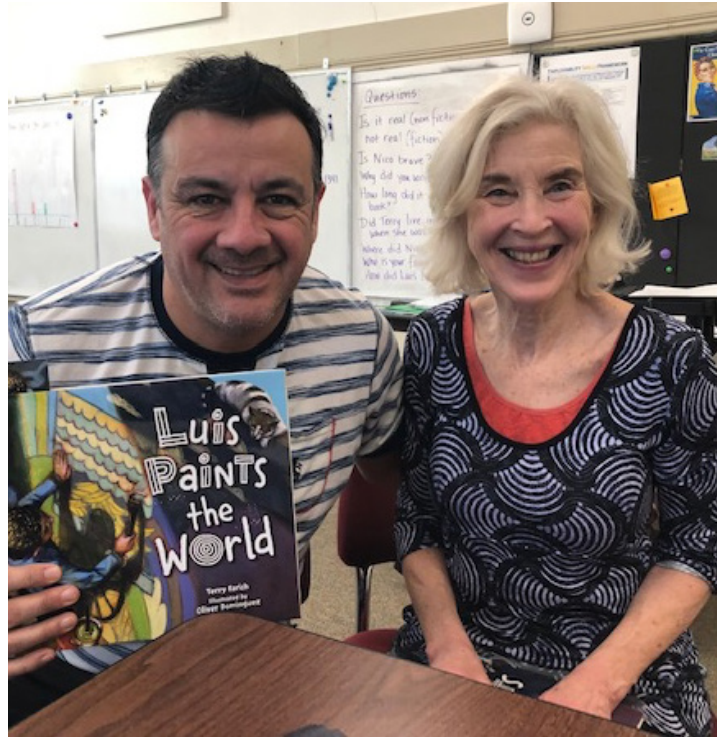


REMOTE ESOL CASE STUDY:

Thematic, No- To High-Tech Remote ESOL Program

Second Start

Concord, New Hampshire



ESOL Program: Second Start ESOL

Website: www.second-start.org (direct link: [ESOL program](#))

Reach: Suburban/Rural

Number of ESOL students served per year: 100

Student population: Immigrants and refugees, most of whom speak Spanish or Arabic

Contact for more information:

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Photos: *Second Start's ESOL students*

Program Description

Second Start is a non-profit organization established in 1971 in Concord, New Hampshire. In addition to the adult ESOL program, Second Start offers adult basic skills classes, high school equivalency programs, an alternative high school for students ages 14 to 20, a childcare center, and a driving school for new Americans. ESOL classes, which range from beginning to high-

intermediate levels, offer support with career navigation, advising, and for meeting basic non-academic needs. Second Start also manages a volunteer tutor program, linking students to an individual learning opportunity with a volunteer from the community.

Virtual, synchronous ESOL classroom instruction is offered four hours per week in monthly cycles. Second Start did not operate a distance education ESOL program prior to March, 2020, but did participate in the Adult Literacy XPRIZE Communities Competition in 2019, through which staff gained access to mobile learning apps, and more importantly, valuable experience in integrating them in instruction. Approximately 99.5 percent of the organization's funding consists of government grants and the remainder is in-kind. The ESOL budget for the 2019–2020 school year was \$186,509.

Notable, Innovative Practices

The program design accommodates no/low- and high-tech users. The heart of this remote ESOL program is a thematic, teacher-developed “month-at-a-time” curriculum with an accompanying book and homework packet that is used in and out of class. It is supported and inspired by [New Hampshire Humanities' Connections](#) adult literacy and book discussion program in which participants can receive and keep up to four books. Teachers develop a robust [learning packet](#) customized to the themes of the book, with links to videos to watch. The advisor drops off packets with students and checks in with them about their needs. Students with no internet connection receive the packet and book to work on independently. Students with internet capability participate in two Zoom meetings per week.

Remote ESOL Program Design

The core of the program design is a thematic, teacher-developed “month-at-a-time” curriculum with an accompanying book and homework packet that is used in and out of class. The program design accommodates no-, low-, and high-tech users. All students work through the same packet and those who can, attend class via Zoom, while those who are not able to attend synchronously, work independently with guidance and phone check-ins with the teacher. The homework packets create the bridge to the class so that those students don't feel left out. WhatsApp is used for group and one-on-one chats and the Quizlet app is also used for learning vocabulary. The program also has a license to Cell-Ed and makes it available to students for supplementary learning.

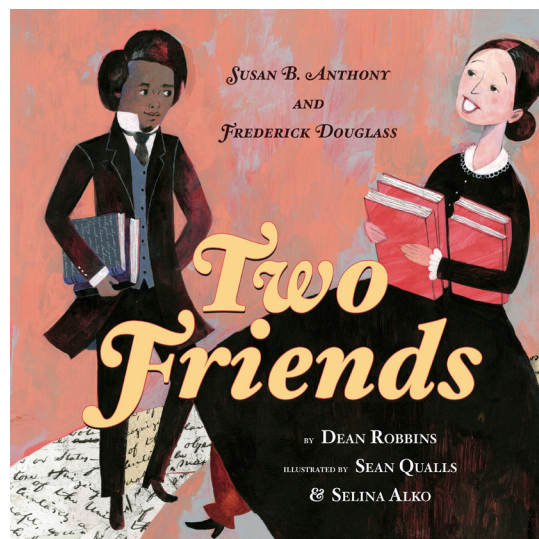
The New Hampshire Department of Education recently purchased a license to the Canvas platform that will be used across all grades, community colleges, and remarkably, also in adult education. Adult learners will thus use the same platform as their children, who are enrolled in public K–12 schools, and it will be a familiar platform if they continue on to community college.

Student Onboarding and Persistence Supports

Student Onboarding & Persistence Supports The student onboarding process was redesigned, driven by what the staff perceived to be the most efficient way to get students registered and enrolled. The registration process was moved online for the most part, a new registration form was created, and computer-based testing instituted. Students with no internet access could still make an appointment to register by phone. In-person registration was streamlined to include onboarding for online tools and digital skills tutoring on whatever device the student has, using the principle, “I do it, we do it, you do it.” Second Start was able to purchase Chromebooks to loan out to students who needed them. Staff reassured students that they were there for them if they needed more help. Students were invited to schedule an appointment to bring in their phone or computer if they are having issues connecting to class.

Instruction

The remote ESOL program was inspired by [New Hampshire Humanities' Connections](#) adult literacy and book discussion program to develop a monthly thematic ESOL curriculum based on carefully selected young adult books. (One of the ESOL teachers at Second Start is also the *Connections* program manager.) *Connections* participants can receive and keep up to four books free of charge. The Second Start ESOL classes read, for example, *Two Friends: The Story of Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass*. Students receive a teacher-developed [learning packet](#) with links to videos to watch, and activities that are all connected to the theme of the book that they are reading. [Here](#) is an agenda for one class related to this book. Teachers even arranged a virtual visit to the Susan B. Anthony Museum in Rochester, New York, during a civics unit, which students loved.



The curriculum is aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education. The learning packets also align with the two or more of the five key domains of [Teaching Skills That Matter](#): digital literacy, civic education, financial literacy, health literacy, and workforce preparation.

Digital Learning Supports

The digital skills tutoring focuses on whatever technology the student has. The approach is: “I do it, we do it, you do it.” All [instructions on how to use Zoom, Quizlet, or Cell-Ed](#) use exclusively pictorial directions, with screen shots of what something would look like on iPhones and Samsung smartphones. Students can make an appointment with the Distance Learning Facilitator to have an in-person meeting on how to use their device and the programs.

The program was able to purchase Chromebooks and lend them out to students who needed them. They provide training to students on how to use them. Students are invited to schedule an appointment to bring in their phone or computer if they are having issues connecting to class. Some students don't have strong enough internet access to support online learning. The local internet provider (Comcast) made special deals available to local residents during the pandemic. Nevertheless, some students participated in remote classes by working on paper-based learning packets and the books that the advisor or the teachers delivered to them. While the advisor drops off packets for most students, students who live outside of Concord pick up their learning packets at a central drop box location at Second Start. If students are unable to get to Second Start, their packet is mailed to their home. Teachers check in with students by phone and through WhatsApp.

The program also has a license to Cell-Ed and makes it available to students for supplementary learning. Many students are finding it helpful for studying for the citizenship exam.

Support for Students' Basic Needs

The program has twice surveyed students about their need for food, applying for unemployment or jobs, health care, housing, and more. An advisor makes follow-up calls and referrals based on the survey and what she learns from teachers and students directly. During teachers' regular one-on-one check-ins with students, they inquire about any changes in students' circumstances and needs. They have connected many students to the New Hampshire Food Bank, for example. Teachers have collected data on student needs to share with the advisor through Google Forms.

Support for Teachers and Staff

“The state has really stepped up and almost flooded programs with various online learning options.”

–Zanna Blaney, Program Director

ESOL teachers and other program staff feel very supported by the program director, the agency administration, and the State Department of Education that funds the program. All staff got a raise in their hourly rate in recognition of the extra effort needed to develop and deliver remote instruction. In addition, they received more paid time for onboarding students and providing more tech support. The ESOL teachers were encouraged and empowered to develop thematic curriculum and received a modest grant from the state for it. The agency secured funds to purchase additional Chromebooks to loan out to students as well as additional Zoom accounts.

The New Hampshire Department of Education Professional Development Specialist organized numerous professional development opportunities and secured licenses for the Northstar Digital Skills program, as well as commercial products such as Essential Education and Burlington English.

Partnerships

Second Start’s key partnership is with New Hampshire Humanities and its Connections program. A representative from New Hampshire Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health twice visited the ESOL class (via Zoom) to talk about workers’ rights and COVID safety.

Indicators of Effectiveness

“We have really high attendance and engagement. We haven’t lost anyone! And the connections students develop with each other are incredible to witness.”

–Mary Nolin, Literacy level ESOL teacher

The program reports that student retention is the highest it has been in years. Removing barriers such as lack of transportation and/or childcare contributes to strong retention. Even though challenges continue for many students (e.g., unemployment), they are consistently attending class and teachers report a high level of student engagement. When comparing the same time frames from last school year (pre-pandemic lockdown) to 2020, one ESOL class lost about eight students in 2019, versus only one in 2020.

Students track their time spent on studying using the packet. The program collects and reports these distance-learning hours to the funder as part of its accountability. Teachers have been pleasantly surprised at the amount of time students are dedicating to studying outside of class. For the October, 2020, *Two Friends: The Story of Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass* learning packet, students spent an average of six hours of work outside of class completing their packets. Students are pleased to track their own progress and like having the monthly packets as the structure that guides their learning. Starting in Spring, 2021, students will be compiling their own learning portfolios. Students’ learning gains are also tracked through state-mandated, standardized testing (TABE [Test of Adult Basic Education] Class-E and CASAS [Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems]), and the teachers report measurable skill gains.

This program model makes it possible for school-age children to participate and learn with their parents. Many parents not only read the books to and with their children, they bring their children to the remote class. Data from New Hampshire Humanities' 2020 Connections program indicate that more than 75 percent of Connections program participants self-reported they are reading books with their children, and ESOL learners are the largest group of participants.

Additional Documentation:

[Instructions for digital tools used in class; sample class agenda and lesson packet; civics pre-/post-test.](#)



ABOUT THE REMOTE ADULT ESOL PROJECT

This case study is part of the Remote Adult ESOL¹ (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Project led by World Education, Inc. The project's goal is to document and disseminate viable remote adult ESOL program models and practices so that ESOL instruction can be done at scale efficiently and effectively in a variety of settings. The impetus for the project was to identify strategies for meeting the current interest and unmet demand as well as meeting potential demand prompted by English language requirements for U.S. citizenship under immigration reform. During winter and spring of 2021, the project investigated selected ESOL programs' and learners' needs, experiences, and promising instructional and learner support practices that rely predominantly on technology-rich strategies and tools deployed remotely.

This case study is one of eight full program profiles selected for its innovative program design and promising practices. The eight case studies of programs from across the U.S. are complemented by:

- *Policy and Practice Brief* that presents policy considerations and recommendations;
- *Creating Equitable Access to Remote ESOL and Supports in Multiple Contexts and for Distinct Populations and Purposes*, a cross-case analysis of remote adult ESOL delivery through the lens of the varied organizational settings in which they operate and the supports needed to engage distinct ESOL populations; and
- *Promising Remote ESOL Practices*, a document that highlights specific practices and innovations of selected, nominated programs from onboarding to instruction, digital skills development, and student and teacher supports.

¹ We use the term English for Speakers of Other Languages or ESOL rather than English as a Second Language (ESL) out of recognition that many English Learners already speak more than one language, just not English.