



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



This January we were lucky to have Steven Reid, who is the Program Manager for Literacy Volunteers Charlottesville/Albemarle in Charlottesville, Virginia. He shared with us his wisdom on Comparative Grammar to explore common confusions from ESL students and how tutors can help them get past those.

## *The Insider*

Greetings LVA family!

February has brought us plenty of snow, the Super Bowl, President's Day, and Filbert the beaver's prediction that winter would last six more weeks from Groundhog Day. What better way to warm up and change the pace of the news than reading about the amazing work and progress our tutors and students are making every day?

In the world of literacy education, tutors like Nancy stand as beacons of hope, guiding eager learners toward brighter futures. Nancy immigrated to the U.S. in the 1980s, studied English, made her way through various degrees including a master's in psychology, and decided to give back by teaching others English once she had a little more time.

We also share the inspiring story of Neila, a student from Haiti who arrived in the U.S. in 2023 and founds herself in need of deepening the foundation of English she had, to better communicate with others. Her story highlights the profound impact that learning English can have on a person's confidence, opportunities, and future.

A recent study published on Nature discusses how language shapes cognition in bilingual brains significantly influencing cognitive functions, particularly working memory and inhibitory control. Another reason to help our adult learning keep learning, and for all of us to be interested in learning other languages!

There is a lot of uncertainty with funding sources for nonprofits across our state, so if you had ever considered a financial donation to LVA, this is a great time to help us shore up our funding by increasing private donations. If you are able to do so, or know others who might, please visit or share <http://www.lvaep.org/donate.html>, and thanks!

We are grateful to each of you for being part of the LVA community!

### *In the News*

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

**“Sentenced' Documentary Reveals Hidden Crisis of Adult and Child Illiteracy.”** TAPinto Newark.

<https://bit.ly/4ba4ddv>

**“Want to Learn a New Language? Study Says Be Sure to Get Enough Sleep First”** Good News Network.

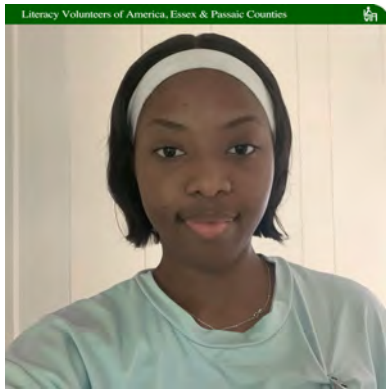
<https://bit.ly/3X8iHVG>

### Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties

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### Getting to Know Us

#### Neila, LVA student

Neila arrived in the U.S. from Haiti in December 2023, determined to build a better future. Her journey was not easy—she missed a flight due to long immigration lines, navigating the process alone. But Neila has always faced challenges with resilience. Back home, life was about survival, especially for young women.

Now, in New Jersey, Neila is charting a new path for herself. One of her first goals? To master English. She had some experience with the language before—she studied it in high school and practiced with her teachers—but learning in Haiti was different from fully immersing herself in an English-speaking country. “I like English, but I learn English because I want to be able to speak with other people and find opportunities,” she says.

She first learned about Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) through Essex County College and some flyers she picked up. Encouraged by the possibility of improving her skills, she decided to give it a try. Now, as a dedicated student at LVA, she balances work and late nights to make time for her studies. “I work at night, sometimes until 1 a.m.,” she shares. “It’s really hard, but I always try. I’m trying to do my best and make a good plan to continue with my classes.”

One of her biggest challenges in learning English is pronunciation. “I know some words, but when I hear a person say them, it’s better,” she explains. Living in a household where everyone speaks French and Creole makes it difficult to practice, but Neila is determined. She reads English books and takes every opportunity to improve.

She recalls a moment that solidified just how important learning English is to her. On her journey to the U.S., she met a group of Haitians who didn’t speak English. When they missed their flight, she became their translator, helping them communicate with airport staff. “They were crying because they didn’t have the resources,” she says. “I helped translate for them, and they got the right help. I will never forget that.”

For Neila, learning English isn’t just about personal growth—it’s about helping others and making her family proud. “Starting can be difficult, stressful, and you may be shy,” she advises other learners. “But if you keep studying and trying to learn more, it will get better. You have to keep working on it.”

Her future is bright, and her goals are clear. “I want to be proud of myself and make my parents proud of me by doing my best and getting better,” she says. With her resilience and determination, there’s no doubt that Neila will achieve exactly that.

Neila arrived in the U.S. with the help of one of her cousins. While she missed a flight due to long immigration lines, she was looking forward to forging a new future in New Jersey. She had some experience with English, but quickly realized she needed to learn more to be able to interact comfortably with others.

### Tutor Training Workshops

#### Online Training, by TBD

Platform: Zoom (*sponsored by LNJ*)  
Tuesdays, 9:30 to 11:30 am  
Feb. 25, 2025

#### Online Training, by TBD

Platform: Zoom (*sponsored by LNJ*)  
Tuesdays 6 to 8 pm  
Mar. 4, 11, 18, 25, & Apr. 1, 2025

#### Online Training, by TBD

Platform: Zoom (*sponsored by LNJ*)  
Mondays & Wednesdays, 9:30 to 11:30 am  
May 19, 21, 28, Jun. 2, & 4, 2025

### Tutor Support Workshops

#### "HESAA Higher Education Financial Aid Resources," with Carla Donegan

Platform: Google Meet  
Wednesday, March 12, 2025, 11 am - 12:30 pm

#### "LVA's Approach to Adult Education," with Cristhian Barcelos

Bloomfield Public Library, Little Theater  
Tuesday, April 22, 2025, 11 am to 12:30 pm

#### Coffee Hour with Tutors with Cheryl Locastro

Thursday, March 13, 2025, at 3pm (General in-person meeting)

***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>



## The Bilingual Brain: How Language Experience Shapes Cognitive Abilities

Story by Valeria Garrido, February 15, 2025

A new study published in *Nature* reveals that bilingualism significantly influences cognitive functions, particularly working memory and inhibitory control. Researchers found that different bilingual experiences shape brain functions in unique ways, offering fresh insights into cognitive development and education.

### How Bilingualism Affects the Brain

The study examined individuals with varying bilingual proficiency, from those who learned two languages from birth to late second-language learners. Early bilinguals—who acquired both languages simultaneously—showed enhanced working memory, suggesting that managing two linguistic systems strengthens the brain’s ability to process and store information.

Meanwhile, individuals who learned a second language later in life displayed superior inhibitory control, meaning they were better at suppressing distractions and focusing on tasks. This may stem from the constant need to switch between languages, refining the brain’s ability to filter out irrelevant information.

### Implications for Learning and Development

These findings have significant educational implications. Early bilingual exposure may enhance memory skills in young learners, while second-language learning in adulthood could improve focus and attention. Recognizing these differences can help tailor language instruction to optimize cognitive benefits.

Beyond personal advantages, the study highlights the broader value of bilingualism in a globalized world. Encouraging bilingual education and supporting multilingual environments can promote both cognitive resilience and cultural understanding.

As this research suggests, learning and using multiple languages isn't just about communication—it actively shapes the brain, enhancing essential cognitive skills that benefit people throughout their lives.

For the full study please copy and paste this link on your browser: <https://bit.ly/3QIdoJ7>

*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.)

Nancy Jeudy, Tutor

In the world of literacy education, tutors like Nancy stand as beacons of hope, guiding eager learners toward brighter futures. As a Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) tutor, Nancy brings experience, deep empathy, and an inspiring journey that fuels her passion for teaching.



Born and raised in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Nancy immigrated to the U.S. in the 1980s. Adjusting to a new language and culture was challenging, but with an ESL program and her sister’s support, she built a foundation in English and business skills. This determination led her to earn degrees from LaGuardia Community College, City College of New York, and a master’s in psychology from Adelphi University.

Nancy’s career was equally remarkable. She worked at Columbia University as a Grants and Contracts Coordinator before transitioning to academia as an Adjunct Instructor of Psychology at CUNY. After retiring in 2022, she discovered LVA while enrolling a relative in an ESL program at a library. Inspired, she applied to become a tutor, beginning her journey in June 2024.

Since joining LVA, Nancy has embraced the challenge of teaching English to adult learners. She currently works with four dedicated students, each bringing unique strengths. One student, Blandon, stands out for his exceptional drive—balancing a full-time job and computer training while demonstrating keen respect and enthusiasm. Another student, Marie, has shown remarkable persistence, juggling work and family while dedicating herself to improving her English skills. These students' commitment fuels Nancy’s passion for teaching.

Nancy acknowledges challenges, such as the absence of a standard textbook, requiring her to create tailored lesson plans. However, the most rewarding part is witnessing her students’ eagerness to learn, their willingness to stay late, and their determination to master English. Seeing their confidence grow is what makes tutoring so fulfilling for her.

Beyond teaching, Nancy offers guidance on navigating life in the U.S., pursuing education, and building careers. She describes herself as altruistic, with a deep well of empathy and commitment to helping others.

Nancy’s journey—from ESL student to educator and dedicated tutor—embodies LVA’s mission. We are honored to have Nancy as part of the LVA family.