



Literacy Unlimited Annual Report 2021



Greetings from Literacy Unlimited, and welcome (or welcome back) to this wonderful community of tutors, class leaders, and benefactors. I am incredibly excited to be here and to serve all of you as well as the students. When I started in March of this year, Framingham Library was still closed to the public, and my first introduction to the Literacy staff (Karen Boudreau, office manager; LieHua Shi, database administrator; Marjie Solomon, office assistant; and Laurie Christie, Natick coordinator) was in a Zoom meeting. It has been quite the transition for me to learn the ropes (many thanks to retired coordinator, Anne O'Connell for staying on to train me) as well as experience the reopening of the library and Literacy Unlimited for in-person activities.

I am excited for the fall and what the year has to bring, although I am aware we live in uncertain times. We are all still experiencing shock waves from the beginning of the pandemic; I often feel exhausted and even discouraged as I listen to the news about Covid-19.

What I want you to know is that we are making decisions based on the circumstances, and that your safety, as well as the students' safety, is paramount.

Currently, we wear masks in the Library; Literacy continues to be open, and you can come in and tutor

with your student. We have rearranged our space and created three socially distanced cubicles; you can call or email us to set up a time to meet with your student. We are acquiring a plethora of clear face mask options to help make your excellent lessons on pronunciation more accessible to students. We started our first in-person, beginning English class in over a year! Approximately 10 students attend the class, which is held in the Costin Room to allow for safe distancing.

Of course, we will continue to offer virtual events and resources for you as well. We will host "Tutor Time" on Zoom, a combined office hours/technological training session at least once a month. We are also happy to help you troubleshoot a specific skill you want to master to enhance your remote tutoring experience. Please reach out to let us know what you need from us in a remote/hybrid learning space.

I come on the heels of amazing progress and innovation thanks to Anne and the staff. This year I want to celebrate how far Literacy has come during this time, and to focus on reconnection as well. If we haven't met, I encourage you to introduce yourself by phone, email, or in-person. I want to hear how you are connected to this community, which is our legacy, after all.

Sincerely yours,
Elyse Brown
Coordinator

Transition to Technology

This past year was a challenging one, not just for Literacy Unlimited, but for everyone. Still, many students and tutors were able to “meet” using creative methods: technology (Zoom), FaceTime, WhatsApp, talking on the phone, emailing, and even sending lessons via mail to be discussed later. Bravo, to all for those efforts. I have really enjoyed learning new technologies to aid in creating and delivering lessons that are fun, effective, and instructional. Most important though has been the commitment of everyone from tutors to group leaders, staff, and the students and their families to maintaining communication, connection, and community. We did it! Great job everyone.

Laurie Christie,
Literacy Services, Morse Institute Library, Natick



A tutor/student pair work on pronunciation with clear masks

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As with everything in life, there is the good and the not so good, yin and yang. The pandemic was no exception. One of the good things was that I stepped out of my comfort zone, and with the help of Anne O’Connell, started a Beginner English conversation class in the spring of 2020 shortly after we closed the Literacy office. Running the class has been an adventure. We learned tons about Zoom, YouTube, and electronic worksheets, including the technology and how to use these resources as effective remote learning tools. We also found that remote conversation classes were a good way to socially connect students during very difficult times. The students are fun and creative with their sharing and writing. As a class we have learned so much about each student’s culture and how it relates to our common experiences like travel, the seasons, and food.

Recently, one of the students commented that she was able to go to the doctor without a translator for the first time.

A milestone like this is what students, tutors, staff, advisors, and others connected with Literacy strive for each day, pandemic notwithstanding. It has been a challenging year, but in many respects a very good one too.

Karen Boudreau,
Office Manager and Volunteer Tutor



A virtual team meeting via Zoom



Anne O'Connell (left) and Elyse Brown (right)

From the Foundation

Literacy Unlimited has remained fiscally sound despite the many challenges brought about these past years. For the second year, we have not held the very popular May Basket Raffle. Our last one, held in 2019, set a record bringing in over \$6000 for Literacy Unlimited.

Thankfully, our fundraising efforts have carried on despite this loss. We moved to a Spring direct appeal (email in 2020 and a letter in 2021). These efforts have been very successful—we are so grateful to all the donors! Anne O'Connell retired as coordinator, and we gathered to celebrate via Zoom her accomplishments and wish her farewell (thankfully, she stayed on to volunteer to help with the transition as our new Coordinator, Elyse Brown, took the helm).

We raised \$4,680 in Anne's name to be used for the construction of a new Literacy Center (someday). Thank you, Anne!

All in all, Literacy Unlimited of Framingham Foundation, Inc. is still standing proud and ready to bring some new fundraising ideas forward. We've made the most of all the changes and continue to be a small nonprofit dedicated to supporting our tutors and students.

Many thanks,
Joan Capite, President
and Anne O'Connell, former Coordinator

FISCAL YEAR 2020

JULY 2019

- * Marcel LaVergne presents tutor workshop
- * Our first Literacy Art Show in Framingham Library lobby!

AUGUST 2019

- * Foundation for Metrowest grant proposal due
- * ESOL Tutor training in Framingham

SEPTEMBER 2019

- * New Student Registration week
- * Citizenship Class on Saturdays
- * Basic Literacy Tutor Training

OCTOBER 2019

- * Foundation Board meets in Natick

NOVEMBER 2019

- * Advisory Board meets
- * Tutor / Student Recognition Evening

DECEMBER 2019

- * Karen Boudreau starts as new office manager
- * ESOL tutor training in Framingham
- * CDBG needs assessment meeting
- * Holiday party!
- * CDBG application due

JANUARY 2020

- * Foundation Board meets
- * Advisory Board meets

FEBRUARY 2020

- * ESOL tutor training in Framingham
- * Potluck dinner!
- * Conversation Leaders meeting
- * TPRS training in Framingham

MARCH 2020

- * USCIS Citizenship workshop
- * Best Plus recertification
- * New student registration
- * Literacy Unlimited closes all in-person activities on March 12th; Library closes on March 13th
- * Karen's tutor newsletter, "Newsy" becomes a fundamental part of remote communication/announcements

APRIL 2020

- * Begin Tutor Technology sessions, weekly on Tuesdays
- * Begin Tutor Office Hours, weekly on Thursdays
- * Conversation classes resume remotely

MAY 2020

- * May Baskets Fundraiser cancelled

JUNE 2020

- * June appeal letter

From the Advisory Board

This past year was undeniably the most difficult, strange, and daunting year in recent memory. Paradoxically, it seemed like the world hit the pause button for some months yet simultaneously kept moving along. People's basic needs did not cease and along with that the vital need to be able to communicate was even more essential. That is why the Literacy Unlimited team of dedicated tutors found many creative ways to continue to teach their students throughout the Covid crisis. Because they could not meet face-to-face with their students, almost every tutor had to take a crash course in Zoom technology. Tutors and students learned together how to make this new normal work for them. Some used computers, others used phones or iPads. Creative ways to use pictures, music, chalk boards, etc., to teach the English language were put into play with great success. Along with the one-to-one lessons, the group classes continued as well.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of some tutors who are very well-versed computer experts, the tutors themselves were taught how to best utilize Zoom and the myriad of online ESOL support websites.

In addition to all that occurred last year, Anne O'Connell resigned her post as director of Literacy Unlimited. She graciously remained in her position (in an abbreviated function) until her replacement, Elyse Brown, was found and trained. Unfortunately, we were unable to hold our May Basket Fundraiser this past year, but an inflow of generous donations in honor of Anne O'Connell's dedication to Literacy Unlimited helped us through the year.

Just recently the Framingham Library reopened allowing tutors and students once again to be able to learn together. We look forward to a semblance of normalcy next year but feel confident that whatever is thrown our way we will be able to persevere. As Anne O'Connell would close many of her emails: Onward!

**Nancy Agler,
Advisory Board Chair**

FISCAL YEAR 2021

SEPTEMBER 2020

- * Tutor tech and office hours become bi-weekly

OCTOBER 2020

- * Anne's virtual Retirement Party/ Fundraiser

NOVEMBER 2020

- * Planning for virtual tutor training

DECEMBER 2020

- * Assist Stoughton with tutor training

JANUARY 2021

- * Literacy offers first virtual tutor tune-up

MARCH 2021

- * Framingham hosts its first virtual ESOL tutor training
- * Elyse Brown starts as new coordinator
- * Literacy staff attends MCAE's first virtual NETWORK conference

APRIL 2021

- * Framingham Library reopens for limited browsing

MAY 2021

- * Annual May/June testing starts

JUNE 2021

- * Spring appeal
- * Literacy reopens for in-person activities

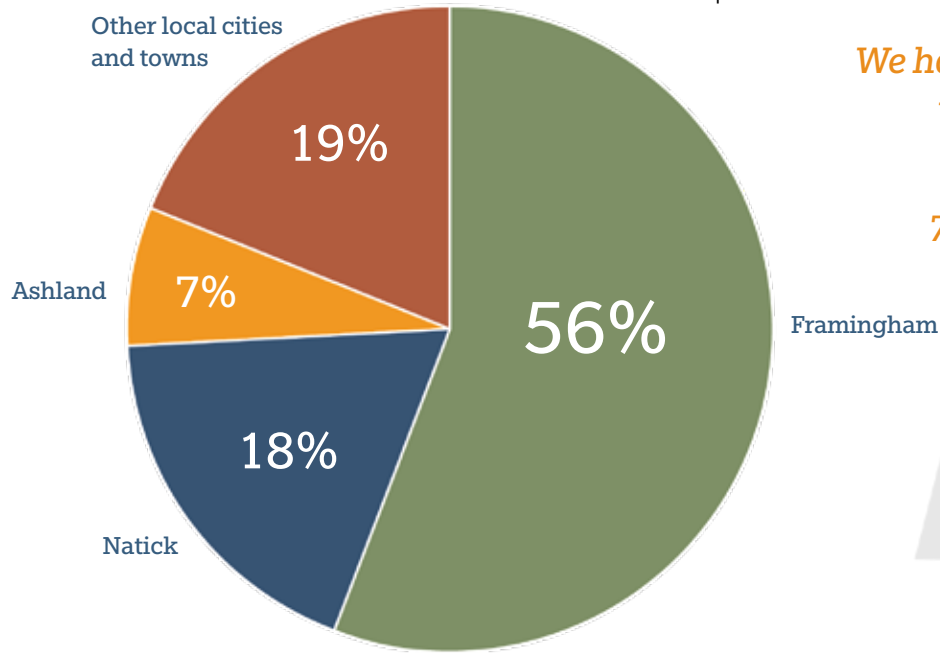


Conversation class leader, Kathy Sastavickas, meets her students during Literacy's Outdoor Meet & Greet

About our students

Where are our students by town?

Among the other local cities and towns are Boston, Worcester, Hopkinton, Westboro, and Sudbury along with 18 others.



We have almost 150 active students with an additional 80 students on our waitlist.

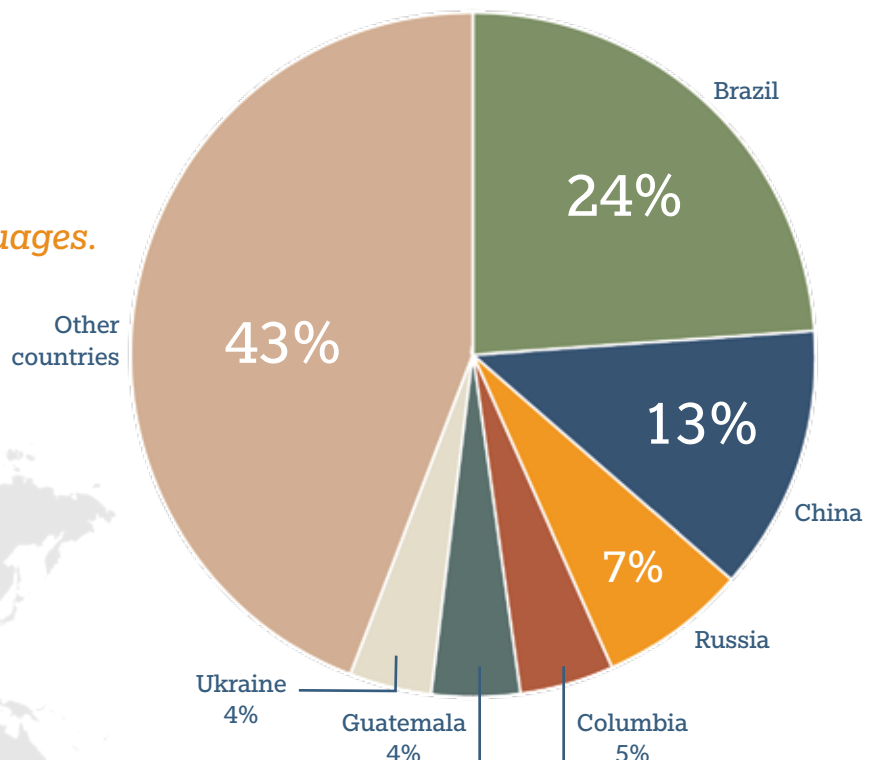
77% of our students are female.



Which countries are our students from?

Other countries consists of 109 countries from North and South America, Asia, and Africa.

Our students speak at least 24 languages.



STAFF

Elyse Brown, Coordinator
Karen Boudreau, Office Manager
LieHua Shi, Database Administrator
Marjie Solomon, Office Assistant

ADVISORY BOARD

Nancy Agler, Chair
Maria Barry, Vice Chair
Tina Fan-Seto, Secretary
Doris Bickley
HongYe Cai
Joan Capite
Denise Corless
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LITERACY UNLIMITED OF FRAMINGHAM FOUNDATION, INC.

Joan Capite, President
Barbara Gainsboro, Clerk
Anne O'Connell, Treasurer
Lena Kilburn, Director
Elyse Brown, Director

Framingham Public Library

Lena Kilburn, Director
Deb Hinkle, Assistant Director

Morse Institute Library

Laurie Christie, Literary Services
Jason Homer, Director

CONVERSATION CLASS LEADERS

Maria Barry
Peter Bearor
Karen Boudreau
Judith Bryant
Laurie Christie
Denise Coreless
Tim Hamilton
Brian Judge
Sue Kelly
Anne O'Connell
Denise O'Hare
Kathy Sastavickas
Dan Schullman
Elaine Strongwater
Peg Wihtol

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Your donation makes a life-changing difference for our students. Because of your generosity, Literacy Unlimited continues to support 107 tutor-student pairs and to host 16 conversation classes each week—all virtually!

Your donation helps pay for:

- * Stipends for our tutor trainers
- * Educational materials for our tutors and students
- * Tuition for NETWORK, a professional development conference for staff and volunteers
- * Essential, online ESL subscriptions

DONATE TODAY

Here are two easy ways to make a tax-deductible donation to Literacy Unlimited.

- 1 Make a monthly or one-time donation via PayPal. Simply go online to <http://bit.ly/Support-Literacy-Unlimited>. Credit and debit cards are accepted.
- 2 Write a check payable to **Literacy Unlimited of Framingham Foundation, Inc.** and mail it to: **Literacy Unlimited, 49 Lexington St., Framingham, MA 01702.**

Scan this QR code with your phone to make a donation online!

