



The Insider, the monthly newsletter of LVA Essex & Passaic Counties, will keep you in the loop on all of the organization's upcoming events.



Grateful for Catherine Angus' presentation during our December Tutor Support Workshop. Catherine presented on "The Podcast Puzzle: How to Listen to Podcasts" providing an understanding on how we can help listeners get more from a podcast/audio/video to help them decode the sounds of spoken English.

The Insider

Greetings LVA family!

As we dive into the heart of January, the brisk winds and chilly temperatures remind us that winter is in full swing. Despite the cold, our community is warmed by the inspiring stories and dedicated individuals who make LVAEP the vibrant organization it is.

In this month's newsletter, we shine a spotlight on two remarkable tales that embody resilience and the transformative power of education. Meet Juan, an adult ESL student hailing from the Dominican Republic. Amidst personal tragedies, Juan discovered solace in learning English, recognizing it as a tool for connection and empowerment in his new home.

We also celebrate Sabina Soloway, a seasoned educator with a passion for language acquisition and the neuroscience of learning. With over 35 years of experience, Sabina's journey began at Brown University and evolved into a deep exploration of the cognitive processes involved in education. Her dedication to individualized instruction has shaped her career, making her a valuable asset to our community.

In addition to these inspiring stories, we are thrilled to share a thought-provoking article featured in this month's newsletter. "Recognizing Community Cultural Wealth in Classrooms" explores the importance of embracing cultural diversity in educational spaces. It's a must-read that aligns with our commitment to fostering inclusive learning environments.

As we embark on National Mentor Month, we encourage our readers to invite tutors to join us in making a difference. Consider volunteering to teach adult literacy classes and be a part of the transformative journey of learners like Juan. Let's build a community where the warmth of connection and the power of education prevail.

In the News

Copy and paste the highlighted website into an internet search bar to view the following stories.

"Rider University receives grant to make college more accessible for adult learners" ROI NJ.
<https://bit.ly/3tSLSRj>

"How to get into reading as an adult" Polygon.
<https://bit.ly/47OSXA6>

"English Learners Need Equal Access to Rich Texts. How One School Makes That Happen" Education Week.
<https://bit.ly/47K0612>

Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties

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Getting to Know Us

Juan, LVA student

In Newark, New Jersey, Juan's journey at Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) weaves a story of resilience, tragedy, and the pursuit of a brighter future. Hailing from the Dominican Republic, Juan arrived in the U.S. in July 2022. Facing adversity six months earlier when his father suffered a cerebrovascular accident, Juan remained devoted while caring for his parents amidst the complexities of relocation.

In September 2022, tragedy struck as Juan's paternal grandmother and father were murdered, and shortly after, his mother passed away. Amidst grief, Juan found solace in an unexpected place – the decision to learn English.

"I decided to learn English to improve my communication skills," Juan shares, emphasizing its importance in forging relationships in a new country. Through the internet, he discovered LVA, seeing English proficiency as a tool for connection and empowerment.

For a year, Juan navigated the intricacies of English with determination. "I have improved a lot since I understand better when English is spoken to me," he reflects. Fueled by resilience, Juan's commitment to mastering a new language became his driving force.

Juan's favorite books, "The Rhino" by Scott Alexander and "How to Win Friends and Influence People" by Dale Carnegie, played a pivotal role in his personal development, teaching him to build meaningful bonds.

His academic achievements in the Dominican Republic, including a Master's and Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, showcase his dedication. Juan takes pride in overcoming challenges, embodying a spirit of triumph.

Juan's journey at LVA is about more than language acquisition; it's about building a network. "Getting to know the teachers, the administrative team, and my classmates, I gained a lot of experience from all of them," he reflects on the supportive community. Balancing English learning with responsibilities, Juan emphasizes the importance of persistence and discipline. Echoing advice, he says, "To achieve similar success, we must be consistent and disciplined in our goals."

Looking ahead, Juan envisions practicing his profession in the U.S., believing that learning English has been a worthwhile endeavor. "It's nice when you understand what they express to you in English. That has a positive impact on our lives," Juan concludes, radiating hope for a brighter future shaped by resilience and the pursuit of knowledge.

Juan arrived in the U.S. in 2022, originally from the Dominican Republic. His life has been marked by tragedy, but his resilience both personally and in his pursuit of learning English are admirable. He takes pride in overcoming challenges and looks forward to practicing his profession in the U.S.

Tutor Training Workshops

Online Training, by TBD

Platform: Zoom (sponsored by LNJ)
Tuesdays, 6 to 8 pm

February 27, March 5, 12, 19, 26, & April 2, 2024

Online Training, by TBD

Platform: Zoom (sponsored by LNJ)
Wednesdays, 6 - 8 pm

March 6, 13, 20, 27, April 3, & 10, 2024

Tutor Support Workshop

"Strategies for Distance Learning," with Karen Cardell

Platform: Google Meet

Thursday, February 15, 2024, 2 pm - 3:30 pm

Coffee Hour with Tutors

with Cheryl Locastro

Thursday, March 14, 2024 at 3pm (Themed online meeting)

Thursday, May 9, 2024 at 3pm (General in-person meeting)

<http://www.lvaep.org/workshops.html>

Literacy opens a wide door to life. Help us keep that door open with your donation!

Thanks in large part to you, we are able to aid hundreds of students each year. Please continue your efforts to improve the lives of others by giving the gift of literacy.

<http://www.lvaep.org/donate.html>



Recognizing community cultural wealth in classrooms

Education NC

Perspective piece written by Jennifer C. Mann

January 17, 2024

Last month, Secretary of Education, Dr. Miguel Cardona, gave a speech calling multilingualism a superpower, but the unfortunate reality is that in North Carolina and across the United States, multilingualism isn't always cast in such a positive light.

As educators, we want to promote asset-based perspectives and continue to reject deficit-based perspectives of our students. It is with this mindset and motivation that scholar, Tara Yosso developed the concept of community cultural wealth (CCW). Yosso's basic assertion is that minoritized communities are culturally wealthy as seen through the six forms of capital she has identified, and that communities — including classroom communities — are enriched through these various capitals. Such forms of capital include aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital.

Forms of capital & their applications

Aspirational capital is the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even when there are a multitude of barriers. Aspirational capital is seen in the refugee teen who flees genocide, relocates to America, learns a new language, and clings to her dream of becoming a fashion designer. To hope against hope takes great courage and displays an aspirational wealth, which ultimately serves to enrich herself and those around her.

Linguistic capital embodies not only communication through multiple languages but is often accompanied by excellent storytelling skills. Linguistic capital is a bridge builder. Frequently, multilingual children become language brokers for their families, translating between their parents and other adults. Immigrant youth report feeling as though their linguistic abilities make them stronger people. Community cultural wealth is communal in nature, and linguistic capital increases the availability and ease of sharing such wealth within a linguistically diverse environment. [...]

For the full story please copy and paste the following link on your browser: <https://bit.ly/3vKjHV5>

Learning a new culture is more than studying a language. Tutoring is more than learning techniques. Our "Resources" webpage covers everything from legal matters, health care, & scholarships for immigrants, to professional development for tutors. Give us a look: <http://www.lvaep.org/students.html>

Getting to Know Us (cont.)

Sabina Soloway, LVA Tutor

Sabina Soloway, a seasoned educator with a passion for language acquisition and the neuroscience of learning, has had an extensive career spanning over 35 years.



Her journey began at Brown University, where she majored in cognitive science, laying the foundation for her fascination with the intricacies of language and the science behind learning.

Sabina's experience as an educator has been fueled by her deep interest in the cognitive processes involved in education. This led her to pursue a master's degree in learning disabilities at Columbia University's Teacher's College, where she gained a deeper understanding of the science of learning and the importance of individualized instruction.

Despite acquiring her master's, Sabina remained in mainstream classrooms, adding a touch of early childhood science to her repertoire. After retiring from the traditional classroom setting, Sabina joined the Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) program in the summer of 2023.

Currently tutoring four students, Sabina appreciates the diverse educational backgrounds they bring from their home countries. One student, a newcomer from Haiti, stands out with his delightful sense of humor and cleverness. Sabina emphasizes the importance of creating a safe space for students like him seeking refuge in the classroom.

Sabina finds the work ethic of her LVA students remarkably impressive. Their commitment, often requiring sacrifices, leaves a lasting impression on her. She recounts the story of a student who, despite being away for a month visiting family, continued attending class virtually, showcasing unwavering dedication.

In sharing something most people wouldn't know, Sabina reveals a delightful daily ritual — receiving a curated poem in her email. This small yet enriching part of her life has become a special morning tradition, one she contemplates extending to her students by sharing a poem a week.

As Sabina continues to enrich the lives of her students at the Literacy Volunteers of America, her story exemplifies the profound impact that dedicated educators can have on the lives of their students. By transcending traditional classrooms, Sabina has created meaningful connections and instilled a love of learning in her students, regardless of age or background.