which I think helps with connection. I have been in a similar situation as they are in now.



One achievement that I can say my students have made for sure is their confidence has increased. I am not sure if the class is just more comfortable with each other or with me, or if they're just feeling more comfortable as a whole, but participation has been at an all-time high, and I see people taking risks and speaking. It is beautiful to see my students practicing, speaking, supporting and being excited to communicate in English with one another when they see each other. I think the community that is developing and the learning that is coming behind that is the biggest achievement. My students are dedicated and come consistently, late in the evening, in the cold, to do something challenging. I think each day they show up and give it their all, they have accomplished something that most people are too afraid to do: step outside of their comfort zone, be vulnerable and learn. It is a beautiful thing to be part of and I am honored to be here.

**The office will be  
closed on Monday,  
February 16th.**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
**PRESIDENTS  
DAY**

## **ABOUT THE TEACHER - RICHARD AIZER**

*(submitted by Richard Aizer, Teacher)*

Richard Aizer retired on July 1, 2025, after 27 years with the New York City Department of Education as a special education teacher — all but one of those years spent at P.S. 193, The Gil Hodges School, in Mill Basin, Brooklyn. Prior to joining the DOE, Richard served as a Staff Development Coordinator at the Shield Institute in Flushing, NY, and as a special education teacher at the Margaret Chapman Residential School in Valhalla, NY. In total, he brings more than 35 years of experience working with students with diverse learning needs.

Richard is a devoted husband and father of three, and he has lived in Oceanside, NY, since 1993. He enjoys traveling (recently visiting France with his wife), reading, and playing pickleball and tennis.

### **Literacy Nassau Connection**

During the 2021–2022 school year, Richard took a sabbatical from teaching and earned his Orton-Gillingham Associate Certification through Literacy Nassau. He continues to tutor students using the O.G. methodology and sought additional educational opportunities after retiring to remain engaged and contribute to the community. This led him back to Literacy Nassau — this time as an Adult English Language Learner (ELL) instructor — where he was excited to support adults in developing their language skills.

### **About the Class & Teaching Approach**

Richard currently teaches a class of ten adult learners speaking six native languages representing seven countries — China, Colombia, Haiti, Italy, Kazakhstan, Peru, and Ukraine. Teaching adults from such diverse linguistic backgrounds was initially a new challenge. His first priority was building meaningful relationships and fostering a supportive classroom environment.



Richard strongly believes that “students, regardless of age, don’t care what you know until they know that you care.” To support his learners, he incorporates technology and translation tools such as Google Translate, while also supplementing the Ventures curriculum with multimedia. This includes curated YouTube clips from shows like Friends and classic cartoons, followed by comprehension discussions and questions. In addition, students engage in language-building games such as WordWall and Kahoot to reinforce learning in an interactive and enjoyable way.

### **Student Connection & Support**

With a small class size, a strong sense of community has developed. Students support one another and often share personal experiences. During one discussion, a learner from Ukraine spoke about leaving his country due to war — prompting heartfelt empathy and support from classmates.

Richard also meets individually with students for case management each month, allowing him to better understand their personal goals and needs. Support may include job assistance such as helping learners register and use New York

State’s JobZone website, as well as connecting them to community resources such as CARECEN, an organization offering reliable immigration information and resources.

### **Student Goals & Achievement**

Every student in the class demonstrates a strong desire to improve their English — whether to enhance employment opportunities, communicate more effectively with family, or support their children’s/grandchildren’s education. Early progress has been notable, particularly in listening comprehension, response accuracy, and the use of correct grammar — all significant milestones given the complexities of English structure.

### **Class Summary**

Although the year has only just begun, Richard has thoroughly enjoyed teaching the Adult ELL class. In addition to classroom instruction, he values meeting individually with each student during their monthly case management sessions. These meetings provide an opportunity to better understand each student’s individual needs and to follow up on previous discussions.

Two recent highlights stand out: one adult learner is now reading Dr. Seuss books to her young son—a direct result of a class lesson in which students were read “The Cat in the Hat” in order to practice using the prepositions in, on, and under. Another learner requested lessons focused on real-life scenarios such as “going shopping in the community,” which will be incorporated into upcoming lessons.

Richard is confident that his students will continue to make meaningful progress in their English language development and looks forward to supporting and witnessing their ongoing growth and progress.



## **GURU KRUPA FOUNDATION (CONTINUED)**

GKF has also contributed to other capital projects such as the Conference Center at our Wantagh office. And their most recent commitment is for general operating support, which allows our organization to do what we do best: respond nimbly to community needs, sustain high-quality programming, and plan thoughtfully for the future.

Looking back over more than a decade, GKF is more than just a funder, they are a true partner that has helped shape the trajectory of Literacy Nassau. From alleviating wait-lists and launching innovative instructional models, to weathering a global pandemic and expanding services to new populations, GKF has been present at every pivotal moment.

As Literacy Nassau looks ahead, we are filled with gratitude and optimism, buoyed by a partner who has never wavered in the belief that access to literacy and education is fundamental to individual dignity and community strength. After 13 years, the story of the Guru Krupa Foundation and Literacy Nassau is not just one of sustained support, but of shared purpose - and a future still being written together.





**LITERACY**  
N A S S A U

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(516) 867-3580 ~ www.literacynassau.org



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our programs by  
making a donation.**

Our literacy services are accessible to disadvantaged populations of all ages by providing donation-based language-building programs.

You may continue to make this possible by donating to us directly on our website at

[www.literacynassau.org/donate](http://www.literacynassau.org/donate)

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## Literacy Nassau's OG Summer Intensive Program

JULY 6 - JULY 30  
MONDAY - THURSDAY  
9:15am-12:00noon  
FOR STUDENTS ENTERING GRADES 1-6  
Located at: 1 Ivy Lane in Wantagh

**To learn how our program can help your child join our IN-PERSON open house on one of the following dates:**  
**Monday, March 16 @ 6:00pm**  
OR  
**Monday, April 13 @ 6:00pm**  
**Early Bird Pricing: \$1900**  
**Due by April 20th.**

Daily Schedule:

- OG-based reading and writing lesson
- Snack break
- OG-based game, craft or activity
- Lesson review and/or read aloud



**To sign up for an open house please email**  
**kquijano@literacynassau.org**  
**(516) 867-3580**

Building literacy skills for students with dyslexia, or other language-based learning disabilities using Orton-Gillingham in a small group.





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