

COMPETENCY BASED WORKPLACE LITERACY PILOT FALL 2025

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PATTI WRAGG

WORKFORCE SUMMIT 2026



A LONG-STANDING PARTNERSHIP

- Kishwaukee College and the Suter Company in Sycamore, IL have had a partnership since 2010
- Adult Education has been a part of that partnership on an as-needed basis, offering ESL classes on-site



PARTNERSHIP CLASSES THROUGH THE YEARS

- Basic Computer Skills
- ESL (AE)
- Basic Math Skills
- Excel
- PowerPoint
- Publisher
- Intro to Business
- Soft Skills (AE)
- Intro to Marketing
- Business Writing
- Workplace Spanish (AE)
- various online computer courses through the college



WHAT DOES THE SUTER COMPANY DO?

- Began in 1925 as egg candling and chicken evisceration facility
 - Distributed eggs and chicken meat to restaurants in Northern Illinois
- Started canning food in the 1950s
 - Canned, boned chicken; chicken broth; chicken a la king; among other products
- 1960s—nationwide distribution began

To the left—Charles Suter, Founder

Image from: www.suterco.com/our-history/

WHAT DOES THE SUTER COMPANY DO? (CONTINUED)

- 1970s—entrée salads
- 1980s—refrigerated salads
- 1990s
 - specialized deviled eggs developed for the salads; lunch kits
 - International distribution began

To the right—New offices opened in 2020

Image from: www.suterco.com/our-history/



SUTER'S COMMITMENT

- Now in its Fourth “Generation,” the Suter Company has an Employee Ownership Plan (ESOP)
 - Began in 2019
- Company is committed to
 - Food safety
 - Employee safety
 - Employee education
 - Community Service

BEGINNING COLLABORATION FOR THIS CLASS



**Fall 2024: offered regular
ESL/IELCE classes on-site**

Separate registration on site

10-week class; 2 times/week; 2 hours/class



**Spring 2025: offered regular ESL
classes on-site**

Separate registration on site

10-week class; 2 times/week; 2 hours/class

BEGINNING COLLOBARATION (CONTINUED)

- Summer 2025: change up the class
 - Met with employee “Dream Managers” and a member of Senior Leadership to pitch a competency-based approach
 - Asked what topics/skills the company wanted for employees (students) to learn/develop
 - Company wanted Lean Manufacturing, Safety, and Computer Literacy
 - Met with members of the company’s safety committee and the Lean Manufacturing leader to learn the protocols and the most important points to emphasize in class

COLLABORATION PROCESS



THE CLASS—FALL 2025

- Separate registration on site
- 15 students registered (13 retained)
- Topics included Safety at Suter, Lean Manufacturing at Suter, and computer/digital skills
 - Opportunity to earn micro-certificates
- Class set up for 2 sessions/week; 2 hours/session

REQUIREMENTS

- Employee of the Suter Company
- English proficiency level of 4 or higher on CASAS STEPS Reading Assessment or any score on the CASAS Reading Goals Assessment
 - Pre-test/placement
- 40 hours of instruction
- Post-test

MATERIALS/CURRICULUM USED IN CLASS

- Lean Manufacturing information developed by and for the Suter Company
- Various online safety practices/information based on the safety topics chosen by the Suter Company
- Computer Literacy components from <https://www.digitallearn.org/>
 - Chose basic and a few more advanced skills to teach
 - Modules come with PowerPoint Presentations, worksheets, and handouts that can be adapted to your specific class
 - FREE!

CERTIFICATES TO BE EARNED

- Email basics
- Intro to Email 2
- Cybersecurity
- Online Fraud & Scams
- Microsoft 10
- PowerPoint Basics
- PowerPoint Special Effects
- Safety
- Lean Manufacturing
- Level gain in English proficiency
- Class completion

CERTIFICATES EARNED BY...

- Lean Manufacturing and Safety
 - 70% or higher on a quiz and final class project
- ALL computer skill certificates earned by demonstrating competency through an assignment/project
- Examples
 - Sending an email with specifications
 - Completing an online module and emailing the certificate
 - Final PowerPoint project on either Lean Manufacturing or Safety
 - How it affects work AND home life

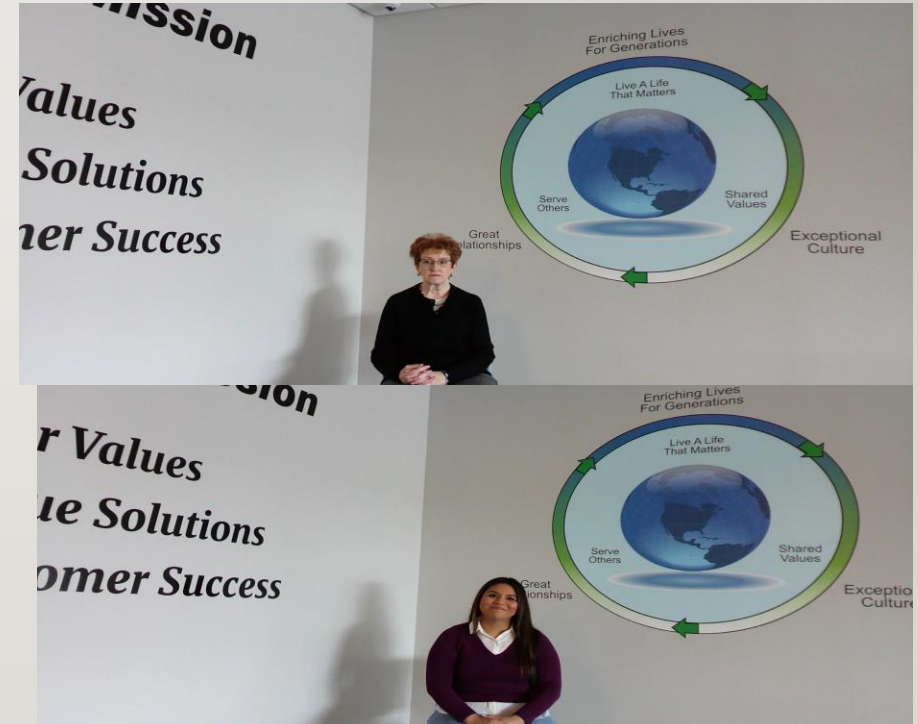
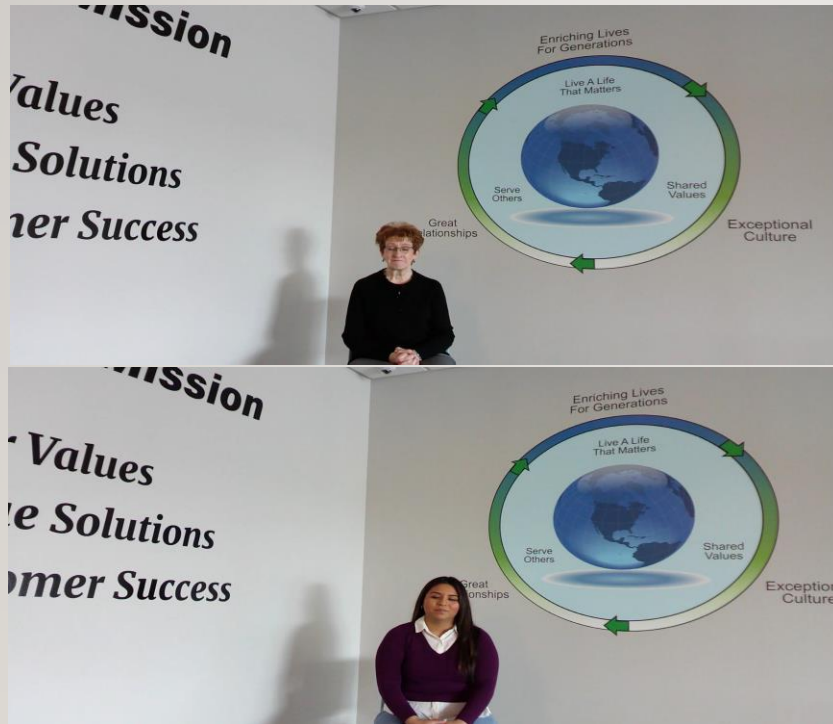
DISCUSSION

SEE HANDOUTS

RESULTS

- 8/13 students (62%) made a gain in their English reading proficiency
 - **This is 17% higher than the average that the entire program earns in an academic year!**
- 12/13 students (92%) earned ALL micro-certificates
- Company has asked for a bilingual, competency-based Computer Literacy class for Spring 2026
- Another Competency Based class will be run in fall 2026

RESULTS SEEN AT SUTER



CLASS CELEBRATION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- On the last day of class, students and their families were invited to a light dinner to celebrate and acknowledge their accomplishments
- Senior Leadership from both the Suter Company and Kishwaukee College were also invited



HAPPY STUDENTS



FROM THE STUDENTS

- The students wish to thank the Leadership Team at the Suter Company for the opportunity to have classes at the company. Many of them feel that they would not otherwise have the ability to continue their education and learn new skills. - *Students gave this statement to me before our celebration*
- I have learned to better understand how my company operates, as well as how to put into practice what I learned in class, such as the impact of downtime on our production. --Deka

JAVIER



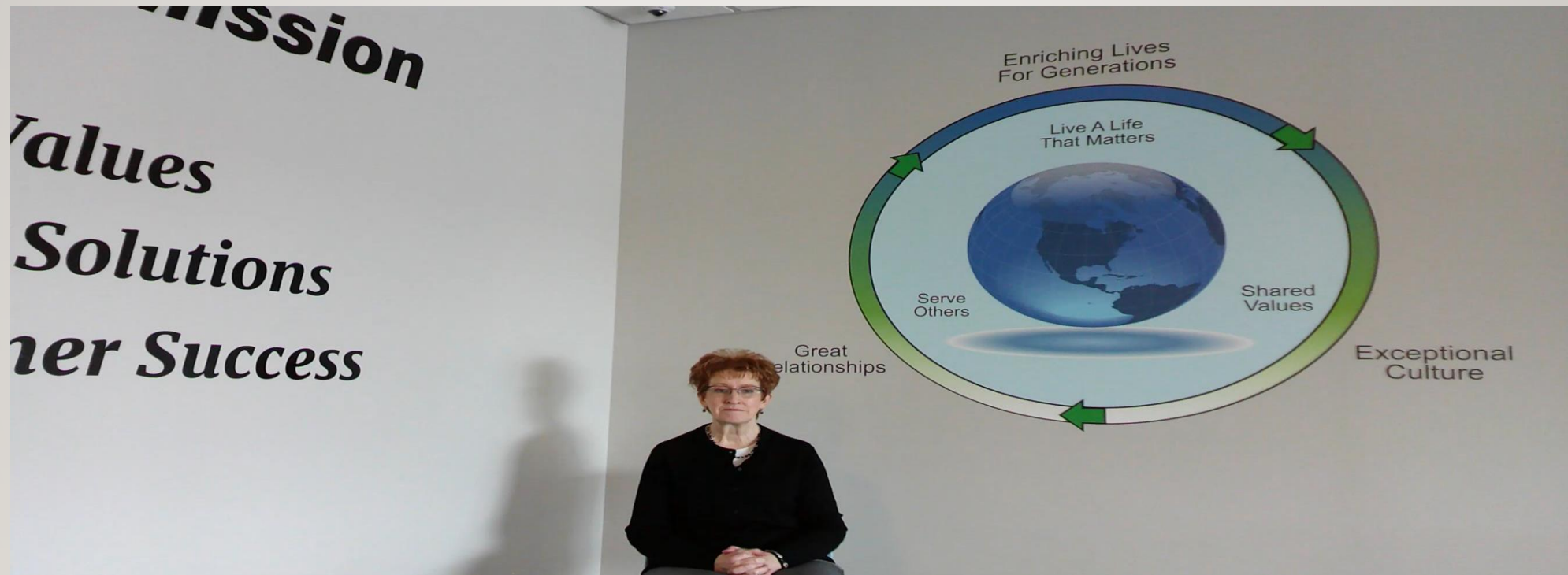
WHY SHOULD YOU HAVE A WORKFORCE LITERACY CLASS?

- Depending on the organization with which you work, there is very minimal or no cost to your company!
- Employees learn
 - English in a contextualized manner
 - Soft skills to make them better employees
 - Other skills to help them succeed at their jobs

WHY SHOULD YOU HAVE A WORKFORCE LITERACY CLASS? (CONTINUED)

- Your company gains employees who are
 - Confident in technical areas (pinpointed to your company's needs)
 - Better able to communicate with management
 - Better equipped to be productive workers

HOW TO GET STARTED



HOW TO GET STARTED

(CONTINUED)

CONNECT WITH YOUR LOCAL AGENCY

- Contact your local Adult Education program
 - Community College
 - Community Based Organization

OTHER THOUGHTS

- Start small
- Come in with questions
 - Ask what the agency can provide
- Be prepared to answer some questions
 - What can you provide the agency?
 - Classroom space/storage

QUESTIONS & CONTACT INFO

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THANK YOU!