



Agenda

Monday, August 18th

8:30-9:15am – Continental Breakfast

9:15-10:15am – Keynote

Literacy: A Gift for a Lifetime

10:30-11:45am – Breakout Sessions

Family Literacy:
Providing a Holistic
Way to Support
Intergenerational
Literacy and Learning
for Stronger
Communities

Let's Study! Study
Skills for Adult
Learners

Don't Forget to Be
Human: How
Authentic Stories
Keep Us Connected

Real-World Money
Education: Integrating
Financial Topics and
Tools with Math for
All Learners

12:00-1:00pm – Lunch

1:15-2:15pm – Breakout Sessions

Community
Partnerships Moving
Cultural Literacy
Forward

Delivering Highly
Effective Instruction
Online

Incorporating
Montessori into Adult
ESL

Co-Learning Our
Way into the Future
with AI

2:15-2:45pm – Snacks with Vendors

2:45-4:00pm – Breakout Sessions

From ABC to GSF:
What and How to
Teach Absolute
Beginner Adult ELLs

Best Practices:
Navigating and
Staying Safe on the
Internet

Slide Forward:
Creating Digital
Flashcards, eBooks &
Games with Google
Slides

Conversation Circles
Panel

4:15-5:00pm – Vendor Lightning Round & Cocktails

5:00-5:45pm – Networking & Cocktails





Tuesday, August 19th

7:15-8:30am – Full Breakfast

8:30-9:30am – Keynote

From Arrival to Voice: Literacy as a Pathway for Migrant and Indigenous Learners

9:45-11:00am – Breakout Sessions

Language for Life:
Building Workforce
and Community
Participation Skills
with Ventures

Bringing English
Language Learning
into the Workplace

Innovative Ways to
Engage Your
Community Panel

Integrated Education
and Training for
Everyone

11:15am-12:15pm – Breakout Sessions

Love the One You're
With: Using AI and
Everyday Tools to Tell
Stories of Impact

Vocab Grab: When
Tech Meets Reading

Wisconsin Pathways
to a High School
Credential

Supporting Immigrant
Learners: Practical
Tips for Educators

12:30-1:45pm – Awards Celebration Luncheon

2:00-3:00pm – Breakout Sessions

Building a Family
Literacy Program

Applying Key
Principles of Adult
Learning for Effective
ESL Instruction

Lesson Planning for
Strong Community
Partnerships

Wisconsin
Department of
Corrections and
Pathways to Reentry
Success



Session Descriptions

Monday, August 18th

Literacy: A Gift for a Lifetime

Dr. Felicia Cumings-Smith, President and CEO at National Center for Families Learning

9:15-10:15am

Language and literacy education creates a remarkable, lasting impact on children and families. The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) has been devoted to increasing literacy, education, and workforce outcomes for children and families for over 35 years. Over that time, literacy has evolved, and the way we engage in literacy acts has shifted. Now more than ever, we must recognize, engage with, and teach the multiple literacies that impact children and families. Let's explore what's possible when we all come together as a movement to engage families in literacy and learn together. Together, we are establishing the legacy of literacy that we desire for our families, communities, and generations to come.

Family Literacy: Providing a Holistic Way to Support Intergenerational Literacy and Learning for Stronger Communities

Anna Kaiper-Marquez, Director of Family Literacy at National Center for Families Learning

Dr. Felicia Cumings-Smith, President and CEO at National Center for Families Learning

10:30-11:45am

In this session, presenters will expand on Dr. Smith's keynote address on the role of intergenerational learning in supporting stronger families and stronger communities by taking a deeper dive into the National Center for Families Learning's (NCFL's) four-component model of family literacy. This interactive session will begin with a historical overview of the model and examine how each of its four components—Adult Education, Parent Time, Children's Education, and Parent and Child Together (PACT Time®)—contributes to a comprehensive approach to family literacy. Presenters will also discuss practical strategies for incorporating these components into existing educational programs to enhance literacy outcomes and strengthen educational efforts. Drawing from real-world examples of NCFL's current family literacy programs across the U.S., the session will showcase how this model can be adapted to a variety of settings to support successful learning and stronger communities.



Let's Study! Study Skills for Adult Learners

Ann Beeson, Senior Sales Consultant, New Readers Press / ProLiteracy

10:30-11:45am

Throughout the years, tutors and instructors comment that students are unable or unwilling to complete classwork outside class. The assumption that students know how to study may be the issue. This presentation focuses on the why and how of studying for adult learners, with activities to make it interesting and engaging for you! Come with your ideas and stories!

Don't Forget to Be Human: How Authentic Stories Keep Us Connected

Brian Artka, Filmmaker and Storyteller at Size43 Films

10:30-11:45am

We are now living in an AI world. It is the new buzzword amongst every organization. This is all well and good because AI can potentially help your organization in many different ways.

The problem is... you do not want AI to do absolutely everything for your nonprofit. Don't fret because here comes the old buzzword and hero of the past (and present)... STORY. Yes, story has been the marketing buzzword for years but is also still relevant today. Why? Because it is the thread that keeps us connected... it keeps us HUMAN.

Authentic stories told within your organization will keep your audience connected to your cause more than any other medium available. When it comes to stories, and retaining genuine relationships, bet on human intelligence. Without it... who are you?

Objectives and Key Takeaways:

- The process of crafting and creating a storytelling video
- Why these types of stories, when done right, are so powerful
- The difference between a story and a great story
- How to apply parts of the storytelling process to help define your organization's story

We will watch a few example videos that have helped organizations fundraise millions of dollars and discuss how each of these films has helped the organization fundraise, create awareness and make a deeper connection with their respective audiences.



Real-World Money Education: Integrating Financial Topics and Tools with Math for All Learners

Michael Matos, Education Technology Director at scaleLIT

10:30-11:45am

This presentation provides an engaging and practical approach to financial education, integrating mathematical concepts benefiting all learners. Participants explore a variety of example lessons, apps, and online activities covering essential topics such as opening and managing checking and savings accounts, understanding banking accounts, basic budgeting, and using credit wisely. Attendees will gain innovative ideas for activities that are accessible to all learners, ultimately demonstrating that financial literacy is enjoyable and easy to connect with everyday life.

Community Partnerships Moving Cultural Literacy Forward

Chu May Paing, Executive Director at Winnebago Area Literacy Council

Juan Garcia Oyervides, Program Director & Professor at UW-Oshkosh

1:15-2:15pm

This presentation highlights the collaboration between the Winnebago Area Literacy Council and the Chicana/o & Latinx Studies program at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh to organize "Growing Up Translating in the Fox Valley". This project brought together the community, professionals, and subject matter experts to discuss the challenges facing children who grow up interpreting for their immigrant families, from everyday tasks to healthcare and labor-related issues.

The presentation will guide attendees through the processes followed by the co-organizers to develop the partnership, including mission alignment, resource sharing, event planning, feedback collection, and lessons learned from this project. This project was presented on May 14, 2025, at the Oshkosh Public Library.

Delivering Highly Effective Instruction Online

Carol Bible, Customer Success Manager and AE Instructor at Essential Education

1:15-2:15pm

Many working adults would like to further their education but can't attend in-person classes. The demand for high-quality online instruction remains high even in our post-COVID world.

Highly effective online instruction is possible with the right tools, strategies, and expectations. This presentation will detail how the presenter built a "face-to-face" online HSE class that can outperform most in-person classes.



Incorporating Montessori into Adult ESL

Katie Blackburn, EL Teacher at International Institute of Wisconsin

1:15-2:15pm

This session explores how the strategies developed by Dr. Maria Montessori can support adult English language learners in developing foundational reading skills, with a focus on phonics and phonemic awareness. Attendees will learn how to apply Montessori principles to meet the unique needs of adult literacy learners. The presentation emphasizes helping learners internalize sound patterns and build decoding skills. Participants will see how the Montessori system can provide visual and kinesthetic reinforcement as adults learn to recognize and produce phonetic words.

This approach is especially relevant for educators and community literacy workers supporting adults who are developing early reading skills, including English learners with limited formal education. Attendees will receive practical tools for incorporating Montessori-inspired methods into phonics instruction and strategies for fostering listening skills that underpin successful reading development. This session aligns with best practices in adult literacy and provides concrete takeaways that can be implemented in classrooms, tutoring sessions, and community-based learning environments.

Co-Learning Our Way into the Future with AI

Brian Curry, Executive Director at Wisconsin Workforce Transformation

1:15-2:15pm

Traditional literacy—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—is no longer enough. In today’s workplaces, increasingly shaped by AI-powered tools and virtual environments, employees who can effectively prompt a language model and evaluate its responses have a clear advantage. This fast-paced, practical session reframes foundational literacy as a four-layer continuum: Print, Digital Navigation, AI Fluency, and Immersive Readiness.

Through live micro-demos and real-world examples, participants will explore how even low-level adult learners can safely and confidently engage with AI—dictating text, adjusting reading levels, and learning to prompt with purpose. The goal is not to turn every learner into a data scientist, but to ensure that no learner is left behind in a world where AI is becoming a standard workplace tool.

This session challenges the outdated notion of the teacher as the sole expert. In the age of rapid technological change, instructors can model curiosity, vulnerability, and co-learning with their students. Attendees will leave with a one-page “AI-Ready Lesson Checklist” they can use immediately, along with renewed confidence to integrate emerging technologies into literacy instruction. Empower your learners not just to keep up—but to stand out.



From ABC to GSF: What and How to Teach Absolute Beginner Adult ELLs

David Nohara, ESL Teacher and Writer at makingsentences.com

2:45-4:00pm

The need for quality curricula and materials for beginning ELLs new to the Latin alphabet is widely acknowledged by program managers, instructors, and students alike, yet resources to address this need are scarce. The objective of this presentation is to walk participants through a process of curriculum building and materials creation for this target student group. The process has 3 areas of emphasis: 1) integration of early literacy skills with the acquisition of basic vocabulary and grammar; 2) reliance on modelling the desired language and providing quality visual prompts for student practice, rather than on explanation; and 3) a slower pace and greater scaffolding than for students at higher levels.

Participants will be asked to identify the vocabulary and sentences they want their students to learn and will leave the session with the beginnings of a Scope and Sequence of coordinated literacy, oral language, and grammar skills. The presenter will share examples of appropriate instructional methods and classroom activities that follow best practices from The Science of Reading, Wisconsin's Act 20, and more recent research into Executive Functioning and cognitive skills, all carefully adapted for adult beginner English Learners.

Best Practices: Navigating and Staying Safe on the Internet

Dr. Stacy Martin, Community Impact Director, Digital Access & Engagement at United Way Greater Chippewa Valley

2:45-4:00pm

This presentation will discuss instructional practices for teaching safety on the internet, creating passwords, and password management. It will also involve discussion around following links/texts/safe browsing and frauds & scams. Learn alongside others who want to help keep their students, as well as their organization, safe.

Slide Forward: Creating Digital Flashcards, eBooks & Games with Google Slides

Lisa Perez, Volunteer Tutor at Baraboo Area Literacy Council & Fox Valley Literacy

2:45-4:00pm

Google Slides is an effective, free tool that can be used to create customized digital flashcards for use with English language learners. With a combination of pictures, words, and even sound, students can be supported to fully engage with meaningful content that they can study in class and later review on their own with any computer or mobile device. Slides can easily be edited, shared, and adapted for various levels. Interested students can even be taught to make their own slides. Adapt slides to create eBooks and games. See the presenter's non-commercial website at literacytidbits.org for examples of what is possible. Modules are added weekly and are available for any tutor and learner to use free of charge. Attend this learning station to get hands-on experience and follow-up information with how-to video links.



Conversation Circles Panel

Jean-René Watchou, Madison International Partners

Shannon Schuren, Literacy Council of Sheboygan County

Cassie Christianson, Kenosha Literacy

2:45-4:00pm

In this session, you will hear from three literacy organizations in Wisconsin that have implemented successful conversation circles for their ELL students to practice the English they are learning. Come learn tips and tricks that you could implement in your own ELL program to help your students gain confidence as they use their English in a familiar, relaxed environment.

Vendor Lightning Round

4:15-5:00pm

Join us for appetizers in the vendor area and have some fun! It's your chance to win some great prizes and get to know about the products our vendors have to offer during these Lightning Rounds. You'll choose three vendors to visit, spend five minutes with each of them hearing about the products that are right for your students. At the end of each five minutes, you'll drop your name into the drawing for that vendor's prize and then move on to the next quick presentation. In just 15 minutes you'll have heard about new and exciting products and entered to win three valuable prizes. Come back on Tuesday to see what you may have won! Don't miss this fun mixer.



Tuesday, August 19th

From Arrival to Voice: Literacy as a Pathway for Migrant and Indigenous Learners

Luis Gonzalez-Quizhpe, Qualitative and User-Centered Design Researcher at School of Medicine & Public Health, UW-Madison

Angela Lake, PhD Student at Department of Curriculum & Instruction, UW-Madison

8:30-9:30am

What does it mean to arrive in a new land without the language to speak, read, or write your story? How does literacy become a lifeline — not just for survival, but for voice, identity, and connection? In this keynote, we explore how adult literacy and language learning shape the lives of migrant and Indigenous learners. Drawing on lived experience, educational research, and community engagement, we highlight the complex realities and remarkable strengths of those navigating new languages and systems. Together, we'll reflect on how educators, institutions, and communities can meaningfully support learners in reclaiming voice — and why literacy is far more than just reading words; it's reading the world.

Objectives:

1. Examine the complex intersections between language acquisition, literacy, and identity formation among adult migrant and Indigenous learners.
2. Identify systemic and cultural barriers to literacy access and explore strategies for creating inclusive, learner-centered environments.
3. Reflect on the role of literacy educators and practitioners in amplifying voice, fostering belonging, and promoting equity through responsive pedagogical approaches.



Language for Life: Building Workforce and Community Participation Skills with Ventures

Annette Acosta, Western Territory Manager at Cambridge University Press & Assessment

Anne Damiecka, ESOL Specialist at Cambridge University Press & Assessment

9:45-11:00am

Moving literacy forward means preparing adult learners not only for the workplace, but also for meaningful participation in their communities. This session explores how the Ventures series supports learners in developing the communication, collaboration, and confidence needed to thrive in real-world settings—on the job, at school, and in everyday life.

Participants will explore how Ventures promotes transferable skills through realistic dialogues, communicative tasks, and integrated instruction in all four language areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The session will highlight how classroom activities can be adapted to support learner goals in areas like employment, health, education, and civic engagement.

With a focus on practical, learner-centered strategies, this session will provide instructors with tools to help students move forward—toward stronger language skills, greater independence, and active roles in their workplaces and communities.

Objectives:

- Identify how Ventures supports workplace and community readiness
- Explore strategies for integrating transferable skills into everyday instruction
- Practice using flexible, communicative activities that promote real-world success

Key Takeaways:

- Activities that build soft skills, confidence, and functional language
- A practical approach to literacy that supports life, work, and community participation
- Resources to help learners take the next step forward—whatever their goal

Bringing English Language Learning into the Workplace

Julie Grives, Associate Director of Adult Skills and Workplace Programs at Lincoln Literacy

9:45-11:00am

This presentation will focus on Lincoln Literacy's successful use of WIOA Title II, ORR Employer Engagement, and private employer paid on-the-job ELL classes while employees are on the clock. It will include examples of curriculum customization, best practices, building partnerships, and how career progression and benefits became a large part of the success. It will also cover retention, raises and promotions that Lincoln businesses and employees are seeing after participating in the program.



Innovative Ways to Engage Your Community Panel

Cathie Sunday, Shawano County Literacy

Heather Chantelois-Kashal, Fox Valley Literacy

Lilly Barrett, Walworth County Literacy Council

9:45-11:00am

Is your literacy program one of the best kept secrets of your community? Raising the profile of your organization may be more important than you realize! Come learn from several small to medium sized Wisconsin organizations as they share the ways they have engaged with their local communities in a way that has helped them reach more learners, recruit more volunteers and raise more financial support!

Integrated Education and Training for Everyone

Aaron Goyette, Associate Director at Literacy Services of Wisconsin

Mike Sengyothinh, Manager of Workforce Development Programs at Literacy Services of Wisconsin

Charles Bradford, Manager of Community Corrections Programs at Literacy Services of Wisconsin

Patrice Vnuk, Manager of ELL Programs at Literacy Services of Wisconsin

9:45-11:00am

Literacy Services of Wisconsin (LSW) operates multiple learning sites across Southeastern Wisconsin that bring quality educational services to the community in the very neighborhoods where our students live and work. Our Comprehensive Services model is designed to connect adults of all skill levels with programs and pathways that lead directly to their personal and professional goals. Adult learners who participate in LSW's Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs are uniquely situated to obtain both a high school equivalency diploma (5.09 HSED) and an industry-recognized credential that puts them on the fast track to a career.

LSW's IET programming illustrates how, with the help of state support and local partners, a wide variety of participants are able to successfully and efficiently obtain employment and academic credentials. This presentation will provide an overview of LSW's current IET pathways with an emphasis on engaging beginning-level learners, justice-involved individuals, and ELLs.



Love the One You're With: Using AI and Everyday Tools to Tell Stories of Impact

Teri Walker, Founder & CEO at CommonTeri Services

11:15am-12:15pm

Are your data tools falling short—and your budget too tight for upgrades? In this hands-on session, you'll learn how to use AI with the platforms you already have (like Google Sheets, Salesforce, or form builders) to turn messy or incomplete data into funder-ready, equity-centered stories.

You'll explore how to summarize evaluation data, translate logic models, and cut hours from grant writing and reporting—all with free or low-cost AI tools. You'll also walk away with strategies for using AI ethically, protecting sensitive data, and making underutilized data sources work harder for you.

Grounded in the Digital Promise EdTech Equity framework, this session will help you bridge the gap between tech limitations and powerful storytelling—without creating a new budget line.

Vocab Grab: When Tech Meets Reading

Chanel Brown, Inventor, CEO & Founder at Vocab Grab LLC

11:15am-12:15pm

This presentation will start with a short description and history of Vocab Grab LLC. The audience will be given details of what is included in a package when they order in person or online. They will understand how to set up the game and watch the introduction video about the rules.

Select audience members will be invited to play while others enjoy the live action. A display of points will be shown while the players are encouraged to track their own scores using their phone and the crowd watches carefully for any signs of cheating!

While play is happening, the presenter will explain how flexible this game can be even under limited circumstances inside a correctional facility, at home, or at school. This is a highly competitive and fun game!

Vocab Grab was made to expand users' vocabulary while challenging their trust and discernment. The first deck for Vocab Grab (the AI pack) is on the market and geared towards 5th - 12th grade reading levels. Decks will be released on a collection basis where reading levels will vary. This is very relevant to the selected literacy audience because it is made to support the reading skills for all ages.



Wisconsin Pathways to a High School Credential

Sherry Holly, Alternative Education Consultant & GED/HSED Administrator at Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

11:15am-12:15pm

In Wisconsin, 9.7% of high school students did not graduate with their cohort in the 2022 school year. This presentation will start by giving a Department of Public Instruction updates for Wisconsin's GED/HSED and Alternative Education Programs and then transition to explore GED and High School Equivalency Diploma Pathways in Wisconsin. This will include a review of the policies and legal framework for alternative pathways to high school diploma. Finally, we will conclude with questions. This presentation may include a panel discussion.

Supporting Immigrant Learners: Practical Tips for Educators

Caitlyn Lewis, Executive Director at Community Center for Immigrants

11:15am-12:15pm

Educators and practitioners working with immigrant and refugee communities bring a deep commitment to equity and inclusion. This session builds on that foundation, offering space to reflect, connect, and refine strategies for supporting adult immigrant learners in educational settings. Together, we'll explore trauma-informed and culturally sustaining practices, share high-impact approaches that foster safety, trust, and engagement, and discuss ways to integrate advocacy and community partnerships into our everyday work. Participants will leave with practical, actionable ideas they can adapt to their own classrooms and programs, with a focus on meeting learners where they are and helping them thrive.

Awards Celebration Luncheon

12:30-1:45pm

Join us as we celebrate five outstanding students, volunteers, programs, businesses or other advocates who are doing incredible work in the field of adult literacy! Enjoy a delicious meal as you hear about the achievements, dedication and innovation happening across the state of Wisconsin and the difference the honorees are making in the lives of limited literacy individuals!



Building a Family Literacy Program

Laura Sumner Coon, Executive Director at Racine Literacy Council

Karen Tillis, Family Literacy Coordinator at Racine Literacy Council

2:00-3:00pm

We have found that all adult learners share one desire -- to improve their own learning so that they can assist their children with theirs. All were passionate about their children having a better life. In 2023, Racine Literacy Council launched a Family Literacy Program that was grown to serve more than 150 parents and children in the first two years. We think it may be valuable for other literacy organizations to hear about our journey and discuss opportunities that may enrich all of our programs.

The objectives of Family Literacy: 1) Build stronger bonds between parents and their children; 2) Equip parents with information about child development and parenting skills; 3) Offer high school and college interns an opportunity for service learning; 4) Provide individualized learning for parents who seek to further their knowledge in areas where we typically provide programming; 5) Strengthen the cognitive, social-emotional and communication skills of children; 6) Model how parents can assist their children with their learning; 7) Introduce Parent And Children Together (PACT) time; 8) Strengthen community by involving families, volunteer tutors and staff throughout the program.

Creating a Family Literacy Program incorporates some of the programming literacy organizations already provide for adults into a holistic program for the whole family.

This workshop will offer attendees several frameworks they could use to create a Family Literacy Program of their own.

Applying Key Principles of Adult Learning for Effective ESL Instruction

JennaRose Dahl, Customer Manager at BurlingtonEnglish

Olia Tomski, Customer Representative at BurlingtonEnglish

2:00-3:00pm

In this session, we will explore the foundational principles of adult learning to gain a deeper understanding of what motivates adult students. We will demonstrate how Burlington English applies these principles through a practical and relevant curriculum, collaborative learning activities, and opportunities to build on learners' experience. Participants will discover new strategies to foster greater student engagement, enhance learning outcomes, and support adults in achieving their language goals.



Lesson Planning for Strong Community Partnerships

Bex Fabrizio, Director of ESL Group Instruction at Literacy Network

2:00-3:00pm

In our Family Literacy and Workplace English programs, Literacy Network's most successful community partnerships have been those that balance the needs of adult ELLs, goals of community partners, and evolving TESOL best practices. At the same time, these objectives can often conflict with one another. It can be challenging for instructors and program managers to design curriculum and write lessons that implement this balance.

This case study will give participants the tools they need to:

- Think creatively about serving students through collaborative Workplace English or Family Literacy programs
- Add activities to their adult ESL classes that are responsive to community partners' goals and feedback
- Brainstorm solutions to potential challenges of fostering community partnerships

Incorporating these tools will help students in community-based programs:

- Engage in their communities in ways that are meaningful to them
- Build confidence in navigating new places in their community
- Persist in long-term and effective community partner classes

Wisconsin Department of Corrections and Pathways to Reentry Success

Dave Prochnow, Education Director for Division of Adult Institutions at Wisconsin Department of Corrections

2:00-3:00pm

This will be an interactive session with an overview of the Wisconsin Department of Corrections' Adult Institutions educational programming and the various paths available to those in our care with the goal of successful reentry. Discussion will focus on ABE/GED, Career and Technical Education, as well as Higher Education in Prison, and collaborating on how our organizations may partner to benefit students. In addition, participants will have the opportunity to share insight on best practices to meet the needs of our non-traditional populations. This session may be especially helpful to those unfamiliar with the Department of Corrections and its educational opportunities.