



## 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 May 6, 2025 Minutes

#### Attendance

COMMITTEE INFORMATION AND ATTENDANCE							
NAME	ORGANIZATION	TRUSTEE	1/7/25	2/4/2025	3/4/2025	4/1/2025	5/6/2025
Kalitan, Marlyn Chair	Kalitan Consulting	X	X	X	X	X	X
Abrams, Larry	BookSmiles			X	X	X	X
Willmann, Michael, Vice Chair	WMSH	X	X	X	X	X	X
Allen, Mikala	One-Stop						
Beach, Patti	Goodwill			X	X	X	
Chisolm, Victoria	Literacy Volunteers of America		X	X	X	X	X
Cirii, Frank	Camden County One Stop	X		X	X	X	
Clark, Justin	Office of Adult Literacy (NJCOL)		X	X	X	X	
D'amato, Greg	Pine Hill School District						
Dann, Carol	HopeWorks Camden			X			
Daunoras, Heidi	Pine Hill School District		X	X	X		X
Rashawn Davis	Book Smiles				X		
Deprey, Brynn	NTIA						
Fithian, Danielle	Goodwill					X	
Floyd, Kwame	Teacher Apprenticeship Network		X	X			
Fugee, Antoinette	Cooper Healthcare			X			
Green, Aurella	Camden County College				X		
Jenkins, Timothy	Camden Board of Education						
Johnstone, Brent	Fathers365						
Knopf, Dick	Marketing Professional Services			X	X	X	
Mauro, Jennifer	Goodwill	X	X	X	X	X	
McKelvey, Christopher	Councilman, Clementon Borough		X	X	X		X
Petty-Ford, Shawnee	HopeWorks Camden						
Robinson, Terrenny	Net America						
Sinclair, Nidia	Camden County One-Stop						
Staples, Akeiff	Fathers365						
Stewart, Queen	Volunteer UP						
Randall, Angela	Camden County OEO		X	X			
Thompson, Ryan	MidPenn Bank	X		X			
Michelle Rohan	WDB		X	X	X	X	X
Richelle Harbinson	WDB				X		
Swartz, Jeffrey S.	WDB		X	X	X	X	X
Williams, Leslie	WDB						
Vaughn, Debra	WDB			X	X	X	X

#### Welcome & Approval of the Minutes

Marlyn Kalitan, Literacy Chair, opened the meeting at 8:33am. She asked for a motion to approve April 1, 2025 minutes. The motion was made by Richard Knopf and seconded by Marlyn Kalitan. By a vote to the affirmative with Heidi Daunoras abstaining, the motion carried, and the minutes were approved.

#### Summary

#### Camden County Literacy and Employment Updates

The committee discussed recent developments and upcoming events related to literacy and employment initiatives in Camden County. Frank reported on a new book distribution system with Book Smiles, an application for an \$800,000 digital literacy grant, and an upcoming job fair on May 16th. He also mentioned ongoing outreach efforts, including ads in public transportation and parks guides. The group discussed staffing changes, training sessions, and plans to improve customer service at the One-Stop center. Larry from Book Smiles announced



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plans to expand their operations in the coming year. The committee then began to discuss how to utilize information from a recent free and reduced lunch report.

### **Integrating Literacy into Existing Events**

Heidi shared her experience with organizing literacy events, emphasizing that standalone events often have low attendance. She suggested that the most effective approach is to integrate literacy initiatives into existing well-attended events, such as back-to-school nights or holiday distributions. Heidi and Larry both stressed the importance of reaching out to communities where access to books is limited, highlighting the generational impact of literacy. They discussed strategies for engaging parents, particularly in elementary schools, and providing resources on how to read with children. Larry added that partnering with nonprofits and utilizing free literacy materials could be beneficial, especially given budget cuts in various sectors.

### **Strategic Planning for Literacy Initiatives**

Michael proposed that the committee should engage in strategic planning rather than working on an ad hoc basis. He suggested gathering information about literacy needs, understanding the environment they're trying to impact on, and seeking input from the people they aim to help. Michael recommended conducting a standard strategic plan, which would involve assessing current efforts, researching successful literacy initiatives elsewhere, and then developing tactical approaches based on this comprehensive understanding.

### **Daycare Book Distribution and Expansion**

Larry introduced Rishawn Davis, the daycare delivery coordinator, who has distributed about 130,000 books since June to daycare and preschools in Camden, Gloucester, Burlington, Mercer counties, and Philadelphia. Rishawn explained that the program aims to bridge the literacy gap in "book deserts" by providing free books to children aged 2-4 before they reach kindergarten, fostering a joy of reading and involving parents in the process. Larry expressed a desire to amplify the program by acquiring another delivery van and developing a program to compete with scholastic book fairs in elementary schools.

### **Improving Book Access for Children**

Heidi proposed placing bookshelves in apartment complex offices to improve access to books for children in book deserts. She suggested regularly visiting these areas to restock the bookshelves. Larry agreed with the apartment idea, emphasizing the importance of involving parents in children's reading. He requested the committee's help in advertising and expanding the existing daycare book delivery program to reach more children on a larger scale.

### **Strategies for Book Distribution and Promotion**

The group discussed strategies to distribute books and promote family literacy in Camden County. Larry was seeking help reaching working-class towns with high free and reduced lunch rates for book giveaways at events like National Night Out. Heidi suggested focusing on sustainable, regular book distributions at locations like daycares and subsidized housing areas. Victoria proposed incorporating family literacy promotion into book deliveries, possibly partnering with Head Start programs. Michelle recommended collaborating with Family



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Success Centers, with Heidi mentioning Building Bridges in Clementon as an example. The team agreed to identify suitable towns and gather information on potential partnership opportunities.

### **Literacy Initiatives and Workforce Updates**

The committee discussed updates and next steps for their literacy initiatives. Jeffrey provided updates on various workforce programs, including the Summer Youth Work Experience Program which has received over 200 applications for 100 slots. The group agreed to have Larry or Rishawn give a presentation on Book Smiles at the upcoming Quarterly meeting on June 18th. Larry offered information on how Book Smiles sources books through trades and estate sales.

### **Next steps**

Jeffrey to keep Christopher informed about potential DVR hiring event at Clementon Fire Hall in the fall.

Michelle to gather information on Family Success Centers for potential partnerships.

Larry/Rishawn to coordinate with Michelle on connecting with Family Success Centers for book distribution.

Committee members identify towns for National Night Out events where book giveaways would be appropriate.

Larry/Rishawn to prepare for presentation at the Workforce Development Board quarterly meeting on June 18th.

### **Adjournment**

Marlyn asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made by Richard Knopf and seconded by Frank Cirii. By majority vote of the affirmative, the motion was carried, and the meeting adjourned at 9:29am.

Respectfully submitted by: Michelle Rohan, Committee Coordinator