

THE TRUTH ABOUT LITERACY

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Dr. Annie Norman, State Librarian, Delaware Division of Libraries & Cindy Shermeyer, Executive Director, Literacy Delaware



John Corcoran is a nationally esteemed author, speaker, and founder of the John Corcoran Foundation. His success as a high school social studies teacher and real estate developer are seemingly incongruent to his second grade reading level.

John has severe dyslexia; he managed to avoid confronting his low literacy until he sought tutoring from a volunteer literacy program well into adulthood. He now reads at a sixth grade proficiency level. His story, and many others, are detailed in the stirring film, ***The Truth About Reading***, which will be shown in numerous locations throughout the state in April thanks to the leadership and passion of Literacy Delaware (see Cindy Shermeyer's article for more).

In cases like John's, it's easy to minimize the role literacy plays in generating successful outcomes across the age continuum. However, despite his success, John himself has admitted to his insecurities and shortcomings due to his inability to read for so long, stating, **“Think how much more I could have done if I had learned to read earlier.”**

Additionally, John's success is quite unique; research has shown time and time again that low literacy is indisputably linked to poor health outcomes, limited economic mobility, and incarceration. With **54 percent** of Americans between the ages of 16 and **74 reading below a sixth grade level**, it is safe to say that the majority of Americans are living well below their full potential.

Fortunately, our Communities of Excellence work is well underway and is poised to help give Delawareans opportunities to thrive. Our efforts seek to align strategies across the state, resulting in a collective positive impact on the literacy landscape in numerous sectors for all Delawareans across the age continuum. The momentum and intention within the Health Literacy committee have caught the eye of national cohorts, as Greg O'Neill's update details. Our newest Alliance member, Dr. Katera Moore, joins us as the Environmental Justice Coordinator for DNREC. Her extensive knowledge, expertise, and experiences help inform her perspective as the chair of our Environmental Literacy subcommittee, which you can read more about in her article. All of these endeavors coalesce with the ALL IN initiative, as detailed by Sarah Cacicco's entry.

The truth about literacy is simple- it is the foundation for wholeness and progress both individually and collectively. ***The Delaware Communities of Excellence seeks a Delaware that is 100 percent literate to ensure that kids and adults are whole, resulting in healthy families, strong communities, and a vibrant and capable workforce.*** We hope you enjoy this newsletter edition and are inspired to partner in this crucial work.

ALL IN AND THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR ADULT LITERACY



Sarah Cacicco, Director, Adult Literacy & Learning Impact Network

More than 54% of adults in the United States struggle with fundamental reading, writing, and digital literacy skills.

An estimated 43 million people—one in five—navigate jobs, healthcare, public systems and services, and family life with the adult equivalent of **third grade reading skills or less**. Low levels of literacy, including digital literacy, reflect existing inequities in society, and disproportionately affect people of color and under-resourced communities—and have across generations.

The **Adult Literacy and Learning Impact Network (ALL IN)** is a new collective impact initiative that was formed by national thought leaders across the adult literacy ecosystem. It was created to implement the collective goals of the **National**

Action Plan for Adult Literacy (2021), which was conceived and convened by the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, in collaboration with more than 100 expert contributors across adult education, professional development, research, technology, and corrections—including adult learners.

Literacy represents for most people the ability to read and write, but reading, writing, and numeracy serve as gateway literacies to multiple forms of literacy, such as digital, health, information, financial, and civic literacy. ALL IN aims to think differently about how we define, measure, and support literacy skill development, not in terms of reading levels, but in terms of multiple literacies that yield multiple possibilities. For ALL IN to be successful, we also need multiple levels of engagement from partners in and outside of the adult learning ecosystem.

continued



The ALL IN coordinating council.

(IN THE NEWS CONT.)

On February 21, ALL IN hosted its first-ever **Community Update Meeting**. During this meeting, members of the ALL IN Coordinating Council:

- Informed the broader adult literacy community about ALL IN and who is involved
- Provided key updates on the National Action Plan for Adult Literacy
- Made the case for strategic investment in adult literacy across sectors
- Outlined our 2023 priorities: 1) Awareness; 2) Data-Driven Research; 3) Literacy Access
- Invited ALL to join this collective impact effort to promote multiple literacies nationwide

Our goal is to collectively explore the multiple literacy skills that interconnect and empower the whole person to pursue their individual needs and goals. The paper also provides examples of how businesses, education institutions, government, and community-based organizations can work together to boost adult literacy equity, access, and attainment for learners and workers across the United States.

Building an awareness campaign remains a key priority for ALL IN. We are working to inform policy-makers, corporate partners, and leaders in every community about the need to invest in adult literacy. This includes collaboration with the newly launched Senate Caucus on Adult Literacy, led by co-chairs Sen. Susan Collins (ME) and Sen. Jack Reed (RI). Investing in adult literacy is proven to strengthen families, our workforce, our health, and our national security and global status. Working together, we are committed to building a country where every adult can improve their literacy skills—regardless of who or where they are.

[We welcome you to sign up to receive our newsletter at allinliteracy.org.](http://allinliteracy.org)



**Watch a short video
highlighting one
family's love for
their local library!**

**WATCH
NOW**

BOOK FLOOD!

**All school libraries are invited to join the
Statewide Delaware Libraries Catalog!**

The Delaware Library Catalog is an infrastructure of more than 70 libraries sharing 2.5 million items for the benefit of Delawareans. This initiative, under the leadership of Representative Valerie Longhurst enables school libraries to [join and participate](#).



Summer Library Reading Program!



Sign up starting June 1, 2023

- Promotes learning during summer break in a fun way
- Sharpens literacy skills
- Encourages reluctant readers
- Fosters a passion for reading
- It's FREE!

delawarelibraries.org/summerreading

DelawareLibraries.org



CONFRONTING LOW LITERACY AND THE OBSTACLES PEOPLE FACE IN THE WORKPLACE

Karryl Hubbard, Secretary of the Delaware Department of Labor



There are multiple reasons why many struggle with finding and maintaining gainful employment.

At the Delaware Department of Labor (DOL), we support programming that assists job seekers in obtaining their GED, certifications, computer skills and job training leading to employment, but also with supportive services such as childcare, transportation and resource management. One area that is not often talked about is the issue of low literacy.

Individuals with low literacy may be unable to read an instruction manual or a newspaper, or food labels. They may have difficulty understanding a bus schedule or filling out a job application online.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, across the United States, approximately 21 percent of adults suffer from low literacy.

In Delaware, that figure is about 11 percent of adults.

The causes of low literacy range from poverty or undiagnosed learning disabilities, hearing or vision loss to living in chaotic households, or in homes where English is not the primary language. Whatever the causes, an inability to read well can set back the career aspirations of very bright and talented people.

Often, the stigma attached to low literacy skills follows people into the world of work and can permanently impair an individual's lifetime earnings.

Yet it is work done by the **Delaware Communities of Excellence** that assists job seekers and workers looking to improve their reading that can help break negative cycles in the work world. Their work is informed by the values of equity, respect, collaboration, and adaptability. These are shared values that we adhere to at the DOL.

We are an agency that does several things. **We are not just the unemployment office; rather we're the employment office.** Our dedicated staff works to address employment and workplace issues in a variety of ways. Whether people are experiencing discrimination in the employment process or struggling with getting employers to pay earned wages, DOL works for the benefit of improving the work experience for job seekers, workers, and employers in Delaware.

This work of addressing low literacy can only be done by effective collaborations with individuals and organizations that have a role to play in improving the wellbeing of Delawareans.

For people seeking work and the barriers that make finding work difficult, DOL believes that our best shot at decreasing unemployment, promoting fulfilling career opportunities for those seeking to work and supporting employers in our state is to address the issue of low literacy through our programming and our relationships with groups like Communities of Excellence, which serves as a community convener to offer solutions to a problem that is often misunderstood.

Together, we can combat low literacy.

SPOTLIGHT: DELAWARE LITERACY ALLIANCE NEW MEMBER

INTRODUCING DR. KATERA MOORE, THE ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY COMMITTEE CHAIR

Martina Johnson, Director of Continuous Improvement and Service, DNREC



Dr. Katera Moore is the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC), and the state's first Environmental Justice (EJ) Coordinator.

She has experience engaging Pre-K to graduate school audiences and is an urban geographer who uses an environmental justice lens to focus on and examine how socio-political structures contribute to disparities that impact everyday life.

Dr. Moore received her Bachelor of Urban Studies and Master of Environmental Studies degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and her Doctorate in Earth and Environmental Sciences with a specialization in geography from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

She served as the Ombudsman for DNREC's Division of Waste and Hazardous Substances, where she used a social science approach to become familiar with the environmental justice landscape in Delaware. Prior to that, she directed a USDA funded nutrition education program in Philadelphia.

As the EJ Coordinator at DNREC, Dr. Moore will work with the state's underserved communities, who historically have experienced disproportionately adverse human health and environmental impacts due to exposure to environmental pollution. Frequently, these communities are also more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Dr. Moore believes using an environmental justice lens for environmental literacy requires a paradigm shift from traditional environmentalist ideologies such as conservation, sustainability, and promoting personal responsibility for the planet. **She believes it starts with place-based education that is experiential.**

Environmental literacy is interdisciplinary.

It encompasses everything from resiliency, to methodologies for identifying injustice related to pollution, to obtaining infrastructure services or engaging with land use decision making, and benefiting from the services provided by natural resources.

According to Dr. Moore, "This all means that we have to center the human experience and how humans interpret the impact of the environment on them."



SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES



The Adult Literacy group met in February. The group is currently tackling three projects:

1. Gathering and reviewing statewide literacy program information
2. Creating a *Results Based Accountability* scorecard that reflects real time adult literacy metrics from programs across Delaware
3. Increasing advocacy and awareness efforts

As part of awareness efforts, the committee is lending support with the screenings of the soon to be released documentary, ***"The Truth About Reading: The Invisible Crisis Hiding in Plain Sight"* (TTAR)**.

Literacy Delaware has been selected by the John Corcoran Foundation to host screenings of this new, eye-opening documentary film from Emmy-Award® winning director Nick Nanton. TTAR brings to light the illiteracy crisis in America, highlighting people who learned to read as adults and sharing proposed solutions for working towards a future where every child learns to read proficiently. Literacy Delaware, with support from other COE members, Delaware Libraries, Read Aloud Delaware, Reading Assist, and Delaware Readiness Teams, are united in their efforts to make reading proficiently at all ages in Delaware a top priority.

ADULT LITERACY SUBCOMMITTEE: THE TRUTH ABOUT READING FILM SCREENINGS

Cindy Shermeyer, Executive Director, Literacy Delaware

The screenings will be held in select libraries and other locations. After viewing the 80-minute film, there will be a panel presentation on Delaware's landscape. Participants will walk away with a new understanding of the invisible crisis in our communities.

We hope you will share this exciting opportunity with your networks and plan to join us on one of the dates below. Click the library link below to confirm your free ticket. More information about registration at the other locations to follow.

Monday, April 24	<u>Georgetown Library, 5:30 pm</u>
Tuesday, April 25	<u>Wilmington Library, 5:30 pm</u>
Wednesday, April 26	<u>Bear Library, 5:30 pm</u>
Thursday, April 27	<u>Dover Library, 5:30 pm</u>
Monday, May 1	Christiana Care, Wilmington Hospital Auditorium
Monday, May 15	Freeman Town Hall

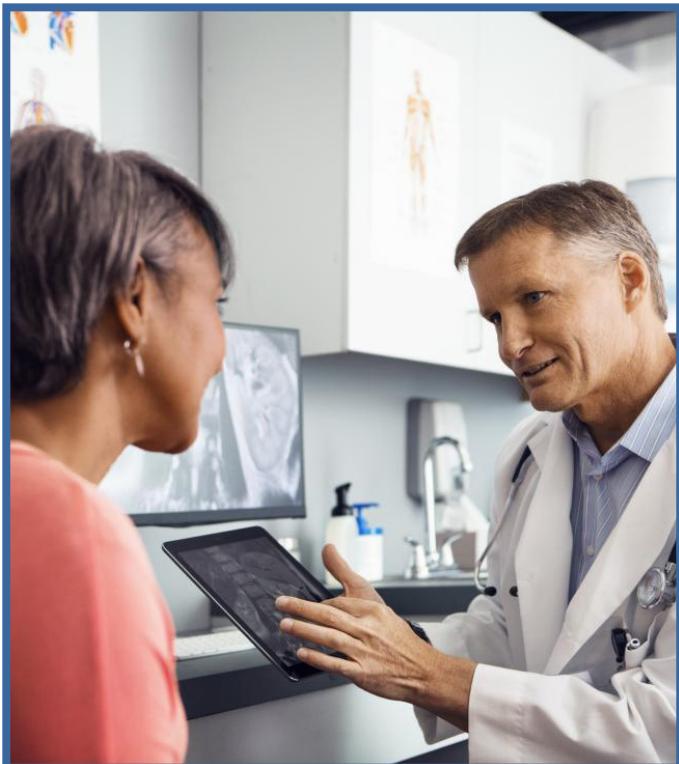
Many thanks to our sponsors so far: CSG, The Freeman Foundation, Christiana Care, and the Sussex County Health Coalition.

For more information on the Adult Literacy subcommittee, or to sponsor a TTAR film screening, contact Cindy Shermeyer at director@literacydelaware.org or Margie Cyr at margery.cyr@lib.de.us.

continued

HEALTH LITERACY UPDATES

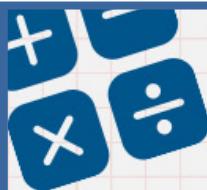
- **The first ever strategic planning session was completed in January.** The Health Literacy Council's advisory board will convene to review the final report and coordinate next steps.
- **We have some exciting news—the Health Literacy Council is going national!** Several HLC members from ChristianaCare are continuing to push health literacy awareness and progress by participating in a few national efforts this spring. The team is presenting at the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society Conference in Chicago (average attendance is 20,000 people), the NRC Health patient experience survey webinar series, and hopefully the Healthcare Education Association Conference among others.
- **Research is also underway to investigate the impact of a public facing health literacy campaign** on the confidence levels in patients asking questions and repeating back health information during a routine doctor's visit.
- **Other efforts** include participation in a request for a National Proclamation for Health Literacy Month, the National Council for Patient Safety through Health Literacy, and several consult inquiries from other health systems around the country related to the health system patient education strategy.



EARLY CHILDHOOD LITERACY UPDATES



- **The Delaware Readiness Teams and our partners will be distributing books this summer, beginning in June, as part of the Delaware Department of Education's (DDOE) Literacy Plan's Summer Reading Program.** The theme goes along with the Delaware Libraries summer reading theme "All Together Now".
- As we prepare for the upcoming 2023 Summer Literacy Outreach Program we will reflect on 2022 program outcomes, update materials and resources for this year's theme, and discuss other aspects of the family outreach plan. **The next Early Literacy Working Group Meeting will be held on Monday, March 27 at 11:00 a.m. via zoom.** Anyone is welcome to attend this meeting.
- Registration for the Virtual Kindergarten Academy is still open! See next couple pages. Its purpose is to inform parents and caregivers about expectations for their children who will be entering kindergarten in the coming school year. The series of sessions provide an educational journey full of learning opportunities for children entering kindergarten. The Academy is presented virtually each month from November through May in English and Spanish and focuses on different learning domains.
- Each month the academy will focus on a different learning area. In February, the Kindergarten Academy focused on the topic of Language and Literacy—Reach Out and Read. **The March topic will focus on Science-From Play to Inquiry.** Sessions are offered in English on Tuesdays at 6 pm and Spanish on Wednesdays at 6 pm. **For more information, see the website.**



JOIN US FOR A

VIRTUAL KINDERGARTEN ACADEMY



*Preparing families and their children who will enter
kindergarten in the 2023-2024 school year*

Children must be five years old on or before August 31, 2023



ALL SESSIONS IN ENGLISH, TUESDAYS 6-6:30 P.M.

November 8
Social Studies
My World &
Community

December 13
Social Emotional
Mindful of Myself
& Others

January 10
Health & Safety
Be Fit Stay Fit

February 14
Literacy & Language
Reach Out & Read

March 14
Science
From Play to Inquiry

April 11
Math
Fun with Numbers

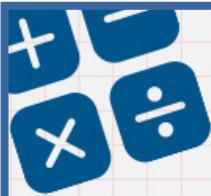
May 9
Easing Transitions
Ready for a Strong
Start



The Virtual Kindergarten Academy series will provide an educational journey full of learning opportunities for children entering kindergarten.

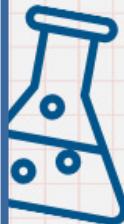
Each month the academy will focus on a different learning area. Parent sessions will be pre-recorded and available on our website.

For more information, visit: dewarereadinessteam.com



ACOMPAÑENOS A

LA ACADEMIA VIRTUAL DEL JARDÍN DE INFANTES



Preparando a las familias y sus hijos que ingresarán al

jardín de infantes en el año escolar 2023-2024

Los niños deben haber cumplido los 5 años de edad antes del 31 de Agosto de 2023

**TODAS LAS SESIONES EN ESPAÑOL SERÁN
UN MIÉRCOLES AL MES DE 6 - 6:30 P.M.**

Noviembre 9
Estudios Sociales
Mi mundo y
comunidad

Deciembre 14
Emociones Sociales
Ser consciente de mi
mismo y los demás

Enero 11
Salud y Seguridad
Estar en forma
mantenerse en forma

Febrero 15
Literatura y lenguaje
Alcanzar y leer

Marzo 15
*Ciencias Del
juego a la
investigación*

Abril 12
Matemáticas
Divertirse con
números

Mayo 10
*Facilitar la transición
para tener un buen
comienzo*



Las series virtuales de la academia del jardín de infantes les proporcionará una guía llena de oportunidades de aprendizaje para los niños que entrarán al Jardín de Infantes. Cada mes la academia se enfocará en un área diferente del aprendizaje. Padres, las sesiones van a ser pregrabadas y estarán disponible en nuestra página web. Para más información, visite: delawarereadinessteam.com

Ecosystem Facilitated by

