



**CITY OF MONROVIA
LIBRARY BOARD
AGENDA REPORT**



DEPARTMENT: Community Services
Library Division

MEETING DATE: February 24, 2022

PREPARED BY: Jade Mushisky
Literacy Coordinator

AGENDA LOCATION: AR-1

TITLE: 2020/2021 Literacy Services Update

OBJECTIVE: To update the Library Board on the status of Literacy Services.

UPDATE: Due to delays related to the pandemic and a change in Literacy Services staffing, this report period covers July 2020-December 2021.

Tutors/Learners

Between July 2020 and December 2021, there have been a total of 52 learners served in the program who completed at least one learning goal. Literacy's trained volunteer tutors meet with learners one-on-one or in small group settings, with our one-on-one tutors contributing 877 volunteer hours to the program. There have been a total of 294 programs provided by literacy staff, with 1,875 participants having attended these programs, all supported with the help of 764 hours of program volunteering from tutors and volunteers. Since July 2020, tutors have volunteered 1,916 hours in total to the literacy program. Based on calculations by the Independent Sector in Washington, DC, the current value of volunteers is rated at \$28.54 an hour, a value of about \$54,683.

Each learner in the literacy program has an established goal, which may include obtaining a their citizenship; passing the High School Equivalency Test (HiSET); improving job skills such as writing reports and reading charts for employment gain; building vocabulary and communication skills for work and life; and increasing confidence to communicate with others outside of their homes and communities. Learner goals completed during this time period include reading a book to their child or grandchild, passing the TOEFL and CBEST exams, navigating digital learning tools with success, speaking at a public event, voting in the United States for the first time, and finding employment as a substitute teacher.

Program & Event Highlights

2020

- Literacy Center staff provided the following groups, *Book Club*, *Culture & Conversation*, *Speak Easy Group*, and *Writing Club*. These groups support learners who want to explore creative writing, reading, pronunciation, and modern American culture.

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- Literacy Center staff facilitated each of the 2020 California Library Literacy Services (CLLS) monthly online professional development webinars. Topics included, hosting a virtual learner book club; building relationships with organizations, and Covid diaries: encouraging learners to write about their experiences during the pandemic.
- Literacy Center staff hosted a virtual tutor meetup for volunteer tutors. Staff updated tutors on upcoming webinars and previewed new materials for adult learners. Ongoing tutor training provides tutors with best practices for adult learners.
- Literacy Center staff hosted the Southern California Library Literacy Network (SCLLN) virtual workshop. *Tutor Ready Writing* was the discussion topic and included virtual breakout rooms where tutors and learners used story starters as writing prompts.

2021

- Staff hosted the program, *Stories of Home – Digital Storytelling Workshop*. Learners were invited to explore their memories of home using writing prompts and creativity, and to practice speaking skills in sharing their stories through this virtual storytelling workshop facilitated by *StoryCenter*.
- Staff supported learners as they navigated the Voxy platform, continuing with the one-year license to pursue English literacy and digital literacy goals for women learners.
- Staff hosted *Bloom Where You are Planted: Wellness through Gentle Yoga and Mindfulness*, a virtual workshop led by certified yoga teacher, Peggy Burt, which supported well-being, mindfulness, and creative writing. Creative prompts led participants through mindful arts, movement, and writing activities.
- Staff hosted a tour of the Monrovia Public Library and Literacy Center for the Monrovia Adult School's ESL students. Eleven (11) students toured the library and literacy center, learned about the library's services and resources, and signed up for library cards.
- Staff launched a Family Literacy program in September during Adult Education and Family Literacy Week, which consisted of take-home book and activity kits to encourage families to read and practice literacy together.
- Staff supported a learner's published book presentation at an authors' panel for the Traveling Vietnam Memorial hosted by Corona Public Library.
- Staff hosted *Relax Into Writing*, a virtual program which offered mindfulness techniques and simple stretches as a springboard into journal writing with confidence. The program was facilitated by Amy Prevendal, an independent adult literacy consultant, certified yoga teacher, and writing workshop facilitator.
- In December, staff provided twenty (20) take-home family literacy activity kits, *Happy Reading Together*. The family literacy kits include a book and guided activity to encourage families to read together and promote early literacy skills.
- Staff created the *Citizenship & Civics Corner*, a dedicated space to provide information to adult learners about the naturalization process to become a U.S. citizen, as well as study materials to help learners prepare for the naturalization interview and test.

Technology & Materials Support

Literacy Services has continued in a virtual space, based on an assessment of current needs of tutors and learners in relation to the pandemic. In August 2021, the library welcomed the new Literacy Coordinator, Jade Mushisky. In order to conduct a thorough assessment of both learner and tutor needs, staff contacted each learner and tutor individually via phone, zoom, and email. Based on feedback from learners and tutors staff evaluated the data and created an updated

service model. Literacy Services will move forward with a virtual and in-person hybrid model, as it allows for more flexibility and respects the safety concerns of individuals. Staff has set up a reservation system with designated space in the Literacy Center to meet learner and tutor needs moving forward with the hybrid model.

Staff has conducted ongoing technology training with learners and tutors to support digital literacy and enable more engagement in the literacy program. All literacy services and volunteer training are conducted virtually in one-to-one or small group meetings, and via phone calls. A weekly digital newsletter provides updates and resources to support tutor and learner needs.

Due to the popularity and convenience of virtual engagement, the book and writing clubs and conversation group will be offered as a hybrid format with learners meeting both in person and virtually. The Literacy Center's Logitech video conferencing system, funded by the Library Foundation, will be used to support hybrid sessions. The system is mobile and enables staff to create virtual classrooms anywhere in the library.

The Literacy Center currently loans laptops and iPad Pros, as well as purchasing Wi-Fi hotspots, tutor camera accessories, and phone and tablet stands to facilitate learners in the virtual learning process. Some items were donated by Library Board members as well as items funded by the Library Foundation.

Literacy Services provides educational and reading materials for new and struggling readers, including access to new materials such as the *Fresh Reads* collection located in the library lobby. *Fresh Reads* is a collection of quick and easy reads for adults looking for non-intimidating novels and nonfiction titles, which are regularly added. The collection removes the stigma of illiteracy and is instead promoted as convenient for new adult readers and for those with hectic schedules in search of a quick read. Updated literacy materials for tutors and learners are funded by the Foundation and consist of educational materials to support learner's individual goals including renewing the digital and print subscription for News for You (a weekly newspaper geared towards adult learners), HiSet materials, and eBooks.

Family Literacy

Literacy staff plan to continue Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors, a curriculum-based family literacy program that promotes school readiness, family well-being, and advocacy, after the current Literacy Coordinator and support staff complete the training. Additionally, Literacy staff plans to use the new mobile literacy van at Monrovia's Station Square Park to engage families in family literacy outreach.

In September 2021, staff launched the first in a series of family literacy book and activity kits. The kits are geared for caregivers and children to provide literacy skill-building opportunities for young children, while enhancing literacy skill development in all members of the family. September's kit celebrated Adult Education & Family Literacy Week. An additional kit was distributed in December 2021. Each kit was complete with a picture book, activity sheet with literacy tips for caregivers, and an accompanying activity to promote fine motor skills, boost self-esteem, and encourage self-expression in the child. Family literacy book and activity kits promote families reading together at home and promote caregivers as their child's first teachers. Kits will continue to be available throughout the year.

CLLS Funding

The State of California administers the literacy grants in two payments over the course of the fiscal year. A payment representing 90% of the grant total at the beginning of the fiscal year and the remaining 10% balance payment towards the end of the fiscal year. On March 2, 2021, staff received notification from the State of California that Monrovia was awarded the final payment of \$2,897 for fiscal year 2020-2021. The baseline amount of \$26,075 had been previously received. The two payments together resulted in a grant total of \$28,972. Staff also received a total of \$54,000 for the Family Literacy Grant 2020/2021 from the State. The grand total of grant funds for Adult Literacy Services and Family Literacy Services for 2020/2021 was \$82,972.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the Library Board move to receive and file AR-1 2020/2021 Literacy Services Update.

LIBRARY BOARD ACTION REQUIRED: If the Library Board concurs, the appropriate action would be a motion: **Receive and file report AR-1 2020/2021 Literacy Services Update.**

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