Creating Equitable Access to Remote Adult ESOL:

Multiple Contexts, Distinct Populations, and Diverse Purposes

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Introduction

More than 11 million adults living in the United States do not speak English well or at all.[1] Most are working-age adults and seek to learn English to secure a better future for themselves and their families. However, publicly funded ESOL programs for adults were able to serve fewer than 700,000 English learner adults in 2018–2019.[2] Waiting lists for classes have been the norm in many English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)[3] programs across the country. Demand could further surge as a result of any comprehensive immigration reform wherein a path to citizenship requires a level of English proficiency. Because the current adult ESOL system of providers does not have anywhere near the capacity to meet such demand, new models are needed. The COVID-19 pandemic, which drove education providers to adopt technology-based approaches faster and at a larger scale than ever before, has uncovered innovative approaches and resources required to support remote ESOL instruction and that might improve and expand capacity to meet growing demand.

World Education, Inc., led a six-month landscape scan in the winter of 2021 to elucidate promising remote ESOL instruction with the potential to reshape the delivery of ESOL in the months and years to come. In response to our national call for participation in the Remote Adult ESOL Learning Project, 52 program nominations were received, reflecting different institutional settings, organizations, student populations, geographies, and approaches, with one program receiving two nominations. Of these, 35 programs were selected for interviews and an analytical review process. During the winter and spring of 2021, the project investigated selected ESOL programs' and learners' needs, experiences, and promising instructional and learner support practices that rely predominantly on technology-rich strategies and tools deployed remotely. These programs represent segments of the adult ESOL ecosystem both with and without WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) Title II funding.

Each of the participant programs integrated some combination of key features identified as leading to ESOL learner success in a remote learning experience. These key features are:

- Student recruitment and onboarding;
- Student access to digital skills, devices, internet and data, and apps;
- ESOL instructional approaches, curriculum and materials;
- Student academic and persistence supports in remote learning;
- Integrated remote support services to meet students' non-academic needs, such as food, filing for unemployment or securing financial assistance, and childcare;
- Professional development and support for staff;
- Tracking program performance and evidence of effectiveness; and
- Program leadership's support for the remote ESOL program design and implementation.

The research team reviewed the interview data, related documents, and websites, with the goal of identifying programmatic and instructional shifts made in response to the pandemic. Through this process, it was clear that 1) innovation and potential to scale looked different depending on the program context, and 2) programs took great pains to ensure that their learners would not be left behind when all instruction became remote.

In this paper, we report on a study of remote adult ESOL delivery through the lens of the varied organizational settings in which they operate and the supports needed to engage distinct ESOL populations (e.g., the elderly, people seeking citizenship, and Deaf English learners). Our purpose is to offer concrete examples of programming and instructional practice that best support equitable access to technology-rich, well-supported ESOL instruction that can be expanded to reach more people.

This brief is complemented by eight program profile case studies; a *Practice and Policy Brief* that highlights key findings and innovative practices and models, names and discusses facilitating conditions, identifies areas where more research is needed, and offers policy recommendations that can facilitate scaling up effective remote instructional models for English language learning; and a *Promising ESOL Practices* document that highlights specific practices and innovations from the programs we interviewed.[4]

I. Remote Adult ESOL Instruction and Supports in Multiple Contexts

Different types of organizations and systems have traditionally responded to adults' need for ESOL for decades. In 29 states,[5] state education agencies manage public funding for adult education, which makes school districts and community-based organizations the most common providers of adult ESOL services. Sixteen states administer their federal and state adult education funding through community and technical college systems. In some regions, library systems offer robust ESOL programming. Unions, such as Service Employees International Union (SEIU), offer ESOL to their members at the workplace or the union hall in many locations across the country. An undetermined number of employers contract with ESOL providers for workplace education for their employees.

Different types of settings come with distinct assets and potentials, as well as constraints, for remote and in-person ESOL. The following discussion focuses on how remote ESOL providers in these settings took advantage of what the umbrella institution could offer for the benefit of their learners. We feature five distinct settings and illustrate selected programs that responded to our call for information and which we interviewed:

a. Community and technical colleges;

b. School districts, charter schools, and community-based organizations;

c. Libraries;

d. Workplaces; and

e. Rural communities.

a. Community and Technical Colleges

Numerous community and technical colleges operate publicly funded, free, non-credit adult ESOL and integrated education and training programs for English learners that now operate fully or partially remotely. Successful delivery of remote ESOL instruction in programs operating in these settings lies in leveraging the strengths and resources of the college, including: extending to non-credit adult learners opportunities to engage in online learning and also access the college's academic and non-academic support services. This significant benefit for immigrants and refugees signals respect and a commitment to equity. It also helps to build a mindset that college is possible.

Leveraging College Resources for ESOL Learners

Colleges that fully embrace their non-credit adult learners make their facilities, career and support services, and device loan programs fully accessible to ESOL learners. For example, to ensure that all faculty were equipped to support learners remotely, **Fox Valley Technical College**'s Center for Instructional Excellence in Wisconsin put in place a two-week, 80-hour training program on remote instruction that the ESOL program faculty attended. Fox Valley, **Northeast Wisconsin Technical College**, and several other colleges across the U.S., extended the laptops and wi-fi hotspots purchased by the college to their non-credit ESOL learners through a device loan program. **Central Wyoming College** allocated CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act funding for the ESOL program's devices. Likewise, **Santa Barbara City College** in California secured CARES Act funding not only to set up a device loan program but also used those funds to pay $200 weekly stipends to unemployed students who attend its intensive Integrated Education and Training program.[7] CARES Act funding largely bypassed other types of adult education programs.

In another example of extending supports to ESOL learners, **Georgia Piedmont Technical College** ESOL staff revamped the Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS) — used across the Technical College System of Georgia — landing pages to be more user-friendly for English learners. The pages become more complex at more advanced ESOL levels, gradually resembling the Blackboard landing page college students encounter. The ESOL program's introductory video to Blackboard can be viewed here.

Innovating and Scaling New Models of Delivery

Innovative colleges embrace new models for delivering technology-rich ESOL instruction at scale. The **Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges** developed an innovative, blended (and, for now, remote) Integrated Digital English Acceleration (I-DEA) ESOL learning program that is used by all community and technical colleges in Washington and is freely available to any ESOL program and state systems nationwide.[8] It is designed to teach English language skills in the context of college and careers for learners who face the largest language gaps. At **Clark College** in Vancouver, Washington, bilingual advisors help ESOL learners create their accounts to access I-DEA through Canvas, the Washington State colleges' LMS. The Chair of the ESOL Faculty and Transitional Studies considers the I-DEA curriculum "phenomenal, well organized, and easy to use."

Holyoke Community College ESOL Program's notable practices include an asynchronous independent learning option, designed to foster metacognition, provide choices, and demonstrate learning.[9]

b. School Districts, Charter Schools, and Community-Based Organizations

School districts and community-based organizations operate two-thirds of publicly funded adult education programs under WIOA Title II. A handful of places, such as Indiana and the District of Columbia, also operate public adult charter schools, one of which, **Carlos Rosario International Adult Charter School**, is featured in our program profiles.[10] Community-based organizations and charter schools sometimes recruit specific groups of learners in the surrounding community, designing instruction and wrap-around supports to meet the needs of those learners. Some of them are profiled in this brief. All programs we interviewed nimbly drew on a range of partnerships and internal resources to restructure programming to sustain services during the pandemic.

Leveraging and Providing Supports in School Settings

Much like community colleges, equity-minded school districts that host adult ESOL programs can be persuaded to extend to adult learners supports similar to those they provide to K–12 schools. For example, the **Lancaster–Lebanon IU13 Adult Education Program** was able to arrange for the IU13 tech department, which supports 20 school districts in central Pennsylvania, to extend its K–12 device

loan program to adult learners and partially manage the loan process in collaboration with adult education advisors and site assistants. **Hubbs Center**[11]**/St. Paul ABE** (Adult Basic Education) similarly used the St. Paul Public Library iPad lending program to provide devices to learners.

New Haven Adult Education in Connecticut leveraged support from its funder, the Connecticut Department of Education, to secure 600 computers to loan out to students. To help learners feel more at ease learning online, digital literacy was embedded in all classes with extra support from a technology educator. Supports were also available to teachers through weekly, virtual professional learning communities and additional paid prep time. Notably, New Haven developed a holistic framework for supporting teachers and students, Supporting Students and Teachers To Succeed Together Framework, adapted from the New Haven Public Schools' World Language Department. When the pandemic hit, leaders recognized that teachers and students alike needed extra encouragement and support, and not just in using technology. New Haven redoubled its focus on social–emotional learning, with frequent check-ins and a case manager assigned to each student. Weekly, virtual student assemblies were instituted to help students feel a part of the larger school community. Additionally, a social worker visited virtual classes regularly.

Tamalpais Adult School in California leverages bilingual career counselors from partner agencies (e.g., CareerPoint, Community Action College of Marin) for its online homecare aide integrated education and training (IET) program for ESOL students. The school was also able to secure Chromebooks to loan to students and to provide one-on-one tech support.

Mt. Diablo Adult School in Northern California has an innovative intake and onboarding process, which is fully online on Zoom. During student orientation, staff use visual tools, such as handheld flashcards, and Google's built-in translation features. Teachers use Google Forms, incorporating visuals, embedded tools, and surveys for many purposes, including: registering students; assessing their English speaking and writing; assessing their digital literacy, using a short in-house technology questionnaire; and identifying other barriers, such as transportation or childcare. The school also offers a self-paced distance learning ESOL program that incorporates various online learning programs, such as BurlingtonEnglish, USA Learns, and Crossroads Cafe, and lessons by level, all of which include short, embedded videos on listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, as well as worksheets and tests.

Innovation in Community-Based Programs

Community-based ESOL programs do not always have an umbrella agency on which they can lean for support for things like devices to loan out, professional development, or federal stimulus funding (e.g., CARES Act). However, they have, perhaps, more freedom to innovate with the program structure and offerings and secure tech tools that are the best match for their target audience of local ESOL learners. The **Chinese Community Center** in Houston, Texas, for example, has developed its ESOL program for people with disabilities using universal design principles, which also serve the needs of other ESOL learners.[12] **Second Start**[13] in New Hampshire designed its remote ESOL program around monthly themes and books that reflect them in collaboration with the New Hampshire Council on Humanities. **Ozark Literacy Council** in Arkansas created online learning communities using mostly free resources. Staff have found the student response to online learning to be overwhelmingly positive and the organization is now planning to continue to expand its online resources and offer blended learning in the future.

To continue its work throughout the pandemic, the **Riverside Language Program** in New York City was able to secure funding for an iPad lending library and an emergency relief fund to help students with job loss, food, and medication. More than 100 students have received support and Riverside has made the availability of this relief ongoing because it has made such a big difference for students. A case manager/counselor meets virtually one-on-one with all students to identify and address key challenges, including digital literacy needs and access to the Internet and data plans. Staff

provide one-on-one training on tech tools with first language translation. Digital skill development is embedded in the curriculum. For each level of instruction, explicit digital learning objectives are articulated, covering the entire range from basic digital literacy to more advanced digital skills. More recently, Riverside has established a permanent remote Digital Literacy Clinic that will be offered to students in all of its class levels. Students will participate in clinic workshops each week and will learn a range of digital literacy skills, from remote learning and computer basics to creating PowerPoint presentations, and other multimedia basics.

This snapshot of remote ESOL programs in school and community settings shows the diverse approaches and resources leveraged to sustain instruction and support throughout the pandemic. More contextualized examples are presented in our case studies, including the journey of how Carlos Rosario International Adult Charter School in Washington, D.C., transformed its classes and support services into remote formats. Also see program profiles of Hubbs Center, Minnesota; Literacy Partners, New York; Literacy Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Second Start, New Hampshire.

c. Libraries

In many communities across the country, public libraries are a community resource for informal and more structured ESOL learning offered free of charge. Library programs are typically not restricted by the many requirements of federal WIOA Title II funding. Their class offerings are tailored to adults' specific English learning needs and interests, not to obtain a measurable learning gain on a specific standardized test. During the pandemic, programs offered through libraries were buoyed by their flexibility to innovate and meet specific needs they encountered in their communities, such as limited English proficient elderly immigrants and refugees. They also leveraged resources through the host library for the benefit of their ESOL students, such as computer labs and funding to purchase devices to loan to students.

Orange County Library System in Orlando, Florida, and **Queens Library**[14] in New York City are two examples of libraries that offer comprehensive, remote ESOL programs, fully or partially funded by the library system. Like so many other ESOL programs, they operated in-person classes only prior to the COVID pandemic, with staff putting in long hours to enable a rapid pivot to remote learning. The Orange County Library System serves more than 1,000 ESOL students annually through its seven options of remote classes, ranging from basic ESOL to business English, English for Families, and conversation groups. The system also employs a social worker, who meets remotely with students one-on-one to assess and address their needs for non-academic supports, such as food and healthcare. The library is part of a coalition of community and immigrant service agencies, which facilitates effective referrals of students for services.

d. Workplaces

Workplace ESOL classes serve many of the workers who did not have the luxury of working from home during the pandemic. Frontline workers and otherwise essential employees were often still regularly going to the workplace, but because of social distancing guidelines, had to rely on technology to support their learning. Programs that sustained instruction creatively blended use of physical space and web-conferencing to bring students and their teachers together.

For example, **Building Skills Partnership** (BSP) in California, is a non-profit labor-management training partnership between more than 90 janitorial employers, more than 60 commercial building owners, the Building Owners and Managers Association of Greater Los Angeles, the Service Employees International Union–United Service Workers West, and the broader community. **The BSP Vocational ESOL and Job Skills** program has traditionally reached more than 500 workers annually at worksites — mostly corporate office buildings, but also universities, factories, medical labs, large event

venues, and airports. Classes had been held during work time, ensuring high attendance and a 95 percent graduation rate from this 70-hour program with curriculum customized to the needs of each worksite. The program is made possible by a mix of funding from corporate and building owners, the State of California, and foundations.

In the shift to remote workplace instruction (ESOL, infectious disease green training, and more), BSP had two main models, depending on the size of a worksite, logistical issues, and the preference of the host building owner and partner employer: 1) workers on paid time at work joined virtual classes from devices, all joining on their own from the individual floors or conference rooms where they work; or 2) workers were brought together socially distanced, masked, and at separate desks in one room at the workplace to receive instruction from a remote teacher being streamed into the room on a screen. Deep bilingual supports, including orientation to use of program tablets and case management with virtual or in-person assistance, were provided to ensure participants could use their devices to participate in the virtual trainings effectively. BSP also recruits learners at worksites to participate in an array of synchronous, asynchronous, and blended remote learning opportunities on topics of health, financial literacy, career advancement, and more. Instructional design reflects the backgrounds of participants and includes a bitmoji of a janitor named Lupe.

A second program that made use of their partner-employer worksites is the **Literacy Council of Montgomery County's (LCMC) LCMC@Work program**. Like BSP, LCMC@Work creates customized curricula to meet the learning needs of the ESOL learners at different worksites, then provides teachers to hold classes focused on academic skill development, embedded digital literacy, and, if possible, an industry certificate. Because of the pandemic, the ESOL programming now happens nearly completely online, though some short orientation activities and CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) testing are offered onsite (with social distancing), if needed. Live instruction is led by a teacher who works remotely from the group of students. Students at one worksite participate together (socially distanced) in a space provided by the employer and using computers and other audio-visual equipment provided by LCMC. The teacher is a guest on the screen. What is interesting about this model is that the teacher can use both the virtual space (breakout rooms) and the actual "classroom space" to construct a range of collaborative learning activities. The set-up also makes it possible for students to work independently online, but, through video conferencing, the teacher can step in and offer support as needed. A staff member from LCMC is always present at worksites to support learners and to troubleshoot for instructors during remote learning. This model could make it possible for one teacher to work with multiple "classrooms" of students from different worksites at the same time.

Sustaining employer partnerships and continuity of workplace ESOL is also possible through completely online and remote programming. **National Immigration Forum's English at Work**[15] is a national initiative offering remote industry-contextualized English language training that helps companies in urban, suburban, and rural communities across the country build stronger career pathways for their employees. It uses a unique instructional model consisting of 40 percent class group instruction — initially in person but now also virtual/remote — and 60 percent self-paced online modules accessible on desktop and mobile devices. Operating in multiple workplaces in eight states, it is designed for scaling.

e. Rural Communities

Remote learning can be particularly challenging in rural communities that lack broadband internet access. However, where high-speed internet service exists and is accessible, remote learning programs can reach and retain more rural immigrants through use of multiple communication and educational technologies. Alternatively, where internet access and bandwidth are concerns, programs that create low-fi instructional activities have succeeded in continuing services throughout the pandemic.

An example of a program located in a rural but well-connected region is **Central Wyoming College's ESOL Program** in Teton County, which serves numerous adults, many of whom have moved to the area from the Tlaxcala region of Mexico. Many students cannot attend face-to-face classes because of employment obligations, lack of reliable transportation, and other factors. When ESOL classes became remote because of COVID-19, they no longer had to cross a high mountain range to get to classes, which increased the program's reach, student persistence, and completion rates. Thanks to the program director's advocacy for the ESOL students' needs and the college's emphasis on equity, all ESOL (and ABE) students utilized a college email account and were allowed to check out a Chromebook if they needed it, and, when in town, students could access the college's computer lab, which remained open through the COVID pandemic. The college also made wi-fi available in its parking lot.

The program uses primarily the I-DEA curriculum developed in Washington State,[16] linked to the college's Canvas LMS. "Students really like I-DEA; it's active learning. It's easy to follow and user-friendly. Instructors like it because they don't have to spend as much time prepping. Canvas allows us to build a shell we can modify and carry over to next semester so that teachers are constantly able to tweak, add, and share content and don't have to start everything from scratch," says Program Director Michael Konsmo. USA Learns is also offered as an independent learning program for students. The Remind texting app is used to send positive reinforcement and check in with students who have missed class.

Wisconsin's **Fox Valley Technical College** also covers a wide rural region. Before remote classes, the college struggled to reach rural students who work split shifts, to get enough enrollments to form a class, and to find qualified instructors. Through remote ESOL, the college has been able to reach more rural ESOL students and in areas that it could not serve before. Instructors use BurlingtonEnglish and Kaltura videos, which students access off the college's Blackboard LMS. As at many other programs, Fox Valley's instructors use the Remind texting app as well as phone calls and emails to support student persistence. They are proud of their 75 percent retention rate. They also rely on higher-level students as peer mentors/leaders to work with lower-level language learners who speak the same native language.

Missoula County Public Schools' Adult Education Academic Success Program serves a mostly rural three-county area of Montana. Because of a lack of internet access in the area, this program had not previously emphasized remote learning options for its learners. Despite this challenge, the program managed to sustain hours, with slightly fewer learners, and deliver instruction in which learners persisted. This was accomplished in a rural area with a diverse community of learners, ranging from refugees, many of whom had interrupted and limited past formal education, to family members of local college faculty.

Teachers were given ample, paid prep time to experiment to find strategies and resources and then to regularly meet, collaborate, and support each other. An important product of this collaboration was the development of a low-fi strategy for instruction that didn't require lots of bandwidth for learners, most of whom were on phones and lacked bandwidth to stream video. To accomplish this, teachers would scan and upload reading materials or print activities into Google Docs or project them during a Zoom session using a document camera. Throughout the instruction, the teacher would take a screenshot of the projected image, and annotate it to emphasize or explain. Teachers also kept records of student questions and after class would write answers as an annotation on the screenshot. Finally, these annotated documents were sent to students after class to help them study.

II. Remote Adult ESOL Instruction and Supports for Distinct Populations and Purposes

Our research uncovered several examples of programs successfully delivering remote ESOL programs to distinct groups of learners, including:

a. Adults seeking to pass the citizenship exam;

b. Adults seeking training and employment;

c. Deaf students;

d. Elderly immigrants;

e. Emergent readers;

f. Parents with young children; and

g. Students with disabilities.

Some of these groups of learners may have been considered traditionally "hard to serve" because of their need for specialized curricula, additional supports, or alternative modes of instruction. We hope that the programs we showcase below might serve as inspiration for expanding these program models and instructional approaches to reach more learners with special needs.

a. Adults Seeking To Pass the Citizenship Exam

> **"Many people need help with citizenship and the program cannot offer classes to all. Offering access through YouTube solves this access issue."**
>
> **Citizenship Teacher, Neighborhood House, Milwaukee**

Remote adult ESOL learning clearly can be leveraged to support immigrants in meeting citizenship language requirements. While we did not seek submissions about citizenship preparation programs, we received a few examples of programs that creatively leverage technology and partnerships to support immigrants in citizenship exam preparation, generally in conjunction with remote ESOL.

The **Neighborhood House in Milwaukee** is a good case in point. Staff developed a Citizenship Corner on YouTube channel, knowing that students go to YouTube to learn new things. The channel includes beginning-level ESOL lessons and videos, some with Burmese and Karen interpretation. It is open to anyone with access to the internet. This YouTube channel has increased the program's reach well beyond Milwaukee. Students like it for its 24/7 access to additional practice at times that are convenient for them. The staff believes that the simple beginning-level approach of these videos makes them unique and useful.

Literacy Pittsburgh[17] also uses YouTube to support learners seeking to pass the citizenship exam. The channel contains instructional videos accessible to students on a familiar and free platform that requires low literacy skills and is accessible from any device. The videos are used as part of synchronous online, hybrid or face-to-face classes, as well as independently, to supplement practice of English language and citizenship skills.

The Savannah Technical College ESL Program in Georgia connects its ESOL program to its six-week citizenship classes by, for example, inviting immigration officers from the U.S. Citizenship Immigration Services to its remote classes to answer questions about citizenship requirements and to walk students through the process and the 400 form. They also conduct mock citizenship interviews with students.

b. Adults Seeking Training and Employment

An integrated education and training (IET) program model responds to adults' need to gain marketable skills and better employment as efficiently as possible. The IET model, with specific, required program features, is baked into the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title II that drives most of publicly funded adult education. WIOA (§463.35) defines IET as "a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement." Its ESOL counterpart is Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE), which requires an IET component as well as civics instruction. An IELCE program is arguably an even more complex undertaking, which may explain why IELCE programs have not proliferated. A report to Congress[18] on the WIOA Section 243, covering program year 2016–2018, illustrates that while students are being enrolled in IELCE programs at growing numbers, very few students are participating in IET within the IELCE funding. Independent of federal funding, other, less restrictive types of integrated, vocational ESOL programs also exist.

Tamalpais Adult School in California continued offering its award-winning 35-hour, online Home Care Aide training program for intermediate and advanced English learners throughout the pandemic. This IELCE program's impact has been especially recognized during the COVID pandemic, as demand for in-home health care grew, making the Tamalpais Home Care Aide Program one of the most popular courses at the school and in the region. Using an I-BEST (Integrated Basic Skills and Educational Training) model, the class is co-taught by a credentialed ESOL teacher and a registered nurse. Co-teachers draw on Relias training videos and curriculum units, available through the school website, along with links to additional resources.

Though many programs have struggled with providing assessments remotely, Tamalpais has created a battery of assessments on Google Forms. Because many students don't use email, teachers have found the Remind app to be useful for communication with students. Enrollment options include completion of a Google form or communication by phone with bilingual office staff. Remote or on-site reading assessments are available. School-issued Chromebooks are available for students who need them, along with the option to come on-site to review content and complete assessments.

Online presentations and demonstrations directly related to the workforce are important components of this program. Guest speakers (nutritionist, psychologist, occupational therapist, hospice worker, Alzheimer's care specialist) make presentations and give demonstrations related to their area of expertise. Bilingual career counselors from partnering organizations share current information about career pathway opportunities in the healthcare field. The class culminates with a job fair, where representatives from 6–8 home care agencies speak to the class, aiming to recruit these job-ready students as home care aides.

The embrace of a "growth mindset" — not only in learners but also in staff — undergirds this successful remote training program. During the pandemic, staff had access to monthly tech training with a district instructional coach and 10 additional hours of paid professional development focused on increasing technology skills and instructional integration.

Fox Valley Technical College in Wisconsin combined the occupational interests of ESOL students with the needs of food service and culinary arts employers in the area. In this IET model, an ESOL instructor and a culinary arts instructor team teach Food Service Production Program courses and guide students through these courses on the pathway to the Food Service Production Technical Diploma and Culinary Arts Associate Degree Program. The program also provides advising, tutoring, peer mentors, and materials and supplies for courses; these critical supports have ensured the ESOL students' success in postsecondary coursework, all of which was moved online. Fox Valley Technical College made this possible by loaning students Chromebooks and implementing a project-based

learning approach in which students created cooking shows from their kitchens, demonstrating the techniques and competencies of the course. Here is a sample video of one of the projects.

Several other colleges are implementing IET/IELCE programs. **Savannah Technical College** in Georgia offers a six-week Entrepreneurship IET program for English learners taught remotely by an instructor from the college. Students are connected with local businesses for mentoring and learn to develop a business plan. **Santa Barbara City College (SBCC)**[19] in California created and implemented intensive online IET programs for personal care attendant, green gardener (landscaping), and construction for adult ESOL students unemployed because of COVID.

c. Deaf Students

Customized ESOL classes for Deaf English learners are rare, so where one exists it was critical to keep it running throughout the pandemic. **ThinkSelf** serves refugee and immigrant adults living in Minnesota. The services are critical, as some of the refugees and immigrants coming to the U.S. have little to no proficiency or even knowledge of commonly signed languages, and are, consequently, completely dependent on a few family members with whom they can communicate through personalized and home-constructed sign language.

Though some of ThinkSelf's students were educated in their home language and became deaf later in life, many students were deaf as children and in places where there was no sign language, so they have limited awareness of language structure or connection between items in their environment and a lexicon. ThinkSelf provides Chromebooks for all students, coupled with digital literacy instruction. ThinkSelf's past use of technology to support its Deaf learners made the organization well-poised to respond to the pandemic with remote programming. Staff discovered that some of the shifts they made were improvements to existing practice and plan to retain them. For example, they improved their online intake form to support independent use by incorporating ASL (American Sign Language) support videos. *(See Figure XX.)* They now rely on Zoom instead of conference calls on video phones to connect students with ASL interpreters. Using Zoom has made it easier for them to implement their highly personalized approach to instruction and has made it possible for students across the state to connect with tutors and teachers, without having to travel.

d. Elderly Immigrants

Elderly immigrants with limited English proficiency face many barriers related to navigating U.S. systems, such as accessing healthcare. They are often caretakers of their grandchildren and sometimes struggle to understand and bond with their Americanized grandchildren, who may not be proficient in the native language. Many also lack digital literacy, which isolated them further during the COVID pandemic. Our search has elucidated two programs that have served elderly immigrants well. Each is providing language instruction through content and activities considered highly relevant to their elderly students.

Queens Library in New York City has been offering a ten-week, remote program called **Grand Family Fundamentals**. Through a collaboration of internal and external partners and funded by the library, grandparents attend the program with one or more grandchildren in their care, often while the parents are working. Grand Family Fundamentals programming includes virtual ESOL classes, digital literacy workshops, coping skills workshops, and games and crafts projects that the elders do with their grandchildren with guidance from an instructor. The grandparents and grandchildren bond, learn, and have fun as they do activities together. Coping skills workshops are led by the New Americans program at the library and other partners have offered workshops on topics such as Alzheimer's disease, nutrition, heart health, COVID, and yoga, in Mandarin, the most common home language of the learners. In addition, the library employs case managers who provide trainings on how to secure rental assistance, obtain food through SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), apply for the citizenship test, and advocate for themselves.

Because the class is predominantly attended by Chinese immigrants, communication outside of class takes place through WeChat, a familiar app to them. WeChat is usually already on their phones to communicate with family in China and elsewhere. Learner support specialists help the elders to log onto Webex and Google Classroom for lessons. A lot of pre-training is necessary before classes begin.

Another organization also serving primarily older Chinese learners is Houston's **Chinese Community Center**, which features a Senior Community Service Employment Program. Through the program, students receive employment assistance and ESOL instruction, with an emphasis on the workplace. The popular program serves a large population of Chinese and Vietnamese speakers who need help getting back into the workforce. Bilingual instructors offer classes via Zoom for 8–10 weeks, six hours a week. Learners also work independently using USA Learns to help them reach the required number of contact hours to post-test for learning gains.

e. Emergent Readers

Among ESOL learners, emergent readers are adults who are not literate in their native language or English. These are adults who never had an opportunity to attend school. Emergent readers typically are not familiar with the alphabet of any language. They may not be able to sign their name or even hold a pen, though they may own a smartphone. Emergent readers present a challenge in multi-level ESOL classes because they need more direct instruction and support on their journey to literacy than adults who are literate in their native language.

The Refugee Education Program (REP) run by Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona, has succeeded with emergent readers by drawing on a proven instructional approach, the Language Experience Approach, and by carefully using technologies with which students already felt comfortable. Most of the program's students test below NRS (National Reporting System) Level 1 and have no formal education in their native countries. They own smartphones but have very limited digital skills. They do know how to use WhatsApp and utilize it to communicate with family abroad. REP staff built a remote program drawing on digital tools with which students were familiar. They also mailed out teacher-made learning packets to each student, including pencils and other supplies. They made instructional videos on ESOL and digital literacy and posted them on WhatsApp. To bridge any difficulty accessing learning materials, they offered supplemental one-on-one tutoring. REP focused on building community among students and used the Learning Experience Approach online to create shared learning experiences. All classes are contextualized to English for New Americans and key industries in Pima County.

The college enabled REP to loan out iPads, laptops, and hotspots to students and made its technology staff available for troubleshooting. REP was able to hire a part-time student success coach who is a refugee herself and who is instrumental in helping students tackle digital issues and access food, community resources, COVID testing, and healthcare. Staff acknowledge that they "worked very hard to rebuild the learning community online and meet our students where they were at." All this helped these emergent readers transition to ESOL classes on Zoom. Remarkably, student enrollment and attendance increased when the program went remote. The REP staff note, "Attending classes gives people new hope."

f. Parents with Young Children

Immigrants comprised 23 percent of all parents of children ages 0–4 and 24 percent of all parents of children ages 5–10 in the United States. Approximately half of immigrant parents of young and elementary school-age children in the United States — roughly 6 million adults — reported speaking English less than "very well" in 2014-2018[20] The key to serving these learners well is embracing a holistic, two-generation approach to education and collaborating with other organizations to implement it.

One such program is the **English for Parents** program in New York City, a partnership between Literacy Partners,[21] early childhood educators, and local healthcare providers, with a strong emphasis on health literacy, access to healthcare, and child development and parenting strategies. The program defines its approach as resilience-based and trauma-informed. The instructional program aims to foster the "five C's" of resilience, also within the remote format: *competence; confidence; community and connections; contribution* (exercising leadership with yourself, in the class, and the community, and recognizing your own contribution and that of others); and *critical thinking*. The partners have successfully kept and even deepened their approach and thematic focus in the new remote program model.

Chinatown Community Development Center builds and manages affordable housing in San Francisco and started a Women's ESL and Life Skills Program in 2011 at the request of a social worker. The program is designed to address the needs of a large community of socially isolated, low-income, mostly Arabic-speaking women, primarily mothers living in public housing. Given that the women juggle childcare and family responsibilities, the remote ESOL program uses a flipped instructional model that enables participants to study on their own time. The ESOL teacher introduces a topic and grammar point on the program's YouTube Channel and through the Remind texting tool. Later in the week, the class meets synchronously on Zoom and builds off that. Arabic-speaking and bicultural staff are also available to support learners and connect them to wraparound supports. This virtual "flipped" classroom approach has increased attendance. Additionally, the program reports that supporting the women with technology access and opportunities to develop digital literacy has helped participants improve their technology skills and learn how to find and vet information on the internet. An additional class meeting is offered every week in which the teacher reads a story meant for parents to listen to later with their children. Women practice reading aloud, discuss the story, and get a copy of the reading and audio so they can listen to it throughout the week with their children using the Easy Stories platform.

g. ESOL Students with Disabilities

Some adult ESOL learners experience difficulty in making expected progress in learning English. In some cases, this difficulty may be due, in part, to learning disabilities. Whether these learners are supported in person or remotely, it is critical that teachers understand their particular learning challenges while being alert to other possible explanations for why the student is struggling with learning. To accomplish this, programs can incorporate screening procedures into the intake process and train teachers on how to modify instructional strategies.

The Chinese Community Center in Houston, Texas, designs and delivers remote ESOL programming in a manner that supports integrating learners with disabilities, particularly learning disabilities, into group instruction. The predominantly Asian students are typically reluctant to discuss learning disabilities, such that without careful screening their learning difficulties might go unnoticed in the placement process. This program's intake process occurs over the phone and includes prompts to elicit the range of services and support that learners may need. Based on the screening, teachers are guided to modify instructional strategies. Live remote class sizes are kept to 10 in order to help personalize each student's learning experience and provide extra attention and space to process and practice speaking English. Program staff have observed that other students pick up when peers need support and are generally comfortable helping with prompts or giving extra time for students to contribute to discussion.

The Wyoming Central College's ESOL Program also relies on screening to support successful remote instruction for students with learning challenges. The program uses Powerpath to Education and Employment, a screening designed to also identify underlying learning challenges in the areas of vision and hearing functions, attention, reading encoding and decoding, and visual and auditory processing issues. Instructors use the screening as part of their intake process. Translation is also

available. Through the college, the program has access to a licensed professional, who can talk with students about accommodations for their learning and/or physical challenges and can provide mental health counseling as needed. The program is able to deliver these approaches remotely through the college's virtual platforms.

III. National and Statewide Models

Considering scale as a goal for choosing programs and strategies to highlight is challenging given the diversity of the constraints and affordances evident in adult ESOL programs across the country. However, there are a handful of large-scale models that have proven popular and hold the promise of further scale-up. These include:

a. Integrated Digital English Acceleration (I-DEA);

b. English Innovations;

c. Pennsylvania Distance Learning Project;

d. English at Work/National Immigration Forum; and

e. Intercambio.

a. Integrated Digital English Acceleration (I-DEA)[22]

The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges developed an innovative, blended (and, for now, remote) Integrated Digital English Acceleration (I-DEA) ESOL learning program that is used by all community and technical colleges in Washington and is freely available to any ESOL program and state system. Designed to teach English language skills in the context of college and careers for learners who face the largest language gaps, it consists of 31 week-long instructional modules with videos and scaffolded activities.

I-DEA uses a "flipped" instruction model, wherein students complete online modules to learn, studying concepts before coming to class. They then use classroom time to apply and practice what they've learned. In-class instructors and peer mentors guide and enhance skill acquisition.

Topics range from navigating the community and information literacy to professional communication, stress management, job exploration, and interview skills. The I-DEA curriculum and related audiovisual materials are available as Open Educational Resources on Canvas Commons and OER Commons for any program or state system to use.

b. English Innovations[23]

English Innovations (EI), developed by OneAmerica in Washington State and now coordinated nationally by the National Partnership for New Americans under its English as a Gateway Initiative, is a model that rests on three pillars: English language, digital literacy, and community engagement. The curriculum, tailored to meet students where they are at with their skills set and rooted in leadership development, story sharing, and organizing, now includes an explicit focus on race and racism. The curriculum also integrates a range of online learning tools, including BurlingtonEnglish, Duolingo, We Speak NYC, and YouTube. The community engagement components of the curriculum address a continuum of engagement, starting with basic awareness of community resources, moving to involvement in community campaigns, and ultimately leading to organizing and advocacy.

As the 2020 report issued by One America notes, "One of the hallmarks of EI is a curriculum that moves from the personal to the political as students tell their stories, and then as a group reflect on common experiences. We invite students to connect these experiences to larger concerns about social justice for immigrants and refugees as well as for other disenfranchised groups. In all of the classes, we seek to link the classroom to the community by drawing on students' strengths and experiences."

Five English Innovation sites operate across the country under the auspices of immigrant rights coalitions, often in partnership with community-based ESOL providers. Throughout the EI sites, programs have quickly adapted to meet students' needs and have been able to continue community engagement through virtual events, some even put on by students themselves. This model of power building comes full circle as former students are integrated as tutors, workshop leaders, and overall community leaders within the organizations.

c. TIU11/Pennsylvania Distance Learning Project[24]

Tuscarora Intermediate Unit (TIU 11) is a regional educational service agency meeting the needs of the public and private schools, personnel, and students in three Pennsylvania counties. TIU 11 has supported distance education in Pennsylvania's ESOL and Adult Basic Education programs for decades. Through mixed-level classes, students from all over the state participate in a purely online program that takes place through a video web-conference application. Students take an online orientation module, are interviewed by phone, and assessed on CASAS, after which they are placed in cohorts. The program does not accept low-beginning level learners. Classes meet for one hour twice a week for three-week sessions. Each teacher works with around 16 ESOL learners (up to 20 total) for 15 hours for each session. Students also do independent work using resources, such as BurlingtonEnglish and Khan Academy.

d. English at Work

Please refer to the program profile of National Immigration Forum's English at Work, a national workplace ESOL program model.

e. Intercambio[25]

CC English is a new platform developed by Intercambio to provide an opportunity for adult English learners anywhere in the country to take ongoing, online, one-on-one classes with a live volunteer teacher. CC English uses Intercambio's own Confidence and Connections book series (Intro and Levels 1–5) as a curriculum that the tutor uses online in PDF format, while the student receives a hard copy in the mail. In the spirit of Intercambio's goal of creating a relationship-based, online ESOL learning system, each lesson ends with a conversation that is meant to get tutors and students sharing cultural perspectives. It is an opportunity for volunteers anywhere in the country to receive training online and a curriculum that aims to prepare them to be "great, culturally humble English tutors." This new technology platform is designed to be scalable and sustainable partly through fees charged to the student ($25/month) and tutor ($30 one-time fee). It is now being piloted nationally, based on Intercambio's more than 20 years of experience providing similar in-person programming in its home state of Colorado. Currently available by invitation only, it is launching to the public in July, 2021. The program goal is to "open doors for students and volunteer teachers to connect and to share perspectives, experiences, and knowledge in ways that bridge differences, heal biases, and advance cultural learning through powerful two-way learning."

Conclusion

Never before has such a massive change in how education is delivered taken place in a matter of a few months. The programs featured in this paper demonstrate how ESOL providers in diverse settings adapted and even transformed their services to remote formats driven by a commitment to provide continuous access to education for their students. They stand as examples of the responsiveness, resilience, and dedication of the field of adult ESOL. They point the way to scalable program models that can reach and teach more people. The Remote ESOL Project Team at World Education is grateful for the opportunity we had to learn from them and shine the light on their efforts. We hope that others also draw inspiration and ideas for their programs and policies from the programs featured by this project.

[1] 2018 American Community Survey

[2] 2018–2019 Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Grant Program Fact Sheet https://aefla.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2021-01/aefla-factsheet.pdf

[3] We use the term English for Speakers of Other Languages, or ESOL, rather than English as a Second Language (ESL) out of recognition that many English learners already speak more than one language, just not English.

[4] They are all available on edtech.worlded.org.

[5] https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/adult-education-basic-grant.pdf

[6] Ibid.

[7] See case study at https://edtech.worlded.org/remote-esol-project.

[8] See Section 3.a. for more information on I-DEA.

[9] See case study at https://edtech.worlded.org/remote-esol-project.

[10] See case study at https://edtech.worlded.org/remote-esol-project.

[11] See case study at https://edtech.worlded.org/remote-esol-project.

[12] See Section II.g. for more detail.

[13] See case study at https://edtech.worlded.org/remote-esol-project.

[14] The Queens Library's ESOL program for the elderly is described in Section II.d. below.

[15] See case study at https://edtech.worlded.org/remote-esol-project.

[16] See section 3.c.

[17] See case study at https://edtech.worlded.org/remote-esol-project.

[18] Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education, under Section 243 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Retrieved 16 April 2021 from https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/octae-ielce-report-to-congress-final-508.pdf

[19] See the program profile of the SBCC School of Extended Learning.

[20] Hofstetter, Jacob and Margie McHugh. (2021). Immigrant and U.S.-Born Parents of Young and Elementary-School-Age Children in the United States: Key Sociodemographic Characteristics. Washington, D.C.: Migration Policy Institute.

[21] See case study at https://edtech.worlded.org/remote-esol-project.

[22] For more information, contact Jodi Ruback, I-DEA Program Administrator, jruback@sbctc.edu.

[23] For more information, contact Melissa Holguin Pineda, Language Access and Leadership Development Organizer, at the National Partnership for New Americans, melissa@partnershipfornewamericans.org.

[24] For more information, contact Lisa Bailey, Distance Learning Coordinator, lbailey@tiu11.org.

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