



"I didn't know what to do, I had the ideas but I needed someone to help. I don't think I could have done it alone." —Nathalie Henri, EDG alumna

Educational Development Group

FAST-TRACK ENGLISH CLASSES SPEED NEWCOMER INTEGRATION

These days you can usually find Nathalie Henri either attending classes or working on homework as she pursues a degree in criminal justice at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. But when Nathalie arrived in the United States from her native Haiti two years ago, the thought of attending college was just a dream for this former culinary arts student. Luckily, shortly after arriving, Nathalie signed up for English classes at The Educational Development Group.

Nathalie hoped to get a basic understanding of the English language; she did not expect that EDG would soon become a second home that would give her the knowledge and resources needed to pursue her lifelong dream of becoming a lawyer.

EDG staff incorporates a unique approach in helping their students quickly

integrate into life here and become productive & successful residents in the United States. Program director Frances Laroche has created EDG as a welcome center that begins with intensive, 40-hour-a-week accelerated English classes and also includes citizenship classes, TOEFL classes and alumni services.

The most highly touted component of EDG's services is the Accelerated English Program (AEP), a program intended for recently-arrived immigrants who have not yet found their first job. Students come to class full-time, with classroom instruction in the morning and activities including small group work and excursions outside the school in the afternoon. The intensive, daytime model offers more uninterrupted instructional time and opportunities for students to put what they learn immediately into context. It also

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The EDG is a resource center that works to provide language acquisition and guidance to non-English speaking immigrants & to assist immigrants in making a successful and productive transition to life in the Boston area.

The EDG assists their students with transitioning by helping them find employment, teaching them traits on how to be productive in the workplace, how to be self-sufficient and to become active members in their communities.

Accelerated ESOL: English Plus:

This is an intensive 40 hour a week program that teaches students English in 10 weeks. The program focuses on grammar and vocabulary which is explained both in English and the students' native language. Following this course students can attend intermediate ESOL classes at EDG as well.

Citizenship: Classes help students prepare for their citizenship interview. The classes assist with the naturalization process, prepares students for the citizenship exam and puts specific emphasis on civic participation. Sessions are 10 weeks.

Alumni Program: Graduates receive assistance with continuing their education and increasing job skills. The program also holds reunions throughout the year to allow students to reconnect with their fellow classmates.

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“Our 40 hour program constructs a school environment that supports learning, and mitigates factors that impede learning, such as fear, anxiety, lack of motivation, and poor self-image. ”

—Frances Laroche



Nathalie (center) and other EDG alumnae.

helps ensure that students are at their best because they are not coming to class after work tired.

In assembling classes, EDG aims to break down cultural and linguistic isolation immigrants experience by admitting students from many different countries, and designing program activities to make the school a community not just a classroom. The result is that most students make significant learning gains in one or two courses, and are ready for a next step.

EDG staff also are aggressive about making sure students can navigate the city and become independent. But first, Laroche says, they need help, and sometimes a lot of it. “People need hand-holding in a supportive way to push them to where they need to go.” EDG staff guide students by providing information on how to use the MBTA, navigate the health care system, prepare for future education and conduct job interviews.

This approach encouraged Nathalie to pursue her dream of becoming a lawyer. After she went through two English courses at EDG and was able to hold her own in English, she began to look into what educational options were available to her. Nathalie was interested in taking college courses so the staff at EDG encouraged her to attend a more advanced English class focused on essay writing at the Asian American Civic Association, to better prepare her for the intensity of college level courses.

Frances then introduced Nathalie to different programs that she was eligible for at local colleges. Nathalie decided the Directions for Student Potential program at UMASS Boston was her best option for pursuing a law degree. During the application process, she met on Saturdays with Frances for assistance on essays and a dose of confidence. Since her acceptance into UMASS Boston, Nathalie has been working diligently toward her goal of becoming a



Frances Laroche, EDG Program Director

lawyer. Recently, she began working at EDG through a UMass work study job. This allows her give back to EDG, and to seek Frances’ advice on course selection and other matters whenever she needs it.

Since Nathalie and many other students continue to return to the EDG to access re-sources and receive assistance on continuing education, jobs, citizenship applications and more; the center is currently designing an alumni program. This component will help the staff at the EDG more efficiently connect its students with information on jobs, immigration issues, and college admissions. Alumni will also be able to make use of center computers

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—Frances Laroche, Program Director

and exchange information among staff, current and alumni.

The connection Frances and the EDG staff make with students allows them to transition into the United States as smoothly as possible. The openness, warmth and genuine concern for the well being of their students has provided over 230 refugees and immigrants with assistance in becoming a new Bostonian and new American, just like Nathalie.



english for NEW BOSTONIANS

English for New Bostonians (ENB) is a public-private-community collaboration addressing the urgent need for increased English language learning opportunities for adult immigrants in Boston. Comprised of the City of Boston, foundations, corporations, non-profits, and community organizations, ENB works to support high-quality, accessible ESOL programs; to expand Boston’s capacity to serve English language learners; to test new strategies to reach learners at home, in the community, and at work; to encourage new investment by diverse stakeholders; to heighten awareness about the importance of adult English language learning; and to support the development of a coordinated ESOL system in Boston. **“Learn more about ENB: www.englishfornewbostonians.org, 617-350-5480 x203**