

# LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY BUILDS STRONG COMMUNITIES

**The success of English Learner (EL) students in school revolves around language proficiency. Their progress in the classroom, integration in their communities, post-secondary education options, and job prospects hinge to a large degree on their language skills.**

Equally important is parental involvement. Teachers and administrators obviously play a central role, but the level of parental involvement in the academic life of EL students cannot be underestimated. A policy brief from the National Education Association states: "When schools, parents, families, and communities work together to support learning, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and enroll in higher level programs."<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, research shows that nearly all K-12 teachers want parents to participate more in classroom activities. The reverse is often true, too: many parents would like to have a more visible, active presence in the education community.

However, parents of EL students grapple with a vexing problem of their own: they themselves do not possess English language proficiency. The consequences of this situation are far-reaching. For example: EL parents will be less engaged in the classroom, have limited interaction with teachers, be unable to oversee homework assignments, and so on.

In many school communities, it takes the involvement of students, teachers, and families to ensure that everyone's voice is heard and valued—and that requires English language proficient parents.

It is often impractical for EL parents to acquire English language skills on their own. Therefore, schools turn to EdTech tools to bridge the language gap and give EL parents access to efficient language learning instruction. This paper will explore how a technology-enabled English language program for EL parents empowers them, involves them in their students' academic progress, and forges stronger community ties.

---



---

### OBSTACLES TO EL PARENTAL LANGUAGE LEARNING

EL parents are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to the education of their children. Their English language deficiencies prevent them from assuming a greater role in the success of their children's education.

The answer lies in sharpening their English language skills in order to give them a greater stake in the academic community. Yet, there are those who say the responsibility for improving their language skills lies with the EL parents themselves, that school communities should not get involved. Often, schools must work within tight budgets and simply don't have the resources to teach parents as well as students.

Upon closer examination, it becomes clear that asking EL parents to resolve this dilemma on their own is problematic. While they may have the desire and the will to improve their language skills, many EL parents face stifling obstacles that impede their progress:

- **Unaffordable technology.** According to a report from the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop, "Four in ten families without a computer or Internet access said they could not afford to purchase either."<sup>2</sup>
  - **Inadequate computer tools.** Many EL families have access only to mobile devices—insufficient in most instances to perform deep study or homework assignments. The Ganz Cooney report goes on to say that "Mobile-only access, despite giving the impression of a smartphone-toting family, is not enough."<sup>3</sup>
  - **Computer illiteracy.** Many EL parents simply do not know how to use a computer. Indeed, the Cincinnati Public Schools found that many EL parents were unaware of fundamental things, such as the location of the on/off switch and the function of a mouse.<sup>4</sup>
  - **Limited learning experience.** EL parents are not used to learning on their own: when, where, what, and how to study. Many may be too embarrassed to ask for help or must rely on the still-evolving language skills of their children to translate for them.
  - **Greater isolation.** Without the ability to communicate clearly, EL parents already feel cut off from their larger community of native English-speakers, including from teachers and administrators.
  - **No time.** Many EL parents are burdened with work commitments and heavy personal family obligations, making it difficult to find time for language instruction outside of the home.
-



For many EL parents, learning English is highly desirable, but often impractical without experienced professional instruction and guidance. Faced with this reality, some question whether helping EL parents is essential to boost their students' success. Let's explore this further.

**BENEFITS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING FOR PARENTS**

A report from MDRC, a nonpartisan research organization, found that "Parents from diverse backgrounds, when given direction, can become more engaged with their children. And when parents are more engaged, children tend to do better."<sup>5</sup>

For EL parents to assume an active role in the community, the ability to speak English is key. Beyond this self-evident conclusion, language proficiency can help in so many specific ways:

- **Deeper involvement.** Parents who speak English well can participate in their students' academic work. According to the American Psychological Association, "Research shows a strong relationship between parent engagement and educational outcomes, including school attendance and higher grades and classroom test scores."<sup>6</sup>

***EL parents who improve their English language skills can develop stronger bonds with teachers, support their children's academic outcomes, and strengthen social and community bonds.***

- **Higher graduation rates.** An independent study on parental involvement found that "parent participation in school functions to be a significant positive predictor of both high school completion and postsecondary enrollment...."<sup>7</sup>
- **Homework achievement.** EL parents with language proficiency can reinforce school lessons, attitudes, and expectations. EdSource and New America Media found that "Improved communication between teachers and parents increases student engagement as measured by homework completion rates, on-task behavior, and class participation."<sup>8</sup>
- **Fewer risky behaviors.** Parental involvement has a dramatic effect on students' lives, leading to better in-class performance and participation. A joint report from EdSource and New America Media says that "At-risk behaviors such as alcohol use, violence and other anti-social behaviors decrease as parent involvement increases."<sup>9</sup>

EL parents who improve their English language skills can develop stronger bonds with teachers, support their children's academic outcomes, and strengthen social and community bonds. Finding the right tools to achieve these laudable goals is paramount. Let's examine this question now.



**ADVANTAGES OF A LANGUAGE PROGRAM FROM ROSETTA STONE**

Language learning for EL adults is central for opening the doorway to deeper engagement in their community, both in their child's school and the wider community in which they live, shop, and socialize.

To meet the demands and challenges of today's busy EL population, Rosetta Stone offers a suite of tools that provide lessons, instructions, and support throughout the learning process.

For example, **Rosetta Stone English for Education** gives administrators, teachers, and families proven online and offline resources to help EL parents learn English, and features:

- **Foundational content.** ELs use an award-winning interactive program that develops fundamental English language skills, gets learners speaking immediately, and accelerates the drive toward speaking confidence.
- **Dynamic Immersion®.** Language lessons provide core language instruction. EL parents begin to learn and speak English immediately, so they get readily acclimated right from the start and no time is wasted.
- **Speech Recognition.** TruAccent® speech recognition technology guides a learner's pronunciation, helping EL parents build confidence in their speaking abilities.
- **Live tutoring.** ELs talk directly and practice their skills with native English-speaking tutors in a safe, friendly environment.

**Classroom Builders.** A teachers' library of resources supports a higher degree of EL classroom integration with activity guides to reinforce online content.

- *The Teacher's Guide* expands teachers' instructional reach with complete lesson plans aligned with online lessons.
- *Student Activities* engage learners with differentiated reading passages, comprehension questions, workbooks, memory games, and more.
- **Mobile apps.** EL parents can practice and learn their lessons with Rosetta Stone mobile apps for portable digital devices.
- **Games and activities.** These entertaining but instructional programs reinforce language skills in fun, engaging ways.
- **Administrator tools.** Easy-to-understand reporting tools allow teachers to track and measure student and group progress quickly.
- **Training and support service.** Training and Services teams work closely with administrators and educators to assist in a successful program launch and to



monitor overall progress. One key goal is to implement online programs that will blend effectively with in-class teacher instruction.

- **Anytime/anywhere accessibility.** EL parents can access their lessons at any time and in any location—in the classroom, at home, in a wired hotspot—and on almost any digital device, ensuring steady and sustained progress in their language proficiency.
- **Wide language choice.** Rosetta Stone offers instruction in 24 languages, helping native speakers preserve their family's heritage language and providing teachers with language learning that corresponds to community language(s).

Rosetta Stone offers a comprehensive language learning solution to EL parents who want to improve their language proficiency and engage more deeply in their community. Let's see how this worked for one school district.

**Rosetta Stone permitted us the opportunity to meet the foreign language needs of a highly mobile and diverse population of students in an interface that the students found quickly engaging.**

*Dr. Kimi Sucharski, Data Analyst,  
Clarksville-Montgomery County School System*

families, provide greater instructional flexibility for Adult ESOL classes, and align with grade and credit recovery guidelines.

CMCSS used the Rosetta Stone Foundations for K-12 as an ESOL resource for adult learners. As part of the solution, adults could learn at their own pace, spoke only the target language, and received pronunciation feedback to build their speaking confidence.

Adult learners sharpened their language skills and the program also resulted in:

- Expanded English language options for Adult GED and ESOL classes
- Supported parental engagement, offering program access to families
- Complemented traditional instruction by certified EL teachers

According to Dr. Kimi Sucharski, the district data analyst, "Rosetta Stone permitted us the opportunity to meet the foreign language needs of a highly mobile and diverse population of students in an interface that the students found quickly engaging."<sup>10</sup>

**FAMILIES LEARNING TOGETHER**

The Clarksville-Montgomery County School System (CMCSS) in Tennessee serves over 32,000 students in 39 schools. Additionally, the system also serves military families stationed at neighboring Fort Campbell. They needed a language solution that would address the needs of EL students and their



---

### STRENGTHENING YOUR COMMUNITY

Research shows that language proficiency in EL parents can do much more than simply improve their own lives.

It also influences how well their children perform in school and careers as well. EL parents who speak with confidence will forge stronger bonds with their children's teachers, administrators, and community—with positive payback in so many ways.

Taking the first step by implementing a program from Rosetta Stone can be the start of a remarkable journey that will result in big dividends for parents, family members, learners, students, schools, and other community members.

Go to the Rosetta Stone [portal](#) to get more information specially prepared for teachers, directors, principals, and superintendents.

Or, [contact Rosetta Stone today](#) to request a consultation about setting up a language learning program for adult ELs.

- 
1. "Why Community Involvement in Schools is Important." International Survey Associates. May 6, 2016. <https://www.pridesurveys.com/index.php/blog/community-involvement-in-schools/>
  2. "Are Low-Income Families Connecting to the Internet? Yes, but Not Easily, Survey Finds," by Blake Montgomery. EdSurge. February 3, 2016. <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2016-02-03-are-low-income-families-connecting-to-the-internet-yes-but-not-easily-survey-finds>
  3. Same.
  4. Make Language Learning a Family Matter. Webinar. Rosetta Stone. March 24, 2017. <https://k12hub.rosettastone.com/k12-webinars/make-language-learning-a-family-matter>
  5. The Impact of Family Involvement on the Education of Children Ages 3 To 8. MDRC. Executive Summary, page iii. October 2013. [https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Family\\_Involvement\\_ES.pdf](https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/The_Impact_of_Family_Involvement_ES.pdf)
  6. "Parent Engagement in Schools." American Psychological Association. <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/programs/safe-supportive/parental-engagement/default.aspx>
  7. "The Differential Effects of Parental Involvement on High School Completion and Postsecondary Attendance," by Terris Ross. Education Policy Analysis Archives. March 7, 2016. <https://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/2030/1752>
  8. The Power of Parents. EdSource in collaboration with New America Media. February 2014. <https://edsources.org/wp-content/publications/Power-of-Parents-Feb-2014.pdf>
  9. Same.
  10. "One solution meets many language needs." Rosetta Stone Case Study. 2016. <https://k12hub.rosettastone.com/english-language-learning/case-study-clarksville-montgomery-county-school-systemm>