

# Worcester ESOL Network

## 2016-2018

*Common goal: Ensure people are learning what they need to – to proceed through needed levels to English proficiency*

*Many approaches – greater continuity does not mean uniformity*

### **ESOL Assessment: Spring 2016**

*Conducted by Worcester Community Connections Coalition with funding from Greater Worcester Community Foundation*

#### Goals

- Understand the greatest barriers that low-income parents encounter when attempting to learn English
- Identify the functioning capacity of the current ESOL classes being offered in the city

#### In order to...

- Address the barriers that exist in the current system
- Facilitate future efforts regarding the coordination and facilitation of ESOL resources in Worcester

#### Methodology

- Interviews with 16 ESOL providers
- Focus group discussions with adult English learners

#### Major Findings

- All providers use different placement tests and curriculums, or use none at all
- Over a third of providers have waiting lists
- Most teachers are required to have certain qualifications
- Classes are offered at various times and locations
- Childcare, scheduling, and transportation are consistent challenges

*“We can’t exist here if we don’t know English.”*

*-Adult English learner*

### **Worcester’s Adult English Learners**

- 34.7% of the population of Worcester 5 years and over, or about 60,000 residents, speak a language other than English at home.
- A little less than half of those, or 16.7% of the total population, self-identify as speaking English less than “very well.”
- About 8,000 total households are considered “Limited English Speaking” households, meaning no member of the family 14 years and older and over speaks only English or speaks English “very well,” accounting for 11.6% of all households in Worcester.

*“Insights from the 2012-2016 American Community Survey Estimates,” prepared by Katelyn Duncan, Worcester Public Library, 12/21/17.*

*I want to learn English “to make friends, to go to all meeting in my kids’ schools, and share my opinions in any matter.”*

*-Adult English learner*

## ESOL Network Convening, February 2017

*20 ESOL providers in attendance*

Revisited 2016 findings

Identified priorities

- Work more closely as a network
- Database of programs
- Central common referral source or place learners can apply
- Public education about what it takes to learn another language
- Common placement
- Common system of measurement/ common measures for assessing proficiency

Vision for Adult ESOL in Worcester

- Coordination, communication, sharing of resources and information, collaboration
- Identify barriers and increase accessibility of English classes
- Wraparound services: childcare, transportation, mental health, and bridge to employment
- Emphasis on community-building, safety, and empathy
- Localized, adaptable, and flexible programs

*People who have contact with the ESL community know better, but people without that contact too often have misconceptions of immigrants and refugees. They are hardworking, intelligent, beautiful people who have so much to contribute. And, learning English and making your way in a new country is hard! I wish native English speakers could all experience what it is like to be a non-native speaker in a foreign country.*

*-ESOL Instructor*

March 2017-Present: Bimonthly network meetings and collaboration

- Regular maintenance of database of ESOL programs (print and online at [worcesterwelcomes.wordpress.com](http://worcesterwelcomes.wordpress.com))
- Work on consensus around understanding of class levels
- Implementation of ESOL Navigator with funding from Greater Worcester Community Foundation

## Worcester ESOL Providers

ACE: African Community Education  
Angel's Net  
Ascentria Care Alliance  
Bachson Academy at Assumption College  
Clark University ALCI Community ESL Program  
Community Builders of Plumley Village  
GEmS (Global Empowerment Services, Inc.)  
Latino Education Institute of WSU—Club E  
Literacy Volunteers of Greater Worcester  
Notre Dame Educational Bridge Center  
Marie Anne Center at St. Bernard's Church  
QCC: Community Bridges Program  
QCC: ESL for credit  
QCC: Adult Community Learning Center  
Southeast Asian Coalition  
St. Peter's Church  
Training Resources of America  
Urban Missionaries of Our Lady of Hope  
WARM (Worcester Alliance for Refugee Ministry)  
Worcester Housing Authority  
Worcester Public Library  
Worcester Public Schools Adult Learning Center  
Worcester Senior Center  
Worcester State University Intensive English Language Institute  
Worcester State University Urban Action Institute  
WRAP (Worcester Refugee Assistance Project)