A Small US Town Teaches English to Immigrants’ Children

美国小镇为移民子女教授英语

A community in the southern state of Alabama is experimenting to find a better way to teach students who are learning English as their second language. To reach its goal, the school district is hiring more local, Spanish-speaking workers.

南部阿拉巴马州的一个社区正在尝试寻找一种更好的方法来教授将英语作为第二语言的学生。为实现其目标，学区正在招聘更多当地的说西班牙语的工人。

More than half of the 2,500 students in Russellville City School district are Hispanic. About 25 percent of them are learning English.

拉塞尔维尔市学区的 2,500 名学生中有一半以上是西班牙裔。其中大约 25% 的人正在学习英语。

The district is using federal aid money aimed at helping communities hurt by the COVID-19 pandemic.

该学区正在使用旨在帮助受 COVID-19 大流行伤害的社区的联邦援助资金。

Kathy Alfaro is one of the teachers. She was a Spanish teacher, but took a new job teaching children the English language. Students learning English are called EL students.

Kathy Alfaro 是其中一位老师。她是一名西班牙语老师，但换了一份教孩子英语的新工作。学习英语的学生称为 EL 学生。

Russellville at times has struggled to find the workers and money needed to help EL students. It usually takes five years of intensive study to help a student learn English and perform well in a regular classroom. Russellville hopes to help its students and be a model for the rest of the country.

Russellville 有时很难找到帮助 EL 学生所需的工人和资金。通常需要五年的强化学习才能帮助学生学习英语并在常规课堂上表现出色。拉塞尔维尔希望帮助其学生并成为该国其他地区的榜样。

"We were trying to teach an increasing number of EL students with predominantly white teachers that speak English," said Superintendent Heath Grimes. "And I'm like, ‘Why are we not using resources that we have in our community?'"

“我们试图教越来越多的 EL 学生，其中主要是讲英语的白人教师，”主管Heath Grimes 说。“我想，'为什么我们不使用我们社区中拥有的资源？'”

As a group, English learners performed lower on language proficiency tests during the pandemic. Experts said that may be because many students did not have good online classes. Schools may have struggled to teach English by video link.

作为一个群体，在大流行期间，英语学习者在语言能力测试中的表现较低。专家表示，这可能是因为很多学生没有上好网课。学校可能很难通过视频链接教授英语。

But test scores at Russellville schools have improved. Across the district, the percentage of students who met language requirements increased from 46 percent in 2019 to 61 percent in 2022. At the two elementary schools, proficiency increased by nearly 30 percentage points.

但拉塞尔维尔学校的考试成绩有所提高。在整个学区，达到语言要求的学生比例从 2019 年的 46% 增加到 2022 年的 61%。在两所小学，语言能力提高了近 30 个百分点。

Grimes said the increase was likely because of new EL teachers and aides.

Grimes 说，增加可能是因为新的 EL 教师和助手。

The non-profit group Education Trust found that some of the nation's largest districts used pandemic aid money to give jobs to bilingual employees. Bilingual describes a person who can speak two languages.

非营利组织教育信托基金发现，美国一些最大的地区使用大流行援助资金为双语员工提供工作。双语描述了一个会说两种语言的人。

Federal aid is ending

联邦援助即将结束

However, federal aid money is starting to be used up and schools are preparing for budget cuts. Some experts warn against reducing support for EL programs.

然而，联邦援助资金开始用完，学校正在为削减预算做准备。一些专家警告不要减少对 EL 项目的支持。

Carlos Alemán is the director of the Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama. He said that as federal money is no longer available, the state should "review what it can do to make sure that these programs can remain in place."

Carlos Alemán 是阿拉巴马州西班牙裔利益联盟的主任。他说，由于联邦资金不再可用，该州应该“审查它可以做些什么，以确保这些计划能够继续实施。”

Russellville school officials are working on ways to keep the new positions. They are also hoping the state will increase long-term funding for EL education.

拉塞尔维尔学校官员正在研究如何保留新职位。他们还希望该州增加对 EL 教育的长期资助。

State support for English language programs is limited, but growing. The state legislature approved $2.9 million for schools with large numbers of students learning English as a second language in 2018. That amount grew to $16 million last year. Leaders at the Alabama State Department of Education are asking for more money in this year's budget for EL specialists.

国家对英语语言课程的支持有限，但正在增长。州立法机构在 2018 年批准了 290 万美元用于有大量学生将英语作为第二语言学习的学校。这一数额在去年增长到 1600 万美元。阿拉巴马州教育部的领导人要求在今年的 EL 专家预算中增加资金。

Supporters say money for EL students often falls short, especially in rural districts.

支持者说，EL 学生的钱经常短缺，尤其是在农村地区。

"It takes a lot more money to educate a child that does not speak your language," said state Representative Jamie Kiel, a Russellville lawmaker of the Republican Party. He has called for spending more money on EL students in the state budget.

“教育一个不会说你的语言的孩子需要更多的钱，”共和党拉塞尔维尔议员、州众议员杰米·基尔(Jamie Kiel)说。他呼吁在州预算中为 EL 学生花更多的钱。

At West Elementary in Russellville, Elizabeth Alonzo is in her second year as an EL assistant. She said there were few bilingual teachers in her school when she was growing up.

在拉塞尔维尔的 West Elementary，伊丽莎白·阿朗佐 (Elizabeth Alonzo) 正在担任 EL 助理的第二年。她说她小时候学校里很少有双语老师。

"Whenever I started kindergarten, I didn't know a word of English, so I struggled a lot," Alonzo said. "That was one of the reasons why I wanted to do this, because I want to help those students."

“每当我开始上幼儿园时，我一个英语单词都不会，所以我很挣扎，”阿朗佐说。“这就是我想这样做的原因之一，因为我想帮助那些学生。”