



LITERACY MATTERS

AUGUST 2015

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



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SUMMER SIZZLES WITH THE LAUNCH OF SGI FOR BEGINNERS

(submitted by Barbara Fody)

Small group instruction (SGI) has been an outstanding success, where intermediate-level students receive 48 hours of English instruction over 12 weeks, and their tutors creatively adapt a pre-set curriculum to the needs of their groups. SGI has also enabled our 1-to-1 tutoring program to focus on low-level students.

Two factors have accelerated the need for small groups to be dedicated for beginners. First, while small group instruction for intermediate students has significantly decreased the wait time for beginning students, the wait time has not been entirely eliminated, due to student/tutor availability and library preferences. A similar program specifically designed for beginners closes the gap between new student registration and student / tutor pairing.

Second, the NYS Education Department holds us to the benchmark of serving 50% of our student population at the beginning level beginning in fiscal year 2015. While many tutors have been actively and successfully working with beginning English Language Learners for months and even years, more tutors than ever will need to be recruited and paired with beginning students.

Preparing to serve a significantly larger number of beginners and leveraging on the success of the small group instruction model, the Literacy Specialists launched a pilot in April 2015 called SGIB: Small Group Instruction for Beginners. Over 80 students attended 15 hours

of instruction in basic English skills with carefully crafted lessons covering survival topics: greetings, weather, clothing, family, physical descriptions of people, and daily activities, such as "getting up," and "cooking dinner." After completing 15 mandatory hours of instruction, eligible students were paired with an individual tutor to continue studying English.

The pilot outcomes were unconditionally positive and paved the way for the official launch of SGIB in July 2015 in locations with the highest number of beginners: Uniondale, Westbury, Freeport, Hicksville, Farmingdale, and Great Neck. Many thanks to the tutors who will teach 5 weekly sessions in July and August, 2 hours/week: Matilda Tobin, Josh Tobias, Rhonnie Fischman, Lynne Borah, Antonia Obara, Dilia Kamensky, and Pat Regan.

In summary, the goals of SGIB are:

- To assess the student's commitment to attending regularly scheduled classes, and therefore, the ability to meet with an individual tutor on a regular and consistent basis.
- To assess the student's motivation to engage with the English language.
- To build a preliminary foundation in English, which the individual tutor and student, working together, will expand and deepen.

What happens when students, who after annual testing and a consultation with the tutor, are no longer considered beginners? An excellent question which will be addressed in the next issue of Literacy Matters!

THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

One thing you're never told when you're getting ready to have a baby is that they grow up really, really fast. All of a sudden, my little Julianne is 20 months old, and is finally finding her voice. Haley (who is 3 now), is excited that she can now play with her little sister, and is always in a big hurry to teach her new things. The catch phrase of the moment is, "Gooley (Haley's name for Julie) can do it too!" I find myself constantly reminding Haley that Julie is just a beginner - that she needs time to learn and discover things on her own. Honestly, I have to remind myself of the same thing. I get so frustrated sometimes when Julie throws tantrums because she doesn't have the words yet to convey what she needs or wants. I have to remember the stages of language acquisition: she's spent the past 20 months listening and taking in all these words, and now she's learning to speak. It won't be long before she's totally verbal, but for now, patience is key. It's a good reminder for all of us who have beginners in our lives.

Karen



My two little ones are becoming the best of friends, but like any good relationship, communication and patience are key.





TUTOR SPOTLIGHT: MAXENE LIVERPOOL

(submitted by Alison Orme)

Maxene Liverpool is a retired senior originally from the Midwest and a graduate of The Ohio State University with a Bachelor of Arts Degree. She raised 3 sons and made her living as a licensed dental hygienist. When one of our Literacy Specialists, Barbara Fody, first asked her to consider tutoring a beginner English language learner, she said, "no." The rest, as they say, is tutoring history!

"Nassau County is so rich with volunteer programs that I wanted to give back to the less fortunate. I became interested in Literacy Nassau reading an article in Newsday entitled 'Call for Help' in the fall of 2012. To me, teaching adult beginners in anything is different than working with young children. I remember being a beginner in piano lessons in my early 40's. My first teacher approached it from the real beginner level format with concepts, history and theories. As an adult, all I wanted was to learn a few chords and to be able to play music from beginner song books. Fortunately, my second teacher understood my goal and formatted my

lessons toward that goal.

With my student, Juan, I keep it simple. I do not want to overload him with verbs, pronouns, adjectives, articles etc. I am trying to help this 54 year old man become functional in English. We spend most of our time just speaking in English. We even start in the library lobby reading their posters and discussing their exhibits. We read children's books and discuss the pictures and I go out of my way to define words that Juan is not familiar with. He discusses his week with me, every week. As homework, I give him worksheets from websites that have been provided to me by the staff at Literacy Nassau. I especially like the www.eslpdf.com worksheets.

Success in helping a student accomplish his or her goals also depends very much on the person you are working with. Juan is serious, dedicated, and determined and he shows up every week, on time. I am proud of his success and enjoy working with him."

CONGRATULATIONS!

Welcome to our newest tutors:

Diane Dwyer
Janice Emanuel
Anita Faulding
Marleen Fenton
Rhonnie Fischman
Carol Fletcher
Carol Garbarino
Lindsay Granat
Dilia Kamensky
Sarah C. Lilly
Kristen Luft
Susan Malinauskas
Christina Martin
Judy McClusky
Aruna Paingankar
Amanda Persico
Linda Pierce
Naomi Robles
Gail Sachs
Ellen Spector-Haigney
Joshua Tobias
Natalie Wilkins

Congratulations are also in order for our newest U.S. Citizens: Luz Giraldo, Elizabeth Cagua, and Kiran Riaz!

SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT: MANHASSET COMMUNITY FUND

A special thank you to our friends at the Manhasset Community Fund Greentree Foundation Good Neighbor Fund for their grant of \$7,500 for our Small Group Instruction (SGI) Program! Their mission is to raise funds for the charities and organizations that serve the Manhasset community by public contribution from individuals and businesses in Manhasset, and to distribute those funds among participating charitable institutions like Literacy Nassau. Their grant will support the expansion of our SGI Program. We are very excited to have the support of such a prestigious organization! Thank you!



VACATION IDEAS

To give you some vacation ideas, here is a short submitted for Open Door entitled "Beautiful and Short Vacations" by Javier Cuartas. Javier is an English language learner in Sandy Pesce's class here in Freeport.

"My wife, my daughter, my grandson, and I went on vacation last December. We started from New York and went to Denver, Colorado by airplane. From there we rented a 4 by 4 Toyota, which we needed because of the winter-time weather. We visited some National Parks in Colorado, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and California. In some of them we shared experiences with some persons coming from different parts of the world. They have similitudes with us, they and we were

looking for: animals, birds, sunsets, sunrises and different and attractive views; we saw a lot of them and took hundreds of pictures.

We traveled by car for 15 days through six States: (Colorado, Utah, Arizona, Nevada, California and New Mexico). We drove about 3,500 miles and visited many National and State Parks; even though the weather wasn't so good. For example, December 31, we stayed in the National Park of Grand Canyon in Arizona and there we had a large snowstorm, even though we enjoyed it and took a lot of photos, also visited special places as Sanctuaries of birds, beautiful Canyons in Utah, Arizona and Colorado.

In the Petrified Forest National Park,

where the trees had become stone, you can't take any small stones, because if you do you can go to a prison even though you can sit on them. The process of the trees becoming stone takes thousands of years. While we traveled from Colorado to Nevada, we saw The Hoover Dam Hydroelectric Powerplant; it's one of the largest dams in the US. It's on the border of two states, Arizona and Nevada. There are 17 main turbines used to generate energy for Nevada, Arizona and California. On the Arizona side, there are nine turbines, and eight on the Nevada side. When we cross over the bridge, from one side to the other side, there is an hour of difference.

The other hand and the most important feelings was the happiest shared by ourselves."





You are "cordially" invited to a divine evening of delectable cuisine perfectly paired with carefully selected wines...

August 25, 2015 ~ 6:00 pm
The Fox Hollow
 7725 Jericho Turnpike
 Woodbury, New York 11797

\$95 per person/\$900 for a table of 10
Business casual attire

Fabulous door prizes, raffles, and a 50/50 will all enhance the evening's festivities!

All proceeds benefit Literacy Nassau, whose work teaching adults to read, write and speak English has improved the lives of thousands of Nassau County residents. This event is being graciously hosted by Board Vice President Stephen Bendernagel.

Seating is limited. All seats must be purchased in advance. Please RSVP below:

Name: _____ Number of Tickets/Tables: _____
 Address: _____ I cannot attend but would like to donate: \$ _____
 City/State/Zip: _____ I will be paying by (Circle one): Check Credit Card
 Phone: _____ Type of card: _____ Card #: _____
 E-Mail: _____ Exp. Date: _____ Sec. Code: _____

Please detach this portion of your invitation and mail it back in the envelope provided. See you there!

SAVE THE DATES!

A Day of Bridge - Friday, September 25, 2015

Sponsored by the John and Janet Kornreich Charitable Foundation, Literacy Nassau's Day of Bridge will be held on Friday, September 25th. At Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock, the day will include catered breakfast and lunch, a lesson from bridge expert, Aaron Silverstein, and a full morning of game play. Complete with amazing raffles and a goody bag, it's a great opportunity to bring a friend who enjoys bridge and who might be interested in learning more about becoming a tutor with Literacy Nassau. Tickets are \$45 per person with discounts available for a foursome.

Literacy Nassau's First Annual Tutor Conference - October 17, 2015

Join your fellow Literacy Nassau tutors for a full day of informative, enjoyable, hands-on workshops presented by Literacy Nassau staff and special guest presenters. The conference promises to be a great opportunity to meet with other tutors and share best practices while you expand your own tutoring knowledge and skills. We are currently planning out our workshop topics but are open to your suggestions. Please email us at mail@literacynassau.org and put "Conference Topics" in the subject line to let us know what you would like to learn about. You won't want to miss it!

PRONUNCIATION TRICKS

(submitted by Kim Nau)

The fall semester equals new beginnings and, as with any new start, we need to commence with a strong foundation. According to pronunciation expert, Robin Walker, competence in all 4 literacy skills is closely related to competence in pronunciation. Poor pronunciation not only affects students' spoken comprehensibility but it can also negatively impact their writing since some students write the way they speak. For example, if a student writes, "I wheel feel up these cup", what he/she really means to write is "I will fill up this cup". This is not a writing error but a pronunciation error. Students need to retrain their mouth muscles to create sounds specific to the English language.

Pronunciation is more than having students "parrot", or repeat, after their language instructor because they may have difficulty hearing the nuances between similar sounds. It is beneficial to demonstrate how some sounds are produced. Below are some hands-on, multi-sensory pronunciation tricks to help students improve their literacy skills:

Tongue Twister Trick—Tongue twisters are the default pronunciation activity for many English language teachers. Tongue twisters are sentences constructed with similar sounds and I believe that they can be effective if the purpose is to exercise the jaw and the mouth muscles to enable students to speak the target sound with ease. A twist to having students simply repeat these senseless sentences is to have them create their own tongue twister with a partner. The activity can be scaffolded having the tongue twisters answer the following questions:

Who?

What did he/she do?

Where?

When?

Why? (because...)

For example, Sara (who) sang a song (what) at the seaside (where) on the sixth of September (when) because she saw sunshine (why).

Rainbow Trick—The Color Vowel Chart is a highly effective visual tool that was developed by Shirley Thompson and Carol Taylor. This chart illustrates that every word has a color based on its primary stress.

(continued on page 4)





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PRONUNCIATION TRICKS, CONT'D.

For example, green tea, silver pin, black cat, or brown cow. Visit www.colorvowelchart.org for downloadable resources and creative uses on how to implement this powerful tool in any English language classroom.

Straw Trick—Students can use a drinking straw to help them differentiate between the problematic /r/ and /l/ sounds. They place a straw horizontally between their lips and when they say the /r/ sound correctly, the straw will remain in place. Conversely, when they say the /l/ sound, the straw will fall out because of the tongue placement.

Vibration Trick—When teaching the present tense, be sure to stress the difference between the ending sounds. For example, the present tense verb “walks” ends with an /s/ sound and “watches” ends with a /z/ sound. To help students understand the voiced and voiceless sounds, I have them gently place their finger on their neck. When they say the voiced /z/ sound, they will feel their vocal chords vibrating. When they correctly say the voiceless /s/ sound, they will not feel any vibrations.

Feather Trick—Students can hold a feather (or a tissue) in front of their mouth to help them visualize the puff of air needed for a “plosive” sound. When they make the /b/ and /p/ sounds, the feather will move due to the pressure from the air escaping from the mouth.

Rubber band Trick—This is a simple way to assist tactile learners with word stress. This technique can be taught using the 50 states. Model how to pronounce the state names (which are challenging to many English language learners) and have the students use the rubber band to stretch out the stressed vowel sound in each state name. Here are some examples: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, and Arkansas (stressed syllables are underlined). Students hold the rubber band between their thumbs and stretch it every time they pronounce the stressed syllable (which is LOUDER, longer, and with stronger emphasis than the other syllables.)

Toobaloo Trick—You can purchase a small plastic device, called a Toobaloo, to magnify students’ voices and provide them with auditory feedback. They will speak

into the device and hear themselves making the sound that they are struggling with. It is also an effective self-monitoring tool for individual students. If you are unable to find a Toobaloo, you can also purchase inexpensive PVC pipe joints from a home improvement store and they should work just as well.

I frequently remind my students that “perfect practice makes (almost) perfect”. Native-like pronunciation does not happen magically but with the abovementioned tricks, we can help students speak with more confidence, ease, and fluency.

JUST FOR FUN: Find the below PHRASE in one of the articles in this month's newsletter.

“carefully crafted lessons”

When you do, call Alison Orme at (516) 867-3580 x21, and you will receive a gift card of your choice (limit \$10).

Are you enjoying the new monthly newsletters? We'd love to hear your feedback and what you want to hear more about.