



LITERACY UPDATE

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Literacy Assistance Center

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Literacy Zones Fight Poverty and Close Education Gaps

> Robert Purga NY State Education Department

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) has awarded grants to 18 high-performing adult education programs to form Literacy Zones in high-poverty areas throughout the state, both urban and rural. These 18 Literacy Zones (see box, page 10) are the first wave in establishing a statewide system for addressing the wrenching gaps in education and literacy levels in high-need communities.

Addressing Ten Pathways out of Poverty

I don't have to tell readers of the *Literacy Update* that low English-language literacy

skills go hand-in-hand with poverty and its ills. The 18 Literacy Zones will establish Family Welcome Centers to connect families and community members to benefits screening and case management support, to comprehensive services and referral, and to ten pathways out of poverty:

1. Total literacy: 100 percent literacy/English-language proficiency at all levels, from preschool and school-age to adult, with an emphasis on workforce literacy
2. Support for at-risk youth to complete high school and enter postsecondary education or advanced training

3. Postsecondary transition for out-of-school youth and adults
4. Meaningful employment for public assistance recipients and the working poor
5. Support for ex-offenders to re-integrate into their communities and to access education and job opportunities
6. Pathways to citizenship and English-language proficiency for immigrants
7. Workforce development

continued on page 10

Making Change

> Elyse Barbell *Executive Director*

My favorite season is here again, and I am sad to say I have not been taking the time to enjoy the beautiful weather, vibrant colors, or delicious apples. The changing color of the leaves is good company for what has been keeping me so inattentive to my surroundings. Change is happening everywhere. In order to weather these tough times, the literacy community must stay flexible and responsive.

Literacy Zones, described throughout this issue, are a new and comprehensive effort by the New York State Education Department to streamline public services for families. Eighteen Literacy Zones are already funded, and more are on the way. Pay careful attention: This initiative, if well executed, will change the framework of social service provision throughout New York State, leveraging services in a way that can bring lasting improvement. Here in New York City, we will be studying the paradigm to learn how we can bring more of this service delivery model to our neighborhoods.

Change is also happening at the LAC. In the coming months we will relocate to a new downtown location, launch a refreshed and more up-to-date website, and continue to tailor our programming to the changing demands of the workplace and goals of our learners.

And if that wasn't enough, I'm experiencing change in my personal life as you are in yours. My daughter Rebecca got her learner's permit this week. The careening anxiety that comes of sitting in the passenger seat as my teenager does the Jersey Slide (going across four lanes of traffic at one shot) on Route 80 seems to stay with me as I sit at my desk each morning and think about the day ahead.

Change brings anxiety, but it's also necessary for growth. My little girl is growing up, and I wouldn't put her back in the playpen just to keep her off Route 80. Similarly, the establishment of Literacy Zones brings significant maturation in our approach to the multiple barriers our learners face. The literacy community is taking another step into the big wide world. We can grow only if we're willing to ride with the change. ●



P.S. Some things stay steady. Stay tuned for news about the 25th annual Literacy Recognition Ceremony, which will pay tribute to NYCALI's 25-year anniversary.

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Staying at the Table:

Building a Neighborhood Coalition in Sunset Park

> **Stacie Evans** *Lutheran Family Health Centers Community Empowerment Program*

A key component to developing a strong Literacy Zone is a strong coalition of community organizations. Such a coalition cannot fall together the moment a funder releases a request for proposals. The Literacy Zone concept requires communities to come together around a central goal. That is precisely the concept behind the Sunset Park Alliance for Youth, which was selected as one of the two Literacy Zones in New York City.

Allying to Serve Youth, Expanding to the Whole Community

The Sunset Park Alliance for Youth is a group of community-based agencies working together to better serve the disconnected youth of southwest Brooklyn. As a Literacy Zone, our work extends beyond our core mission to include comprehensive services offered to all community members. The agencies of the Alliance are Turning Point, the Center for Family Life, Fifth Avenue Committee / Brooklyn Workforce Innovations, Lutheran Family Health Centers, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, and Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation.

Though the alliance's central focus is disconnected youth, the founding agencies offer a broad range of programs and services to residents of all ages. Programming available through alliance agencies includes adult education and vocational training services, employment cooperatives, early childhood and early intervention centers, after-school programming, family literacy, services for older adults and the frail elderly, substance abuse treatment, mental health counseling, temporary and scatter-site housing, case management, and mental health services.

The services we offer as a Literacy Zone are strengthened by the fact that the partner organizations had been working for nearly two years to create the alliance before the Literacy Zone proposal was released. At the core of our model is the "One Neighborhood" concept, which recognizes that, while youth may be disconnected from school and work, they identify deeply with their community. Alliance members work together as "sister organizations" to engage as many disconnected young adults as possible and, now as the Literacy Zone, to strengthen services available to all Sunset Park residents who need them.

Collaborating to Create Community-Sustaining Change

Though alliance members have a decades-long history of informal collaboration, creating the alliance required revamping our ideas of partnering. Each agency brings a wealth of experience to the table, but each acknowledges that there are issues we can't tackle by ourselves. Collaboration is the way to make long-term, community-sustaining change. Still, the alliance represents a partnership, not a merger. Each organization maintains its unique culture and philosophy; each has equal authority over the development and implementation of the alliance's goals.

None of us imagined such a long path ahead when we first sat down to talk about disconnected youth. Senior staff from each agency met regularly to develop the project that would eventually become the Sunset Park Alliance for Youth. We discussed the issues facing young people in our community, identified service gaps, and outlined a plan of action. Getting the collaboration off the ground was daunting both in prospect and in actuality. Certainly, no one had the time and resources to support this two-year process, but we put in the effort all the same.

Sticking It Out—Together

Our initial meetings involved many community organizations. However, not all of the agencies that came to the table for those early conversations stayed at the table. The creation of the alliance demanded a significant commitment, especially since there was no funding at the time and no promise of funding to come.

The agencies that stayed at the table are the core of the Sunset Park Alliance for Youth, which became fully operational this spring and is now seeing the fruits of collaboration. In addition to being funded as one of the two Literacy Zones in New York City, we have secured additional public and private funding to staff the alliance and support service enhancements across programs. Partner agencies have also leveraged membership in the alliance to secure new funding to build capacity and implement new services.

Most importantly, we have developed and implemented a strong model for collaboration that embodies the Literacy Zone concept of bringing community partners together to address community needs. Agreeing to work together in this way has meant looking beyond our individual agency priorities, resources, egos, and identities to get the work done. This focus wasn't easy when we started, and it still poses occasional challenges. Our commitment to the community we serve and our collective belief in the far-reaching potential of this model keeps us coming back to the table, helps us find solutions to problems, and strengthens each of our agencies. ●

Guiding Literacy Coalition Brings Five Literacy Zones to Central Southern Tier

> **Jim Matt** *Director, Central Southern Tier Regional Adult Education Network*

During the time of year when the many colors of nature's harvest dot the countryside here in the Mohawk Valley, the families of the Central Southern Tier region have access to new opportunities. Thanks to our new Literacy Zones, we will be strengthening and enhancing existing literacy services, working to improve living and working conditions, and increasing the efficiency of the systems that serve low-income residents. Five out of the total of 18 Literacy Zones in the state have been awarded here, creating a bit of an Erie Canal corridor stretching from the rural Herkimer valley to the small city of Utica and on to Syracuse, the "Emerald City."

Although this region is full of service-rich communities, its many social service partners have not been fully engaged in improving the lives of families through family literacy and strategies to involve parents and caregivers. However, over the past two years, careful planning and persistent community leadership brought together human services agencies, workforce development agencies, faith-based organizations, arts and cultural organizations, businesses, civic engagement organizations, local government leaders, and, of course, existing adult education providers.

Pulling Together

Through a unified effort, local adult education programs, the Central Southern Tier Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN), and the community foundations of Herkimer, Oneida, and Onondaga counties launched a Guiding Literacy Coalition. The coalition examined the impact of low literacy on their communities and then developed a plan to reinforce and expand available services and opportunities for adults and families. The goal was to develop and implement a comprehensive, integrated approach to literacy. Local government officials including members of Congress, New York State Assembly representatives, mayors, county executives, members of county councils, and superintendents of each of the local school districts showed their support by attending meetings or sending representatives.

Throughout the spring, summer, and fall of 2008, the Mid-State RAEN provided professional development for members of the guiding coalition. Topics included plain language, financial literacy, and a framework for understanding poverty. "Bridges out of Poverty" was the subject of discussion roundtables. Between 25 and 35 coalition members attended each event; their participation reinforced the cohesiveness of the coalition.

The Mid-State and Central Southern Tier RAENs hosted a culminating literacy expo in September 2008. Over 75 agencies displayed their services and participated in activities that allowed them to meet and connect with one another. The coalition gelled from a loose confederation of many members into one solid network that was united in its desire to bring Literacy Zones to our communities.

Building Five Literacy Zones

Through its competitive proposal process, the New York State Education Department Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development awarded a total of five Literacy Zones to this region, in widely different settings:

- > The Herkimer BOCES serves a mostly rural area.
- > Madison-Oneida BOCES serves two of our most economically depressed small city areas with Literacy Zones in West Utica and East Utica.
- > The Syracuse City School District also has two Literacy Zones, one in the north sector of the city and one in the west, where immigrants are concentrated.

All five Literacy Zones will be in full operation by late fall 2009. They promise to be living projects that will change and grow with every turn of the seasons.

The coalition examined the impact of low literacy on their communities and then developed a plan to reinforce and expand available services and opportunities for adults and families

Make no mistake about it; bringing these zones to fruition took a great deal of effort. The partners strongly believe that the Literacy Zone awards will serve a springboard into the quest for future funding to sustain their enormous united effort. ●

Health Literacy Lessons Respond to Swine Flu Concerns

> Estella Natal *Professional Development Associate*

The rapid spread of the swine (H1N1) flu has raised a lot of questions and concerns among the adult literacy community in New York City. In response, the LAC worked with a group of teachers representing adult literacy programs around the city to develop swine flu health literacy lessons over the summer and to pilot them at the beginning of the fall semester. Those lessons and related links are now available on the LAC website at www.lacnyc.org, free for use by literacy teachers in New York and around the country.

During the Health Literacy Teacher Share held in June, the teachers expressed several concerns about this epidemic. They said they felt unprepared to answer their students' questions about the swine flu, viruses, and other specific health issues. They also expressed a need for resources at low readability levels that they could share with their students.

Consequently, the teachers geared up to create swine flu health literacy lessons in time for the fall flu season. The diverse array of lessons cover:

- > Prevention: getting vaccinated, early detection, washing your hands thoroughly, and covering your cough properly
- > Detection: learning about symptoms and knowing when to seek medical care
- > Treatment: knowing how to care for yourself or others and getting a prescription for antiviral medications such as Tamiflu when the symptoms are severe

Examples of swine flu lesson titles are "The Art of Avoiding the H1N1 (Swine Flu) Virus," and "Evaluating Cartoons Regarding the H1N1 Virus (Swine Flu)." The lessons are intended not only to inform adult learners about the swine flu but also to develop language, literacy, and numeracy skills. Specific skills addressed include:

- > Vocabulary development of such key terms as *virus*, *hand sanitizer*, *fatigue*, *pandemic*, and *outbreak*
- > Reading and analyzing information on tables and maps
- > Reading comprehension focused on understanding various health concepts
- > Listening to presentations and discussions
- > Speaking, for example, describing symptoms and making appointments

Authentic materials from the World Health Organization, the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), the Centers for Disease Control, and other national health agencies were used to gather swine flu facts for the lessons. Our latest public health menace, the swine flu, has once again enabled teachers to build literacy skills around a relevant topic that can affect the health of thousands of adult learners, their families, and their communities in New York City and beyond.

On October 9, the teachers involved in this lesson development project shared their final drafts, as well as their experiences in developing them, with a larger community of adult literacy teachers. The widely advertised Internet launch of the swine flu lessons on www.lacnyc.org was timed to coincide with the availability of the newly developed H1N1 vaccine, Health Literacy Month, and the NYC DOHMH's "Take Care New York" campaign, which involves over 400 partner organizations including hospitals, health centers, community-based organizations, healthcare plans, and city agencies.

As a result of the health literacy partnerships spearheaded by the LAC between adult literacy programs and health centers, hospitals, and other health organizations, many students can obtain a range of services including health-related information and screenings. For information on the availability of the flu vaccine for students at HHC public hospitals and health centers, go to www.nyc.gov/html/bhc/html/facilities/directory.shtml to get a phone number from a nearby facility, or call 311. ●

Swine Flu Lesson Excerpt

Gale Lichter of the NYC Department of Education's Office of Adult and Continuing Education developed a five-day unit on swine flu basics for beginning ESOL students. This brief excerpt comes toward the end of Day 1: Symptoms of Swine Flu.

7. Introduce vocabulary
Show the students the pictures or dramatize the action to elicit the following vocabulary:

- > a fever
- > a headache
- > a cough
- > a runny nose
- > a sore throat
- > the chills
- > diarrhea

Start by introducing the words individually. Encourage students to look and listen. Discourage them from repeating at this time.

8. Total Physical Response

For the first round, the teacher calls out the word and performs the action while the students watch and listen attentively.

Then teacher and students perform the actions together while the teacher calls out the symptoms.

Next the teacher calls out the symptoms and watches the students perform the appropriate actions.

Divide the class in half. Half of the class will repeat the symptom after the teacher while the other half performs the action. The two groups switch roles.

Go to www.lacnyc.org to see the rest of this lesson and others.

CALENDAR of events >>

Nov. 4

Adult Literacy Educators Core Curriculum (ALECC)

Teaching English to Adult Speakers of Other Languages

Wednesday, November 4, 9 am–12:30 pm

Facilitator: Shannon Allen

In this session, participants develop an awareness of the importance of communicative language teaching (CLT) and the use of contextualized language in ESOL instruction. Participants will also learn the place of vocabulary development and Strategies Based Instruction for successful acquisition of a second language.

Nov. 5

Learning to Teach and Train Online Using Moodle

Thursday, November 5, 1–5 pm

Facilitator: Marilyn Rymniak

In this course you will learn how to teach online or incorporate an online component into your existing program using Moodle, an online course management system, to construct and manage content.

Nov. 11

ASISTS Data Entry Training

Wednesday, November 11, 9:30 am–4:30 pm

Facilitator: John Lyons

This training introduces new users to the Adult Student Information System and Technical Support (ASISTS) web-based data system. Topics covered include navigating ASISTS data entry screens; inputting student, class, and instructor information; updating outcomes, tests, and contact hours; and running management and funding reports.

Nov. 12

Strategies for Working with Diverse Students

Thursday, November 12, 9:30 am–12:30 pm

Facilitators: Be Jensen and Marilyn Rymniak

This workshop provides hands-on activities and games to further develop intercultural communication skills and cross-cultural sensitivity that can be used in the ESOL or adult literacy classroom.

Nov. 13

Problem Solving for Social Justice in the ABE Math Classroom

Friday, November 13, 9:30 am–1:30 pm

Facilitators: Charlie Brovner, Denise Deagan, and Solange Farina

Participants will explore non-routine problems that pose key issues of social justice and teach key mathematical concepts. Problems from the pages of daily newspapers pose the central question of social justice: Is it fair?

Nov. 13

ESOL Teacher Share

Friday, November 13, 2–4:30 pm

Facilitator: Winston Lawrence

In these sessions, teachers will have an opportunity to hear and discuss promising and innovative practices that colleagues are pursuing.

Nov. 17

TABE Test Administrator Training

Tuesday, November 17, 9:30 am–3:30 pm

Facilitator: Be Jensen

This one-day workshop will introduce participants to the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) Forms 7, 8, 9, and 10—the main test used by the adult literacy programs funded by the New York State Education Department. Participants will learn how to administer the test and use the scoring tables.

Nov. 18

Adult Literacy Educators Core Curriculum (ALECC)

Teaching Numeracy and Quantitative Literacy to Adults

Wednesday, November 18, 9 am–12:30 pm

Facilitator: Shannon Allen

Participants will develop an understanding of the relevant core concepts and standards in the field of teaching quantitative literacy and numeracy. The workshop will focus on the central importance of problem-solving abilities in mastering practical math skills for adults.

Nov. 19

NRS Foundations Training

Thursday, November 19, 9 am–4 pm

Facilitator: Rosemary Matt

This introductory session will focus on informing new adult education teachers and new data staff members involved with NRS data collection and reporting about the National Reporting System (NRS)—including history and NRS impact on funding.

Nov. 20

Effective Lesson Planning for ESOL Students

Friday, November 20, 1–5 pm

Facilitator: Susan Dalmas

Participants will learn how to organize a lesson for ESOL learners through applying design elements and integrating interactive activities and related materials.

Nov. 20

NRS Advanced Training

Friday, November 20, 1–4 pm

Facilitator: Rosemary Matt

The focus of this training is to learn how to use the National Reporting System (NRS) data as a catalyst for program management, improvement, and change.

All LAC events take place at 32 Broadway, 10th floor.

Building management requires that all visitors have picture ID and sign in. Please leave extra time for this procedure.

RSVP: RSVP@LACNYC.ORG OR LAC RESERVATION LINE AT 212.803.3323

Nov. 24

Health Literacy Study Circle: Managing Chronic Diseases

Tuesday, November 24, 9 am–1 pm

Facilitator: Winston Lawrence

This session will focus on integrating the language and literacy skills needed for managing chronic diseases into classroom instruction. Participants will develop lesson plans and will use Moodle to discuss ideas and issues between sessions.

Nov. 24

NYC RAEN Meeting

Tuesday, November 24, 9:30 am–12:30 pm

Facilitator: Ellen Richer

This meeting is for program managers in state-funded programs.

Dec. 1

BEST Plus Test Refresher

Tuesday, December 1, 9:30 am–2 pm

Facilitator: Be Jensen

Designed for previously trained BEST Plus Test administrators, this workshop offers a comprehensive review of the BEST Plus Test.

Dec. 2

Using Health Literacy for Program Improvement

Wednesday, December 2, 11 am–1 pm

Facilitator: Winston Lawrence

This lunch-and-learn session brings program managers together to share insights into how health literacy is being incorporated into their curriculum and instruction.

Dec. 3

Learning to Teach and Train Online Using Moodle

Thursday, December 3, 1–5 pm

Facilitator: Marilyn Rymniak

Please see November 5 for a description of this event.

Dec. 4

ASISTS Data Entry Training

Friday, December 4, 9:30 am–4:30 pm

Facilitator: John Lyons

Please see November 11 for a description of this event.

Dec. 4 & Dec. 7

Teaching the U.S. Civics Curriculum

Friday, December 4, 9:30 am–4:30 pm

Monday, December 7, 9:30 am–4:30 pm

Facilitators: Be Jensen and Alice Broggio

This two-part workshop will prepare participants to teach the U.S. Civics for Immigrants curriculum effectively. They will receive a structure for lessons, the contents of the curriculum, and the materials used in the lesson modules.

Dec. 9

GED Testing Network

Wednesday, December 9, 1–3:30 pm

Facilitator: Barbara Sparks

Participants will discuss local issues, challenges, and policy implications and how they can collaborate on piloting new elements of the NYC GED reform initiative.

Dec. 10

Barriers to Parent Involvement

Thursday, December 10, 9:30 am–12:30 pm

Facilitator: Be Jensen

This workshop will identify the barriers that hinder parents from becoming actively involved in their children's education. Participants will look at practical ideas for encouraging greater parent engagement and discuss how their programs can integrate these ideas into their current operations and services.

Dec. 10

New York College Transitions Network

Thursday, December 10, 1:30–4:30 pm

Facilitator: TBA

Participants will share strategies and learn additional techniques to integrate time management, listening, note taking, test taking and other important skills into literacy classes.

Dec. 16

Adult Literacy Educators Core Curriculum (ALECC) Indicators of Program Quality

Wednesday, December 16, 9 am–12:30 pm

Facilitator: Shannon Allen

Participants will develop an awareness of the importance of the five major components of reading instruction, the importance of vocabulary and learner knowledge in the reading process, and the differences between teaching reading to adults and to children.

RESOURCES >> Students Writing and Getting Published

> Kristen McKenna *Bristol Community College, Attleboro, MA*

As a former teacher and current program administrator, I seek out meaningful, socially relevant publications to use in my ABE classes. How much more meaningful a magazine is when it includes pieces by other adult learners—pieces that are spoken from the heart and rooted in lived experience. Even more meaningful than that: sometimes the pieces are written by my own students!

The Change Agent, a national magazine published by the New England Literacy Resource Center at World Education, includes writing by adult learners. Twice a year, *The Change Agent* sends out a call for articles, inviting students to submit their essays, poems, illustrations, and reflections.

I always take advantage of the call for articles because it acts as a writing prompt and leads to a real-world process: submitting a piece of writing to be evaluated and possibly accepted for publication. Preparing to write a piece for *The Change Agent* is a group activity that builds community among our students. When one of our own students has an article published, all the students seem to take pride in this accomplishment

Knowing someone who got an article published, or knowing that many peers in adult education are being published, provides a great gateway to more reading and exploring. Students might initially be attracted to the magazine because they recognize the writers, but then they hold on to the magazine and browse through the other stories. They enjoy being able to hold something in their hands that is fully accessible, engaging, and relevant to their everyday lives.

Many students in our program receive a copy of *The Change Agent* as if it were a textbook. (Except that it is a lot cheaper than a textbook—only about a dollar per copy when you buy in bulk.) The articles are written at a variety of levels so teachers can make adjustments to their lessons to suit the class. A new and value-added feature is the online lessons that accompany and extend the articles. These extras, along with current and back issues of *The Change Agent*, can be found at www.nelrc.org/changeagent. To order, call 617-482-9485 or visit the website.

The current issue of *The Change Agent* focuses on the economic crisis. The forthcoming issue, “Coming Home from War,” addresses the issues and challenges facing veterans. The call for articles for this issue is on the website—but hurry, the deadline is November 6. ●



LAC Professional Development Center Open Hours

Every Monday, 1–5 pm

Computer Learning Center

Visit our 16-station Internet-connected computer lab to explore ways to use computers to enhance instruction. Browse the web for sites that lend themselves to your lessons, or build a project that uses common office software to enhance communication skills.

Dan Rabideau Clearinghouse

Explore the city's largest collection of materials for adult literacy education. The collection of books, journals, and audiovisual materials encompasses professional development materials as well as curriculum and reading materials for ESOL, ABE, and GED learners. For information, contact Dr. Winston Lawrence, 212.803.3326 or winstonl@lacnyc.org.

Bookbinders' Annual Softball Game Supports Literacy

For the first time in its 17-year history, the Bookbinders' Guild Charity Softball Game was rained out this August. Did that stop the Bookbinders' Guild of New York? Of course not. This staunch supporter of literacy simply rescheduled. September 19 was a

beautiful day for a softball game in Central Park—and for raising awareness of and funds for the cause of literacy for all. Members of the Bookbinders' Guild donated some terrific raffle prizes including, of course, books, but also Bruce Springsteen concert tickets,

Mets tickets, a health club membership, and many more. Our thanks go to the Bookbinders' Guild and particularly to Paul Stanley, a member of the LAC board as well as of Bookbinders' executive committee, for organizing the event.



Our teams, ready to take the field



The Bookbinders' Guild table featured—what else?—members' books.



The spectators had as much fun as the players.



Children got to take home a book courtesy of the Bookbinders' Guild. Shown here is the daughter of Estella Natal of the LAC's professional development unit.



The LAC's Tony Pupello with Paul Stanley, the founder of the annual softball game

Literacy Zones Fight Poverty *continued*

8. Support for mature workers and senior citizens to stay out of poverty
9. Opportunities for individuals with disabilities to access appropriate educational, vocational, and rehabilitation services
10. Transition support for returning veterans

The 18 adult education programs designated as Literacy Zones are each receiving NYSED grants of approximately \$100,000–\$325,000 in 2009. We anticipate providing sustainable funding for these 18 and establishing at least a second wave of new Literacy Zones.

A One-Stop Solution

Each Literacy Zone will use the NYSED funding to support a full-time partnership coordinator to work with community partner organizations. The goal is to provide a seamless web of referrals to needed services. Primary partnerships will include, among others, educational institutions at all levels; business and workforce development programs; nonprofit and cultural organizations; health organizations; and a wide range of organizations providing specialized supports to such populations as people with disabilities, disconnected youth, and ex-offenders. Other NYSED-funded adult literacy programs will also be important partners.

Each Literacy Zone will employ case managers to help educationally disadvantaged parents and community members navigate the complex systems that surround them, including educational, healthcare, financial, technology, and legal systems. Case managers will connect families with government and nonprofit supports that exist to help stabilize families' finances, housing, and health.

We're working on ways to measure progress in the ten pathways out of poverty. ASISTS®, the statewide adult student information system, will play a key role in tracking not only the NRS measures that are currently part of the system, but also health literacy and financial stability. With the help of the Literacy Assistance Center, we're planning structured interviews with affected families to gather rich qualitative data on the effectiveness of the Literacy Zones. Other measures are being examined for such areas as community impact and effects on specific populations.

Adult Education Drives Reform

The Literacy Zones comprise a massive undertaking with a bold goal: to close the educational and achievement gaps endemic in New York's high-need communities. In these communities—not only in the Big Five cities (New York, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Yonkers) but also in smaller communities and rural areas around the state—Literacy Zones will serve as “educational one-stops.”

The Literacy Zones are New York's first effort to address multiple reform efforts using adult literacy education as the “driver.”

Literacy Zones

NYSED has established 18 Literacy Zones throughout the state, with the expectation of funding additional programs in the future.

Awards beginning July 1, 2009

Buffalo City School District (East Zone)
Clinton/Essex/Warren/Washington BOCES
Franklin-Essex-Hamilton BOCES
Literacy West NY, Inc.
Madison-Oneida BOCES (West Zone)
Ossining Union Free School District
Queens Borough Public Library
Rochester City School District
Syracuse City School District (North Zone)
Turning Point (Discipleship Outreach Ministries, Inc.)
Yonkers Public Schools (Fermi Center)

Awards beginning October 1, 2009

Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES
Herkimer BOCES
Madison-Oneida BOCES (East Zone)
Orleans/Niagara BOCES
Sullivan County BOCES
Syracuse City School District (West Zone)
Yonkers City School District (Vive Center)

Literacy Zones are intended to visibly and dramatically change perceptions, so that policymakers pursuing educational reform, welfare reform, workforce reform, healthcare reform, economic development, and other change initiatives will see and say that adult education is a key contributor to these reform efforts.

Toward the Future

Already we are seeing the benefits of the Literacy Zone concept, which has generated strong interest among our state education partners, other state agencies, community foundations, and corporations including IBM. A year from now, the 18 Literacy Zones will have expanded over a dozen capacities, including health literacy, postsecondary transition, financial stability, pathways and services for individuals with disabilities and their families, benefits screening, connections that support parent engagement and family literacy, and the innovative use of technology for collaboration.

The fun starts now as we connect and build these resources in the 18 Literacy Zones to show potential funders and policymakers what adult education can contribute to a host of reforms in education, immigration, healthcare, and workforce competitiveness. We want to work aggressively on a second track to share lessons and best practices with all adult education programs and to create tools to accelerate the learning curve for the next wave of Literacy Zones. We are working with the Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN) centers to create that next wave. From what we can see, we could double or triple the number of effective sites in the next several years. Already a number of communities are moving ahead on planning. For information on the next wave of Literacy Zones, contact your RAEN center. ●

Follow and Friend the LAC!

The Literacy Assistance Center has joined the global conversation about adult literacy education and is using social media to raise awareness of literacy issues. In other words, we're on Facebook and Twitter.

Facebook, now the largest social network site, allows its members to keep in touch with "friends" far and near through brief postings, shared links, and a wide variety of applications. More importantly for nonprofits, Facebook also allows organizations to have their own pages and recruit "fans" who then see all the nonprofit's posts on their own Facebook home pages. If you're on Facebook, search for "Literacy Assistance Center" and become a fan so you can stay up to date on all our doings. We post photos of events such as the Bookbinders Guild softball game in Central Park and the Literacy Recognition Awards. You'll see your colleagues in action!

We're also exploring a newer aspect of Facebook called Causes, which allows nonprofits to recruit members and raise funds. Our page begins, "Literacy is a right, not a privilege." We hope to use this page to engage people from outside the literacy community, highlighting the importance of adult literacy education.

You can also join us on the latest social network craze, Twitter. Despite what you may have heard, Twitter isn't primarily about what a million people had for lunch. In 140-character messages called "tweets," Twitter members share information, usually on specific topics of interest, including links to more detailed descriptions. If you're on Twitter, follow LACNYCnell—that's Nell Eckersley of our data analysis unit—to keep up with the latest in literacy. For example, here are some of Nell's tweets from

September (the web addresses are shortened using a special tool to keep posts including URLs within the 140-character limit):

- > Sept. 28: Oprah, Tyler Perry and a Painful, "Precious" Life <http://bit.ly/Z1OXo>
- > Sept. 22: US Federal Communication Commission Pledges to Keep the Internet Open to Help Innovation Flourish <http://bit.ly/sz9jp>
- > Sept. 14: A review of free technology resources & how teachers can use them. Ideas for technology integration in education. <http://bit.ly/tFei5>
- > Sept. 11: Will Low-Skilled Workers Benefit from Economic Recovery? <http://bit.ly/YzP9E>

Don't miss out on the conversation! Sign up for a Twitter account and go to <http://twitter.com/LACNYCnell> to see how this powerful social network can help the literacy community connect and stay informed.



New NIFL Resources and Discussions

The National Institute for Literacy is expanding its online resource collections and discussion lists. The discussion lists, a part of the Institute's Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS), provide a forum for subscribers to seek answers and share information on literacy-related topics, issues, and resources. LINCS' online resource collections offer a variety of scientifically based and rigorously reviewed instructional materials. The topic of health literacy will become the newest addition to the Basic Skills Resource Collection. New discussion lists include Transitions to Post Secondary Education and Math and Numeracy. To see a complete list of the discussion lists and resource collections, visit www.nifl.gov/news/discussionlists09.

NYCALI Set to Celebrate 25th Anniversary

2009–10 marks the 25th anniversary of the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative (NYCALI). The very first issue of this newsletter, then called Information Update, ran this story in September 1984:

“After two years of struggle to find funds for an adult literacy program, Union Settlement is delighted to have been awarded a MAC grant, which will allow us to hire a teacher and offer this critical service to the East Harlem community.” Sally Yarmolinsky, Director of Development of Union Settlement, echoes the thoughts of many new literacy programs about the new MAC initiative. As many of you know, Mayor Koch has allocated \$35 million of the Municipal Assistance Corporation (MAC) surplus funds to adult literacy in New York City over the next four years. The majority of the \$7.5 million allocation for this year has

been made to the Board of Education, the City University of New York, the Community Development Agency (for community-based agencies), and the three public libraries, for improvement of services to adults (16 and over) who read at very low levels or are in need of ESL at the lowest levels.

Thus began NYCALI, before it even had a name. Stay tuned for announcements about 25th anniversary celebrations!

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