



Putting the Human in Healthcare – with the Humanities

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What if one book could bridge language gaps, spark meaningful conversation, and inspire healthcare workers across the state?

In teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) within the healthcare field, choosing the right reading material isn't just important, it's essential. When your classroom includes learners ranging from beginner to advanced, both in-person and tuning in to class via Zoom from remote corners of New Hampshire, a well-chosen book becomes more than a lesson. It becomes a lifeline. The story *Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah* proved these outcomes are possible for two New Hampshire healthcare communities.

Over the past year, the International Institute of New England (IINE) has delivered remote, ESOL instruction to immigrant healthcare employees at Elliot Hospital of Manchester and Dartmouth Health of Lebanon. These

employees are striving to improve their English proficiency and integrate more fully into their communities and careers. At the center of this ESOL for healthcare curriculum is literature provided by New Hampshire Humanities' *Connections* program. The *Connections* program provided free copies of each book to every student enrolled in the class to support the healthcare instruction designed by IINE teachers.

Through *Connections* literature, students can explore "elephant in the room" topics that they see every day in their jobs and lives but often have few opportunities to discuss. This past cohort read *Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah* by Laurie Anne Thompson. This story of a man born with one leg that rode his bicycle across Ghana was selected not just for its accessibility into the English language, but for its heart. It served as a shared entry point into critical conversations about disability,

"If you want to do something, don't let anyone tell you that you can't!"

- Connections participant at International Institute of New England

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perseverance, cultural myths, and self-advocacy, topics that often do not come up in healthcare training.

According to Hannah Granok, Education Manager at IINE, often times healthcare classes simply teach you how to do your job but skip over the human experience. She said,

“A healthcare curriculum will teach you how to do your job, whether it is taking blood pressure or cleaning a room, but it glances over the human part of healthcare. This includes understanding people with disabilities, mental health, or being culturally sensitive. These *Connections* books and their teacher allow students to explore the ‘How and Why?’”

By bringing the humanities and literature to a healthcare class, *Emmanuel’s Dream* proved to be more than just a reading activity. It was a bridge connecting cultures, an invitation to reflect on personal growth, and a prompt for broader social understanding. Most respondents said the story helped them better understand people with disabilities. Emmanuel’s story

also inspired empathy and admiration for his ability to rise above societal expectations and prove his capability. One student reflected, **“I want to be strong like Emmanuel, despite his disabilities he never stopped fighting for his goal and his success. I’m going to fight to realize my goals.”** For ESOL learners in healthcare settings, stories like Emmanuel’s are not only educational, but transformational.

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Connections participant, IINE

Focusing on literature that brings everyone together, IINE, local healthcare employers, and students, participants are not just learning English, they are finding their voices. They are improving their ability to work with and respectfully care for all who come into their workplace. The program provides personal benefit to the learners who find words for complicated

situations in which they may find themselves. Employers benefit by ensuring a more highly trained and skilled workforce, which benefits everyone who needs care in New Hampshire. Together, these partnerships empower learners to develop language skills through literature that resonates with their lived experiences and ultimately makes them better prepared for their jobs and lives in America. 🌍

To learn more about the *Connections* program, please visit www.nhhumanities.org/Connections.