



adult learning

quarterly

Library Outreach Program Expands to Serve ESL Students

LOLA, MIGUEL, AND VICTOR SMILE

as they talk about learning English at Operation Read in Lexington, KY.

Their young faces full of hope, they tease each other about watching more American TV channels and fewer Spanish, about accessing closed captioning so that they can see words written as they are spoken. Occasionally, they pause to mentally search for the word they want

Lola is one of many students learning English at Operation Read.

and then, having found it, continue eagerly. There is a feeling of freedom, of ideas able to take flight through these new tools—these English words.

“If you want to stay (in the U.S.) a long time, it is necessary to learn English,” a smiling Miguel notes, “because not many Americans speak Spanish well. It is very necessary we learn English. We need the English for everything.”

Lola, whose husband is English-speaking, appreciates her teacher because he is married to a woman from China and knows “how it is not to understand each other.”

The teacher has a good sense of humor and class is not boring, Victor adds.

Approximately 35,000 Spanish-speaking adults live in the Lexington area, many working on horse or tobacco farms, or in restaurants, according to Gail Toye, Operation Read executive director. English as a Second Language (ESL) classes meet at the program’s downtown headquarters, neighborhood centers, and other community sites at staggered times to accommodate work schedules. In addition, tutors travel to area horse farms to work with Spanish-speaking employees and to teach Spanish to

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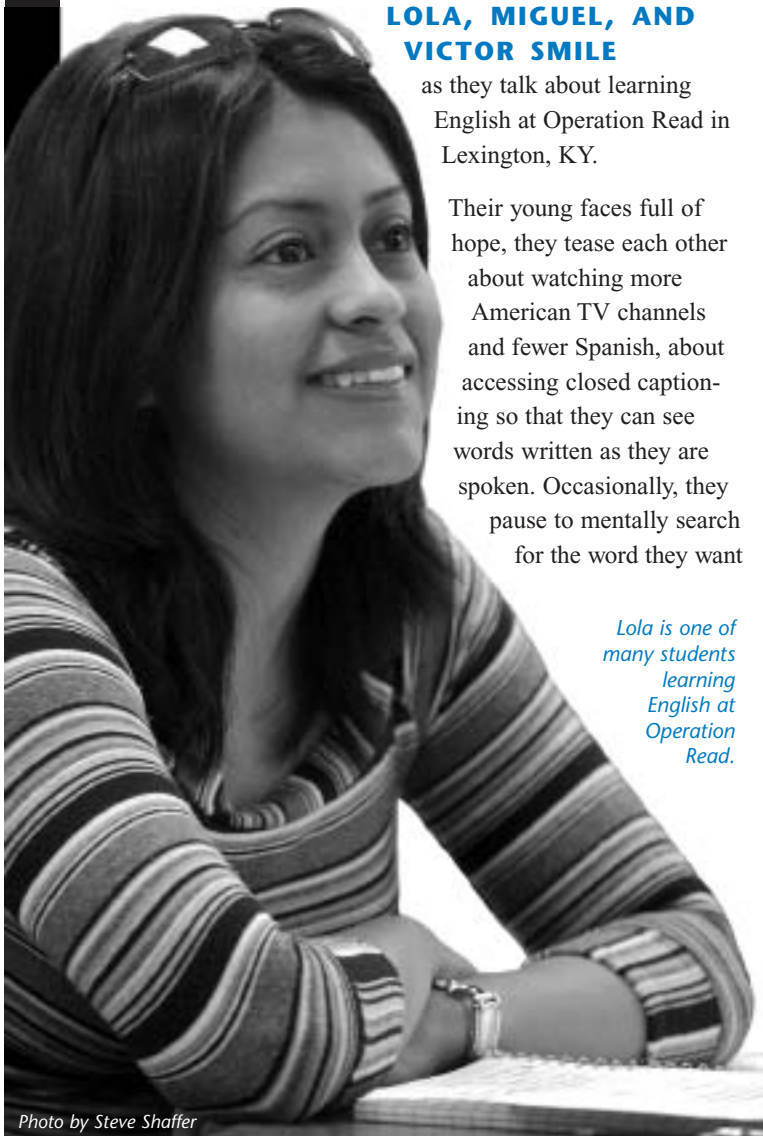


Photo by Steve Shaffer

English-speaking supervisors.

At several elementary schools, Operation Read is planning ESL sessions for stay-at-home moms, timed to end with the school day so mother and child can go home together. ESL services also are available to other members of the city's growing international population, including immigrants from China, Bosnia, Russia, Jordan, Mali, and Japan.

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ESL is only one facet of a program that began in 1979 as an outreach of the Lexington Public Library. The mission, Toye says, "is to assist adults in acquiring the reading and writing skills they desire to achieve their personal goals. We serve adults who have never learned to read and write and immigrants who are just learning to read English."

"When adults' basic skills are low, they are more likely to be on public assistance, less likely to be involved in their child's education, and less likely to vote," she says. "We believe that the ability to read and write, to understand and be understood, is critical to personal freedom and the maintenance of a democratic society. We recognize literacy as an integral element in the broader goals of economic opportunity and security, social justice, and dignity."

Other Operation Read services include:

- **Family Literacy:** Parents and children are the audience for interactive learning opportunities
- **GED:** In partnership with the Central Kentucky Technical College, Operation Read offers assessment and preparatory classes
- **Correctional Literacy:** Operation Read trains inmates to tutor other inmates at the Federal Medical Center


- **Computer Assisted Learning:** Learning labs utilize educational software for adult new learners

- **Basic Literacy:** An estimated 15 percent of Lexington citizens can't read above the 6th grade level, and most who come to us can't read at all, Toye says. Operation Read matches learners with volunteer tutors. The pairs meet three hours a week to work on basic reading and writing skills. "We try to get the learners to come to small group sessions also," Toye says, "because they can interact and learn from each other, but some are not ready for a class setting."

In addition, Learner Support Specialist Patsy Golden, herself an Operation Read participant, organizes social activities, as well as group volunteer opportunities to help the learners contribute and build self-esteem.

Operation Read served 1,140 students in the last fiscal year, says Michelle Adomitis, systems & financial analyst. Financing comes through fundraisers; contributions from the United Way and the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government; grants from Keeneland, LexMark, Starbucks, Toyota, and Wal-Mart; and individual donors. "Every dollar is used fully," says Adomitis. "We get a big bang for our buck. And for every \$3 spent, \$33 comes back to the community."

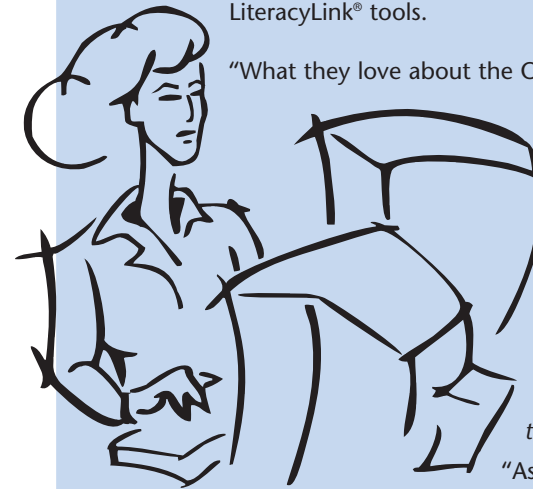
More than 300 volunteers serve the students and "we need more," Toye says. After 14 hours of training, volunteers are certified through ProLiteracy America. Other volunteers, including members of RSVP (the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) and PACE (Prepare Adults for Community/Competitive Employment), help with child care while parents are in class.

"Our volunteers make this work," Toye says. "Volunteers are our program." 

For more information, contact Operation Read, 251 West Second Street, Lexington, KY 40507; call (859) 254-9964, or visit the Web site at www.opread.org.

OMS Teachers Interact with Learners Online


"Teachers are thrilled with the Online Management System," says Milli Fazey, former director of sales and marketing for KET's Enterprise Division, now a busy trainer helping teachers make the most of PBS LiteracyLink® tools.



"What they love about the OMS is that learners can work online at their own pace, and teachers can see what learners in their virtual classroom have accomplished – *online and in real time*," says Fazey.

"As soon as a learner clicks the 'save' button, that work goes into an online portfolio. In seconds, the teacher can see the learner's work online on the teacher's computer screen. And teachers can use the messaging feature to interact with their learners online one-on-one. They can comment on their learners' work, offer suggestions, instruction, and encouragement, immediately or at a later time. The OMS also has a reporting function that allows teachers and administrators to run reports showing the amount of work their learners have accomplished over a given period."

LiteracyLink lessons, activities, and pre-tests are available free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to any learner with access to the Internet. For a moderate fee, the LiteracyLink Online Management System gives teachers the advantage of interacting with learners and keeping track of their progress.

"Learners can work at their own pace, and teachers can review the work online at their convenience – whether they're at a learning center or at home," says Fazey. "It's a big help to busy teachers who want to stay in touch." 

For more information, visit LiteracyLink online at www.pbs.org/literacy, or call KET at (800) 354-9067.