

Happy New Year to All Our Tutors and Learners!

Celebrating the Holidays

Our Watertown ESL classes shared a winter lunch in December. These lunches are so tasty because the students bring in authentic dishes from their countries. It is a wonderful opportunity to share culture, recipes, and camaraderie.



From the left - Helen, Ping, Kazumi, Marisol, Miguel, and Anna

The Fort Drum ESL classes also celebrated the holiday season by hosting a lunch of international delights. The students brought in dishes representing their countries.



**Standing from left are: Selene, Clara, Nadia, Na-Ni and Yui.
Sitting from left are: Paulina, Magdalena, Ayumi and Sulki.**

Garage Sale Items Needed

The employees of Watertown Savings Bank are once again conducting a garage sale to benefit Literacy of Northern New York. We very much appreciate their generosity and support of our literacy programs! We need items for the sale so if your New Year's resolution is to become more organized, we will gladly take your unwanted items. All proceeds will benefit our literacy programs.

The garage sale will be held this spring so you have plenty of time to clean out those closets, basements, and attics!

Children's Book Give Away

Jefferson Community College generously donated 340 children's books to Literacy of Northern NY. LNNY also purchased numerous board books for preschoolers. Amy and Deborah gave all the books away to low-income families picking up holiday gifts at the Salvation Army in December.

A big thank you to the staff at JCC's Library for organizing the book drive and to the college faculty and students for donating the books. The families genuinely appreciate the books.

Math Packets for Students Studying to Pass the High School Equivalency Test

The City University of N.Y. (CUNY) Adult Literacy and High School Equivalency Program has put together a number of math packets to help students studying for the high school equivalency test. The packets cover math topics that are frequently on the high school equivalency exam. Mastering these packets, as well as working on basic math skills, will increase a student's chance of passing the test.

Even students who have not mastered basic math skills can benefit from using the packets. The rigid transformations packet covers geometry concepts such as the different ways rigid shapes can change position and turn, flip, or slide. There are, of course, fancy math terms for each of those changes in position. The packet also covers plotting points on a coordinate plane, teaches how to figure out the equation for a line, and contains a vocabulary review of math terms. The packet starts out with easy lessons and builds in complexity. It's very well done. **Twenty-three percent of the high school equivalency math test problems focus on geometry so it's an area we need to emphasize with students.** We do have basic geometry books covering lines, angles, circles, quadrilaterals, etc., in our office.

The population density math study packet covers area, density, measurement word problems, charts and graphs, vocabulary review, etc.

We expect to receive several more of the CUNY math study packets soon and will let tutors know when they are available.

Teaching Students How to Find the Main Idea of a Story

When we assess students, we frequently notice on the diagnostics that they have difficulty finding the main idea of a passage. The main idea is the primary point the author is trying to convey to the reader. Tutors can help students become more successful at finding the main idea by breaking the task down into a series of steps.

The first step is to identify the topic. You can teach this concept to your student by using pictures. Show a picture and ask the student to state in a few words what the picture is about. You can download pictures from the internet. There are many wonderful sites for pictures including <https://www.pexels.com/> Or you can cut pictures out of the newspaper or magazine. Here are some sample pictures you can use:



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The second step is to show your student a short paragraph and model how you would go about finding the main idea.

1. **Find the topic:** Read the paragraph out loud, thinking aloud as you try to determine the topic of the paragraph. Talk about how authors often repeat words or phrases to help indicate what the topic is about.
2. **Reread key sentences:** Once you've figured out the topic, now you want to decide what the author is trying to say about that topic. Talk about how an author often states the main idea in the first or last sentence of the paragraph. Reread those sentences.
3. **Summarize the main idea:** State the main idea in your own words, as briefly as possible.

The third step is guided practice. Ask your student to read a paragraph out loud and help him figure out the main idea.

1. Ask him to identify the topic.
2. Suggest he reread the first and last sentences.
3. Ask him to summarize the main idea in his own words.

Continue to have the student summarize the main idea of single paragraphs until he can do the task without any assistance from you.

Step four is to find the main idea of a short reading passage containing several paragraphs. Model how to do this for your student and then help him do it for another short story.

Identify the topic of each paragraph.
Reread the first and last sentences of the story.
In your own words, summarize the main idea.

Talk to your student about common mistakes people make when trying to determine the main idea. Common mistakes include:

1. Choosing an answer that is too narrow in scope. It's a detail in the story, not the overarching theme.
2. Selecting an answer that is too broad or vague. For example, the story is about tigers. That's very vague. What is the author saying about tigers?

We have some wonderful textbooks at Literacy of Northern NY that help students work on finding the main idea. Call Cecilia at the Literacy office and ask her for some recommendations and she will provide you with reading materials at the proper level for your student.

Success Stories

Carole McCoy's student, Juliet, passed the high school equivalency test and enrolled in classes at Jefferson Community College. She begins college later this month.

Cecilia's student, Matthew, took the high school equivalency test in December and is waiting for his results.

Anna has improved her English language skills and obtained her driver's license. Now she can drive herself to class when her husband is busy working.



Anna

Ryan passed the first half of his welding course at BOCES. His tutor helped him study for the weekly reading tests.



Mary and Doug Anderson's former student, Freshta is taking Business Administration classes at Jefferson Community College. She was the featured J.C.C. Honors Program student in November 2018 for completing a nine-step accounting cycle as an honors option.

Freshta

Several of our students from the Watertown office and at Fort Drum obtained jobs during the last few months.

Ruth is working at SACC (School Age Child Care). Cory is working at Home Depot.

Cem obtained his Commercial Driver's License and is now in a training program to learn how to drive commercial vehicles. Denisa got a job at the Fort Drum Exchange.

LNNY Welcomes New Tutors

Several new tutors have taken the online training and one took the in-person training. Most have been matched with students while others are waiting for a student who lives nearby and whose schedule is convenient.

Deborah DiBartolomeo, David Sanchez, Jameelea McKoy, Michael Avery, Lydia Doolittle, Susan Favreau, Hadiel Renteria all joined our volunteer roster.

Annual Appeal

Thank you to the tutors, students, board members, former volunteers, and staff who donated to our annual appeal. We deeply appreciate your generosity!