

# DAILY @ NEWS

2.5 MILLION READERS EVERY DAY

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## 'Mommy, what does it say?'

### E. Flatbush mom learned how to read so she could answer her son

BY JOYCE SHELBY

IF THERE'S one thing Myriam Philip loves to do, it's read to her two kids. But that wasn't always so.

She recalls times riding on the bus with her older child, Zendayi, now 5, when he would look up from his book and ask, "Mommy, what does it say?"

Philip said she would pretend she didn't hear her son. When that didn't work, she would find something to distract him.

"It was so embarrassing," said Philip, a 33-year-old single mom who lives in East Flatbush.

Her problem was one shared by 3.7 million other New York City residents — an inability to read well.

According to Literacy Partners, 25% of New York City's parents do not read well enough to share a bedtime story with their children.

One in three New Yorkers cannot read beyond the fifth-grade level; 1.3 million New Yorkers don't speak, read or write English well.

Literacy Partners offers free, small-group classes at sites in Bedford-Stuyvesant, the South Bronx and Manhattan.

"We're seeing more people who weren't getting a good education in their country of origin," said Susan McLean, executive director of Literacy Partners.

"That's a big change," McLean said, "and there's a great disparity between need and services available."

Only 3.4% of the adults in New York City who need help with their reading are getting it, according to Literacy Partners.

Philip, who grew up in St. Lucia, said she loved going to school.

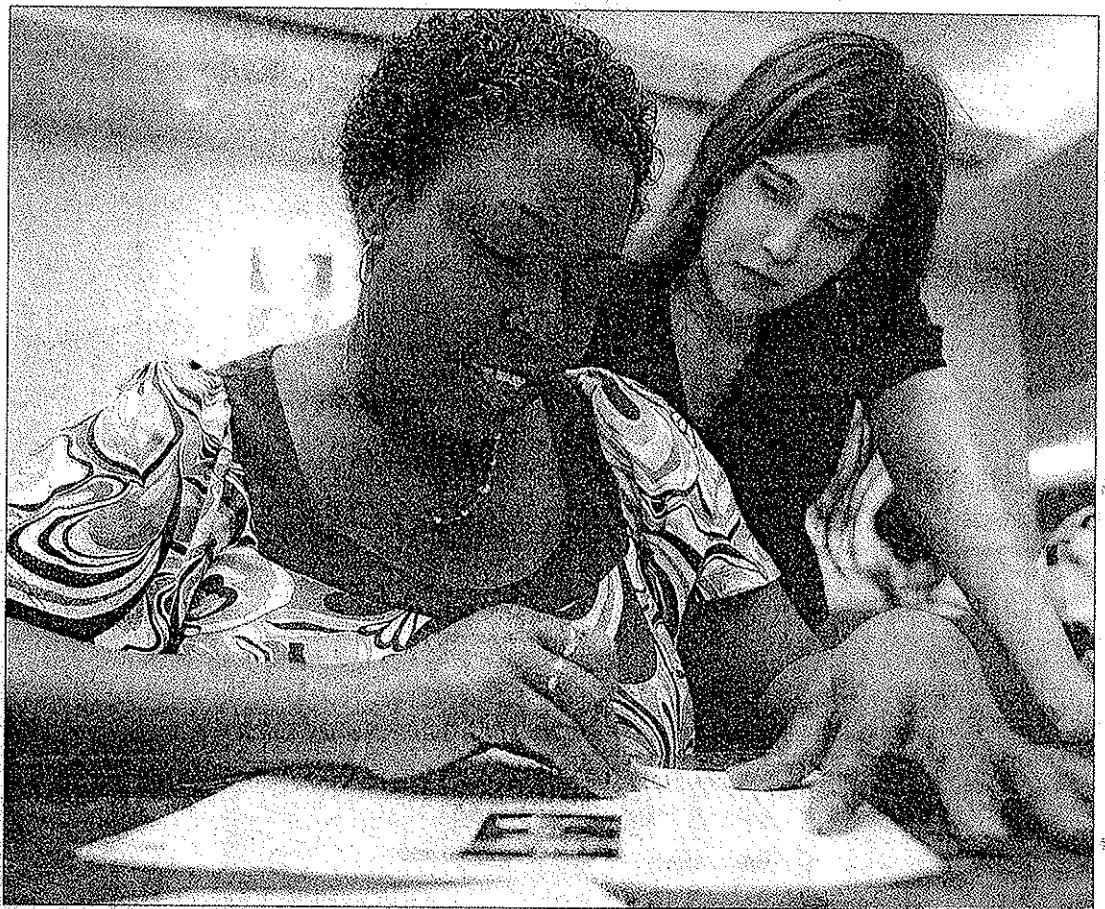
"I got A's," she said. "But I had to leave school a lot to help out my parents. They didn't have much."

By age 14, Philip had dropped out completely to work with her parents, who grew bananas.

She came to the United States nine years ago and learned of Literacy Partners when she spotted their ad while riding the bus.

"I kept that number," she said, "and when it was time for my son to go to school, I decided it was time for me to go, too."

Philip hopes to get her high school equivalency diploma and get started on a career.



Myriam Philip practices on her reading with her tutor from Literacy Partners, Katherine Molina. Philip, who had to drop out of school in St. Lucia to help her parents, was deficient in reading but learned how thanks to Literacy Partners. Photo by Mayita Mendez

"Right now, I'm doing housekeeping," said Philip.

"I'm looking forward to taking nursing courses, and I love forensics. I hope to move into that field."

Returning to a learning environment was much easier than expected, Philip said. Within

a month, she had moved from an adult basic education class to a pre-GED class.

"But especially important to me," Philip said, "I'm now able to help my son with his homework and I can read bedtime stories to my children."

[jshelby@nydailynews.com](mailto:jshelby@nydailynews.com)

#### CALL FOR INFO

For more information about Literacy Partners, visit its Web site, [www.literacypartners.org](http://www.literacypartners.org), or call (212) 725-9200.