



LITERACY MATTERS

DECEMBER 2020



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

What You'll Find in this Issue:

Curvy C and Straight K	2
Happy Birthday!	3
Guru Krupa Extern Hired	3
Office Holiday Hours	4

Our Staff Team

Karen Micciche, Executive Director
 Anne-Marie Poliviou, Executive Assistant
 Renae Katz, Bookkeeper
 Kim Nau, Director of OG Services
 Kate Quijano, Adult Program Director
 Jessica D'Aprile, Americorps VISTA

Our Board of Directors

Judith Beckman (Pres.), Financial Solutions
 Susan Santoro (VP), Oceanville Mason Supply
 Iris Grover (Secretary), Reading teacher (ret.)
 Sean Miller (Treasurer), TD Bank
 Wendy Ehrlich, OppenheimerFunds (ret.)
 Dorita Gibson, NYC Dep't. of Education (ret.)
 Melissa Grote, Sunrise Medical Labs
 Irv Miljoner, US Dep't. of Labor (ret.)
 Stefanie Singer, Novogradac
 Craig Weintraub, Weintraub Films

WORKING TOGETHER TO ENSURE STUDENT SUCCESS

(submitted by Dorita Gibson, Board Member)

We are 9 months into the pandemic and while our educators have faced many challenges, so too have their students and, of course, their families. Although parents often are in the dark about what goes on in the classroom, during the first part of the pandemic our parents became the teachers. It is still important for parents, guardians, and caretakers to be active participants in their children's education.

Educators work hard to be positive, to keep parents/guardians informed, and to provide a safe instructional environment for students. Questions about state and city exams, graduations, SATs, ACTs, and Regents Exams being canceled (again) create anxiety for students. Many are asking, "Will this ever be over? Is this the new normal?"

There are no answers, but clearly the world has changed and our educators are continue to wonder how best to educate children in this COVID-19 era. Research has shown there is no "perfect" solution. At this point, some schools in New York State and around the country are open, some 5 days a week, others between 1 and 4 days for in-person instruction. There are public, private, and parochial schools around the state that are open 5 days a week for all-day, in-person instruction. Many schools are using a hybrid

approach, allowing students to work online using instructional technology platforms. Solutions vary from school to school.

I spent 36 years working for the NYC-DOE, 16 years in various administrative positions and 7 of those years as the Deputy Chancellor. However, the 8 years I spent as a middle school principal were most rewarding despite their challenges. Two things that I know for sure are: 1. Children are resilient; they will survive this, and 2. Work happens in the classroom.

I have the utmost respect for teachers. I also know that a good principal can make the world of difference in the success of his or her teachers and students. My heart goes out to all building leaders as many of them have sacrificed their own families to make sure that their school community is safe day in and day out.

During this time, a principal is faced with many challenges, including how to create a safe, supportive environment for teachers, guidance counselors, and the entire school staff, how to ensure that all students have access to rigorous, standard-based instruction, and how to provide much-needed professional development, particularly now because teachers need to learn and expand their technological skillset in order to adapt to the pressures associated with remote learning. *(continued on page 2)*

THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

It's hard to believe this year is finally ending. Each and every one of us can compile a list of things that went wrong: plans that got canceled, loved ones who became sick, money problems, and more. When my cat passed away in October, I thought to myself, "Will this ever end?" Then I realized, joy is not a *right*. I cannot just demand that the world bring me joy. Joy is a privilege - and sometimes, it comes in the form of giving to others.

After swearing up and down that I would never get another cat, my husband (pictured here) and I decided the house didn't feel right without a pet. My girls were sad and I was pretty miserable, too. Then, Chris and I went to Last Hope Animal Rescue to meet Candy Corn (Cici), an aptly named calico kitten who needed a home. We brought her home, surprising our girls, and in the past 6 weeks, she has brought us all so much joy - but not just because she's so cute. It feels good to know that we rescued her. This holiday season, help someone (human or otherwise), and give yourself the gift of selfless joy.

Karen 😊



Christmas joy is a bit harder to find this year, so we did what a lot of people have been doing - we adopted a new kitten! Cici is the happiest part of our 2020!





WORKING TOGETHER (CONT'D. FROM PG. 1)

Perhaps the biggest source of stress for educators and building leaders is that despite the pandemic, the expectation remains that instruction be impactful and lead to student success. This expectation exists for *all* students, including those who struggle the most, such as special needs students and students for whom English is a new language. There are also the needs of gifted children to consider - those who are in "accelerated" programs. During COVID-19, teachers and administrators have had to juggle elements we used to all be able to take for granted in with their primary charge of educating students.

If you are unsure what role teachers should play during this unique time, below is a list of reasonable expectations for your reference.

- Teachers should deliver a modified curriculum grounded in instructional standards.
- Use instructional methods that allow for coherence between students working online and in-person through the use of instructional technology platforms.
- Design an organizational structure that encompasses an individualized approach – i.e. an IEP (Individual Educational Plan) for every student.
- Communicate with facts. Community and parent involvement is essential. Because the pandemic is ever-evolving, questions need to be answered continually and lines of communication should be open.
- Utilize guidance counselors and social workers. Social emotional awareness is critical and must be addressed on all levels. In addition, schools must provide mechanisms to track students who are no-shows or not participating in online instruction.
- Work with principals, administrators and health officials to ensure proper use of PPE and adequate testing and tracking of COVID-19.

These are difficult times for all educational programs from nursery schools through higher educational institutions. Ideally, we want and need our students to be educated with their peers in a school building because that is the best place for them to actively participate in their learning. However, in this era, we need to design a safe and healthy learning environment.

Below are some ways to help educators during this time:

- Thank your principal, your teachers and all staff members.
- Thank your school safety agents, crossing guards, bus drivers, lunchroom workers, and school nurses.
- Make sure your children follow all school safety rules such as washing their hands and wearing a mask.
- Make sure your children are actively engaged in their online classes. This is a challenge for working parents, however, checking completed schoolwork every evening will encourage students to complete required assignments.
- When you have a question, send a letter or an e-mail to your principal and patiently wait for a reply.

We are all in this together. Students need structure, social interaction and the support that only a school environment can provide. Until students are back in school full time with a daily schedule, it is important to understand that online learning and instructional technology has become part of the learning ecosystem. It is imperative that schools continue to invest in professional development to improve the delivery of content on a remote platform as part of their teaching repertoire.

CURVY C AND STRAIGHT K

(submitted by Kim Nau)

I have been studying Orton-Gillingham for about four years now. I recently learned something new that I wanted to share because I feel that it would be applicable to our OG tutors, BL tutors, and our tutors of ELLs.

Pop Quiz

C and K both make the /k/ sound, so how do you decide which one to use at the beginning of a word?

- a. Use c immediately before a consonant
- b. Use k immediately before some vowels
- c. Use c immediately before some vowels
- d. All of the above

The correct answer to this question is D but let me share the reason behind that answer.

C is made of a big curvy line so let's name it **Curvy C**. K is made of straight lines so let's name it **Straight K**. We spell words with C when a curvy vowel (a, o, u) comes immediately after the /k/ sound. We also spell words with Curvy C immediately before consonant letters in blends. Here are some examples:

- cat** (curvy C is followed by curvy a)
- cotton** (curvy c is followed by curvy o)
- cut** (curvy c is followed by curvy u)
- scram** (curvy c is followed by consonant r)
- clap** (curvy c is followed by consonant l)

Since Straight K is made up of straight lines, it goes immediately before the straight vowels: i, e (e has a straight line across the middle), and y. Here are some examples:

- kitten** (straight k is followed by straight i)
- kept** (straight k is followed by straight e)
- sky** (straight k is followed by straight vowel y)

Students need direct and explicit instruction of this rule and they will be able to spell C and K words correctly.

Rule: Curvy C goes immediately before curvy a, o, u, and consonants. Straight K goes immediately before straight e, i, and y.

Spelling is something that many of us take for granted. We automatically know which letter to choose when spelling a word with C or K. However, for students with dyslexia or English language learners, this can be very difficult for them to determine because both letters make the same sound. The most effective strategy is to explicitly teach students the rules behind spelling the /k/ sound so that you can set them up for success.

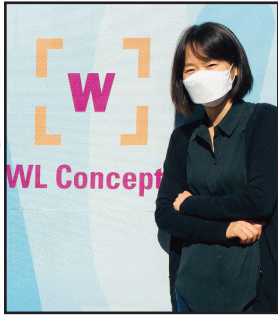




GURU KRUPA FOUNDATION EXTERN HIRED

(submitted by Kim Nau)

Mihye Go is a graduate of our highest level English Language class. Her work ethic in that class prompted us to offer her an opportunity to interview for our Guru Krupa Foundation Externship program. This foundation provides us with funding to offer paid job experience to our higher level students. These positions enable them to improve on their language skills and gain valuable work experience. Mihye was placed at WL Concepts and Productions, a local family-owned business, and was offered a full time position. Here is what she had to say about it:



1. What is your position at the company?

I am working in an administrative staffing role in the accounting department at WL Concepts. My work schedule is usually on Tuesdays and Thursdays. It's twice a week, 5 hours a day.

2. What did you learn from your externship experience?

At first, I learned more English while working with nice people. Also, I learned how to send invoices via an online platform, how to create purchase orders, and post invoices using Quickbooks, which is an accounting software package. I am learning more details about invoices and advanced skills to use Quickbooks.

3. How did COVID impact your externship?

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I had to stop my externship and stayed at home for almost seven months. However, when things improved, I was able to return to work.

4. What was your reaction when you were hired to stay on staff after the completion of your externship?

I was so delighted to have the offer and appreciated them giving me the great opportunity. Right after the meeting with Mr. Levine, I called my husband and shared the good news.

5. What do you like best about working at WL Concepts?

I like best working with people who are very nice. They always try to help me.

6. The Guru Krupa Foundation funded the externship program. What would you like to say to them for this opportunity?

I want to thank the Guru Krupa Foundation for giving the opportunity. Because of the foundation's generous support, I could have a valuable externship opportunity. Without the foundation's help, it would not be possible for me to have this job!

MY YEAR OF SERVICE

(submitted by Jessica D'Aprile)


As my year of service as an AmeriCorps VISTA comes to an end, I reflect upon all that it has offered me. This year has impacted my life in many ways, all of them being positive. I have found myself becoming more introspective and extrospective, contemplating where my priorities lay in life and in our community. Helping others has always been a passion of mine, and working as a VISTA helped fortify that passion, revealing all of the different ways there are to help the community. I was able to see many different societal issues that I would have never known existed.

Not only have I developed on a personal level, I have also grown tremendously professionally. I have been immersed in different trainings and activities, which have stretched my skill set and broadened my outlook. Learning the ins and outs of a non-profit organization, working closely with co-workers and peers, and learning to be dynamic in the workplace are all highlights of my professional development. I have been able to foster friendships with people who have varying points of view, challenging me to reflect upon my own beliefs and make sure I am constantly developing them. This has also helped me to expand my understanding of the world and our community.

Finally, this term has helped me to contemplate my career path and my areas of interest, further preparing me for the pursuit of a doctorate degree in cognitive neuroscience. I am currently preparing applications for graduate school. My long-term goal is to conduct research studies that advance our understanding of brain function and cognition.

This year has been unique for all AmeriCorps VISTAs due to COVID-19. Normally, VISTAs are not allowed to work from home, as it inhibits us from fully immersing in the workplace experience. With COVID-19, the CNCS released a mandate allowing VISTAs to work from home until safe conditions returned. Having worked from home March through June, I felt this impact and loss of the full experience. Being able to come back in June was a breath of fresh air. I am fortunate enough to be the only VISTA in the cohort that was able to return to working in the office; all of my peers still remain working from home. Many of my peers feel as though this has had adverse effects on their work output and on their relationships with their organizations, in some cases feeling isolated from their organization. With this in mind, it has been a difficult time to be an AmeriCorps VISTA.

I feel extremely lucky to have Literacy Nassau as my host site, as I have felt welcome since the first day of service. Karen and the staff at Literacy Nassau have shown me patience and kindness through the process of learning the best practices of capacity building and volunteer management. Literacy Nassau has offered me a warm, supportive environment, allowing me to look forward to going to work every day. I have been fortunate in my experience as a VISTA to have such a strong support system. Being an AmeriCorps VISTA is a commitment that some may hesitate to make, but it is one that I highly recommend. If you are considering becoming an AmeriCorps VISTA and would like guidance regarding the process, feel free to contact me at jdaprile@literacynassau.org



Warm Birthday Wishes to our Tutors!

Anita Achkhanian – Linda Bernstein
 Laura Blanca de Silva – Anita Bloom
 Mercedes Carbonell-Scudero – Marie Gruen – Fran Dowling – Lauri Sacco
 Johanna Eposito – Helene Fleisig – Fran Fox – Patricia Goldberg – Julie Goldstein – Kathleen Gyves – Georgene Harrison – Georgine Hartenfels – Maryann Harvey – Nancy Keegan – Leslie Leber – Lilianna Llanos – Maureen Lomangino
 Janice Mazzari – Andrea McLaughlin – Susan Molinelli
 Neil Moran – Salvatore Morici – Kathie Novak – Robert Palleschi – John Pizzo – Sue Rachell – Timothy Reedy – Shivani Devi Singh – Barbara Spun – Harshini Suresh – Sheldon Wald



