



literacy chronicle

FALL 2007

NEWS AND BEST PRACTICES FROM THE LITERACY COOPERATIVE OF GREATER CLEVELAND

Welcome!

We are excited to present the first issue of our quarterly newsletter. Literacy Chronicle is designed to link readers with local and national news and best practices in literacy. Literacy affects almost every sphere of life; each newsletter will offer a snapshot of the breadth of this issue.

If you have interacted with The Literacy Cooperative team in the past few months you probably heard phrases such as “workplace simulation,” “career pathways,” or “learner centered.” Workforce literacy, learner transitions and a learner-centered approach to literacy instruction have been a recurring theme in our work. Hence we chose workforce readiness as the theme of this inaugural issue.

We welcome your feedback, and invite you to share some of your innovative and promising practices to feature in future editions.



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the **literacy**
cooperative

Literacy Cooperative launches Instructors Learning Network

GROUP OFFERS SUPPORT, PROMOTES SHARING OF IDEAS



Photo by Janet Century

Connecting literacy instructors with up-to-the-minute research, best practices and their peers in the field is the aim of Instructors Learning Network, a group launched in May by The Literacy Cooperative.

The Instructors Learning Network (ILN) is an organized community of literacy instructors dedicated to identifying and implementing best practices in literacy education. ILN is modeled after the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning & Literacy's study circles. It is led by a steering committee of literacy instructors from Tri-C East-ABLE, Tri-C Educational Opportunities Center, Seeds of Literacy, Cleveland Scholarship Program, Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Garden Valley Neighborhood House, WVIZ Ideastream and Merrick House.

Operating as educators and, often, social workers, literacy instructors frequently help their students navigate social and economic barriers that hinder learning. Meanwhile literacy instructors also must operate in a continuous learning mode themselves to ensure that learners receive the quality instruction they deserve. To do that, instructors need access to new thinking and research on literacy.

ILN is about connecting instructors with peers to lend support, share ideas and connect with the larger literacy community. Peer learning has been shown as one of the most powerful and low-cost models of learning and professional development. This was reinforced in 2006 when a small group of Cleveland instructors met at a training workshop. It was the first time participants said they had the opportunity to interact and engage professionally with colleagues, and they all agreed the connection was energizing, inspiring and much needed. The idea for ILN was born.

ILN's kick-off event May 11 included more than 80 literacy service providers. Morning presenter was Kristen Mikelbank, research assistant at Case Western Reserve University's Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development at the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences. In her presentation, "Literacy and Poverty in Greater Cleveland," she highlighted some of the ways low literacy levels and poverty coexist.

Basheer Jones, a poet and social activist who is a graduate of Cleveland's Martin Luther King Jr. High School and Morehouse College in Atlanta, closed the event with an inspiring speech, encouraging participants towards cultural sensitivity and continued motivation of their learners.

More than 80 literacy service providers attended the first meeting of the Instructors Learning Network in May to share ideas and best practices.

The next meeting of ILN is scheduled for October 5. Details are available on The Literacy Cooperative's website at www.literacycooperative.org. To participate in ILN, contact The Literacy Cooperative at (216) 615-7190.



Photo by Janet Century

Attendees at the first meeting of Instructors Learning Network heard startling statistics about literacy and economic hardship in Cleveland: Nearly 1 in 3 city residents live in poverty.

SNAPSHOT: LOCAL LITERACY STATISTICS

Literacy rates and poverty seem to go hand-in-hand. Here are some statistics about literacy in our area:

- 119 out of 193 Cuyahoga County public schools do not meet state requirements for fourth-grade reading proficiency.
- 72 of these schools are in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District.
- In 2005, Cleveland had the highest poverty rate among U.S. cities with more than 250,000 residents.
- Children born to mothers with low levels of education are less likely to have early literacy skills and are less prepared for school.
- Children in professional families hear more than 30 million words by their third birthday, while children in poor families hear only 10 million words.

Sources: The Literacy Cooperative; Kristen Mikelbank

Terry Thomas Talks Training

Ohio's jobs official shares tips on developing talent



Terry Thomas

Terry Thomas, assistant director of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, helped author the report “Setting Ohio’s Talent Agenda,” an in-depth look at what Ohio must do to cultivate growth and employment opportunities for its residents.

The Literacy Chronicle asked Thomas to share his thoughts on Ohio’s workforce.

What challenges are Ohio employers facing now regarding the number of skilled employees?

As a whole Ohio has a relatively low degree of attainment in education as compared to other states. Every measure of higher education attainment we have shows Ohio is 38th, 39th, 40th... With the drop we’re going to have in traditional age population within the next few years, it’s incumbent upon us to build up our adult workforce to meet the needs of employers.

How can literacy agencies tailor their services to combat this problem?

I’m really excited about the transition of the Adult Basic and Literacy Education Program over to the Ohio Board of Regents so that all adult workforce entities in the state will be in one agency. I think that will really open the possibilities for basic literacy programs. I see them filling a void in a number of areas. One is developmental education. I think they can provide that service on a cost-effective basis. One thing we’re trying to do is educate our adult population, and I think literacy agencies are not particularly intimidating to people. They might have a comfort level there that they may not have in other venues.

What are the consequences of having an unskilled workforce in a state like Ohio, which is trying to reinvent itself after a downturn in the economy?

The consequences would be to continue to fall below national norms. We’ve been trailing the nation for a long time in many things, whether it’s job growth or income. We’re trying to turn around Ohio, so obviously we want to reverse that trend.

Lt. Gov. Lee Fisher, who’s also our development director, says increasingly that he sees talent development as a game changer in economic development; companies that are looking to close deals are looking for talent. The thing that really separates one state from another is the talent that they have. We have a great work ethic in Ohio, but we need the skills to go along with that ethic.

In terms of talent development, what skills are most valuable to employers?

The need for strong written and verbal communication skills is absolutely critical in coming years. Data tells us that reading comprehension will be required in 48.3 percent of all new job openings in the ten-year period from 2004 to 2014. Also important is active listening, speaking and writing. A lot of people think about training people on a specific engine or device, but really it’s these soft skills, the written and verbal, that are increasingly important as we move forward in a 21st century economy.

How can literacy service agencies collaborate with businesses to ensure a ready workforce?

One thing we’re trying to do is to get our partners in the education and adult workforce community to work together more regionally. And we think that literacy agencies need to be among those agencies, among the career techs and community colleges, joining in the discussion.

Ohio's skills projection: How should we prepare learners?

TOP 15 SKILLS REQUIRED FOR WORK IN OHIO IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS.

Skills	Supply Rank	Percent Demand	Gap Index	Replacement
Reading Comprehension	1	48.3%	100	65
Active listening	2	46.6%	97	67
Critical thinking	3	41.9%	94	65
Speaking	4	38.4%	91	64
Coordination	5	36.8%	89	63
Active learning	6	37.4%	86	65
Monitoring	7	34.3%	83	64
Writing	8	33.6%	80	64
Instructing	9	34.1%	77	64
Time management	10	31.6%	74	64
Learning strategies	11	31.3%	71	64
Social perceptiveness	12	28.6%	69	63
Service orientation	13	25.4%	66	62
Judgment and decision making	14	23.6%	63	63
Persuasion	15	22.2%	60	64

"Supply rank" ranks skills based on the number of today's jobs that require proficiency in each skill.

"Percent demand" gives the percentage of average annual openings that will require a skill, with higher percentages indicating stronger demand.

"Gap index" is the projected difference between the available supply of a skill and its demand, standardized to a range of 0 to 100. Skills with higher skills-gap indices may require greater focus in training programs and policy to meet projected demand.

"Replacement index" is the proportion of projected annual openings requiring a given skill that will arise to replace exiting workers (e.g. through dismissals, retirements, disabilities, etc.) rather than to fill a new position.

The full report, Ohio's Economic Analysis 2007, is available on The Literacy Cooperative's web site at www.literacycooperative.org.

"LITERACY" MEANS MORE THAN JUST READING. IT INCLUDES AN INDIVIDUAL'S ABILITY TO WRITE, SPEAK IN ENGLISH AND COMPUTE AND PROBLEM-SOLVE AT A LEVEL NECESSARY TO FUNCTION IN SOCIETY.

International Literacy Day September 8

International Literacy Day was founded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and was first celebrated on September 8, 1967. It is a worldwide effort to promote and demonstrate commitment to literacy for all.

IDEAS FOR COMMEMORATING THE DAY

- Businesses: Provide, encourage and actively support opportunities for employees to improve their education. Start a literacy program in your workplace, or adopt a literacy program to support.
- Literacy providers: Celebrate past successes and make a fresh commitment to the success of your clients.
- Individuals: Commit to life-long learning, whether by learning something new, tutoring someone else, or being a mentor. Learn about and support local literacy projects.

Career Pathways approach provides roadmap for learners

MODEL ADVOCATES ONGOING EDUCATION



Barbara Endel

Partnerships between regional agencies are critical to establishing “career pathways” for learners, according to Barbara Endel, senior associate at the Workforce Strategy Center in New York.

Career Pathways is a series of connected education/training programs and support services that allow individuals to gain employment, with the expectation that they will continue to seek successively higher levels of education to advance in their careers.

Endel explained the Career Pathways model on June 8 at a day-long conference presented by The Literacy Cooperative to address workforce issues. In a telephone interview recently, she emphasized collaboration to propel learners upward in their careers.

Endel has consulted with the Louisiana Community & Technical College System to introduce Career Pathways concepts as a strategy to help rebuild following Hurricane Katrina. She said regional agencies, such as community colleges and literacy organizations, must collaborate to ensure that people desiring to continue their education have the chance to do so with minimal confusion.

“We’re very rich in terms of programs and information,” Endel said, “but very poor in terms of being able to readily connect all the resources for students least able to navigate them.” She said one of Northeast Ohio’s greatest resources is the multi-campus Cuyahoga Community College.

Tri-C has several programs designed for career advancement, including its Corporate College division that provides training for businesses and employees.

Endel suggests that literacy agencies partner together to create a streamlined approach to educating the unskilled, including a “more intentional referral process.”

“Typically, these students are multitasking to a great degree in their lives. It’s very difficult to try to make time for school and make school a priority.”

Endel said cost is another reason people hesitate to enroll in some of these programs; Ohio is one of the two least affordable states regarding higher education.

When using the Career Pathways model, it’s important for agencies to have good relationships with students they serve.

“Literacy staff could know what community assets are available,” she said, and “encourage students to continue their learning.”

However, Endel believes a combination of efforts from both providers and learners produces the best results.

“It’s also incumbent upon students to know what the next step could be.”

For more information on Career Pathways visit www.workforcestrategy.org and click on “Our Model.”

Recommended reading

TO LEARN MORE ON WORKFORCE LITERACY AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT, CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING LINKS:

Setting Ohio’s Talent Agenda – www.ohioworkforce.org

Career Pathways Explored: Stories from Ohio – www.kwfdn.org

Career Pathways Explored: Building Partnerships to Advance Literacy & Workforce Development – www.literacycooperative.org

Center for Benefit-Cost Studies of Education – www.cbsce.org

Funder Collaboratives: A Philanthropic Strategy for Supplying Workforce Intermediaries – www.jff.org/knowledgecenter

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

Local

September

Make It/Take It

Friday, September 7, or Friday, September 14

9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Northeast ABLE Resource Center

23131 Lakeshore Blvd., Euclid, 44123

This is an opportunity for instructors, teachers and educators to assemble manipulatives, create lesson plans and gather resources from the Internet and our resource library. You can even create a toolkit for your own classroom. Laminator, supplies and copy machine will be available.

This can be a half day (2.5 hours) or full-day (5 hours) session. You may arrive and complete activities anytime between 9:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

To register contact Erika Mason by phone, (216) 615-7190, or by email, emason@literacycooperative.org. Please indicate whether you will attend for a half day or full day.

National

September

Institute for a Competitive Workforce (ICW) Education & Workforce Summit, 2007

September 24 -26, Washington, D.C.

<http://www.uschamber.com/icw/strategies/icwsummit.htm>

October

American Association of Adult & Continuing Education (AAACE), 2007 Conference

October 30 – November 2, Norfolk, Va.

<http://www.education.armstrong.edu/adulted/aaace/>

November

Proliteracy Worldwide's Annual Conference

November 7 -10, Alexandria, Va.

<http://www.proliteracy.org/conference/>

National College Transition Network

Effective Transitions in Adult Education Conference 2007

November 8 – 9, Providence, R.I.

<http://www.collegetransition.org/novconference.html>

The Literacy Cooperative is working to improve literacy levels among children, youth and adults in Greater Cleveland. The Literacy Cooperative is jointly funded by the Cleveland, George Gund and Martha Holden Jennings foundations. For more information visit us on the web at www.literacycooperative.org.