

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS



## Columbus State Community College's ESL Afterschool Communities

Columbus, OH

260

Average number of students served during the school year

100%

ELL students

99%

Students from low-income families

### Main funding sources:

- ▶ 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers
- ▶ Other grants



**2017 Dollar General Afterschool Literacy Award Winner**

## Taking a comprehensive approach to support English language learners and their families.

More than 4 million English language learners (ELL)—students who receive language assistance, such as bilingual education and High Intensity Language Training—attend public schools nationwide. This growing and diverse population faces myriad challenges and needs a coordinated system of support to help them build literacy skills and thrive. Afterschool programs are uniquely positioned to serve both ELL students and their families.

### Overview

*Columbus State Community College's ESL Afterschool Communities (ESLAsC)* develops ELL students' literacy skills through individualized learning plans, small group instruction, vocabulary games, journaling, and more. ESLAsC's success comes from their dedication to individualized instruction and tutoring, the relationships between students and staff, and the work that ESLAsC puts into building strong relationships with the communities and schools they serve.

### A typical day for students

ESLAsC staff meet students in their classrooms, so they can connect with students' school-day teachers. The program begins with an academic Power Hour that includes daily reading, academic enrichment activities, and homework help. Next, students go outside for physical activity, enjoy a hot meal, and dedicated development time. Students and staff talk about teamwork, sportsmanship, and integrity, and connect students' experiences to lessons on respect and responsibility. Students also have opportunity to build leadership skills and take on various roles in the program, such as leading group circles. In summer, ESLAsC runs two three-week programs that continue academic and literacy components from the school year and allow time and flexibility for fun programming, such as participating in the local library's summer reading challenge and the annual ESLAsC 5K.

## Outcomes

Working with an external evaluator, ESLAsC found that during the 2015-2016 school year, 86 percent of students passed the 3rd Grade Reading Guarantee, and 64 percent of students in the program maintained a B or better or increased their reading grades. Close to 9 in 10 ESLAsC students increased at least one grade level in reading.

## Plans for the Dollar General Afterschool Literacy Award

Due to limited funding this year, ESLAsC was anticipating limiting its summer services to three weeks of programming instead of six. With the help of the Dollar General Afterschool Literacy Award, ESLAsC will extend its summer programming to the full six weeks at each of their program sites.



## Challenges

**ELL students face many hurdles in school.** ELL students must develop fluency in a new language, understand new content through a language they have limited proficiency in, and navigate a new school with an unfamiliar culture. ELL students are also more likely to live in low-income families and attend under-resourced schools.

**ELL students are struggling academically.** ELL students are between 2.5 and 3.5 times more likely to score below basic in reading than their English-fluent peers. The dropout rate for students who “spoke a language other than English at home and spoke English less than very well” is more than 3.5 times as high as the national average and ELL students’ graduation rate is almost 20 percentage points lower than the national average.

**ELL students are a growing and diverse population.** During the 2013-14 school year, approximately 4.5 million ELL students attended public school, an increase of almost a quarter of a million students over the past decade. ELL students comprise a diverse group of more than a dozen racial and ethnic populations speaking more than 30 languages.

Read [Afterschool Providing Key Literacy Supports to English Language Learner Students](#) to learn more.



## Program characteristics

ESLAsC works to ensure the success of its students through extensive academic and social and emotional support. ESLAsC’s mission is to help students’ develop their academic, social, and personal skills, and the program weaves this goal throughout its literacy-building activities by providing opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills, work on teamwork skills, and discuss what it means to be respectful and responsible.

A fundamental part of the ESLAsC programming is its well-rounded approach, not only providing a diverse set of literacy activities and offering individualized learning plans, but teaching students life skills, taking students on field trips, and providing supports like dental services and adult English classes to students’ families.

Regarding academics, the program provides a small tutor-to-student ratio of 8:1. Tutors stick with their group of students throughout the academic year, building a relationship with each student. Tutors’ support is not limited to after school; once a week, they sit in on their students’ classes to better align afterschool academic assistance with school day lessons. A certified teacher, often an ESL school day teacher, also provides students with one hour per week of direct literacy instruction. This ensures that the support students receive is specifically tailored to their needs.

Parent needs are also taken into account for programming. ESLAsC enlists a parent liaison to help with communication between the community, other parents, and ESLAsC. Furthermore, ESLAsC prioritizes establishing strong connections with its students’ parents by making phone calls, performing home visits, providing translation services, accompanying families to parent teacher conferences, providing social services referrals, and more. Understanding that a student’s day does not end when they leave the program, ESLAsC sees these services as vital to the families they serve.

Key to ESLAsC’s success is the intentional placement of programs. Before opening a program, ESLAsC performs a six- to nine-month evaluation of community need and desire for the program. By doing so, ESLAsC ensures that when they open a program, they have the support of the school teachers, principal, housing community, cultural center, parents, and community members.

## Program history

The idea for ESLAsC came from parents and community members who attend the college’s basic English classes, voicing the need for similar programming for their children. In 2002, the first ESLAsC opened, and in 2004 the program solidified its practices and programming into the model the programs use today. ESLAsC now operates within four schools and one community center in Columbus, serving majority immigrant and refugee populations.

### Recommendations

#### *for serving ELL students and their families*

- ▶ Listen to and advocate for the needs of the community you serve—it will establish trust and make your program stronger.
- ▶ Stay true to your mission. It isn’t always the best plan to adjust your programming to meet the needs of funders. Don’t be afraid to ask why, and disagree.

