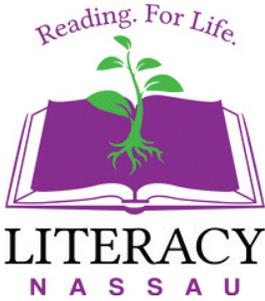




LITERACY MATTERS

APRIL 2019



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

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ONA RESTRUCTURES AS A RESULT OF IMMIGRANT FEARS

(submitted by Karen Micciche)

Anyone who follows the news knows that immigration is at the forefront of controversial political conversations everywhere. What is left unspoken is the impact of our current federal administration on American workers. What follows is a hyper-local illustration of how fear-based policies are impacting Literacy Nassau.

As shared in the January edition of *Literacy Matters*, Governor Cuomo recently revamped the purpose of the NYS Office for New Americans (ONA). New York has always been proud of it's position as the most welcoming state for immigrants in America. ONA was designed in 2011 to create Opportunity Centers in every county of the state where new Americans could go to receive any kind of help an immigrant might need. At the time, the most crucial component was offering assistance with learning English, combined with legal services and other ancillary resources to help immigrants create a new life in America.

What has happened in reaction to our current federal administration is that English is no longer the focus of ONA; instead, the focus has become legal services alone. This is a direct result of anti-immigrant rhetoric that has dramatically changed the landscape for those new to this country.

The change in ONA's funding priorities has resulted in Literacy Nassau no longer fitting the bill: despite having the capacity to provide limited legal services over the past 6 years, we are not attorneys. By design, our organization is education-based. We have received ONA funding because of our unique capacity to teach English while also providing supplemental resources to our clients. Unfortunately, due to the intense fear the immigrant population harbors, English matters a lot less, and has been replaced by a desperate need for more legal services. As a result, Literacy Nassau will not be receiving an ONA grant in 2019-20, and Digna Johnson will no longer be employed here as of May 1, 2019.

What strikes me the most is the unfortunate reality that a diligent, hard-working teacher in our program for the past 6 years has become a casualty of this administration. Digna is a working-class U.S. Citizen who is loved fiercely by her students.

The new round of funding is only for one year (prior grants have been for 3 years), so it remains to be seen what will happen to ONA if/when a new administration takes over. My hope is that one day, not too long from now, Digna will be able to return to us and New York will be able to revert back to the welcoming state it set out to be when ONA began in 2011.

THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

Spring is a time for change, and let's face it - more often than not, change is hard. At Literacy Nassau, I'm feeling the weight of the season knowing that Digna will only be here through the month of April, having Kelly go out on maternity leave, and personally preparing for the start of grad school this summer. I don't envy any of us: I remember all too well my first few nights after Julie was born (no sleep at all), I remember the last time I applied for a new job and the stress and fear of the interview process, and even though it's been almost 20 years since I was in school, I remember the first day of a new school and the anxiety I felt. The common thread shared by experiences like these is how strong we become as a result of them. Anxiety and fear breed resilience. My hope for Digna, Kelly, and even myself is that we each walk through these changes in our lives with courage, knowing that it won't be long before we have landed safely on the other side, all the wiser for having gone through it!

Karen 😊



This throwback picture was taken after I gave birth to Julie. I learned what real exhaustion was not long after!





DIGNA'S FAREWELL

(submitted by Digna Johnson)

As an ONA teacher I have had the opportunity to meet and work with students from all over the world. Ironically, before I started my teaching career, I used to say all the time, "I want to travel the world." Now I can say, through the eyes of my ESOL students I have traveled to many places around the globe. I am richer in culture, languages, and most importantly relationships. Teaching English has helped me become a better, more well-rounded person.

The ONA ESOL program is unique because of its diverse students. At first, I faced many challenges. I had to figure out how to meet the needs of each adult student in my classroom setting so I asked each student to share with me what they needed in order to reach their goals. I had to develop multiple lesson plans, including sub-plans to differentiate each lesson to my groups based on English levels. I made sure I provided quality academic lessons and I equipped them with out of the classroom survival skills. In the classroom, I wore many hats, but that was okay with me because that's what good teachers do.

I appreciate the services ONA has offered. For 6 years, ONA has welcomed immigrants to New York and provided many opportunities, which have changed so many lives for the better. Students have learned practical English skills that they can use daily. They have become better prepared to help their children with school. They've learned how to find a job or improve their current job. Students and their families have gotten help completing U.S. citizenship (N400) applications from start to finish, and have been able to visit with an attorney for free to help them with any legal issues. There have been health and financial educational workshops as well as how to start your own business workshops. For enrichment, we have hosted field trips to museums in NYC, on Long Island, to the Long Island Aquarium, the Botanical Gardens in the Bronx, and many more. Students are grateful for the ONA experiences and because of ONA many of them have developed a sense of community through the new friendships they have started with each other.

I am humbled to have had the opportunity to learn from my students these past six years. My work as an ONA teacher has been unique, sweet, and rewarding.



Above, Digna (pictured right) poses with one of her ONA classes.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF DYSLEXIA?

(submitted by Kim Nau)

20% of the general population suffers from dyslexia or another language-based learning disability. Maybe a child that you know exhibits some of these signs:

- Very slow in acquiring reading skills
- Trouble reading unfamiliar words, often making wild guesses because s/he cannot sound out the word
- Lacks strategies for reading/decoding new words
- Avoids reading out loud

Children with dyslexia also struggle with oral language skills:

- Searches for a specific word and ends up using vague language, such as "stuff" or "thing," without naming the object
- Confuses words that sound alike, such as saying "tornado" for "volcano," substituting "lotion" for "ocean"
- Mispronunciation of long, unfamiliar or complicated words
- Needs extra time to respond to questions

For an adult with dyslexia, the signs might be as follows:

- A childhood history of reading and spelling difficulties
- While reading skills have developed over time, reading still requires great effort and is done at a slow pace
- Rarely reads for pleasure
- Slow reading of most materials—books, manuals, subtitles in films
- Avoids reading aloud

An adult with dyslexia can also struggle with the following speaking skills:

- Earlier oral language difficulties persist, including a lack of fluency; frequent use of "um's" and imprecise language; and general anxiety when speaking
- Often pronounces the names of people and places incorrectly; trips over parts of words

- Difficulty remembering names of people and places; confuses names that sound alike
 - Struggles to retrieve words; frequently has "It was on the tip of my tongue" moments
 - Rarely has a fast response in conversations; struggles when put on the spot
 - Spoken vocabulary is smaller than listening vocabulary
 - Avoids saying words that might be mispronounced
- Those with dyslexia also have a variety of strengths:
- Excellent thinking skills: conceptualization, reasoning, imagination, abstraction
 - Learning that is accomplished best through meaning rather than rote memorization
 - Ability to get the "big picture"
 - The ability to read and to understand at a high level over-learned (or highly practiced) words in a special area of interest; for example, if he or she loves cooking they may be able to read food magazines and cookbooks
 - A surprisingly sophisticated listening vocabulary
 - Has a high capacity to learn
 - Successful in areas not dependent on rote memory
 - Resilient and able to adapt

Keep in mind that not every person who shows one or more of these signs, or struggles with reading, has dyslexia. There are many facets to dyslexia. Dyslexia can be diagnosed through a comprehensive evaluation by a licensed educational psychologist or other medical professionals.

(The above list was adapted from [Overcoming Dyslexia](#) by Sally Shaywitz.)

RESOURCE CORNER: POETRY LESSONS

(submitted by Kate Quijano)

April is National Poetry Month. Poetry is an important genre that often gets overlooked. Poetry offers English Language Learners an opportunity to learn new vocabulary and work with rhyme, which increases oral language skills. Practice with rhyme can include work on word families and spelling patterns in English. It is a great opportunity to practice pronunciation. Good oral language skills are directly related to reading ability.

Poems tend to be short so they are less overwhelming to students who are just learning to read English. There are many different types of poems so try out several and see which your students like best.

Poetry also offers an opportunity to look at poems from different students' countries and to compare themes across countries. Bringing in a poem from their home country would help them to access background knowledge and be ready to start reading poetry in English.

To learn more about the benefits of poetry, visit this site:

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/introducing-and-reading-poetry-english-language-learners> Here are some great ideas for how to incorporate poetry into your lessons with your students:

1. Read a poem aloud to the class and have them discuss what it means and make connections to it.
2. Do a choral reading of a poem (everyone reads it out loud at the same time) to improve fluency and pronunciation.
3. Read a short poem with a partner and draw a picture of it. This is a chance to show your creativity and to work on reading comprehension. Have other students look at the pictures and discuss if they agree that is what the poem meant.
4. Read a poem and conduct a role play of it.
5. Read a "Poem for Two Voices" created to be read in parts by partners or two small groups. Students must practice reading in a call and response fashion which builds their speaking and listening skills. Partners could even create their own poem for two voices together and present them for the class. Check out this website for more details; <https://www.playfullearning.net/resource/two-voice-poetry>
6. Research different types of poems and try them out. <http://www.readingrockets.org/calendar/valentine#poetry>
7. Take a look at this website to choose a movie that is related to poetry. You could choose some of that poet's work or a poem on the same theme as the movie to discuss & compare. <https://www.poets.org/national-poetry-month/text/watch-poetry-movie>
8. Want to know more about poets and what inspires their work? Check out these videos of poets discussing poetry. <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/poets-poetry-virtual-village-discovery-and-poetics>

Of course, everyone has different tastes in poetry types and styles; share your favorites with your class and allow students to share their favorites as well. Your personal enjoyment will show through and students will get more out of the experience. My personal favorites are short, funny poems. I love Shel Silverstein's collections of poems. Go to this site for a collection of his works: <http://www.shelsilverstein.com/books/> What's your favorite?

RECOGNITION NIGHT 2019

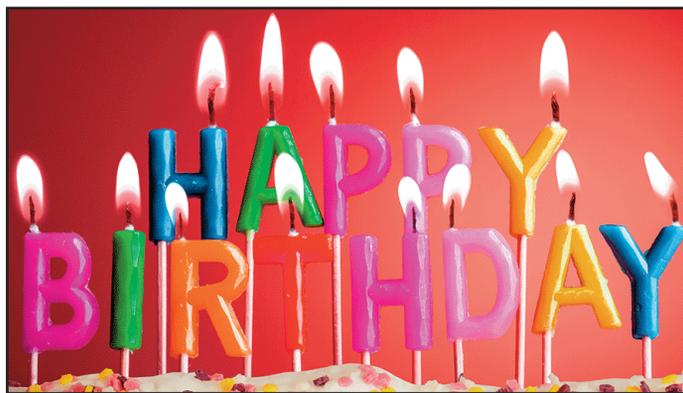
(submitted by Cindy Cabrera)

This year's Annual Recognition Night is Thursday, May 30th. It's a night where we celebrate our graduating students, give out awards, recognize our dedicated volunteers, bid on great raffle prizes and much more. Invitations will be mailed soon, and we encourage you attend this event with your students.

We are now accepting student submissions for Open Door. If you are a new tutor, chances are you may have heard of Open Door but may not know exactly what it is. Open Door is our annual published anthology of student pieces. It offers our students a creative outlet through writing. Many of our students submit written work; however, we also accept artwork and photography. We do ask students to add a caption or some thoughts about any artwork they submit. All photos must be sent as a JPEG file.

Encourage your students to submit their piece by May 1st. Give your students time to think about what they want to submit. Have a brainstorming session and think about topics they have learned about or are interested in writing about. The purpose of Open Door is to celebrate and highlight your student's journey and progress. Don't worry about having perfect grammar; we want the student's authentic voice in their piece.

Open Door writing submissions must be sent via a Word document or cut and paste the submission into the body of an e-mail. Don't forget to add the title, author's name, and tutor's name. If you have any questions you may contact your Regional Director or Literacy Specialist.



Warm wishes to the following tutors born in April!:

Kami-Leigh Agard – Mary Alibrandi – Zeba Ansari – Carol Aronin – Nancy Benchimol – Nancy Bob – Eileen Capriotti – Judy Caputo – Adrienne Carlton – Jennifer Cestaro – Kathleen Coleman – Eileen D'Antonio – Margaret Dudley – Anita Faulding – Barbara Fritz – Janet Geduldig – Lauren Gilbert – Kelsey Greene – George Greier – Michele Haber – Florence Harff – Michael Hauser – Kathleen Jeacoma – Dolores Joseph – Keon Karimababy – Lorri Klonsky – Audrey Korman – Eleanor Krebs – Carmelinda Kurtzberg – Jean Lesser Carol Markman – India McClain – Christian Mueller – Helen O'Brien – Antonia Obara – Joanne Ortiz – Carol Padovani – Josphine Palazzolo – Amy Perlmutter – Terese Pizza – Linda Podhurst – Larry Portnoi – Jane Quinton – Susan Rosenberg – Stephen Salyk – Carol Schrafel – Vasu Shah – Linda Shine – James Tenney – Debbie Uckele – Rosemary Valenti – Virginia Walsh – Joan Whiteside

