



English
Skills
Learning
Center

Winter Newsletter



English Skills Learning Center
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ESLC Mission

The ESLC works to connect communities through language learning. This year we brought together over 1,500 adult English language learners from more than 45 different countries and a corps of over 200 trained and mentored volunteers. Our classes are taught in libraries, schools, community centers, apartment buildings, and workplaces at times when students need them.

We believe that families with improved English skills are stronger, better integrated into our community, and can begin to build the bridges out of poverty.

The ESLC is one of the only providers of
free and accessible
English classes in the area.

ESLC History

The English Skills Learning Center was founded as Literacy Volunteers of America - Wasatch Front (LVA-WF) in 1988. Initially, the organization provided adult basic literacy and ESL services. In the face of a rapidly growing population of refugees and other immigrants, LVA-WF began to put more emphasis on helping adult non-English speakers, and since 2001, has worked exclusively in the field of English as a Second Language. In 2003, our name was changed to English Skills Learning Center to better reflect the focus of our organization.

Today, we offer six different programs that focus on English for special purposes. We provide our students the language skills and cultural knowledge they need to succeed in the United States.



From the Executive Director

A recent article in the Washington Post (Nov 1, 2016) highlights the limitations of adult literacy; "The inability to read makes life significantly harder for individuals but also has an effect on society at large, according to the Literacy Foundation, which lists these consequences:

For individuals

Limited ability to obtain and understand essential information;

Unemployment: The unemployment rate is 2–4 times higher among those with little schooling than among those with Bachelor's degrees;

Lower income;

Lower-quality jobs;

Reduced access to lifelong learning and professional development;

Precarious financial position;

Little value is given to education and reading within the family, and this often leads to intergenerational transmission of illiteracy;

Low self-esteem, which can lead to isolation."

A large number of the immigrant and refugee adults taught by our volunteers fall into this demographic and struggle with many of these barriers to successful integration in America. Their illiteracy is complicated by the fact that they are trying to learn how to read and write in a language which is also unfamiliar. Newly arrived families in American can feel isolated for many reasons, but not being able to read can be one of the most challenging obstacle to overcome. Many Utahans are asking themselves how they can make a difference in the community, to show that immigrants and refugees are welcome in our country. One very practical way to make these newcomers feel welcomed is to help them to learn English and when needed, help them to become literate adults.

Please share this message with friends and family and let's make 2017 a year where we open our hearts and share language and literacy with our new neighbors.

Catherine Barnhart
Executive Director



Most of our classes are taught by hard-working, trained and mentored volunteers. We could not change lives in our community without dedicated community members.

Anyone interested in volunteering with the ESLC as a teacher must attend our four-session volunteer training. Volunteers will acquire the skills needed to teach English to low-proficiency adult immigrants and refugees.

A one-time training fee of \$50 covers the cost of training as well as a mandatory background check. Visit our website for more information and to register to attend our training!

Upcoming training dates:

March Daytime Training

Part 1: Wed 03/01 9 am-12 pm

Part 2: Wed 03/01 12:30 pm-3:30 pm

Part 3: Wed 03/08 9 am-12 pm

Part 4: Wed 03/08 12:30 pm-3:30 pm

ESLC Program Updates



Life Skills

Immigrants and refugees often struggle to adapt to life in a new country. Our Life Skills English classes focus on teaching students the English they need to navigate daily tasks, make friends, and integrate into their new community.

Since July 2016, Life Skills has served approximately 262 students. So far, Life Skills has 7 partnerships, which host a total of 17 classes.

Humanitarian Center

The LDS Humanitarian Center offers intensive job skills training and ESL to hundreds of refugees and immigrants. Through a community partnership, the ESLC provides small group classes at the Humanitarian Center.

This past year, the ESLC began offering two new classes: Health and Finance, and Current Events. The Humanitarian Center offers these new classes as well as Driving, Citizenship, Literacy, and Life Skills.

Citizenship

Our Citizenship classes help students develop the skills they need to be able to pass the Citizenship test. This past fiscal year, 98 students attempted the test and 96 passed - a pass rate of 98%.

The program is excited because Horizonte is in a central location where a lot of refugees and immigrants already know about it. The class will start on January 17, 2017 from 6-7:30pm. One exciting thing about this class is that the students are already attending regular Horizonte classes.

Empowering Parents

The Empowering Parents program helps immigrants and refugees to become active participants in their children's education. Parents learn to understand report cards, speak with teachers, and read with their children.

Since July 2016, Empowering Parents has served approximately 180 students. So far this school year, Empowering Parents has partnerships with six schools, hosting a total of 10 classes.

Job Readiness

Job Readiness classes help to familiarize students with American work culture and expectations of the American workplace. Through improved English skills, students are better able to acquire or improve their employment.

The Job Readiness program has started to track student outcomes after completion of the courses. They are also exploring new locations farther west in Salt Lake County..

Workplace

The Workplace English program partners with local businesses to offer ESL classes tailored to specific industries. These classes help students to effectively communicate with coworkers and supervisors, understand work assignments, and work according to safety regulations.

This year, we expect to expand business partnerships to offer Workplace ESL to more businesses. Workplace ESL classes are a vital resource for ensuring employees are safe on the job and have the language skills necessary to be productive team members.



Jacob Newman, JR Coordinator

Why Literacy

At the English Skills Learning Center, we specialize in working with individuals with limited or no formal education in their home country. Many of these individuals never learned to read and write in their own language or their language does not have a codified written system. In turn, they struggle to acquire sufficient literacy skills. In our quest to empower English language learners at the ESLC, we often discuss the how of teaching literacy, but we do not consider the why of building literacy. There are two key reasons that adult literacy is crucial to the population we serve: it builds bridges out of intergenerational poverty and it fosters greater community involvement among these newcomers to Utah.

Many of our students, who are low to middle income, may have grown up in intergenerational poverty. Individuals that grew up in these circumstances do not have the sufficient literacy skills required to move from low-skill, low-paying jobs to middle-skill, higher-paying jobs. It is crucial for our students to acquire the literacy skills to access training and education so that they can have higher-paying jobs. In our Job Readiness program, the ESLC aims to serve as a pipeline for students to move students into community colleges, vocational certificates, and apprenticeships. Middle skill workers can expect to earn more in lifetime earnings, allowing students to develop self sufficiency. Our Life Skills program also focuses on English literacy for everyday life and aims to serve students who, for a variety of reasons, cannot access traditional, more intensive English programs. With these literacy skills, these students can seek promotions at work or additional training. In addition to these programs, we have partnered with the LDS Humanitarian Center and Granite Peaks Learning to provide a unique work training program combined with intensive English instruction to prepare students to enter the American workforce and obtain higher paying jobs.

"We believe that our mission to empower English language learners in Salt Lake County will have tremendous benefits for our learners to move out of poverty..."

Our students also have a stake in community involvement. The ESLC's citizenship program prepares students to take the citizenship exam, which has a written portion, requiring some basic literacy. These courses also help students understand their role as American citizens and foster civic involvement. Without these basic literacy skills, these new Americans will not be able to engage in the community. Our Empowering Parents program works with students to develop the literacy to help their children with their homework and engage with their children in everyday reading. From joining the local PTA to reading about political candidates and campaigns, our students in our various programs need to acquire sufficient literacy skills to engage in our community. Our students make tremendous contributions in their communities in many regards. With enhanced literacy, our students will become even more engaged in our local communities.

The ESLC has invested strongly in adult literacy. We believe that our mission to empower English language learners in Salt Lake County will have tremendous benefits for our learners to move out of poverty and to become engaged residents in our community. We are grateful for those individuals who have given of their time and money to help us fulfill our mission. Together, we will continue to work to recognize the why of our literacy instruction and improve the how to reach our lofty goals.



Katie Donoviel, EP Coordinator

Moving Beyond Foundational Reading Skills

Billboards, building signs, and street names are a few examples of where one encounters written language on a daily basis. Although these encounters are frequent, a surprisingly low percentage of the population can pull meaning from written words. Imagine opening this newsletter and becoming overwhelmed and frustrated by shapes that hold no meaning. That said, if you are currently reading this article, you have had the experience of learning the English alphabet, the sounds for each letter, and how to combine sounds to create words. To add, you learned the meaning of these words (i.e. vocabulary), the order of the words (i.e. grammar), and many other skills needed to derive meaning from a text.

Because students come in constant contact with written information, it is crucial to move beyond basic principles of letter recognition, vocabulary, and grammar and to teach students reading strategies. Strategic readers have a deeper understanding of a text, a stronger awareness of how to learn from reading, and tools to self-regulate their learning.

Stoller and Grabe (2011) organized reading strategies into three groups: Global Reading Strategies, Monitoring Reading Strategies, and Support Reading Strategies. Learning reading strategies from all three categories can make students more efficient and successful readers.

Global Reading Strategies contribute to the “larger picture” of a reading passage and include reading with a purpose, predicting, creating mental images while reading, and connecting prior knowledge and experience to the text. Reading with a purpose is particularly important when working with students who do not have literacy in their own language. It helps develop a clear goal when interacting with a text and promotes the idea that reading is meaningful, which are difficult concepts for adults who have not been reading for the majority of their lives.

"Because students come in constant contact with written information, it is crucial to move beyond basic principles of letter recognition, vocabulary, and grammar and to teach students reading strategies."

The next category, Monitoring Reading Strategies, encourages students to check their own understanding of a text. While reading, students are invited to ask questions related to their comprehension, reread material, or reflect on the reading. Through these strategies, students are shown how to develop agency by bringing attention to challenges they experience while reading. Since reading is a receptive skills, meaning it is often processed silently and internally, Monitoring Strategies also act as a tool for teachers to know when students are struggling with reading.

In addition to students knowing how to express the challenges they experience, teachers should also give them tools to become self-regulated readers, which can be done using Support Reading Strategies. These strategies include underlining unknown words, using the dictionary, taking notes, and using graphic organizers when reading. Since the ultimate goal is for students to read outside of the classroom, students must learn how to be successful when reading on their own. An effective teacher will incorporate reading strategies every time students interact with reading in the classroom. While teaching reading strategies is valuable, it does take time and patience. Similar to learning any skill, students need to see a strategy modeled and use the strategy several times with guidance before they are expected to use it independently. Although teaching reading strategies requires time and patience, students will undoubtedly become stronger readers, which is, in the end, how language programs can use literacy instruction to empower adult language learners.

Community Partners

- Catholic Community Services of Utah
- Copperview Recreation Center
- Glendale Community Learning Center
- Granite School District
- Guadalupe School
- Historic Scott School Arts & Community Center
- Hser Ner Moo Community & Welcome Center
- International Rescue Committee in Salt Lake City
- LDS Humanitarian Center
- Lowell Bennion Community Service Center
- Promise South Salt Lake
- Refugee & Immigrant Center
- Salt Lake CAP Head Start
- Salt Lake City Public Library
- Salt Lake City School District
- Salt Lake County Library Services
- United Way of Salt Lake
- University Neighborhood Partners
- Utah Department of Workforce Services
- Utah Health & Human Rights Project
- Utah State University Extension
- YMCA Community Family Center
- YWCA Utah

Financial Supporters

- American Express Center for Community Development
- R. Harold Burton Foundation
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- Dee Family Foundation
- Eskuche Foundation
- George S. and Dolores Dore Eccles Foundation
- Richard K. and Shirley S. Hemingway Foundation
- Salt Lake City CDBG
- Salt Lake Education Foundation
- Sorenson Legacy Foundation
- United Way of Salt Lake
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
- Utah Office of Refugee Services
- Utah State Office of Education
- West Valley City CDBG
- Walmart
- XMission Internet (in-kind)