

Partner Breakfasts

*Literacy, Inc.
New York, New York*

Come for breakfast, but don't expect to sit back and ease into the day if your host is Literacy, Inc. (LINC) of New York City. This organization calls its Partner Breakfasts working gatherings, but the work often resembles play. Playing games, playing new roles—and all the while working to build and improve programs for young readers.

LINC rallies people from all facets of a neighborhood to see who can and will contribute to its literacy programs for young readers. The organization holds these quarterly Breakfasts to attract many people at once—from schools, libraries, health care providers, businesses, recreational facilities and community organizations—to pool their best practices for out-of-classroom literacy programs. “In this relaxed and open environment, we have found that participants are excited to contribute by sharing experiences and best practices, allowing all of the participants to feel valued,” a LINC staff member said.

Over good food and games, LINC pursues its mission of showing neighborhood leaders how they can work together to promote early reading. Each breakfast helps participants create new reading programs or tackle problems in existing ones. Each Breakfast also has a theme, often fashioned around the time of year, such as Summer Reading or Valentine's Day. Activities coordinate with the theme and are designed to get attendees thinking about the community's role in early childhood literacy. After they work in small groups, participants share their ideas. LINC staff helps them improve their ideas and put together actual steps for making their ideas a

reality. Attendees leave the Breakfast with concrete ideas of how to improve young children's literacy.

One LINC activity asked each small-group participant to play a community “character”—a business owner, for instance, or a teenager. From these assumed perspectives, group members brainstormed ways these characters could establish and support a reading program.

Despite the Breakfasts' growing from needs experienced by LINC coordinators in the field, attendance presented an initial challenge. LINC solved this problem by increasing the number of partners invited and asking participants to bring at least one person with them to the next Breakfast. LINC staff also discovered that interactive events generated more interest and greater attendance. “I've never been to a meeting on a Friday morning that was more fun!” said one community member. “This was a wonderful experience; you all are very creative,” commented another.

LINC is pleased with the response to its Partner Breakfasts. “We have found that participants are excited to contribute by sharing experiences and best practices,” said LINC staff. Through the organization's work, children learn to read on time.

*Marrakech Arbuckle, Data and
Communications Coordinator
(212) 620-5462
marbuckle@lincnyc.org*