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## Impressive Enrollment Kicks Off 2026

We cannot shower enough glowing praise on our incredible students. Each semester, especially in these unparalleled times, we are astonished by the number of enthusiastic, smiling, and dedicated students who show up for our classes. This current semester is no different. We enrolled 115 students across all four locations (Denver, Centennial, Barney Ford Elementary, and Little Village/Aurora). Dozens of returning students, many who worked their way into higher levels, were joined by a flood of new adult learners. The energy inside the school is thrilling!



*Do you know someone who wants to build their English skills? Please send them our way!*

### HEARD IN THE HALLS

*"It has been amazing to watch him mature and manage immigration with so much capability and courage."*

-ELC Teacher speaking about a student

## Save the Date! Spring Celebration & Fundraiser

On **Friday, April 17<sup>th</sup>**, we're planning an exciting event to celebrate everyone involved with our school and raise critical funds for our ongoing operation. Plan on a late afternoon/early evening filled with global appetizers, fun beverages, and themed entertainment.

We're always looking for volunteers and sponsors to help with our events. If you would like to be involved or know an organization that would be interested in sponsoring part of our event, please contact Anna Oldenbrook ([oldenai14@gmail.com](mailto:oldenai14@gmail.com)).

Additional information, including final event times and activities, will be coming soon!





# “Spanglish,” The Denver Zoo, and Other Wonderments

—Helen Hedrick, Level 1 Teacher/Board Member



I recently had the opportunity to spend the day at the Denver Zoo with a Spanish-speaking student. She is learning English. I am inadvertently improving my Spanish. Though I am trained to use sheltered English (talking VERY slowly, talking in “chunks,” using facial expressions), she would be exhausted if we spoke English all day. I would be exhausted if she spoke to me all day using her very rapid Spanish! So, we talked in “Spanglish.”

Here’s a snippet of our conversation:

Her: ¡Guau! ¿Qué es eso?

Me: Oh my gosh. Me parece un ratón enorme.

Her: Si, pero con patas muy tall.

Me: Y, pero no tail. ¿Qué dice el cartel?

Her: Oh, the sign says es un biggest ratón en el mundo! ¡El capybara!

Me: It’s like a guinea pig from South America. Es muy cute.

Her: No lo sé. Es un poco extraño.

Me: Yes, a little strange. I wouldn’t want it in my house.

Her: Repite, por favor.

Me: I wouldn’t want it in my house.

Her: No lo querría en mi casa.



Maybe since Spanglish isn’t a true language, we should speak totally in English? Or maybe totally in Spanish? Or, wait, maybe Spanglish IS a true language.

There is no agreement among experts on whether Spanglish is a true language. Some formal linguists think of Spanglish as an unholy mix of two languages, reducing the value of each. A more informal stance is that Spanglish is a precious cultural mix, allowing friendships and reducing barriers in communication.

## A CAVEAT:

It depends on the situation whether to choose to speak Spanglish or not. If you are an ESOL teacher with some, but not all, Spanish speakers in your classroom, it might not be the best idea to use Spanglish nor to give instructions in Spanish. It may help the Spanish speakers bridge the gap to the English language, but it won’t help the non-Spanish speakers. Most importantly, it might detract from a sense of community in the classroom, with the Chinese, Arabic, and Farsi speakers feeling left out or less respected. A class of mixed languages is one of those times when maybe it’s best to use “sheltered” English: draw pictures, use pictures on the monitor, talk VERY slowly, use gestures, leave pauses for processing time, write the word on the board as you say it.

Looking for an outing for your English class or your family? Consider the Denver Zoo!

There are free tickets on two upcoming days: [denverzoo.org/free-days/](http://denverzoo.org/free-days/)

Sunday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday, April 19<sup>th</sup> (tickets are released 2 weeks prior)





# ELC Awash in Sea of Languages

—Michael Arrieta-Walden, Level 1 Teacher

When you walk into an English Learning Center classroom, it's like entering the United Nations. You will find students from Venezuela, China, and France. You will see students from Korea, Uzbekistan, and Mexico. Sitting together will be students from Honduras, India, and Vietnam. For the spring term, more than 40 countries are represented at the center!

Longtime director Julie Feeny says the diversity makes the center special. Each term, she eagerly anticipates seeing which countries are represented after registration.

"I'm fascinated by the numbers every semester," she said. "It does surprise me."

Feeny had lived in Los Angeles and Chicago before becoming director seven years ago. She had always thought those cities were much more diverse than Denver.

"I find joy in the fact that people from all over the world come to Denver," she said.

The makeup of students changes each semester. Often, there is a surge from a particular country because of word-of-mouth. In the past, a student from Senegal came to the center. Soon, ten students were from Senegal. The same type of surge occurred with students from Uzbekistan.

Students say they value the center's diversity. Paola Quevedo from Colombia says that students from elsewhere have changed her perspective.

"It has been beautiful because I didn't know a lot of other cultures," she said. "It has been amazing because my brain changed."

Student Kate R. from Russia says she learns from others. "It's really interesting to see the diverse population here and to learn from that diversity," she said. "It's amazing."

Volunteer teachers also love the diversity of students. New teacher Nancy Hochstetler says the students bond despite language differences.

"I am amazed at how easily some students from different cultures can connect, even when English is a barrier," she said.

Volunteer John-Paul Morfin says it is exciting to meet people from all over the world. He makes an effort to learn a little of the native languages spoken by students. He already speaks Spanish and French, but has learned some Arabic, Portuguese, Kurdish, Turkish, Creole, and Korean.

"It reminds me how difficult it is to learn a language from day one," he said. "I understand how important it is to learn the language of the country you are living in."



## Countries Represented this Term at ELC

Afghanistan, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, El Salvador, France, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Russia, South Korea, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Venezuela and Vietnam.

## Languages Spoken this Term at ELC

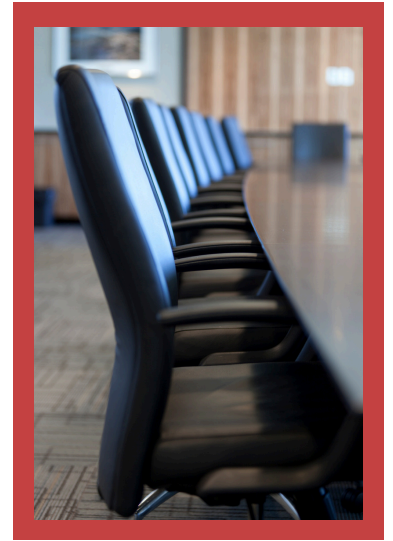
Arabic, Ashanti Twi, Chinese, Creole, Spanish, Farsi, French, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Marathi, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkce or Turkish, Urdu, Uzbek, and Vietnamese.



# News from the Board

We are very pleased to announce that Carol Maclennan has joined our board of directors! Carol brings a wealth of non-profit operations and board experience to the English Learning Center. Carol recently began volunteering as a teaching assistant. Prior to her retirement, Carol built a career in social work and then staffed Colorado Governor Lamm's office on solar energy issues, and was Community Liaison at the former National Renewable Energy Lab, Environmental Coordinator for the City of Aurora, and Land Use Program Coordinator for Tri-County Health Department. Welcome Carol!

We continue seeking candidates to join our board. We're currently searching for someone with **strong marketing and/or public relations skills**. *Interested? Please contact Helen Hedrick at [helenkhedrick@gmail.com](mailto:helenkhedrick@gmail.com).*



It's always a good time to support the English Learning Center!

Looking to DONATE?

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