Crafting a Literacy Program That Works

Wilma Kakie Glover-Koomson
Haverstraw King’s Daughters Public Library
**Literacy**: The ability to identify, understand, create, interpret, compute, read, and write in a way that allows us to communicate efficiently and proficiently. Critical to making individual, family and community-based decisions for:

- Economic
- Health
- Physical
- Mental well-being

as well as:

- Assimilation into society
- Preparation for job application and training
- Civics and pathways to citizenship
Types of Literacies

There are several types of Literacies:

- Alphanumeric or language literacy and numeracy. This is where most people place ESL
- Financial and economic literacy
- Health
- Civics
- Digital and Computer
- Media literacy
ESL and Alphanumeric literacy

- Designed to improve a student’s command of English as they go through life day-to-day
- Students are non-native speakers of English
- Through ESL classes they develop their command of English through vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, composition, listening and writing.
- Students also learn numbers and numerical values and basic arithmetic. Basic numeracy skills consist of comprehending fundamental such as addition, subtraction, multiplication and division
- With numeracy, students learn to tell their age, birthdates of themselves and their families (skills which they will need in filling out forms.) Numeracy also helps in developing critical thinking skills and reasoning strategies
- Both of these literacies will help in developing logical thinking in dealing with family, employability and workplace skills, in completing everyday tasks.
Financial and Economic Literacy

Basic financial education which promotes a simple understanding of:

Money and personal finance
Budgeting
Planning
Setting goals
Making smart money choices
Financial management
Simple currency conversion
Strengthening the family
Health Literacy

- Assists individuals to obtain, process and understand basic health issues
- Points them to information and health services that will enable them make appropriate health decisions
- Helps in understanding, planning and selecting health coverage and benefits that work for the individual and well as the household.
Civic Literacy

Addresses:

- History of the United States
- How to understand the government
- How to participate and initiate changes in the community, and society as a whole
- Promotes civic responsibility
  - also
- Prepares students to understand the immigrations process
- Ensure and uphold the values of citizenship
- Prepares students for citizenship
Digital and Computational Literacy

- Promotes and understanding of the computer and digital world through
- Simple computing and keyboarding classes
- Students learn to type at their own comfortable speed
- They learn to use software for word-processing and simple spreadsheets and date entry, filling out forms, etc.
- Introduce students to email and Internet access/surfing for news and other information
- Using smartphones, not just for telephony but other digital uses for and communication and data access
- Using eReaders etc.
Tools for a Successful Literacy Program @ the Library

- Counters
- Basic Reading materials
- Easy English News
- Workbooks
- Role-playing
- Flash Cards
- Posters
- Civic information such as simple historical pamphlets, voter registration information and cards, voting information
- Computer programs such as Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing,
- Tablets
- Smartphones
Literacy Tools & Resources Outside the Library

- The Community – programs held outside the Library
- Team up with Literacy Solutions/Volunteers
- BOCES
- US Department of Education’s Division of Adult Education and Literacy for suggestions and resources
- Assist in organizing storytelling contests and other programs @ recreational areas, such as parks, by various ethnic groups
- Conduct family literacy activities
- Collaborate with the town for programs that involve the whole family
- Request free materials from sponsored agencies, such as INS, cultural and community groups for distribution to patrons
Know Your Community

- What is the make up of the community you serve?
- What are the major ethnic groups?
- How involved is the library?
- Do you go in assuming that your patrons are clueless about everything, and you are the only one who knows what is good for them?
- Is it your assumption that, just because they do not have a good command of English, they “know nothing” or are “poor and can’t afford anything?” Do you make an effort to understand “their” culture, habits, language, mannerisms?
- Take the time to know your patrons. They would like to learn from you but, you can also learn from them.