

Garodnick visits local literacy center

On a recent visit to an adult literacy center at the New York Life Building on East 27th Street, Council Member Dan Garodnick got a first-hand look at a free reading program operated by Literacy Partners, a nonprofit group that teaches adults how to read and write. In one corner of the room, students learned basic phonics, while in another they constructed simple sentences. The students ranged in age from 18 to 75, and included native New Yorkers and newly arrived immigrants, some unable to read and write not just English, but their own language.

Susan A. McLean, the executive director of Literacy Partners, said that 3.7 million adults in New York City cannot read above the fifth grade level. This means, for example, that they cannot read a newspaper or understand the directions on a medicine bottle; many have difficulty reading a menu; and for them, filling out a job application is near impossible. Yet, less than two percent of the low-reading adults in New York City have access to classes.



Council Member Garodnick said he plans to do more to lower the adult illiteracy rate in the city.

“The reasons for adult illiteracy are numerous,” said McLean. “Some students drop out at a young age to get a job to help with family financial troubles. Others are promoted from grade to grade, despite the fact that they can’t read.”

McLean and the Councilman vowed to continue discussing this distressing and growing problem, and to work together to find solutions.