



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Chesterfield County

Program Title: Great Outcomes in Adult Literacy

Program Category: Community and Economic Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Carolyn Sears

Title: Assistant Director

Department: Chesterfield County Public Library

Telephone: 804-748-1761 Website: library.chesterfield.gov

Email: searsc@chesterfield.gov

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Joseph P. Casey, Ph.D.

Title: County Administrator

Signature: Joseph P. Casey, Ph.D.

Digitally signed by Joseph P. Casey, Ph.D.
DN: cn=Joseph P. Casey, Ph.D., o=Chesterfield County, ou=County Administration,
email=caseyjoe@chesterfield.gov, c=US
Date: 2023.06.27 12:42:50 -04'00'



Great Outcomes in Adult Literacy VACO Application 2023 – Chesterfield County Public Library

Executive Summary

The Great Outcomes in Adult Literacy (GOAL) project is a collaboration between Chesterfield County Public Library (CCPL) and local non-profit The READ Center to provide assessments and one-on-one tutoring to low literate adults in Chesterfield County. As the primary adult literacy organization in Central Virginia, The READ Center pairs English-speaking students needing services with trained tutors. The partnership created by the GOAL project allows for Chesterfield residents to receive assessments and in-person tutoring by a CCPL librarian at any of the ten convenient library locations in Chesterfield County. The READ Center trains librarians, tracks student progress and conducts quarterly programs. The library provides materials for librarians, work time for tutoring, curriculum materials the student may take home and keep and priority use of safe spaces six days a week. Both agencies work together to recruit community volunteers and students and to promote the importance of reading. The partnership continues to strengthen as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

The Problem

The READ Center, an adult literacy non-profit in central Virginia, reports that one-in-twelve adults in Chesterfield County does not read well. They struggle with prescriptions, government services, employment applications and helping their children with homework. In the article “Illiteracy is costing America – here’s why,” (March 2,

2022), *USA Today* describes a crisis that was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and those in the most vulnerable demographic groups have been impacted at even more alarming rates. After discussion of the economic benefits of literacy at an individual and community level, the article concludes by saying, “The effort for greater literacy proficiency starts at the grassroots, local level.” Chesterfield County Public Library and The READ Center are well positioned to lead the effort locally by working together to re-ignite efforts to engage low literate adults and community volunteers in a program improving the quality of life and economic outlook for individuals in the community. For these reasons, the GOAL project both responds to the economic downturn and advances diversity, equity and inclusion in Chesterfield County.

The Program

In 2020, CCPL identified literacy as a strategic goal and began developing programs to support the lifelong benefits of reading through literacy skill-building for all ages. The scope of GOAL is to serve adults (post-secondary school) who are challenged by low reading, writing and digital English language literacy skills which create barriers to daily living and participation in the workforce, while promoting enjoyment of reading itself to increase library usage and community well-being. The GOAL project does not replace GED education or duplicate programs in place by the school system, nor does it serve adults whose native language is not English, although those who currently have elementary-level English-language skills may participate in the program.

CCPL acknowledges The READ Center's expertise in addressing adult literacy. To assess the reading level of those who contact them, The READ Center administers the TABE test. When the test results indicate a third-grade level or lower, the adult is referred to a class. When the TABE test indicates reading skills above a third-grade level the adult can attend a class or request a one-on-one tutor. As CCPL's partner, The READ Center has trained 18 librarians to be tutors and five others to administer the TABE assessment. The initial training took place March-May 2020 and additional librarians were trained in fall 2022. When a Chesterfield County resident contacts The READ Center, the tutor coordinator schedules an assessment at the most convenient library location. After the conclusion of the appointment, library staff scan the "scantron" answer sheet and return it to The READ Center electronically for scoring to determine whether the person would attend the class or be assigned a tutor. If a tutor is to be assigned, the tutor coordinator determines the location nearest the resident and consults with the project manager at the library to identify a tutor. The tutor and student meet and begin to work on the curriculum. If the class level is indicated, they will be assigned to attend class sessions at CCPL's Chester Library.

CCPL's longstanding approach to reference and information services is called Your Personal Librarian (YPL). YPL's are designed for one-on-one engagement between a customer and a librarian, focused on setting goals and creating a learning plan to achieve them. Some YPLs are single meetings to learn how to do a task, such as program a new cellphone, format a document, or 3D print a design. Others are a sequence of meetings between a librarian and customer who have created a plan

consisting of steps towards reaching their goal. Tutoring low literate adult learners is an extension of this second type of YPL and is the reason CCPL's librarians were chosen to participate in the program. TABE Assessments are administered as YPLs as well.

In addition to CCPL librarians, any community volunteer who is a tutor for The READ Center and who meets with their student at one of CCPL's libraries is considered part of the GOAL project. Each library has a plexiglass tabletop partition students and tutors can borrow. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, volunteers were offered priority access to learning spaces in library buildings that had not yet opened to the public. This is no longer necessary because all locations are open to the public. The library is very proactive in recruiting both students and tutors for The READ Center to be part of this program with and includes signage at all locations, community presentations and a digital billboard in September 2021 for National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week.

During the time the student and tutor work together, they not only use the curriculum material at the level suggested by The READ Center tutor coordinator, but also other materials found through individual research. Each tutor provides monthly progress reports to The READ Center and CCPL and participates in an internal forum to coach and encourage each other via a Microsoft Teams channel. They share worksheets they have used, tips for good online training and to create and share internal book lists.

In addition to conducting the weekly class at the Chester Library and pairing librarian tutors, there are several other components to the GOAL project. CCPL applied for and received grant funding from the Believe in Reading Foundation to purchase a collection of curriculum materials from New Readers Press and a collection of publications to add to CCPL's professional collection to be used by tutors. The curriculum material consisted of master copies of levels 3-8 for all reading and writing *Challenger* and *Journey to Success* workbooks and their teacher's guides, as well as multiple copies of the same workbooks that could be given to students to write in, take home and work on independently between tutoring appointments. The grant also provided funding for a collection of low difficulty/high interest novels that are available to student/tutor pairs for use in-house.

The READ Center presented quarterly programs related to aspects of literacy in 2022. These were originally planned for 2021 but was delayed because The READ Center felt that low literate adults would be better served by in-person programs which were not possible until 2022 due the COVID-19 pandemic. The programs were on the topics of health literacy, digital literacy, financial literacy and employment literacy. Employment literacy covered topics related to obtaining and keeping a job, including applications and forms. These were held at the four library locations in proximity to Title I schools and were the locations of past summer lunch programs. Although attendance was small at these programs, they contributed to the overall message that the library is the place for adults in Chesterfield County to receive literacy services.

CCPL relied on The READ Center's projections for estimating the numbers of students that could be served, as well as their established schedule and approach for training tutors, meeting with students and collecting data. These original markers were largely interrupted in March 2020 at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which coincides with CCPL's first strategic planning discussions. Some goal measures became unrealistic, however the overall approach CCPL took to establish practices going forward have proven successful and are a strong building block as volume increases. The number of students reaching out to the READ Center dropped since March 2020 and they paused many services from May-September 2021 due to a change in executive leadership and moving to a new building. Additionally, most classes and one-on-one tutors were meeting virtually during COVID-19.

Nonetheless, as Virginia began to relax COVID-19 restrictions, adult learners were again contacting The READ Center and CCPL in need of services. Since September 2021 library staff have administered 18 assessments, librarians have been paired with nine students and the class offered by The READ Center has moved from a school facility to Chester Library. In December 2022, one student graduated from the program, having advanced through four grade levels with her tutor. The READ Center and library staff celebrated her success. All the students are advancing in their proficiency and the library has ordered additional workbooks with local funds. No student has dropped out of the program.

Staffing and Finance

Staff hours for training, one on one tutoring and conducting assessments are incorporated into the regular expected work tasks for librarians and managers because of CCPL's YPL program. Two trained tutors have left the county. With at least one trained tutor at each of the 10 libraries and additional staff trained to conduct assessments, approximately 100 hours have been used system-wide for training. Meeting with a student on average of 2 hours a week results in approximately 8-10 hours a month for each pair, who have had staggered start dates. As mentioned, tutoring is considered a YPL session and the time is incorporated into their regular schedule.

The grant amount of \$2,992 purchased the original supply of workbooks and reference materials for tutors. The library purchased 20 copies of the LitStart textbook for tutors (\$19.60 each) out of its professional development budget and paid The READ Center for presenting the programs at their standard rate of \$250.00. The replacement purchase of twenty Challenger student books in late 2022 was \$341.64.

Results

The GOAL project increases the community's access to vital services by training trusted library employees to be literacy tutors. It is an innovative approach to expand already-existing library services to connect with a hard-to-reach population of potential learners. Residents previously had limited access to The READ Center, located in downtown Richmond, which provides services to Chesterfield County as well as the

entire Richmond and Central Virginia region. The GOAL project also addresses the growing need to increase adult literacy in the community. This need can be hard to address because of stigma and difficulty in communicating to those who need the service. The GOAL project demonstrates the value of a strong partnership that brings tangible benefits to a community in need. Finally, this project is easily replicable by other jurisdictions who have an adult literacy provider in their community.

One of the biggest successes is that the program has built a strong partnership between the public library and The READ Center. The partnership has helped expand The READ Center's reach and impact, drawing the attention of a regional coalition formed by a local foundation seeking to fund literacy projects. The READ Center is pleased with the progress being reported in tutors' monthly reports and nearly every week another potential learner is referred for an assessment.

Supplemental Materials

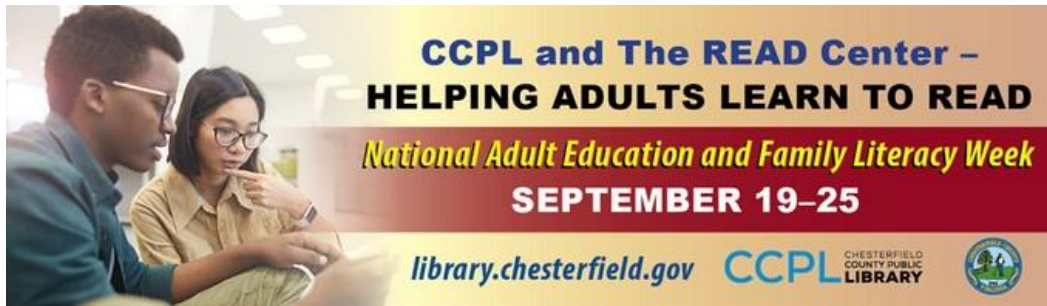


Image for digital billboard for National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week.



Photo of billboard advertisement for National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week on electronic billboard located near a major intersection in Chesterfield County.



Recent graduate of The GOAL project, Emma Pooler, visited LaPrade Library to accept her graduation certificate. Congratulations were given from her tutor, librarian Autumn Bedwell, and program manager/regional librarian, Barbara Ferrara. The certificate was awarded by The READ Center's Director of Programs Chris Miller along with Executive Director Ryan Corrigan.

Overview

The GOAL project is a collaboration between The READ Center and the Chesterfield County Public Library (CCPL) to serve adults who are challenged by low reading, writing and digital English language skills which create barriers to daily living. Chesterfield County is one of several jurisdictions served by The READ Center. The READ Center is in downtown Richmond and public transportation is limited, so Chesterfield residents in need of services find it more convenient to visit their neighborhood branch library than to drive into the city.

CCPL's longstanding approach to information services is called Your Personal Librarian (YPL). A YPL is a one-on-one engagement between a customer and a librarian, focused on setting and achieving goals. Tutoring low literate adult learners is a YPL and is the reason CCPL's librarians were chosen to participate in the program. As CCPL's partner, The READ Center has trained 18 librarians to be tutors and five others to administer assessments. When a Chesterfield County resident contacts The READ Center, the tutor coordinator schedules an assessment at the most convenient library location.

The READ Center uses curriculum materials from levels 3-8 for all reading and writing *Challenger* and *Journey to Success* workbooks from New Reader's Press. CCPL received grant funding from the Believe in Reading Foundation to purchase copies of these and the teacher's guides for the tutors, as well as additional copies of the workbooks for the students to write in and work on independently between meetings. All students are advancing in their proficiency, no student has dropped out, and two have graduated from the program.