



ANNUAL REPORT 2016

DEAR FRIENDS,

Thank you for your gifts to First Literacy during our 2015-2016 year. With your help, we have expanded our support of adult learners by focusing on their teachers.

We began the year with an unexpected honor. First Literacy and Eaton Vance Management were recognized by the Boston Business Journal for our long-standing partnership to improve the lives of adult learners through education.

This boost, plus the support that we received from you, sustained us throughout the year.

We believe that by supporting teachers, program administrators, and advisers—the people who interact with students every day—outcomes for adult students improve. Our Professional Development Workshops and Teachers' Circles provide adult educators with information about new approaches and resources that may be immediately implemented in the classroom and shared with peers. The First *Literacy Lab* initiative provides opportunities for educators to test innovative ideas and pilot new curriculum.

As Mary Ann Corley, an Adult Literacy Consulting and Professional Learning Specialist, states in the 2016 publication by the National Council for Adult Learning, *Ideas to Action-Creating a Comprehensive Adult Education Professional Development & Learning System*, “There is a compelling need for the adult education field to develop and provide the kinds of professional learning opportunities that enrich and change teacher behaviors so as to improve student learning and performance.” With your gifts, we are doing just that!

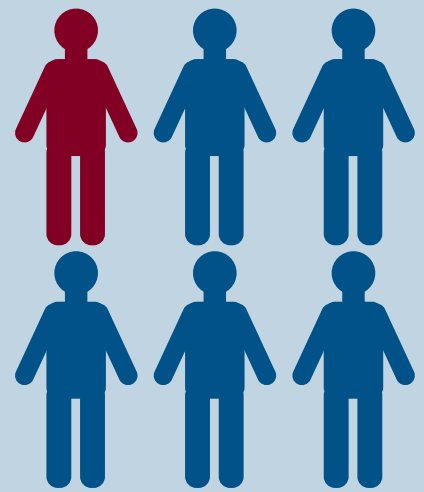
This fall we said good-bye to Michael Feher, First Literacy's Director of Programs since 2010, who helped create the robust array of initiatives that are so vital to our success. Joining our small team is Lenore Balliro, an adult educator with over 25 years experience as a staff and program developer, curriculum designer, writer/editor, and instructor. She brings an innovative, hands-on approach to her work, combining an extensive background in education with experience as a visual artist and poet.

Your gifts have enabled First Literacy to ensure that Greater Boston adults with low-literacy or limited English proficiency have high-quality educational opportunities that allow them to thrive as individuals and as family members, in their workplaces, and in their communities.

Thank you.

Skye M. Kramer

By 2017
63%
of all US jobs
will require
education beyond
high school



1 in 6
young adults drop out
of high school each year



16,000
MASSACHUSETTS
ADULTS
are on waiting lists
for literacy services

PROGRAM SUPPORT

INVESTING IN INNOVATION

THE WELCOME PROJECT IN SOMERVILLE received a First *Literacy Lab* grant in 2016 to use English versions of student stories in English for Speakers of Other Languages classes and to share the stories online to help other low-literacy English students engage with print.

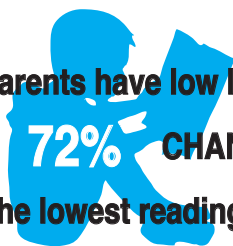
The project was based on students' personal stories about their immigration experience. Telling their stories led to great improvement in areas such as use of past tense, mastery of narrative line, and fluency in speaking and writing.

One student wrote, "I am really proud of myself that I am [in the United States] with all kinds of opportunities. Before I was a housewife. I had never gotten a job. I know when a woman has a job and you have money, you have freedom. But I hadn't had those kinds of opportunities, and now I have opportunity. I can go to school even though I am over forty...If I were now in Bangladesh, it couldn't be like that, a single mom with four children. Here I have a hard time, but I can live. If I were in Bangladesh, I could not survive."

The goal of First *Literacy Lab* grants is to stimulate and support the development, trial, and implementation of new, innovative Adult Basic Education resources and practices that have a multi-faceted impact on specific students, programs, and the ABE field in general.

Children whose parents have low literacy skills

HAVE A 72% CHANCE
of being at the lowest reading levels



One student asked, "I could tell my story, but why would anyone be interested?" Through their storytelling, all discovered that others were interested in their stories.

—Tim Groves



Examples of *Literacy Lab* projects include a book club designed to develop critical reading skills, increase vocabulary acquisition, and encourage the joy of reading in English for upper level students; the development and testing of a digital literacy curriculum for low-level English literacy classes, and the creation of a book containing immigrants' stories designed to facilitate discussion and writing about students' own stories.

PROGRAM SUPPORT

- 13 community-based literacy programs received *Literacy Lab* project grants.
- 580 adult learners participated in 15 First *Literacy Lab* projects.
- 469 students participated in projects that strengthened their programs.
- 111 students benefitted from projects that will improve the entire field.
- 7 programs developed new curriculum to better serve students.
- 248 students learned English by exploring their own stories/neighborhoods.
- 95 students received innovative instruction to prepare for high school equivalency.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CHALLENGING ADULT EDUCATORS

From our new Director of Programs, Lenore Balliro

MANY YEARS AGO, I found myself teaching English to a group of Southeast Asian refugees. I was not formally prepared for this job, and despite my good intentions, compassion, and commitment, I was overwhelmed by how much I didn't know about my students' lives, about teaching reading and writing to non-literate adults, about how cultural differences impact learning. I eagerly sought out workshops and other opportunities to build my knowledge base.

I cannot overstate the importance of my professional development in those early days and in my continual growth as an educator for nearly 30 years. My story is not unusual. Adult basic education teachers today still welcome refugees, immigrants, and undereducated adults who bring their hopes for better lives into the classroom. And these teachers need, as I did, ongoing training to help students meet their goals. First Literacy provides those much-needed professional development opportunities.

As the newly-hired Director of Programs at First Literacy, I am deeply committed to maintaining the quality of professional development and program support that First Literacy has offered for so many years. I know how important it was for me to participate in a community of inquiry and support with peers and experts, and it is no less important for teachers and programs today.

In 2016, First Literacy presented the following workshops for adult educators eager to learn and share their new knowledge with their colleagues:

- More than Fun: Planning Field Trips To Increase Student Learning and Engagement
- Training and Supporting Volunteer Teachers and Tutors in Your Program
- A Student-Centered Approach to Developing College and Career Foundational Skills
- Smart Practice: Brain-Based ESOL Instructional Techniques
- Preparing Adult Learners for Social Studies and Science High-School Equivalency Tests
- Visual Storytelling for English Language Learners



Fridays at First Literacy

WE SURVEYED WORKSHOP ATTENDEES AND LEARNED THAT:

80%

of workshop participants state techniques learned are immediately actionable

75%

see noticeable differences in their teaching based on implementing strategies

60%

have witnessed noticeable progress made by their students

90%

share what they've learned with their peers

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 18 workshops were held throughout the academic year.
- 381 attendees participated.
- 6,154 adult students were impacted.
- 54 hours of professional development were presented.
- 94 programs sent educators to workshops.
- 106 educators attended more than one workshop.
- 95% of attendees feel invigorated after attending a workshop.

We adult education professionals could not do what we do without the instruction, encouragement, and leadership offered by First Literacy. Team-building and the strengthening of ongoing professional development is the hallmark of First Literacy.

SCHOLARSHIPS

REWARDING EXCELLENCE

MALQUISUA SOUSA HAS ALWAYS KNOWN that she wanted to be a teacher. “This has been my passion since I was a little girl and used to play school with my siblings.” As a volunteer teacher in Brazil, she worked with second graders, focusing on creative ways to teach math, particularly how math was related to everything in her students’ everyday lives.

While teaching in Brazil, Malky learned that in order for children to be successful in school, teachers and parents must work as a team. This lesson stayed with her after she had a child of her own and began a new life in the United States. Malky’s daughter was four years old when they immigrated to the U.S. “My daughter’s teacher was not patient with me, but I prayed she would be kind and patient with my daughter. I felt powerless because I could not communicate. I felt embarrassed



to go to parent conferences, but I went, even though I didn’t understand a word, because I wanted to be part of my daughter’s life.”

Malky started studying English. As her skills improved, she gained confidence and began dreaming of returning to the teaching career that she had left behind. In 2015, Malky received her first of two scholarships from First Literacy. She is studying mathematics at Bunker Hill Community College. “It feels really good to be in college accomplishing something meaningful in my life.”

New Scholars

Anne Marie Caroline Denis
Luciana Castilho*
Wilfrix Cherazard
Bianca Cornejo

Ana Maria Dos Santos
Wilken Geneus
Hasna Hassoun

Valry Jamieson*
Moses Kabwe
Hanan Neamah

Catricia Plaisir*
Xavier Aguirre-Echevarria Ruiz
Olivia Yang

Continuing Scholars

Judelande Antoine
Sovely Forestal

Jason Grant
Evgeniia Kagramanova

Tong Liu
Joshua Lopez

Prakrit Saetang*
Malquisua Sousa*
Ciro Valiente

*Named 11-10-02 Foundation Scholars

The Mayor Thomas Menino Scholarship, created to honor Mayor Menino’s commitment to adult literacy education and the potential of all students, was awarded to Moses Kabwe.

The William Berman Scholarship, which recognizes Mr. Berman’s years of dedicated service to First Literacy and his love of learning throughout his life, was awarded to Malquisua Sousa.

The Robert Fraser Scholarship, created to memorialize Mr. Fraser’s commitment to education and leadership of First Literacy in its early years, was awarded to Tong Liu, a fellow pianist and lover of music.

The scholarships are made possible by the generous support of the 11-10-02 Foundation, Bank of New York Mellon, Eaton Vance Management, and the Hamilton Company Charitable Foundation.

SCHOLARSHIPS

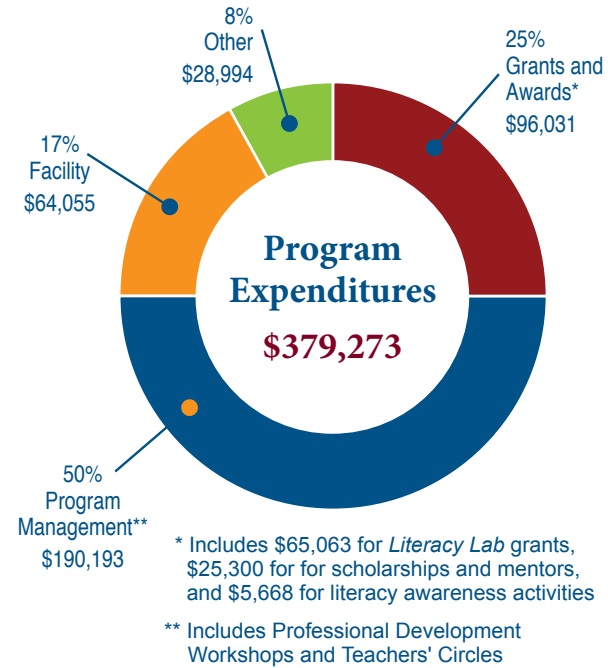
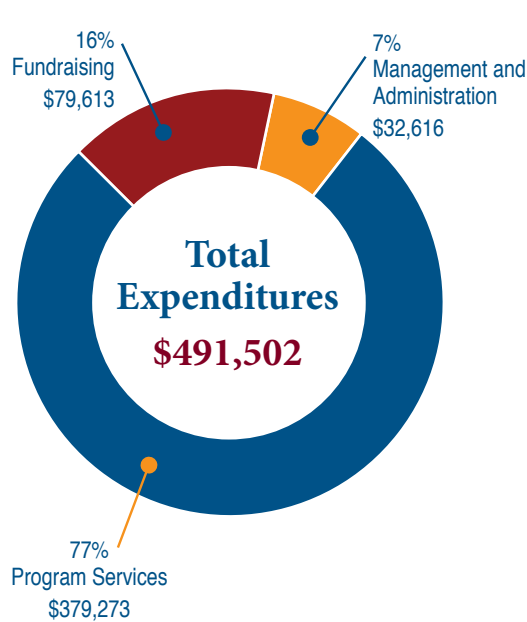
- 13 first-time scholarships were awarded.
- 9 continuing scholarships were awarded.
- 15 countries are represented among the scholars.
- 4 students were named as 11-10-02 Foundation scholars.
- 77% attend Bunker Hill Community College.
- 2 scholars attend UMass Boston.
- 1 scholar attends Urban College.
- 1 scholar attends North Shore Community College.
- 1 scholar attends Quincy College.

Your story is a compelling story. We all have a story of our people,...of families that came from different places and the struggles they might have had, but this is your opportunity now to take your education to the next level. —Mayor Walsh

First Literacy thanks the individuals, corporations, and foundations who believe that all adults should receive an education. The following list recognizes those donors who made gifts between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016.

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Dedicated to the memory of the late Robert B. Fraser, an early Board member of First Literacy, in gratitude for his devotion to the cause of improving educational opportunities for all Boston learners.

Demographics

This map represents the reach of First Literacy's work. From north to south, our *Literacy Lab* initiative, professional development activities, and scholarships impact students and teachers alike. Over 4,800 adults participated in classes supported by the *Literacy Lab* initiative or taught by teachers who attended workshops or teachers' circles.



These demographics reflect the ethnicities and gender of our scholars and the students who benefit from the First *Literacy Lab* initiative.

