



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 October 7, 2025 via Zoom

ATTENDANCE

	COMMITTEE INFORMATION AND 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
Kalitan, Marlyn Chair	Kalitan Consulting	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Abrams, Larry	BookSmiles			X	X	X	X	X				
Willmann, Michael, Vice Chair	WMSH	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Arreola, Enrique	Center for Family Services										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
Clark, Justin	Office of Adult Literacy (NJDOE)		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Daunoras, Heidi	Education Consultant		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
Green, Aurelia	Camden County College				X			X			X	
Knopf, Dick	Marketing Professional Services			X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Mauro, Jennifer	Goodwill	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
McKelvey, Christopher	Councilman, Clementon Borough		X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X
Randall, Angela	Surviving in Strength		X	X				X	X	X		X
Thompson, Ryan	MidPenn Bank	X		X								
Clark, Justin	NJDOL											X
Hamilton, Karen	BookSmiles											X
Michelle Rohan	WDB		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Richelle Harbinson	WDB				X							
Swartz, Jeffrey S.	WDB		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Williams, Leslie	WDB											
Vaughn, Debra	WDB			X	X	X	X		X	X		X

WELCOME & APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Marlyn Kalitan, Pathways to Literacy Chair, opened the meeting at 8:30 AM. She asked for a motion to approve September 2, 2025 minutes. The motion was made by Michael Willmann and seconded by Dick Knopf. By a majority vote to the affirmative, the motion carried, and the minutes were approved. Due to Election Day on November 4th and Veterans Day on November 11th, the November committee meeting will be scheduled for November 6th at 8:30 AM via Zoom. Karen Hamilton will check with Larry about hosting the December 2nd meeting at BookSmiles at 9:00 AM.

Event Planning and Attendance Updates

The group discussed an upcoming Empowerment Expo for which they are expecting a large attendance, with Jeffrey and Marlyn expressing excitement about the community partners and stakeholders involved. The group discussed the upcoming event, the coordination of logistics for the expo, including table setup needs and parking arrangements, with volunteers being organized to assist with table delivery between 10-12 and vendor setup at 2 PM. The event will host approximately 42 vendors, including a gaming truck, a Virtua Hospital Eat Well van, and offer a slide show of a previous ARC event footage.



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One Stop Career Center

Frank Cirii, Local Area Operations Director

Frank reported that the One Stop received funding for their workforce budget, though there will be a two-month delay in implementation. He mentioned an ongoing investigation into a cheating incident during GED testing, where a candidate was caught using a phone to take pictures of test questions. GED testing continues with approximately 100 tests per month.

While performance metrics are generally positive, Frank commented that employment numbers are being affected by rising unemployment, partly due to seasonal factors and the center is participating in flu shot and COVID-19 vaccination events.

BookSmiles Event and Literacy Updates

- The team discussed the success of a recent book distribution event where BookSmiles provided 10 boxes of books for county vendors, with many books given away to attendees.
- Richard Knopf mentioned a successful September walk event organized by BookSmiles and shared that he had invited Dr. Bill Watson, an education official, to the upcoming expo.
- Heidi Daunoras updated the team on literacy programs, sharing a document that compiled information about various initiatives including Magic Seeds and Read Aloud, while noting that the Literacy Institute link provides valuable national literacy statistics.

New Jersey Literacy Assessment Expansion

- Heidi explained that the Department of Education is expanding literacy assessments to all public schools in New Jersey, requiring twice-yearly evaluations, which builds on existing requirements for districts receiving Title I funding. She emphasized that this expansion reflects a recognition of effective practices in assessing and supporting students' literacy levels, rather than a new initiative. Richard suggested inviting a representative from the Department of Education to provide further insights, which Justin Clark, a state literacy program representative, agreed to follow up on.
- Michael and Heidi are planning to research the science of reading versus phonics teaching methods. They agreed to form a subcommittee to evaluate literacy strategies, with Heidi offering to research current scientific understanding of literacy development.
- Michael shared a URL for the Parents Magazine article, "Gen Z Parents Don't Want to Read to Their Kids, New Study Shows."

WDB and Regional Updates

Jeffrey Swartz, WDB Executive Director

- The local plan update is due at the end of the month, requiring public comment.
- The GSETA Conference in Atlantic City on the 22nd and 23rd is expected to draw 800 attendees.
- The WDB received a notice of award for workforce funding. Jeffrey discussed the current hiring trends, highlighting sectors like healthcare, transportation, distribution, and logistics, retail, hospitality, tourism, advanced manufacturing, and finance/insurance/real estate (FIRE) as actively hiring. He noted that healthcare, particularly hospitals like Cooper, has approximately 500 open positions, while sectors like pharmaceuticals, such as Novo Nordisk, are experiencing layoffs but seeing movement in job transitions. Richard mentioned GlaxoSmithKline's expansion plans, while Marlyn shared insights into Novo Nordisk's layoffs and the subsequent hiring by other



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pharmaceutical companies. Jeffrey clarified the acronym TDL (transportation, Distribution, and Logistics), emphasizing the growth in these areas, particularly in Camden County's port.

Family Success Center

Enrique Arreola

- Enrique presented a proposal for a literacy-focused portion of the Family Success Center's December holiday banquet, which Karen from BookSmiles offered to support by providing books.

Rowan University

Tiffany Probasco

- Tiffany introduced plans for a college readiness boot camp at their Camden campus starting Summer 2026, along with workforce development.

ADJOURNMENT

Marlyn asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made by Michael Willmann and seconded by Heidi Daunoras. By majority vote of the affirmative, the motion was carried, and the meeting adjourned at 9:19 AM.

The next Literacy Committee meeting will be held on November 6, 2025 at 8:30 AM on Zoom.

Respectfully submitted by: Debra Vaughn, Executive Assistant