



**MORONGO BASIN COALITION
FOR ADULT LITERACY**



NEWSLETTER

P O Box 686, Twentynine Palms, CA 92277
 Reach us by phone at (760) 475-2835 or (760) 362-4132 or mbcal29@gmail.com
 “Like” us on Facebook.com/morongobasincoalitionforadulthoodliteracy
 Newsletter Editor: Kathy Truesdell

VOLUME XXIII, Number 3

July-August-September 2018

DATES FOR YOUR CALENDAR

MBCAL Board Meetings—4th Wednesdays, call for location and time

No meeting July, August, and December
 Community Health Fair, Luckie Park, Oct.6

THANK YOU

Thank you to Space Cowboy Books, located at Sun Alley Shops in Joshua Tree, for their donation to the MBCAL. We are always pleased to have book stores support adult literacy. We are sure bookstore owners and employees are as passionate about reading as we are.

VOLUNTEER HOURS

Twice a year we add up the hours our tutors and other volunteers have donated to the cause of adult literacy. Numbers for the January to June 30, 2018 period are as follows:

Tutoring in the English as a Second Language class, Student Success Center, Copper Mountain College

MJ Fiocco
 Marilyn Clark
 Mitchell Halicki
 Sharon Resnick
 Kathy Truesdell
 Bridget McGinty
 Total ESL Volunteer Hours 297.5

Tutoring elsewhere:
 Kelvin Easterling
 Dan Stork
 Anita Fultz
 Phil Fultz
 Bridget McGinty
 Total Volunteer Hours 101

Community Outreach
 Kelvin Easterling 8
 Community Health Fair, Yucca Valley
 Stater Bros. East, Yucca Valley
 Kathy Truesdell 43
 MBCAL newsletter
 Kiwanis speaker
 Community Health Fair
 Spell-A-Thon
 Total 51
Total Volunteer Hours 449.5

Board meetings and Adult Education meetings are not included. There is no way to account for all the miscellaneous hours donated here and there in travel, purchase of supplies, sending in required paperwork to the State of California, etc., but those are all important in keeping the MBCAL doing what it does, teaching people to read and supporting literacy activities in the community.

PROLITERACY'S ANNUAL REPORT

ProLiteracy's Annual Statistical Report for 2016-2017, based on Annual Member Surveys from member organizations, of which the MBCAL is one, shows 216,681 students served by 88,404 instructors/volunteers. Of these students 65% were female and 35% were male. 43% were Hispanic/Latino, 21% were white, 18% were black, and 13% were Asian. Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Other rounded out the pie chart. The percentage of English Language Learners has gone from 50% in 2009-2010 to 63% in 2016-2017.

Student Entrance Levels are fairly evenly divided among Beginning Readers at 24%, Developing Readers at 24%, Intermediate Readers at 30%, and Advanced Readers at 22%. Those not able to speak or read English are at 17% and range up to 49% who can read and speak some English. Over 34,000 learners are not literate in their native languages.

Instructors were 73% female, 27% male, and 96% were volunteers. 48% are over the age of 60, up from 35% in 2010-2011. 75% of instructors have college degrees.

Member organizations receiving United Way funds has dropped from 50% in 2005-2006 to 40% in 2016-2017. The MBCAL receives less than \$100 per year from designated pledges to United Way of the Desert. 66% of programs receive private/individual donations, and 43% of members rely on 100% nonpublic sources of funding. The MBCAL receives no government funding and has relied on memberships, donations, and the fund-raising Spell-A-Thon.

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BAN LAPTOPS IN CLASSROOMS?

Two articles, one in the *Washington Post* in October 2014, and one in the *Wall Street Journal* in July 2016, are just as pertinent today as they were when written.

In 2014, Fred Barbash entitled his article "Want to Learn? Lose the Laptop." Mr. Barbash says that if you took class notes in longhand, you probably remember more about those subjects than today's students do. A study on which method was more efficacious, writing with a pen or typing on a keyboard, in his words, "It was no contest." "When it came to learning the concepts, the handwriters won." Even students who paid attention and took good notes on their laptops, still didn't learn the material as well. Handwriters were more selective of what they wrote down, and they studied more efficiently. It appears that the hand has a "unique relationship with the brain when it come to composing thoughts and ideas."

An Opinion Piece in the *Wall Street Journal*, written by Stuart Green, goes even farther. He says, "I'm Banning Laptops From My Classroom." While he recognizes the advances made by modern technology, such as computerized research, he sometimes moves from the front of his classroom to the rear, and there he sees what students are really doing on their laptops. Most are taking notes, but some are posting on social media, sending emails, shopping online, looking at YouTube, or checking out summer jobs. One was streaming an NHL hockey game! A 2013 study confirmed that students who are multitasking have less understanding and recall of what is being discussed, and are less able to join in class discussions.

THE STUDENT OWNS IT

by Phil Fultz

Sometimes students get discouraged, or just tired, at the repetitious work they have to do in order to learn to read. Because we are dealing with adults, the tactics grade school teachers use obviously won't work. So for a few meetings, here are a couple of ways to reach bored or tired students.

Point out to the student that her/his name is personal and may be spelled or used in any way s/he desires, absent giving gross offense. Thus, it is entirely OK for the student to pronounce S-m-i-t-h, and spell his/her surname "Jones." Of course, the student will spend a lot of time correcting the pronunciation, but that chore goes along with the choice. Less extreme examples abound in the worlds of public relations and show business. There are any number of "Smyth's" and "Smythe's." There are "Jaymes" and "Jaims" and even occasionally "James." Those variant spellings are meant to set their users apart; there is nothing sinister about them.

Other names that are without malice (but odd from the English speaker's point of view) are those brought from another language than English. Perhaps the most apparently egregious is the long-term coach of the Duke University basketball team—Mike Krzyzewski, pronounced "she-SHEV-ski." Certainly, the Coach could have changed his name, but he chose not to. It is not for us here to speculate why that was so; we can merely wonder how long it took for him, as a child, to learn to spell his name and for his teachers to recognize when he got it right.

You could go from playing with names to having fun with the English language itself:

Tutors can also tell their students that they can play with English by using another language's rules, usually jokingly. So occasionally we can see a name board on a doghouse, "Phydeaux." The writer of such a name isn't usually as

witty as s/he thinks, but the dog's name does tell us a little bit about the owner. Witty? Young? Educated? Perhaps all or none of them. The point is that the sacred, starchy, strong English language still has some fun left in it.

And to finish, here is a thought-provoking look at another way we might learn.

A PARABLE by Phil Fultz

A long time ago, in a county far away, "Sam," a new immigrant, went to work with his sponsor cousin at the neighborhood factory. When lunchtime came, he wasn't particularly hungry because he was accustomed to eating his big meal in the evening. So when he accompanied his cousin to the nearby diner, he asked him what to order.

"Order apple pie and coffee," his cousin told him. Sam did so and found the kind and amount of food just to his taste.

This went on for several weeks until Sam and his cousin were moved temporarily to the swing shift. More hungry at the evening meal break, he again asked his cousin what to eat at the diner. "Order ham and swiss on rye and coffee." was the reply.

Thus, nutritionally fortified, Sam stayed employed at the factory for more than twenty-five years, learning additional vocabulary words regularly and easily, until by the time he retired, he could hold a pleasant extended conversation, or a protracted argument, with almost anyone.

Does this story sound plausible? Did you realize that Sam's initial English vocabulary consisted of only nine words? "And" was used three times, "coffee" twice. Again we have the opportunity to point out to our students that English is so practical, so flexible, and so user-friendly that they have nothing to fear as they learn. Except they might order salad and carrot juice.