

SPRING 2026

STUDENT & TUTOR NEWS

Literacy Volunteers of Washington County



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ANNOUNCEMENTS AND EVENTS

Literacy Volunteers of Washington County will close this spring for the following :

- April 20-24, 2026, for Spring Break.
- May 25, 2026, for Memorial Day
- June 19, 2026, for Juneteenth National Independence Day

LVWC out in the community:

- LVWC will have a table at the Ocean House Wellness Fair on Wednesday, March 25, 2026, from 11am-4pm.
- LVWC will have a table at the 42nd Garden Market Fair on Sunday, May 17, 2026, from 9am-2pm. Stop by and say hi.



Thank you to the Chariho Rotary Club for their donation of \$500 to Literacy Volunteers of Washington County. We appreciate the support!



SPOTLIGHT

Student Highlights

Congratulations! Hard work pays off. Luis was sworn in as a new United States citizen on December 9, 2025.



Angie has been accepted to URI and wants to study health sciences. She is pictured here with her tutor Teresa. Angie and Teresa have been meeting regularly since September 2025.

Congratulations and good luck Angie!



The road to progress requires an engaged, participating student and a patient, listening tutor.

If you've been reading Tutor Tips for a while, you know that one of my main themes is relating/comparing your student's learning to your own. Your approaches to learning something new can inform your sessions with your student. Have you recently tried to learn another language, perhaps for an upcoming trip or professional reason? How did you go about it? What resources of the millions out there (in person, online, etc.) did you try? Which helped the most? Did you concentrate on listening, speaking or reading the foreign (to you) language or all of the above?

I bet whatever reference(s) you used was introduced/organized in some way, e.g. "Conversational Italian," or "How to Read in Russian," etc. And you, being practical, sought content that you would use. I also bet your resource asked you to repeat words/phrases... often. Probably the source you chose used visuals as well as text to help. And, I bet your best learning happened when you were actually immersed in/surrounded by that foreign language.

You can extract successful strategies to use with your English language learners from your own experience. Reflect and see. Below are some of my favorite best practices supported by the research and my experience in trying to learn Italian!

First: Situating/organizing/introducing the session/material.

I'm a big believer in starting every session by identifying what you're going to be dealing with. What's the content/structure/topic of your lesson? And why are we tackling this? If you'll be reading, for example, help your student to recognize the context, be it a text, a newspaper article, a government form, short story, even a list of verbs, etc. Obviously, reading words in a business letter is different from reading words in a text on your phone. Do "pre-reading." Ask them to look for answers in the text before they dig into the reading. Keep asking questions throughout the session to make sure they're engaged.

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Upcoming Tutor Gatherings

March 30
11:30am-12:30pm
LVWC, Westerly

April 27
11:30am-12:30pm
Kingston Free Library,
Kingston

May 18
11:30am-12:30pm
LVWC, Westerly

Second: Incorporating English into students' usual routines.

If your student has a favorite TV show or app, suggest that he watch or use it translated into English. Does your student check the weather on her phone? Suggest she set that app to English. You can do this in small doses at first. Habits, we know, are hard to change, but the more exposure to English, the better. Reality check: Students, we have found, rarely do homework, but we can always hope.

Third: Repeating, repeating, repeating.

As you know, repetition is what secures new material in the brain. What you also know is that it can get boring for tutor and student to pronounce a new word or phrase over and over. So, mix it up. Focus on a limited range of new material to reinforce. Ask your student to pronounce a word or phrase, use it in a question, act it out. Tap out syllables so that students get the cadence of English words. Use visuals and movement. Write it down. Revisit at the end of your session.

This tutoring business is a two-way street as you know. The road to progress requires an engaged, participating student and a patient, listening tutor. We at LVWC are lucky to have such pairs...usually.

Hopefully these three tips are useful reminders to you. Please let us know what is working for you.

Thank you.

Happy Spring!
Barbara Heuer



THE BLOCK ISLAND BEAT New day and time

The Block Island conversation class has changed its day and time to Tuesdays at 4:00pm and is meeting at the Island Free Library.

LEARNING ENGLISH?

JOIN US FOR A FREE CONVERSATION CLASS FOR ADULTS

Where: Island Free Library
9 Dodge Street, Block Island

When: Tuesdays **NEW**
April 7
April 21

NEW Time: 4:00pm

40 LITERACY VOLUNTEERS
YEARS of Washington County

MY MOTHER'S GIFT

by Lisa Frankes

My name is Lisa Frankes, and I recently retired. I have been reflecting on this new life ahead filled with possibility, and I value this time to explore. I have been rediscovering pleasures like playing guitar, visiting friends, and cooking. I have asked myself, "What can I explore that is less self-focused, a pursuit that is meaningful and serves a purpose beyond my own needs and wants?"

After my father died in 2001, my mother searched for a meaningful purpose in her community and decided to inquire about becoming a tutor with the Literacy Volunteers of Washington County. I reflected on our discussions about how fulfilling her experience was, and she often described the challenges of teaching English. I recall how she strove to design lessons that addressed the unique needs of her students. The work was interesting to her and compelling.

She worked with a Bulgarian couple for many years and developed friendships with them and their friends. After a few years, the couple invited her to visit their hometown in Bulgaria. She loved travelling and meeting their friends and family. She brought back photos and described her adventures including picking grapes for an afternoon on a family farm. The Bulgarian family eventually moved from the area and continued to correspond with my mother for several years.



My mother then began working with a young Chinese woman and met her extended Chinese family. Mom learned a lot about Chinese culture and became very interested in China as a country with a fascinating history. She attained greater insights regarding the challenges for immigrants coming to the U.S., including the complex procedures and criteria required to attain citizenship. She assisted her student with understanding and responding to government paperwork. As a social worker, I readily imagined how difficult that might be, because I struggled to help my U.S. born English speaking clients understand and complete their government paperwork! My mother's life was deeply enriched through her experiences working with this Chinese woman, and their relationship was characterized by warmth and mutual appreciation.

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My Mother's Gift continued...

After reflecting on my mother's volunteer experience, I decided to meet with Theresa Gregal, the Literacy Volunteers program director, to learn more about the program. Theresa was welcoming and enthusiastic. The process of becoming a tutor was not intimidating, and there are many supportive people and resources available to me. I am now a volunteer and enjoy tutoring very much. I have a lot to learn alongside my student. We will both gain a lot of knowledge and understanding as we learn more about each other. Contributing to an immigrant's ability to create a better life in this uncertain and sometimes frightening world is meaningful and fulfilling.



Tutors



Hey Tutors, remember if you are meeting outside of the LVWC, you need to submit your hours using our Off-Site Tutor Reporting Form from our website. Thank you!

SOMEONE NEW AT LVWC

Tonya Bilotti, Assessment & Evaluation Specialist



What is an assessment?

An assessment is a way for a teacher to check what you know and what you can do.

Tonya Bilotti joined the LVWC family when she started as a volunteer tutor. Thanks to a grant from the RI Foundation, Tonya is now our new Evaluation & Assessment Specialist. Her focus will be bringing back assessments for our students, and evaluating our program by interviewing students and tutors. All of this is to help LVWC be a better program for our students and improve support for our tutors.



Pictured top, right to left: Barbara Heuer, Theresa Gregal, Jessica Wick, Tonya Bilotti.
Sitting: Torey Malatia

Tonya comes with great experience in education as a secondary language arts teacher for the Coventry School District where she was a dedicated and compassionate teacher. Tonya brings that dedication and compassion, as well her many other talents, to LVWC, and we are grateful for it.

LVWC Board of Directors

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FREE CONVERSATION CLASSES

for adult English language learners



URI Graduate Village (Hybrid)

Mondays

5:30 PM - 7:00 PM

URI Graduate Village Community Center
2900 Kingstown Rd. Kingston RI



Tuesday Zoom English Practice

Tuesdays, starting in January 2026

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Zoom Only

Sign up on our website



LVWC Conversation Practice

Wednesdays

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

7 Elm Street, Westerly RI
(Christ Church basement offices)



Block Island Conversation Class

Tuesday 4/7, 4/21 4:00-5:00PM

Island Free Library

Block Island



40 LITERACY
YEARS VOLUNTEERS
and growing! *of Washington County*

www.literacywashingtoncounty.org

