

Published in the Penn-Franklin News on September 28, 2022.

Digital Literacy Programming

In collaboration, the Delmont Public Library and Greensburg Hempfield Area Library are preparing to offer digital literacy programming for preK-2 to teen kids running through the first half of 2023. The two have paired up to gain important, supportive grant funding from both the PA Department of Labor & Industry (DLI) and the United Way of Southwestern PA. Both Libraries are interested in building a Digital Literacy Center of Excellence to build career capacity early in life for modern needs. In the case of the DLI funding, the two local Libraries are part of a diverse statewide team of 21 awardees (some Libraries), with real local benefits likely to come from the teamwork.

The proposition is this: Public Libraries need to passionately promote digital literacy, for adults and, yes, even for the youngest of children, too, by: (1) teaching its technologies, even as they change fast; and (2) by distinguishing the informed from uninformed in their use. Early technology training (#1) is surely a plus for success in today's world. Beyond that, however, is the urgent need to direct students to reliable sources of knowledge (#2), especially on the Internet. These two digital literacies are essential for career success.

The project goals are these: (1) leverage PA standards-based STEM capacity built since 2014 with the Storytime STEM-packs™ program and its tools; (2) shape digital skill outcomes for preK-2 children through teen, as measured by PA Department of Labor & Industry assessment tools; (3), thereby, demonstrate that public Libraries are well prepared to build ramps for children for digital literacy-based careers of the future, especially in an inevitably “greener” world; (4) sustain and expand the enterprise for all WLN Libraries based on quantitative outcomes assessment.

Each Library will create Tech Times (in-person and/or virtual) for each of the age ranges, during which children will be oriented to the technologies they will be using. For preK-2, for example, that will be Bee-Bot robots; for grades 3-8, Sphero robots. The initial sessions will emphasize how to use the devices for purposes of the project; subsequent sessions will put increasing emphasis on what to do with the devices. For preK-2, for example, this will be learning how to use a simple algorithm and robotically navigate a simulated moon surface on a custom board, and then reading about what the real moon is from an age-appropriate book, “Moon Adventures.”

For pre-teen/teen, students will be taught how to access Overdrive's free e-books with the Libby app and how to access and find appropriate STEM and career materials in Power Library. They will be led to sites such as that of the National Center for Autonomous Technologies (NCAT), which is funded by the NSF Advanced Technological Education program and focused on the education of technicians for high-tech fields.

There will be a lot more to say about these digital learning kids' programs in the future. I will also report about an associated arts initiative that was funded by the United Way, as well as a third grant award just received from the American Library Association for an

Published in the Penn-Franklin News on September 28, 2022.

adult Digital Literacy Workshop. You can expect to read about what is being done, and progress relative to goals, right here. Stay tuned in, and do get involved.

Charles B. Greenberg