



**Waltham Connections**  
for Healthy Aging

# **Report: “Welcome to the Digital Age” Class for Ugandan Seniors in Waltham, MA**

Author: Walter Leutz, PhD, Connections Evaluator

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As described in our [2023 Annual Report](#), in February 2024, Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging (Connections) began a Welcome to the Digital Age (WDA) class for 10 Ugandan immigrant seniors. This report covers how the classes were organized, how seniors were recruited and enrolled, and how the class went, including a brief pre/post evaluation of skills acquired and satisfaction.

## Classes

As with prior WDA sessions, the classes took place at the Waltham Senior Center. There were 9 sessions of 2 hours each on Tuesdays from 3-5 PM, including a graduation session. To assist participants not fully fluent in English, we recruited and trained a Luganda-speaking assistant teacher. [Africano Waltham](#) promised transportation for those who needed it in their van, but in the end participants either drove themselves or got rides from others, including Connections' outreach worker, who took the class herself.

## Recruitment & Participant Demographics

Marketing for the course was conducted by Connections' Ugandan outreach worker, who is based at Africano. The 65 or so individuals in the Africano WhatsApp group for seniors were told about the class. There was significant interest and participants were chosen on a first-come basis. Most, but not all, are regular attendees of Africano's "salon," which meets 10 AM-2 PM every Tuesday. Here's a summary of demographics:

<b>Gender</b>	10 women 0 men
<b>Age</b>	6 were between the ages of 60-69 4 were between the ages of 70-79
<b>Household size</b>	4 lived alone 2 live in a household of 2-3 people 4 live in a household of 4 or more

<b>Highest education level</b>	1 was a Certified Nurse-Midwife 2 completed college 3 attended some college 2 completed high school 2 completed eighth grade
<b>Employment</b>	5 working full-time 3 working part-time 2 retired

In general, the class was younger, had more schooling, and were working more than prior WDA classes. In terms of experience with communications technology, all had smartphones, half already had a computer in their household, and seven already had internet in their households. With this level of connectivity, we did not need to provide hotspots to participants.

## Pre/Post Comparisons

A pre/post survey was administered the first day and last day of class. Pre/post comparisons in six areas of computer and internet skill and knowledge are in the table below. In most areas at the start of the class, 20% or fewer respondents were very or moderately confident, the exception being creating and sending emails, where 30% were very confident. Overall, participants reported substantial improvement in the skill areas. In three areas all respondents were very or moderately confident, while in three areas only 25% (2 participants) reported little or no skill. Post scores could be somewhat lower if the two who were absent from the last class and did not take the post survey had lower confidence.

<b>Table 1</b>						
<b>How confident are you...</b>	<b>Very confident</b>		<b>Moderately confident</b>		<b>Little or no confidence</b>	
	<b>Pre</b>	<b>Post</b>	<b>Pre</b>	<b>Post</b>	<b>Pre</b>	<b>Post</b>
<b>Using internet for</b>	10%	38%	10%	38%	80%	25%

<b>info</b>						
<b>Create &amp; send emails</b>	30%	75%	10%	25%	60%	0%
<b>Open &amp; reply to emails</b>	20%	75%	0%	25%	80%	0%
<b>Save files &amp; find them</b>	0%	13%	10%	63%	90%	25%
<b>Use mouse, headset</b>	0%	38%	10%	63%	90%	0%
<b>Feel safe online</b>	10%	75%	0%	0%	90%	25%

Consistent with these findings, the table below shows that participant evaluations of course components were very positive. Overall satisfaction was a little more mixed.

<b>Table 2</b>			
<b>How useful were...</b>	<b>Very Useful</b>	<b>Pretty Useful</b>	<b>No answer</b>
<b>Lectures, discussions, exercises</b>	7	1	0
<b>Handouts</b>	7	1	0
<b>Online reference page</b>	3	4	1
	<b>Very satisfied</b>	<b>Pretty satisfied</b>	<b>No answer</b>
<b>Overall satisfaction</b>	4	4	0

## Qualitative Findings

Besides the scaled questions above, we also asked participants open-ended questions about what they wanted at the start of the class, whether they got it, and what they still need to learn. Here are the key findings:

- **Goals at start:** Everyone said in one way or another “how to use a computer.”
- **What did you like most?** Two cited patience and experience of the instructors, two said typing, two said using the internet, and one each said getting the computer and how to paste content.
- **What did you like least?** Four cited nothing, two said searching for apps, one said typing and apps, and one said time was too short for all the topics covered.
- **How to improve the course:** In one way or another, all eight respondents said “more time to learn.”

## Summary

Overall, the survey found that this sequence of WDA was a success in terms of moving the large majority of the class from not being able to use a computer and the internet to the large majority reporting being able to do so. And they generally reported that the course was useful in making this progress.

However, it is also clear that the course did not create ten Chromebook or internet experts. Only in the areas of using email and avoiding scams did 75% report being very confident. The weakest area was being able to save files and find them (87% reported no to moderate confidence) followed by using the internet for information (63% reported no to moderate confidence).

It appears that many of the participants could use more help using their Chromebooks to the fullest. Connections is considering offering another “intermediate” class for WDA graduates. Last year’s intermediate class was a success (see the appendix to the [Annual Report](#)). Based on first-hand feedback from participants and reports from instructors, there would be strong interest. Like prior classes, the Ugandan seniors were very happy to

spend time in the class with their classmates and instructors. After some classes they danced and sang. They brought food to share.

They were also delighted to be in the Senior Center, to feel welcomed, and to think about participating in the activities they saw there. WDA has been part of a successful increase in use of the Senior Center among Spanish-speaking seniors. Hopefully we can use it to build a similar pathway for Ugandan seniors.