

REMOTE ADULT ESOL CASE STUDIES





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OVERVIEW

This case study is part of the Remote Adult ESOL¹ (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Project led by World Education, Inc. The project's goal is to document and disseminate viable remote adult ESOL program models and practices so that ESOL instruction can be done at scale efficiently and effectively in a variety of settings. The impetus for the project was to identify strategies for meeting the current interest and unmet demand as well as meeting potential demand prompted by English language requirements for U.S. citizenship under immigration reform. During winter and spring of 2021, the project investigated selected ESOL programs' and learners' needs, experiences, and promising instructional and learner support practices that rely predominantly on technology-rich strategies and tools deployed remotely.

This case study is one of eight full program profiles selected for its innovative program design and promising practices. The eight case studies of programs from across the U.S. are complemented by:

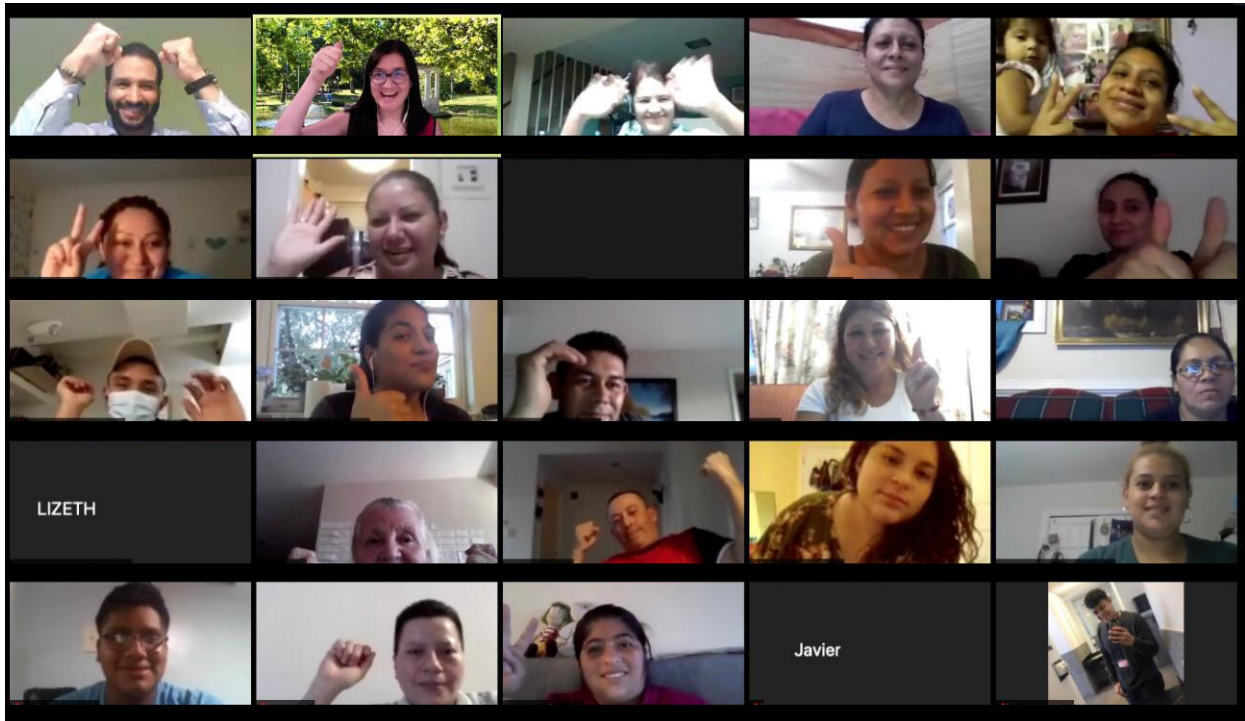
- *Policy and Practice Brief* that presents policy considerations and recommendations;
- *Creating Equitable Access to Remote ESOL and Supports in Multiple Contexts and for Distinct Populations and Purposes*, a cross-case analysis of remote adult ESOL delivery through the lens of the varied organizational settings in which they operate and the supports needed to engage distinct ESOL populations; and
- *Promising Remote ESOL Practices*, a document that highlights specific practices and innovations of selected, nominated programs from onboarding to instruction, digital skills development, and student and teacher supports.

¹ We use the term English for Speakers of Other Languages or ESOL rather than English as a Second Language (ESL) out of recognition that many English Learners already speak more than one language, just not English.

REMOTE ESOL CASE STUDY:

Holistic Remote Instruction Through Standardized Technologies and Integrated Support Services

Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School
Washington, D.C.



ESOL Program:

Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School ESOL Program

Website: www.carlosrosario.org

Reach: Urban

Number of ESOL students served per year: 2,500

Student population:

Immigrants and refugees, most of whom speak Spanish, Amharic or French

Contact for more information:

Allison Kokkoros, CEO, akokkoros@carlosrosario.org

Photo: Carlos Rosario School ESOL students

Program Description

The Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School (Carlos Rosario School) is a Local Education Agency (LEA) funded by the District of Columbia. It is one of nine adult public charter schools in Washington, D.C. Its mission is to deliver high-quality education, career training, and support services that enable adult immigrants to realize their dreams while strengthening the community and economy. Its Harvard Street Campus is primarily dedicated to ESOL, digital literacy skills development, and high school equivalency, taught in Spanish, while the Sonia Gutierrez Campus hosts the school's career programs, advanced ESOL classes, high school equivalency preparation in English, and transition to higher education. The Carlos Rosario School uses a three-pronged approach: 1) foundational skills, including ESOL, literacy, and high school diploma equivalency, along with computer literacy and citizenship; 2) career certification training in high-growth, high-demand sectors; and 3) comprehensive supports for student persistence. All services are provided in ways that are linguistically and culturally appropriate.

ESOL services include instruction from beginning ESOL literacy through advanced ESOL levels. Other services include English and Spanish GED (General Educational Development), citizenship, and hands-on career training programs, including culinary arts, information technology, and nurse's aide programs. Carlos Rosario School also has a small business program that includes weekly classes addressing the various stages of business development, from idea generation to developing a business plan to network development. Except for grant-funded special programs supporting services for Maryland and Virginia residents, students must be D.C. residents. Between 90 percent and 95 percent of Carlos Rosario School funding consists of local D.C. dollars. The allotment is approximately \$10,000 per student. The school also receives a facilities allotment to find, run, maintain, and secure buildings. Carlos Rosario School supplements this funding through various fundraising efforts to be able to provide student supports, including college scholarships to students.

Notable, Innovative Practices

The Carlos Rosario School approach to distance learning is motivated by inclusion of all learners and is designed to meet students' expressed needs, especially those facing the greatest barriers to online learning, starting with a multi-faceted and differentiated digital literacy onboarding. The school fully redesigned its previously in-person program and created a remote learning program from onboarding to instruction and assessment, digital skills and devices, and student supports. Key practices were: providing flexible class scheduling and open access to class materials and content, to engage students as their schedules allowed; standardizing technology, by providing students (at no cost) with high-quality laptops that came with internet, data, and all necessary apps, so students only needed to learn how to use them; viewing digital capability as a foundational life skill; offering training, onboarding, and persistence supports in various languages and via multiple tools; expecting cross-organizational collaboration of the academic, operational, and technology teams as they designed their approach; providing intensive professional development; and transitioning integrated support services into remote delivery.

Remote ESOL Program Design

Carlos Rosario School developed and memorialized its *School Approach to Educational Equity* during COVID to ensure that "All students will have equitable access to their educational materials, synchronous classes, and asynchronous learning." Since March 2020, Carlos Rosario School has provided synchronous and asynchronous ESOL instruction - using differentiated tools - and supports for 2,500 adults 12+ hours/week. Delivery switched from set three-hour classes in person to a combination of synchronous (90 minutes) and asynchronous learning. The schedule was flexibly adjusted to create options for students so they could attend classes at any time if they had scheduling conflicts and also have access to virtual teacher office hours.

Criteria for student promotion were also altered, as the school did not have the ability to use CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) for all students nor to implement in-house assessments virtually in a systematic way within one semester. As of May, 2021, staff are still working on these shifts and adaptations and continue to work with students on student goals. Carlos Rosario School is also offering intensive, virtual support services as described below.

Student Onboarding and Persistence Supports

School leadership realized early on that student and teacher supports would be essential in ensuring a successful onboarding process. There was a great student need for training on how to use devices and tech tools. The team created written manuals and videos in students' primary languages to help students learn to use the tech tools. Teachers also created video tutorials in multiple languages. Teachers coordinated onboarding by levels and worked together to creatively engineer plans to support students at the beginning of the semester as they distributed devices to students. Help Desk Support provision was also critical. Information technology became an integral part of the success of distance learning in the fall. Staff also support students in their native language to troubleshoot or replace devices.

Instruction

Both synchronous and asynchronous instruction is designed to foster active engagement and belonging within a learning community. This includes celebrating and marking progress toward learning goals. Synchronous instruction takes place on Zoom, and Google Suite is used for email and class documents.

The team at Carlos Rosario tries to always be in tune with students' needs and aspirations, and guides and shapes everything it does, from curriculum design to student government, using student voices. The curriculum, for instance, captures student voices through an embedded goal-setting practice so that it reflects and addresses students' expressed goals. Student government advises the school on unmet student needs (e.g., issues with parking tickets or childcare issues interfering with persistence) and meets with the CEO and principals remotely to solve for these needs (e.g., create a childcare center, which was underway pre-COVID-19).

Digital Learning Supports

Pre-pandemic, the school had used anything and everything in terms of devices and materials. Then the school held focus groups with students. Students said they wanted to see each other and be in a virtual classroom together. As it was learning from its spring 2020 experience, the school put these technology solutions in place:

- **Devices:** Carlos Rosario School ordered 1,500 laptops with data cards connected. The associated costs were considerable. Laptops cost \$1.6 million. Data costs were \$955,000. The school pulled off the financing for these solutions through a combination of sources. Carlos Rosario School was able to advocate in coalition with peer adult charter schools for adult schools to be included in the federal relief funds to D.C. The school also used its per-pupil allotment dollars and was able to secure a local equity grant from private philanthropy to support access to technology for K–12 charter families and advocated to get adult charter schools included. The school also experienced some savings resulting from not being in person and was able to reallocate some of the resources (e.g., savings in campus security costs).
- **Desktop:** Carlos Rosario School designed the image of the desktop to make the most frequently used tools easily accessible for students, including the creation of Google folders for each campus that linked websites that were commonly used by teachers, and the installation of icons or software on the desktop of four tech tools the school standardized. As the Chief

Financial Officer put it: “You need a device with a robust operating system, which many devices, such as Chromebooks, don’t have. Internet access is key, as well as figuring out the data use, as videos and other media use a lot of data. Our vision was to select a device that would not only be a good tool for online learning for school but would also create the opportunity for computer use beyond school.”

- **Tech tools:** Carlos Rosario School chose four pieces of technology to standardize its distance learning programs: 1) Schoology learning management system; 2) Remind, a school-wide communication system which allows two-way communication between staff and students without revealing phone numbers, captures and stores all communications, and translates messages into multiple languages; 3) Zoom video conferencing tool for synchronous classes and “in-person” communication; and 4) Google Suite for email and class documents.

The school created and piloted a tech curriculum and offered it in three languages and received feedback from students that two hours were not adequate. Subsequently, the school rolled out the tech curriculum over a three-week period almost in bootcamp style.

“We distributed the laptops, teachers called students at home to help with getting going, we provided tech support in the students’ native languages. We made YouTube videos in different languages and organized 45-minute practice sessions which were one-on-one for every student. . . . We needed to keep it simple and consistent. . . . We also had to acknowledge that language and digital proficiency do not necessarily develop at the same time, and that first-language support is tremendously important.”

–HollyAnn Fresno-Moore, Principal

Support for Students’ Basic Needs

“I am 100 percent for the Carlos Rosario School education. I didn’t know anything about technology. I have learned a lot. My health insurance was expired. I got insurance through D.C. Health Link [with the help of the school].”

–Carlos Rosario School student

Student support services were the heart and hub of the school pre-pandemic. Student barriers to participation and persistence were amplified by the pandemic. Continuing support services remotely was critical:

“We used Google Voice in the beginning, but then went to Zoom one-on-one sessions, as they provided the privacy these relationships require. We continued to provide food assistance, housing supports, employment supports, UI [unemployment insurance] benefit supports. We did eviction monitoring. We offered services 24/7, including weekends. We worked on addressing increases in domestic violence. We leveraged local funding to help undocumented residents. We set up a community health education effort using direct communication with students, social media, videos in multiple languages, etc. We completed a heavy lift to get an adult learner transportation benefit of \$70 on Metro cards from the City.”

–HollyAnn Freso-Moore, Principal

To address food shortage and insecurity, distinct partnerships with U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farmers to Families program and the D.C. Mayor’s Office on Latino Affairs allowed Carlos Rosario School to distribute more than 1,000 boxes of fresh produce and other foods to its student community. The school raised and continues to operate an emergency fund of approximately \$60,000 to assist students who are food insecure or are under threat of losing their housing, as well as an annual \$150,000 scholarship fund for students who go on to postsecondary education or training.

Support for Teachers and Staff²

Carlos Rosario School developed and provided a comprehensive, five-week, full-time professional development program to teachers and staff in summer, 2020. It was a mix of helping people engage with concepts of distance learning, building curriculum and instructional modules, receiving feedback, considering the whole student (social–emotional needs as well as skills), and training on tech tools. School leaders found that this professional development was helpful in shifting the mindset towards remote delivery and getting staff comfortable with the tech tools and also that adaptations would need to be made to modules once the semester started in response to external factors and learning from the students and their needs. [Here](#) is a link to the professional development curriculum and schedule. Also notable is that rather than laying off the staff whose jobs were affected by COVID-19, the Carlos Rosario school created a supplemental staffing pool and cross-trained them to help in various areas such as providing supports to learners.

Partnerships

Carlos Rosario School has numerous partnerships with community organizations, employers, and government agencies, but the relationship with its peer adult charter schools is critical. At this time, the D.C. adult charter school consortium is focused on the policy and practice of measuring impact in this pandemic-triggered remote learning environment with a specific interest in how to measure digital literacy across the District. One concrete activity of this consortium was two coordinated adult learner surveys at the beginning of the pandemic and one year later. This partnership has also been critical to ensure that any resources that became available for Pre-K–12 charter schools would also be available to adult charter schools.

Leadership

The CEO charged principals to adapt the school model and figure out how to enroll and retain everyone, which created space for creativity, gave freedom to experiment, instilled a “can-do”

attitude, and created a sense of being in this together. She expected cross-organizational collaboration of the academic, operational, and technology teams. She advocated to include adult charter schools in any additional emergency resources that became available from the federal or district government and secured additional resources. Holding the belief that everything is possible and can be solved put tremendous time, pressure, and importance on iterating and communication. The CEO shared that, in retrospect, it would have been helpful to have a checklist of what was needed to put in a remote program plan. The CEO also wished she would have been able to attend to the stress of this pandemic and transition sooner and along the way. The school eventually did set up a wellness task force for staff and provided services (e.g., meditation) and resources to assist with stress management.

Indicators of Effectiveness

“For my part, these classes have been a huge help because I have been able to help my children and my nieces and nephews because with the help of the computer classes I have learned a lot.”

—Carlos Rosario School student

The transition to remote learning changed the way Carlos Rosario School leaders think about attendance and success, as the remote program created new avenues for students to participate, persist and, in some instances, provided more learning opportunities and achieved greater gains in a shorter period of time. Key effectiveness questions of interest have become: How are students engaging? Do we know where students are? Do we know how students are participating (in classes, meeting with counselors, etc.)? Are we meeting students' social-emotional needs and how do these needs impact their ability to learn? The inclusion of digital literacy skills — not just to facilitate remote class participation/learning but for workforce development purposes — is a second practice/change Carlos Rosario School has adopted and will sustain post-pandemic as a critical part of its offerings. A big evolution was the idea of capturing digital literacy as a measure of success. Early performance data are positive and support the association of outcomes with higher levels of investment compared to other programs. [Click here](#) for Carlos Rosario School's performance report cards over time.

Additional Documentation:

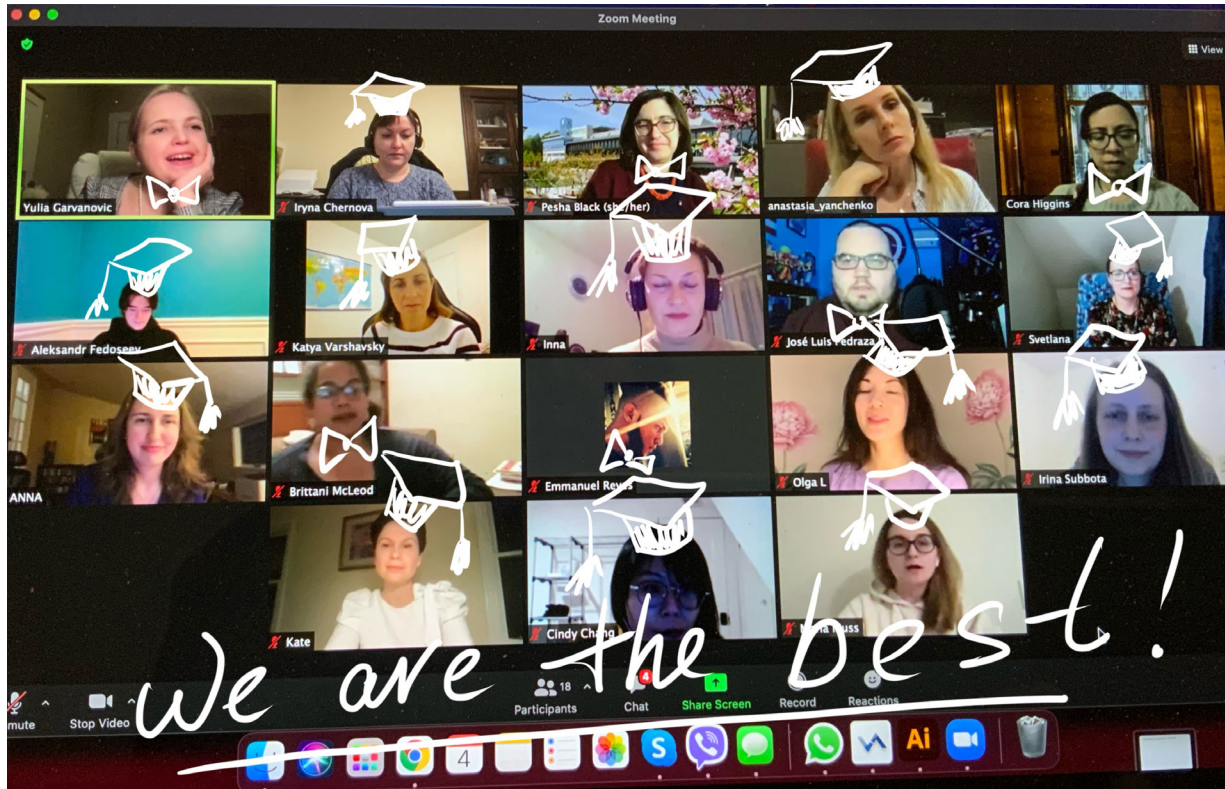
- [The impact of COVID-19 on D.C.'s adult learners: Results from a Spring 2020 survey](#)
- [D.C.'s adult learners during the pandemic: Results from a Fall 2020 survey](#)

² Carlos Rosario School's staff reflects its student communities. Its staff model and diversity have shifted and adapted over time, as the school's student body reflects global migration patterns. Because of growth in its Ethiopian student population, for instance, the school now has highly qualified Ethiopian staff members, including trained counselors, case managers, and faculty. Several administrative staff are former students. geographies.

REMOTE ESOL CASE STUDY:

Supporting Independent Learning From A Distance

Holyoke Community College
Holyoke, Ludlow, and Springfield, Massachusetts



ESOL Program: Ludlow area and Springfield Adult Learning Centers

Website: www.hcc.edu/courses-and-programs/adult-education

Reach: Urban/Suburban

Number of ESOL students served per year: 300–350

Student population:

Immigrants and refugees who speak 36 home languages, most of whom speak Arabic, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, or Vietnamese

Contact for more information:

Pesha Black, Director of ESOL, pblack@hcc.edu

Photo: Holyoke Community College Remote Accelerated Career ESOL class students

Program Description

Holyoke Community College (HCC) operates beginning to advanced ESOL programs in Springfield and Ludlow, Massachusetts, and ESOL workforce development courses ([Nurse Aide/Home Health Aide/ESOL](#), [Culinary & Hospitality/ESOL](#), and [Accelerated Career English](#)) in Holyoke. Ordinarily, students are drawn from 16 Western Massachusetts communities (in 2020–2021, remote and online classes attracted students from 55 Massachusetts communities), representing 45 countries and speaking about 36 languages. In-person classes typically meet 7–9 hours/week or 9–10.5 hours/week, three days a week, for 12–14 weeks each trimester. Beginning in Fall 2020, HCC added a pay-for-performance ESOL program, funded by Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The staff of 28 includes four full-time teachers, three benefitted advisors, and two technology support staff. The annual budget ranges from approximately \$1.03 million to \$1.2 million.

Notable, Innovative Practices

The remote ESOL program model entails personalized [Independent learning](#) that develops metacognition, incorporates student choice, connects to students' goals, and requires demonstration of learning. At Level 2 students opt into month-long modules based on their goals and interests, such as US citizenship, nurse aide exploration and prep, and career and education goals. Teachers support students through one-on-one meetings. Two dedicated technology coaches support students and teachers. They also run a remote basic computer class using NorthStar Digital Literacy curriculum via Zoom. Advisors seek to develop strong relationships with students. They support student persistence in various ways including connecting students with community resources, and supporting students' engagement with a career center, work readiness, career pathway planning, job search, and job placement.

Remote ESOL Program Design

The team has arrived at the program design based on teacher input, student input, significant experimentation by teachers in the spring and fall of 2020, and the experience they have gained since the start of the pandemic. All levels use a class website as the landing page from which students can go to Zoom for synchronous classes and Google Classroom for homework and independent learning, with links for office hours and independent learning options. Beginner/high-beginner levels have class websites, use Zoom or WhatsApp for synchronous work, and WhatsApp, Remind or TalkingPoints, and email for communication. Teachers are sensitive to students' comfort level with different technologies and have found that small-group meetings seem to be most effective for the beginning-level students. Fully enrolled classes of 16 students are subdivided into small groups of five to 10 students, who meet by Zoom. For literacy students, the groupings may be even smaller, with one teacher meeting with only two of her students by WhatsApp to provide targeted support. Class websites also have links to reading material, exercises, videos, and other resources for independent learning.

Intermediate and advanced levels have class websites, use Zoom for synchronous classes, Google Classroom for homework, and Remind and WhatsApp for communication and community-building. Teachers meet by Zoom with the full class several times per week for synchronous classes. Independent asynchronous work includes homework and independent learning, which is linked to student choice and goals. All levels are also supported by advisors who take attendance in classes, help troubleshoot any technical difficulties that students might have, and meet regularly one-on-one with students.

Student Onboarding and Persistence Supports

Student onboarding and persistence support through two advisors has become more important with remote classes. After the pandemic, the team has been very intentional about onboarding and getting students comfortable with technology and tools before the beginning of classes. The program director is involved in registration and orientation for each class. There is an orientation to advising to ensure that students meet their advisors and are familiar with their classes and with various class and community resources. There are separate sessions for digital skills, with the goal that students be able to access classes and email, to start building a sense of comfort and community even before classes begin.

There are two advisors for the core ESOL programs, one each supporting classes in Ludlow and Springfield. They are responsible for developing and maintaining relationships with students and providing resources to support persistence. They are also responsible for advising students about career and education pathways and employment strategies, as well as helping with job searches.

Advisors take attendance in classes and assist any students who might be having issues with technology, leaving the teacher free to conduct the class. This has also been useful to help identify students who are missing classes as well as understanding the difficulties students have with technology. Students receive a monthly letter about their attendance that their advisors discuss with them. Attendance interactions provide an opportunity for advisors to build relationships with students through regular conversation.

Advisors meet one-on-one with students and also hold weekly office hours for students. They communicate regularly with students, using Remind to share newsletters and announcements every week, using Google Voice for two-way communication with students, and, in some cases, also using WhatsApp. Advisors also play an important role in celebrating success: for instance, by mailing greeting cards or handwritten notes on occasions.

With the increasing reliance on technology, two dedicated technology coaches to support students and teachers were added late in 2020. These coaches hold open office hours, follow up with students referred for support by their teachers or advisors, and, beginning in Spring, 2021, are running a remote basic computer class using NorthStar Digital Literacy curriculum via Zoom. Technology coaches were added so that advisors could refocus their energy on advising work.

Instruction

The program always focuses on student-centered classroom instruction that is communicative and rigorous, supported by culturally responsive learning communities where students support each other.

With increasing emphasis on remote learning, teachers have a dual focus: making a conscious effort to incorporate more scaffolding, collaborative learning, student engagement, and community-building in remote synchronous classrooms; and developing approaches for asynchronous learning, including reading, writing, and project work, additional practice, independent activities, flipped classroom-style activities, and book clubs.

Asynchronous work includes homework and independent learning. [Independent learning](#) involves metacognition, incorporates student choice, is goal-connected, and requires demonstration of learning. Teachers continue to experiment, adapt, and develop options for small-group and independent work, including forms for demonstrating and logging learning, and developing mechanisms for students to integrate independent work into class by sharing or presenting.

Independent learning is organized differently at each level, beginning at level 2:

At Level 2, independent learning is linked to small groups based on goals and interests of students. Students opt into month-long modules based on goals and interests. Choices might include U.S. citizenship, nurse's aide exploration and prep, reading and writing strategies, and career and education goals. Each small group is assigned independent work linked to its focus. In addition, teachers meet one-on-one with students.

At Level 3, independent learning is based on student choice and involves an independent study report that incorporates learning and reflection. Teachers provide students with a menu of five offerings, adding new choices periodically. Choices were introduced incrementally over the course of the fall, so every student learned to use each resource.

At Level 4, independent learning involves planning, undertaking the actual activity, maintenance of a [learning log](#), and reflection and demonstration of learning. Each week, students say what they intend to do for independent work in the coming week. In the subsequent log, they look back and say whether or not they did as they planned (changing one's mind based on new circumstances is fine!), and plan for the next week. Students are also sharing or presenting in class.

Digital Learning Supports

Holyoke Community College's library lends tablets and hotspots based on student need and has loaned 130 Chromebooks and 34 hot spots to ESOL learners. A [student web page](#) links to web pages for each class, which in turn provides all relevant links and information, including hours, schedules, checklists, homework, and resources for independent work.

An example of a [higher-level class web page](#).

Each semester, 12–16 [orientation sessions for Zoom](#) and [eight sessions for Google Classroom](#) have been organized to familiarize students with these tools and to ensure that they have a degree of comfort with the tools before the first class. In Google Classroom sessions, students are subdivided by device type (tablet/phone or computer/Chromebook) for tailored instruction. Two tech-support staff have been hired to hold open tech-help hours and basic computer classes and to troubleshoot any problems for students.

Support for Students' Basic Needs

Two advisors are charged with building and maintaining relationships with students and being the primary points of contact. They hold regular office hours — now by Zoom — with each student to assess need for different supports, including academic support, job-search support, and general case management. Using weekly newsletters (by email and on class websites), advisors connect students with college and community resources, including the food bank/pantry, mental health resources, free tax preparation, citizenship classes, and immigration legal assistance. Holyoke Community College has mobilized significant resources to support students throughout the pandemic: ESOL students have borrowed more than 130 Chromebooks, laptops, or hotspots from the library; the campus food pantry has delivered bags of food to students; and the [President's Student Emergency Fund](#) has provided monetary support to cover an ESOL student's rent when her family faced an eviction notice.

One of the advisors is a career center employee who is stationed full-time in Ludlow, and both advisors help students develop career plans, build workforce readiness skills, connect students to job search resources and help them set up accounts on JobQuest, the career center software application, to use career center resources. Monthly remote meetings of a Job Seekers' Club deepened students' knowledge of job searches, resumes, interviewing, short-term trainings, funding sources, and career center resources.

Support for Teachers and Staff

“Our larger team feels more cohesive now because we have more regular contact, even though it’s remote, and feels like that’s really strengthened our feeling . . . of collective energy.”

– Laura Porter, ESOL Instructor

The team has spent a lot of time together to determine the blend of synchronous and asynchronous lessons that works well for students at each level. Teachers and staff meet prior to the beginning of each semester for staff planning week or an ESOL Team Staff “[sharing mini-conference](#).” Staff planning week includes courses from the community college on remote instruction; meetings to plan syllabi; classes, especially to plan, share, and develop a consistent approach to independent learning, student reflection, and tracking; building class websites; and facilitating advisor–teacher collaboration.

Teachers take leadership in developing specific approaches and using technology tools, and then share with other teachers. Examples of topics that some of the teachers have focused on include “Five Components of Remote Learning Model” and “Planning and Running an Effective Small Group Session.” Teachers can also take the opportunity to [reflect](#) on their experience. They are paid prep on both synchronous and asynchronous class time, as well as an additional 1.5 hours weekly for “student support.”

Partnerships

The ESOL program has a strong formal partnership with the MassHire career center in Holyoke, which also enables a MassHire staff member to work full-time as a student advisor and enables students to use systems and services at the career center for job search and workforce readiness.

At the end of every semester, an event is organized to introduce advanced ESOL students to ‘next steps’ opportunities for further education, incorporating alumni from the ESOL program who have gone on to further education and training; partner representatives; and partner videos featuring Transition to College programs, Academic ESL, grant-funded college certificate programs, such as Community Health Worker and Early Childhood, and short-term training programs, among others. Additionally, advisors host student meetings with partners, such as [Jewish Family Services of Western Massachusetts](#) for citizenship classes; [EforAll Holyoke](#) for a local entrepreneurship business accelerator; the YMCA; and the Attorney General’s Office for topics including landlord/tenant issues, healthcare access, and water safety (in light of immigrant drownings in Western Massachusetts in the recent past).

Leadership

“Our director built into every staff meeting time to convene with teachers at our level ...so that we can be sharing resources and ideas and best practices.”

– Susan Reade, ESOL Instructor

The program director is actively engaged in leading her team. She makes it a point to be involved in student orientation to classes and, over the past year, in conducting orientation to Zoom and Google Classroom, since online and remote teaching are so critical. The program director has a very collaborative and team-oriented style of leadership, with regular team meetings every week, extended sessions at the beginning of every semester for shared planning, and time after each semester for reflection and sharing. She has also been supportive of the teachers experimenting with new approaches and gathering input from their students on the appropriate and best methods for engaging them in a remote and online teaching environment.

Indicators of Effectiveness

The program has maintained a high level of continuity after COVID and a high level of student engagement with advisors and teachers, attracting students from an additional 29 communities outside the region by word of mouth. As compared to face-to-face attendance last year, attendance in synchronous offerings on Zoom is higher this year and has been exceeding 80 percent. In addition, more than 80 percent of students were engaged with advisors in December, 2020. In a survey completed by more than 130 students, 72 percent said they learned a lot in Zoom classes and 77 percent indicated that they enjoyed their homework and learned from it. In an April, 2021, survey about modality preferences for Fall, 2021, which was ongoing at the time of writing, 72 percent of the students preferred online learning over in-person classes.

At the end of the 2021 academic year, the program will have year-end standardized assessments and Level Completion Projects, a new initiative in which students are working on either capstone projects or portfolios.

REMOTE ESOL CASE STUDY:

Reimagining the Work of Adult Education to Succeed in Challenging Times

The Ronald M. Hubbs Center for Lifelong Learning,
Saint Paul Public Schools Adult Education
Saint Paul, Minnesota



ESOL Program: English Language Learning

Website: www.spps.org/ABE

Reach: Urban

Number of ESOL students served per year: 3,375

Student population: Immigrants and refugees who speak 51 home languages, including Somali, Spanish, Amharic, Oromo, Hmong, Karen, Arabic, French, Tigrinya, Vietnamese, and Burmese

Contact for more information:

Renada Rutmanis, Adult Basic Education Supervisor, Renada.Rutmanis@spps.org

Program Description

The Ronald M. Hubbs Center for Lifelong Learning (Hubbs Center) is the ABE (Adult Basic Education) program of the Saint Paul Public Schools' Community Education Department. Hubbs Center works together with area community-based organizations as part of the [Saint Paul Community Literacy Consortium](#), a collaboration of agencies throughout Saint Paul that provide literacy services to adults. Hubbs Center is located in the heart of Saint Paul's Frogtown–Midway communities, historically a port of entry for Southeast Asian immigrants and refugees.

Hubbs Center offers a full range of educational opportunities, from early English literacy to GED (General Educational Development) classes, post-secondary bridge programs, career navigation, distance education and digital literacy supports, and (usually) free childcare for students. During the pandemic, classes meet either four or six hours per week in remote live instruction and integrated use of an online distance learning curriculum, such as MobyMax. Success with this model has been supported by the center's past focus on developing robust distance and blended learning opportunities. Like all programs in Minnesota, Saint Paul ABE is supported by healthy state investment that surpasses its Federal WIOA (Workforce Investment Opportunity Act) II grant. A small percentage of the center's funding comes from the private sector and individuals. The average annual budget is \$4 million.

Notable, Innovative Practices

Most notably, Hubbs Center re-evaluated use of staff time to meet the needs for delivering instruction remotely. Instead of having teachers provide direct live instruction for 20 hours a week, class time was reduced in half and each class was matched with an online distance learning curriculum. This guiding strategy freed up staff to work in new ways better suited to providing instruction completely online.

First, teachers collaborated and used the time to experiment with new approaches and digital resources, finding new and creative ways to deliver mobile-friendly instruction. Second, teachers had more engagement with the orientation process and onboarding of students into online learning. Third, key staff were given time to exclusively focus on the digital learning needs of both staff and students, offering “push-in” digital literacy support so that everyone could work more effectively online. This has resulted in a 50 percent increase in student time logged in online distance education — for an average of 10,000 hours per month in distance learning during the pandemic, on top of the attendance time logged for the remote live instruction.

Remote ESOL Program Design

As described above, the entire program has taken a hybrid approach, pairing remote live instruction with distance education defined by independent learning in online comprehensive curricula. A curriculum committee constantly evaluates new options to ensure best fit with the levels of ESOL classes offered at Hubbs. There are currently 13 different mobile friendly distance learning platforms in use, including Edmentum, ReadTheory, MobyMax, Khan Academy, ReadWorks, USA Learns, Vocabulary A–Z, MyEnglishLab, MyMathLab and CommonLit. In addition, the remote live classes employ a wide range of digital tools to make the class more interactive — breakout rooms, Pear Deck, Desmos, SeeSaw, and Jamboard.

Volunteers provide support in class and meet with learners in tutoring sessions online. Students who cannot commit to remote live instruction each week enroll in coached distance education. Each distance education coach works with 75 students, who learn independently using one of the approved distance education curricula. Coaches monitor learner progress in the online curriculum and check in with students periodically to support connection and engagement. This coaching model has boosted engagement in distance education — 50 percent who enroll



are engaging with the online curriculum platforms monthly, where previously only 30 percent had activity in a given month.

Many of the digital resources mentioned above are linked from Google Classroom, teacher-created websites, and learning management systems, including Seesaw and PowerSchool. As a whole, this collection of digital learning resources allows for a mix of synchronous instruction, coaching, and independent learning opportunities that meet the majority of learners' needs.

Student Onboarding and Persistence Supports

The new 100 percent remote intake model begins with a link to a registration form created using Qualtrics and posted on the Hubbs Center website; many ESOL learners have family help them with the intake form online. Five intake staff, which includes multilinguals proficient in Hmong and Spanish, are also available to help do intake by phone. After the form is completed, students get emailed instructions for remote placement testing. Because of the State of Minnesota ABE COVID exemption freeing programs from previously mandatory CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems) and TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education), Hubbs uses ReadTheory for reading placement and MobyMax for custom assessments for lower-level ESOL and math. The multilingual texting app TalkingPoints is used to communicate with learners through the intake process.

After their assessment, students receive training in essential technologies for learning at Hubbs. This orientation focuses on getting students comfortable with Google Meet and the distance learning platform they will use with their class. Four orientation staff, including teachers, offer these remote orientation sessions prior to the start of each managed enrollment session. Hubbs adopted a month-long managed enrollment approach to make it easier for teachers to welcome new students into their classes. Because teachers are trained to run orientation sessions, they are able to support student persistence using essential technologies students need to participate in learning.

Students are given access to their distance learning platforms before starting synchronous classes so they can get started right away. The goal of the intake process is to give students several points of contact so that they feel connected to the program and have multiple people to reach out to when needed. The tech tools used to onboard students and get them attending remote classes also make it easy and efficient for teachers to communicate more regularly with students, pushing out messages to their phones or emails with the apps they are already using. (For instance, Google Classroom will email students automatically when their teacher has provided feedback on an assignment.)

To support persistence after orientation, teachers use Remind or WhatsApp to communicate. Additionally, Hubbs created a student engagement committee that looks at ways of increasing

“fun” in the classroom, makes use of breakout rooms for increased opportunities to communicate in smaller groups, and holds asynchronous Kahoot competitions for distance education students.

In some cases, Hubbs has seen higher levels of persistence remotely than it had in person, and sometimes from students who had been struggling in in-person classes. While some students faced challenges with the online environment, others who had previously faced challenges with childcare, health, transportation, work schedules, etc., found it much easier to attend online. Others had fewer distractions learning from home.

Instruction

The hybrid approach used throughout the Hubbs Center is marked by its focus on digital literacy skill development — for both teachers and students. Because students encounter a diverse range of ed tech, they need to become flexible users of digital technologies. Hubbs Center accomplishes this by doing “push-in” digital literacy support in each class nearly every week. A digital literacy lead teacher spends 75 minutes teaching relevant skills through demonstration and instructive activities. This takes pressure off the content teacher to come up with instructional activities supporting digital literacy, gives students some explicit instruction to build computer skills, and builds skills of the content teachers who are able to learn from the digital literacy lead.

For example, in a lesson on using browsers, the digital literacy specialist teacher may suggest installing and using the free and safe Adblock browser extension to prevent distracting ads. He will demonstrate how to search for Adblock, install it, and use it by showing a webpage when the ads are allowed, and again when the ads are blocked. Screenshots on the process and/or a link to a how-to screencast are included in the slides, which are always shared with learners via the teacher’s website or virtual classroom for review or for those who couldn’t attend class that day. For mobile browsers, the teacher shows how to use Reader View, which is an ad-blocking feature built into Safari on Apple mobile devices.

“It’s important for the class teacher to see some of those things and to see what their students are capable of doing. I mean, maybe they weren’t doing some of that in their instruction, but then Adam or one of the other teachers comes in and shows the students how to do it and the teacher kind of gets pulled along with that as well.”

—Cathy Grady, Hubbs Center Assistant Supervisor

Digital Learning Supports

Hubbs made the most of several strategies to support digital devices and wi-fi access. Staff members helped students take part in a Ramsey County CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act initiative providing Tech Paks (refurbished computers and wi-fi access) to many students. They also were able to loan iPads and hot spots through Saint Paul Public Schools. In addition, they received nearly 50 computers through private donations.

Hubbs made instruction as mobile-friendly as possible to improve the experience for students attending on their phones and, as mentioned above, provided push-in digital literacy instruction in classes. Staff also held two stand-alone remotely delivered computer basics classes. Finally, they collected online “how-to” resources (how to download Google Meet on your phone, how to update your browser, how to make a Gmail account, etc.) in one spot for easier sharing with students and teachers.

Sample class agenda

ELL Speaking/Listening

Home April March February January December: Climate Change September October November: Voting and Black H...

Derick Chauvin's Trial

4/19-4/22

Monday, April 19, we will do:

- Check in - How was your weekend?
- Today is the last day of Derek Chauvin Trial. What are your thoughts?
- Vocabulary for Chauvin's Trial

Vocabulary for Chauvin's Trial:

Use the vocabulary to help talk about the trial and what

- is happening in the city of Minneapolis.
- [Click here](#) to go to the vocabulary

Chauvin's Trial

charged with a crime

Support for Students' Basic Needs

Hubbs Center offers access to food support, information about obtaining unemployment benefits, health care, and rental assistance. These services are provided by a part-time counselor who meets online with individual students and who shares relevant information with teachers. Hubbs Center also posts information about support services on its popular Facebook page. In addition, Hubbs Center is proactive in acknowledging hardship and stress caused by the pandemic, the racial reckoning motivated by the killing of George Floyd, and the attack on the U.S. Capitol building. Hubbs creates curricula for teachers to use to help students stay informed and safe.

Support for Teachers and Staff

When schools first closed in March, 2020, all staff made a personal work plan, which included sections on supporting students, building program capacity, and completing personal professional development (PD). Staff were able to target PD that was of high need for them, from working on their own technical skills to learning more about distance learning platforms and synchronous online instruction. In the first week the center reopened, Hubbs offered a "choose your own adventure PD," where both internal and external recordings of short videos were shared in one place and staff had three hours to spend looking at ones that were most relevant to them. Since then, staff have attended several statewide PD offerings and also participated in internal professional learning opportunities. The flexibility of online learning has allowed them to increase the number of PD days, including time for professional learning communities and team meetings. Overall, they find that it has been easier to offer more differentiated PD offerings in a remote environment.

Partnerships

In addition to the partnership that resulted in access to devices for students, the Hubbs Center credits an innovative and flexible state agency for its success. The Minnesota Department of Education, Adult Basic Education, offers access to state-funded distance learning platforms and has provided leadership with key policy shifts in response to the pandemic. Following OCTAE (Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education) memoranda published in Spring, 2020, the state offered an exemption from standardized testing, paused contact-hour and proxy contact-hour counting, and offered frequent, highly relevant and user-friendly professional development opportunities.

Leadership

Renada Rutmanis, the program leader, gave teachers flexibility to be creative and try new things. She created a curriculum committee for planning for hybrid instruction now and in the future. Teachers were given extra prep time, extra PD time, and had fewer synchronous instructional hours. Teachers were also able to purchase licenses for platforms they needed or wanted to try. Hubbs leadership also upgraded staff technology for home use as needed.

Indicators of Effectiveness

Like many programs in the U.S., the Hubbs Center has not been able to pre- and post-test students on TABE and CASAS, so staff cannot measure level gains. However, progress scores from their current placement and progress assessments in MobyMax indicate grade-level growth between August, 2020, and the end of February, 2021.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of the organization's programming is demonstrated in the persistence by enrollment hours. Between July, 2020, and the end of February, 2021, Hubbs Center served 1,742 ESOL students; 1,219 students (70 percent) reached 12 hours; 745 (43 percent) reached 40 hours; 321 (18 percent) reached 100 hours; and 104 (6 percent) reached 200 hours. In addition, three ESOL students earned GEDs and 24 students passed at least one proctored Northstar Digital Literacy assessment, as a whole earning 73 Northstar Digital Literacy certificates in that time period. Most impressively, nine students logged more than 250 hours in distance learning platforms between September, 2020, and the end of February, 2021, earning a refurbished laptop through a distance education incentive program funded by private donations.

Though enrollment numbers are not on pace with previous years, the sharp increase in hours logged in independent distance learning bodes well for the enrollment in the future. Through its innovative response to the pandemic, Hubbs has laid in place sustainable distance and remote instruction models that will offer more flexible options for students in the years to come. Indeed, results from a recent student survey showed many students want to stay online even after in person classes can fully resume.

REMOTE ESOL CASE STUDY:

Resilience, Health Literacy and English for Parents

Literacy Partners
New York, NY



ESOL Program: English for Parents

Website: www.literacypartners.org/our-classes

Reach: Urban

Number of ESOL students served per year: 200 parents, plus their young children

Student population:

Parents of young children (ages 0–5), who primarily speak Spanish, Arabic, or Chinese

Contact for more information:

Lynn Clark, Chief Program Officer, lynnc@literacypartners.org

Photo: Antonia, English for Parents student, and her daughter Alexa

Program Description

Literacy Partners is a community-based organization in New York City. Its mission is to strengthen families through a two-generation approach to education. Designed to provide parents and caregivers with the tools they need to create success for themselves and a better future for the children in their care, Literacy Partners' programs strive to break the cycle of poverty, improve job prospects, and close the achievement gap for children before they begin school.

The organization offers beginning to high-intermediate levels of thematic ESOL instruction on an open enrollment basis through multiple, flexible learning options. Literacy Partners did not operate a distance education program prior to March, 2020, at which time it became fully remote. The average annual enrollment is 200 students. Literacy Partners has chosen to be 100 percent privately funded because the terms of government contracts might constrain the program model and cut out those students most in need of support. The annual program budget is around \$420,000.

Notable, Innovative Practices

English for Parents is a partnership between Literacy Partners and health providers, with a strong emphasis on health literacy, access to health care and social services, early child development, and school readiness. The program uses a blend of live online and on-demand digital content that helps immigrant parents of young children (ages 0–5) to navigate health and educational systems, while engaging in authentic language production with a variety of native speakers.

The student journey often begins with a health care encounter where health provider partners have adapted their intake process to include a “social determinants of health” screening that identifies English language learning needs. Families are then referred to Literacy Partners for online ESOL classes. These classes are supported by a network of student interns from local universities who act as “health navigators” to connect families to the health and social services they need. Students are further supported by a large pool of volunteers who serve as small-group and one-on-one speaking partners both in and outside of class time.

Literacy Partners uses a resilience-based, trauma-informed approach that aims to foster the “five C’s” of resilience within a remote format: competence; confidence; community; contribution; and critical thinking. The organization has successfully kept and even deepened its approach and thematic focus in the new remote model.

Remote ESOL Program Design

“We had to stop thinking about the past and think about what fits this [remote learning] environment while holding onto what drives outcomes. We reinvented our program from scratch.”

—Anthony Tassi, CEO

In response to the COVID pandemic, the program morphed from in-person classes that met 8–10 hours a week for 36 weeks a year to a fully remote model with classes meeting only 6–8 hours a week on Zoom and WhatsApp. Program designers started with a small class pilot to get proof of concept and then increased classes and teachers over time. They also prototyped use of WhatsApp with former participants and used volunteers to increase opportunities for students to speak. Currently the program has eight online classes that serve more than 200 ESOL students.

The program design is driven by flexible learning options that leverage more than 100 volunteers, who reinforce and supplement instruction by teachers with formal training. The primary components are:

- Teacher-facilitated live online classes twice a week via Zoom;
- Breakout room discussions facilitated by volunteers during the last 30 minutes of class;
- One-on-one volunteer speaking partners by phone or Zoom outside of class;
- Online vocabulary tools for students to work independently or in volunteer-facilitated small groups;
- Weekly Power of Families workshops that bring together all classes to watch and discuss episodes of [We Are New York](#) videos and other media that cover parent-focused topics such as childcare, school readiness, and hospital visits.

Four times a year, all participating families receive a home library of children's books that are culturally representative and integrated into classroom instruction.

Student Onboarding and Persistence Supports

The program uses the coordinated care network [UniteNYC](#) to receive referrals for classes from health providers and to refer families to the social services they need. Most students are referred by health provider partners and come in through the program's [multilingual website](#).

Currently, eight student interns from New York University, CityTech University, and City University of New York are trained as health navigators to do intake and follow-up support with individual families. These interns conduct intake by phone, and pre-screen prospective students for eligibility (parents of young children) and availability (classes are during the day). They also survey students about social determinants of health, such as stable housing, adequate food, technology, and feeling safe, to ensure that students start out classes with the support they need to learn effectively.

The program pre- and post-tests students using BEST Plus to track language proficiency, as well as pre- and post-surveys to gauge increases in time and frequency of reading to their child, health literacy, well-child visits, and parenting efficacy.

The primary persistence strategies are the “five C’s” of resilience:

- Building **community** inside and outside of class using multiple strategies: 1) opening and closing circles during class; 2) WhatsApp chats to share class information and photos from home; and 3) health navigators who follow up with students who miss class to make sure they have the resources they need.
- Boosting students' **confidence** using multiple strategies, including a shared teaching model that brings students into weekly contact with native English speakers who are not their teacher.
- Providing outside of class opportunities to build **competence** through independent practice, small-group vocabulary sessions, and one-on-one speaking partners.
- Creating opportunities for students to **contribute** to each other's knowledge during breakout room discussions and Power of Families workshops.
- Incorporating vocabulary and media that prompt **critical thinking** and help parents navigate the health and educational systems that contribute to the well-being of their child.

Instruction

“Connection is most important — then engagement and differentiation.”

—Michael Kengmana, ESOL Teacher

Teachers in the program developed a two-semester curriculum that is based on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) theory and imbeds academic language in two areas: health literacy and early childhood literacy. The program aims to help parents develop the confidence and the competence to use English to navigate the world around them, including educational and health care systems. During the first semester, teachers incorporate child development and parenting topics to help parents and caregivers boost children's early reading, social emotional growth, and school readiness. In the second semester, teachers focus on health literacy and well-child visits. While the health and early literacy curriculum was in place prior to the pivot online, the move to Zoom-based instruction, with breakout rooms that leveraged the growing volunteer pool, strengthened the communicative approach and increased opportunities for authentic language production with native speakers.

Classes use a trauma-informed approach that builds community and connection between students. Every class begins with an opening circle where each student gets a chance to check in and say something in English without being corrected. Next, teachers use compelling text or media to help students build their competence listening, reading, writing, and speaking about that day's topic. The sessions are structured with incremental scaffolding to help students in the process of becoming confident speakers. For the last 30 minutes of class, students take what they have learned into breakout rooms, where they work with a volunteer speaking partner to practice speaking and listening to each other in English. Classes end with a closing circle that connects that day's lesson to their children, and a challenge to share photos on WhatsApp of themselves reading and interacting with their child.

Power of Families workshops bring students from all eight classes together once a week — children and other family members are welcome — to watch and discuss an episode of the *We Are New York* video series or other compelling media. Breakout discussions take place in home-language affinity groups or in English, facilitated by a volunteer. The ultimate purpose of these weekly workshops is to provide a space where parents are contributing to each other's knowledge and thinking critically about how they can navigate the health and educational systems. Students can also participate in two additional hours of practice: one-on-one speaking partners with a volunteer outside of class time; and individual or small-group practice sessions using online vocabulary resources such as Voxy.

Digital Learning Supports

Prior to moving online, students were polled as to their technology needs. The majority of students were able to quickly pivot to Zoom and WhatsApp, but many still do not have a stable internet connection. Participants with school-age children are provided information about computers available through the New York Department of Education and interns help facilitate wireless discounts through the LifeLine Program.

Support for Students' Basic Needs

At the beginning of each term, staff administer a social determinants of health survey and the student intern health navigators follow up on the needs it reveals. In the Fall, 2020, cohort,

60 percent of students were food-insecure and 40 percent were housing-insecure. Working with community partners, staff organized a pop-up event in a Family Health Center parking lot to hand out bags of food, school supplies, and curated book bundles to more than 100 families in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, one of the neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID-19.

Support for Teachers and Staff

“The teachers have worked hard to align their curriculum while keeping their students connected to each other and the resources they need.”

—Lynn Clark, Chief Program Officer

The program fosters a culture of professional learning. Staff meet weekly to support each other and connect resources for their students through updates from the program director and volunteer coordinator. Teachers have also created a virtual community of practice, where they observe each other teaching, another activity made easier by the remote format.

Partnerships

Strong partnerships are a defining feature of the program. Health care providers, universities, and UniteNYC, a coordinated care platform, are primary partners who support students through direct referrals. Although English for Parents had a strong place-based partnership in place with NYU Langone Health, the move online expanded the network to include New York-Presbyterian Hospital, The Child Center of New York, and Public Health Solutions. Literacy Partners has formal memoranda of understanding with health providers and the program director communicates regularly with the designated points of contact.

Leadership

When the pandemic hit, program leadership decided to pause classes and take the time to redesign and pilot the remote program. This process engaged both teachers and former participants. Staff came together under the leadership of a new chief program officer, who was tasked to create a model that would keep the “five C’s” of resilience, while reinventing the program for an online format. This included leveraging interns and volunteers to support students and increase opportunities for students to speak. By bringing down the number of teacher contact hours, the program was able to double the number of classes and meet the growing number of referrals from health providers. The move online has increased the linguistic and geographic diversity of the classes as well as expanded the range of students, with almost half of the classes serving the lowest levels of English language acquisition. Program leaders actively continue to cultivate organizational partnerships, raising funds from the private sector to fund the entire program.

Indicators of Effectiveness

“Our students are really thriving in the remote model. The online model enables our interns and volunteers to be present for every single class. Transportation and childcare issues, for example, go away for people.”

—Anthony Tassi, CEO

In spite of having cut hours of direct instruction in half as part of the transition to the remote model, student persistence, engagement in classes, and learning gains have remained high: 63 percent of students made +1 level gain as measured by BEST Plus as compared to 60 percent the year before. Notably, the pool of volunteers increased from one to 100 when classes went remote, which made more English-speaking practice time available to students. Currently the program has a waiting list of more than 100 students.

“It’s complicated when you’re a parent. I’m afraid to leave my kids in others’ care. Alexa depends 100 percent on me now, so remote learning works well with me. Also, we immigrants work long hours so it’s hard to make it to class in person. With online classes, there’s more flexibility. I can study in the train and the bus with my phone. I’m in the Voxy program [small group vocabulary practice]. It’s very good. I also participate in a conversation class with a volunteer [speaking partners] and in online ESL classes with a parent group on Fridays [Power of Families]. This program has exceeded my expectations.”

—Antonia, English for Parents student

REMOTE ESOL CASE STUDY:

Independent and Peer Learning

Literacy Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania



ESOL Program: English Language Learning and Family Literacy

Website: www.literacypittsburgh.org

Reach: Urban/Suburban

Number of ESOL students served per year: 1,484

Student population:

Immigrants and refugees, most of whom speak Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, French, Kiswahili, Nepali, Portuguese, Russian or Spanish

Contact for more information:

Sara Cole, Instructor and Digital Literacy Fellow,
scole@literacypittsburgh.org

“Better lives through learning. Literacy Pittsburgh believes that all people deserve the opportunity to learn in a place where their strengths are celebrated; and, as a leader, they embrace the responsibility to innovate, model best practices, and grow.”²

Program Description

Founded as an all-volunteer organization in the late 1970s by Mary Yardumian, who taught students to read at her kitchen table, Literacy Pittsburgh (formerly Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council) has been recognized as a national leader in adult and family literacy since its incorporation in 1982. Literacy Pittsburgh has earned state and national awards for the strength of its programs and administrative oversight; and is the largest provider of adult basic education in Allegheny and Beaver Counties. Last year, nearly 5,000 people were served by Literacy Pittsburgh’s programs. Over the years, offerings have expanded to meet the community’s broader learning needs — from GED preparation to English Language learning to digital literacy and workplace skills. In Allegheny County alone, there are about 54,000 adults who either don’t have a high school credential or don’t have the adequate English language skills³. Classroom, small-group, and one-to-one instruction are offered free of charge. A stable staff of nearly 50 with extensive training and experience in adult education and ESOL, supported by nearly 500 volunteer tutors, creates an outstanding learning environment for students, grounded in best practices, innovation, and continuous program improvement.

Notable, Innovative Practices

In response to the pandemic, Literacy Pittsburgh created two YouTube channels to support remote learning: [Literacy Pittsburgh English Class](#) and [Family Literacy Storytime](#). The channels contain instructional videos accessible to students on a familiar and free platform that is accessible from any device and with low literacy skills. The videos can be used as part of synchronous online, hybrid, or face-to-face class or independently, as a supplement for students to practice English language and citizenship skills. Literacy Pittsburgh also developed an optional “class with no teacher,” where learners meet with peers to practice English and maintain community at a distance. This has been a popular offering, allowing learners to socialize, share information, get advice and offer mutual support.

The Digital Literacy Fellow is a new staff position responsible for increasing technology use across the agency and making sure the organization and the staff are up to date on the different resources available to support teaching and learning at a distance.

Remote ESOL Program Design

“YouTube channels give learners the freedom to choose what they want to learn and when they want to learn.”

—Nicole Mannino Johnson, Special Projects Manager

In response to the COVID pandemic, teachers brainstormed ways to remain connected and provide support and educational programming to their students. Remembering that their learners like videos and frequently use YouTube to access information, they decided to try it as

a content-delivery tool. Using a projector and their cellphones, they started to record short videos, upload them to YouTube, and share them with their learners. After recruiting other teachers to make more videos, they quickly had [a collection of videos on YouTube to support distance learning](#). This adaptation to the challenges brought by the pandemic took place even before they started using Zoom for instruction.

Students responded immediately to the YouTube videos. The platform is free and starts playing on any device, whether it is a phone, a tablet, a Chromebook, or a laptop. Another convenient feature is that it requires minimal digital literacy skills. In the family literacy classes, the videos proved useful, helping parents to teach relevant content to their children, especially while the stay-at-home order was in place. The videos also added flexibility to accommodate the needs of adult learners. Even if they cannot attend the Zoom class, they can still use the videos and watch them when it is convenient for their families: at breakfast, at bedtime, or during family time.

Although replicating peer learning in a classroom setting is hard in the virtual world, Literacy Pittsburgh was not ready to ignore that important part of learning. To incentivize connection and peer-to-peer learning, the program implemented synchronous online classes with no teacher. In these classes, learners meet to share information, learn from one another, practice conversation skills, and offer mutual support.

Student Onboarding & Persistence Supports

Currently, onboarding is completed virtually to comply with COVID-19 regulations. Literacy Pittsburgh staff onboard students by contacting them via phone or email. The staff helps learners access an online orientation module on [Thinkific](#), a cloud-based learning management system. If learners are not able to navigate the online orientation independently, Literacy Pittsburgh offers sessions via Zoom. During orientation, students complete paperwork and testing. All the organization's orientation forms are on [JotForm](#), an online form-builder that integrates with its data system. If learners are using mobile devices, they often need to share documents via [PandaDoc](#), a user-friendly method of sharing forms for signature.

Once learners have completed orientation, they are connected with a coordinator, who places each student in an English, Citizenship, or College and Career Readiness class or with a one-on-one tutor. If students are job seekers, they are connected with the Career Transitions team. Students meet one-on-one with the transitions manager, who helps them explore career opportunities and identify next steps.

Literacy Pittsburgh has employed a flexible strategy by using and adapting various tools to support enrollment and orientation for learners with diverse devices and connectivity needs, and to accommodate multiple digital fluency levels. By partnering with agencies in the community that can connect learners to wraparound services in a timely way, the program has been able to support learners with needs beyond accessing the virtual class.

Instruction

"The videos are not exactly a replication of what we did in class before, but an opportunity to review, get practice with pronunciation, and develop other skills."

—Nicole Mannino Johnson, Special Projects Manager

Students meet in live Zoom classes; before or after class, the instructor sends each student a link for a specific video to watch, which follows up on what was done in class. Within the video, the teachers who created them ask students to practice speaking, listening, reading, or writing. The students will do the activities proposed and text or WhatsApp the instructors the questions, recordings with answers, or images of written exercises. They have never encountered the need for a teacher to guide a learner on how to use YouTube videos. Just by sending a specific link for a particular video that a teacher wants students to watch on that day, with the content the teacher wants them to practice, is enough.

In the post-pandemic world, videos will continue to be a handy tool for learners to practice outside of the classroom, allowing them to review if they miss a session or get more practice if they feel the need. Currently, Literacy Pittsburgh is producing around one to two videos a week for its ESOL classes. Teachers send the videos ahead of time for learners to get familiar with and preview what will be covered in class that week. They then use the Zoom session to review, see what students have retained, practice applying words and concepts, etc. Additionally, the channels now have playlists organized by level and sometimes by teacher, so, depending on the learners' levels, teachers can customize content and borrow content from different playlists as needed by the class or to support specific learner needs.

Digital Learning Supports

Literacy Pittsburgh secured a grant from BNY Mellon Foundation that paid for Chromebooks, which allowed them to launch a tech lending library to ensure students in need of devices could successfully learn remotely. Literacy Pittsburgh then worked through partners to secure internet connectivity for their learners. Through the Carnegie Libraries of Pittsburgh and Immigrant Services and Connections (ISAC) agency, they were able to help learners get Comcast essentials and hotspots. The hotspots could be kept until the end of the school year, which has now been extended until the end of summer 2021. Support from other partners also quickly came in, with other library systems asking how they could support learners and offering additional hotspots for any students that needed them. The Whitehall Public Library and the Baldwin Public Library also provided hotspots.

Beyond connectivity and devices, Literacy Pittsburgh also worked to ensure teachers implicitly or explicitly teach and develop students' digital literacy skills within their class. One teacher worked with a group of advanced learners over Zoom to create a podcast. In the family literacy program, explicit digital literacy instruction is specifically geared to help students navigate issues with their children's school and support their children's virtual learning. Some examples of practical digital literacy skills that have been covered include learning how to add an attachment in an email or send a basic email to their children's teachers.

Support for Students' Basic Needs

Partnerships have been instrumental in ensuring learners' access to resources in the community. Many of these partnerships existed before the pandemic, but during the pandemic, those partnerships became critical. Literacy Pittsburgh supports immigrants and refugees through a partnership with [Immigrant Services and Connections](#), a cross-agency partnership that connects clients to a full range of community services and offers bilingual navigation. In addition, the [Career Accelerator Program](#) through the Jewish Family and Community Services (JFCS) has brought career assistance into Literacy Pittsburgh's classes. This fast-paced class helps students get a GED (General Educational Development diploma) very quickly, while offering career exploration and guidance to either continue to postsecondary education or apply for jobs. Literacy Pittsburgh and JFCS also offer the Immigrant Workforce Program, which assists students

interested in careers in health care to work on the language and job skills they need to enter the field. Literacy Pittsburgh considers this offering a big help for learners seeking to secure jobs.

Support for Teachers and Staff

Prior to the beginning of the pandemic, a new position was created to ensure teachers, staff, and the organization are prepared for the digital literacy challenges that the pandemic made even more evident. The Digital Literacy Fellow is responsible for increasing technology use across the agency and making sure the organization and the staff are up to date on the different resources available to support teaching and learning at a distance. The Digital Literacy Fellow shares knowledge and supports the exploration of new technology tools to improve instruction at a distance and infuse more digital literacy practice into existing classes.

There are both required trainings as well as voluntary professional development opportunities through the agency organized by the Digital Literacy Fellow. Professional development options include peer exploration and elective coaching. The [Teaching the Skills That Matter](#) framework and lesson plan toolkit are shared with the teachers as one of many approaches.

Sometimes the sessions are fluid conversations about things teachers would like to do in class or questions they have about specific tools. In this case, teachers receive suggestions and opportunities to explore tools that could help them address their concerns. In other instances, coaching is customized to cover specific topics, such as how to best utilize breakout rooms and other features in Zoom or how to go about teaching a word-processing application in tandem with English language skills. The Digital Literacy Fellow also offers a variety of workshops for volunteer teachers, where they [learn and practice using different tools](#) to support remote teaching and make it more interactive and effective.

Leadership

“We didn’t want to let our students down.”

–Caitlin Griffiths, Director of Child and Family Programs

Teachers were the first responders. They called students every day during the first weeks of the pandemic, making sure they had what they needed, ensuring connections to support services were being made. Teachers drove to people’s houses to deliver Chromebooks, and as teachers learned of students losing their jobs and not qualifying for food assistance, they picked up foods from the local food pantry and delivered the goods to students’ homes. They delivered supplies to students, including masks, gloves, and other items students couldn’t get any other way. The YouTube project was also born from the teachers’ commitment to not letting their students down. They recorded their first YouTube videos as the school was shutting down because of the pandemic, recruited other teachers, and improved their equipment and skills to create better quality videos that could support their students’ needs. Teachers were empowered to take risks, but most importantly, they shared common values.

Indicators of Effectiveness

Although validation of the effectiveness of the YouTube channels is needed, the channels had 272,000 views and 2,000 subscribers as of March, 2021. According to learners themselves, the channels are effective, with many reporting passing scores and accomplishing their learning goals.

Comments

Comments on "Citizenship N400 Sample Interview: Before the Interview, Eligibility and Putting under Oath"

Highlighted comment

Cing S Huai 2 weeks ago
Thank you teacher Nicole, I love the way you teach, It's help me to understand and easy to remember.
👍 🗨️ ❤️ REPLY

C

carmen alcaraz 1 month ago
Hi teacher Nicole I loved your videos, I have my interview next month please share more information about interviews, thanks God bless you 😊
👍 🗨️ ❤️ REPLY

A

Abdi Mahdi 2 months ago
Hi teacher Nicole I passed my interview yesterday Thank you so much for your help.
👍 🗨️ ❤️ REPLY

[View reply from Literacy Pittsburgh English Class](#)

Comments

Comments on "Citizenship interview words and questions: N400 Part 12: 45-50 Attachment to the Constitution"

S

Highlighted comment

Sabitra Bista 5 days ago
Thank you so much your citizenship video's help me a lot I passed 😊
👍 🗨️ ❤️ REPLY

[View 2 replies from Literacy Pittsburgh English Class and ot](#)

Bhushan Prabha 5 months ago

Your videos very useful 🙌 😊
👍 1 🗨️ ❤️ REPLY

Comments from Students on the Citizenship Instructional Videos

² <https://www.literacypittsburgh.org/mission/>

³ <https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2020/09/02/literacy-pittsburgh-in-need-of-volunteers-for-adult-education-programs/>

Remote ESOL Case Studies: Literacy Pittsburgh · 31

REMOTE ESOL CASE STUDY:

Fully Remote Workplace ESOL

English at Work, National Immigration Forum
Washington, D.C.



ESOL Program: English at Work

Website: <https://immigrationforum.org/article/english-at-work>

Reach: National program with sites across the country

Number of ESOL students served per year: 500–550

Student population: Immigrant/refugee/asylum-seeking incumbent workers

Contact for more information:

Ana Negoescu, Assistant Vice President, Integration Programs,
anegoescu@immigrationforum.org

Photo: *English at Work students*

Program Description

English at Work is a national initiative that offers industry-contextualized English language training that helps companies in urban, suburban, and rural communities build stronger career pathways for their employees. The National Immigration Forum (Forum), a non-profit organization founded in 1982 to advocate for the value of immigrants and immigration to our nation, created the program. The initiative, now referred to as English at Work, is part of the Forum's New American Workforce program, which has engaged more than 400 companies that recognize the value of their immigrant workforce and partnered with them to offer tailored

services that meet the demands of operations and individual workers, resulting in contextualized training mindful of the needs of not only workers, but also employers' operational considerations. Since the inception, 70 cohorts have participated in the program, made up of 1,500 employees. Almost 550 workers are served per year.

English at Work has been implemented with employers in eight states. The program is currently focusing its work in California, home to more than 5 million limited-English-proficient workers, according to the U.S. Census. The program is rapidly scaling and expects to serve 1,000 workers per year and reach the milestone of 6,000 workers in five years. The program has multilingual staff to support its work, including capacity in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, French, and others, which reflects the larger first-language groups of participants. English at Work offered distance education/blended learning well before March, 2020, launching in 2016. The program was designed as such and uses a unique instructional model consisting of 40 percent in-person instruction and 60 percent self-paced online modules accessible on desktop and mobile devices. The program is free to the student and is funded partly through employer investment (cost per student and number of students). The Forum has developed a strategic plan to diversify its funding model and created a tiered pricing model that incorporates employer investment and considering what the market would bear.

Notable, Innovative Practices

English at Work is a national initiative — designed for scaling — that offers industry-contextualized English language training that helps companies in urban, suburban, and rural communities build stronger career pathways for their employees. English at Work uses a unique instructional model consisting of 40 percent class group instruction — initially in-person but now also virtual/remote — and 60 percent self-paced online modules accessible on desktop and mobile devices. One notable practice is peer-to-peer student tech support — often in shared first languages — and collaborative problem-solving in technology-rich environments. When a learner, for instance, has an issue with audio or unmuting, then another learner will jump in to help. A second notable practice is providing a technical support person to every instructor during class, so that when the instructor is not able to focus on or solve a technical issue, this person jumps in right away.

Remote ESOL Program Design

English at Work started with Walmart Foundation funding to design and pilot blended, retail-contextualized English training to help workers develop their worksite vocabulary and communication skills. Services are offered to limited-English-proficient immigrant employees at low-beginning through high-intermediate ESOL levels. English at Work does not offer advanced ESOL, nor does it offer ESOL to employees who do not have or have only limited literacy skills in their first language. English at Work uses a unique instructional model consisting of 40 percent in-person instruction and 60 percent self-paced online modules accessible on desktop and mobile devices. Each site is partnered with a local community college or adult education program. This initial program delivery model and instructional approach have evolved into a fully remote model, which has been useful to secure continuity of services during COVID-19. In this model, 40 percent instruction is live remote classroom instruction, where the instructor and students connect live once a week, and 60 percent of learning is anywhere, anytime, independent, online learning. The fully remote model is helping the program to scale, minimize costs, and reach workers in wider and more remote geographies.

Student Onboarding and Persistence Supports

Student recruitment and onboarding are greatly facilitated by the worksite. The partnership agreement with employers is to provide ESOL learning opportunities to employees. Company leaders encourage employees to participate, welcome students at the beginning of the program,

and recognize them with a worksite-based graduation. As online learning is on the students' own time, onboarding involves “behind-the-scenes” guidance and assistance from program staff — called the help desk — essential to increasing students' success with the technology. Instructors assist students with logging on to the learning management system (LMS) platform and learning to navigate the online modules. Program staff are proactive about providing support, doing individual outreach to get students on board. This simple step and initial outreach allow the team to catch any issues in advance of the first day of classes and to build a communication line/relationship with learners so that they feel comfortable asking for help and know who to contact. In addition to a user guide and technology orientation, program staff provide live support before, during, and after the remote sessions to ensure students are successfully onboarded and to support their persistence. Support focuses on making sure students — and staff — understand platform vocabulary and functions so they can successfully navigate, independently troubleshoot common issues, and actively participate in the virtual classroom.

Instructors monitor students' weekly activities online and track assessment results and topics that need reinforcement. At sites where computer labs are available, instructors use these labs to help students troubleshoot before and after classes. English at Work, by design, integrates digital literacy skills development into instruction and activities, including development of key vocabulary, such as log in/log out, mute/unmute, microphone, headset, chat, and poll. One notable practice is peer-to-peer student tech support — often in shared first languages — and collaborative problem-solving in technology-rich environments. When a learner, for instance, has an issue with audio or unmuting, then another learner will jump in to help. A second notable practice is providing a technical support person to every instructor during class, so that when the instructor is not able to focus on or solve a technical issue, this person jumps in right away.

Instruction

English at Work staff are very intentional about their approach to curriculum and instructional materials design, understanding that the curriculum design process, as well as its adaptation to new sectors and modes of delivery, requires close collaboration between staff, workplace subject matter experts, and individuals with expertise in curriculum development and education technology. English at Work further includes a strong peer review process. This collaborative process ensures that the curriculum is highly customized, responds to the main learner challenges, and meets the training goals and other employer needs.

Curriculum Process Chart



English at Work staff learned that the best way to address the operational needs of employers is to engage them in ways that are not straining employer capacity. One of these ways of engaging employer representatives focuses on customizing the curricula and instruction for each industry and job function or for a particular worksite by incorporating company training materials and company-specific tools and vocabulary. Some of this work involves nimbly adapting existing, blended learning content for new contexts, using a variety of resources to contextualize activities and instructional materials, including employer feedback, job descriptions, industry standards, online forums, and employee feedback. This curriculum design process addresses the need to develop a strong base curriculum and set of tools that can be easily adapted to different sectors and modalities of instruction. In addition, it has allowed English at Work to continuously optimize online learning for mobile platforms. The curriculum has since been adapted, with input from curriculum experts at World Education, Inc., and the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education, for employers and worker students in various industries and subsectors. In the initial model, English at Work included a component of 40 percent in-person classroom instruction. As the model evolved, a 40 percent remote classroom instructional component was developed, which required instructors to rethink instructional strategies and materials.

Digital Learning Supports

The original design of English at Work offered only a desktop-accessible platform for online learning, which resulted in lower-than-expected participation online. The pilot showed the need to increase accessibility of online learning by making the platform accessible on smartphones and tablets, in addition to computers, given that almost half (46 percent) of participants had low or no computer literacy, but 100 percent indicated they use a smartphone or tablet to communicate with friends through text messaging and social media. Therefore, the Forum set out to redesign its digital modules to be smartphone- and tablet-accessible and added a digital literacy module to its curriculum. By integrating digital literacy with contextualized English instruction, the Forum adopted a best practice in adult education that builds vocabulary, provides a natural context to practice language, and develops an essential job skill. Part of the support for students is to have a robust LMS infrastructure. The Forum selected the World Education EdTech Center to conduct the audit of its LMS and online content, as well as identify the key LMI (Local Management Interface) requirements that would address the onboarding and project management challenges of the pilot year. English at Work subsequently built its own LMI that met its requirements. The requirements included: ease of management and access to student progress and assessment reporting data; adaptability/ability to easily customize interface, site content, navigation, and overall look and feel; affordability; mobile-optimized, user-friendly platform; and security and longevity, with a preference for an open-source solution. Based on these key LMS requirements, the team selected Moodle, an open-source platform to host the online learning, launch the virtual classroom, share instructor tools, and collect participant data.

Support for Students' Basic Needs

The English at Work model helps employee-students solve challenges ESOL students typically face: availability, affordability and scheduling of classes; work schedules; unfamiliarity with college systems and enrollment processes; and lack of childcare and transportation. Students can also access services and resources at the local partner community college and adult education provider campuses, including use of computer labs, as well as administrative expertise and support in program implementation and troubleshooting. The program staff's multilingual capacity has been helpful throughout. Staff seek out language support as needed to support learners who speak languages other than those for which the program has internal capacity.

Support for Teachers and Staff

English at Work has successfully recruited and employed qualified ESOL instructors — mostly community college instructors — who embrace new teaching models and are comfortable teaching in a nontraditional, off-campus classroom environment with a focus on oral communication and job competencies. English at Work provides teachers with several orientation sessions and gives them time to practice. The organization provides handbooks and clear, step-by-step directions in an instructor manual. English at Work also supports an instructor “Community of Practice” for discussing instructional challenges, sharing best and promising practices, and providing timely instructor feedback. Topics have included training delivery, curriculum, teaching techniques, technology tools, and administrative processes. The Community of Practice also builds a sense of camaraderie among instructors. English at Work further supports instructors through a fully digitized instruction repository, including a train-the-trainer module. Instructor training and support is offered exclusively via webinar to increase efficiency and minimize costs. These sessions are recorded for future reference.

Partnerships

There have been many strategic partnerships over the lifetime of the program. During the early stage of the program, the Forum partnered with Miami Dade College and the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education (CCCIE) and successfully trained nearly 1,000 retail workers at employer partners, including Publix in Miami, Kroger in Houston, and Whole Foods in the New York City area and Houston. The Forum also engaged local instruction partners — predominantly faculty at community colleges — across the country to deliver the training in each region at the worksite or on campus. The partnerships between English at Work and community colleges were critical to the successful launch, evolution, and, ultimately, the scaling and sustainability of English at Work. Many of these partnerships were facilitated by CCCIE, English at Work’s key partner.¹ A critical partner on the educational technology side was World Education, which assisted in the process of selecting an appropriate LMS and provided guidance around digital literacy issues the program wished to address. The Forum’s collaboration with these partners has translated into training excellence and provided the specialized expertise and validity of accreditation that employers value.

Leadership

English at Work was created as a result of a strategic decision made by the Board and Executive Leadership of the Forum related to two priorities: immigration reform and workforce needs; and integration and citizenship. The former focuses on shaping the policies necessary to make the U.S. immigration system meet the needs of the economy, workers, and their families. The latter focuses on creating the opportunities necessary for immigrants to succeed and contribute to the growth and prosperity of America. The Forum’s leadership sought and found the resources to pilot and subsequently grow the initiative. The program was designed well before COVID-19, and it was designed for scale. The commitment of the Forum’s leadership is further illustrated by its active participation in the national DigitalUS coalition working to ensure that all of us have foundational digital skills to thrive in work and life by 2030.

Indicators of Effectiveness

English at Work has a comprehensive approach to measuring success that focuses on more than measurable skills gains on test scores. It uses multiple data sources to look at performance, outcomes, and impact, including ongoing instructor feedback, test data from customized pre- and post-program student assessments, various standardized tests used by the community colleges and other adult learning provider partners, and employer surveys.

Some key achievements/results to date include:

For workers:

- 87 percent of students across all retail cohorts demonstrated language gains on the custom assessment developed for the retail curriculum and 42 percent demonstrated language gains on the standardized tests used (i.e., CASAS [Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems], BEST Plus, and TABE [Test of Adult Basic Education]);
- 37 percent were promoted and many had increased likelihood for promotion after participating and gaining confidence in English and digital literacy; and
- 73 percent were on track for wage increases.

For employers:

- 93 percent of students reported improved job performance;
- 89 percent of managers reported increased productivity as a result of increased language skills, increased quality of work, and reduced time per task;
- 86 percent of managers noted improved interactions with customers;
- More than 90 percent of managers indicated moderate or significant progress with employees' understanding of safety guidelines and processes (safety on the job), morale, and job satisfaction;
- 91 percent of managers reported increased employee confidence on the job;
- Between 80 percent and 90 percent of manager ratings indicated moderate or significant progress with increased self-esteem; working through language challenges; interactions with customers; participation in worksite orientations, training and workshops; and communication with colleagues and supervisors;
- Nearly 100 percent of managers would recommend to other employers to offer ESOL classes to their employees; and
- 30-day retention of employees was 100 percent.

For the program:

- After implementing the new LMS, online participation doubled from an average of 2.5 modules completed in Year 1 to an average of 5.5 modules of 6 completed, thanks to the customized mobile app.
- Course retention has been more than 80 percent across all employers.

English at Work contracted with RTI as the third-party, independent evaluator of the initiative. RTI issues an independent evaluation report after each round of training. The external evaluation focuses on measurement of learning outcomes through standard and custom pre- and post-testing; a rubric for assessing industry-specific soft skills (i.e., Participant Progress Assessment Rubric developed with project partners) and tracking course completion, grades, in-person attendance, and participation in online learning; measurement of employment outcomes and

business ROI (Return On Investment) through manager surveys (productivity, communication on the job, confidence and morale, and customer satisfaction) and participant surveys (job retention, promotion, wage increases, and employee satisfaction); and analysis of the pedagogical models and curriculum suitability through weekly instructor surveys, classroom observation, and developer and partner interviews. The key associated evaluation questions RTI articulated to guide the evaluation are: What are the English language gains for employees as a result of the program? What are participants' experiences with the program and what benefits do they perceive for skill development, job performance, confidence, and motivation for career advancement? What are the benefits perceived by managers? What lessons have been learned to inform future efforts?

RTI designed the specific evaluation tools that would generate the data to answer these questions including (1) administrative and test data provided by the project managers (e.g., attendance, online module completion, 30-day retention, promotion, employee demographics, test scores, grades, and instructors' ratings of students); (2) instructor surveys (at the end of the program) and an instructor log (weekly) administered online by RTI; (3) employee surveys before and after the program; and (4) two-part (workforce background and employee ratings) manager surveys implemented with managers following the program. RTI has also conducted visits to each site, observed classrooms, and conducted interviews with instructors and instructor partner staff. To monitor project implementation and improvement, The Forum leads internal formative and summative evaluations of English at Work processes, guided by project work plans. Quantitative and qualitative project data are kept in a database. The database is being accessed by all project partners, who have specific roles in maintaining it.

Additional Documentation

<https://immigrationforum.org/article/upskilling-new-americans-innovative-english-training-for-career-advancement>

¹ CCCIE is an intermediary organization that supports a national network comprising more than 50 community colleges and other organizations that have joined forces to increase educational opportunities for immigrant students. ge resources, including qualified and trained ESOL instructors, a key element of the English at Work model.

REMOTE ESOL CASE STUDY:

Low- and High-Intensity Remote ESOL Options Santa Barbara City College School of Extended Learning Santa Barbara, California



ESOL Program: SBCC School of Extended Learning

Website: www.sbcc.edu/extendedlearning

Reach: Urban/Suburban

Number of ESOL students served per year: 1,300–2,000

Student population: 75 percent Spanish-speaking immigrants

Contact for more information:

Sachiko Oates, Noncredit Coordinator, sooates@pipeline.sbcc.edu

Photo: SBCC student with her new Chromebook provided by the college

Program Description

SBCC School of Extended Learning is part of Santa Barbara City College, based in Santa Barbara, California. Its mission is to create a gateway to opportunities for lifelong learning and remove barriers to participation in education, while fostering an equitable learning community that embraces, promotes, and supports diversity and inclusion. In addition to regular ESL classes

(SBCC doesn't use the acronym ESOL), the ESL program partners with the Career Skills Institute, also at the School of Extended Learning, to offer intensive Integrated Education and Training (IET) courses, such as Green Gardener (landscaping), that are co-taught by faculty from the ESL program and the Institute. Back to Work, an IET model program funded through the federal CARES Act, targets unemployed adults and pays a weekly stipend. The ESL program also offers stand-alone Vocational English for Healthcare courses, such as the Personal Care Attendant (PCA) training/certificate. In addition, the School of Extended Learning offers parenting courses, adult secondary education, careers skills courses, courses for older adults, and learning circles. Learning circles are informal study groups, facilitated by a volunteer or teacher, that take place once a week for 5–6 weeks on an open enrollment basis, so that there are three rounds of learning circles each semester. SBCC School of Extended Learning did not operate a distance education program prior to March, 2020. The school is funded by Santa Barbara City College, the federal CARES Act, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title II, the Santa Barbara Adult Education Consortium, and the SBCC Foundation. The average annual budget is \$1 million. In addition, the school was able to secure federal CARES Act support for non-credit students who have experienced ongoing significant financial hardships as a result of COVID-19. SBCC was allocated \$600,000 that went directly to almost 800 students in the form of CARES Act Emergency Grants.

Notable, Innovative Practices

SBCC School of Extended Learning created and implements intensive, online IET programs for ESOL learners, such as Personal Care Attendant, Green Gardener (landscaping), and Construction. Some of the IET programs target unemployed community members who have been laid off due to COVID's impact on the economy. Thanks to federal CARES Act funding, these students receive \$200/week to attend these intensive IET classes remotely. In contrast to the intensive IET courses, the ESL program offers a "light-touch" option: open-entry, less formal learning circles offered remotely. The learning circles are a regular part of the ESL program offerings.

Remote ESOL Program Design

Students at SBCC School of Extended Learning have multiple remote learning options depending on their interest, availability, and life circumstances. These options range from open-entry learning circles that meet once a week to regular ESOL classes and intensive IET courses that meet 30–32 hours per week in eight-week cycles. Instruction is virtual and synchronous. IET courses that accommodate ESOL students include Personal Care Attendant, Green Gardener (landscaping), and Construction. Each IET program consists of three components: vocational skills, ESOL language support, and career exploration/job search skills. ESOL instructors are teamed up with vocational skills instructors for live, virtual classes on Zoom to support students' language learning and comprehension. Further ESOL support is provided through small breakout room group discussions. In addition, every Friday students participate in a job search skills/workplace readiness small group meeting via Zoom to learn about topics such as resume writing, job interview skills, and using the online job search and career development website Eureka. The goal is for students to be job-ready upon completion. Selected IET courses target unemployed adult students who receive \$200/week to attend classes remotely, funded with federal CARES Act and higher education emergency.

Another program component is open-enrollment learning circles that are offered remotely and synchronously via Zoom once a week in 5–6-week sessions. Learning circle students can join at any time throughout the session and are provided with free BurlingtonEnglish accounts. People who want to join the ESOL program, but missed the beginning of the cycle, are told about the learning circles. The meetups consist of walk-throughs of BurlingtonEnglish lesson units, and watching and discussing different YouTube videos, followed by more in-depth small-group, breakout room discussions about these topics. Learning circles complement more formal classes, offering a more

light-touch option for students who are not able or ready to commit to more rigorous classes. Since they require only a one evening per week commitment, students find them less stressful. Learning circles have been a great success, which is why they have been made part of SBCC's regular ESL program.

Student Onboarding and Persistence Supports

Most students learn about the program by word of mouth. The application and enrollment processes now take place over Zoom, where staff walk prospective students through the steps. ESL instructors also support student onboarding via Zoom onto BurlingtonEnglish, for supplemental online learning, and Eureka, for online career planning. They provide constant encouragement to help students develop more comfort using computers and the software used in classes.

Texting apps are used by individual instructors to allow students to submit their assignments via a mobile device and to foster connection with and among students. Staff do retention phone calls to students who miss classes and send out emails and surveys to better understand students' needs/barriers to engagement. Program-wide mass texting is conducted to remind students of classes if the student opted for this service. Some classes form social media groups and can have as many as 100 members, including former students.

Instruction

The synchronous classes on Zoom are complemented by a variety of apps and software, such as Google Classroom, Stand Out Classroom presentation software, BurlingtonEnglish, Learning Upgrade mobile learning app, Newsela, and Eureka career planning website. WhatsApp and other social media tools are used for communication. For the IET courses, ESL and vocational instructors plan lessons and activities together. Each remote class meeting includes 30–45 minutes of breakout activities to reinforce the vocabulary and communication skills. To provide the hands-on instruction for the Green Gardener (landscaping) and Construction courses, instructors filmed themselves working with the tools.

Digital Learning Supports

SBCC School of Extended Learning was able to secure CARES Act funding to purchase more than 200 Chromebooks and 100 internet hotspots to lend out to learners who needed them. Students were encouraged to stay connected even when using a computer was a barrier. Some students participated in the remote classes through their mobile devices. Students who had digital literacy challenges were encouraged to complete exercises on paper or in notebooks and to show their work on screen via Zoom or take a photo of their work and text or email it to the instructor. For example, in one of the classes, a WhatsApp group was created with 95 current and former students to help learners stay connected through group chats and allow them to submit some of their assignments. The program also provided continued guidance by integrating digital literacy activities into their ESOL lessons.

Support for Students' Basic Needs

SBCC School of Extended Learning was able to secure Federal CARES Act funding for non-credit students who were experiencing significant financial hardships, such as falling behind in rent payments, as a result of COVID-19 pandemic. In December, 2020, \$300,000 was distributed and again in March, 2021, another \$300,000 to almost 800 students, based on income and other indicators of need resulting from the impact of COVID on their lives (e.g., loss of employment, reduced work hours). SBCC provided weekly drive-through/walk-up food distributions on campus for students. Students enrolled in the CARES Act-funded IET courses were given childcare grants of \$100/week/child, as well as career counseling and job search support.

Support for Teachers and Staff

Early in the pandemic, ESOL teachers and other program staff received intensive and mandatory professional development on remote teaching and using Zoom. Teachers were encouraged to further develop their remote teaching skills through ongoing distance-education professional development, for which they were paid. Professional development opportunities included webinar courses (e.g., humanizing online education), workshops, and conferences.

Partnerships

SBCC School of Extended Learning partners with local K–12 districts and community organizations, such as Catholic Charities. The school actively recruits parents of public school children to join their classes. Before the pandemic, the school had 10 satellite locations in the community.

Leadership

SBCC School of Extended Learning leadership advocated for and secured funding to purchase and loan Chromebooks and hotspots to students, to pay stipends to students for participation in the intensive IET courses, and to provide paid professional development for teachers. The coordinator supported teachers to form communities of practice to share best practices. She sought ways to build community, express empathy, listen to concerns and needs, and be available to facilitate meeting those needs.

Indicators of Effectiveness

“I really like taking the Zoom class because I don’t have to stop looking after my children and I feel that I have learned a lot [even though] I don’t have a car to move around.”

–ESOL Program Participant

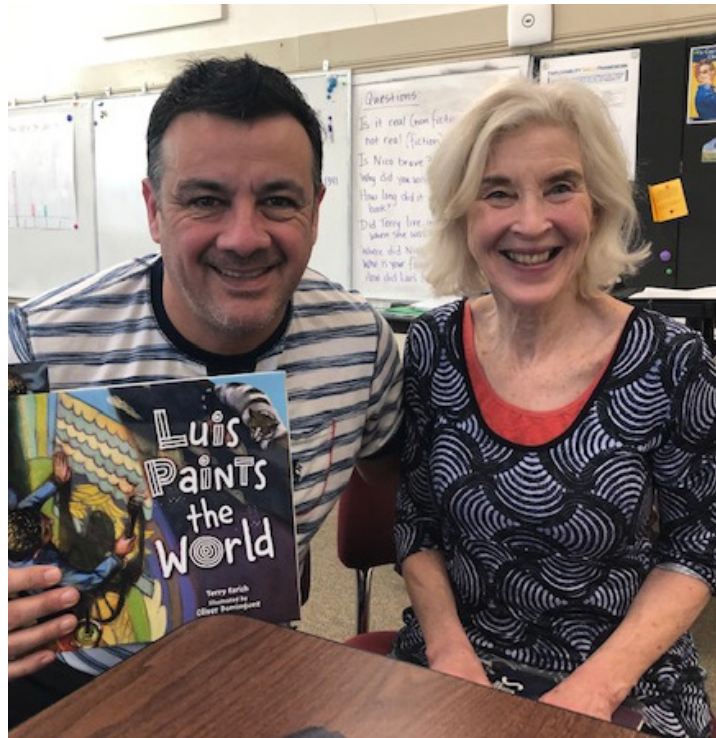
SBCC School of Extended Learning surveyed more than 220 students (ESOL and high school equivalency) and found that 76 percent of both Spanish and English speakers said they would like to continue remote classes using Zoom. Although enrollment rates for lower-level learners (CASAS level 1 and 2) and men were lower in the remote program than when classes were offered in person, attendance and participation were higher for women, and individual students’ hours spent in class were higher than in-person, pre-pandemic classes.

REMOTE ESOL CASE STUDY:

Thematic, No- To High-Tech Remote ESOL Program

Second Start

Concord, New Hampshire



ESOL Program: Second Start ESOL

Website: www.second-start.org (direct link: [ESOL program](#))

Reach: Suburban/Rural

Number of ESOL students served per year: 100

Student population: Immigrants and refugees, most of whom speak Spanish or Arabic

Contact for more information:

Zanna Blaney, Program Director, zblaney@second-start.org

Photos: *Second Start's ESOL students*

Program Description

Second Start is a non-profit organization established in 1971 in Concord, New Hampshire. In addition to the adult ESOL program, Second Start offers adult basic skills classes, high school equivalency programs, an alternative high school for students ages 14 to 20, a childcare center, and a driving school for new Americans. ESOL classes, which range from beginning to high-

intermediate levels, offer support with career navigation, advising, and for meeting basic non-academic needs. Second Start also manages a volunteer tutor program, linking students to an individual learning opportunity with a volunteer from the community.

Virtual, synchronous ESOL classroom instruction is offered four hours per week in monthly cycles. Second Start did not operate a distance education ESOL program prior to March, 2020, but did participate in the Adult Literacy XPRIZE Communities Competition in 2019, through which staff gained access to mobile learning apps, and more importantly, valuable experience in integrating them in instruction. Approximately 99.5 percent of the organization's funding consists of government grants and the remainder is in-kind. The ESOL budget for the 2019–2020 school year was \$186,509.

Notable, Innovative Practices

The program design accommodates no/low- and high-tech users. The heart of this remote ESOL program is a thematic, teacher-developed “month-at-a-time” curriculum with an accompanying book and homework packet that is used in and out of class. It is supported and inspired by [New Hampshire Humanities' Connections](#) adult literacy and book discussion program in which participants can receive and keep up to four books. Teachers develop a robust [learning packet](#) customized to the themes of the book, with links to videos to watch. The advisor drops off packets with students and checks in with them about their needs. Students with no internet connection receive the packet and book to work on independently. Students with internet capability participate in two Zoom meetings per week.

Remote ESOL Program Design

The core of the program design is a thematic, teacher-developed “month-at-a-time” curriculum with an accompanying book and homework packet that is used in and out of class. The program design accommodates no-, low-, and high-tech users. All students work through the same packet and those who can, attend class via Zoom, while those who are not able to attend synchronously, work independently with guidance and phone check-ins with the teacher. The homework packets create the bridge to the class so that those students don't feel left out. WhatsApp is used for group and one-on-one chats and the Quizlet app is also used for learning vocabulary. The program also has a license to Cell-Ed and makes it available to students for supplementary learning.

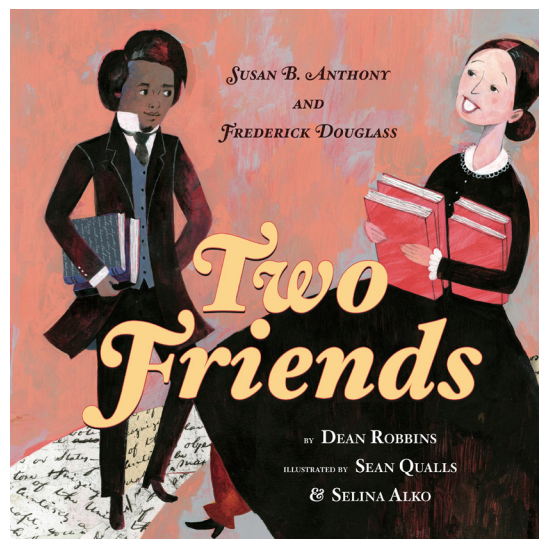
The New Hampshire Department of Education recently purchased a license to the Canvas platform that will be used across all grades, community colleges, and remarkably, also in adult education. Adult learners will thus use the same platform as their children, who are enrolled in public K–12 schools, and it will be a familiar platform if they continue on to community college.

Student Onboarding and Persistence Supports

Student Onboarding & Persistence Supports The student onboarding process was redesigned, driven by what the staff perceived to be the most efficient way to get students registered and enrolled. The registration process was moved online for the most part, a new registration form was created, and computer-based testing instituted. Students with no internet access could still make an appointment to register by phone. In-person registration was streamlined to include onboarding for online tools and digital skills tutoring on whatever device the student has, using the principle, “I do it, we do it, you do it.” Second Start was able to purchase Chromebooks to loan out to students who needed them. Staff reassured students that they were there for them if they needed more help. Students were invited to schedule an appointment to bring in their phone or computer if they are having issues connecting to class.

Instruction

The remote ESOL program was inspired by [New Hampshire Humanities' Connections](#) adult literacy and book discussion program to develop a monthly thematic ESOL curriculum based on carefully selected young adult books. (One of the ESOL teachers at Second Start is also the *Connections* program manager.) *Connections* participants can receive and keep up to four books free of charge. The Second Start ESOL classes read, for example, *Two Friends: The Story of Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass*. Students receive a teacher-developed [learning packet](#) with links to videos to watch, and activities that are all connected to the theme of the book that they are reading. [Here](#) is an agenda for one class related to this book. Teachers even arranged a virtual visit to the Susan B. Anthony Museum in Rochester, New York, during a civics unit, which students loved.



The curriculum is aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education. The learning packets also align with the two or more of the five key domains of [Teaching Skills That Matter](#): digital literacy, civic education, financial literacy, health literacy, and workforce preparation.

Digital Learning Supports

The digital skills tutoring focuses on whatever technology the student has. The approach is: “I do it, we do it, you do it.” All [instructions on how to use Zoom, Quizlet, or Cell-Ed](#) use exclusively pictorial directions, with screen shots of what something would look like on iPhones and Samsung smartphones. Students can make an appointment with the Distance Learning Facilitator to have an in-person meeting on how to use their device and the programs.

The program was able to purchase Chromebooks and lend them out to students who needed them. They provide training to students on how to use them. Students are invited to schedule an appointment to bring in their phone or computer if they are having issues connecting to class. Some students don't have strong enough internet access to support online learning. The local internet provider (Comcast) made special deals available to local residents during the pandemic. Nevertheless, some students participated in remote classes by working on paper-based learning packets and the books that the advisor or the teachers delivered to them. While the advisor drops off packets for most students, students who live outside of Concord pick up their learning packets at a central drop box location at Second Start. If students are unable to get to Second Start, their packet is mailed to their home. Teachers check in with students by phone and through WhatsApp.

The program also has a license to Cell-Ed and makes it available to students for supplementary learning. Many students are finding it helpful for studying for the citizenship exam.

Support for Students' Basic Needs

The program has twice surveyed students about their need for food, applying for unemployment or jobs, health care, housing, and more. An advisor makes follow-up calls and referrals based on the survey and what she learns from teachers and students directly. During teachers' regular one-on-one check-ins with students, they inquire about any changes in students' circumstances and needs. They have connected many students to the New Hampshire Food Bank, for example. Teachers have collected data on student needs to share with the advisor through Google Forms.

Support for Teachers and Staff

“The state has really stepped up and almost flooded programs with various online learning options.”

–Zanna Blaney, Program Director

ESOL teachers and other program staff feel very supported by the program director, the agency administration, and the State Department of Education that funds the program. All staff got a raise in their hourly rate in recognition of the extra effort needed to develop and deliver remote instruction. In addition, they received more paid time for onboarding students and providing more tech support. The ESOL teachers were encouraged and empowered to develop thematic curriculum and received a modest grant from the state for it. The agency secured funds to purchase additional Chromebooks to loan out to students as well as additional Zoom accounts.

The New Hampshire Department of Education Professional Development Specialist organized numerous professional development opportunities and secured licenses for the Northstar Digital Skills program, as well as commercial products such as Essential Education and Burlington English.

Partnerships

Second Start’s key partnership is with New Hampshire Humanities and its Connections program. A representative from New Hampshire Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health twice visited the ESOL class (via Zoom) to talk about workers’ rights and COVID safety.

Indicators of Effectiveness

“We have really high attendance and engagement. We haven’t lost anyone! And the connections students develop with each other are incredible to witness.”

–Mary Nolin, Literacy level ESOL teacher

The program reports that student retention is the highest it has been in years. Removing barriers such as lack of transportation and/or childcare contributes to strong retention. Even though challenges continue for many students (e.g., unemployment), they are consistently attending class and teachers report a high level of student engagement. When comparing the same time frames from last school year (pre-pandemic lockdown) to 2020, one ESOL class lost about eight students in 2019, versus only one in 2020.

Students track their time spent on studying using the packet. The program collects and reports these distance-learning hours to the funder as part of its accountability. Teachers have been pleasantly surprised at the amount of time students are dedicating to studying outside of class. For the October, 2020, *Two Friends: The Story of Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass* learning packet, students spent an average of six hours of work outside of class completing their packets. Students are pleased to track their own progress and like having the monthly packets as the structure that guides their learning. Starting in Spring, 2021, students will be compiling their own learning portfolios. Students’ learning gains are also tracked through state-mandated, standardized testing (TABE [Test of Adult Basic Education] Class-E and CASAS [Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems]), and the teachers report measurable skill gains.

This program model makes it possible for school-age children to participate and learn with their parents. Many parents not only read the books to and with their children, they bring their children to the remote class. Data from New Hampshire Humanities' 2020 Connections program indicate that more than 75 percent of Connections program participants self-reported they are reading books with their children, and ESOL learners are the largest group of participants.

Additional Documentation:

[Instructions for digital tools used in class; sample class agenda and lesson packet; civics pre-/post-test.](#)



WORLD EDUCATION

World Education, Inc.
44 Farnsworth Street
Boston, MA 02210, USA
Tel: 617.482.9485
literacy@worlded.org

