



The Literacy Council
of Lancaster-Lebanon

The Literacy Line

Spring 2020

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Literacy & Learning
Success Centers

Lancaster | Lebanon

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The Literacy & Learning Success Centers, a service of
The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon.

Our Plan to Resume Face-to-Face Services

-Cheryl Hiester, Executive Director

It is hard to believe that we have been staying home for 10 weeks! It's even harder to believe that I have been working at The Literacy Council for 13 years! In those 13 years, we have faced successes and challenges. COVID-19 hit hard. The situation we currently face is certainly not one that we planned for and while the impact on our organization, communities, state, and nation remains unknown, there is one thing I do know – adult literacy and basic education services are needed in our community and we are determined to come through this crisis stronger and better.

In this newsletter, we celebrate our teachers and students who have managed to stay connected during this crisis. You will read about their successes and challenges as they manage to work from home through this difficult time. You will read about creative teachers, committed students, and a late winter trip to the Capitol.

During this time, we have learned a great deal about remote teaching and learning. For some of our students, remote learning is working great. They have the technology, skills, and equipment to make this work. For others, it has been a struggle. For some, it has been impossible to continue. Obvious barriers to distance learning are lack of technology and technology skills. Less obvious barriers include isolation, stress, anxiety, managing children's education, and increased work demands.

While we are eager to resume classes and face-to-face tutoring, decisions about services will be grounded in one priority – the health and safety of our students, volunteers, staff, and our families.

As we consider how and when to open our centers to the public, we will be using the guidance provided by the CDC and the PA Department of Health. We are considering a phased approach and will communicate more details as we move through the process. As this situation changes, our approach and process may change as well. Please check our website and Facebook page for updates about face-to-face services. We know that we cannot return to the old way of providing services. Moving forward, we will use a blend of in-person services and distance learning opportunities to enable us to better serve the community. **Please see page 2 for a detailed chart, outlining the COVID-19 reopening phases.**

Upcoming Events

Extraordinary Give
November 20, 2020

An Evening of Matched Pairs
April 25, 2021

COVID-19 Reopening Phases

	Work & Congregate Settings	Social Settings	Literacy & Learning Success Centers
Red Phase	<p>Life-sustaining businesses only</p> <p>Restrictions in place for prison + congregate care</p> <p>Schools closed for in-person instruction</p> <p>Most child care closed</p>	<p>Stay at home ordered</p> <p>Large gatherings prohibited</p> <p>Restaurants/bars limited to carry-out + delivery</p> <p>Only travel for life-sustaining purposes</p>	<p>Staff & students work remotely</p> <p>Closed to public</p> <p>Staff may pick up office items needed for at home work, one person at a time. Communication via teams to coordinate schedules.</p>
Yellow Phase	<p>Telework must continue where feasible</p> <p>Businesses with in-person operations must follow safety orders</p> <p>Child care open with worker + building safety orders</p> <p>Restrictions in place for prison + congregate care</p> <p>Schools closed for in-person instruction</p>	<p>Stay at home restrictions lifted in favor of aggressive mitigation</p> <p>Large gatherings prohibited</p> <p>In-person retail allowed: curbside/delivery preferred</p> <p>Indoor recreation, health and wellness facilities (such as gyms, spas), and all entertainment (such as casinos, theaters) remain closed</p> <p>Restaurants/bars limited to carry-out + delivery</p>	<p>Staff only on site as needed – not open to public</p> <p>Staff works a staggered schedule & maintains physical distance</p> <p>All staff will be provided PPE as recommended by the CDC and PA Department of Health</p> <p>Social distancing guidelines observed</p> <p>Staff prepares for public opening & continues providing remote services</p>
Green Phase	<p>All businesses must follow CDC and PA Department of Health guidelines</p>	<p>Aggressive mitigation orders lifted</p> <p>Individuals must follow CDC and PA Department of Health guidelines</p>	<p>The Success Centers team is working on a three-phase plan to gradually offer face-to-face services in a way that ensures important safety measures & protocols (see below).</p>

Green Phase 1: Open for One-to-One Contact with Students

- Students meet with staff and/or tutor by appointment only.
- One student per classroom.
- Priority will be given to current students in need of technology support.
- Virtual classes only.

Green Phase 2: Limited Group Access

- Some group instruction – not more than 5 people (including teacher).

Green Phase 3: Classes and Workshops Resume

- Classes & schedules resume in accordance with the CDC and PA Department of Health guidelines.

Tutors Rising to the Challenge: James (Jim) Eickenberry

-Amanda Ruth, Program Coordinator, Lebanon

When the world started realizing that we needed to be more serious about social distancing, my heart dropped every time I would get a call saying that tutors would no longer be able to meet with their students. I knew it was what was best for everyone, but I had no idea how we would be able to move forward. My mind was reeling about how progress could be possible. How would we get tutors and students the technology, internet connection, and know-how to be able to navigate learning in these new and difficult times?

As a teacher, I started feeling more confident about online learning the more I tried working with my students. And, I was happy to hear that some of the volunteers with the Literacy & Learning Success Centers were willing to give it a try, too. After some troubleshooting and trial and error, scheduling conflicts and more, I am happy to say that one of our Lebanon tutors, Jim Eickenberry, has embraced this new style of teaching, and both he and his student are flourishing.

When Jim first attended our joint Lebanon and Lancaster tutor meeting, he had trouble getting logged on and had some audio issues. He persevered, and although it hasn't all been perfect, Jim has figured out ways to get reconnected through audio if one method or the other isn't working. Jim has experimented with the different tools that are offered in GoToMeeting and is continually optimistic. We always say that the next week will be easier, and so far, each week we have overcome another hurdle. From getting his student logged in, connection issues that caused their meeting to abruptly end, and continuing audio troubles, he has been able to continue to meet the needs of his student.

As soon as I approached Jim about trying to meet and continue his work, he was on board. As we started troubleshooting, Jim used his experience with Zoom and other online programs to try and get his audio working. He figured out creative ways to get in touch with his student, and then the two were able to connect and get to work. When I asked Jim if he would be open to meeting with more students, he welcomed the idea. Through everything, Jim's flexibility and willingness to learn has been extremely helpful in getting "back to work."

I would have never imagined that so much learning would be able to take place with no one able to leave his or her house. I am continually surprised by the willingness of everyone to try something new. My hopes are that this changes the number and range of students that we can reach, and that it opens new doors that we hadn't even imagined before. All in an effort to move everyone forward and into a better situation.

One Day at a Time

-Jane Myers, Volunteers Services Coordinator

When our buildings closed to the public and suspended face-to-face services, I felt incredibly overwhelmed as how to continue teaching, meeting with volunteers, helping students, testing, and recruiting. I continue to struggle with some of these, but I am trying to take one day at a time and tackle each situation as it arises.

Instruction being my priority, I contacted my class by phone and text. The majority responded and indicated that they wanted to continue to meet, but there were issues. They were anxious, depressed, and extremely worried about their families in their countries.

Italy is one of the hardest hit countries, and the mother of one of my student's had just suffered a stroke, was in the hospital, and was being sent home to a caregiver who also had medical issues. With a young son who was learning remotely, missing school, and his friends, her English class was not number one on her list. Last week she contacted me, told me that she had done the homework I had sent, and asked if we could meet. Because she cannot attend the class, she and I are meeting one-on-one via FaceTime.

A doctor, a woman in her 60's from Cuba, joined my class two weeks prior to the transition of face-to-face to remote instruction. Being a relatively new arrival, she missed her husband and younger son, and was feeling isolated and scared. Her Cuban family, living in an area under strict quarantine, was not allowed to leave their home for any reason. Her husband was very ill. Communication was at a minimum. Being with people in the classroom was a lifeline and then it ended. Whenever I reached out to her, she cried and said that she could not use the technology and that she was too sad to study. The other students began emailing and texting her, some communicating in her native language. Last week she joined the class on GoToMeeting. She even joked about our hair and how all of us would soon turn off our cameras.

The world has been brought to its knees by this virus, but a group of 12 students from 12 different countries has continued to attend class, not only to learn English, but to help each other and me get through one day at a time.

Learner Persistence in an Era of COVID-19

-Steve Hess, Student Services Coordinator

Zig Ziglar once lamented: “When obstacles arise, you change your direction to reach your goal; you do not change your decision to get there.”

In the face of the Coronavirus pandemic, these words ring so true for our instructional staff and the students we serve. Adult learners have had to adjust to a new way of learning. For the Success Centers, our instructional staff continue to do what we do best – connecting to our students in a way that meets their individual and educational needs to meet this new reality.

Since September 2018, Lashelle has been enrolled in Reading Horizons, an online program for individuals who struggle with spelling, reading, and comprehension skills. Lashelle, a grandmother of six, struggles with reading comprehension. She can read individual words but cannot put these words together to understand the meaning of text. As well, she suffers from a medical condition that at times forces her to “step out” from her studies. Furthermore, Lashelle does not have a computer at her home, and prior to the pandemic, would walk to the Lancaster Success Center to use a computer. Despite these barriers, Lashelle continues to persevere, and in her words, “she’s trying.”

With the shutdown of the Success Center in mid-March, Lashelle no longer was able to access Reading Horizons. When we reached out to Lashelle for a check-in, she expressed a desire to continue her studies. Her instructor currently sends her reading practice via email, which Lashelle reads with a cracked phone, making it a little difficult to see and complete her homework. Despite this, she continues to submit her work in a timely manner and is eager for more. She also regularly communicates with her instructor to let him know how she is doing and if she runs into any problems.

This pandemic has brought to light the barriers and challenges we have had to overcome in the delivery of educational services. Some of these barriers and challenges include: remote learning replacing traditional face-to-face instruction; digital literacy skills have taken on a greater importance; and a lack of adequate access to technology can often hinder students from learning the skills needed to succeed in today’s economy. However, students such as Lashelle, those who demonstrate a willingness to persevere in the face of obstacles, those who are willing to learn in a method they are not accustomed to, and those who do not give up when the going gets tough, truly inspire those of us who are committed to meeting students where they are and ensuring they have the necessary supports in place to better themselves.

Coping with Technology

-Cathy Roth, Program Coordinator, Lebanon

The last few weeks have been a challenge, not just to me, but to my students. Trying to participate in classes remotely, oversee children’s homework, and perform the normal household routine is not easy.

Chantal has all these challenges, and is raising six-year-old twin sons on her own while her husband works in New York. She has a computer without a camera and a smartphone, but no technology skills.

When the “Stay at Home Order” came I thought it was unlikely she would participate in distance learning. She surprised me! At first, we made phone contact and I was thrilled with being able to talk to her, but worried that I could not provide the literacy skills instruction she needed so desperately from a remote learning environment.

First, I had to understand the GoToMeeting website. My techno wizard co-worker, Amanda, helped me navigate early on, but talking the process through step-by-step with Chantal via phone was laborious. The audio connections weren’t functioning; I called Amanda in on a GoToMeeting trial run and together we were able to take screen shots, send them to Chantal’s cellphone, and help her press the right icons to turn audio on. It was such a thrill when we completed our first GoToMeeting lesson!

What we’re learning: the importance of working with students via technology not only in times of crisis, but on a regular basis. When we are able to teach face-to-face classes again, the Success Centers will continue to work with students on their technology skills. They will be prepared to easily transition to remote learning (should they need to do so), and continue to gain the technology skills needed for 21st century jobs and careers.



Chantal (right) is receiving help from Svitlana to operate a computer.

A Visit to the Capitol for Adult Learners

-Brittany Foose, Program Coordinator

Seventy-eight students and staff from the Success Centers and IU13 took a field trip on February 5th to the Capitol Building in Harrisburg, PA. The purpose of the trip was two-fold: to educate students about the function of the state government, and to advocate for adult education through visits and hand-delivered letters to state senators and representatives.

For several weeks before the trip, ESL and ABE teachers created and delivered lessons to teach students about the form and function of the state government. Students also learned how they could play a part in the democratic process by contacting their elected officials. Students were given the opportunity to write letters to their state senator and representative to explain how they have been positively impacted by adult education. A total of 96 letters were written by ESL and ABE students to advocate on behalf of adult education funding.

At the Capitol Building, students and staff separated into two groups. The larger group took a guided tour of the building, while the smaller group delivered the 96 student-written letters to the various senators and representatives. All students also had a chance to sit in for part of a House of Representatives session. A small group of students even had the chance to meet Representative Michael Sturla and sit on the floor for part of the session.

Through this field trip, students from the Success Centers and IU13 were able to learn first-hand how the legislative process works on a state level. They also were able to use their voices to share their personal experiences and advocate for further funding of adult education.

Staying Committed

-Jenny Bair, Program Director

Be willing to change, because life won't stay the same. -Anonymous

And, boy have we gone through changes in the past few months!

On March 16, 2020, the Success Centers were mandated by state safety guidelines to suspend face-to-face services due to the COVID-19 crisis. But learning has not stopped. Volunteers and program staff swiftly responded to changes, and quickly transitioned to providing remote classes to their students.

Instruction has taken many forms. Each instructor has considered his or her student's literacy level and access to technology to develop remote materials that will best serve the student's needs and goals. Some instructors went "back to basics" by mailing packets of paper-based worksheets to their students while others started online meeting sessions without any clue how it would work. In each case, instructors took obstacles and turned them into opportunities.

It is truly an honor to work with a group of educators who are willing to change when things don't stay the same. I applaud everyone who has continued to provide opportunities for life-long learning and learning for life!

The Shift

-Ilsa Powell Diller, Outreach & Resource Coordinator

Just like our instructors, volunteers, and students have had to adjust to our "remote way of working together," I, too, have had to "shift" my way of thinking and doing with certain aspects of my job. I can no longer walk down the hall to Jane, Brittany, and Steve and get some input for a grant narrative; I can't walk next door to Jenny's office to ask about student data; I can't ask for Tina's thoughts on an idea for Matched Pairs; I can't tell Monica "I have a meeting with So-in-So—just send her up to my office when she arrives." I can't walk up to Cheryl and say: "this is what I'm thinking, does that make sense?"

So, I'm finding ways to make my traditional face-to-face conversations and meetings happen online, via text and phone. Is it ideal? Of course not, but it is what it must be right now. Our organization has taken a detailed look at our strategic plan, and reassessed where our focus needs to be in the foreseeable future. Our top priority is and will remain our students. We have learned, through all of this, how important it is to have accessible technology for our students, not only in times of trouble, but in times of peace. Why? The reality is, they need the skills. They need to continue practicing those skills so that when they are ready for a job, they are prepared, and can get a job with a life-sustaining wage. Our online presence is more important now than ever. But, will we slow down the messages after this is "over"? No. We know that our social media presence is growing and has become a standard vehicle of communication for our donors, friends, students, and community partners and supporters to stay in touch with us and stay up-to-date on Success Center activities.

Shifting is not easy, but it also comes with many lessons learned, opportunities, positive experiences, and for me....gratitude that we can still provide services to adult learners in Lancaster and Lebanon counties.

The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon

We serve the people and communities of Lancaster and Lebanon Counties; working in partnership with multiple stakeholders, including but not limited to nonprofit agencies, educational institutions, business and industry employers, governmental staff, and organizations. Key to our success is a network of highly qualified volunteers, professional staff, and a supportive community.

Mission

Promoting lifelong learning and learning for life.

Vision

Adults have skills to transform their lives, sustain their families, and strengthen their communities.

Values

Quality – Our high-quality programs and services are rooted in evidence-based practices and offered in an encouraging and caring environment.

Goal-Driven – Our programs and services demonstrate results that support the education students need to successfully transition to the next step of obtaining their life goals.

Respect and Integrity – Our compassionate and caring approach and interactions are highly respectful of diverse backgrounds and differences. Our integrity rests in our word, all deeds and actions that ensure trustworthiness and confidentiality.

Leadership – Our staff, board members, volunteers, and students are engaged and are actively advocating for adult education. Our responsibility to continually enhance our own leadership skills will keep us prominent in the field.

Innovative – Our effective partnerships, strategic approaches, and being open to possibilities allow us to respond creatively to our work.

Collaborative – Our willingness to build strong relationships and alliances with others that support our mission ensures commitment to serving our community and the betterment of society at large.

Board

The Literacy Council is governed by a volunteer board of directors. 2019-2020 board members:

Eric Luckenbaugh, President
Aliina Hirschhoff Hopkins, Vice President
Mary Edith Leichliter, Secretary
Erik Cianci, Treasurer

Scott Cole Star Gibbs
Rich Druby Martha Guaigua
Willa Freer Cheryl Hiester*
Ashley Garcia

*(Non Voting)

Staff

Jenny Bair, Program Director
Brittany Foose, Program Coordinator
Steve Hess, Student Services Coordinator
Cheryl Hiester, Executive Director
Mitchell Hiester, Program Assistant
Jane Myers, Volunteer Services Coordinator
Ilsa Powell Diller, Outreach & Resource Coordinator
Cathy Roth, Program Coordinator, Lebanon
Amanda Ruth, Program Coordinator, Lebanon
Monica Shannon, Receptionist

Adjunct Teachers

Meredith Aul Kerry Hurst
Tina Barnhart Deb Linton
Lisa Bowman Rita Nutter
Barbara Dorozynsky Lauren Swartz

Volunteers Needed

Take action today and join us. We need volunteers to teach basic education skills.

To get started, contact:

Jane Myers,
Lancaster Center
jane@literacysuccess.org

Amanda Ruth,
Lebanon Center
amanda@literacysuccess.org

"When obstacles arise, you change your direction to reach your goal; you do not change your decision to get there." –Zig Ziglar



The Literacy & Learning Success Centers are powered by United Way of Lancaster and Lebanon Counties.



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