

Margie Cyr  
Courtnei Suber  
June 17, 2025

DelawareLibraries.org



## **Table of Contents**

<b>Part 1: Narrative</b>	<b>P. 3</b>
<b>Part 2: Data</b>	<b>P. 7</b>
<b>Part 3: Learning Styles</b>	<b>P. 9</b>
<b>Part 4: Conclusion</b>	<b>P. 11</b>
<b>Attachment 1: Learning Circles Agendas: Georgetown Learning Circle</b>	<b>P. 13</b>
<b>Attachment 2: Learning Circles Agendas: Laurel Learning Circles</b>	<b>P. 15</b>
<b>Attachment 3: Survey Document</b>	<b>P. 17</b>
<b>Attachment 4: Learning Style Cards</b>	<b>P. 18</b>
<b>Attachment 5: Recommendations for Adult Literacy Services, Part 1, January 23, 2024</b>	<b>P. 19</b>
<b>Attachment 6: Recommendations for Adult Literacy Services, Part 2, March 12, 2024</b>	<b>P. 23</b>

## Part 1: Narrative

The concept of creating a program that would provide an opportunity for support, practice, and motivation for adult students learning to read was first developed in the fall of 2023 with the assistance of David Brake and Safiya Washington, two AmeriCorps Vistas assigned to DDL's literacy project. David's and Safiya's first six months were spent researching best practices for teaching adults to learn how to read and educational materials to use in the reading journey. The second half of their Vista year was researching supplemental activities to support the learning process, provide motivation, involve family members (crucial to motivation), and speed the learning process.

At that time, we were considered developing "Conversation Groups" for this project. From my public library programming experience and research done by David and Safiya, we knew that simply planning, scheduling, and offering a "Conversation Group" to the general public with a target audience of those who might be learning to read would not be successful in gaining an audience. There are several reasons for this:

- Adult learners who don't know how to read cannot read PR materials
- Adult learners who don't know how to read are not typically library patrons
- Adult learners who don't know how to read are isolated by their lack of skills and feel shame about them. This creates a severe reluctance to ask for help directly.
- Adult learners who don't know how to read may be in the low economic threshold and are working more than one job to support their families. This limits their available time to participate in another activity.
- Adult learners with low literacy skills may have had a poor experience with formal schooling. This makes them reluctant to return to that environment.
- The libraries have limited ways to reach this audience.

We believed that we need to start any "Conversation Group" with a partner which offered formal, scheduled instruction in reading. In order to test any success rate for the project, it was critical to have a controlled group of participants to complete the project.

Ideally this partner would be offering classes in public library facilities. I reached out to Kelly Whaley, Director of Adult Education at Sussex Technical Vocational High School. Sussex Tech offers ABE/GED and ESL classes to adult students located in Milton, Lewes, Frankford, Selbyville, Laurel, Georgetown, Bridgeville, and Seaford libraries. In Sussex Tech's program, all GED students start with ABE (Adult Basic Education) and all ESL students transition to GED. Kelly was interested in our project and willing to partner.

In June 2024, Dr. Annie Norman, Alta Porterfield, Mary Kellogg, and I met to discuss the possibility of asking Literacy Delaware to develop reading classes to be held in the two hours before open labs at certain libraries. Literacy Delaware has gained AmeriCorps Vistas and they may be able to assist with such classes. The ideal locations would be Bear and Wilmington libraries. It was unclear if Literacy Delaware had the capacity to offer this type of programming. This would be a pilot program in northern Delaware.

At the same time, a pilot program would be developed using the “Conversation Circles” model partnering with Sussex Tech in southern Delaware. The new incoming DDL Vista would work with this pilot project to develop the supplemental program, develop a volunteer corps to help, and to work with certain libraries. It was agreed to ask Georgetown, Laurel, Milton, and Lewes to partner with DDL and Sussex Tech on this project.

Also, in June 2024, DDL and Literacy Delaware were invited to participate with ALA in an IMLS grant funded project which would create a template and best practices for Family Literacy Centers in public libraries. The multi-year grant would provide funding for this work. Since the development of Family Literacy centers in all the libraries Delaware was Dr. Annie Norman’s goal, and since, we were already developing “Conversation Circles” in public libraries to support adults learning to read, it was a perfect opportunity.

The work that was accomplished (see Attachments 5 and 6) by David and Safiya formed a foundation for work continued in 2024 when AmeriCorps Vista, Courtni Suber, came on board.

Working with Kelly Whaley from Sussex Tech, we identified the days and times ABE/GED and ESL classes would be held at Laurel (ABE/GED), Lewes (ABE/GED), Milton (ESL), and Georgetown (ESL). Kelly provided introductions to each teacher. We met with the teachers to talk about the project and gain their interest. Every teacher expressed a desire to participate. We met with the libraries and asked for their partnership. Every library agreed to partner with the project.

Once classes began in the fall of 2024, we visited the classes and gave a presentation to the students of what our goals were and what we hoped to accomplish:

- Support their learning
- Provide an opportunity to practice what they were learning in an informal peer group
- Speed their learning process
- Increase their motivation by providing fun activities and involving their families

We needed to learn if there was interest in participating, and if so, reach a consensus on best days and times to hold the Circles. As we anticipated, interest was high but tempered by demands of work and family obligations.

Planning began on the structure of the Circles. It was agreed that reading had to be the foundation used for all activities including the ESL students who were learning to speak English and not necessarily to read it. We had hoped to obtain some guidance from the teachers about the reading levels students brought to the Circles; but we were not successful at obtaining those. In the end, it wasn’t important.

Using the four goals in mind, we renamed the “Conversation Circles” to “Learning Circles.” The new name was more explicit to describe the program and gave students a stronger basis for participation. Courtni began working with Christine at DDL to design flyers that could be used in the libraries and to recruit volunteers.

Following up on a suggestion to obtain volunteers, we contacted Delaware 50+ to ask for their assistance with this. Doing so was a vastly more complicated process which took months and required formal agreements

between state entities. We are still working on this. It's possibly a positive thing that we weren't successful (at this point) in obtaining volunteers. The concept behind the Learning Circles was an experiment and was completely dependent on the students who participated, their interests, proficiency levels, and frequency of attendance. Working without volunteers allowed Courtni and me total flexibility to see what worked and what didn't work.

In late 2024, the Lewes Library failed to attract enough registered students to proceed with hosting a class; and the Milton Library faced staffing issues so they withdrew as a host partner. We agreed to proceed with Laurel Library (ABE/GED) and Georgetown (ESL). Choosing to proceed with ABE/GED students at one location and ESL students at the other location would give us a better overview of processes to use and what the students needed and wanted. Using the students' articulated time preferences we scheduled Learning Circles at Laurel at 11:30 AM on Wednesdays immediately before class began; and 11:00 AM on Saturdays at Georgetown.

As we approached the beginning of the school semester in January 2025, we began to develop agendas for the classes. Unknown to us were any proficiency level of the students. For the ABE/GED class, we agreed to start with an oral reading of the book "Sarah Plain and Tall." We knew this book was family oriented, character driven, with a theme that offered challenges and a happy ending. Its Lexile level is 660 (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade). Doing oral reading with pre-reading discussion would tell us about comprehension and ability to interpret illustrations.

For the ESL students, the ability to read any text in English was a complete unknown.

In September 2024, ALA again approached DDL about participating in a grant from the Estee Lauder Foundation. This grant was to develop a program using storytelling to improve literacy and promote healing in youth who have experienced incarceration. While this grant's program did not match our Learning Circle project, it did provide a large donation of educational materials for use with students at a low literacy level. Working with the ESL teachers partnering with us, we learned that ESL students (regardless of their age), appreciate working with educational materials of any level even if they are illustrated for children and not adults.

Among this Estee Lauder donation were two sets of playing card decks, "Blah, Blah, Blah" (easier level) and "Vocabularious" (harder level); and two volumes of "Word of the Day: 365 Words to Learn and Explore."\* The "Word of the Day" became the daily closing ritual for the ABE/GED class and the "Blah, Blah, Blah" cards became the opening ritual for the ESL class.

To achieve the foundation of reading in the ESL class, we turned to our previous experience with Prime Time at the Georgetown Library. Prime Time, a program offered to bilingual families by Delaware Humanities, provides curated reading lists at the picture book level. Because the majority of the ESL students speak Spanish as their primary language and that was the target audience for Prime Time, we went to the Prime Time Reading Lists to find picture books we could use for the illustrations for pre-reading discussion; and the text would resonate with this audience to provide opportunities for vocabulary exploration and development.

The first Learning Circles were scheduled to begin at Laurel Library on Wednesday, January 22, 2025 at 11:30 AM and at the Georgetown Library on Saturday, February 1, 2025 at 10:30 AM. The teachers sent out reminder communications to all the students. Binders were prepared for each student. These binders were customized for the Learning Circle location and contained contact information, lined paper for notes, and DDL's Unleash Inner Genius booklets.

The first session at Laurel worked well. There were nine students enrolled in the ABE/Ged class which began at 12:30 PM. At 11:30 AM, six students arrived for the Learning Circle. Of these six, four were young male Haitians for whom English was not a first language, one was a woman who had been attempting to gain her GED for many years, and the sixth was a young woman working on her GED. All were interested and participated willingly. They asked to meet weekly since it gave them a routine easy to follow. During the course of Laurel's Learning Circle, half of the ABE/GED class dropped out due to work or family commitments. In the last half of the project, two students continued to attend weekly and a third student attended sporadically. Using "Sarah, Plain, and Tall" as our foundation, over the months, we discussed content, characters, life on the prairie in the mid 1800's, the difference culturally between the coast of northern Maine and the Midwest, transportation, food, health care. Our students were engaged and eager. We expanded our exploration into American geography, map study, and descriptions of States (locations, wildlife, capitals). The students were able to predict outcomes in "Sarah, Plain, and Tall," and learned to care for the characters. The happy ending pleased them. At one point, our student who had been working on her GED for many years said, "My brain is really working now and I'm learning."

The experience with the ESL classes at Georgetown was different. The first session we had five students attend. After this session, we had no attendance. We reached out to the teachers to let them know this and ask for a reminder to the students. Courtni and I considered ending the project in Georgetown due to lack of attendance. I revisited the classes and told them about the project again and asked if another day and time would be better. The consensus was Saturday was still the best time but 11:00 AM would be better than 10:30 AM. Courtni and I adjusted the time, and by March 22, we had a regular attendance of three sisters (one of whom was not in the class) and two of their small children and a married couple. This group stayed with the Learning Circle until its end. The English literacy of all the students was low. We worked on listening, comprehension, vocabulary and pronunciation.

During one Learning Circle, the sisters were not in attendance and the couple asked me to let them read out loud. They asked me to read a page to them and then pass the book to each of them to read the page, to correct their pronunciation and explain words they did not know. This worked very well for them; and they kept a notebook of words they were just learning. We continued this pattern. When the sisters returned, we asked them if they would also like to do this; and they did.

We learned that Georgetown Library has a bilingual art program for children one Saturday a month; and we made arrangements with this art teacher to hold our Learning Circle as part of her art class. Our hope was that

this would give the young children something fun to do and provide a platform for conversation for the adult students. On the day of this class, the sisters with their children did not attend.

In order to measure success of the project, each student was asked at their first or second Learning Circle to complete an initial survey. During the course of both Learning Circles, Courtni introduced the concept of Learning Styles to the students. The students found this interesting and helpful to their learning journey.

The last session of each Learning Circle was bittersweet. A real benefit of the small numbers of attendees was that we got to know each well and they got lots of hand-on practice. Establishing a close and trusting relationship with each of the students was a critical part of the success of the program. Each student was asked to complete another survey almost identical to the one they completed at the beginning. We gave each student a Delaware Passion t-shirt and thanked them for working with us on this project. None of the students, in either class, wanted the Learning Circle to end. All expressed desire to continue the work over the summer and also to resume in the fall.

During the course of the Learning Circle pilot, in conversation with Literacy Delaware, it did not seem that their pilot had started out as planned and did not proceed as planned initially. Information about the status of their pilot project has not yet been received.

## **Part 2: Data**

### **Laurel Public Library**

Partnered with Sussex Tech's ABE/GED class.

On January 22, 2025 nine students attended with an age range of 18-65 and a mix of race and gender. Of the nine students, three were Haitian Creole-speaking and the other six were English-speaking; in-conjunction, six students had officially registered for the Learning Circle through their ABE/GED Teacher, while the additional three students had learned of the Learning Circle from other students and attended out of curiosity.

After the first couple of Circles, attendance typically ranged from 2-3 students each week. Partially due to this is, the teacher reported that several students had dropped out of the class due to scheduling conflicts with work, so they couldn't attend the Circle anymore.

Of the initial nine students that attended the first Learning Circle on January 22, only two of those students consistently attended until the final Learning Circle on May 21.

### **Surveys**

The students at Laurel Public Library completed a survey at the beginning and at the end of the Learning Circle.

Initial survey on February 5 and 19, 2025:

Six students completed the survey, and the following data was collected:

The students had experienced two Learning Circles before completing the initial survey:

- Out of a rank from 1 to 5 for the question “How likely are you to attend more Circles?” all students chose 5 meaning “Very Likely” 100%
- Believed the Circles were interesting, fun, and informative, and wanted them to be once a week. 100%
- Enjoyed playing games and practicing their English in a non-classroom setting that was interactive and fun. 100%
- Did not know their Learning Style. 83%
  - One student knew of the concept and their personal Learning Style being Visual. 16%

Final survey on May 21, 2025

Two students completed the survey, and the following data was collected. These students had attended each Learning Circle from the first class on January 22, 2025, so their feedback was extremely valuable as both agreed that they:

- Out of a rank from 1 to 5 for the question “Would you come to Learning Circles in the future?” both students chose 5 meaning “Very Likely.” 100%
- Believed the Circles had been fun, helpful, and timely (and specifically enjoyed the card games). 100%
- Learned how to read better as well as gained more knowledge on the United States’ history, states, and capitals (based on a multi-week map activity played with these two students). 100%
- Knew their Learning Style. 100%
  - 1 student was a Visual Learner
  - 1 student was a Reading/Writing & Kinesthetic Learner

### **Georgetown Public Library**

Partnered with Sussex Tech’s ESL classes

On February 1, 2025 of the first Circle, five students attended, and they were pre-dominantly Haitian Creole-speaking with an age range of 5 - 50 and a mix of gender.

However, of the five students that attended the first Learning Circle on February 1, none of them attended again and all scheduled Circles after had no students. In response, the Circle was cancelled until we met again with the ESL class at Sussex Tech to gauge interest from the other students; several of them were interested and then the Circle was officially restarted on March 22.

When the Circle restarted five students attended, and they were pre-dominantly Spanish-speaking with an age range of 25 – 45 and a mix of gender.

### **Surveys**

The students at Georgetown Public Library completed a survey at the beginning and at the end of the Learning Circle.



Initial survey on April 12, 2025:

Two students completed the survey, and the following data was collected. The students had experienced three Learning Circles before completing the survey:

- Out of a rank from 1 to 5 for the question “How likely are you to attend more Circles?”, both students chose 5 meaning “Very Likely.” 100%
- Believed the Circles were informative, fun, and interesting, and had learned more words and enjoyed practicing English-speaking. 100%
- Did know their Learning Style: both students were Visual and Kinesthetic Learners

Final survey on June 7, 2025

Four students completed the survey, and the following data was collected:

These students had all attended the Learning Circle on or after March 29 and continued to attend when they had the availability:

- Out of a rank from 1 to 5 for the question “Would you come to Learning Circles in the future?” all students chose 5 meaning “Very Likely.” 100%
- Believed the Circles had been fun, helpful, and timely, and were appreciative of the extra opportunity to learn and practice new and known words outside of ESL class. 100%
- Knew their Learning Style. 100%. All students were a mix of Visual, Kinesthetic, and/or Reading/Writing

### **Part 3: Learning Styles**

The Learning Style concept is about the different styles of learning that everybody has: some people learn by hearing, others learn by reading, and then there’s those who learn via a combination of styles.

There are Four Learning Styles and it is referred to as the VARK model:

- Visual
- Auditory
- Reading/Writing
- Kinesthetic

Visual Learning Style: Means the individual best learns when the information is introduced visually in forms such as graphs, photos, maps, videos, etc.

- An example of learning something visually is watching a presentation with graphs and videos detailing the data of Delaware’s adult literacy levels.

Auditory Learning Style: Means the individual best learns when the information is introduced audibly in forms such as spoken via group discussions, podcasts, lectures, etc.

- An example of learning something audibly is listening to a guest speaker talk about the data of Delaware's adult literacy levels.

Reading/Writing Learning Style: Means the individual best learns when information is introduced via words in forms such as articles, essays, written diagrams, etc.

- An example of learning something via reading/writing is reading an article on the data of Delaware's adult literacy levels.

Kinesthetic Learning Style: Means the individual best learns when information is introduced in forms such as hands-on interaction via experiments, simulations, activities, etc.

- An example of learning something kinesthetically is participating in an activity that simulates the difference in literacy levels of Delaware adults.

Presenting the concept of Learning Styles to the students at Laurel Public and the Georgetown Public libraries was critical to us - we believe that knowing one's personal Learning Style(s) can increase learning retention and self-confidence, both of which are important elements to develop stronger literacy skills.

The VARK Learning Style model was presented to students first by asking if they were familiar with the concept and if they knew what their Learning Style was or could be. Afterwards they were given a visual presentation of a definition and example of all four Styles, followed by a 15-question quiz they individually took online to determine their personal Learning Style(s). Quiz: VARK Model: 4 Types of Learning Styles Explained + Quiz

The results of the quiz:

- At Laurel Public Library, one student was a Visual Learner and one student was a combination of a Reading/Writing & Kinesthetic Learner.
- At Georgetown Public Library, all four students were a combination of Visual, Kinesthetic, and/or Reading/Writing Learners.

Once students determined their Learning Style(s) from the quiz, activities designed with the intention of engaging multiple Styles were facilitated to give the students an immediate opportunity to experience their newfound knowledge applied.

At the final Circle for each Library, all students who completed the Learning Style quiz wrote on their final surveys that they remember their quiz result, and one student wrote a note sharing how learning their Style has helped them read better since.

To ensure that students continued forward with this newfound knowledge, each of them were given a Learning Style Card at the final Circle. These Cards provide a short description of the four Learning Styles, as well as a link to the website above where students can read more about their Learning Style(s) and easily share the information and quiz with others.

## Part 4: Conclusion

Neither Courtney nor I really knew what to expect going into the Learning Circle Project. We believed that the opportunity to offer students (enrolled in a formal educational program) to practice what they were learning with peers in a non-judgmental environment was critical to their learning journey. We knew that the learning journey was a long process that could last years. Motivation, visible progress, and support of others would be the key to their continued study.

We were very upfront about telling both the teachers and the students that we were not going to teach. Our role was to practice and supplement. We didn't know what that would "look like." We were not given any information about students' educational levels from either the ABE/GED class nor the ESL classes. We were worried about that at first but soon realized that it didn't matter to what we were doing.

Attendance in the Learning Circles was disappointing at first. We were aware that employment, family commitments, and school came first. But as we worked with the students in such small groups, we developed real relationships with them and that was really helpful to them and to us. They trusted us, felt free to ask questions and explore topics, and to tell us what they needed as we moved forward with them.

The ESL students at Georgetown expressed to us early on, that the Learning Circle's talking and reading was so important to them because they had no other place at which they could practice English. At home and at work, everyone speaks a language other than English. In their day-to-day business, English speaking is not part of their lives. And yet, they know how critical it is to their successful American lives, to be able to understand, speak, and read the English language. In their formal class, the class work proceeds so quickly, they don't have a chance to ask questions, discuss, and revisit. In Learning Circles, this is what we do.

The ABE/GED students are committed to earning this degree. But it's dry stuff and hard work especially for students for whom, English is not the first language or for whom learning differences create additional challenges. In Learning Circles, we make the learning fun and interactive.

All students were visibly and articulately disappointed that our Learning Circle project had come to an end.

The Laurel Library had hoped to work with an ESL teacher over the summer to run Conversation Circles. That did not work out. So the Library came to us to ask if we could bring the Learning Circles to the Library over the summer. Staff there is willing to see how we ran the Circles and devote the time and effort to running the Circles themselves (with our initial help).

Our next step is to attempt to bring the Georgetown students to Laurel Library to continue the Learning Circles over the summer and to merge the Georgetown students with the Laurel students to keep the Circle running in one location over the summer months.

We are working with the Duck Creek Library to develop the Family Literacy Center there. Duck Creek will host ABE/GED and ESL classes there. And we are meeting with Literacy Delaware to discuss bringing one-on-one reading tutoring to Duck Creek. If we can use both the Polytech classes and Literacy Delaware's tutors as a

foundation for formal learning there, we can offer a variety of Learning Circles and other activities for all ages to supplement and speed the development of literacy and reading.

Our goal is to bring Learning Circles to all the libraries. This will depend on a robust volunteer corps and funding for both DOL and DDL.

\* When speaking with the staff at the children's department at the Laurel Library soon after the Mrs. Wordsmith materials arrived in their Parenting Collection, we showed the staff how the Word of the Day worked. They saw clearly that putting the Word of the Day on their desk and using it as a daily teaser was a super easy soft program that would get young peoples' attention.

## **Attachment 1: Learning Circle Agendas: Georgetown Library – ESL Classes**

### **Class #1: February 1, 2025**

Opening Get-to-Know You Exercise (Courtnei)  
Tell & Draw Storytelling – Family Tree (Margie)  
Pre-Reading Exercise – “Sarah Plain and Tall” picture – what do you see – with graphic organizer (first two columns) (Margie)  
How often to meet? (Courtnei)  
Get contact information

### **Class #2: February 22, 2025**

For new attendees – Get to Know You Exercise (Courtnei)  
For new attendees – Tell & Draw Storytelling – Family Tree (Margie)  
Pre-reading exercise – “Frederick” picture – what do you see – graphic organizer (first two columns) (Margie)  
Read aloud “Frederick” – (third column, what do you know) – discuss  
Bingo – 2 games (if time)  
Word of the Day: Swagger  
Next meeting: Saturday, March 1, 11:00 AM

### **Class # 5: March 22, 2025: Restart**

Tell & Draw Storytelling – Family Tree (Margie)  
Pre-Reading Exercise – “Frederick” picture – what do you see? (Margie)  
Card Game: Blah Blah Blah (easy)  
Word of the Day: Swagger  
How often to meet? (Courtnei)  
Get contact information

### **Class #6: March 29, 2025**

Get-to-Know You Activity (Courtnei)  
Pre-Reading Exercise: “Thank You Omu”  
Oral Reading “Thank You Omu”  
Card Game: Blah Blah Blah (easy) – may need to a second card game  
Word of the Day: Swagger  
Next meeting: April 5, 2025

### **Class # 7: April 5, 2025, 11:00 AM**

Get-to-Know You Activity if new students  
Pre-Reading Exercise: “Last Stop on Market Street”  
Oral Reading: “Last Stop on Market Street”  
Card Game: Blah Blah Blah  
Word of the Day: Swagger  
Next meeting: April 12, 2025, 11:00 AM

### **Class #8: Saturday, April 12, 2025, 11:00 AM**

Pre-reading Exercise: “Blackout”  
Oral reading: “Blackout”  
Survey  
Card Game: Blah, Blah, Blah

Word of the Day: Swagger

Next meeting: April 26, 2025, 11:00 AM

Class # 9: Saturday, April 26, 2025, 11:00 AM

Pre-reading Exercise: "Rainbow Fish" shells and cover

Oral reading: "Rainbow Fish" and discussion

Card Game: Blah, Blah, Blah

Word of the Day: Swagger

Next meeting: May 10, 2025, 11:00 AM

Class # 10: Saturday, May 10, 2025, 11:00 AM

Art & Conversation OR

Oral Reading: **"A Chair for My Mother"** or "The Great Kapok Tree"

Game: Vocabularious or Blah Blah Blah

When should we have the last class? 17<sup>th</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup>?

Next: Saturday, May 17, 2025, 11:00 AM

Class #11: Saturday, May 17, 2025, 11:00 AM

Oral Reading: "Something Special for Me" (sequel to "A Chair for My Mother")

Re-read "A Chair for My Mother"

Money Activity

Conversation about local areas & services and opportunities to continue Learning Circles

Next class: June 7, 2025

Class #12: Saturday, June 7, 2025, 11:00 AM

Oral Reading: "Fry Bread: a Native American Family Story"

Discussion & vocabulary review

Discuss possibility of summer time Learning Circle at Laurel (Fridays, 11:00 AM ??)

Learning Styles & Learning Cards

Survey

Game: Vocabularious

T-Shirts

## Attachment 2: Learning Circle Agendas: Laurel Library – ABE/GED Class

### Class #1: January 22, 2025

- Opening Get-to-Know You Exercise (Courtnei)
- Tell & Draw Storytelling – Family Tree (Margie)
- Pre-Reading Exercise – “Sarah Plain and Tall” picture – what do you see – with graphic organizer (first two columns) (Margie)
- How often to meet? (Courtnei)

### Class #2: February 5, 2025

- Opening Get-to-Know You Exercise with new students (Courtnei)
- Tell & Draw Storytelling – Family Tree with new students (Margie)
- Review picture & review their thoughts
- Begin Oral Reading (Depending on Time)
- Student Survey – may need to do one-on-one

### Class #3: February 19, 2025

- Review reading of “Sarah, Plain & Tall”: what do they know so far? (Margie)
- Is this a book they wish to continue with?
  - If not, introduce “Thank you, Omu!” and do prereading exercise “What I Know”
  - If so, review what they learned from the last reading of “Sarah, Plain & Tall.” In middle column, fill out “what I wonder.”
- Play either crossword or Bingo (Courtnei)
- Collect surveys (Courtnei)
- Word of the Day – Swagger (Margie)

### Class #4: February 26, 2025

- Tell & Draw Storytelling – Family Tree with the new student (Margie)
- Review “Sarah, Plain & Tall.” In graphic organizer, complete the last column “What I learned.”
- Look at oversized map of America & talk about the journey to the Midwest in the late 1800’s and the living conditions of settlers there at the time. This sets the foundation for comprehension of the story. (Margie)
- Oral reading of “Sarah, Plain & Tall” (Margie)
- Bingo (Courtnei)
- Word of the Day: review Swagger. New word “grating”
- Next meeting: Wednesday, March 12 at 11:30 AM

### Class #5: March 12, 2025

- Review “Sarah, Plain & Tall” in graphic organizer, last column
- Review oversized map of America and revisit the journey west and why the family is waiting to meet Sarah.
- Oral reading of “Sarah, Plain & Tall” (Margie)
- Card Game: Blah, Blah, Blah (easy) (Courtnei)
- Word of the Day: review Swagger, Grating. New word “Tongue-Tied”
- Next meeting: Wednesday, March 19 at 11:30 AM

### Class #6: March 19, 2025

- Learning Styles exercise & card games (Courtnei)

Oral Reading of "Sarah, Plain & Tall." Discuss – what do you know now? (Margie)

Word of the Day: review, Swagger, Grating, Tongue-Tied, New word "Vacant"

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 26 at 11:30 AM

Class #7: March 26, 2025

Learning Styles exercise (Courtnei) & Card games (Blah Blah Blah (Margie)

Oral Reading of "Sarah, Plain & Tall." Discuss – what do you know now? (Margie)

States Exercise (Courtnei)

Word of the Day: review, Swagger, Grating, Tongue-Tied – use in a sentence. New word "Vacant"

Next meeting: Wednesday, April 2 at 11:30 AM

Class #8: April 2, 2025

Oral Reading of "Sarah, Plain & Tall: discuss what do you know now? (Margie)

States Exercise (Courtnei)

Survey (Courtnei)

Word of the Day: New word "Demolish"

Next meeting April 8, 2025, 11:30 AM

Class #9: April 9, 2025

Learning Style for new attendees

Oral Reading of "Sarah, Plain & Tall" discuss what do you know now?

States exercise (Courtnei)

Survey (Courtnei)

Word of the Day: "Demolish"

Next meeting: April 16, 2025, 11:30 AM

Class #10: April 16, 2025

Oral Reading of "Sarah, Plain & Tall" discuss what do you know now? (Margie)

Shells of Atlantic Ocean (Margie)

States exercise (Courtnei)

Survey (Courtnei)

Word of the Day: "Flawless"

Next meeting: April 30, 2025, 11:30 AM

Class #11: April 30, 2025

Oral Reading of "Sarah, Plain & Tall" discuss what do you know now? (Margie)

Sequence Game: States and Capitals

Word of the Day: "Flawless"

Next meeting: May 7, 2025, 11:30 AM

Class #12: May 7, 2025

Oral Reading of "Sarah, Plain & Tall" discuss what do you know now? (Margie)

Vocabularious Word Game

Word of the Day: "Flawless"

Next meeting: May 21, 2025, 11:30 AM NO MEETING May 14

Class #13: May 21, 2025, 11:30 AM

Survey #2

Oral Reading of "Sarah, Plain & Tall" discuss what do you know now? (Margie)



Vocabularious Word Game  
Word of the Day: "Flawless"  
T-shirts & thanks

### Attachment 3: Surveys

Name:

Date:

## Student Survey

We want your opinion to make the Learning Circles better for you, please answer the questions below.

How likely are you to attend more Learning Circles?

☐ 1      ☐ 2      ☐ 3      ☐ 4      ☐ 5

Not likely

Likely

Are the Circles...

Interesting?      ☐ Yes | ☐ No

Fun?      ☐ Yes | ☐ No

Informative?      ☐ Yes | ☐ No

Do you know your learning style?

☐ Yes | ☐ No

If yes, what is it?

---

---

What have you learned so far from the Learning Circles?

---

---

Anything you want to share with Margie & Courtnei?






---


---

Thank you!

## Attachment 4: Learning Style Cards

DelawareLibraries.org




    

 **Learning Styles**

*What are Learning Styles?*  
Read more & take the quiz  
at this website:  
<https://teachng.com/teach/vark/>

*The four Learning Styles:*  
Visual — “seeing”  
Auditory — “hearing”  
Reading/Writing  
Kinesthetic — “doing”

DelawareLibraries.org

 **Estilos de Aprendizaje**

*¿Qué son los Estilos de Aprendizaje?*  
Lea más y responda el cuestionario  
en este sitio web:  
<https://teachng.com/teach/vark/>

*Los cuatro Estilos de Aprendizaje:*  
Visual — “ver”  
Auditivo — “oir”  
Lectura/Escritura  
Cinestésico — “hacer”

DelawareLibraries.org

 **Estil Aprantisaj**

*Kisa estil aprantisaj yo ye?*  
Li plis & pran kesyon an nan sit  
wèb sa a:  
<https://teachng.com/teach/vark/>

*Katriye Stil Aprantisaj:*  
Vizyèl — “wè”  
Odyo — “tande”  
Li/Ekri  
Kinestetik — “fè”

## **Attachment 5: Recommendations for Adult Literacy Services in Public Libraries, Part I**

In 2022, the Delaware Division of Libraries committed to improving the high rate of low literacy among adults in the State of Delaware using a collaborative Baldrige-based model by participating with the national Communities of Excellence program. Partnering with Literacy Delaware, the goal is to help every Delawarean become a proficient reader who can actively and fully engage in life, studies, work, good health, and civic opportunities. To this end, Literacy Alliance, a state-wide collaborative of all agencies devoted to the work of improving literacy for people, was formed.

With many organizations already involved in this effort the question was asked, why, in 2023, do 56% of adult Delawareans read below the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading level and why do 20.3% of adults in the state experience low literacy?

The answer is complicated, and it will be an enormous challenge to reach the goal of proficient reading skills for every Delawarean. First steps have already been taken: organizations which were previously siloed and working on their own are now at the table together; realization that the methods used for teaching reading the past thirty years were failures has been recognized and legislation requiring use of Science of Reading techniques must be incorporated in the curriculum of the public schools has been signed; and an effort to raise awareness of the issues among the general public has begun.

Barriers exist to the effort of helping adults learn to read better. Chief among them is the lack of capacity in those agencies who already directly serve adult learners. Literacy Delaware, a non-profit organization which provides one-on-one tutoring for adult non-readers and adults for whom English is not their first language; and the Department of Education which provides federal funding to county Vo-Techs and community colleges to offer adult basic education classes (reading and writing) to adults who wish to obtain the GED.

Literacy Delaware carries a waiting list for students both seeking reading and those seeking ESL teaching (80+ people). This waiting list may take a year until a student begins his learning journey. The DOE-funded programs in each county report significant waiting lists (633+ people) with those in New Castle County reporting a two-year waiting list. It takes an extraordinarily determined and dedicated person to wait out these waiting lists while remaining illiterate. Hence the literacy rate remains low.

Do public libraries have a role in helping to solve these problems? Public libraries for many years have made the assumption that people who walk through their doors know how to read. After all, that's why they come. Collections are developed for those who like to read and for those who are studying for higher education. But we argue that libraries are for readers – at whatever level - and libraries have a responsibility to help those who need to learn to read better. Librarians are not reading teachers and, in general, are not taught to teach reading. So what role should public libraries play in the quest for reduced reading levels amongst adults in the State?

Library staff at all levels need training in order to understand the challenges presented by low literacy. And to understand that each interaction with a library patron is an opportunity to observe potential red flags for low

literacy. Staff will need training in awareness, empathy, and the delicacy of exploring literacy needs with the patrons who have the greatest need for this type of assistance. Staff will need to be trained in the basics of literacy assessment and fully informed about how and to whom the immediate in-person referral for services should be made. Ideally each library would have an on-site person who manages the warm touch of the referral, and it is done at that visit.

The Job Center and Social Services model that was implemented successfully years ago in Delaware libraries could be considered as the host of literacy services. ABE (reading and math), ESL, and an expanded digital learning element would be the foundation piece for workforce readiness. It would be crucial to ensure adequate staffing was present to meet all these needs in these centers.

There are opportunities for services that should be explored, and we are recommending some here:

- Literacy Delaware is currently using a model of one-on-one tutoring. This does offer a benefit for the potential of a close personal bond between tutor and tutee which can help in the learning journey.
  - Literacy Delaware should explore the development of tutoring small groups of learners at the same reading level. This will engage more students in active learning. These students will benefit from the peer support and encouragement typically found in small group learning.
  - Some tutors are meeting for teaching sessions in the public libraries. The small group sessions should take place in the libraries and the tutors should actively engage with library staff and its resources. Efforts should be made to assist the students in the use of the library and its resources, especially for recreational reading materials that supplement the reading done as part of the tutoring curriculum. Such recreational reading helps with vocabulary, context, fluency, and enjoyment.
  - Literacy Delaware has recently begun a pilot program of virtual Conversation Groups for people who are waiting for ESL services. This concept could be duplicated across the State for every adult who is on a waiting list.
  - For those libraries which do not have the space to host group sessions should continue to offer a discrete space for one-on-one tutoring.
  - Literacy Delaware should consult with experts in PR to widen and improve its appeals for tutors. An increased tutor force is needed, especially in Kent and Sussex Counties.
- DOE provides federal funding to support Adult Education Programs at: Appoquinimink School District, Christina School District, DTCC Owens Campus, DTCC Terry Campus, DTCC George Campus, New Castle County Vo Tech, Polytech, Sussex Tech, Red Clay School District
  - Appoquinimink already has in place an MOU with the Appoquinimink Public Library to use library space for ESL classes.
  - New Castle County Vo-Tech has articulated a desire to expand their ABE classes into other venues.
  - Christina School District works with the Bear Library to provide ABE and ESL

- Sussex Tech is offering ABE and ESL classes at the Laurel, Georgetown, Bridgeville, and Seaford public libraries. They have stated their willingness to expand these services into any library in the County that will host them.
- Polytech is offering ABE and ESL classes at the Milford and Smyrna public libraries.

While some libraries do not have space to host ABE and tutoring classes, many do. These libraries have expressed a need and interest in providing literacy services:

- Newark
- Claymont
- Rt 9
- Kirkwood
- Greenwood
- Corbit
- Lewes
- Milton

Since many of the libraries already have a cooperative working relationship with the school districts providing ABE and ESL services, these districts have funding and trained staff, and have expressed an interest in the concept of expanding their ABE and ESL classes outside of the school walls, it makes sense to pursue the expansion of these existing services into the public libraries who have space and interest in hosting such.

For those libraries who are in school districts without ABE and ESL services and there is an inability for the Vo-tech school districts to expand into those geographic areas, consideration might be given to development of a reading and ESL tutoring program independent of Literacy Delaware and the school districts. This would be a heavy lift as staffing would need to be hired, trained, and managed. Curriculum and assessment programs would need to be explored and purchased. Our assessment of available curriculums in use around the United States leads us to recommend these curriculums for consideration:

- Wilson Language (San Francisco Public Library)
- STAR Reading (DE Department of Education)
- STEP (University of Chicago)
- IXL (Project Read Wicomico County, MD)

The actual teaching of reading skills is only one part of the learning journey faced by an adult learner. Supplemental activities are critical to the speed and fluency at which their learning occurs. Support and engagement by family members and peers keeps them on the journey and speeds it along. Because illiteracy is most often seen in multiple generations of a family, family literacy activities benefit everyone.

Libraries can play the biggest role here by working cooperatively with reading and ESL tutors, planning support programs, conversation groups, and providing space for both learning and supportive programs.

In today's environment, digital skills are critical to a successful adulthood. A lack of digital skills often goes hand in hand with low literacy skills. Libraries and their staff are well versed in the provision of digital learning opportunities. Many libraries have computer labs or spaces. Some of these are part of the Job and Social Service centers. Many libraries have developed curriculum for computer classes at different levels and NorthStar provides further opportunities for learning. None of this learning happens in a vacuum, and feedback leads us to understand that the existing opportunities for digital training and support from an informed staff member or volunteer makes the digital learning process more effective. These programs need to be expanded and better advertised.

It must be understood that people with low literacy and low digital skills need a different approach to traditional advertising. Similar to the need for Literacy Delaware to expand and improve PR efforts, libraries would benefit from working with a skilled professional who can develop advertising processes that reach the non-reading public.

David Brake, Safiya Washington, Margie Cyr

January 23, 2024

## **Attachment 6: Recommendations for Adult Literacy Support in Public Libraries, Part II**

### **Initial Planning:**

1. Individual Assessment: Understand the interests, goals, and existing literacy levels of each learner.
2. Learning Styles: Consider different learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) to tailor activities accordingly.
3. Set Clear Learning Objectives:
  - a. Define specific learning outcomes for each activity.
  - b. Align objectives with learners' needs and real-world applications.
4. Choose Relevant Topics:
  - a. Select topics that resonate with adult learners' daily lives.
  - b. Examples: Health, finances, job skills, community resources, and practical communication.

Potential Supplemental Support Activities for Adult Learners in reading or ABE programs. Programs should be engaging, participatory, interactive for the group setting:

1. Conversation circles
2. Reading Circles: Read and Discuss articles, short stories, or news together.
3. Outdoor book club
4. Virtual or in-reading buddies program
5. One book national or state program
6. Vocabulary Games: Word bingo, crossword puzzles, or word association.
7. Board games club
8. Real-Life Scenarios: Role-play situations (e.g., grocery shopping, job interviews).
9. Adult scavenger hunts
10. Writing Prompts: Creative writing, journaling, or letter writing.
11. Writing competitions
12. Spelling bee's
13. Poetry workshops, readings, slams
14. Interactive Worksheets: Fill-in-the-blank exercises, sentence completion, and matching..
15. Adult Storytime programming – adults read or tell stories to community
16. Collaborative Projects: Create a community cookbook, neighborhood newsletter, or short stories.
  - a. Peer Feedback: Encourage learners to review each other's work.
  - b. Use images, charts, and diagrams to reinforce concepts.
  - c. Visuals enhance comprehension and memory.
17. Online activities:
  - a. Somali books (Seattle program that features reading in different languages)
  - b. Book Bingo Brain HQ app
  - c. Typing club and/or typing.com

- d. Mango Languages App
- e. Barton Tiles App

18. Field Trips and Guest Speakers:

- a. Visit local libraries, museums, or community centers
- b. Invite guest speakers (e.g., health professionals, financial advisors).

Celebrate Progress:

- a. Certificates: Recognize achievements with certificates or badges.
- b. Showcase Work: Display learners' writing or artwork.

Feedback and Reflection:

- a. Regularly assess learners' progress.
- b. Encourage self-reflection on learning experiences.

David Brake, Safiya Washington, Margie Cyr

March 12, 2024