



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 May 5, 2026 Zoom Meeting at 9:00AM

ATTENDANCE

NAME	ORGANIZATION	TRUSTEE	11/6/2025	12/2/2025	1/6/2026	2/3/2026	3/3/2026	4/7/2026	5/5/2026
Kalitan, Marilyn Chair	Kalitan Consulting	X	X	X	X				X
Abrams, Larry	BookSmiles			X	X	X	X		
Willmann, Michael, Vice Chair	WMSH	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Arreola, Enrique	Center for Family Services		X	X	X	X	X		
Beach, Patti	Goodwill								
Boaten, Roberta	NJ Dept of Health				X	X	X	X	
Chisolm, Victoria	Literacy Volunteers of America					X	X	X	X
Ciri, Frank	Camden County One Stop	X			X	X	X	X	
Clark, Justin	Office of Adult Literacy (NJDOE)		X		X	X	X	X	
Daunoras, Heidi	Multiplicity Consulting LLC		X		X	X	X		X
Donato, Carl	WDB Board Chair								
Rashawn Davis	Book Smiles								
Fithian, Danielle	Goodwill								
Floyd, Kwame	Teacher Apprenticeship Network								
Godorov, Lori	The Work Group							X	
Green, Aurella	Camden County College				X	X	X		
Gutierrez, Innocencia	The One Stop							X	
Knopf, Dick	Marketing Professional Services		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mauro, Jennifer	Goodwill	X							
McKelvey, Christopher	Borough of Clementon						X		
Naroden, Eric									X
Peterson, Jiji	Youth One Stop							X	
Tiffany Probasco-Francis	Rowan University			X	X	X	X		
Randall, Angela	Surviving in Strength		X			X	X	X	
Rafferty, Joanne	Volunteer Literacy Advisor				X				
Sinclair, Nidia	The One Stop							X	
Thompson, Ryan	MidPenn Bank	X							
Hamilton, Karen	BookSmiles								
Emily Loughlin	BookSmiles			X					
Richelle Hardison	WDB								
Swartz, Jeffrey S.	WDB		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Williams, Leslie	WDB								
Vaughn, Debra	WDB		X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Welcome

Michael Willmann, Vice Chair, opened the meeting at 9:07 AM, and asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the April 7, 2026 meeting. Motion was made by Dick Knopf, seconded by Jeffrey Swartz. By majority vote to the affirmative, the motion carried and the minutes were approved.

Meeting Logistics and Rescheduling

The committee rescheduled their next meeting from June 2nd (Election Day) to June 3rd to accommodate members working at polling locations. Additionally, a quarterly in-person meeting was scheduled for June 17th at Camden County College, where officer elections and board resolutions will be addressed.

Committee Membership and Introductions

The meeting welcomed new members Eric Naroden to the committee. Eric was introduced as a former intern who conducted the original literacy study in 2019-2020. He shared his personal connection to



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literacy through his family's experiences with public housing and education, bringing valuable perspective to the committee's work.

Previous Work And Achievements

The committee reviewed their successful literacy initiatives in the Lindenwold, Clementon, and Pine Hill area, which demonstrated improved literacy levels after three years of sustained support. This success story serves as a model for future expansion efforts across Camden County.

Strategic Planning Process

Michael proposed conducting a comprehensive literature search to identify:

- Recent major treatments and approaches to literacy
- Key organizations working in literacy (local, statewide, and national levels)
- Major players and stakeholders in the literacy field

The strategic planning subcommittee (Michael, Heidi, and Larry) was tasked with this research to ensure the committee understands the broader landscape before developing new initiatives.

Emerging Literacy Concerns

Heidi, drawing from her experience managing literacy programs during COVID, raised important concerns about AI literacy as a growing challenge. She emphasized the need to address how people distinguish between AI-generated content and real events, suggesting this as a potential focus area for the committee.

Core Initiative: "A Book in Every Child's Hand"

The committee's flagship initiative aims to provide a book to every first-grade child in Camden County.

This initiative serves multiple purposes:

- Increasing literacy rates across the county
- Introducing children to the joy of reading
- Creating equitable access to books for all children

Distribution Strategy Debate

The committee engaged in extensive discussion about the most effective distribution approach:

Michael advocated for working through schools, suggesting they:

- Start with target schools in underserved areas
- Work through superintendents, principals, and teachers
- Benefit from easier tracking and measurement of impact

However, concerns were raised that schools already have existing programs and resources.

Community-Based Distribution

Heidi strongly advocated for focusing distribution efforts outside of schools to reach underserved populations:

- Food pantries and food service locations
- Community events and job fairs



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- Group homes (suggested by Victoria)
- Homeschooled children
- Children in foster care
- Families where literacy promotion may be lacking

This approach targets children and families with multiple unmet needs beyond education.

Implementation Logistics

Jeff emphasized the need for concrete plans before presenting to county officials, particularly regarding:

- Transportation and Distribution

How books will be physically delivered to distribution points

- Volunteer Support

Jeffrey proposed coordinating with service organizations such as:

- Rotary clubs
- Lions clubs
- Other community service groups
- Resource Coordination

Working with local resources including:

- Larry's existing collection of books
- County librarian
- Existing literacy organizations

Funding and Support Mechanisms

Mini-Grant Program

Heidi proposed offering mini-grants to support transportation and distribution efforts. Jeffrey was tasked with investigating whether the Workforce Development Board (or committee) can legally provide mini-grants or stipends to partner organizations for book distribution and logistics support. While Jeff confirmed this was technically possible, he noted it wasn't typically done and required further verification.

County Government Engagement

Jeff was assigned to arrange a meeting with Lou Cappelli (and possibly Michael and Marlyn) to discuss the "book in every child's hand" initiative and explore potential county support.

Partnership and Collaboration Strategy

Avoiding Duplication

The committee emphasized the importance of:

- Understanding existing literacy programs funded by the state or other organizations
- Avoiding duplication of efforts in the same geographic areas
- Selecting 1-2 actionable initiatives within their bandwidth
- Focusing on specific impactful efforts rather than broad programs



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Potential Partnerships

The committee discussed engaging with various organizations:

- State-Level Organizations

Jeffrey mentioned the State Employment and Training Commission's (SETC) SCALES subcommittee, which previously focused on adult literacy, though its current status was unclear. Heidi found information about New Jersey Literacy Associations during the meeting.

- Local Organizations

Victoria shared information about her role with Literacy Volunteers of Camden County, suggesting potential collaboration opportunities.

- Active Associations

Heidi suggested inviting representatives from active associations with similar purposes to support literacy initiatives and potentially present at future meetings.

Additional Discussion Topics

Philadelphia Charter School Literacy Issues

The group briefly discussed a TikTok video involving students struggling to read at a Philadelphia charter school. Richard mentioned he would write a letter about the issue, indicating the committee's awareness of broader regional literacy challenges.

Creating Libraries in Underserved Areas

The committee mentioned plans for creating libraries in underserved areas as part of their broader strategy to improve access to books and reading materials throughout Camden County.

Key Themes and Priorities

Focus on Impact

The committee is committed to selecting initiatives that will have measurable, meaningful impact rather than spreading resources too thin across multiple programs.

Collaboration Over Competition

There is strong emphasis on working with existing organizations and avoiding duplication, while identifying gaps in current services.

Equity and Access

The committee is particularly focused on reaching underserved populations, including children in foster care, group homes, homeschooled children, and families with multiple unmet needs.

Strategic Planning

The committee is taking a thoughtful, research-based approach to developing their strategic plan, including literature reviews, stakeholder mapping, and comprehensive needs assessment.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Next Literacy Committee Meeting: June 3rd at 9:00 AM on Zoom (June 2 is Election Day)
- Quarterly Board Meeting: June 17th in-person at Camden County College



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ACTION ITEMS SUMMARY

Michael encouraged participants to share information about available state resources that could benefit literacy programs, emphasizing the need for better awareness and utilization of existing support systems.

Motion to adjourn was made by Heidi Daunoras, seconded by Marlyn Kalitan. With a majority vote to the affirmative, the motion was carried and the meeting adjourned at 10:05 AM.

The next Pathways to Literacy Committee meeting will be held on Zoom on June 3, 2026 at 9:00 AM.

The next quarterly Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 17th at 8:30 AM at Camden County College/Blackwood Campus, Roosevelt Hall/Room 102 at 8:30 AM. Breakfast will be served. Board members are asked to RSVP to ensure quorum.

Respectfully submitted by Debra Vaughn, Executive Assistant