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Parents come to **LITERACY PARTNERS** to transform their lives and create a brighter future for their families through the power of literacy.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE FOR TWO GENERATION OUTCOMES



With our free classes, workshops, and educational media, parents develop the literacy and language skills they need to solve problems and achieve success in today's world. Some of these results include getting a better job, navigating the healthcare system to protect their family's health, and advancing to college.

Our research-based curriculum also emphasizes child development and parenting topics so that our students can better promote their children's early learning, social emotional growth, and school readiness.

By boosting parents' capacity, we aim to close the achievement gap — and opportunity gap — among young children before they begin school and ultimately break the cycle of poverty.

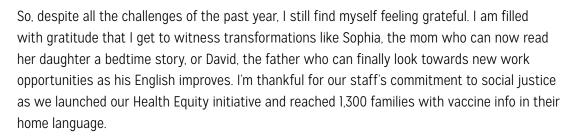
LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear Friends:

I don't think I've ever lived through a time that has stretched parents in the way this pandemic has, and I could not be prouder of the team at Literacy Partners for meeting the moment.

Throughout this constantly unpredictable year, they have stayed true to our mission and values, always recognizing our students'

strength and resilience, and working hard to create new opportunities for them to learn and grow. Watching our teachers respond to rapid change and innovate in the moment has been truly inspirational.



I am grateful to have shared in the pride of our student Angie, whose recitation of the poem "The Unglam Mom" at our I Love This Poem event was filled with as much poise and power as those performed by the actor and rapper Common and the writer Tommy Orange.

At Literacy Partners, we know we are on a journey of transformation and healing. I hear it in every conversation I have with our staff. Each step our students take reverberates with hope. We are doing the work of social change, one parent at a time. At a moment when there are so many worthwhile causes competing for your time and attention, I am so grateful for you and your continued support. Through the stories shared in this annual report, I hope you can share in that gratitude as well.

Sincerely,

Anthony Tassi

PS. In 2021, we provided 9,112 age appropriate books in English and several other languages to the children of our students. Thank you so much for your help!

A MOTHER'S JOURNEY TO LEARN ENGLISH

ike so many others, Irene left her home country searching for a better life for her family. The violence in El Salvador had become too much to bear. She had seen colleagues die at the hands of ruthless gangs. She herself had received death threats. Irene feared for her life, and that of her young daughter. She made the sacrifice of leaving behind a nearly-grown son to move to the U.S. to ensure her baby's safety. She arrived six years ago, fiercely determined to provide her daughter with the opportunity to thrive.

It was rough going at first. "I had to start from zero," she notes. She'd had a job in El Salvador, and wanted to continue to work, but, Irene reports, "I lost many work opportunities because I didn't know English." For example, this past summer, she had a job opportunity, but when the interview started and she spoke in Spanish, the response was quick and cold: "You are not who we are looking for." She left, feeling "frustrated and defeated." These kinds of experiences built up her resolve: "I am going to set a goal for myself — I am going to learn English."

She faced challenges trying to meet this goal. Her first attempt was not a success. "I registered to take English classes, but I felt like I couldn't understand anything...I felt embarrassed to ask questions or even talk." Finding Literacy Partners changed everything.



I am a mother, wife, and a student with dreams and drive to succeed in this country.

- IRENE

The method, and the people, she says, make all the difference. "The teachers take their time to explain things to us," Irene says, and she feels they are "dedicating their time only to me." "In other programs," she continues, if you don't talk, "no one will follow-up. Here, they make sure I talk…make sure I am participating."

Now with another baby (Austin is one, while her daughter Fernanda is now seven), Irene has to squeeze in her English work while taking care of her growing family and completing her undergraduate degree. Sometimes, she says, "I am attending classes while breastfeeding. But all of these sacrifices are worth it, I know it is going to pay off."

She already sees a big payoff: "Being in the classes has helped me to overcome the fear of speaking English." The biggest impact is how her own skills are helping her daughter grow and learn. "Learning English has helped me enjoy learning with my daughter," she says, adding, "We talk in English! Before, I used to ask her 'How do you say this?' Now when I pick her from school I ask her in English, 'How was your day? What did you do?'" Irene can now text her daughter's teacher directly when they need support with homework, and she is comfortable using her English at her daughter's school. Irene also uses the books she gets from Literacy Partners to strengthen her daughter's reading. She likes how intentional the book choices are. "I like sharing them with her and reading together. I am practicing and learning while spending quality time with my daughter." She is even helping her husband with his English. "He has been here 18 years, but can't write. I am teaching him! I feel so proud!" Irene exclaims. "I am a mother, wife, and a student with dreams and drive to succeed in this country."

ENGLISH FOR PARENTS:

Parents achieved meaningful success in our English classes, despite the many challenges of Covid-19

- 78% graduated to the next level of English proficiency
- 88% felt better prepared to talk with the doctor about their child's health—including their mental health
- $\boxed{34\%}$ said the program reduced their stress levels

PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF IN LEARNING TO READ



ophia laughs when asked about why she enrolled with Literacy Partners. "I was really struggling!" she blurts out. "I needed better opportunities, for me and my daughter." She knew that her limited reading skills were holding her back from the life she envisioned for herself and her young daughter. Working an overnight job stocking retail, she had little time to spend with her four-year old. And, with no high school diploma, and reading skills below the third grade level, Sophia felt little hope of a better future. Desperate to change her situation, she turned to searching the internet. She knew she needed a personal connection, somebody who could really invest in her and help her make her way. She found Literacy Partners online, made a call, and was surprised that the program got back to her right away. Maybe, she thought, this will be my chance.

Sophia joined the **Reading for Adults** program in April and was paired with her tutor Ritu, and the two quickly developed an easy, natural rapport. Sophia found the work challenging at first. She laughs recounting how during the Rose and Thorn exercise to identify each day's highs and lows, "all I had was thorns. At first I didn't understand the process, and I was annoyed!" But the relationship with Ritu grounded her, and her persistence paid off. The innovative one-on-one method began to click. The pair meet twice a week via Zoom, and Ritu teaches Sophia to read using a scripted curriculum. They read together while Ritu offers support and reinforces Sophia's efforts. Sophia has thrown her whole heart into the program. "She comes with a positive attitude, seriousness and hard work," notes Ritu. She is such an active participant that her teacher, Kimiko, thinks of her as a model and inspiration for other students to engage.

After only 6 months, Sophia was making steady progress, and her life had changed by leaps and bounds. With her new reading skills, she was able to quit her night job to work at a child care center, something she never dreamed was possible. "I thought I'd never be able to work with kids, because they are learning to read" and that was something she doubted she could ever help with. Not any more. "I can read a book to them!" she boasts. Her new reading skills have also made her more confident with her daughter Bliss as well. "I used to be nervous at bedtime. Bliss wants a bedtime story, and my boyfriend would do it...I was ashamed. Now I read a night time story with her." Caps for Sale is the family favorite these days.

Now Sophia has set her sights even higher. Next up is her high school equivalency exam, and she's thinking about college. She loves that the program stays with students so that once they achieve one goal, they can start working towards the next. She knows that Ritu will support her as she takes her next steps. Ritu confirms that she is ready to follow Sophia throughout her "learning journey." "We are here to get down to business," she adds. "There are days we are both tired, but...it's easy to show up when you know that the other person is in it with you."

Sophia echoes the sentiment. "Y'all really take care of me and made sure I had the right person and had what I need to grow in this program."

...And A Volunteer Tutor Finds Meaning and More

In seeing a volunteer opportunity, Ritu was hoping for a meaningful experience that fit into her busy work schedule. What she didn't expect was that she would be making a new friend. "Sophia let me become part of her life, and we get to know each other...It's definitely a friendship." As a business consultant with a hectic work life, Ritu was looking for the right opportunity to give back. Her heart was in literacy, since reading had always been such an important part of her life. But, most of the volunteer opportunities she came across focused on reading with children, and that didn't feel quite right for her. When Ritu happened upon Literacy Partners, she knew she had found her match. "It was really unique and it really made sense. Being able to read to your kids...! was really drawn to that!" She found the staff very responsive, and the method organized, "which didn't seem to be the case" at other organizations.

Ritu also appreciated the chance to work with just one student over time. "I really like the one-on-one... you become really invested," Ritu explained. "I look forward to it after work...

I learn something every time!" She also found a strong sense of community. Ritu explained that because the program structure is so intentional, "it incentivizes people to stay...the tutors stick with it." She found she would often return to the main Zoom session to chat with program staff, ask questions that arose, or simply share an anecdote about Sophia's progress. "Staff check in all the time, to see what we need and come up with creative ways to help. They give the time and show up every session. You never feel like you're doing it by yourself."

The biggest lesson for Ritu is that, ultimately, she may be getting as much out of the tutoring as Sophia is. It's given her a fresh perspective and made her "more open minded" as she's learned how to put herself squarely in "someone else's shoes"



Photo Credit: Holger Thoss

COLLEGE ACCESS: A BRIGHTER FUTURE

aritza sits in her sunny Florida living room cuddling her dog and keeping an eye on her rambunctious 4 year old son Savior. Her older son Luchien is off at school, her fiancé is at work and she is reflecting on all the plans she is currently juggling. Getting a job as a 911 dispatcher once a childcare slot opens up for Savior; a career in the human services field "to pay it forward;" a class that would certify her to be a foster parent.

That Mariza's life would look like this at 25 was not always obvious, least of all to her.

She grew up in the Bronx with a single mother. Things got challenging when she and her mom "hit a bad patch" and Maritza entered foster care at age 13. She was moved from facility to facility and then got pregnant at 15. A program for pregnant and parenting teens gave her some stability, but becoming a mother at such a young age was rough and scary. She had no support from family or her baby's father, and she fell into a postpartum depression. Luckily, the program provided her with therapy, and she recovered after a very difficult first year

because it was people my age, and mothers, and it would be great to see and hear what they are going through... I didn't expect them to have things in common with me... to uplift each other and learn from each other!

– MARITZA

with her son Luchien. However, her education took a big hit.

She had tried to attend high school while pregnant, but she felt embarrassed by her situation. She found herself easily frustrated — something she attributes to her foster care years, constantly starting over in new schools with new people. When she tried to return to high school at 18, she was already living in her own apartment and working at McDonalds to support herself. With a toddler at home and the constant struggle to find childcare, she "felt like it was no use." But she knew that her current situation was "not going to cut it."

It was at that point that Maritza heard about Literacy Partners, and entered one of our classes targeting young parents who need educational support. The program was a turning point for her. "I joined because it was people my age, and mothers, and it would be great to see and hear what they are going through," she recalled. What she got, though, was so much more. "I didn't expect them to have things in common with me...to uplift each other and learn from each other!" she continued. The program helped her cope with the demands of managing her education and raising her young son. "It was overwhelming, my grades were slacking," she notes, but Literacy Partners taught her how to make the time she needed for homework. "Learning to meditate helped me stay on my school work...without the program, I would not have graduated on time!"

Not only did Literacy Partners help Maritza stay on track academically, but "it taught me how to parent. I learned patience... that it's okay if you are frustrated with your child to walk away, let them know you need a moment, instead of lashing out." She also lets on that she is a much better playmate for her children now. "I learned how to follow their lead. I used to be like 'what do you mean the dinosaur is a princess, that's impossible.' Now I know to let them have an imagination."

She can imagine a bright future for all of them now. Despite the pandemic, she obtained her Associate's degree in 2021, and now plans a return to school to complete her Bachelor's. As for her children, she now knows better than to set their goals for them — "they change their minds everyday" — but she wants "to encourage them to do what they really want to do, accomplish all their dreams. I want them to live a better life than I did." She is on her way to making that wish come true.

LEADERSHIP FOR EDUCATION AND PARENTING (LEAP): Our College Access Program for Young Moms

29 young moms have enrolled in our LEAP program in partnership with Bronx Community College. In comparison to other parents in the same high school equivalency degree program, they have been:

55% more likely to earn a high school equivalency degree

41% more likely to enroll in college

And they have accumulated 5X as many college credits.

WORDS SHAPE

I Love This Poem: A Celebrity Reading

poetry has long been a force for personal growth, expression, and social justice. This event featured intimate poetry readings from some of the most compelling voices in film, television, theater, and the world of books. We are proud to highlight two of our students who also shared their favorite poem.



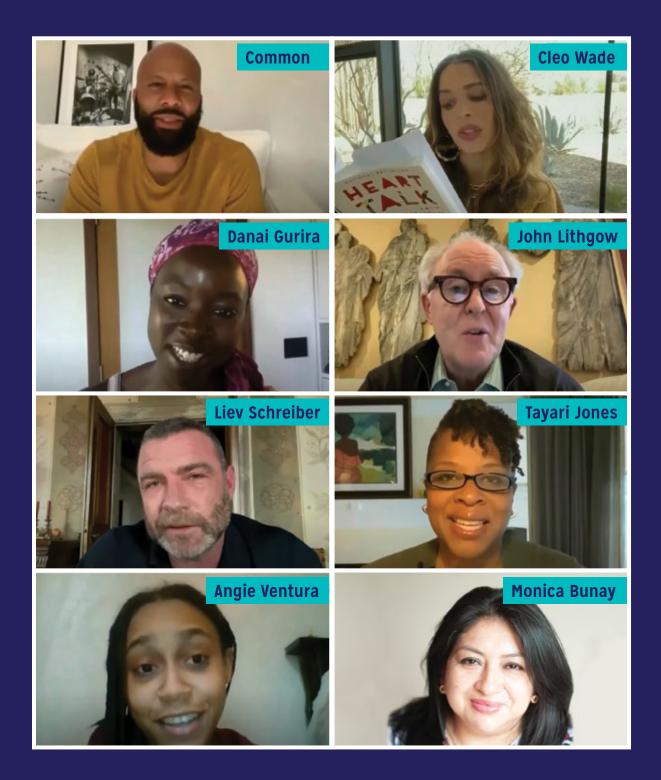
The event was co-hosted by podcaster, publisher, and book influencer, Zibby Owens, and critically acclaimed author. Mira Jacob

WORDS SHAPE OUR WORLD

2020 changed our world forever. In the midst of the global pandemic, a long-overdue reckoning with racial violence and injustice from our nation's past — and present — began to take shape. As an organization founded in the struggle for civil rights and tracing our origins to the Emancipation movement, we were inspired by this new wave of activism and engagement.

In response, we created **Words Shape Our World**, a digital series of literary and social justice events featuring some of today's most compelling voices. Thousands of people have gathered together online to find inspiration in art, scholarship and activism.

OUR WORLD



PARENT LEADERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

When July (pronounced Julie) and her family arrived from Colombia to settle in Staten Island five years ago, she hoped to continue working as a special education teacher. However, she encountered "many, many barriers" to continuing in her field in the U.S. She desperately wanted to contribute financially to her family, but with limited English and no one to take care of her one-year-old son (her older son was already in school), she had little choice but to stay home and focus on raising her kids. She loved being able to spend so much time with her youngest, but she sometimes wondered if she would ever be called teacher again. But after two years at home, "the need awakened" in her and she knew it was time for something more. She got involved with a local organization that helped her find work as a nanny, and, at the same time, she found Literacy Partners Spanish-language program, La Fuerza de Familias Latinas, which is underwritten by the William Penn Foundation, the Staten Island Foundation, and the Clinton Foundation.

July immediately felt connected to the program. "I was interested in all the topics they talked about…education, the development of children. I loved the program!" The workshops enabled her to express herself in a better way and positively "influence the communication development" of her children, echoing her own studies as a teacher. Most of all, she was grateful to have an opportunity to learn in her native language: "The most important thing is that it focused on people who speak Spanish."



The workshops also helped her build confidence and find community. Indeed, she found the program so fulfilling, it motivated her to get more involved and join Literacy Partners as a facilitator in the program. July knew she had the capabilities, and that Literacy Partners would help her develop the tools she needed "to provide to the Latino community" what she had so longed for when she first arrived, "from a person who also lived it." She sees herself in the moms who come to the program, and she wants them to reap the same benefits she did.

I always try to go a little deeper in terms of information, and I try to make them feel that everything they share is very important.

- JULY

She completed her facilitator training in March, and has nothing but praise for the trainer -"she's the dearest of dear"-and for the tools, tips and strategies she learned. Not surprisingly, July takes the work of facilitating La Fuerza workshops very seriously. "I always try to go a little deeper in terms of information, and I try to make them feel that everything they share is very important," she notes. She appreciates the workshop content even more now as a facilitator. Facilitating workshops on Zoom and WhatsApp during the pandemic has led her to learn new technology skills as well. More than ever, she feels gratitude for the learning, and for the pride and fulfillment she now gets from her work again. "To be able to be here, to give workshops, to be able to educate, to be able to teach...This is really exciting for me. That first day I was called teacher, you can't imagine...it touched my heart."



LA FUERZA

de Famililas Latinas



STORY Parents watch video clips we produced with Univision

VOICE They discuss what they've seen and how it relates to their child's learning

ACTION They try something new at home with their kids

WORKSHOPS

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Photo Credit: Holger Thoss

THRIVING THROUGH **VOLUNTEER SERVICE**

/ael has been supporting Literacy Partners for two years, facilitating classes, testing new program ideas and supporting staff and other volunteers to learn from each other. "The students are so lovely, so sharing and open and enthusiastic! They are genuine and very thankful...it's a wonderful feeling to be thanked for something you enjoy doing." Five years into her retirement, volunteering in the program has become an "anchor" for Yael. "I really found something that I am competent at...It's a major part of my retired life which I really enjoy."

An Israeli immigrant, she came to the U.S. in 1980 to get a master's and teach English as a second language. Once she got her PhD and began her career in computer linguistics, she left the teaching world behind. Decades later, as she reflected on how she wanted the next stage of her life to unfold, Yael thought about her love of language and the soft spot in her heart for those who immigrate.

I have a lot of sympathy for people who ask, 'Where is home? Where do I belong? and Do I feel comfortable in this language?'

These are the questions that really resonated for her as she searched for an opportunity to volunteer, but finding the right fit took some work. Her first experience was sidelined by COVID. Other organizations did not align with her values — she did not want to be teaching English to UN staff or the spouses of diplomats. "I wanted to work with people who needed my help." Yael had known about Literacy Partners, and as she articulated for herself what she was looking for - "a well-run organization with a clear mission, a good cause dedicated to a population in need" — everything coalesced.

Staff describe her as "exceptional" because of her background and dedication, but she also typifies how volunteers at Literacy Partners have the opportunity to become deeply and authentically involved. "When I told them I could do more, they took me up on it!" she notes.

The admiration is mutual. "I'm impressed with how the organization is run, and the focus on what counts," Yael notes. "I really like the focus on helping children by helping parents," she continues, "I love the way Literacy Partners does this '360' support — social, health, housing, English, children. it surrounds the family. Without being a very rich organization, they are very good at taking the money they have and spending it in an impressive way to envelope the family with the services they need."

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2021 FINANCIALS

Revenue

Foundations & Corporations	\$ 952,571
Individuals	\$ 736,722
Investment Appropriation	\$ 560,000
In-kind Contributions	\$ 424,890
Special Events	\$ 265,541
Government	\$ 263,617
Other Revenue	\$ 39,489

\$ 3,242,830

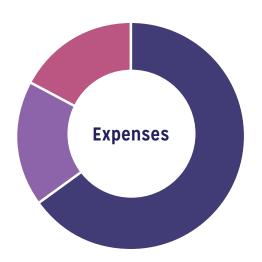


Expenses

TOTAL REVENUE

Programs	\$ 1,885,557
Fundraising	\$ 512,663
Administration &	\$ 498,181
Management	

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National Director of Parent Education

Rosa Loza

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Clementine Morel

Digital Media Specialist

Audrey Dahyung Oh Multimedia Specialist Paige Peterson

Author and Artist in Residence

Kimiko Petsche

Program Manager for Basic Literacy & Volunteer Coordinator

Emily Pressler

Director of Data Analytics

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