



The Midwest Is Springing Forward with BurlingtonEnglish

“The hallmark of adult ESL programs is flexibility. To be effective, programs need to offer classes that vary in terms of scheduling, location, duration, and content in order to maximize learning opportunities while accommodating the realities and constraints of adult learners’ lives.”¹

In this article, we will highlight three programs that recognize the importance of providing students with a flexible, personalized experience to encourage persistence and retention. We will learn how this approach has led to increased enrollment, usage, and learning gains since using BurlingtonEnglish.

Increased Enrollment

The Right Turn is a non-profit organization that serves individuals in rural counties of South Dakota. We recently asked Danette Jarzab, an English instructor at The Right Turn, about their program’s recent growth. She responded enthusiastically, “Our program has expanded in the past year, and we believe that it is due to BurlingtonEnglish.”



What factors contributed to the increase in enrollment?

Danette explained that Burlington’s flexible curriculum allows for easy instruction both in-person and online, and students benefit from having one consistent curriculum. Danette appreciates the ready-made lesson plans and comprehensive online lessons that allow her to spend more quality time working with her students.

Danette also emphasized how easy it is to offer personalized attention to students using BurlingtonEnglish in their one-on-one and small group instructional settings. During her online Zoom sessions, Danette shares the remote with each student and allows them to guide the pace and focus of the In-Class Lesson. This helps students feel more empowered during the interactive lesson and helps develop their digital literacy skills.

According to Danette, The Right Turn had started to see some growth prior to using BurlingtonEnglish, but then, “Burlington expedited the want and need.” Students immediately connected with the new curriculum and started to spread the word about their English classes to friends and family. New students began to enroll based on these word-of-mouth recommendations. Additionally, The Right Turn used Burlington’s free recruitment kit to advertise their English language classes throughout their community with the customized posters, flyers, and social media posts.

Student enrollment in English language classes is growing at The Right Turn because of their dedicated teachers, engaging curriculum, and effective outreach. In Danette’s own words, “Burlington has contemporary lessons that focus on topics relevant to life in the U.S. The lessons take large English concepts and break them down into small, easy-to-master pieces. Adult learners at all levels feel successful using BurlingtonEnglish, which continues to motivate them.”

¹ CAELA Network: Education for Adult English Language Learners in the United States: Trends, Research, and Promising Practices <https://www.cal.org/caelanetwork/resources/adultELLs/programdesign.html>

Increased Student Usage

Since introducing the BurlingtonEnglish curriculum, **Fox Valley Technical College** in Appleton, Wisconsin has seen a significant increase in both teacher and student usage. We recently spoke with Brian Skelton, a department chair and English language instructor at Fox Valley Technical College, about their program's recent increase in usage. He shared, "We know that teachers and students love it (BurlingtonEnglish) once they use it."



What factors contributed to the increase in teacher and student usage?

Brian explained that Fox Valley offers a range of flexible instructional options including online, in-person, and HyFlex models to meet the varied scheduling needs of their students and teachers. They offer a strong student orientation program in which teachers visit students' homes to help them set up their school-provided Chromebooks and BurlingtonEnglish accounts. This personalized attention helps build students' confidence and comfort level with BurlingtonEnglish, resulting in increased commitment and usage.

ESL teachers at Fox Valley Technical College use BurlingtonEnglish in on-site and online classes to ensure a consistent curriculum for students at every level. Teachers regularly assign homework in the Student Lessons and carefully monitor their students' usage, which motivates and encourages students to persist in the program. Fox Valley recently partnered with K-12 schools in Oshkosh to further encourage student usage. In this creative model, parents and children use BurlingtonEnglish together to help busy parents continue their studies and model good educational habits.

Another innovative idea came about because of the growing number of students on waitlists for English language classes. Fox Valley provides these students with access to BurlingtonEnglish to keep them engaged while they are waiting for entry into the program. Once they are enrolled, the students are already prepared for their ESL classes and immersed in the learning process.

Fox Valley Technical College places a strong emphasis on IET programming. Burlington's *Career Wordlists*, *Soft Skills*, and *Courses for Specific Careers* have allowed students to continue their work in BurlingtonEnglish alongside their technical coursework. Brian emphasized that "*English for Specific Careers* has been a valuable tool to supplement our curriculum. Students can begin their career journey by focusing on content-specific language in an independent learning environment. Students are motivated, and their career exploration and preparation have never been more effective."

Increased Learning Gains

Carolyn Potter is an ESL instructor at **Burnsville School for Adults** in Minnesota. In our recent conversation, Carolyn was pleased to describe the positive outcomes that she has seen since she started teaching with BurlingtonEnglish only eight months ago. Carolyn shared that after a few short months with the program, 50% of her students showed learning gains.



What factors contributed to the increase in learning gains?

Like the schools above, Carolyn's program prepares students for success from day one. For example, she shares her contact information with students so they can text her at any time for support. She explained, "I want my students to move forward and not get stuck." The program at Burnsville School offers both online and in-person instructional options to make it convenient for their students.

Carolyn described the connection between student engagement with BurlingtonEnglish and the increase in learning gains. Carolyn was excited to share that “students seem to love using Burlington – some working for hours at a time.” She explained how she assigns daily homework in the Student Lessons, monitors her students’ progress, and follows up with feedback to the class on a regular basis. In many cases she gives “shoutouts” to students who have shown increased or particularly high usage in their Student Lessons. To emphasize the level of her students’ dedication, Carolyn shared a story of one student whose English had greatly improved but was frustrated about not achieving a level gain. The student then spent more than 20 hours per week for three weeks working in Burlington’s *Prepare for CASAS* and demonstrated a level gain on the CASAS test. Carolyn believes this extra test practice helped the student overcome her test anxiety.

Many of Carolyn’s students have demonstrated learning gains since using Burlington’s comprehensive curriculum, and after speaking with Carolyn, it’s easy to see why. “Oh gosh, do I love *Burlington Core*! It’s been great for students to become fluent with computers. It’s helped them grow in confidence. I love the speaking activities. I have the students go into breakout rooms to practice asking and answering questions.” When Carolyn started with BurlingtonEnglish, she modeled a positive approach with her students, saying “You just need to jump in and do it! Don’t try to figure it all out first. Just learn as you go.”

Tying It All Together

Each of the above programs offers an effective approach that supports adult ESL learners with flexible, personalized instruction where students come first. All three instructors we interviewed agreed that the BurlingtonEnglish curriculum is the perfect fit for their programs’ needs; it allows students to connect with the learning process and engage with the content. As a result, teachers and students enjoy a positive classroom experience leading to increased enrollment, usage, and learning gains.

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