

# English as a Second Language Task Force Study December 2007



The Business Council  
of Fairfield County

*Strengthening Businesses. Strengthening Communities.*



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# ESL Task Force Study

## About JobsNet and the ESL Task Force Study

The region has both a labor and a talent shortage that is projected to grow significantly over the next 15 years. The high cost of living and severe highway congestion limit the region's ability to recruit workers through relocation or longer distance commuting. While we are fortunate to be an international immigration magnet, the arriving workforce does not fit easily into the available positions in our knowledge-based, technology-driven economy. Most importantly, most immigrants have a lack of English language proficiency and a poor skills fit with well paying jobs in the local labor market. The problem is exacerbated by fragmented media markets, limited mass transit services, and municipally-focused support networks (community-based organizations, libraries adult education programs, etc.) in a regionally-focused labor market. The impending retirements of "boomers" will make the problem even more difficult to solve.

JobsNet is a managed network of resource organizations that will help employers recruit, train and retain employees. Its activities are directed by the JobsNet Council, a team of employers, training providers, educational institutions, constituent services groups, and public agencies.

The JobsNet initiative links resources and opportunities to the needs of employers and workers. Three industries have been identified as having immediate and growing labor needs: retail, health care and financial services. In the short term, improved information sharing will reduce some of the current labor market inefficiencies. Longer term, the initiative will seek to build a workforce community culture that views all vacancies as entry points into a regional career ladder, while training and education opportunities will be tailored not just to assure entry-level proficiency, but also to enable upward mobility.

**More information is available at [www.coastalfairfieldcounty.org](http://www.coastalfairfieldcounty.org) and at [www.businessfairfield.com](http://www.businessfairfield.com).**

## About One Coast, One Future

The JobsNet Council is a component of the *One Coast, One Future* initiative, a cooperative effort between the public and private sectors in Fairfield County, Connecticut. Its focus is to stimulate economic growth, job creation and individual economic opportunity by linking the Coastal Fairfield County region's business centers in a new and stronger alliance for their mutual benefit. The *One Coast, One Future* initiative is a partnership of the Bridgeport Regional Business Council and the Business Council of Fairfield County in cooperation with the Greater Norwalk Chamber of Commerce.



The *One Coast, One Future* initiative of Coastal Fairfield County is funded through a grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). SBA's funding should not be construed as an endorsement of any products, opinions, or services. All SBA-funded projects are extended to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis.

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## **One Coast One Future JobsNet ESL Task Force Study**

### **Executive Summary**

The basis for this study is the unprecedented growth in the immigrant population in Fairfield County during the past decade. Dozens of languages are spoken in our region's homes. Yet only one language, English, is required to succeed in the best paying jobs and in our fastest growing industries. On the other hand, immigration is one of the solutions to our growing labor shortage in Fairfield County. Immigration holds the potential human capital we need to make our economy grow and thrive. But without acquiring fluency in the language, individuals and their families will be blocked from achieving a career and a future for them and their family. We see the support of immigrants to learn English as a win-win proposition for employers and residents alike.

### **Goals and Objectives**

- Conduct an estimate of demand for ESL: instruction in Fairfield County's One County One Future communities;
- Measure and analyze the capacity of the region's institutions to meet the ESL demand;
- Survey alternative methods of instruction and best practices nationally and regionally that provide ESL instruction to immigrant populations.; and
- Determine strategies that can be implemented to deliver ESL fluency programs to the largest number of immigrants – both employed and those seeking employment -- in a timely and cost-effective manner.

### **Background**

Adult literacy is a significant issue in Connecticut and across the country with critical social and economic development implications. The problem facing Connecticut and Fairfield County is not illiteracy in the traditional sense, or the inability to read or write at all. Instead, the challenge is low literacy levels, the lack of career competencies that adults need to succeed in the new knowledge-based economy and the lack of English language proficiency for the foreign born residents who comprise nearly 19% of the county population.

This report focuses on English as Second Language (ESL) in identifying supply, demand, capacity, and instruction delivery in the 20 One Coast One Future communities. Taken as a whole, Fairfield County boasts one of the most effective ESL instruction delivery systems in the state in terms of numbers of participants and waiting lists. The ESL courses are provided by local Adult Education programs as well as local community colleges and community-based nonprofit organizations. The intent of this study is not to overhaul current ESL programs, but rather to build on and expand the excellent nucleus that exists in order to offer English fluency to a majority of foreign-born residents in Fairfield County. This expansion of ESL programs can be accomplished with increased funding and commitment from the state and private sector.

Adult education programs in the cities of Stamford, Bridgeport, and Norwalk alone provided ESL services to more than 4,500 individuals in 2006. The Stamford Adult Education program is the largest in the state. According to the Connecticut State Department of Education annual performance review of Adult Education programs, the ESL Beginning

Literacy level saw a significant improvement – ESL adults showed a 10-point gain in listening and an 8 point gain in reading -- while the ABE (Adult Basic Ed.) high Intermediate level declined. The report also indicated that 52 percent of student respondents indicated that they entered a postsecondary education program following basic literacy courses. On the basis of a combined foreign-born population of more than 90,000 for those three cities, there is still significant unmet need for ESL instruction. A major barrier to meeting that need is increased funding to be able to provide additional hours for students and more classes at more venues throughout the state and the communities of Fairfield County.

### **Summary of Findings**

- **U.S. Census Bureau Data for Connecticut foreign-born residents** indicates that 12.9% (452,358) of state residents were foreign born as of 2006. That represents a growth of 61% in the foreign-born population since 1990 and a 21% increase since 2000. Connecticut ranks 11<sup>th</sup> in the United States for having the highest percentage of foreign-born residents.
- **U.S Census Bureau data for 2006** indicates that the foreign-born population in Fairfield County is 18.7% .The data also shows that the largest increases in foreign-born residents in the state occurred in Fairfield County since 2000: Stamford, 37,210, 32% increase; Bridgeport, 35,826, 26% increase; Norwalk, 20,699, a 26% increase; and Danbury, 26,667, a 34% increase.
- **“Speak English less than very well”** - In terms of ESL instruction demand, US Census data for 2006 for Congressional District 4 which encompasses most of Fairfield County, indicates the percentage of those who “speak English less than “Very well,” is 11.8% of the population of those over age five or nearly 77,000.
- **“Linguistic Isolation”** - The U.S. Census Bureau defines this category as households where English is not the primary language and no person age 14 or older in the household speaks English “very well.” The American Community Survey (ACS) reports that statewide 5 percent of households are linguistically isolated. But in Bridgeport, that number is 17%, one of the highest in the state. In Stamford and Norwalk, the percentage of linguistically isolated households is 12% and 9% respectively. The “Immigration in Connecticut” report, released by Connecticut Voices for Children, suggested that children in these households might need more specifically targeted help learning English since no one in their homes can help them linguistically.
- **Survey of One Coast One Future communities** - A 2007 ESL Task force survey of existing ESL instruction in the 20 communities of the One Coast One Future region in Fairfield County found that only half of the communities offered language fluency programs and approximately 10,500 students were enrolled. If we compare those numbers with the 77,000 in the 4<sup>th</sup> Congressional district in the speaking “English less than very well” category, that is an indicator of significant demand for more ESL instruction. The Task Force also conducted a more targeted survey of ESL instruction in Bridgeport, Norwalk and Stamford. While the results of the survey indicated that the Adult Education programs in each community were offering a large number of classes and substantial enrollment, the instruction is still only reaching about one in eight or nine foreign born who are listed in the census category of “not able to speak English well.” It was agreed that additional funding is needed to provide more classes at more sites throughout the communities. (See Appendix B for ESL program data excerpts from seven programs in Stamford, Bridgeport and Norwalk)

- **ESL Funding sources** - The primary sources of funding for ESL programs in Fairfield County are from the state and local governments. The federal government provides grants through its state Adult Education and Family Literacy Act awards. In fiscal year 2005, Connecticut received almost \$5.8 million in grants for ESL programs. As of 2005, state, local and federal funding for adult literacy services include ESL instruction has remained constant at about \$40 million for the entire state for several years despite the growth in the immigrant population and the increase in demand for ESL instruction.
- **Adult Literacy Report on State programs** - According to a state legislative report that surveyed Adult Literacy Programs including ESL, in 2006, it found a program seriously flawed. Among other things, the system lacked a program czar; it had no central information directory that could identify types of instruction needed, clients being served or service providers; The report also noted that where the community college system and public school system both served the same students, there was a lack of coordination with each other. The bottom line, the report suggested, was a need for more funding in order to make the adult education and specifically the ESL program more cost effective.

Besides inadequate funding, there are additional barriers to the delivery and instruction of ESL in Fairfield County. They include:

- Reluctance of employers to offer on-site ESL or give workers time off to attend classes. Success with employers in this regard often depends on company CEO or senior management support rather than industry-wide practices. (See Best Practices – Business Council of Fairfield County’s ESL program with the Sheraton Hotel, Stamford)
- Lack of appropriate classroom space. More alternative class sites need to be created, i.e., Laundromats, churches, storefronts, day labor pick up points, etc, that would be available on nights and weekends for ESL instruction.
- Lack of qualified ESL instructors, volunteers and part-time instructors needed for one-on-one instruction and small group interaction.
- Lack of available time for workers to take classes; funding needed for portable CD-take home English language programs, video instruction, and access to online ESL resources. (See Best Practices section)
- Need for case management for ESL students with social service issues, including on-site childcare; transportation; (some providers offer bus tokens to students for transit at night); and multiple job requirements.
- Special funding needed for ESL students moving from free public school/adult and continuing education classes to community college to help students attain advanced English language skills that are required to enter the labor market and obtain a living wage job.

## **Best Practices**

### **a) National**

- **“English Works”** - Santa Ana, CA. an initiative launched by the Santa Ana Chamber of Commerce in 2005 to provide ESL fluency to 50,000 residents by

2010 at a cost of \$4.5 million. Partners in this initiative included the business community, city government, the school district and the Rancho Santiago Community College District that provides some 70,000-instruction sites for immigrants who comprise 50% of Santa Ana's population. The program offers free ESL classes and interactive language kits to use at home.

- **"El Sol" - Jupiter (FL) Neighborhood Resource Center** – The center opened in September 2006 in response to controversy resulting from crime and safety issues involving day laborer congregation sites. The center offers a facility where employers can hire workers in an orderly manner and also provides workers with ESL and computer training. Workers receive identification cards and are classified according to their skills and English proficiency. A lottery takes place several times a day. Five workers at a time are placed in a standby hiring pool from workers are assigned to employers.

#### **b) Regional and Fairfield County Best Practices**

- **"Neighbors Link", Mount Kisco, NY** – This organization was founded in 2000 to meet the needs of 3,000 Latino immigrants who represented more than a quarter of Mount Kisco's total population. When issues emerged involving immigrant day laborers congregating on street corners waiting to be hired, concerned members of the community raised private funds to convert a masonry warehouse into a community center initially designed as a facility for day laborers. Today, Neighbors Link serves all immigrant residents, offering a variety of social and education programs including ESL instruction; day labor registration and hiring; computer skills training and other services.
- **Stamford Day Laborer ESL Project**– In August, 2007, **Stamford Partnership**, in conjunction with voluntary instruction design and delivery by Susan Benthall Business Communications, began offering an outdoor, two hour, once a week ESL class to a "drop-in" group of day laborers in a protected, "No-Hassle" pickup zone under Rt. 95. Thus far, the class has been held four times, and the attendance has fluctuated around 20 to 30 individuals. The teaching materials are designed to meet the needs of day laborers – focusing on questions the workers need to ask employers. Each student receives a 3-page handout summarizing the class content that includes words in English, Spanish and illustrations that even those with literacy issues in Spanish can understand.
- **ESL Instruction, Hospitality Sector, Stamford** – In 2005, the Business Council of Fairfield County facilitated a 4-month long English Language training program for employees at the Sheraton Stamford Hotel. The initiative was funded by the state of Connecticut and the ESL instruction was delivered by UCONN, Stamford, College of Continuing Studies. The key to the program's success was the ability to deliver the instruction at the work site and the management's enthusiastic support of the program. The management agreed to pay employees their hourly wage while attending class two hours a week. Despite the limited class time provided to workers, hotel management said the program had improved communication between staff and customers and raised productivity.
- **Careers for Life Academy, Bridgeport Hospital** - Bridgeport Hospital is starting an on-site School for Employee Education and Development (SEED) program in early 2008. Eligible employees will take classes weekly in a

variety of education and skill areas, including ESL (English as a Second Language); (Literacy Volunteers to provide instruction); GED; basic math, grammar and reading skills; basic computer skills; and medical terminology.

- **ESL College - Community nonprofit partnership** - In an effort to bring more ESL resources into the community, Norwalk Community College (NCC) partnered with CTE in Stamford in 2006 to offer NCC's non-credit ESL program to 48 adults from Stamford South End and waterside communities. NCC provided instructors and offered five ESL class levels to enable students to take a class designed for their needs. The instruction began in early 2007.
- **Pilot program for linguistically isolated households** – A language program (Spanish and English) called "Lee y Seras Family Conversations" (Read and You Will Be) was piloted in Danbury in 2006 involving 60-70 Hispanic families with much success. The program consisted of bringing parents and children, birth to age 6, to a 2-hour workshop once a week for six weeks to read and interact with their children to develop sustained habits of reading and interaction. Families were encouraged to speak to their children in Spanish and English. Program was developed and funded by Scholastic, Verizon, and the National Council of La Raza, the national Latino civil rights organization.

## Recommendations

- Make a request to the state to increase public funding earmarked for ESL instruction, particularly in Fairfield County that has the highest foreign-born population in the state – 18.7%.
- Train additional ESL teachers, paraprofessionals, and retirees for ESL training throughout Fairfield County. Recruit volunteers and ESL teachers from "Teach for America."
- Collaborative effort on behalf of Fairfield County's business, philanthropic, nonprofit, and political leadership to form a county-wide ESL Instruction Council to identify new and innovative methods for delivering ESL instruction to their local immigrant populations.
- Develop an Adult Literacy website to assist individuals in finding appropriate programs and how to navigate the Adult Education System throughout the 30 communities in the Southeastern Regional Workforce Investment Council area of responsibility within Fairfield County. (See Appendix A)
- Create and implement pilot ESL instruction programs for incumbent immigrant health care workers at Fairfield County hospitals. The ESL Task Force conducted an informal survey of local hospitals to gauge their interest in participating in such a program. Norwalk and Greenwich hospitals and Griffin Hospital in Derby indicated an interest in ESL training for their housekeeping and service staff. Norwalk Hospital has approximately 100 workers on their housekeeping staff and there is room onsite for instruction. Greenwich Hospital has 30-50 workers who would be interested in taking ESL classes.
- Design and implement an advertising and marketing campaign – "Get Ahead with Better English" – for the cities of Stamford, Norwalk and Bridgeport that commit to

improving the English fluency of 50,000 local immigrants for a three-year period. Instruction will be provided at local churches, community centers, at Norwalk Community College and Housatonic Community College campuses, as well as at business facilities with an immigrant workforce. Initiative could be modeled on the Santa Ana, California, "EnglishWorks" ESL program listed under Best Practices section, which was funded at \$4.5 million for four years.

- Identify local organizations or nonprofit groups that would be committed to establishing a permanent facility that would provide ESL instruction, and social services support for the day laborer immigrant population in a specific community in Fairfield County.
- Create a pilot program too begin to reduce "linguistically isolated" households by offering free ESL programs for immigrant mothers with infant children. By encouraging mothers to speak English to their newborn infants, the cycle of linguistic isolation in the household can be broken. The action also reinforces a basis for the continuing study of the language by the parent and the child, and hopefully begins to reduce the expense of language remediation.
- Design and implement a labor market feeder system to help foreign-born students who have achieved speaking and reading proficiency in ESL classes to move into employment sectors with greatest entry level skill set needs. System would provide data pathways to indicate specific skills by sector i.e., health care, business and professional services, retail sales, hospitality, manufacturing, and information services, etc. The data would also include salary ranges for each career path matching specific skill level, i.e., entry level, mid range or high range skills.
- The need for additional funding to support foreign-born students to make the transition from Adult Education ESL courses to local college ESL credit programs. Many foreign-born high school graduates need additional ESL courses to expand their proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in English to achieve success in postsecondary degree courses. Without achieving advanced fluency in the English language, immigrants will be denied the opportunity to earn a living wage in a variety of workforce sectors and enjoy a productive future for themselves and their families.
- Expanded utilization of online learning programs to deliver ESL training to foreign-born residents with home computers or access to public libraries in Fairfield County. One existing resource is the Connecticut Adult Virtual High School (CT AVHS) program that helps high school students earn credits toward graduation by participating in mentored online courses. ESL courses should be added to the curriculum. Another potential online resource is Charter Oak State College, a distance-learning postsecondary institution that is considering offering ESL online with an industry specific focus.

## **I. Overview**

Adult literacy is a significant issue in Connecticut and across the country with critical social and economic development implications. The problem facing Connecticut and Fairfield County is not illiteracy in the traditional sense, or the inability to read or write at all. Instead, the challenge is low literacy levels, the lack of career competencies that adults need to succeed in the new knowledge-based economy and the lack of English language proficiency for the foreign born residents who comprise nearly 19% of the county population.

This report focuses on English as Second Language (ESL) in identifying supply, demand, and instruction delivery in the 20 One Coast One Future communities. Taken as a whole, Fairfield County boasts one of the most effective ESL instruction delivery systems in the state in terms of numbers of participants and waiting lists. These ESL courses are provided by local Adult Education programs as well local community colleges and community-based nonprofit organizations. The intent of this study is not to overhaul current ESL programs, but rather to expand on the excellent nucleus that exists in order to offer English fluency to a majority of foreign-born residents in Fairfield County. This expansion of ESL programs can be accomplished with increased funding and commitment from the state and private sector.

Connecticut's Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee, in a report released in December 2006, found that the need for adult basic skills and ESL services far exceeds current program capacity. It's estimated that 181,000 more adults would participate in the adult education system if services were available. At current funding levels, the report found, the system serves approximately 32,000 adult learners a year. Nearly half of those students are in Fairfield County. Adult education programs in the cities of Stamford, Bridgeport, and Norwalk alone provided ESL services to more than 4,500 individuals in 2006. The Stamford Adult Education program is the largest in the state.

According to the Connecticut State Department of Education annual performance review of Adult Education programs, the ESL Beginning Literacy level saw a significant improvement – ESL adults showed a 10-point gain in listening and an 8 point gain in reading -- while the ABE (Adult Basic Ed.) high Intermediate level declined. The report also indicated that 52 percent of student respondents indicated that they entered a postsecondary education program following basic literacy courses. On the basis of a combined foreign-born population of more than 90,000 for those three cities, there is still significant unmet need for ESL instruction. A major barrier to meeting that need is increased funding to be able to provide additional hours for students and more classes at more venues throughout the state and the communities of Fairfield County.

The state report said a goal of reducing unmet need by 10% of over five years through expanded adult education services would take more than a 30% increase (\$12.5 million) in the current system's annual budget. Expanded ESL instruction for foreign-born residents of Fairfield County will also have a direct impact on the labor force. Norwalk Community College (NCC) provides workplace based ESL programs that are requested and funded by local employers. Since summer 2006, NCC's ESL program has worked with nearly 200 individuals in a variety of programs funded by employers or private grants.

Increased employer support for providing on-site ESL classes will be needed to raise worker productivity and offer the county's immigrant population the opportunity to achieve a living wage and career promotions to provide a brighter future for themselves and their families. To support those goals for foreign-born residents, high schools and local colleges in

collaboration with regional employers need to design and implement a workforce feeder system that identifies educational and workforce skill requirement pathways for immigrant workers in labor sectors that are in greatest demand.

One existing resource that could be utilized to expand and enhance ESL instruction to immigrants is the Connecticut Adult Virtual High School (CT AVHS) program. The program currently allows adult high school students to earn credits toward graduation by participating in mentored online courses that could deliver ESL instruction at various fluency levels. Public libraries throughout Fairfield County already offer online ESL instruction. Charter Oak State College, a distance-learning postsecondary institution in New Britain, is considering an ESL course offering that could have industry specific components.

### **a.) Introduction**

The Southwestern Connecticut economy is changing at an unprecedented pace, influenced more than ever by the needs and trends of the global economy. The ability to innovate and respond to change in a timely manner requires vision, perspective, and an understanding of these trends based on the most current data. As Southwestern Connecticut's Workforce Investment Board, The Workplace, Inc., is charged with guiding the region's workforce development systems. To that end, The Workplace constantly examines regional workforce dynamics and engages partners in crafting innovative solutions to the most urgent issues facing individuals in the labor force and employers seeking qualified labor. In the Workplace's 2006 Community & Needs Assessment report, it identifies several of the major trends combining to drive change in Southwestern Connecticut:

**The aging workforce.** The Southwest's workforce is old and aging and large numbers of highly skilled workers are expected to retire in the near future. With the first of the 77 million baby boomers turning 60 in 2007, the U.S. Bureau of Labor estimates 10 million jobs will go unfilled in 2010 as the first wave of boomers retires.

**The surge in immigration.** More than 50,000 immigrants arrived in Fairfield and New Haven counties in the first half of this decade. These immigrants have become critical to keeping certain sectors of the Southwest economy afloat, but with focus and support they also hold the potential to propel the region forward.

**The widening gap between the haves and the have-nots.** The fastest growth in the Southwest is in high-wage occupations such as Financial Service and Health Care and in low-wage occupations such as retail and hospitality. Combined with a serious academic achievement gap and a significant decline in better paying manufacturing occupations, this has prevented many Southwestern residents from enjoying the benefits of one of the wealthiest regions in the world.

**Technology.** In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we live in a rapidly changing, global information age where the basic understanding of technology is critical to survival or advancement in almost any field. Too many of our region's workers simply do not have the necessary technology skills to succeed.

**Innovation.** Due to global competition, innovation is essential to creating a thriving economy. The regional workforce investment system must partner with employers to devise innovative approaches to using the workforce to increase competitiveness.

**Regional and Global Integration and Growth Sectors.** Southwest Connecticut is a vital part of the dynamic tri-state metropolitan area which is a major global center,

especially in finance, health care, and the arts. Cross-commuting and economic integration with New York is up substantially as major financial firms have migrated to the southern portion of the region. Leveraging this competitive advantage will be a major key to increasing economic success.

The Workplace's Community & Needs Assessment report also examines the sectors driving the regional economy and creating the most jobs – financial services, health care, leisure and hospitality and retail – and what needs to be done to support this growth and ensure that it benefits residents of the region.

- Financial Services
- Health care
- Leisure and hospitality
- Retail

Manufacturing, though in continued decline in numbers of jobs, remains a major force in the regional economy. The report confirms that significant issues remain – namely deficits in basic technology and workplace skills of a large segment of the population; the growing population without English language fluency and skill gaps and shortages specific to certain growth sectors.

The following report addresses one solution to building a more competitive and dynamic workforce for the Southwest region.

## **b.) Study Background**

This initiative is part of the One Coast One Future project that seeks to stimulate economic growth, job creation and individual economic opportunity by linking the Coastal Fairfield County region's business centers in an alliance for mutual benefit. The One Coast One Future project is funded by a Small Business Administration grant secured by Congressman Christopher Shays.

A consortium formed by the Bridgeport Regional Business Council and The Business Council of Fairfield County, the One Coast One Future initiative seeks to spark new and renewed growth through cooperation and venue-appropriate efforts. The interdependency of Bridgeport, Stamford and Norwalk is based upon infrastructure, commutation patterns, housing cost differentials, employment trends, communications, Long Island Sound coastal locations and share health care providers, higher education institutions and transportation services. The combined region is statistically among the wealthiest in the country. Thirty years of economic growth in Stamford has come to a virtual halt in the face of structural issues that must be addressed. Meanwhile the struggling city of Bridgeport is increasingly recognized as having great potential and is gradually building momentum for sustained economic growth. Norwalk, the third largest city in the region, has developed a strong retail sector and a rapidly developing corporate office building sector, yet faces many of the same issues facing Stamford and Bridgeport.

One Coast One Future's long-term plan consists of eight key objectives. Four of those objectives are managed by the Bridgeport Regional Business Council, including developing a comprehensive economic development strategy; a marketing campaign focused on development and housing opportunities; and cultural and entertainment opportunities; and encouraging growth of minority and women-focused business development groups.

The Business Council of Fairfield County is managing four additional objectives including creation of a growth strategy for jobs in the healthcare sector; enhancing the quality of the region's workforce through improvement and expansion of services from local colleges and universities through establishment of a Higher Education Council, creation of a Wi-Fi network in city centers and a linkage of employer needs with available employee skills through the JobsNet program.

The "ESL Task Force" initiative is one of the JobsNet programs managed by The Business Council of Fairfield County.

### **c.) The One Coast One Future Region**

For purposes of this study, the One Coast region is comprised of 20 communities covering 462.3 square miles that include Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Bridgeport, Darien, Derby, Easton, Fairfield, Greenwich, Monroe, New Canaan, Norwalk, Oxford, Seymour, Shelton, Stamford, Stratford, Trumbull, Weston, Westport, and Wilton. These communities form the service area of The Workplace, Inc, the Southwest Connecticut Workforce Investment Board area of responsibility, due to this study's emphasis on workforce development.

Although this narrow geographic definition has been chosen for research purposes, the One Coast region is best understood in relation to the larger New York-New Jersey Metropolitan Area that stretches from New Haven, Connecticut to Princeton, New Jersey. The Connecticut Economic Resources Center (CERC) describes the One Coast region as satellite urban-suburban center linked to the greater New York Metropolitan Area. In terms of labor market, firm location decisions and economic development opportunities, this perspective changes the view about individual and firm behavior. As has been the case with the finance industry, the region's location and labor market within the New York-New Jersey Metropolitan area present significant employment opportunities for workers with various skills and experience levels.

### **d.) Methodology**

The Business Council of Fairfield County (BCFC) retained Robert S. Stokes, a workforce consultant, to work with a Steering Committee composed of local and regional stakeholders in business, labor, workforce development, philanthropy, and the individual communities in the One Coast One Future region to develop a set of recommendations related to the existing employment and educational opportunities and immigrant populations that are caused by language skill deficits, that can define ESL demand, assess the capacity of the region's institutions to meet and the demand and develop and test cost-effective alternative methods of ESL instruction delivery in a way that responds in a culturally sensitive way to the economic, time, transportation and location limitations of immigrants' lives. The Steering Committee, with direction and support from the consultant, will seek to develop a set of recommendations regarding immigrant populations based on a review of extensive demographic data, a literature search of national and regional trends involving immigrants as well as the opinions of experts and stakeholders in immigrant worker issues.

### **e.) Study Framework**

The project is administered by the Business Council of Fairfield County and conducted in cooperation with the Bridgeport Regional Business Council, and other affected and interested organizations and agencies. A project steering committee, **JobsNet "ESL Task Force" Steering Committee**, was formed in May 2007 to work with The

Business Council of Fairfield County's designated consultant on this effort. The steering committee agreed to be available for consultation and to meet frequently during the period of the grant to interact with the consultant regarding new and relevant research about Fairfield County's immigrant population and ESL instruction and delivery nationally and regionally. The steering committee also agreed to provide any other input regarding best practices or research to make the report relevant and actionable.

- **Steering Committee:** The initial meeting of the Steering Committee was held on May 16, 2007. The members of the committee who attended included:
  - Elena Padin, Congressman Shays Office
  - Marcia Gethin-Jones, UCONN, Stamford
  - Roslyn Nesin, Stamford Adult Ed
  - Phil McKain, CTE, Stamford,
  - Keith Sears, CTE, Stamford
  - Wayne Valaitis, Literacy Volunteers of Southeastern Fairfield County;
  - Diane Rosenthal, Literacy Volunteers, Stamford/Greenwich
  - Dennie Daych, Norwalk Community College
  - Diana Napier, The Workplace, Bridgeport
  - Jo Shute, The Workplace, Bridgeport
  - Karen Brown, Fairfield County Community Foundation
  - Maria Rocha, Housatonic Community College
  - Chip Anderson, NEON, Norwalk
  - Neal Brodsky, Norwalk Housing Authority
  - Kathleen Walsh, Stamford Partnership
  - Deborah Sewell, Yerwood Center, Stamford
  - Juan Paniagua, Stamford Partnership
  - Sandra Espinel, Citibank, Stamford
- **Stakeholder outreach:** The consultant, with support from the Steering committee, will conduct outreach meetings with local, state and federal officials, companies and other key stakeholders for the purpose of understanding immigrant population issues and the viability of potential solutions.
- **Focus groups:** The consultant will conduct focus groups with ESL stakeholders and companies that have immigrants as employees to understand the challenges, barriers and opportunities in the delivery of ESL instruction.
- **Literature review:** The consultant, with recommendations from the Steering Committee, will conduct in-depth research and review of literature published within the last five years regarding the subject of immigrant workers and language fluency barriers that hold back individuals, their families and the economy at large. The review will also identify national best practices that provide and encourage ESL instruction and delivery for immigrant residents.

#### **f.) Study Goals and Objectives**

Fairfield County has experienced an unprecedented growth in our immigrant population during the past decade. Literally dozens of languages are spoken in our region's homes. Yet, only one, English, is required to succeed in the best paying jobs and in our fastest growing industries. Immigration is bringing us the potential human capital we need, but language fluency barriers hold back individuals, their families and the economy of Fairfield County at large.

The objective of the ESL Task Force study is to identify gaps between existing employment and educational opportunities and interested individuals that are caused by language skills deficits, define ESL demand, assess the capacity of the region's institutions to meet the demand and develop and test cost-effective alternative methods of instruction and delivery that respond to the varied needs of immigrants' lives.

- Research questions to be answered:
  - ✓ What strategies can be implemented to deliver an ESL fluency program to the largest number of immigrants, both employed and those seeking employment, in a timely and cost-effective manner?
  - ✓ What ESL delivery strategies would be viable for working immigrants unable to go to a classroom setting?
  - ✓ What are the supply and demand metrics for ESL instruction in Fairfield County?

## Findings

### II. Demographic Trends and Implications for the Workforce

The United States is known as a nation of immigrants – a characterization that is more appropriate today than at any time since the 1930s. Census Bureau data for 2006 indicate that 37.5 million of the nation's 288 million people – 13 percent of the U.S. population – were foreign born. Those numbers represent the highest percentage of foreign-born residents the Census Bureau had recorded in 70 years.<sup>1</sup> Of these, two thirds are here legally, as naturalized citizens, or with proper visas and other authorizations. They comprise about 9 percent of our workforce. About one third, 11-12 million, is here without valid status and comprises about 5 percent of the workforce.

Immigrants are a substantial and growing segment of the U.S. labor force nationally and regionally. The positive aspect of this immigration is the opportunity to fill the labor shortage caused by the aging and retirement-able native born population. On the other hand, the enormous growth of the immigrant population since 2000, and the critical importance of English language fluency in a knowledge-based economy present communities throughout the U.S. with workforce, education, housing, and health care system challenges that are more profound than those faced by earlier generations.

Although immigrants work in every part of the country, two thirds of them reside in just six states where only one-third of native-born workers live. The foreign-born constitute 32 percent of the labor force in California and average 21 percent of the labor force in Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas. California and New York are not only major gateways for new immigrants but also major sources of foreign-born workers for other states. Internal migration has recently had a substantial effect on the growth of immigrant populations in Arkansas, Georgia, Nevada, and North Carolina

Educational attainment, specifically fluency in the English language, will determine the role of immigrants in the labor market and their ability to assimilate and succeed in their community. Sharp differences exist between the educational attainment of workers from Mexico and Central America as from that of immigrants from other parts of the world. Immigrants from Mexico and Central America typically have completed about nine years of education or less. Workers from other countries have completed an average of 14 years of education prior to immigration. That is slightly higher than the average of education level

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2006.

achieved by native-born workers. While these education levels are important because of the cognitive skills and academic knowledge foreign-born workers bring to the labor market, research has confirmed for years that fluency in the English language is the common denominator of success for immigrant workers in the U.S. job market.

Due to this lack of English fluency, more than half of all workers from Mexico and Central America are employed in occupations that require little formal education – construction and extraction; building and grounds cleaning and maintenance; and restaurant/fast food services. These occupations account for the relatively low earnings capacity of immigrants compared to native-born workers. In 2004, the average weekly earning of foreign-born men working full-time were 78% of those of their native counterparts who have the same level of or even less education. The average weekly earnings of foreign-born women were 87% of those of native-born women.

It's clear that given the impact of the aging U.S. population, including the Baby Boomer generation's potential exit from the labor force starting in 2010, the major growth in the U.S. labor force will come from the immigrant population between now and 2050. The challenge for the U.S. and the communities that have experienced rapid immigrant growth is to acknowledge the value of this population to the health of its economies and the vitality of its labor markets and to take actions to help these new populations overcome the barrier of English fluency which is key to their assimilation and success.

### **a.) National trends**

Given the role that the burgeoning immigrant population will continue to play in the economic and social fiber of the United States, promoting their acquisition of English fluency (speaking, reading and writing) is arguably the most important challenge – and opportunity – facing cities, states and the federal government. English proficiency among immigrants is linked to higher earnings and tax contributions, lower welfare dependency, greater educational and economic advancement as well as providing a solution to a growing labor shortfall resulting from the aging U.S. labor force.

According to a recent report by the nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute,<sup>2</sup> federal and state governments need to increase funding for English instruction to more than \$4 billion a year for the next six years. Using census data, the report concluded that 5.8 million permanent residents with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) would need 277 million hours to become proficient – that is based on an average of 110 hours per student. The report also estimated that approximately 6.4 million immigrants in the country would require ESL instruction to gain the necessary skills to pass the naturalization exam. Federal and state governments currently spend about \$1 billion a year on English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction for adults, most of which comes from the states. As immigrants' share of the population grows, efforts to help them learn English are not keeping pace. The U.S. Census Bureau data indicated that the population with Limited English Proficiency grew from 14 million in 1990 to more than 23 million in 2005. But waiting lists for ESL classes at the local level remain long and the quality of instruction varies by state.

New initiatives to provide ESL instruction for immigrant populations across the country are increasingly being generated by individual business and social organizations in communities with some of the largest increases in immigration. Many business organizations, including chambers of commerce, are responding to local immigration-

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<sup>2</sup> Migration Policy Institute, National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy; "Adult English Language Instruction in the United States: Determining Need and Investing Wisely," July 2007

generated challenges by developing locally appropriate solutions. These organizations view the cost of these initiatives, as “not just a cost but a return on investment” for the community. (See Best Practices: “English Works,” Santa Ana, CA)

**b.) State and Southwestern Fairfield County Population Trends**

New population estimates released by the U.S. Census Bureau between 2000 and July 1, 2006 show that the Hispanic population of Fairfield County, as in the rest of the state, has grown far more quickly than the population as a whole. By July 2, 2005, Fairfield County had become the most heavily Hispanic in the state with about 128,500 residents, more than 14% identified as Latino by the census. The proportion of Puerto Ricans in the Hispanic population in the county is about 37%, with large communities of Ecuadorian, Columbian, Guatemalan and other South and Central American immigrants. These immigrants give Fairfield County the highest proportion of foreign-born residents in the state, about 18.7% according to the census survey. As of 2006, the four largest cities in the County with foreign-born populations were (in order of size): Stamford – 37,210; Bridgeport, 35,826; Danbury, 26,667; and Norwalk, 20,699. Percentage increase of immigrants since 2000 is: Stamford, 32%; Bridgeport, 26%; Norwalk, 26%; and Danbury, 34%.<sup>3</sup> Statewide, the top countries of origin for Connecticut’s foreign-born residents are geographically diverse and include Poland, India, and Jamaica as well as Italy, Mexico and China.

**Percentage of Population Foreign-Born by Town**

<b>Town</b>	<b>2000 %</b>	<b>2006 %</b>	<b>(Number)</b>
Bridgeport	21%	26%	(35,826)
Danbury	27%	34%	(26,667)
Hartford	19%	21%	(24,941)
New Britain	18%	23%	(16,586)
New Haven	12%	17%	(21,579)
Norwalk	20%	26%	(20,699)
Stamford	30%	32%	(37,210)
Waterbury	12%	10%	(10,681)
<b>Connecticut</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>(452,358)</b>

Foreign-born children who live in a home where English is not the primary language spoken face a major challenge in acquiring fluency in the language. According to the Connecticut State Department of Education, (SDE), one in eight Connecticut children in the state’s K-12 schools lives in a home where English is not the primary language. According to recent research,<sup>4</sup> the percentage of Bridgeport schools students living in a non-English Home Language environment dropped slightly from 40% to 39% between 2000 and 2006. But for Norwalk and Stamford school students, the non-English Home language percentage has increased significantly since 2000-2001; in Norwalk, 25% to 36%, and in Stamford, 31% to 35%.

The U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey also has a category called “linguistic isolation.” This category is defined as households where English is not the primary language and no person age 14 or older in the household speaks English “very

<sup>3</sup> Source: United States Census Bureau, Census 2000 and ACS 2006 Table B)5002

<sup>4</sup> “Immigration in Connecticut: A Growing Opportunity,” by Rafael Mejia and Priscilla Canny, Ph.D., October 2007, Connecticut Voices for Children.

well.” The ACS reports that statewide 5 percent of households are linguistically isolated. But in Bridgeport, that number is 17%, one of the highest in the state. In Stamford and Norwalk, the percentage of linguistically isolated households is 12% and 9% respectively. The “Immigration in Connecticut” report suggested that children in these households may need more specifically targeted help learning English since no one in their homes can help them linguistically. Linguistically isolated families also face challenges in accessing benefits and services, understanding and advocating for their rights, and comprehending health care, school, and other important information.

The primary sources of funding for ESL programs in the 20-community One Coast One Future area of responsibility are the state, federal and local government, with help from private, nonprofit organizations. As of the FY2005 funding cycle, state and federal funding for adult literacy services, including ESL instruction, has remained constant at about \$40 million for the past several years. Between FY 2000 and FY 2006, the Fairfield County Community Foundation (FCCF) awarded \$1,079,800 in discretionary grants supporting services for the county’s growing immigrant population. Those FCCF grants included supporting expansion of ESL classes offered by nonprofit organizations in Danbury, Greenwich, Norwalk and Bridgeport. FCCF also funded the Literacy Coalition of Stamford during FY 2001, a start-up organization aimed at coordinating services of ESL and adult literacy providers in Stamford. The Coalition is no longer operating. The FCCF also awarded a \$5,000 grant to the Center for Youth Leadership at Brien McMahon HS, Norwalk, to enable a group of students there to survey day laborers in Norwalk about their service needs.

Total funding for adult education in Connecticut is one of the highest in the U.S. Yet there is significant unmet need for adult literacy services, both basic education and English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, due to under- funding. Added to that problem is the lack of systemic coordination of Adult Literacy programs at the state and county level.

A state legislative report –“Coordination of Adult Literacy Programs”--<sup>5</sup> noted that adult literacy services throughout the state lack a program czar or “champion” who could serve as an advocate for the system and have the power to achieve the English fluency goals the system was originally designed to meet. The report also noted that the system is plagued by the lack of a central information directory or interactive data bank that could identify types of instruction needed, clients being served, service providers, class locations and class times. The State report pointed to a frequent lack of coordination among the various ESL service providers at the regional level. For example, ESL instruction in the community college system and public school system operate separately and don’t interface with each other. Yet, the report says, the systems have “overlapping roles” since both entities are preparing students for post-secondary work. The bottom line need, the report points out, is more public funding in order to make the adult education system, specifically the ESL programs, more cost-effective and achieve a meaningful return on investment.

As the Migration Policy Institute report recommended, each ESL student needs approximately 110 hours of instruction to achieve meaningful English fluency. Yet, the state report notes that the majority of adult education programs in Connecticut provide less than six hours of instruction per week per student over a 12-13 week semester. At current funding levels, the State’s system serves about 32,000 adult learners a year, but

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<sup>5</sup> Coordination of Adult Literacy Programs Final Report; Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee, December 2006, Connecticut General Assembly.

a half million adults across the state lack a high school diploma or English language proficiency.

Based on a recent ESL Task Force survey of existing ESL instruction programs in the 20 community One Coast One Future region in Fairfield County, only half of the communities offered language fluency programs; 10,473 students were currently enrolled in those programs. The numbers were taken during the summer when enrollment is typically low. But considering that the cities of Stamford, Norwalk and Bridgeport have a combined foreign-born population of more than 90,000, the participation of Fairfield County's immigrant population in ESL programs remains too low to have a significant impact in achieving English fluency among those residents who need it most. The low participation rate in ESL instruction is reflected in reasons previously cited.

### **c.) ESL Instruction Challenges in Fairfield County**

Besides inadequate funding, there are additional barriers to the delivery and instruction of ESL in the communities of Fairfield County. They include:

- Reluctance of employers to offer on-site ESL or give workers time off to attend classes. Success with employers in this regard often depends on the company CEO or senior management support rather than industry-wide practices. (See Best Practices – BCFC's ESL program with the Sheraton Hotel, Stamford)
- Lack of alternative classroom space. More alternative class sites need to be created, i.e., Laundromats, churches, storefronts, day labor pick up points, etc, that would be available on nights and weekends for ESL instruction.
- Lack of qualified ESL instructors, volunteers and part-time instructors needed for one-on-one instruction and small group interaction.
- Lack of available time for workers to take classes; funding needed for portable CD-take home English language programs, video instruction, and access to online ESL resources. (See Best Practices section)
- Need for case management for ESL students with social service issues, including on-site childcare; transportation; (some providers offer bus tokens to students for transit at night); and multiple job requirements.
- Special funding needed for ESL students moving from free public school/adult and continuing education classes to more advanced community college instruction to help students achieve skills needed to enter the labor market and obtain a living wage job.

### **d.) Results from Steering Committee**

The initial meeting of the JobsNet "ESL" Task force took place on Wednesday, May 16, 2007 attended by: Elena Padin, Congressman Shays Office; Marcia Gethin-Jones, UCONN; Roslyn Nesin, Stamford Adult Ed; Phil McKain, CTE; Keith Sears, CTE; Wayne Valaitis, Literacy Volunteers of Southeastern Fairfield County; Dennie Daych, Norwalk Community College; Diana Napier, The Workplace; Jo Shute, The Workplace; Karen Brown, Fairfield County Community Foundation; Maria Roche, Housatonic Community College; Chip Anderson, Neon; Neal Brodsky, Norwalk Housing Authority; and the Business Council of Fairfield County staff, Chris Bruhl, President & CEO; Tanya Court,

Director, Public Policy & Programs; and Bob Stokes, Consultant and Workforce Projects Manager.

Below we have listed comments, suggestions and recommendations from the group regarding the following questions involving ESL instruction and delivery in Fairfield County:

- **Describe the current environment in Fairfield County.**
- **Identify barriers for ESL instruction and delivery involving workers and employers**
- **Describe best practices**
- **What can we do to improve the system?**

**Current environment:**

- Funding issues.
- Lack of coordination of programs throughout Fairfield County.
- Immigrant issues, including undocumented workers.
- Need current demand data.
- Different needs for different groups.
- Lack of instruction delivered at worksite.
- Diversity of immigrant populations
- Day laborers
- Lack of qualified teachers/volunteers
- Literacy deficits in languages other than English.
- Lack of services available when needed.

**Barriers for workers and employers:**

- Reluctance to offer ESL instruction during work hours.
- Lack of federal or state funding.
- Lack of qualified teachers, volunteers and paid
- Immigration issues
- Family issues/childcare/transportation
- Lack of case managers to deal with family and non-instruction issues.
- Lack of Instruction delivery flexibility

**Best Practices**

- ESL Directory for workers/employers county-wide
- Case managers required to ensure student attendance
- Community center outreach at public housing authorities
- "Neighbor Link" program in Mt. Kisco, NY
- Distance learning/ online English language programs – Rosetta Stone/English Language Learning Instruction System (ELLIS)
- Workshops focused on effective case management strategies for ESL students.
- Identify companies who have used ESL/ conduct focus group to assess needs.
- Time sharing – employer gives worker 1 hr./worker give an hr. for instruction on site
- More WIA funding needed/ use incumbent worker training funds
- Regional fulltime ESL facilitator/ professional development
- National models: Santa Ana (CA) Chamber of Commerce; ABC Boston

**What Can We Do?**

- Meet with employers to poll their perspective and needs for ESL instruction.
- Design, produce, distribute directory of ESL programs offered throughout county.

- Identify, compile metrics, and focus on those to be served: educated professional; low wage, and day laborer.
- Identify documented vs. undocumented workers.
- Recruit ESL teachers from Teach for America; Tomorrow's Teachers, newly retired Baby Boomers.

**e.) National Best Practices:**

- **"English Works", Santa Ana, CA** - An initiative launched by the Santa Ana Chamber of Commerce in 2005 to provide ESL fluency to 50,000 residents by 2010 at a cost of \$4.5 million. Partners in this initiative included the business community, the city, the school district and the Rancho Santiago Community College District that provides some 70,000 instruction sites for immigrants who comprise 50% of Santa Ana's population. The program offers free ESL classes and interactive language kits to use at home. "Sed de Saber" or "Thirst for Knowledge" is a portable handheld device developed by Retention Education, Inc. and Leap Frog that's been tested by more than 300 businesses and 30,000 employees in the U.S. The Chamber is well on its way to meeting its goal by increasing ESL classroom enrollments by 50 percent, increasing English proficiency in the workplace by 30 percent and raising English proficiency of the future workforce by 30 percent. "English Works will increase productivity and profitability in the workplace," says Dale Ward, the Santa Ana Chamber Executive Vice President. "That is why we are doing it."
- **"El Sol", Jupiter (FL) Neighborhood Resource Center** – The center opened in September 2006 in response to controversy resulting from crime and safety issues involving day laborer congregation sites. The center offers a facility where employers can hire workers in an orderly manner and also provides workers with ESL and computer training. Workers receive identification cards and are classified according to their skills and English proficiency. A lottery takes place several times a day. Five workers at a time are placed in a standby hiring pool from workers are assigned to employers. The center's creation was supported by the North Palm Beach County Chamber of Commerce. It worked with Corn Maya, Inc (a nonprofit organization that assists refugees of Mayan descent) and Catholic Charities to find a 10,000 square foot former church building accommodate the day laborers. The town rents the space to Catholic Charities for \$1 a year. ESL instruction is an important service provided by the center says Rito Hernandez, a laborer who has been coming to the center since it opened. "We have all the important services, bathrooms, discipline, computers and the most important thing is the language. That's the only way."

**f.) Regional and Fairfield County Best Practices**

- **"Neighbors Link", Mount Kisco, NY** – This organization was founded in 2000 to meet the needs of 3,000 Latino immigrants who represented more than a quarter of Mount Kisco's total population. When issues emerged involving immigrant day laborers congregating on street corners waiting to be hired, concerned members of the community raised private funds to convert a masonry warehouse into a community center initially designed as a facility for day laborers. Today, Neighbors Link serves all immigrant residents, offering a variety of social and education programs including ESL instruction; day labor registration and hiring; computer skills training; on-site support and referrals for personal and family issues such as housing and homelessness,

medical and mental health, family budgeting, alcoholism, domestic violence, and immigration issues. Morning classes in "Job English" are offered for Day Laborers Monday through Thursday 9 a.m. to 12 noon for those functionally illiterate in Spanish and English. ESL classes are offered Monday through Thursday evenings from 7-9 p.m. for students employed fulltime and possess 3-6 years of prior schooling. The center is staffed primarily by volunteers with the exception of Executive Director, Carola Bracco.

- **Stamford Day Laborer ESL Project**– In August, 2007, the Stamford Partnership, in conjunction with voluntary instruction design and delivery by Susan Benthall Business Communications, began offering an outdoor, two hour, once a week ESL class to a "drop-in" group of day laborers in a protected, "No-Hassle" pickup zone under Rt. 95. Thus far, the class has been held four times, and the attendance has fluctuated around 20 to 30 individuals.

The teaching materials are designed to meet the needs of day laborers – focusing on questions the workers need to ask employers. Each student receives a 3-page handout summarizing the class content that includes words in English, Spanish and illustrations that even those with literacy issues in Spanish can understand. The program hopes to distribute the handout to employers with an explanation of the program's goals and an invitation to employers to help develop the class content as it continues. The long-term goal is to find a permanent indoor location where the program can continue as the weather turns colder and the outside work opportunities end for the season.

Cost to support this program (including a donated indoor space, lunches for students, and an ESL instructor) would be approximately \$14,000 annually.

- **Careers for Life Academy, Bridgeport Hospital**  
Bridgeport Hospital is starting an on-site School for Employee Education and Development (SEED) program in early 2008. Eligible employees will take classes weekly in a variety of education and skill areas, including ESL (English as a Second Language); (Literacy Volunteers to provide instruction); GED; basic math, grammar and reading skills; basic computer skills; and medical terminology. The SEED Program will also offer a variety of Life Skills training for entry level workers, including dress for success; debt consolidation; parenting; and developing a budget. Hospital employees will be paid for attending classes if their work shift takes place during the class times. The initial classes will be 1-½ hours a week from March 1 to June 1 including ESL.
- **ESL Instruction, Hospitality Sector, Stamford** – In 2005, the Business Council of Fairfield County facilitated a 4-month long English Language training program for employees at the Sheraton Stamford Hotel. The initiative was funded by the state of Connecticut and the ESL instruction was delivered by UCONN, Stamford's College of Continuing Studies. The key to the program's success was the ability to deliver the instruction at the work site and the management's enthusiastic support of the program. The management agreed to pay employees their hourly wage while attending class two hours a week. Despite the limited class time provided to workers, hotel management said the program had improved communication between staff and customers, and raised productivity.

- **ESL College-Community nonprofit partnership** - In an effort to bring more ESL resources into the community, Norwalk Community College (NCC) partnered with CTE in Stamford in 2006 to offer NCC's non-credit ESL program to 48 adults from Stamford South End and waterside communities. NCC provided instructors and offered five ESL class levels to enable students to take a class designed for their needs. The instruction began in early 2007. A grant by the Fairfield County Community Foundation (FCCF) helped to support CTE and NCC staffing and instruction supplies for the program.
- **Pilot program for linguistically isolated households** – A language program (Spanish and English) called "Lee y Seras Family Conversations" (Read and You Will Be) was piloted in Danbury in 2006 involving 60-70 Hispanic families with much success. The program consisted of bringing parents and children, birth to age 6, to a 2-hour workshop once a week for six weeks to read and interact with their children to develop sustained habits of reading and interaction. Families were encouraged to speak to their children in Spanish and English. The program was developed and funded by Scholastic, Verizon, and the National Council of La Raza, the national Latino civil rights organization.

### **Recommendations**

- Train additional ESL teachers, paraprofessionals, and retirees for ESL training throughout Fairfield County. Recruit volunteers and ESL teachers from "Teach for America."
- Collaborative effort on behalf of Fairfield County's business, philanthropic, nonprofit, and political leadership to form a county-wide ESL Instruction Council to identify new and innovative methods for delivering ESL instruction to their local immigrant populations.
- Develop an Adult Literacy website to assist individuals in finding appropriate programs and how to navigate the Adult Education system for each of the 20 communities in the Southeastern Regional Workforce Investment Council area within Fairfield County. (See Appendix A)
- Create and implement pilot ESL instruction programs for incumbent immigrant health care workers at Fairfield County hospitals. The ESL Task Force conducted an informal survey of local hospitals to gauge their interest in participating in such a program. Norwalk and Greenwich hospitals and Griffin Hospital in Derby indicated an interest in ESL training for their housekeeping and service staff. Bridgeport Hospital is starting its own on-site academy. (See Best Practices) Norwalk Hospital has approximately 100 workers on their housekeeping staff and there is room onsite for instruction. Greenwich Hospital has 30-50 workers who would be interested in taking ESL classes.
- Design and implement an advertising and marketing campaign – "Get Ahead with Better English" – for the cities of Stamford and Norwalk that commit to improving the English fluency of 50,000 local immigrants for a three-year period. Instruction will be provided at local churches, community centers, at Norwalk Community College campuses, as well as at business facilities with an immigrant workforce. Funds could be raised from the respective business communities of Stamford and Norwalk as well as from The Workplace, Inc and nonprofit foundations. Initiative could be modeled on the Santa Ana, California, "EnglishWorks" ESL program listed under Best Practices section, which was funded at \$4.5 million for four years.

- Identify local organizations, private foundations, or nonprofit groups that would be committed to support private funding to provide a permanent facility, ESL instruction, and social services support for the day laborer immigrant population in a specific community in Fairfield County.
- Create a pilot program too begin to reduce “linguistically isolated” households by offering free ESL programs for immigrant mothers with infant children. By encouraging mothers to speak English to their infant children, the cycle of linguistic isolation in the household can be broken. The action also reinforces a basis for the continuing study of the language by the parent and the child, and hopefully begins to reduce the expense of language remediation. (See “Lee y Seras Family Conversations” under Best Practices section)
- Design and implement a labor market feeder system to help foreign-born students who have achieved speaking and reading proficiency in ESL classes to move into employment sectors with greatest entry level skill set needs. System would provide data pathways to indicate specific skills by sector i.e., health care, business and professional services, retail sales, hospitality, manufacturing, information services, etc. The data would also include salary ranges for each career path matching specific skill level, i.e., entry level, mid range or high range skills.
- The need for additional funding to support foreign-born students to make the transition from Adult Education ESL courses to local college ESL credit programs. Many foreign-born high school graduates need additional ESL courses to expand their proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in English to achieve success in postsecondary degree courses. Without achieving advanced fluency in the English language, immigrants will be denied the opportunity to earn a living wage in a variety of workforce sectors and enjoy a productive future for themselves and their families.
- Expanded utilization of online learning programs to deliver ESL training to foreign-born residents with home computers or access to public libraries in Fairfield County. One existing resource is the Connecticut Adult Virtual High School (CT AVHS) program that helps high school students earn credits toward graduation by participating in mentored online courses. Another potential online resource is Charter Oak State College, a distance-learning postsecondary institution that is considering offering ESL online with industry specific focus.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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**Appendix A** – Fairfield County ESL provider directory.

**Appendix B** - ESL Data Survey excerpts from program operators in Bridgeport, Norwalk and Stamford

## Appendix A – JobsNet ESL Task Force Report

### Fairfield County Resources for ESL (English as a Second Language)

#### Bridgeport

**Bridgeport Adult Education** – ESL classes are offered at various sites in the City of Bridgeport and at night at Central High School on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Classes are free and provide five levels of proficiency ranging from literacy to advanced. There is no waiting list and maximum class size is 22 per class.

**Contact:**

Coordinator: Thomas O’Neil  
1 Lincoln Blvd.  
Bridgeport, CT 06609  
203-576-7377/7374  
[TONEILL@bridgeportedu.net](mailto:TONEILL@bridgeportedu.net)

**Bullard Havens Technical School** – ESL programs are offered to adults at three proficiency levels – beginner, intermediate, and advanced. Classes are offered from 9 am to 2:30 pm weekdays and weekends, October 3, 2007 to May 19, 2008. Check school for specific class dates and times. There is a waiting list but classes are free.

**Contact:**

Supervisor: Linda Rivera  
500 Palisade Ave.  
Bridgeport, CT 06610  
203-579-6333 ext. 6608  
[linda.rivera@ct.gov](mailto:linda.rivera@ct.gov)

**Caroline House** – ESL classes are offered to women, 18 and older, at only the beginner and intermediate proficiency levels. Classes are free, and offered 9 am to 1 pm, Monday through Thursday. Classes are limited to small groups of 3 to 5 people.

**Contact:**

Director: Sister Ann Moles  
574 Stillman St.  
Bridgeport, CT 06608  
203-334-0640  
[cbrennan@snet.net](mailto:cbrennan@snet.net)

**Housatonic Community College** – The College’s Continuing Education program offers credit and noncredit ESL classes, including one directed at employers – “Business Communication,” and “How to Get a Job in the USA.” HCC also offers an EWSL course prepping individuals to take the test for U.S. Citizenship.

**Contact:**

Maria Roche, Coordinator  
900 Lafayette Blvd.  
Bridgeport, CT 06604  
203-332-5149  
[Mroche@hcc.commnet.edu](mailto:Mroche@hcc.commnet.edu)  
[www.hcc.commnet.edu/ContEd/](http://www.hcc.commnet.edu/ContEd/)

**International Institute of Connecticut** – ESL classes are offered to women at three proficiency levels – beginner, intermediate and advanced. Classes are offered from 9 am -

11 am, Monday through Friday. Class size limited from 10 - 20 students. There is a waiting list but classes are free.

**Contact:**

Director: Myra Oliver, M.S.  
670 Clinton Ave.  
Bridgeport, CT 06605  
203-336-0141  
[admin@iiconn.org](mailto:admin@iiconn.org)

**Literacy Volunteers of Southeastern Fairfield County (LVSFC)** – The organization’s ESL instruction is specifically geared to employers. LVSFC literacy instructors meet with incumbent workers in the workplace and provide English instruction to meet specific needs of the employees and their employers.

**Contact:**

Wayne Valaitis  
177 State St.  
Bridgeport, CT 06604  
203-579-2208  
[wvalaitis@fswinc.org](mailto:wvalaitis@fswinc.org)

**Mercy Learning Center** – ESL programs are offered to adults at three basic proficiency levels – beginner, intermediate, advanced. Classes are offered morning, afternoon and evenings. Check with school for specific dates and times of classes. Instruction is free.

**Contact:**

Jane Ferreira, President & CEO  
637 Park Ave.  
Bridgeport, CT 06604  
203-334-6699  
[mercy.learning.cntr@snet.net](mailto:mercy.learning.cntr@snet.net)

**University of Bridgeport** – ESL programs are offered for adults are various levels of proficiency including elementary, low intermediate, high intermediate, low advanced and advanced. Classes are offered morning, afternoon and evenings and limited to 15 students per class. There is no waiting list. Check with school about course prices.

**Contact:**

Director: Meg Cooney  
126 Park Ave.  
Bridgeport, CT 06604  
203-576-4860  
[esl@bridgeport.edu](mailto:esl@bridgeport.edu)

**Fairfield**

**Fairfield Continuing Education** – Free ESL classes for adults are offered at three basic proficiency levels from beginner to advanced in the evenings -- 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm. Check contact for specific class days. There is no waiting list and class size is 25-30 students.

**Contact:**

Director: Patricia Flynn  
501 Kings Highway East, Suite 210  
Fairfield, CT 06825  
203-255-8376/8371  
[patricia.flynn@fairfield.k12.ct.us](mailto:patricia.flynn@fairfield.k12.ct.us)

**Sacred Heart University** – ESL classes for adults are offered at six levels of English proficiency from literacy to advanced in mornings and evenings. Check school for specific date and times for classes. There is no waiting list and costs of instruction vary depending on the number of credit hours students take.

**Contact:**

Assistant Director: Ruth Gross  
5151 Park Avenue  
Fairfield, CT 06825  
203-365-7528  
[grossr@sacredheart.edu](mailto:grossr@sacredheart.edu)

**Greenwich**

**Greenwich Adult and Continuing Education** – ESL classes are free for Greenwich residents at four proficiency levels ranging from literacy to advanced and are offered in the mornings and evenings. Check contact for specific date and times for classes. There is no waiting list and class size averages 20-25 students.

**Contact:**

Director: Alan Curtis  
290 Greenwich Ave.  
Greenwich, CT 06830  
203-625-7403  
[gce@greenwich.k12.ct.us](mailto:gce@greenwich.k12.ct.us)

**Naugatuck/Waterbury**

**Naugatuck Adult and Continuing Education** – ESL programs are offered at Naugatuck High School to local residents at four English proficiency levels – literacy, beginners, intermediate and advanced. Classes are offered Monday through Wednesday, 6:30pm – 9pm. There is currently no waiting list for students and instruction is free.

**Contact:**

Director: Lori Ferreira  
543 Rubber Ave.  
Naugatuck, CT 06770  
203-720-5400  
[webmasterNPS@naugy.net](mailto:webmasterNPS@naugy.net)

**Naugatuck Valley Community College** – ESL programs are offered for three levels of English proficiency – beginners, intermediate and advanced. Classes are scheduled in the morning, afternoon and night with no waiting list. Check with college for specific class times. Instruction cost depends on number of credits taken.

**Contact:**

Robin Baeder/Melany Majeski  
750 Chase Pkwy.  
Waterbury, CT 06708  
203-596-8743/2109  
[mmajeski@nvcc.commnet.edu](mailto:mmajeski@nvcc.commnet.edu)

**Norwalk**

**Literacy Volunteers, Norwalk Public Library** – ESL tutoring classes are offered at no cost at the beginner and intermediate level. This is an intensive, one-to-one learning process. Classes are two hours long and course takes between four and six weeks to complete. Number of student slots varies depending on how quickly classes fill up.

**Contact:**

Coordinator: Helene Becker

1 Belden Avenue  
Norwalk, CT 06850  
203-854-6684  
[beckerh@norwalkps.org](mailto:beckerh@norwalkps.org)

**Norwalk Community College** - NCC offers both credit and non-credit ESL classes. Credit classes are offered through the Academic Division and help prepare students for college-level work (i.e. effective writing), in many cases, leading to a degree or certificate. The Extended Studies Division offers non-credit ESL classes on weekdays, evening and weekends. These classes cover the basic language skill areas as well as specialized areas for employer needs, such as workers in allied health and the hotel industry. Courses require a fee (non-credit) and/or tuition (credit).

**Contact:**

Craig Machado  
188 Richards Avenue  
Norwalk, CT 06854  
203-857-7176  
[cmachado@ncc.commnet.edu](mailto:cmachado@ncc.commnet.edu)

**Norwalk Continuing Education** – ESL classes are free for Norwalk residents and are offered at beginner, intermediate, and advanced proficiency levels in morning and evenings. Check contact for specific class dates and times. Class size is 25 students. Classes fill up quickly.

**Contact:**

Linda Cervil  
125 East Avenue  
Norwalk, CT 06852  
203-854-4115  
[cervil@norwalkps.org](mailto:cervil@norwalkps.org)

**Shelton**

**Valley Regional Adult Education** – ESL classes are offered free of charge to adult students residing in Derby, Ansonia, Shelton and Monroe at four levels of English proficiency ranging from Beginning 1 to Advanced. Classes are offered 15 hours per week, 9:15 am to 12:15 pm year round. Check contact for specific days for classes. There is a waiting list of 5 to 15 students.

**Contact:**

Director: Michelle Holovach  
415 Howe Ave.  
Shelton, CT 06484  
203-924-6651  
[m.holovach@snet.net](mailto:m.holovach@snet.net)

**Stratford**

**Stratford Continuing Education** – Classes are offered at no cost to Stratford residents twice a week from 7 pm to 9 pm in four proficiency levels, ranging from basic to advanced. Check with contact for days of the week classes are offered. There is no waiting list.

**Contact:**

Director: Barbara Pitcher  
45 North Parade

Stratford, CT 06902  
203-385-4230  
[conted@stratford.k12.ct.us](mailto:conted@stratford.k12.ct.us)

### **Stamford**

**CTE** – Tutoring in ESL classes are offered at no cost to Stamford residents in reading, writing and speaking skills at beginner, intermediate and advanced English proficiency. Check contact for specific dates and times of classes. There is no waiting list.

**Contact:**

Director: Denise Pflueger  
34 Woodland Ave.  
Stamford, CT 06902  
203-327-3260/ (203) 352-4842  
[info@ctecap.org](mailto:info@ctecap.org)

**Ferguson Public Library** – ESL classes are offered each Wednesday evening in the main library from 7 pm to 8:30 pm at three proficiency levels, beginner to advanced. Classes are free, there is no waiting list and class size averages 25-30 persons.

**Contact:**

Director: Yelena Klompus  
One Public Library Plaza  
Stamford, CT 06904  
203-351-8228/8221/8226  
[Yelena@fergusonlibrary.org](mailto:Yelena@fergusonlibrary.org)

**Literacy Volunteers--Stamford/Greenwich** – Classes are offered for adults needing assistance in reading, writing, and speaking English at the beginner's level. Check with school for specific days and times of classes. Due to small class size, 2-5 students in a group, there is a waiting list of up to 100 students. Registration fee required.

**Contact:**

Director: Diane Rosenthal  
141 Franklin St.  
Stamford, CT 06901  
203-324-5214  
[djr@lvsg.org](mailto:djr@lvsg.org)

**Stamford Adult Learning Center** – ESL classes are offered at various locations throughout the city at four proficiency levels, ranging from basic to advanced in morning and afternoons. Check with center for specific times and class days. Classes are free for residents of Stamford, Darien and New Canaan with no waiting list.

**Contact:**

Director: Roslyn Nesin  
369 Washington Blvd.  
Stamford, CT 06901  
203-977-4209/4871  
[rnegin@ci.stamford.ct.us](mailto:rnegin@ci.stamford.ct.us)

### **Stamford School Community Organization - Westover Magnet School Family**

**Resource** – Classes are offered in mornings and evenings at the beginner and intermediate proficiency levels at no cost. Check contact for location, day and times for classes. There is no waiting list.

**Contact:**

Director: Sheila Glenn  
412 Stillwater Ave.  
Stamford, CT 06902  
203-975-9559  
[staff@roscco.org](mailto:staff@roscco.org)

**UConn Center for Continuing Studies** – Courses are offered at eight levels of proficiency during the day, evening and Saturday. On-site customized classes are also offered for corporate clients. Check with the university or the website for specific information: <http://continuingstudies.uconn.edu/esl/index.html>. Fees depend upon number of hours per course.

**Contact:**

Director: Marcia Gethin-Jones  
One University Place  
Stamford, CT 06901  
**203-251-8511**  
[m.gethinjones@uconn.edu](mailto:m.gethinjones@uconn.edu)

**Trumbull**

**Trumbull Adult Education** – Classes are offered 7 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday and Wednesday. Course duration is 10 weeks at three proficiency levels, beginner to advanced. Classes are free for Trumbull residents and \$20 for out of town residents, plus book costs. There is no waiting list.

**Contact:**

Director: Robert DeCerbo  
72 Strobel Rd.  
Trumbull, CT 06611  
203-452-4554  
[DecerboR@trumbullps.org](mailto:DecerboR@trumbullps.org)

**Westport**

**Westport Continuing Education** – Classes are offered mornings, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday and evening classes from 7 pm to 9 pm. Check with contact for morning class times. Classes have three levels of proficiency and are free. There is no waiting list.

**Contact:**

Director: Dr. Glenn Hightower  
70 North Ave.  
Westport, CT 06880  
203-341-1209  
[ghightower@westport.k12.ct.us](mailto:ghightower@westport.k12.ct.us)

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\* Total number of students enrolled at time of survey (8/07): 10,473

\*\* ESL provider list also appears in "Employer's Guide to Labor Resources in Fairfield County," prepared and published by The Business Council of Fairfield County.

## **Appendix B**

### **ESL Task Force**

#### **ESL Survey Excerpts – Stamford, Norwalk, Bridgeport, 2007:**

##### **Stamford Adult Ed:**

Total funding: (State/local and Fed): \$1.3 m  
Total student enrollment: 2728  
Total instructional hrs: 8958  
Total program sites: 8  
No. & % of adults who do not speak English well: 8,385 / 8%

##### **Literacy Volunteers, Stamford/Greenwich:**

Total funding: (State, local and private) \$483.4  
Total student enrollment: 451  
Total instructional hrs: 21,300  
Total program sites: 14  
Nr & % of adults who do not speak English well: 387 / 85.8%

##### **CTE, Stamford**

Total funding: (Private) \$40,000  
Total student enrollment: 46  
Total instructional hrs: 40  
Total program sites: 1  
No. & % of adults who don't speak English well: 24 / 60%

##### **Norwalk Adult Ed**

Total funding: (NA)  
Total student enrollment: 796  
Total instructional hrs.: 50  
Total program sites: 5  
No. & % of adults who don't speak English well: 4,269 / 6.59%

##### **Norwalk Community College**

Total funding: (\$1.7m)  
Total student enrollment: 1,530  
Total instructional hrs: 228 credit hrs; 1030 noncredit hrs.  
Total program sites: 3  
No. & % of adults who don't speak English well: 25%.

##### **Bridgeport Adult Ed.**

Total funding: (\$1.87m)  
Total student enrollment: 1019  
Total instructional hrs: 7,386  
Total program sites: 7  
No. & % of adults who don't speak English well: 11,742 / 45%

##### **Literacy Volunteers of Southeastern Fairfield County (Greater Bridgeport and Greater Norwalk)**

Total funding: \$950,000  
Total student enrollment: 1284  
Total instructional hrs offered: 8257  
Total Program sites: (all over the County)

No. & % of adult pop. who don't speak English well: 714 / 56%

**Comments regarding Gaps in ESL Programs:**

- ❑ Additional classes for lower level students; providing job training.
- ❑ Childcare.
- ❑ More enrollments, and better retention.
- ❑ A viable off-campus site that would allow the college to increase the number of courses offered in the Stamford area; getting students who have finished basis noncredit ESL to move into credit ESL and other college courses.
- ❑ More funding to provide more classes, at more sites to serve more people in need.
- ❑ More volunteer tutors.