



LITERACY CHICAGO

May 2020
Issue 7

Literacy Chicago News

Chicago's Oldest Literacy Organization Stays Young

Literacy Chicago • 641 W. Lake St. Suite 200 • Chicago, IL 60661 • 312-870-1100 • literacychicago.org

Message from Our Executive Director



Richard Dominguez

Since putting our classes on hold in March due to concerns regarding the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak, we have transitioned to operating online. As April approached, we decided it was in the best interest of our students and the community that we try to keep as much normalcy as possible.

However, moving classes, tutoring sessions and trainings online has been no easy endeavor. The cooperation of staff, teachers, volunteers, and our students has been an impressive display of patience and kindness.

We hope to gradually reopen classes and training sessions when the stay at home order is lifted. For continuous updates please follow us on Facebook, Instagram and our website where we will keep you up to date on when we will resume in person operations.

If you need to reach us, we will still be available by our office phone number and emails.

Please take care of yourselves and stay healthy.

Richard Dominguez
Executive Director



Literacy Chicago Goes Online

Upcoming Events

Words on the Page Celebration

The 2020 edition of *Words on the Page - Top of My Bucket List* will be unveiled as soon as we are allowed to meet in big groups. Family, friends, volunteers, and community supporters are always invited to this fun event! Come celebrate and hear our students read their own essays from the book. Purchase copies of previous editions of the book at our office or order here on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com).

www.literacychicago.org/words-on-the-page

Online Volunteer Tutor Training

Training from 9:30 am to 12:30pm

Thursday May 21, 2020

Friday May 22, 2020

Thursday May 28, 2020

Friday May 29, 2020

Join us for our first online training! This fun-filled training course takes place the last two weeks of May. Four days of attendance are required to complete Volunteer Tutor Training.

[Find out more about volunteering here.](#)

Continuing Events

Registration open for online Citizenship, ESL Conversation, and Adult Literacy classes.

<https://www.literacychicago.org/register-for-classes.html>



CONNECT



Virtual Meetups



Laura's Wednesday Afternoon ESL
Conversation Class



Catherine's Monday and Wednesday
Beginner ESL Class



Literacy Chicago's Associate Board
Sharing their Current Reads and a Drink



Karen and Nat's Reading the
World Class

QUOTE OF THE MOMENT



"The Internet is not a
luxury, it is a necessity"

President Obama

Literacy Chicago Goes Online

Joanne Telser-Frere

Program Development Manager



In our 53rd year Literacy Chicago has had to make some quick changes to its traditional classroom approach. Due to the coronavirus pandemic we had to shut down all of our classes around the city and move to online teaching.

What a challenge for our teachers and students alike. We had to decide which online platforms to use. Zoom? Google hangouts? Google meet? Skype? Whats App? There are so many.

We decided to use both Google Meet (Hangouts) and Zoom for different classes. The next step was getting familiar enough, from a teacher's viewpoint, to use all the different features of these platforms. Everything changed from our "normal" classroom.. But how different is it really? From a teacher's perspective we can still engage our students and teach them using virtual whiteboards, videos, and other virtual tools.

Hats off to all of our teachers!

For the students it's a whole new world. Most of our ESL classes were up and running fairly quickly as were our citizenship classes. The conversation classes are a big success as well. Many of our ESL students enjoy supplementing their classes with some extra online chat in English. Most of the students had prior access to technology and had the internet at home.

For our ABE (pre-GED) and GED classes it has been a bigger challenge for the students. Many only have cell phones and for those who have computers we had to walk them through getting set up.

Literacy Chicago Volunteers Save the Day

Unfortunately, going to an online class has been an impossible challenge for most of our Adult Literacy students. It is heartbreaking to know that these low literacy level students are even more isolated because they are on the wrong side of the digital divide. Many of them don't have a computer or a smartphone, and/or they don't have internet access. This includes our students who have the know-how to use a computer since they have been taking our Digital Literacy Classes.

However for a handful of students there has been a light during this pandemic. After contacting as many students as possible we were able to start online adult literacy classes. We are currently running 3 reading classes and one digital literacy class for a group of very happy and engaged students.

I would like to thank Susan Termini, our digital literacy volunteer instructor who offered to work with any of our tutors who wanted some extra help learning about online teaching. A big thank you to Steve Wolfe, the first AL tutor to get his class on line, as well as Karen Fredrickson, Nat Shippee whose Wednesday class is doing great. Also thanks to Betty Hurder and Aaron Kulick who have also accepted the challenge and have opened the Thursday class!

One-on-one tutoring is still taking place across the airwaves and I thank all of our tutors for keeping contact with their students.

I would like to add an extra thank-you for the exceptional cooperation and commitment to all of our teachers and our volunteers. Without your support and passion for our mission we would not be able to help so many Chicagoans during both this horrible pandemic and of course all year long.

This is a difficult time for everyone however human contact and working together, albeit virtual, can help all of us stay connected and hopeful for the future.

Zooming Along the Road to Literacy

Steve Wolfe- Adult Literacy Tutor

Like your students, the students I work with come from different walks of life and have a wide range of reading skills. Some are functionally literate, while others face profound reading challenges. Many come from financially deprived backgrounds. All of them struggle with day to day life issues.

I'm fortunate to have a smartphone, a desktop computer and easy internet access - things I have come to take for granted. These electronic tools make using a program such as Zoom easy. But a good number of our students are not so lucky – they don't have ready access to a computer with audio and video capability, or even a cell phone, much less a "smart" one.



Steve shows his students how to write messages on the screen.

Not surprisingly, those equipment challenges, and others, surfaced as we tried to transition our class from weekly face to face group meetings to weekly videoconferences during these "Stay at Home" times. For example, some students have limited or no access to email. And some of those who do have email accounts find it difficult to interpret a simple message without the help of a family member. On another note, I would always bring copies of reading or grammar exercise handouts for the students to use during class, an option no longer available to us. Those are just two of the issues we had to work through.

I'm happy to report our first couple classes have gone well under the circumstances, but not without some planning and effort ahead of time. First, with Joanne's generous help and patience, I familiarized myself with Zoom and some of its accessories. Those accessories include slideshow and white board functions which will replace our class handouts. Second, we emailed the Zoom meeting invitations to students who have email accounts and followed up with phone calls to those same students and others who we thought might be able to participate in a videoconference class. These communication efforts took a meaningful amount of time, particularly with some of our more challenged students.

I'm pleased to report my co-instructor, Susan Touhy, and I successfully met with six students for our first online class and a similar number the second week. I can tell you without hesitation our class members are delighted to reconnect with one another and enjoyed see everyone else on a video screen. For me, the smiles on the students' faces alone made the effort setting up the class worthwhile.

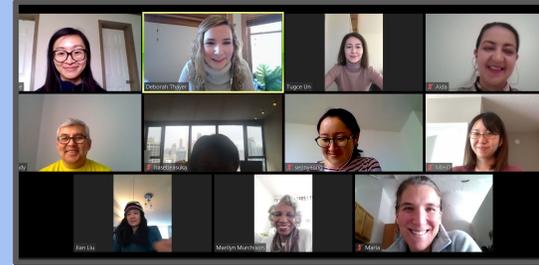
During our initial class, we spent some time ironing out technical issues and just catching up a bit on life during the COVID-19 crisis. Our second class was more focused on reading exercises using the slide show and the white board functions. This type of class will be our "new normal", at least for the time being.

Despite those positive results, the class remains a work in progress. Our in-person classes were two hours long; free Zoom meetings are limited to 40 minutes. Going forward, we may try scheduling two meetings back to back to increase class time. We still need to reconnect with other students. (On the plus side, Zoom gives the meeting host the ability to "mute" a participant, something I've warned our more vocal students about).

The bottom line is, life is different now. As always, we have to adapt to change. I encourage everyone to continue to try to make a difference in a student's life. Holding Zoom meetings is one suggestion, but only one. While this method is working for our class, I would welcome hearing suggestions and ideas from you as well. Best wishes to all.

Steve Wolfe

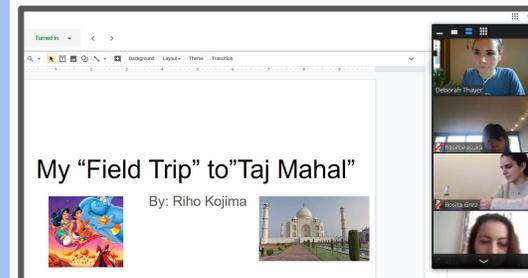
Engaging with Students Online



I'm happy to report that the transition to online learning has been smoother than I expected!

One thing that really helped was that I used Google classroom before this happened so the students were familiar with the platform. Since we moved online, we have had a lot of fun both in our Zoom calls and with the Google assignments. One assignment that has been really fun we call "News Leader". Each student chooses one NYT Youtube video to present on their day. Everyone must watch the video before the class and the leader presents vocabulary words and a quiz for the video. We also have had "digital field trips" using Google arts and culture. The students love learning from each other and the opportunity to teach one another.

Debby Park- ESL Intermediate

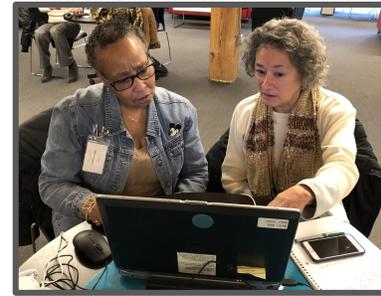


Debby's student Asuka created this video about how to Japanese Fried Chicken. Check it out to see the delicious chicken she makes with her husband!

Volunteers take on Online Tutoring

I have been so pleased to see and talk with the students who are able to participate. I have been especially impressed with one student, often quiet in class, who spent two days with me learning to access and feel comfortable using the software and joining the online class. They are all eager to talk and learn more about technology. Together we have seen how 3D printers work and how they have been used to help during the Coronavirus crisis. We also use the Quizizz software to supplement online discussions about how we use technology.

Susan Termini - Digital Literacy Instructor



Susan tutoring Vickie in the Literacenter before COVID-19.



Our Citizenship class has been meeting online for a month now. It was a little tough at first, getting everyone familiar with our Zoom and USALearns set-ups, but we seem to have ironed out all the technical difficulties. Being online means it is hard to have small group work, which is a big part of our in-person classes. I think everyone misses that. It also means no kinesthetic activities. But we have been using a lot of videos, doing practice interviews, and doing lots of talking! And we are always so happy to see each other! Being able to connect and be together for a couple of hours twice a week makes such a difference in my quarantined life. Our little community is standing strong—we feel lucky to be able to support each other.

Jeannie Araujo - Citizenship Instructor

I am so glad Tugce and I have been able to maintain our relationship online. Using Zoom, we read and discuss articles together. It is nice to connect and see a friendly face! Since we had established a relationship before the program moved online, I am so glad that we can continue our friendship.

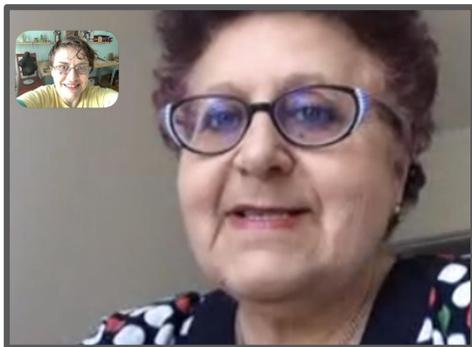
-Lisa Goodman

This transition has been interesting to say the least. First and foremost....my concern for my family, friends, students, humanity etc. Thinking about that and trying to teach online has taken some time to adjust to. I have kept in touch with my student. I just recently started communicating with her via Skype and it has been an educational and fun transition.

-Alphonso Fuller-Rodgers



Alphonso meeting with his student Chisako at the Literacenter before COVID-19.



As an older woman, new technology is challenging [for my student] so it's all been a learning curve that I'm happy to see her master. I've taught her how to take a screenshot! Even though it's very simple to show if you're next to each other, try explaining that to someone with limited English via FaceTime! But we keep at it and it's been a nice change to my endless blending of days.... Meanwhile, my student has 6 different virtual classes/sessions a week to keep her busy. She was always out and about doing lots of stuff so I think these are really keeping her sane. And as I well know about second language learning, if you don't use it you lose it. So this is keeping her from forgetting all the great progress she's had over the past year.

-Marina Rios

As a high-schooler participating in online classes from the student perspective, it's been fascinating and immensely rewarding to engage in online teaching from the point of view of an instructor. I've been given an increased sense of empathy for my teachers and a deeper understanding of the difficulties (and rewards) of transitioning to an online platform. While there were a few bumps in the road in figuring out what activities did and didn't translate to a Zoom session, Jian and I have settled in to our new platform and keeping up our relationship has been Wonderful.

-Jack Goodman



SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

HELP MAKE LITERACY A REALITY



VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

Become part of a team of like-minded individuals dedicated to reaching and advocating for Chicago adults who struggle with basic education

<https://www.literacychicago.org/volunteer.html>



BECOME A TUTOR

Give a couple of hours a week to help someone with their reading, learn English, or master essential skills to join the workforce

<https://www.literacychicago.org/become-a-tutor.html>



DONATE TO LITERACY

Your generous monetary gift will provide educational programs for Chicago communities in need and help adults to find gainful employment

<https://www.literacychicago.org/donate.html>



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