



ELL Programs: A Lifeline for Non-English-Speaking Patrons

Farnaz Goravanchi spoke little English when she relocated to the U.S. in 2012. A quality control/lab manager in the food industry in Iran, she wanted to further her career here. She connected with the Library's English Language Learning (ELL) program and was matched with a tutor for resume development and practice interview sessions. After two months, she obtained part-time retail employment and a short time later, full-time employment in a food services lab.

Farnaz is just one example of the many people who use the Library's ELL resources to develop their English language skills.

Who Participates?

The 2020 census data shows that between 10-11% of all Clifton Park-Halfmoon residents speak a

language other than English at home. Many want to improve their English skills so they can build a better connection with the community through work or friends. They find out about the Library's ELL programs and resources through the school system, local immigrant and refugee advocacy groups, or by word of mouth.

Once they connect with the Library, they are added to the ELL program's email list, which notifies more than 300 adult English language learners in the Clifton Park-Halfmoon/greater Capital District area about upcoming programs.

"We help our community's ELL students improve their language skills, prepare for the U.S. citizenship interview and exam, develop American cultural knowledge, understand local

ELL Program Coordinator Ali Witmer

I've worn many hats, but I am and always will be a teacher at heart.

I completed my undergraduate studies at Colgate University and then a master's degree in education from Wheelock College in



Boston. I taught elementary school for more than a decade, and focused my graduate studies on literacy and language development.

I'm so honored to be charged with helping the library's ELL program continue to grow and meet the needs of our community. Knowing our program is a safe and welcoming space for those who often feel lonely and isolated is the most satisfying aspect of it for me.

ELL Classes and Programs

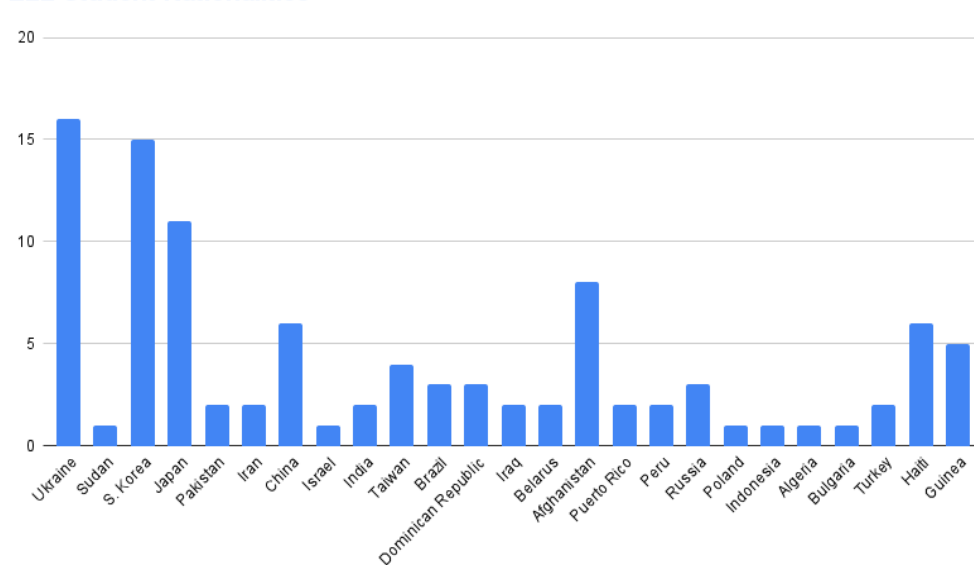
The Library offered 215 ELL and citizenship programs (averaging 15 students per class) in 2023. This represents nearly 1,200 hours of English instruction. The classes focus on conversation, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, American culture, and current events. Classes include:

- Beginner English
- Community & Conversation
- Intermediate English
- U.S. Citizenship Class
- ELL Computer Class

Contact cph-ell@sals.edu to sign up for a class or to volunteer.

New classes begin April 16!

ELL Student Nationalities





More Resources for English Language Learners

Thanks to the support of the Friends of the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Public Library, we can provide the following resources to English Language Learners:

News for You and News for You Online: Available in newsprint and online, this newspaper offers easy-to-read news stories that can help you learn to read, write, speak, and understand English. Seven new stories are posted each Wednesday, along with audio, exercises, and puzzles. Users can listen to each story in full or sentence-by-sentence. Go to [cphlibrary>research>newspapers](#) and use code **601657** to access.

Ellii.com Student Account: A comprehensive English learning platform with options for digital and in-person learning. Ellii's ready-made lessons are designed to engage ELL Library students at all levels. Materials on Ellii are continually adapted to reflect recent events, changes in language, and student needs.

Language Learning Materials: The Language Learning section is on the Library's first floor, on the far left section of the main staircase back wall. Call numbers **421-428** contain materials that can be checked out by library card holders.

Not a library card holder? Please contact ELL Coordinator Ali Witmer at cph-ell@sals.edu to request help applying for a library card.

resources, and build self-confidence to be successful and comfortable in a new community," says Alison (Ali) Witmer, ELL Program Coordinator at the Library. "There is no better feeling than to know we've helped someone realize their goals."

One of the most requested features of the program is the opportunity to simply practice their conversational skills, she says.

"Many of our adult students have had at least some academic English experience. They've done worksheets and can read English well, but lack the experience of listening to and speaking with native English speakers," she says. "That's why I always tell potential volunteers that you don't necessarily need to have an education background to be a successful volunteer, you should just appreciate *the gift of gab!*"

The Volunteers

The Library's ELL programs are dependent on volunteers who commit their time and experience to helping participants. They come

from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, including retired education professionals or human service professions, such as medical, library, or even law enforcement fields.

They tend to be people who interacted with the public and miss it, Ali says. "They like connecting with people who need help."

Becoming a volunteer is easy—just contact Ali, fill out an application and attend one orientation session. There are also training opportunities for those who have never taught before.

There are 20-30 active volunteers in the program, but more are always welcome as the need for the program continues to rapidly grow.

"I tend to think all of us—introverts and extroverts alike—are soothed by connecting with others, and that's really what this program is about," Ali says. "One encounter at a time, our volunteers are making the Clifton Park-Halfmoon community a friendlier and more accessible space."

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