



# LITERACY MATTERS

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



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 Kim Nau, Program Director  
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## CREATING A SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR NEW STUDENT

*(submitted by Alison Orme)*

You may have heard the audible sigh of relief from the staff here in the office when post-test season finally wrapped up on June 30th. Over 500 students were post-tested across multiple programs and more than 60% of them made significant enough gains to be eligible for the next level of study here at Literacy Nassau. It is so exciting and rewarding to see the difference that our tutors are making in the lives of our students, and for many of you, this means that you will be starting with a new student or group this fall.

For those of you starting with a new student or group or who are resuming lessons after a hiatus, keep these tips in mind to create a safe learning environment for your student.

1. Stay calm and be prepared. I used to guest lecture for a marketing class at Baruch College in Manhattan. Every time, I would present to a new class and I would get a little nervous. A friend who has been a college professor for 20 years shared with me that she still gets nervous on the first day of classes. She feels that any teacher worth their salt will experience some nervousness when meeting new students. Arrive early, scope out your meeting space, prepare your lessons in advance and consider including an ice breaker. It is a great way to learn more about each other, and it will help both you and your student relax - especially during the early sessions.
2. Focus on your student's goals. Why does he want to learn English? What are his language needs? Based on what you know about him, what vocabulary does he need to learn? If you do not have enough information, please call your Literacy Specialist to find out more.
3. You may need to keep it short at the start. Working with a true beginner for two hours can be intimidating for you and overwhelming for your student. You might consider meeting for two separate one-hour sessions for the first few weeks as your student builds vocabulary.
4. Listen. It is so important for your student to practice language skills by speaking. Be sure to pause and give your student an opportunity to ask questions and also ask follow-up questions so tfluency can start to build.
5. Be kind and smile often. Never underestimate the power of body language!
6. Be patient. In the early days, the focus is on vocabulary and repetition. I read recently that in order to memorize a simple phrase in English, the average adult would need to repeat it 15 times during the day in 3 blocks of 5 over a 5 day period. And that is for a native English speaker who already knows the language! But be mindful not to over-drill without changing up the activity to keep your student engaged and your lessons fun. *(cont'd. on p.2)*

## THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

I am writing this on the first day back to the office after a blissful week in Cape Cod. My colleagues are shocked to see that I have a tan (for the first time since before I had Haley)! Our week at the Cape was awesome, filled with the four B's: beach, bike, baseball, and (my favorite): books!

My girls and I have a family tradition. Everytime we go away on vacation, instead of a toy or t-shirt commemorating the trip, I buy them each a book which I inscribe with my own memories of the trip. This week, I bought Haley a book called Stella, Star of the Sea. The story is about a girl who wants to bring her younger brother into the water with her at the beach, but he is too busy asking questions to just enjoy himself. I chose it because it reminded me of my little one, Julianne. She's constantly chasing Haley around asking questions of her. I leave it to Haley to teach Julie to relax and enjoy all that is good in the world around her. This summer, I encourage you to find a good book that reminds you of the importance of just relaxing and enjoying all that is good in the world. Then take a deep breath, find a comfy beach chair, and enjoy!

*Karen*



Summer is the perfect time to catch up with old friends, reconnect with family, or (in our case) just relax! Pictured above, Haley and Julie take a breather after tumbling in the grass.





## CREATING A SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, CONT'D.

7. Allow for mistakes. Remember the emphasis is on understanding, not perfect English. Help your student to build confidence and fluency by letting her speak without interruption. Once you observe patterns or areas for improvement, use it as an opportunity to incorporate into a future lesson plan. Let her know it is okay to make mistakes and see guideline #8.

8. Laugh with your student(s). Be sure to mix some fun into your lessons and don't be afraid to be a little silly. Recently, when I was talking to a potential student on the phone, I mistakenly mispronounced "apellido" which means "last name" in Spanish and said "abuelito" which means "grandfather" instead. We both laughed as did my Spanish-speaking co-worker who overheard the conversation. Laughter is good for the soul and is a fantastic way to start building a rapport with your student.

9. Admit if you don't know something. This is a hard one for me. I am so goal-oriented that I like to skip ahead to the answer, often neglecting the fact that the real goal is ongoing learning, not just having the right answer. It is also a fantastic opportunity to share online language resources or apps with your student so she knows where to look up information when you are not there. If you do not know the difference between a present participle and the present perfect, a great response is, "I don't know, but let's look it up."

10. Enjoy yourself. Learning a new language can have a hugely positive impact on an individual's life, but it can be extremely challenging for both tutor and student. As the tutor, be sure to relax and have fun while you provide instruction.

## STAFFING CHANGES AT LITERACY NASSAU

(submitted by Karen Micciche)

As our program continues to grow, so have the roles and responsibilities of our staff team. As summer turns to fall, you will be introduced to new faces at Literacy Nassau, and we are very excited for our staff family to add new members!

In the meantime, I am excited to announce three new promotions: Ocaria DiMango, Umama Pasha, and Kim Nau have all accepted the new role of Program Director. As Program Directors, each will be responsible for the direct oversight of one large program we offer (SGIB for Umama, SGI for Ocaria, and Next Chapter Book Clubs for Kim), as well as collectively overseeing the entire 1:1 caseload of students we work with. These new positions will give Ocaria, Umama, and Kim the opportunity to develop as leaders, as each will supervise a new staff member as well. As we work to prepare to implement new program initiatives made possible through the \$1 million commitment from John and Janet Korreich, the Program Directors will be attending trainings to become certified in Orton-Gillingham techniques and practices in the months and years to come. There are many new and exciting things on the horizon for our team and it is a pleasure and an honor to elevate these three exceptional women to this new leadership positions!

As they each transition to their new role, please be patient as we iron out our communications strategy for our tutors. You may be hearing from some of our new staff members later this summer to introduce themselves to you. Please know that our new staff members will be working under the direct supervision of Ocaria, Umama, and Kim. Despite our growth, we remain a small organization dedicated to ensuring that every volunteer has the support he/she needs to be successful.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Happy birthday to all of our tutors born in August!

Amina Ahmed	Carol Barnes
Eleanor Blackman	Phyllis Blum
Elinor Brown	Maggie Cilingir
Kathy Clarke	Natalie Colaneri
Judy Elfenbein	
Barbara Entes	
Marcie Granick	
Anita Greenman	
Rocert Hackett	
Patricia Hanlon	
Cheree Himmel	
Harriet Kaufman	
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Patricia Rossi	
Ann Scavetta	
Reed Toscano	
Suzanne Valls	
Bridget Ward	



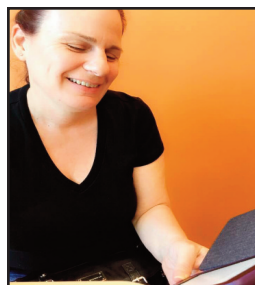
## SUMMER READING SELFIES

What are you reading this summer? We caught up with some of our staff members to check in and see if they had any recommendations!



*Hands Free Life* by Rachel Macy Stafford is about the distractions of technology and how to stay in the moment. Kim is halfway through this book and so far, it's inspired her to get out in nature more and give 100% of her attention to her daughter more often.

*Here's to Us* by Elin Hildebrand is a novel about 3 women who all married the same man (at different times) being summoned together to spread his ashes after his untimely death. Karen admits that she loves to read "chick lit" in her limited free time!



*A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman is a comical, heart-warming story about a man who appears to be a curmudgeon but turns out to be anything but. Renae highly recommends this book for a nice summer read; it was also turned into a movie (if reading's not your thing)!







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## FIREFLIES

*(submitted by Kim Nau)*

My ten-year old daughter is shy and it can take her a while to warm up in new situations. I was beginning to become concerned because often times, it is the shy students in class that can get overlooked or lost in the shuffle (I know because I was one of them). I read an article recently by Rachel Macy Stafford who shared about her young daughter who is like a "firefly." She explained that some individuals are outgoing like bright, colorful butterflies, but others shine from within, like a firefly. I just loved this analogy and her article, Children Who Shine from Within, brought me to tears.

This leads me to the topic of my article. Those quiet students, or reluctant book club readers, just need their opportunity to shine. It is amazing when that moment comes where they finally begin to feel comfortable and open up. Sometimes it can be as simple as taking the time, after your session, to speak with them personally and boost their self-confidence. Share specifics about their progress and express how you have seen improvement. Understandably, English language learners have anxiety about speaking a language other than their native tongue. Book club members might also be nervous about reading aloud in a group setting.

In one of our Next Chapter Book Clubs, there was a woman who chose not to read aloud for weeks. Weeks would pass, pages would turn, and she would not participate. After one book club meeting, one of the facilitators pulled her aside and took the time to speak to her and encouraged her to give it a try. Soon after, she finally read aloud and it was such a powerful moment. She read, and she read well. She just needed that extra reassurance to feel more comfortable and secure before she could let her light shine.

I encourage book club facilitators to give book club members a Certificate of Accomplishment when they complete a book. For them, a simple piece of paper that shows that they read an entire book means the world. In some cases, it's the first time they ever read a book.

Please do not overlook the power of praise and encouragement. Some students will be butterflies and others need some extra help in order to shine brightly and to succeed.

## SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

*(submitted by Alison Orme)*

Literacy Nassau would like to thank the Nassau County Bar Association for their generous gift of \$2,500 to improve adult literacy in Nassau County. This gift was made through the WE CARE Fund which was founded in 1988 by NCBA Past President Stephen Gassman. Charitable grants are given to improve the quality of life for children, the elderly and others in need throughout Nassau County. We will be using our grant to expand our Next Chapter Book Club program. Thank you Nassau County Bar Association!

