



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



We can't wait to welcome you in October to our Annual Awards Ceremony, a celebration of students, tutors, and the community that surrounds us with their support each year as we gather to honor the efforts and progress of all who are part of our program. We are looking forward to seeing you there!

The Insider

Greetings LVA family!

As the days grow shorter and the air begins to cool, we say goodbye to summer and welcome the back-to-school season—a time that always reminds us of the power of learning and new beginnings. At Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties, this moment feels especially hopeful, as federal funding for adult education and English Language Learning has been restored. This long-awaited commitment means programs like ours can continue to provide classes, tutoring, and support to the many adults who depend on these opportunities to achieve their goals.

This month's newsletter highlights two stories from within our own community. **Daniel**, a dedicated tutor, has spent nearly a decade volunteering his time and expertise. His journey with LVAEP reflects both the challenges and the joy of guiding students to greater confidence and fluency. In his words and example, we see how tutoring is not only about teaching English but also about building trust and opening doors to connection. We also introduce you to **Nelly**, a student originally from Ecuador who has made tremendous progress in her studies. Once a teacher herself in her home country, Nelly brings deep pride and perseverance to her English learning, balancing work, health, and family commitments while continuing to show up for class with determination.

Alongside these stories, we share thought-provoking articles on language education. Our featured piece, *What if we invited them in? Using learners' languages to support English* from the British Council, asks how honoring the languages learners already know can make English instruction more effective and inclusive.

Together, these resources and stories remind us that language learning is transformative—not just about mastering grammar or vocabulary, but about expanding opportunity, building confidence, and fostering belonging.

In the News

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

“English Language Learning funding safe again.” MV Times. <https://bit.ly/3UL9Ojn>

“Bilingual Education vs. English-Only: What the Research Says.” Ed Week. <https://bit.ly/4mBnk6>

“Unleashing English-speaking proficiency: The role of academic environment, technology, and linguistic adaptability evidence from Indonesia.” Science Direct. <https://bit.ly/3VjHgO2>

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Getting to Know Us Nelly, LVA student

When Nelly arrived in the United States from Ecuador in 2002, she came on a tourist visa, unsure of how long she would stay. But she quickly fell in love with the country's energy and possibilities. What she didn't expect was how much language would stand in the way of her goals.

Back home, Nelly had a successful career. She earned a university degree in history and geography and worked proudly as a teacher. "Being a teacher was one of my greatest accomplishments," she says. "I was proud of what I had achieved." But in the U.S., without English, her qualifications didn't seem to matter. "The language barrier made everything harder. I couldn't work in my field, and I struggled to explain myself in everyday life."

Tasks that once felt simple—visiting the doctor, filling out forms, understanding her surroundings—suddenly became difficult and stressful. "I had so many dreams when I came here," she says. "But without English, I felt stuck."

Things began to change when her friend Anita told her about Literacy Volunteers of America. Nelly decided to join and has now been studying at LVA for over a year. She quickly learned that the support of skilled, patient tutors could make a huge difference. "They help me with grammar, reading, writing, and vocabulary," she explains. "They understand my challenges and help me push through them."

She now balances work and classes, often studying at night after long shifts. Despite the demands of her schedule, she never misses a session. "I want to keep improving," she says. "Every class gives me more tools and more confidence."

Her progress has been steady and rewarding. Today, she no longer needs a translator at medical appointments. She can understand conversations in public spaces and feels more confident asking questions and making decisions. "Now I feel more independent," she says. "It feels good to do things for myself."

Nelly's long-term goals include speaking and writing fluently, growing her vocabulary, and returning to meaningful work that reflects her background. She hopes one day to support others who are going through the same experience.

To other adult learners, she offers this advice: "Be patient with yourself, but don't stop. Keep coming to class. Keep studying. You're not alone—and every step you take moves you forward."

For Nelly, learning English is not just about communication. It's about unlocking her potential and honoring the person she has always been.

Nelly proudly worked as a teacher in Ecuador, but when she arrived in the United States in 2003 and decided to stay, she realized the language barrier made everything harder and she couldn't work in her field.

Tutor Training Workshops

Online Training, by Laura Pistoia
Platform: Zoom (sponsored by LNJ)
Tuesdays, 6 to 8 pm
Sept. 2, 9, 16, 2025

Online Training, by Barb Hathaway
Platform: Zoom (sponsored by LNJ)
Mondays & Wednesdays, 6 to 8 pm
Sept. 3, 8, 10, 15 & 17, 2025

Online Training, by Jo Krish
Platform: Zoom (sponsored by LNJ)
Tuesdays, 6 to 8 pm
Sept. 30 and Oct. 7, 14, 21, and 28, 2025

Tutor Support Workshops

"Pick Your Battles: Best Practices for Helping Students with Pronunciation," with Steven Reid
Platform: Google Meet
Thursday, September 18, 2025, 11 am - 12:30 pm

"Getting Started with Writing Prompts," with Dr. Erik Jacobson
Location: Bloomfield Public Library, Conference Room
Thursday, October 9, 2025, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Tutor Study Circle
Facilitator: Cheryl Locastro

Thursday, September 18, 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.



What if we invited them in? Using learners' languages to support English

British Council, August 11, 2025

Written by Huma Hasna Riaz Ahmed, Teacher-Researcher

Could welcoming our learners' other languages into the classroom be the key to greater inclusion and more effective learning? Teacher-researcher Huma Riaz explores how plurilingualism can create richer, more supportive English language learning experiences.

"No Arabic here, please."

"Please don't use Spanish."

Sound familiar?

Walk into any English language classroom today, and chances are you will find more than just English being used - whispers in French, a few words in Hindi, perhaps some Chinese or Lingala. These moments are often seen as distractions or even barriers by teachers who may have been trained to view languages as distinct entities: English is English, and Hindi is Hindi - as if they are songs on the playlist; when one is on, the others are off.

But what if we stopped asking learners to leave their languages at the classroom door and instead invited them in?

What if, even without speaking our learners' languages, we could still use them to scaffold English learning in practical, principled ways?

I grappled with these questions in my recent classroom research at the British Council in the United Arab Emirates, where nine different language backgrounds waited at the door. I found that using students' languages strategically does not hinder English learning - it enhances it.

Why this research?

While plurilingualism has gained ground in educational policy and research, it hasn't made the same impact in paid language centres or classrooms with adult learners. Much of the existing research focuses on public schools, bilingual programmes, or university contexts. [...]

For the full study please copy and paste this link on your browser:

<http://bit.ly/3UPDTOD>

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.)

Daniel Kramer, Tutor

For nearly a decade, Daniel has served as a dedicated tutor with Literacy Volunteers of America, returning to the program again and again because of a simple belief: language matters. He first taught in Kearny, then later in Bloomfield, and most recently returned in February 2024. His motivation has never wavered. "There are so many people in this country who need language skills," Daniel says. "It's a basic need, and I wanted to help." His decision to keep coming back stems from the fulfillment he finds in helping others grow.



Daniel currently works with one student and is preparing to welcome a second. While his tutoring group is small, the impact is lasting. He speaks with admiration about his current student's commitment. "She's very reliable and punctual," he says. "She never misses class and actively participates. That kind of consistency is really impressive."

He acknowledges that teaching adults comes with its own unique challenges. "It's different from teaching younger people," Daniel explains. "Adults are balancing work, family, and responsibilities. They often come to class tired or preoccupied. It can be hard to retain information." But despite those challenges, he's consistently inspired by his students' motivation. "You see their growth. Over time, they gain confidence. You realize how much of a difference even small improvements can make."

What motivates Daniel most is the human connection. "I want my students to know how much I enjoy teaching them," he says. "Their success matters to me—not just in the classroom, but in life."

He's also grateful for the support provided by the LVA team. "I've been really impressed with Sydney and Cristhian," he notes. "Their dedication and professionalism make it easier for all of us to do our best work."

Daniel believes tutoring is a powerful way to make a difference. "I enjoy helping people," he says. "And tutoring is a great way to do that. If someone's looking for a meaningful way to give back, this is it."

His story is a quiet reminder that real change doesn't always make headlines. Sometimes it begins with one student, one conversation, and one tutor who keeps showing up—week after week—with patience, kindness, and a belief in what's possible.