



LITERACY MATTERS

SEPTEMBER 2021



Literacy Matters is a recurring publication of Literacy Nassau, Inc.

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DON'T PANIC! IT'S JUST A TEST

(submitted by Kate Quijano)

Post-testing time for our ELL students is upon us again. This is the first time we have post-tested since pre-COVID times and we have several new tutors with us since then, so I wanted to take a minute to review the process. When students came to register for the summer session, they took a test which determined which level class they would be placed in (pre-test). At the end of the session, they will need to take a post-test which will measure their growth and determine what level class they should be placed in for the fall session. Either Jessica or I will come to visit your class during your regularly scheduled time during the last two weeks of the summer session. Tutors will continue to teach their regular lesson while we pull one student at a time aside for their post-test. (We will need a spot in the back of the classroom near an outlet. Expect each student to need about 15 minutes with us.) We will also register them for the fall session at the same time. (They will have first preference in classes before we open registration to new students.)

Sometimes students feel stressed about post-testing due to previous experiences they have had with taking tests or due to not understanding the procedures and

goals of the post-test. Here are some things to know so that tutors can lessen their stress prior to their post-test:

- The post-test will be like a short one on one interview with a staff member. It is very relaxed and they just answer verbal questions.
- We will ask them a variety of questions on different topics. They can ask us to repeat the question if need be and they can skip a question if they do not understand it.
- Sometimes, students will "test out" of the verbal test because their score is too high. Then they will need to take a written test. This typically only happens for level 4 students and will be explained to them by the staff member giving the test. We will have these tests with us and we will administer them if needed.
- Post-testing is NOT a pass/fail exam. Students are NOT in competition against other classmates.
- There is a wide range of scores on the test that place them into each level. It is very common for a student to make a lot of progress, but to still need to stay in that same level class. This is totally to be expected and is NOT "failing" a class or being "left back."
- Some students will repeat the level they are in and others will be moved to the next

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THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

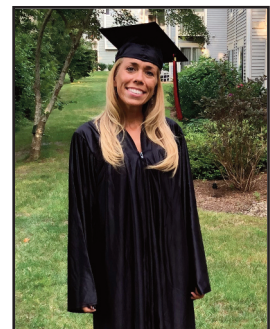
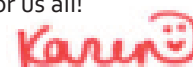
Hi Everyone,

It's hard to believe summer is ending. Not only will we face the inevitable weather change, bringing us all back indoors, but many of us also face the added stress of sending our kids back to school. In my house, it's a double whammy because I'm married to a teacher, so "back to school" directly affects all of us.

Should be a recipe for disaster, right? Well, thankfully, this isn't our first rodeo. We had to navigate in-person school for our family last year, in the height of the pandemic, and we've learned some valuable lessons which I'm happy to share here:

- 1) Be prepared. Pack extra masks, stockpile hand soap, and keep your iPad charged in case tomorrow moves from live to virtual.
- 2) Schedule breaks (not just for the kids!). Chris and I need time to de-stress just as much as our girls do.
- 3) Connect every single day - In order to support each other, we make time in our house to be together. Little moments of connection create security in a constantly shifting landscape.

Here's to an easy, successful school year for us all!



This month, I'm happy to offer suggestions about how to handle back-to-school. (And I'm a master now, so you can trust these are good suggestions!)





WELCOME OUR NEW COHORT OF ORTON-GILLINGHAM TUTORS

We asked our new cohort members to share a little background, summer memory or fun fact about themselves. Here are some excerpts:

RICHARD AIZER



I have spent the bulk of my career at P.S. 193, Gil Hodges Elementary School and for the last five years, I have been the IEP teacher and my role has been primarily as a reading interventionist. I have been trained in the S.P.I.R.E reading program; the author Sheila Clark-Edmands is an Orton-Gillingham Fellow. I am looking forward to

increasing my knowledge and skill set as a Special Education teacher with Orton-Gillingham training.

As a fun fact, I was born six weeks premature weighing 3.5 pounds. I believe my prematurity led to some early school learning delays, but the principal in my school always put me with the best teachers to meet my needs. So, my philosophy as an educator is to support all students with learning differences both emotionally and socially; as well as providing the best practices in pedagogy.

ALLISON GERBERT



For the past three years I have served as a self-contained K-2 teacher in East Rockaway. I chose to train to become an OG tutor because I know it will give me the opportunity to reach more of my students with Dyslexia and other reading challenges. The OG approach keeps surfacing as highly effective. As an educator, I want the tools to help my children succeed.

School was always a challenge for me as I have suffered from generalized anxiety disorder. Staying focused and completing tasks was always quite difficult. Round robin reading, drills, and oral presentations, are just a few examples of experiences that gave me feelings of dread and panic. It wasn't until college that I had developed the tools and strategies to no longer let it stand in my way.

This summer I took a whale watching cruise out of Brooklyn and experienced my dream of seeing a Humpback Whale!

STACEY POPKIN



I have a learning disability that was not uncovered until high school. It is a memory and perception-based disability which caused me to have to study twice as hard as my peers. I was determined to never let any thing keep me down and am very proud of my accomplishments. Although I am not dyslexic and do not have a reading disability,

two very dear children in my life struggle with reading. One of them receives OG training through Literacy Nassau.

After seeing the difficulties these children face I decided I wanted to get involved and help other children the way our tutor Melissa has been helping. I want to give back to others and feel there needs to be more OG tutors to help as many in need as possible.

A fun fact about me is that I love to read and have read over seven books so far this summer.

MICHELLE DRUCKER



I have been teaching at the South Country Central School District since 2001. I consider myself a strong teacher, but every year I had students that made less than expected progress in reading and writing, which I found very frustrating, but it was my role as a parent that brought me to learn about the Orton-Gillingham approach.

I have a son with an IEP who struggles with reading and writing. In order to best support him I began researching approaches to reading instruction. As soon as I learned about Orton Gillingham, I knew I had to become certified. I have seen first hand, with my son, how hard it is for children that struggle with reading and writing and I believe that every struggling student is just one properly trained teacher away from significant reading improvement. I want to be that properly trained teacher that can help my students.

NEHA BAJAJ



I have served on various education-focused boards including the Great Oaks Charter School in NYC, Code2College and the Garden City SEPTA, where I have been both VP of Curriculum and co-president over the past several years. I have a passion for literacy and special education and believe strongly in the potential of all students, of all abilities.

I believe that literacy is the key to equity. I also have personal experience as a mother with a struggling reader, so I know how critical it is for children to have explicit instruction in research-based methods and this is what drew me to OG.

In junior high school, I remember approaching my lacrosse coach to tell her I was going to quit the team because I wasn't that good and the long days were too much for me. She refused to let me quit the team. That year I won most improved player and continued playing lacrosse for four more years.

HELEN DAWSON



I decided to train to become an OG tutor because my son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren are dyslexic. I went through a lot when my son was younger and now we are going through the same thing with my grandchildren. I am frustrated that not much has changed in the years in between. My resolve was even greater during the lockdown.

I offered free Math tutoring while we were teaching remotely. So many students struggle with Math in person, I thought how difficult this must be on Zoom. I couldn't believe how many requests I received for reading help in the elementary grades. This convinced me that I am doing the right thing.

My best summer memory is absolutely being able to see my grandchildren in person. I spent 14 months living alone. Thankfully my four sons convinced me to get a smartphone the year before. What would we do without facetime!?



RENEE REMI



I am currently a special education teacher in the Great Neck Public School District and have worked there for the past four years. I want to be trained to become an OG tutor because I am deeply interested in adding to my repertoire of strategies to teach children how to read. I am always looking for ways to improve as an educator and I feel that

learning the Orton-Gillingham approach will greatly help me support my students' diverse needs in reading.

I also have a personal connection to becoming an OG tutor because I have cousins that were recently diagnosed with dyslexia and I know that they are now being taught to read using OG in their school.

A fun fact about me is that I swam with sharks three times (cage diving twice and free diving once). My best moment of Summer 2021 is getting engaged to my fiancée, Joe, in June.

AMIE KLEPACK



I graduated from business school at NYU and worked in finance and marketing at an investment bank until I had my children. After becoming a mother, I started exploring a career in education and assisted in Early Education at the Waldorf School of Garden City.

My twin sons were struggling readers and we were thankfully guided to Orton Gillingham tutoring early on. OG tutoring was a game changer, they both took to it right away and the progress they made in a short time was astounding. They never complained about tutoring sessions; the sessions, even over Zoom, were always fun and engaging and a far more natural way for their brains to learn to read.

Witnessing their journey made me want to be part of the OG world and spread this method of learning into all corners.

A fun fact about me is that I love Spain!



Pictured Left:

Our new Orton-Gillingham cohort met at our office for the first time to begin their training.

Look for more bios next month.

FREE ELL CLASS FALL REGISTRATION

September 7th- September 17th

We will have classes at Hillside, Floral Park, Williston Park, Mineola, Oceanside, Baldwin, Freeport, North Bellmore, Hicksville, Jericho, and Farmingdale Libraries.

Classes will begin September 27th and end December 17th.

**To make an appointment go to: www.literacynassau.org/appointment
Call: 516-867-3580**

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Warm Birthday Wishes to our Tutors!

- Maria Acosta – Lisa Adams – Sam Antar – Jessica Askoy
- Lillian Baum – Michelle Berman – Maria Budris
- Toni Cangialosi – Lisa Chieco – Janice Collins – Carol Cook
- Janice Donoghue – Rhea Epstein – Leslie Feinberg
- Nancy Friedman – Laura Garcia – Ann Gordon – Freya Grice
- Elinor Haber – Donald Hayde – Jean Heinz – Amy Karofsky
- Cynthia Katz – Linda Klein – Margaret Latronica
- Kathy Leibowitz – Maxene Liverpool – Mary Ellen LoConte
- Jenny Marcotrigiano – Alison Marooney – Marie Marsac
- Michaela McElhatton – Lois Miceli – Irv Miljoner – Paul Nelson
- Karla Padawer Solomon – Linda Pierce – Rona Rappe
- Marcy Ruggiero – Stan Schickler – Arlyne Skolnik
- Jenn Starzynski – Maria Vivona – Janine Washinger
- Loretta White – Linda White – Colleen Woodell



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DON'T PANIC! IT'S JUST A TEST (CONT'D)

next level. Each student will be placed in the best level for them to learn the most and to be the most comfortable.

- There is nothing that they need to "study". The test is computer generated and everyone will have a variety of different questions.
- The date of the post-test was already shared with the tutor at the same time that rosters were emailed. This is the only date that we will visit the class to post-test. Students **MUST** be in attendance on that day to take their test. Tests are a requirement of taking the class. Please make them aware of their post-test date.
- If students are currently meeting remotely, we have several windows of time that we are offering post-testing at our office. These dates were shared with remote tutors. Tutors should remind students of the importance of coming in to take their post-test.
- If a student is absent on the day of the post-test or if a remote student does not come to the office for post-testing, they will have to make an appointment to re-register for classes in order to sign up for the fall session. This could cause them to miss out on their preferred class if the class fills up before they are able to re-register.

Post-testing is an important part of the requirements of the grant that we receive from New York State. Thank you for your assistance in making sure we are able to meet this requirement while helping students to feel as comfortable and as confident as possible.



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT :)