

Also: Tutor Conference Recap,
PAACE Conference, Meet
Mohammad & More!

No images? [Click here](#)



Federal Adult Education Funding Is at Risk (Again): Your Voice Matters



The Administration's proposed FY 2027 budget once again calls for eliminating federal adult education funding—a move that would have serious consequences for our learners, our programs, and the communities Literacy Pittsburgh serves. While this proposal is deeply concerning, it is not final. Congress now begins the appropriations process, and history shows that strong, coordinated advocacy can make the difference. Just last year, Congress rejected a similar proposal after we (staff, students, donors, and volunteers) spoke up clearly and persistently about the life-changing impact of our work.

Here is what you can do:

- [Send an email to your Senators](#)

- [Send an email to your Representative](#)

Please take time to engage in this effort and encourage your Congressional representatives to support adult education funding. **Our collective voices helped preserve funding before, and together we can do it again—for our students, our mission, and the future of adult education.**

Classroom Aides Needed



Looking for a meaningful short-term volunteer opportunity? Literacy Pittsburgh needs Classroom Aides for May-July to assist with GED prep and ELL classes. Help online or in-person 2 hours a week for 12 weeks. [Get the details and apply here.](#)

Tutor Conference Offers Learning and Connections



Literacy Pittsburgh's Spring 2026 Tutor Conference at the JCC Squirrel Hill on April 11 was a great success! We had 67 wonderful volunteer tutors show up for the day's events.

Based on feedback from past tutor conferences, we tried a new Tutor Bingo activity to get the morning started with lots of networking and socializing. Congratulations to the Bingo winners: Maryann, Roberta, and Iffat!

Tutors shared some of their favorite teaching tips with one another, including paying close attention to your own speech, using music to teach English, using Flippity for online teaching, adapting lessons to students' interests, and teaching a joke as a fun way to end a class.

We then offered 8 presentations across 2 sessions for tutors to choose from, covering topics from low-literacy English teaching to helping students prepare for the GED. The biggest turnout was for Katy Critchfield's workshop on Practical Communicative Activities, where over 40 ELL tutors tried out a variety of fun activities to get students talking more.

We rounded out the day's activities with a delicious taco buffet from La Palapa and more networking and socializing. Thank you to all of our Literacy Pittsburgh staff and volunteers, and the generous support of our sponsors: Highmark, UPMC and UPMC Health Plan, Rectenwald Brothers, PPG, Buchanan Ingersol & Rooney,

Eat'n Park, Raymond James, and Smithfield Trust.
Hope to see everyone back for the Fall 2026 Tutor
Conference online!





Literacy Pittsburgh a Finalist in Ethics Awards

Literacy Pittsburgh was honored to be a finalist in the Rotary Club of Pittsburgh's Excellence in Ethics Award. Board members Rebecca Roadman, Bill Southern, and Steve Sokoloski joined CEO Carey Harris and Marketing and Communications Director Maria Polinsky at Fago de Chao for the awards ceremony. While we didn't win in our category, we are honored to be nominated and congratulate the evening's winners!



Celebrating Milestone Anniversaries

We are pleased to recognize three of our staff members, Miguel Diaz Segura, Leah Patterson, and Nile Wilson, for five years of service to Literacy Pittsburgh. Meet them here and then [keep reading for more.](#)



Originally from California, **Miguel Diaz Segura** came to Pittsburgh 5 years ago. He spearheads our College Pathways programming, which offers classes and workshops to help students make a smooth transition to college. Students learn about the application process and financial aid, develop their writing skills, and meet representatives from local universities.



Leah Patterson, Northside – Ohio River Program Coordinator, takes pride in supporting learner success by helping connect people to the right resources. That includes matching adult learners with tutors and guiding them toward the best educational path for their goals.



Born and raised in Pittsburgh, **Nile Wilson** transitioned to his current position at Literacy Pittsburgh after working in retail positions. “Coming here was a good shift for me, finally landing in a field I could consider a career for myself.” Nile has helped implement changes at our Downtown Center that have strengthened site safety for staff and students, including the addition of security cameras.

April Brings Career Cohorts

This month, we launched new cohorts for classes in Customer Service, QuickBooks Certification Prep, and Microsoft Office Specialist Excel. These classes offer Literacy Pittsburgh students an opportunity to develop essential workplace skills and certifications.

The MOS Excel preparation class develops the advanced productivity software skills employers need. MOS-certified employees demonstrate verified proficiency in Microsoft Office applications that drive business operations across all industries. (These prep classes are available in Associate Word, Associate Excel, and Expert Excel)

QuickBooks Certification Prep produces candidates ready to handle financial record management, payroll processing, and business reporting—essential skills for small businesses and accounting departments.

Finally, our Customer Service program delivers multiple industry-recognized credentials. Graduates earn IBM SkillsBuild digital badges demonstrating proficiency in customer relationship management, problem-solving, and communication—transferable skills valuable across departments and industries. Through our partnership with PA Women Work, participants also earn DDI (Development Dimensions International) certification in Communicating for Success. Our Customer Service Class is now a verified credential through our partnership with MyCareerForward, which offers MySmartResume—a platform where graduates can proudly feature their digital badge to showcase their achievement to potential employers.

These are a few of our non-degree credentialing classes that bridge the skills gap by equipping adults with the certifications employers actively seek—without requiring traditional degree programs.

2026 PAACE Conference: Spotlight on Literacy Pittsburgh Staff at PAACE

PAACE, or the Pennsylvania Association of Adult Continuing Education, is the state's organization for advocacy of adult and continuing education. Each year, PAACE holds a conference where adult educators, administrators, staff, and tutors from across the state of Pennsylvania convene to learn and network together.

Eleven Literacy Pittsburgh staff members from across the agency will be presenting at this year's conference, held April 26-27 and May 1. Carey Harris, Terra Teets, and Miranda Pino represent a cross-team collaboration and will share recent successes Literacy Pittsburgh has had in Adult Education advocacy in the Southwestern Pennsylvania region. From the teaching team, Mia Naccarato, Luke Fredland, and Emily Harrer will present on reducing testing anxiety, incorporating writing into daily instruction, and trauma-informed practices for an ESL classroom. [Keep reading](#)

From Service to Success: Mohammad's New Chapter

Mohammad arrived in Pittsburgh from Afghanistan in June 2024 through a Special Immigrant Visa. He came to the United States seeking safety and financial stability. Upon landing in "beautiful Pittsburgh," Mohammad immediately began

looking for ways to build his community. A chance meeting at the Carnegie Library led him to Literacy Pittsburgh, where he enrolled in the English for Job Seekers class.

“I have never enjoyed being in a class in my entire life as much as I enjoyed attending Ms. Anne Carney’s class,” Mohammad shares. “I learned a lot not only from the teacher but from the classmates who were from every corner of the world.”

The program's focus on employment and education helped Mohammad navigate the American professional landscape. Today, he works in research at the University of Pittsburgh. He views his work in research as a long-term investment in the community.

“I always look at research like a fruit tree,” Mohammad explains. “When planting it, the gardener knows he can’t harvest for a few years, but once it starts producing, it benefits everyone.”

With his career established, Mohammad is now focused on pursuing an associate degree and starting a family. He credits the determination of Literacy Pittsburgh for helping immigrants find the resources they need to thrive. For other students, Mohammad offers simple but powerful advice for success: “Positivity, gratefulness, and hard work.”

Sign up for our Next Introductory Tutor Training!

[Learn more](#) about becoming a volunteer adult literacy tutor and register for training.

[Introductory Tutor Training: Teaching Adult Learners In-Person Workshop](#)

Thursday, May 7
12:00 PM - 2:00 PM
New Brighton Public Library
1021 Third Avenue
New Brighton, PA 15066

Introductory Tutor Training: Teaching Adult Learners

Virtual Workshop

Friday, June 5
10:00 AM -12:00 PM
JCC South Hills branch
345 Kane Blvd
Pittsburgh, PA 15243

Why We Do the Work We Do

Henry Wilde has a mission: take math students from “I’ll never understand this” to graduation. After a decade of doing just that, for Henry it never gets old. “After 10 years, I still tell my wife I really enjoy tutoring,”

Henry, Literacy Pittsburgh Tutor



Support Literacy Pittsburgh with your purchase of comfy tees, cozy sweatshirts, and other cool merch. 10% of each purchase will help our students to succeed. Visit our merch store.

Thank you to Highmark Wholecare for sponsorship of *The Spark Online*.



VOLUNTEER

DONATE

ENROLL

Share

Tweet

Share

Forward

Literacy Pittsburgh
411 Seventh Avenue, Suite 525
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
412-393-7600
info@literacypittsburgh.org
www.literacypittsburgh.org

[Unsubscribe](#)