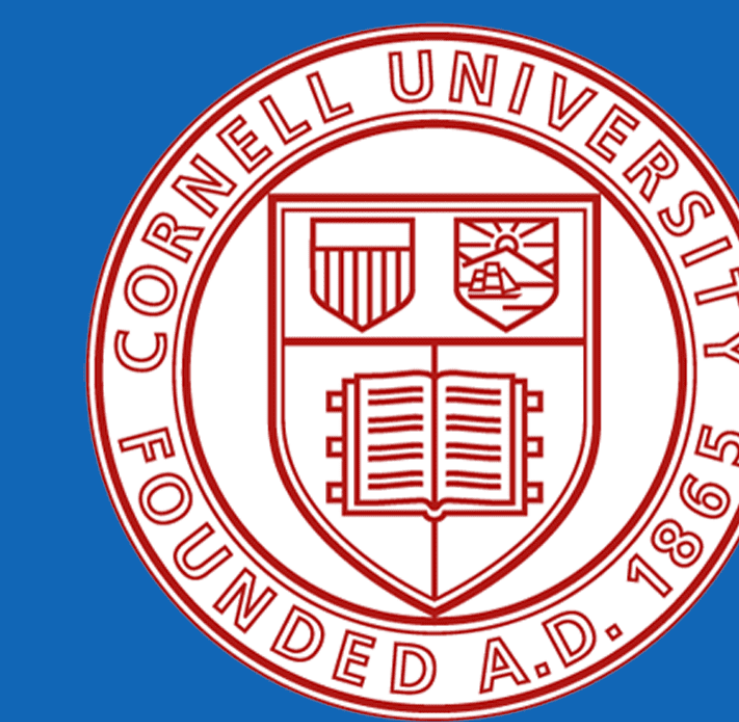




# THE OCEAN COUNTY COMMUNITY ADULT LANGUAGE SCHOOL: BUILDING SELF-EFFICACY THROUGH SOCIAL SUPPORT AND EDUCATION



Jasmine Guarin (jmg492)

## BACKGROUND

The acculturation process that recent arriving immigrant families face is often overlooked due to the assumption that they should strive for assimilation. Immigrant families often experience hardships integrating into their host culture due to the anxiety, social isolation, and frustration that stems from the inability to fully express themselves in English. Community Ambassadors, a nonprofit organization that supports the social development of immigrant families in Ocean County, aims to cultivate a sense of belonging for community members through creating opportunities to increase English proficiency.

## INITIAL STEPS: FORMING PARTNERSHIPS

Rate your comfort level on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is the least and 5 is the highest. Place a check mark in the corresponding box for each question.

Question	1	2	3	4	5
1. How comfortable are you with the level of English you speak?	22	10	1	0	0
2. How well do you feel you are learning English at school?	15	13	1	0	3
3. Rate the quality of the ESL program at your school.	3	4	15	3	8
4. How patient are people with you when you try to communicate in English?	23	9	1	0	0
5. How would you describe your relationship with your family?	12	15	4	1	1
6. Have you experienced racism or discrimination due to your English proficiency?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
Indicate which of the areas below limit your growth for each of the questions.					
	Difficulty with Language	Social Withdrawal	Difficulties w/ social & peer interactions	Finances	Isolation & Insecurity
7. Which would describe the reason you may not be successful in school?	28	0	0	19	0
8. Which area limits your future plans to attend college or university?	14	0	0	19	0
9. Which area has impacted your life the most upon arriving in this country?	7	6	10	5	5
10. Please share additional comments about the areas indicated.					
11. Do you feel you are at risk of being deported by ICE at any moment?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
	27	6			

Rate your comfort level on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is the least and 5 is the highest. Place a check mark in the corresponding box for each question.

Question	1	2	3	4	5
1. How comfortable are you with the level of English you speak?	22	4	0	0	0
2. How well do you feel you are learning English at school?	17	10	3	2	1
3. Rate the quality of the ESL program at your school.	5	20	8	0	0
4. How patient are people with you when you try to communicate in English?	20	10	1	2	0
5. How would you describe your relationship with your family?	17	15	1	0	0
6. Have you experienced racism or discrimination due to your English proficiency?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
Indicate which of the areas below limit your growth for each of the questions.					
	Difficulty with Language	Social Withdrawal	Difficulties w/ social & peer interactions	Finances	Isolation & Insecurity
7. Which would describe the reason you may not be successful in school?	21	0	0	10	0
8. Which area limits your future plans to attend college or university?	11	0	0	22	0
9. Which area has impacted your life the most upon arriving in this country?	5	0	8	20	0
10. Please share additional comments about the areas indicated.					
11. Do you feel you are at risk of being deported by ICE at any moment?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
	21	8			

Through conducting needs assessment surveys, **language difficulties and financial insecurity** were the top two debilitating struggles ESL students identified as they planned education goals. We partnered with Ocean County College (OCC) to offer a Saturday ESL program to adults 18 years and older. This free six-hour program included books, placement tests, and Workforce Training in the areas of Computer Literacy and Customer Service. OCC was unable to continue to offer the program on Saturdays due to teacher availability. The class was taught using a college level framework where students received three-hour instruction in one classroom by the same instructor, who was not an ESL certified teacher. The course was taught at a rapid pace, suggested by the book used. Many students struggled with this model.

## OUR RESPONSE TO THE NEED

To meet the needs of recent arrivals who possess little to no English, and considering their educational background, we created our own ESL Program. The framework we use reflects the pacing and scheduling of elementary school programs due to many Ocean County immigrants having a third grade education or below.



## OUR PURPOSE AND GOAL

We view the social development of our immigrant neighbors to be our personal responsibility and we are led by the vision to serve as the face and voice of the immigrant population living in Ocean County. Our purpose is to identify and address the needs in our region to cultivate a sense of belonging by valuing our immigrant neighbors' individual and cultural worth. Our goal is to create social conditions for growth by facilitating access to basic public community services, promote leadership development, and building self-efficacy for all immigrant communities through enhancing language proficiency.

## KEY PARTNERS



## THE PROGRAM

Through a Community Needs Assessment Survey, four common problems were identified within existing ESL programs in Ocean County: **weekday hours, accessibility, and childcare.**

**Hours:** The 10 week semesters occur in the winter (January), spring (April), summer (July), and fall (September). The course fee is \$150 per person (includes placement tests) and books are sold separately. Classes are held every Saturday from 9am-12pm.

**Accessibility:** Partnering with a centrally located church to host the ESL program, introductory grammar, vocabulary, reading, and pronunciation courses are provided to 150 adults while simultaneously tutoring 30 children/youth (8-11 years old) in English and mathematics each semester. Course instructors are elementary teachers specialized in speech and literacy development, which is essential for improving literacy skills, pronunciation, and accent.

**Childcare:** Childcare is offered for children starting from 18 months until 11 years old. Tutoring sessions and our youth mentorship program are led by student interns from Princeton University, Cornell University, OCC, and local ESL high school students to build leadership skills in our next generation.



## NEXT STEPS

Through feedback provided during focus group sessions, families who have taken our courses have expressed interest in preparing their youth for college while also learning English as a family. We aim to expand our ESL program by creating the **Strengthening Families ESL Program** where ESL students 14-18 years old and their family are able to learn English together. Along with ESL instruction, these students and families will create an educational plan based on their interests and goals. Assistance in writing college essays, navigating the college application and financial aid process as an immigrant, writing cover letters/résumés, and other career/job resources will be provided.

