

Power of Nine Literacy Project – Meeting Minutes

Date: June 4, 2026

Time: 7:04 PM – 7:43 PM

Attendees

- Nakisha Chaney AKA
- Matthew Coats AΦA
- Miranda Hill ΔΣΘ
- Patrice LaGrand ΣΓP
- Colongie Weems AKA
- Jason White ΩΨΦ

Program Plans

D9 Literacy Project (Book Donation)

- **Vision:** Increase access to culturally responsive books across Washtenaw County schools. **Strategy:** Community book drives, Amazon wish lists, sponsor-a-classroom campaigns, corporate sponsorships
- **Target partners:** WISD, Ann Arbor Public Schools, Ypsilanti Community Schools, EMU, U-M, United Way, Black Men Read, Ypsilanti District Library, Neutral Zone, Boys & Girls Club
- **Selection priorities:** Black authors/illustrators, bilingual books, social-emotional learning, STEM/career exploration, leadership themes
- **Impact tracking:** Books donated, schools served, students reached, volunteer hours, book club participation

Life Literacy Program (Adult Skills)

- **Target timing:** Parent-teacher conferences (November/March), school open houses, NAAPID Day, Head Start parent meetings
- **Topics:** Reading food labels, understanding medical information, immunization documentation
- **Delivery methods:** In-person workshops during existing school events, handouts with follow-up sessions for functionally illiterate adults, libraries
- **Confirmed venue:** Westerman Preschool and Family Center is willing to host presentations, distribute literature in take-home packs, facilitate during home visits, and three annual parent-teacher conferences

Book-to-Movie Clubs

- **Format:** Groups meet every other week to read selected books, then gather to watch film adaptations and discuss differences
- **Locations:** Libraries, schools (Che' Carter's school confirmed available), community centers, or homes
- **Recruitment:** Outreach during NAAPID and parent-teacher conferences
- **Group structure:** Size dependent on enrollment; consideration for gender-split vs. mixed groups
- **Example titles:** Wonder, The Great Gatsby (with Broadway show option), The Hate U Give

Storytelling Event with AACHM

- **Partnership:** African American Cultural and Historical Museum collaboration
- **Planning elements:** Professional storytellers vs. readers, location accessibility (museum is on Lower Road in township area), transportation considerations, cost sharing, nonprofit information tables, Black author book sales

- **Documentation:** MOU between NPHC and museum, risk management plan for children's event, marketing plan

District Support & Logistics

- **Ypsilanti schools:** All principals excited, no pushback, requesting immediate start dates
- **Book purchasing:** District will buy books directly, eliminating chapter costs and selection liability: principals choose titles, volunteers provide reading presence (Matthew and Jason will work together on this)
- **Timing restrictions:** Avoid M-STEP and MEEP testing periods (Jason to provide blocked dates)
- **Volunteer preferences:** Principals want both fraternities and sororities present, not just one gender
- **Safety considerations:** Parent access to buildings varies by district due to security concerns; some require metal detectors and resource officer clearance

Alternative Venue Opportunities

- **Library reading days:** Divine Nine presence at Ypsilanti or other libraries on Saturdays for drop-in reading sessions
- **Whitaker Library:** Large room available for movie screenings, accessible via bus line, opportunity for library card enrollment
- **Tutoring expansion:** Potential to broaden beyond reading to include math, science, and other academic support, leveraging committee expertise
- **Park Ridge Community Center:** Neighborhood-accessible venue for both book clubs and life literacy programs

Black Author Engagement

- **Purpose:** Allow D9 authors to present children's books for program consideration and recommended reading lists
- **Known authors:** One Omega, one Kappa (children's books), Angie Vargas (comedian/author), griot tradition storyteller, Marcellus (4 books for middle schoolers)
- **Process:** Authors attend meetings to present, and the committee decides whether to endorse, on a rolling basis as authors are identified
- **Pre-meeting materials:** Authors should send synopsis, background, and book journey ahead of the presentation, especially if they are not able to attend the meeting.

Email from Byron (Summary)

The NPHC publishes a national newsletter highlighting impactful programs and initiatives from councils across the country. Recently, the Area II Coordinator, whose role is comparable to that of a regional vice president or regional director, requested submissions from NPHC councils across the Midwest. The purpose was to identify and showcase outstanding initiatives taking place across the region's 11 states. The Area II Coordinator has chosen The Power of Nine Initiative for submission to the National NPHC for consideration in an upcoming national publication. This recognizes the collaborative service and community impact demonstrated by the Ann Arbor NPHC.

Action Items

- **Jason:** Provide Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti school calendars plus standardized testing dates for the next meeting
- **Patrice:** Obtain contact information and biographies for Angie Vargas, griot storyteller, and Marcellus
- **Miranda:** Present book club concept to the sorority chapter at the June 12th meeting, confirm participation
- **Nakisha:** Reach out to the AACHM executive director and board chair about a storytelling partnership
- **All:** Identify additional Black authors for the rolling presentation schedule. Notify Nakisha when you want them to present before a D9 Literary Project Planning Meeting.

Next Meeting

- **Date:** Thursday, June 11, 7:00 PM
- **Agenda:** Review school calendars to establish program timing and frequency; identify specific next steps for each program to maintain momentum
- **Note:** Colongie will present first due to a family dinner conflict, then step out