



# LITERACY MATTERS

JANUARY 2022



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

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## SATURDAY MORNING ENGLISH IMMERSION PROGRAM - FOR KIDS!

*(submitted by Karen Micciche)*

The new year often brings new initiatives, and with this in mind, we are eager to share that we are launching our Saturday morning English Immersion program for kids this month! With the help of two brand-new teachers, we will be utilizing both indoor and upgraded outdoor space to bring English to life for fifteen youngsters, ages 6-12, for two and a half hours every Saturday morning from now through June.

This pilot program, which is generously funded by the Guru Krupa Foundation, actually came about thanks to my husband, Chris. Chris is a high school Earth Science and Biology teacher. He's passionate about his work and believes that doing his job well means making sure that all children in his classes receive the highest possible level of quality instruction. Unfortunately, in recent years, he has found more and more ENL (English as a New Language) kids being mainstreamed into his rigorous, Regents-based classes. These are children who can barely speak the English language, much less navigate

the hefty vocabulary that goes along with taking - and passing - a New York State Regents exam. This past summer, in an effort to better communicate with these kids, he downloaded the Duo Lingo app on to his phone and has spent at least thirty minutes on it every day since.

Public schools do the very best they can with kids who are newcomers, but it is still often not enough, and to be fair, not every teacher is going to share the passion (or have the time) my husband has for helping all kids. With that in mind, and also after checking in with some of our low-level adult learners, we decided to develop the Saturday English Immersion Program.

The program is a combination of gross motor skills (games), fine motor skills (crafts and other seated activities) and traditional academic desk learning using a one room schoolhouse/Montessori model. Registration will take place on January 8th and January 15th, and space is limited. The program is free to all families thanks to the support of the Guru Krupa Foundation. If you know someone who could benefit from this program, please direct them to Kate at [kquijano@literacynassau.org](mailto:kquijano@literacynassau.org).

## THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

Happy New Year! I hope this newsletter finds you healthy, rested, and ready for a fresh start in 2022!

When thinking about resolutions, most people make lists of things they want to start doing. For example: I want to start going to the gym, or start eating healthy, or start saving money. This year, I challenge you to think about things you'd like to stop doing. I had a conversation with a friend recently about the power of stopping; in fact, she was the one who enlightened me about the concept. She said, "It's not enough to say you're going to start working out. Instead, stop making excuses." I thought about it, and there are so many things that could be spun this way. Instead of working on developing an attitude of gratitude, just stop complaining. Instead of saying you're going to eat healthy, just stop eating garbage. Instead of saying you're going to read more books, just stop binge watching so much TV. Stopping a bad habit is the first step towards starting a better one.

You may think it's a matter of semantics, but it's really not. So many people labor over a meal plan for all the healthy things they're going to eat, but the act of creating the menu becomes so intense that they end up at Taco Bell, binging on gorditas.

Wishing you a new year full of healthy stopping!

*Karen* 😊



So happy to kick the New Year off by putting a stop to all the things that keep us from starting something great! Happy New Year!





## 2021: A YEAR IN REVIEW

(submitted by Kate Quijano)

As we get ready to welcome the New Year, I'd like to look back on all the positives from 2021 and all that we have accomplished. We are so thankful for the continued relationships we have built with our tutors and students over the past year. Here are some of our highlights:

### Winter 2021

- We had 26 virtual ESL classes, 14 virtual conversation classes, and 4 virtual citizenship classes. We also ran the following workshops for our students: Nutrition, Health Literacy, Workplace Literacy, and Computer Literacy.
- We post-tested our Basic Literacy students to fulfill the requirements of our Dollar General Grant. It was amazing to see all the growth they made as they continued studying virtually during the Pandemic.



- On a personal note, I moved, had a new baby nephew, and got a puppy last winter.

### Spring 2021

- We had 22 virtual ESL classes, 11 virtual conversation classes, and 3 virtual citizenship classes. We also ran another Computer Literacy workshop.
- Karen and I attended the virtual OGA conference to network with other OG providers and get new resources for our students.
- We started creating our reopening plan and researching locations where we could get back to in-person tutoring.
- I started interviewing and assessing new students for our OG summer and fall program while Karen began interviewing new OG trainees to bring on board for the next cohort.



- I got a second puppy! (I know, I'm crazy, but the first one insisted she was lonely while I was at work and needed a friend). They are such great companions.

## Summer 2021

- As this began our new fiscal/school year, we registered and pre-tested all of our ELL students. We made great use of our outdoor space in testing our returning students and were able to host new student registration at a few select libraries.
- We slowly transitioned back to in-person classes. We had 10 in-person and 6 virtual ESL classes, 4 virtual conversation classes, and a virtual citizenship class.
- We began an OG Intensive Summer Program for children ages 6-12. Students received daily OG instruction and took part in crafts, games, and sports used to reinforce the skills they were learning. The summer program was a huge success. Students had fun and made a lot of growth in their reading.
- We provided initial training for our new cohort of OG tutors who would prepare to begin working with their practicum students in the fall.
- We post-tested our ESL classes. It was so nice to get to see everyone in-person and visit all the libraries again.
- My puppies learned to swim! My parents live by a lake and their "grand-dogs" enjoyed visiting them to swim in it.



### Fall 2021

- We really expanded our in-person classes as more libraries opened up for classes. We had 23 in-person and 8 virtual ESL classes, 8 virtual conversation classes, and 3 virtual citizenship classes. We also ran the following workshops for our students: Nutrition, Health Literacy, and Workplace Literacy. We welcomed many new volunteers who were eager to get back to in-person activities after so much time at home.
- NYS Ed reopened their in-person professional development offerings so we all went out to a few trainings and had the opportunity to share ideas with other literacy programs.
- We welcomed Melissa as our new full-time OG tutor. We are so happy that she is a part of our Literacy Nassau family.
- We saw a huge increase in the need for OG services within school districts. We began several new school contracts this year, which have Melissa, Jane, Karen and myself all traveling to different schools throughout the day to meet with students in need of OG services. We are so happy that word is spreading about our services and school districts are able to provide this important method of instruction to their students.



- We welcomed our new cohort of OG trainees and students to our tutoring center. We initiated a monthly activity to help students get to know each other and build a love for Literacy.

(continued on next page)



## **TUTOR SPOTLIGHT: BOB PALLESCHI**

*(submitted by Kate Quijano)*

Bob Palleschi has been tutoring with Literacy Nassau for several years. We appreciate his dedication to the program and his flexibility in teaching in various locations, levels, and formats. Bob taught virtually during the pandemic and then agreed to teach outdoors at our center in Wantagh this summer when we were just beginning to transition back to in-person classes. He has tutored alone and has co-tutored as a mentor to newer tutors. This fall, we were offered space from St. Killian's Church in Farmingdale. Bob agreed to tutor at this new location and has helped to make a strong community connection for us with this church. This is especially important as libraries are still limiting how many classes we can hold due to COVID protocols. They have been very accommodating and very appreciative of our classes. They are including our flyers in the food bags that they give out at their food pantry. We look forward to a continued partnership with St. Killian's and thank Bob for the work he has done to help foster this. We hope to see an increase in the number of students attending the St. Killian's class for the winter session.

In order to get to know Bob a little better, I asked him to respond to some interview questions:

### **How did you get involved with Literacy Nassau?**

I joined the program in 2014 after I had decided to move my career to consulting. I knew I would be home more often and would have time to offer. My wife had participated in a similar program years earlier and I had also read about Literacy Nassau, so it seemed to work fine. I had two all day training sessions with Karen serving as instructor.

### **Describe some of your experiences teaching remotely during the pandemic.**

Initially I had the class I was teaching at Hicksville Library cancelled. Then I agreed to substitute in the summer session for a tutor who dropped out for medical reasons. It was my first exposure to Zoom and it was, to be honest, a bit challenging. It took more than a few sessions to get comfortable using the remote format but eventually I came to appreciate its versatility. I then had the fall, winter and spring sessions remote and they went quite well.

## **2021: A YEAR IN REVIEW**

*(continued from page 2)*

We had a very successful November food drive for the food pantry at St. Francis de Chantal and a "Secret Snowflake" card and craft exchange in December.

- We post-tested our fall ESL classes. As we had far more classes this session, and I've been out tutoring, we recruited Carol Davan who is a long-time tutor to come on board to help out with testing. We are so thankful for her ongoing support.
- My nephew learned to crawl and pull himself up to stand. My puppies are slowly learning to walk on a leash without dragging me down the block and have started making friends at the dog park.



Bob with his co-tutor Sherry (left) and his student Yukiko (right)

### **Describe some of your experiences transitioning back to in-person classes.**

I think the only challenge is the need for hard copy materials. I tend to go through a great deal of material in a session and I needed it in hard copy. I cannot thank Anne-Marie enough for her putting up with my voluminous requests and never leaving me waiting for materials.

### **What keeps you motivated to continue tutoring?**

There are two primary motivations. First and foremost, I am sure most tutors will agree, is the appreciation that the students show. They realize we are giving our time and energy towards helping them. The other is more personal. For a period, it served as diversion during a difficult family time serving to occupy my time and more importantly providing me with an academic outlet.

### **What suggestions do you have for new tutors?**

Enjoy the students! They are a nice diverse group, all of which are worthy of our time. You will learn a great deal about other cultures. It's important to always remember this is tutoring, not grad school. We do what we can to help.

### **What are some things you like to do outside of tutoring?**

Although I am retired, I still do some consulting. I enjoy a wide array of interests. Hockey games, opera and everything in between. I enjoy this program and want to thank Kate and her staff for making it work. This year I had the ultimate reward, a former student that I spent three years with sent me a text to tell me she was proud that this was her first 4th of July as an American citizen. She came here in 2015 as a widow with two young children and spoke only Russian. Talk about a true success story.



### **Warm Birthday Wishes to our Tutors!**

Leslie Arluck–Mildred Aronson–Jonathan Baker–Debbie Buglisi–Jill Ditchik–Frank Dorf–Connie Egelman–Josephine Feldman–Marleen Fenton–Janet Gordon–Samantha Gordon Latoyra Graves–Mara Jacobowitz–Ruthann Kennedy–Jan Kerr Carol Kessler–Emma LaPrince–David Leibenhaut–Robin Lovell Rose Lowe–Kiana Mahabadi–Michelle Malone–Michael Marrin Roseann Martz–Anjana Matani–Marcia Mayer–Christine Merola Eileen Morgan–Harriet Morosoff–Marion Polizzi–Honey Prager Alice Scharf–Patricia Searby–Paula Silverman–Addy Skolnick Janet Trajbar–Nina Wachsmann–Kourtnee Wallace–Gerard Wisla



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