
Center for an Urban Future

NOVEMBER 2007

UPDATE: STILL LOST IN TRANSLATION

IN NOVEMBER 2006, THE CENTER FOR AN URBAN FUTURE AND THE SCHUYLER CENTER FOR Analysis and Advocacy released "Lost in Translation," a report which found that while immigrants have been fueling the population growth of communities in nearly every corner of the state, from Suffolk County to Syracuse, the state-run English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program has not come close to keeping pace with the demand. An analysis of new data by the Center for an Urban Future reveals that the problem has gotten even worse in the past year. The new analysis finds:

In 2006, there were more than 1.75 million working-age adults across New York State with only limited English skills, but just 86,948 seats in state-run ESOL programs—serving only 5.0 percent of the estimated need.

- Orange County was home to 22,200 adults with limited English skills in 2006, but just 1,066 residents were enrolled in state funded ESOL programs that year.
- In Dutchess County, state-run ESOL classes served just 5.7 percent of the need. In Erie County, the percentage served was 8.1 percent; in New York City, just 3.4 percent; in Nassau County, 10.6 percent and in Westchester, 9.7 percent.

Demand for English-language instruction continues to increase throughout the state.

- Statewide, the 1.75 million working-age adults with limited English proficiency represent a 7.5 percent increase since last year, or 122,889 more adults.
- In Albany County, the number of adults with limited English proficiency increased by 65 percent between 2005 and 2006.
- In Erie County, the number grew by 32 percent; in Nassau County, by 9 percent; in Suffolk County by 8 percent and in New York City by 7 percent.
- In 2006, 242,380 adult New Yorkers spoke no English at all.

Supply of state-funded ESOL hasn't kept pace with growing demand.

- There were 515 more adults enrolled in state-funded ESOL programs in 2006 than 2005 – a rise of just 0.6 percent despite the 7.5 percent increase in the number of adults in need of services.
- Even with this increase in overall adults enrolled, a smaller percentage of those in need were actually receiving ESOL services (5.0 percent in 2006, down from 5.3 percent the prior year).

Despite rising demand, 11 of the 15 largest counties outside of NYC saw a decline in ESOL enrollment.

- Orange County has seen huge spikes in immigration but ESOL enrollment shrunk by 40 percent.
- Erie County experienced a 32 percent increase in adults with limited English proficiency but lost 10 percent of their seats.

Report - November 2007

Still Lost in Translation

A new analysis shows that the enormous gap between demand for ESOL and the supply of available classes in New York State has gotten even worse over the past year.

by Tara Colton

Click here to read the full report (PDF).

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Immigrants Face Severe English Class Shortages

Voice of America, by Adam Phillips, March 14, 2007

Teaching Adults to Read, Write Helps Their Kids, Our Economy

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, by Robert Mahar and Kevin Smith, May 09, 2007

Why Don't You Teach English?

El Diario/LA PRENSA, November 29, 2007

Facing A Failure to Communicate

Albany Times Union, by Paul Grondhal, December 01, 2007

Plan to Fund Adult ESL Gains Support

Queens Tribune, by Alex Silverberg, June 22, 2007

ESOL Conference Tuesday in Albany

WAMC Radio, by Dave Lucas, November 26, 2007

Empowered through English - ESL on Long Island (video)

Long Island WINS via YouTube, April 24, 2009

Help Wanted: Getting NY's Workers the Language Skills They Need

The Brian Lehrer Show, WNYC, November 26, 2007

English Classes for Immigrants Lag, Groups Say

The Poughkeepsie Journal, by Dan Osborn, November 28, 2007

Inmigrantes Perdidos en la Traducci

El Diario/LA PRENSA, by Carmen Villavicencio, November 28, 2007

Teaching English to Immigrants for Economic Development

North Country Public Radio, by Karen Dewitt, November 28, 2007

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