



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Supporting the Development and Retention of a World Class Workforce

Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director

Carl A. Donato Jr., Chair

**Pathways to Literacy Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 6, 2026
Zoom Meeting at 9:00AM**

ATTENDANCE

NAME	ORGANIZATION	TRUSTEE	1/7/25	2/4/2025	3/4/2025	4/1/2025	5/6/2025	6/3/2025	7/1/2025	8/5/2025	9/2/2025	10/7/2025	11/6/2025	12/2/2025	1/6/2026
Kalitan, Marlyn Chair	Kalitan Consulting	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Abrams, Larry	BookSmiles		X	X	X	X	X	X						X	X
Willmann, Michael, Vice Chair	WMSH	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Arreola, Enrique	Center for Family Services										X	X	X	X	X
Beach, Patti	Goodwill			X	X	X		X	X	X					
Chisolm, Victoria	Literacy Volunteers of America		X	X	X	X	X								
Cirii, Frank	Camden County One Stop	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X			X
Clark, Justin	Office of Adult Literacy (NJDOJ)		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Daunoras, Heidi	Education Consultant		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Donato, Carl	WDB Board Chair								X	X	X				
Rashawn Davis	Book Smiles				X										
Fithian, Danielle	Goodwill					X									
Floyd, Kwame	Teacher Apprenticeship Network		X	X											
Tiffany Probasco-Francis	Rowan University								X		X	X		X	X
Green, Aurella	Camden County College				X			X			X				X
Knopf, Dick	Marketing Professional Services			X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mauro, Jennifer	Goodwill	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X			
Rafferty, Joanne															X
Randall, Angela	Surviving in Strength		X	X				X	X	X		X	X		
Thompson, Ryan	MidPenn Bank	X		X											
Hamilton, Karen	BookSmiles											X			
Emily Loughlin	BookSmiles													X	
Michelle Rohan	WDB		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X				
Richelle Hardison	WDB				X										
Swartz, Jeffrey S.	WDB		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Williams, Leslie	WDB														
Vaughn, Debra	WDB			X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X

Welcome & Approval Of Minutes

Marlyn Kalitan, Committee Chair, opened the meeting at 8:35 AM, and asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the December 2, 2025 meeting. Motion was made by Dick Knopf, seconded by Michael Willmann. By a majority vote to the affirmative, the motion carried and the minutes were approved.

One Stop Update

Frank Cirii, Local Area Operations Director

Frank provided operational updates highlighting program successes and challenges:

- Increased Referrals: Growing number of referrals from Board of Social Services
- State Compliance: Successfully addressed state complaint and improved front desk triage procedures
- Positive Feedback: Survey responses praised services for families with children, specifically mentioning Larry's BookSmiles program
- GED Testing: Ongoing testing proceeding without issues
- Service Challenges: Reduced childcare services creating operational difficulties
- Client Relations: Resolved issue with Employment Services clients who felt neglected through improved follow-up procedures

Workforce Development Board

Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director

Jeff reported on broader regional developments affecting literacy work:



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Regional Initiatives and Coordination

- Inter-County Library Agreement: New services agreement expanding library access across county lines
Workforce Development: Aircraft maintenance technician apprenticeship program development
Regional Planning: Upcoming South Jersey Workforce Collaborative meeting to discuss literacy initiatives
State Advocacy: Letter to be drafted requesting regional waiver for Aircraft Maintenance Technician codes on ETPL, with supporting letters from regional employers

BookSmiles

Larry Abrams

BookSmiles Distribution Goals and Infrastructure

- Ambitious 2026 Target: Larry Abrams outlined BookSmiles' goal to distribute 1.75 million books throughout Camden County, emphasizing the vision of providing a personal library to every child in the region.
Operational Expansion: BookSmiles plans to relocate to a new facility near the One Stop center, positioning for monthly distribution of 10,000 books through workforce development and Pathways to Literacy channels.
Distribution Strategy: The committee discussed leveraging existing relationships with municipalities including Pine Hill, Clementon, and Lindenwold to create a comprehensive distribution network.

Book Collection and Partnership Development

Multiple sources for book acquisition were identified and assigned for follow-up:

Table with 3 columns: Source, Details, Responsible Party. Rows include Cherry Hill Public Library, Clementon Library, Gibbsboro Library, and Community Collection.

Building Bridges Family Success Center

Enrique Arreola, Jr., Program Director

Enrique shared outcomes from recent initiatives and future expansion plans:

- Christmas Party Event Results:
o Successfully distributed over 1,000 books to families
o Identified logistical improvements needed for future events



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- Demonstrated strong community engagement and demand
- Grant-Funded Expansion: New partnership with Gloucester Township preschools focusing on ages 0-3, with potential follow-up programming including book clubs and scavenger hunts to sustain engagement beyond initial distribution.

NJDOL

Justin Clark

Justin reported no new updates from state regarding literacy initiatives

Heidi Daunoras

Heidi and Aurella Green collaborated on collecting information

Community Literacy Research Findings

- Heidi and Enrique presented results from listening sessions conducted for the Nonprofit Development Center, identifying key challenges and actionable solutions:

Key Community Action Steps Identified:

- Reverse mentorship programs pairing youth with adults
- Equipping children's first teachers (parents/caregivers) with literacy tools
- Building partnerships with local employers to support literacy initiatives
- Creating campaigns promoting literacy as a shared family value and legacy
- Securing business partner funding for sustained programming

Mindset Shift Focus: The research emphasized the importance of changing family and community attitudes toward reading, moving beyond event-based activities to create lasting cultural change around literacy.

Strategic Planning Framework

Heidi presented a comprehensive proposal for more deliberate strategic planning:

- Original Proposal: Intergenerational volunteer approach to help children with reading (no longer feasible due to personnel changes)
- Revised Approach: Systematic examination of successful models from other organizations
- Structural Considerations: Review of committee structure, goals, and operational framework
- Implementation Philosophy: Test solutions in small groups before scaling regionally

Nonprofit Development Center of Southern NJ

Michael Willmann

- South Jersey Nonprofit Summit
 - March 17th at Rowan University
 - 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM
 - Expected Attendance: 250 participants
 - Focus:
 - Breaking Intergenerational Poverty Through Literacy
 - Regional approaches to literacy and broader social issues, including proposal for regional book distribution to children

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Committee Discussion:

The committee emphasized literacy as a critical tool for breaking cycles of intergenerational poverty:

- Core Philosophy: Books as fundamental resources for economic mobility
- Multigenerational Approach: Programs designed to impact entire families, not just individual children
- Research Foundation: Recent studies on multigenerational literacy programs informing strategy
- Community Partnerships: Engaging local employers and organizations in literacy support

Subcommittee Formation: The committee agreed to establish a strategic planning subcommittee including Mike, Heidi, Enrique, Larry, Marlyn, and other volunteers to develop a comprehensive plan within 1-2 months.

Next Steps and Accountability

The committee established clear action items with assigned responsibilities:

- Strategic Planning Subcommittee: Heidi, Enrique, Larry, Marlyn (and volunteers) to develop comprehensive plan, review best practices from other regions, and report back within 1-2 months
- Library Partnerships: Marlyn to follow up with Cherry Hill Public Library on book donations and box logistics
- Book Collection Coordination: Larry to email Chris regarding Clementon library books
- Municipal Outreach: Jeffrey and Dick to continue discussions with Gibbsboro Mayor Ed Campbell about closed library books
- Regional Advocacy: Jeff to raise literacy initiatives at South Jersey Workforce Collaborative meeting and report back
- Summit Coordination: Debra to distribute March 17th Nonprofit Summit save-the-date
- Meeting Updates: Debra to update all meeting invites to reflect 9:00 AM start time

Key Themes and Takeaways

- Collaborative Approach: The meeting demonstrated strong inter-organizational collaboration, with libraries, workforce development, nonprofits, and community organizations working together toward shared literacy goals.
- Scale and Ambition: The 1.75 million book distribution goal represents a significant scaling of efforts, requiring systematic planning and multiple distribution channels.
- Evidence-Based Strategy: Community listening sessions and research on multigenerational programs provide data-driven foundation for initiatives.
- Sustainability Focus: Emphasis on changing mindsets and creating lasting cultural shifts rather than one-time events or distributions.
- Regional Coordination: Recognition that literacy challenges require regional solutions and cross-jurisdictional cooperation.



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Administrative Updates

- Future meetings will begin at 9:00 AM.

Adjournment

Marlyn asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion was made by Michael, seconded by Frank Ciri. By majority vote of the affirmative, the motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 9:27 AM.

The next Literacy Committee meeting will be held on February 3, 2026 at 9:00 AM on ZOOM.

Respectfully submitted by: Debra Vaughn, Executive Assistant