



## Theater classes bring students' stories to life

Our mission is to give immigrants a voice, but how do you help someone who's afraid to open their mouth? Believe it or not, theater can be a powerful tool for English learners to build their English skills and confidence, even the shy ones. The Immigrant Learning Center's students were thrilled to participate in a series of theater workshops led by Vahdat Yeganeh of the American Repertory Theater at Harvard University (ART). The students gained English skills, confidence and ability to share their stories.

The ART program was piloted in the spring with a three-session run that was very positively received by participants. The students were excited to practice English and get the opportunity to share their stories. One student, Xiaojing, said that when she first came to the U.S., "I'm really scared to open my mouth," but while taking the theater workshops, "Sometimes [I] may feel shy or something, but the teachers or the students encourage you to speak louder and louder. It really helps." Her only complaint was that she wished the program had run longer, saying, "I hope we can have a longer session."

Following the success of the first set of workshops, Xiaojing got her wish. A longer, eight-session program ran this summer, culminating in a presentation called *HOME* at the Loeb Drama Center in Harvard Square. Each piece was written and performed by The ILC students about their experiences as newcomers. The ILC is preparing for another ART workshop series this fall. Suadad, another student who participated in the workshops, said that she was ready to sign up again. She said, "I am glad for everyone in ILC. I feel like [a] second family."



Students at The ILC participated in theater workshops to improve their English and confidence.

## Thirty years of giving immigrants a voice

What were you doing 30 years ago? Diane Portnoy was starting a free school for adult immigrants to learn English. A lot has happened since then. The Immigrant Learning Center has surfed every high and survived every low, and we couldn't have done it without supporters like you.

Please join us at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston on November 15, 2022, for a celebration to remember!



# Anniversary

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# New leaders propel The ILC into the future

The Immigrant Learning Center has grown a lot over the past 30 years. So much has changed, but whether we're expanding to meet new needs or looking for a better way to serve, we always keep our eye on the mission of giving immigrants a voice. That's why, when the Director of English Language Programs Karen Oakley retired after 26 years at The ILC, we were both sad to see her go and excited for the possibilities a new generation of leaders will bring.

Karen joined The ILC as a teacher in 1996 when the organization was just four years old. Over the years her responsibilities grew as she took on tasks such as staff development. In 2011, the program had grown to the point it was obvious that The ILC founder Diane Portnoy could no longer effectively oversee everything herself. Karen was promoted to The ILC's first director of English language programs. Through her retirement in June 2022, she did a stellar job of building on the foundation that Diane created. When asked why she stayed so long, Karen said the job was challenging yet rewarding, but mostly she felt it was "work worth doing."

One of Karen's strengths was developing leadership among The ILC staff. Two staff members are stepping up to lead the English language programs, and we're excited to see how they continue to grow and improve the program.



Jessica Senat and Rachel Soule take the reins as the director of English language programs retires.

Jessica Senat is the new director of English language programs. She started as a volunteer at The ILC in 2012 then joined the teaching staff, transitioned to an advisor role and finally her administrative skills led her to become the program coordinator. In addition to her professional insight, Jessica also brings the perspective of an immigrant who grew up in Malden.

Rachel Soule is the new assistant director of English language programs. She began teaching at The ILC in 2018 and was the lead teacher prior to her promotion. Her responsibilities include professional development, curriculum development and oversight of the continually evolving technology program.

When asked about the change in leadership, Diane said, "As much as I am going to miss Karen, I have full faith and confidence in Jessica and Rachel and the rest of The ILC staff. They have already been extremely helpful in producing The ILC's new strategic plan."

# Giving immigrants a voice is an easy decision



Teachers and staff at Everett schools pooled their donations to support students at The ILC.

When Brittany Hay, Everett School District director of English learners, and her staff wanted to do something special for Latinx Heritage Month last October, they asked the superintendent for permission to hold a "Jeans Day." This is a day when teachers and staff may choose to wear jeans to work in exchange for donating \$5 each to a designated charity. They raised \$400 and donated it to The Immigrant Learning Center!

Brittany says choosing The Immigrant Learning Center was "an easy decision," and "I think you guys do incredible, incredible work."

Although The Immigrant Learning Center is located in Malden, we serve students from all over Greater Boston. After Malden, the second largest number of adults looking to learn English come to us from our neighbors in Everett. It's no surprise given that, according to Data USA, 43 percent of Everett's population is foreign-born. Many of our students from Everett have children in the Everett school system. According to Brittany, 35 percent of Everett's school children are English learners, and they received 1,000 more in the 2022 school year alone.

We are immensely grateful to the hard-working teachers of Everett, and we are looking forward to opportunities to work together in the future to help our overlapping families.

# Thank you, donors!

It is with our deepest thanks that we recognize the following donors who made financial and in-kind contributions to The ILC between March 12, 2022 to July 19, 2022. Special thanks to our monthly donors, Facebook fundraisers and those who use giving and matching programs through their employers. Please check with your company's HR department for details.

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The Immigrant Learning Center is a not-for-profit corporation supported by tax-deductible charitable contributions and, in part, by funding from The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Mystic Valley Elder Services, Inc., the Massachusetts Executive Offices of Elder Affairs and the Federal Administration on Aging; and the cities of Malden and Medford, Massachusetts.

# Malden High students share their immigration stories

In order to highlight the accomplishments and stories of immigrants in our own backyard, The ILC's Public Education Institute hosted its first annual Immigration Essay Contest on the topic "How Malden Benefits from Immigration." Students from Malden High School, just a block away from The ILC's headquarters, submitted thoughtful, beautifully written essays. Their work incorporated research, personal stories and powerful depictions of the contributions of immigrants.

Dina Genene took first place for her essay that featured both research on Malden's history as a welcoming community and her personal experience as a daughter of Ethiopian immigrants. Julie Huynh's second place essay detailed her parents' story of immigrating to the U.S. and studying at The ILC, and how their story has influenced her own life. Michelle Dang took third place with an essay that focused on how diversity has strengthened Malden's public schools. Students Linh Le, Saad Mecbah and Hadjar Yousfi received honorable mentions.



The ILC honored six students for their powerful essays describing how immigration benefits their community.

The proud winners received their awards in a ceremony that was attended by families, teachers and even the mayor of Malden. Mayor Christenson said, "I was quite impressed with the ceremony especially the caliber of the essays submitted for this first-ever contest."

We can't wait to read next year's essays. Students have valuable perspectives on immigrants and immigration, and The ILC is proud to share them. Learn more and read the winning essays here: <https://www.ilctr.org/essaycontest>

# Making teachers' jobs a little easier



The new Educator Resource Hub, demonstrated on screen here, features more than 100 resources for teachers of immigrants and immigration.

With everything else on their plates, we admire teachers who make time to learn how to best support immigrant students or incorporate U.S. immigration into their lessons. Over the past two decades, The ILC's Public Education Institute has produced and curated hundreds of free resources to help these teachers, creating another challenge. These assets were available on The ILC's website, but educators needed a quicker, easier way to find what they need.

In response, The ILC developed a new "Educator Resource Hub." These web pages are organized by topics, such as immigration lesson plans or immigrant trauma, as well as by grade level, and can be searched by keyword.

Teachers across the country responded enthusiastically when the Educator Resource Hub was rolled out during The ILC's annual, online conference, "Immigrant Student Success" in July. "This is an amazing resource! Thank you so much," said Jacqueline Padilla DiMirco, an ESOL teacher from New York. The ILC is committed to continuing to produce and curate resources to ensure that the Hub remains up to date, valuable and comprehensive.

**Check out the Hub for yourself here:**

<https://www.ilctr.org/educator-resource-hub>



Or scan the QR code to the left using your phone to visit the Hub

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# Giving Immigrants a Voice Since 1992

## Climbing the ladder, with a boost from The ILC

Learning English is more than the first rung on the ladder to success for newcomers to this country. It's hard to overestimate how important being able to communicate in English really is. Take Algerian-born Rachid for example. Although he studied hard and held down two jobs, he credits the free classes he took at The ILC with his success. "Everything about my story, it's The ILC," he said modestly. "I get all the help that I need from you guys."

The ILC's Next Steps class helped him find a free program to transition to college. From there, he enrolled in Bunker Hill Community College where he graduated with an associate degree in cybersecurity this spring. Rachid plans on pursuing a bachelor's degree in the same field, setting himself up for a promising career in STEM.

Rachid is unafraid of the difficulty of pursuing higher education and an ambitious career while speaking English as a second language. "Challenges, it's like fuel for me," he says. We're so proud of Rachid and students like him who use their time at The ILC as a springboard for a bright future, and we can't wait to see what he does next.



After studying at The ILC, Rachid graduated in 2022 with a degree in cybersecurity.