

Giving Immigrants a Voice

WINTER 2018

WHY IS ENGLISH SO IMPORTANT?

We asked our students why learning English is so important to them. The answers they gave ranged from important life goals, like getting a job or going to college, to mundane, every day tasks. This snapshot of answers gives a compelling portrait of life in the United States without English.

For all these reasons and more, thank you for giving them a voice:

“To survive in the USA”

Health

To make a doctor’s appointment, talk to the doctor by myself, understand what the doctor says to me.

Eating

To go shopping, read food labels, read a menu, order a coffee, order food the way I like it.

Getting Around

To read street signs, read a map, ask directions, take public transportation, get a driver’s license.

Getting by day-to-day

To find housing, open a bank account, understand the utility bill, get a haircut, answer the phone, use the internet, write an email.

“When I don’t speak English, everything is difficult.”

Social

To make friends, introduce myself, have a conversation, help other people, understand Americans, share ideas.

Family

To help my children with their homework, attend parent-teacher conferences, support family members who don’t speak English very well.



An ILC student learns to tell time in English.

“All my life I’ve always dreamed to live the American dream, go to school, have a better job, be able to speak, write and listen easier.”

Community and Culture

To read the newspaper, listen to the radio, watch movies without subtitles, understand the laws, become a U.S. citizen.

Confidence

To prove myself, get rid of interpreters, not be too afraid or frustrated to speak, make a better life.

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Moving forward, with your help.

You may remember Yenny from the last Impact Update. She came to the United States from Venezuela with her two adult children in 2015 seeking asylum. She knew no English and started in Level One in April 2016. In December 2016, she was granted a temporary work permit. With her work permit in hand and ever-improving English skills, Yenny was hired by Macy's to work in the merchandise department in April 2017. There she has been responsible for things like receiving merchandise and inventory control.

Yenny started Level Four this year, and in January she was given an offer she couldn't refuse. Macy's promoted her to manager of merchandise in one of its Miami stores. She will be supervising 20 people and, while she will miss Massachusetts, she will be closer to her son who also lives in Miami. Yenny says she is happy about the promotion but sad to leave The ILC. "All I learned was here. I love my school," she says.



Yenny's steadily improving English helped her find a job and earn a promotion at Macy's.

She and her son and daughter are still waiting to hear if their applications for asylum will be granted. Putting it mildly, Yenny said, "It's uncomfortable not knowing yes or no about asylum." She and her children applied for visas through the Diversity Lottery. While it's anyone's guess when they will hear about their asylum case, they will find out in May if they won the lottery or not. They have roughly a one percent chance. Until then, we are keeping our fingers crossed for them.

Educating the next generation

Last fall, tenth-grade students at Weston High School were studying U.S. immigration and enhanced their curriculum with the help of The Immigrant Learning Center. First, two classes of Weston students exchanged letters with adult students in The ILC Next Steps classes. Next, a field trip to The ILC brought their lessons to life. The Weston High students learned about the positive impact of

immigrants from The ILC Public Education Institute staff, and they met face-to-face with their ILC pen pals.

In February, Denzil Mohammed and Rosie Busiakiewicz from The ILC Public Education Institute went to Brookline and presented Immigrants as Assets to fifth-graders at The Park School. The students were enthusiastic learners and full of questions that revealed even younger students can be affected by misleading rhetoric around immigration.



Rosie Busiakiewicz presents Immigrants as Assets to fifth-graders at The Park School.

Through these learning opportunities, The ILC is helping the next generation of Americans understand that immigration is not just anonymous waves of people they read about in history books, it's about individuals in our community today and our shared prosperity in the future.

Just in time

These are turbulent times for immigrants and those who support them. The ILC Public Education Institute is responding to today's challenges with tools and resources direct from top experts.

- 1 When changes in public policy resulted in increased stress for millions of immigrant families, we responded with the webinar **Immigrant Trauma and How to Deal with It**. Social workers, educators and advocates from across the country gained best practices and tools to help.
- 2 When false narratives about security threats were used to justify harmful policy decisions, we responded with the truth that immigrants help to create safer communities in the webinar **Immigration, Safety and Security**.
- 3 As public discourse became increasingly toxic, we responded with the webinar **Making Facts Matter: Immigrants, the Economy and Words that Work** to provide the most effective tools against anti-immigrant rhetoric.

Your support gives hundreds of people across the country access to these live, online presentations. Countless more benefit every day from the wealth of recordings and resources available on our recently re-designed website. To learn more, visit <http://www.ilctr.org/promoting-immigrants>.

A kindred spirit

After 33 years in higher education, Dr. Elena Macias knows a thing or two about immigrant students. She recently found an ally in The Immigrant Learning Center. Although she missed the latest webinar from The ILC Public Education Institute entitled "Making Facts Matter: Immigrants, the Economy and Words that Work," she was thrilled to discover that recordings and resources from the webinar (and all prior webinars) are freely available on The ILC website.

A retiree from California State University, Long Beach, Elena has made it her life's

mission to help educators on campuses throughout California understand how to help their immigrant students succeed. Each month, she delivers her own customized training and curriculum to a new campus, and she plans to use The ILC resources to keep her material current. "Since I plan on using the material," she explained, "I thought I better send a donation. This is excellent material I can integrate into my presentations on campuses. I've already shared it as vital training material with some of my contacts."

Welcome to The ILC family, Elena.



Dr. Elena Macias is using materials from The ILC webinars in her work on college campuses in California.

SAVE THE DATES

The ILC is planning two very special events. Please update your calendars with the following dates:

Thursday, May 3, 2018 The ILC Immigrant Entrepreneur Awards Dinner at Royal Sonesta Boston

Monday, June 11, 2018 20th Annual Golf Classic at Pine Brook Country Club, Weston, MA

For more information, contact Mark Correia at mcorreia@ilctr.org or (781) 322-9777.

The computer lab gets a much-needed upgrade.

The Immigrant Learning Center has been using computers as part of the curriculum since 2000. Students can learn listening, reading and writing in English through self-paced software programs. They also improve their digital literacy including skills like finding information on the internet, writing a resume and applying for jobs. Upper-level students all create Gmail accounts for communicating with their teachers and each other.

Last fall, the Technology Program got a much-needed upgrade with a generous grant from The Adelaide Breed Bayrd Foundation. With the Foundation's support, 30 brand new computers were installed in the computer lab and three projectors were purchased for in-class presentations. Using current equipment ensures that The ILC students are learning the skills essential for today's economy.



Thanks to the Adelaide Breed Bayrd Foundation, The ILC students are learning on current equipment.

Thank You Donors

It is with our deepest thanks that we recognize the following community groups, corporations, foundations and individuals that made financial and in-kind contributions to The ILC between July 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017.

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Special thanks to Mystic View Design for its assistance in the design, layout and production of this Impact Update.

With a little help from your friends...

Jennifer never thought of herself as a fundraiser for The Immigrant Learning Center. Last November, she gave it a try when she created an online appeal for GivingTuesday. “I was very surprised how giving people were,” Jennifer said recalling how easy it was to raise \$500 in just a few days.

Jennifer’s friends and family are very supportive of the work she does. She says, “This is a time when people want to give to organizations like this. People want to be heard. Even if it’s heard by \$10, it makes you

feel a little bit better about your day. I tell my students all the time, people want to help. It’s just human.”

Now, anyone can quickly and easily create an online fundraiser using new tools available on The ILC website. Just go to www.ilctr.org/support-us and follow the instructions under “fundraise.” You don’t even have to wait for GivingTuesday. Your birthday, President’s Day, any day can be a good day to give immigrants a voice.



Jennifer Grehan teaches Next Steps classes at The Immigrant Learning Center and raised \$500 online for GivingTuesday.

In loving memory of Barry Portnoy



Barry Portnoy, husband of ILC Founder and CEO Diane Portnoy, was a staunch supporter and board member of The Immigrant Learning Center since its inception 25 years ago. His support started even earlier when he encouraged Diane to fulfill her dream of starting her own school. He also co-edited the book published by The ILC in 2012, *Immigrant Struggles, Immigrant Gifts*.

Barry founded what is now known as The RMR Group LLC in 1986, and served as

its chairman and a managing director of its parent company, The RMR Group Inc., since its inception.

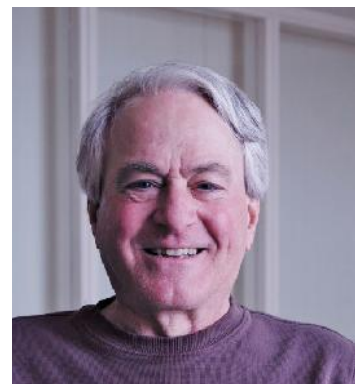
Because of Barry’s generous and unwavering support, many lives have been forever changed for the better. While he is sorely missed, the foundation he helped to build at The Immigrant Learning Center will continue to give immigrants a voice for many years to come.

A passionate “second act” begins at The Immigrant Learning Center.

Last spring, I was looking forward to retirement thinking about how to make the best use of my free time. At the same time, I was increasingly frustrated with the political environment in which immigrants and refugees were being demonized. I retired in April, and by May I was volunteering at The Immigrant Learning Center.

I have worked in a variety of teaching/training/tutoring roles for more than 50 years. I have enjoyed them immensely, but this experience is far more satisfying. It is wonderful to use my abilities to help people who are so appreciative and hard-working.

I’m zealous about this work. After a month, I knew that I wanted to expand my commitment beyond the classroom. I was sure I knew people who would support this mission if they were aware of it. So I created a list of potential donors (e.g. friends, former colleagues, family, etc.) who would likely support The ILC’s mission and who had the financial ability to help. I then approached each person individually by email or telephone and adapted my message to make it personal. The response was overwhelmingly positive, so much so that I will be asking each person for a donation on an annual basis.



Andy Koppel volunteers twice a week at The ILC since retiring.

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