

MillerKnoll Partners with The Literacy Center of West Michigan to Offer Customized Workplace English Instruction Program

The Literacy Center of West Michigan announced the completion of an onsite Customized Workplace English program at global design leader MillerKnoll. The 15-week class reduced English language literacy as a barrier for 11 MillerKnoll associates by providing contextual English language instruction using a tailored curriculum based on their specific workplace.

The curriculum covered a variety of topics ranging from alphabet and grammar concepts to conversational skills, giving and receiving instructions, working with maps as well as safety and workplace vocabulary.

According to MillerKnoll leadership, the partnership with the Literacy Center of West Michigan is not only expanding prospective talent but providing existing associates with opportunities for upskilling and professional development. To further reduce barriers, the company also provided transportation and paid for the time associates were in class, which was an hour before their shift.

“Our goal was to make the program accessible and equitable for our associates,” said Domingo Hernandez-Gomez, DEI program manager, MillerKnoll. “The Literacy Center of West Michigan Customized Workplace English program was a safe space to grow and learn. It helped develop a sense of community. Our associates are supporting each other and more engaged with their managers.”

The Literacy Center of West Michigan Customized Workplace English class met twice per week over 15 weeks for a total of 60 hours.

For MillerKnoll associate, Marleny Herranz, the course not only added confidence, but a sense of belonging.

“The English class has been very helpful to me, and I am encouraging my friends to apply here,” said Herranz, a Machine Operator. “I’ve worked for a few companies and MillerKnoll has been the best. The people are nice, and it is a safe environment with good benefits.”

A ceremony was held in November to recognize the associates who achieved the post-testing requirements. The event was attended by MillerKnoll manufacturing leaders, human resource representatives and Francisco Henriquez Montiel, Vice President of Manufacturing for the Americas.

“I immigrated to the United States from Venezuela 19 years ago without knowing English,” said Henriquez Montiel. “Learning English was the first step in my journey to eventually becoming a leader. This program helped our manufacturing teams at MillerKnoll tap into a vibrant prospective talent pool, all while upskilling and retaining our existing talent. Thank you to the Literacy Center for your partnership, and congratulations to our first cohort of associates!”

Since 2001, the Literacy Center of West Michigan has provided Customized Workplace English programming to more than 90 companies. In the last year, the nonprofit has worked with a dozen companies including LG Energy Solutions, Lacks Enterprises, Corewell Health, and Haworth.

“Literacy skills are a critical requirement to be successful in any job,” said Marcus Little, customized workplace English director, Literacy Center of West Michigan. “While our program helps individuals find a job or excel within a career, we also recognize the profound impact that English language instruction has in empowering people when they are not at work to live abundantly within their communities.”

About the Literacy Center of West Michigan

Founded in 1986, the Literacy Center of West Michigan is committed to bringing about a just and vibrant West Michigan through the power of literacy. Instructing 800+ adults annually, the Literacy Center works with immigrants, refugees, and native speakers of English to provide literacy support tailored to their individual needs and priorities. A key player in workforce development, the Literacy Center also creates paths to citizenship, supports returning citizens, and partners with multiple school districts to provide a two-generational approach to children's literacy. With 85,000 adults in Kent County reading below a 4th-grade level, the Literacy Center is eager to grow its capacity to serve even more learners and draw attention to the critical issue of low literacy among adults in our community. www.literacycenterwm.org

<https://news.millerknoll.com/2022-12-15-MillerKnoll-Partners-with-The-Literary-Center-of-West-Michigan-to-Offer-Customized-Workplace-English-Instruction-Program-to-Help-Fill-Manufacturing-Talent-Gap>