



Accent

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President's Message

by Diane Pham



Another school year has come to an end, and it seems like we just welcomed a new group of students to the classroom for a new school year. Although our work in the classroom is done for the 2015/16 school year, our work as English as a second language (ESL) teachers has only begun. The English as a Second Language Council (ESLC) has been tenaciously working with teachers across the province to advocate for a more deliberate focus on ESL in the curriculum redesign as well as funding to support the necessary number of years required for students to acquire proficient academic language. In addition, teachers have continually asked for support to help ELLs who have experienced trauma in refugee settings, wartorn countries, limited formal schooling, limited literacy in their first language, interrupted schooling, emigration and so on. The demands for support have increased, but funding has decreased. This must improve for both teachers and students, so we are moving forward to advocate for change. We are asking members to submit stories about their teaching experiences since the funding decreases, and we will forward these stories to the provincial government. Please submit articles for publication in *Accent*, or e-mail your thoughts and concerns to ataeslcpresident@gmail.com.

The provincial government must hear about how the decreased funding has not only negatively affected students but also the teachers' ability to provide adequate support to ELLs. The provincial government needs to be deliberate with ELL program planning to increase ELLs' high school completion rates. Please share the same story with your government representative as this will help with the advocacy process.

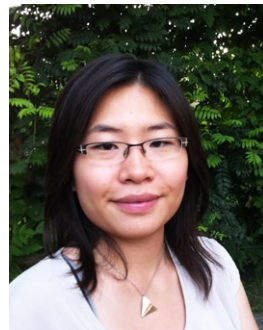
Class sizes are increasing, and some students have very complex learning needs. Our work is forever demanding and, at times, taxing on our emotional and physical well-being. Please remember to take care of yourselves and enjoy time with your families over the summer.

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Editor's Corner

Advocacy for Teacher Training



by Annie Fung

While many of us were ticking off the days to our official summer holiday countdown on our calendars, we might also have been secretly (or openly!) thinking at least a bit about September and

reflecting on the 2015/16 year. It's OK to admit it, but we won't tease you if you didn't! As for me, I get more sentimental and lean toward being reflective, and this year was especially memorable. I moved into a new role last fall supporting mature high school ELLs where I experienced first-hand not only the new energy and rigour oozing out of these young adults but also their anxieties at trying to upgrade their academic courses to further their postsecondary studies and careers as their countdown to free public education ticks away. Like many of you, I have had to sit down with many students to reassure them and to help them appreciate the little progress that they see is phenomenal given how new they may be to Canada. Needless to say, many questions needed to be answered about second language acquisition, community and funding resources, how high school and postsecondary programs work, and the list goes on!

Hence, as our council is working harder than ever to create a dialogue with the government to advocate for ELLs' needs, I can't help but think that this goes hand-in-hand with helping the government and other stakeholders realize the roles of teachers as well. We need to move toward advocating for better

professional development for both preservice and veteran educators in many areas such as second language acquisition, teaching strategies, and ESL benchmarks and using the Alberta K–12 ESL Proficiency Benchmarks (Alberta Education 2009) document to guide our programming. We would also benefit from both workshops and long-term support. There are no quick fixes, but without a doubt many of us likely wished for some of these when we were left scrambling this year with the higher influx of newcomers from Syria and all over the world. As I met colleagues at conferences and different events this year; however, I heard about their worries and frustrations but also many messages of hope.

The high influx of newcomers has actually created a sort of systematic shock, and the positive and negative effects were felt beyond the ESL classrooms. In many aspects, it has helped spark much needed meaningful dialogue about the role of all teachers as many of us work in inclusive classrooms. This is a great opportunity for all of us to revisit how we have done things and share what we have learned in our roles as ESL teachers. For me, I have been sharing information with colleagues about the higher risk of high school dropouts. We may know this already, but many other teachers may be unaware of such alarming dropout rates. According



to one intensive study from 1989 to 1997, by David Watt and Hetty Roessingh, it was determined that 93 per cent of beginning ELLs in high school were dropping out (Wark 2000)! The study concluded that ESL students were 2.5 times more likely to drop out than the general population, and Watt succinctly pointed to the seriousness of the issue: "The loss of so many academically competent learners needs to be understood as loss of human and educational capital" (2000). And, of course, many times this year, my 18–20-year-old students were sweating bullets worrying about how many courses they could finish before they moved on to postsecondary programs, which have greater demands on their time and finances. Although we can advocate for more funding and time to complete high school courses for these students, teachers do need help in classrooms now to provide targeted instruction for ELLs, and we teachers already do so much! These three excellent resources may help teachers prepare for next year, especially those who work with secondary ELLs:


1. "Adjunct Support for High School ESL Learners in Mainstream English Classrooms: Ensuring Success," by Hetty Roessingh, 1999. *TESL Canada Journal* 17, no 1: 72–86. <http://teslcanadajournal.ca/index.php/tesl/article/viewFile/881/700>
Notes: The article includes more statistics on high school dropout rates of ELLs, discussion of a model for developing academic proficiency for ELLs, learning and teaching strategies, and suggestions on how ESL/English teachers can collaborate in courses.
2. "Providing Transitional Supports for ELLs from High School to University," by Hetty Roessingh, 2010. Slideshow presented at 2010 ESL Conference, November 4–6. [http://eslc.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/conference/Transitional ELLs from hs to uni. ppt.pdf](http://eslc.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/conference/Transitional%20ELLs%20from%20hs%20to%20uni.ppt.pdf)
Notes: This slideshow provides teachers with information about second language acquisition, how an ELL's age affects academic learning, how ELLs fare in various high school courses compared with native-speaking counterparts, and describes the pilot study conducted to provide early interventions for ELLs as well as the study recommendations.
3. *Here Comes Everyone: Teaching in the Intercultural Classroom*, Alberta Teachers' Association 2011.

www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Human-Rights-Issues/MON-3%20Here%20comes%20everyone.pdf
Notes: This publication was created by the Association's Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee to assist all teachers and stakeholders. It provides advice with reflecting on our own cultural assumptions and actions, creating more inclusive learning environments and tailoring instruction and assessments to be more intercultural responsive, addressing inequality in classrooms as well as involving the wider community in fostering intercultural understanding.

I'd like, again, to salute you for all that you do for ESL students and their families. May your summer be fun, safe and restful! And don't forget—now that Accent is downloadable in PDF, you can take your summer reading with you! See you in the fall!

Reference

- Alberta Education. 2009. *Alberta K–12 ESL Proficiency Benchmarks*. Edmonton, Alta: Alberta Education.
- Wark, A. 2000. "ESL Students at Higher Risk of High School Dropout: Study." News release, University of Calgary, February 9. www.ucalgary.ca/uofc/events/unicomm/NewsReleases/esldrop.htm (accessed July 12, 2016).

 Effective IMMEDIATELY, your annual no-cost specialist council membership will no longer expire in August. Instead, it will continue year after year until you change it. To register or change your council membership, log in at www.teachers.ab.ca with your TNET username and password. Specialist councils are your source for conferences, networking, publications, resources, workshops, online communities and professional development.

JOIN ESLC Being an ESLC member has many perks.

- Connection to Alberta Education
- Networking with like-minded professionals
- PD opportunities
- Some meetings held via Skype
- Information to help you with your professional practice
- Opportunity to advocate at a provincial level for our learners
- All expenses covered

We're super-fun!

If you are interested in joining the ESLC, please contact our vice-president at ataeslcvicepresident@gmail.com.



CLD Annual Conference 2016

by Lynn Farrugia



What a thrill it was to be invited to present two sessions at the recent Celebrating Linguistic Diversity (CLD) annual conference in Toronto, May 5–6. The conference was hosted by the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute

for Studies in Education (OISE) and the Toronto District School Board. Attendees from across Canada and around the world including a delegation of 16 educators from Alberta were treated to an incredible variety of breakout sessions. This conference's mandate is to focus on supporting teachers of ELLs from early learning to Grade 12.

Each morning the keynote speakers were very different but equally educating. Thursday morning we heard from Lorne Waldman, an immigration lawyer best known for his work representing Zunera Ishaq, the Pakistani immigrant woman who successfully challenged the government's ban on wearing the niqab during the citizenship oath. His enlightening behind-the-scenes observations and stories caused me to pause and become fairly concerned about the state of human rights in our country. Waldman was very entertaining, and I could have easily listened to his stories for another hour.

Friday's keynote speaker was Alberta's own Johanne Paradis from the University of Alberta. Paradis's presentation entitled "What Does it Take to Become a Native Speaker?" focused on her research documenting how ELLs catch up in different linguistic domains at different times. One takeaway for me was her discovery that young ELLs do not necessarily need to start English early learning classes as soon as was previously believed and that waiting until they are five is not detrimental to their English language development. I also liked her discovery that the maternal education level was a key factor in a child's English language development. Interesting findings continue to emerge from her

research in the Department of Linguistics that we need to use to inform practice in our school districts.

The most valuable breakout session was "Creating Identity Texts in the Grades 7–10 Classroom," presented by Jill Robinson and Lisa Ainsworth of the Peel District School Board. During this session we learned what an identity text is and how to help students create identity texts (oral, written and media). We even received an identity text toolbox created by a Peel writing team; it includes incredible lessons that engage students in a variety of tasks that embed 21st-century tools across the curriculum. I particularly liked that the lessons provided are suitable for a variety of age and proficiency levels and can be used with all students not just ELLs! I am so excited to try these in a classroom next year!

The two sessions I had the pleasure of presenting were titled "Between Two Cultures: Contemporary Immigrant and Refugee Children Represented in Children's Literature" and "Working with Refugee Students: My Experiences with the Karen People of Burma." I enjoyed sharing these two sessions as they are my favourite topics, and the presentations seemed to be well received.

Time to collaborate with colleagues was precious, and opportunities at the conference led to great conversations and connections. Many of us are noticing similarities in our newcomers and their families. It is good to know that we are all in this together!

I was only able to attend two breakout sessions and wish I could have gone to many more. This was the second time I have attended this conference, and it was just as good as the first. This conference is an excellent way to connect with ESL teachers from across our country and around the world; keep your fingers crossed that the organizers continue to offer it in the future. Being held at the university, prices are reasonable, but meals are not included. Accessibility is great as the subway stops there, and a number of hotels are within walking distance. If you have an opportunity to attend in the future, I would highly recommend it.

On a personal note, it was wonderful to have the support of ESLC members when I needed them most. Thanks Teresa Borchers, Sharon Seward, Sarah Clark and Diane Casello. I promise to join you next time.

Cardinal Collins ELL Centre



by Roslyn Marcelo

Cardinal Collins High School Academic Centre is Edmonton Catholic School District's (ECSD) academic completion program for fourth-to-sixth year high school students who are

new residents of Canada and English language learners (ELLs) who require additional years to complete necessary high school requirements. These ELLs are enrolled in full-time English as a second language locally acquired courses (English Expository 15/25, Canadian Studies 15/25, ESL Science 15, ESL Math 15 and Academic Vocabulary.) All courses were developed by the Calgary Board of Education. Students are offered individual support to improve their English throughout the year at one of the three campuses throughout the city.

ELLs enrolled in the program have the opportunity to complete high school courses through a blended learning environment (self-paced classroom). In addition, academic counselling is offered to assist students in preparing for postsecondary transition or career exploration. Newly arrived ELLs work closely with grad and learning coaches by providing transcripts from their home country. These transcripts are evaluated at the centre, and students are given credits for courses taken back home.

The program is in its third year and has seen tremendous growth and academic accomplishments from the ELLs attending. The program runs in partnership with the School of Alternative Education.

Students have access to the following programs and services:

- Fresh Start (self-paced ECSD modules and Alberta Distance Learning modules)
- PASS (part-time, alternative, self-paced school evening program)
- Diploma preparation sessions
- Summer school program
- Revelation online (online modules created by ECSD)
- Parenting and academic support for students who are parenting (Our Lady of Grace program)

The student support centre allows ELLs the chance to access the following services:

- Grad coach and career development
- Postsecondary student recruitment in-house and partnerships
- Learning coach for additional academic support
- Academic counselling

Cardinal Collins Academic Centre runs on a quarterly eight-week timetable based on November, January, April and June diploma writes. This timetable allows ELLs the access they need to 30-level courses and diplomas several times throughout the school year.

The ESL programming and support at Cardinal Collins and the three campus locations have provided ELLs with the academic requirements and skills necessary to access postsecondary education and further their language acquisition skills.

ESLC Retreat and Strategic Goal Planning

by Diane Pham and Dianne Leong-Fortier

March was a month of rejuvenation for the English as a Second Language Council (ESLC). The executive team held a retreat in Banff to reflect and strategically plan what to focus on for the next three years. We reviewed the vision, mission statement, geophysical locations of ESL teachers and current ESL needs in Alberta. We reflected on what has worked, is working and what needs to be worked on as we move forward to support and advocate for ESL teachers and English language learners (ELLs). Since the first year that ESL was recognized as a program and some funds were provided to support ELLs back in the early 1980s (during the influx of Vietnamese refugees), we have made tremendous

gains in developing programs, resources and support systems for ESL teachers to enhance teaching and learning of ELLs. However, much more needs to be done. During the retreat, the executive team examined the history, progression and direction of ESL teaching and learning. Our strategic plan focuses on four targeted areas: (1) advocacy, (2) member engagement, (3) professional development and (4) creating partnerships. We are excited about working to meet the goals that were identified at the retreat. We, however, value your input, and if you would like to share your experiences, stories or needs, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Reports from Members at Large

Calgary Catholic



by Samantha Tomlinson

This school year, September 2015 to May 2016, the Calgary Catholic School District Reception Centre registered about 1,800 students.

Calgary Catholic School District continues to support teachers in using the *Alberta K-12 ESL Proficiency Benchmarks* (Alberta Education 2009) in planning, instruction, assessing and reporting English language development for English language learners. Looking at various models of practice to share and record progress using the ESL benchmarks in junior high as well as introducing them to high school ESL course teachers have been two areas of focus this year.

Our district goals included increasing literacy and student engagement with a focus on differentiated assessments.

We created a welcome package for use in schools to support the intake of new students attending Calgary Catholic. With a high volume of registrants our exploration for and usage of multilingual resources to equip classrooms and learning commons continues to expand.

Other areas of focus include a high school professional learning community (PLC) for ESL course teachers to share ideas and assessments and an English language development PLC for classroom teachers to increase their awareness and understanding of second language acquisition. We have targeted developing strategies to support oral language and academic language development in the classroom along with increasing awareness of the student story and how best to support each student's success.

Reference

Alberta Education. 2009. *Alberta K-12 ESL Proficiency Benchmarks*. Edmonton, Alta: Alberta Education.

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