



Accent

Volume 25, Number 1

Fall 2021

President's Message

by Joan Miles



Hello, *Accent* readers! I hope that you have enjoyed a restorative break after the last 15 months of turmoil. Thinking back, it was just over one year ago that our heads were spinning from dealing with the challenges of a new and unpredictable health crisis. In the midst of massive societal shifts that included physical distancing, masks, food shortages and lack of access to traditional forms of leisure activities, we were also desperately trying to figure out how to teach in the virtual world, assess student learning and offer students fair and meaningful feedback to end the school year. It wasn't easy. It took a few months for things to settle into a more predictable pattern, but even with all of the proper protocols in place at the start of the 2020/21 school year, we were constantly on alert for the potential need to quarantine. The stress was exhausting, but we rode the wave. You—the teachers, support staff and administrators—were nimble and flexible. When learning moved online, you developed new tech skills. You became comfortable hybrid instructors and worked tirelessly to keep students actively engaged in learning. The online world was especially challenging for ELLs, many of whom lacked access to necessary resources. You had to shift into a whole new gear to deal with the needs of these complex and often marginalized students, and it was because of you that these learners remained afloat in very rough seas. Congratulations on a job well done!

An unexpected benefit of the pandemic was an embarrassment of riches when it came to professional development opportunities. Online PD was plentiful, well attended and often free. Teachers had access to some remarkable presenters, including four renowned speakers hosted this past spring by our own ESL Council: Valentina Gonzalez spoke about the power of reading and writing with English language learners; Jan Stewart shared strategies for working with refugee students; Esther Park presented on the topic of technology and engagement for ELLs; and

Inside This Issue

| | |
|---|---|
| Editor's Corner..... | 3 |
| Greetings from Some of Your Executives | 4 |
| Reports from Members at Large: Edmonton Public..... | 5 |
| Wisdom from Other Specialist Councils..... | 6 |

Souvankham Thammavongsa, winner of the 2020 Giller Prize, shared some of the personal anecdotes that formed the basis of her award-winning collection of short stories, *How to Pronounce Knife* (Little, Brown and Company 2020). We hope that you were able to attend one or more of these excellent virtual sessions.

Now, though, with things slowly returning to “business as usual,” we are ready to set our laptops aside and engage in some real face-to-face collaboration again. We hope you feel the same way. We have missed seeing our colleagues at educational events, participating in hands-on learning experiences and falling into impromptu discussions over coffee. Due to the restrictions posed by COVID-19, ESLC twice postponed the annual conference that was originally planned for March 2020; however, the good news is that we are set to go for the spring of 2022! Our conference team has been hard at work over the past year and a half, and we know you will be thrilled with what we have to offer. *From May 6–8, 2022, join us at the beautiful Malcolm Hotel, in Canmore, Alberta, for “Staying Ahead of the Curve,” brought to you by the English as a Second Language Specialist Council of the Alberta Teachers’ Association.* Sessions will start on Friday afternoon and continue throughout the day on Saturday. There are no sessions scheduled for Sunday, May 8, so those wishing to celebrate Mother’s Day in the mountains will be free to relax and partake of a variety of wellness activities.

Registration for the conference is now open, so be sure to book early so that you can guarantee your room at the Malcolm (<https://event-wizard.com/ESLCConference2022inCanmore/0/welcome/>). We are so looking forward to seeing all of you in person again!

In closing, I would like to reiterate that we know it has been a stressful year, but adversity has prompted an unprecedented level of personal professional growth. We are all eager to share in the new strategies and skills that emerged over the course of the pandemic as a result of the need to approach ELL teaching and learning differently. We invite you to share your insights by writing an article for *Accent* or by submitting a proposal to speak at our upcoming conference. Applications will be accepted prior to November 30, 2021. Please visit our website, www.eslcata.com/, for further details.

In addition, ESLC will hold its annual general meeting on November 20, 2021, from 10 AM to noon, online. Join in to hear the highly esteemed Hetty Rossingh, PhD, speak about her new research on culturally responsive classrooms. This is also an opportunity for you to apply for open positions on the council and take a more active role in supporting ELL teachers in the province. On that note, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of the current council members for the outstanding work that they did this year despite the many challenges they faced. Thank you, team, for your advocacy, vision and support for ELL education in Alberta!

Keep in touch with the
English as a Second
Language Council



[www.facebook.com
/ATAESLC](https://www.facebook.com/ATAESLC)



@ESLCATA

Editor's Corner

by Annie Fung



Greetings, ESLC! I hope you all found some space to rest during the summer and to enjoy a few favourite beverages, laughed yourselves silly as you chatted with friends and family, and caught up on some serious cat naps and deep sleeps. You truly

deserved it, and that sleeping part would make me a little jealous. You see, we decided to take our five-year-old out of daycare for the summer to spend “quality time” with him. Needless to say, we love “Tigger,” but we did not really miss him when we sent him away for short day camps.

At ESLC, I guess we *are* bouncing a little like Tigger because, as you’ve heard from Joan, our ESLC Conference 2022 in Canmore is *on*. Did you register

yet? Look out for more information in your upcoming ESL Tidbits and on the conference website. Imagine: mountains in May, May in the mountains—and good colleagues and professional development to boot!

I am very excited about this edition of *Accent*. Other than this being our first publication of the new school year, we were also able to gather some very specific articles from other specialist councils that pertain to your grade levels and subject areas (looking at you, kindergarten and math teachers!). The highlights are available in “Wisdom from Other Specialist Councils,” on page 6; please keep this issue for later reference or to share with your dear colleagues who may benefit. And *do* encourage them to sign up for our ESL specialist council. I wish you the best this coming school year. Savour those giggles and smiles from your kiddos and find tiny ways to pamper yourselves—and most of all, stay well! See you at the AGM and the conference.

ESLC 2022  English as a Second Language Council
Of The Alberta Teachers Association

Staying Ahead Of The Curve

Malcolm Hotel, Canmore

May 6–8, 2022



The Changing Educational Landscape

Greetings from Some of Your Executives

Time to introduce some of our executives in a more up-close-and-personal capacity! Here we go!

Joan Miles



Current role on executive:
President

Information I'd like to share about my work:

I am assistant principal at an adult upgrading facility where about 75 per cent of students are ELL or post-ELL. We notice that many

of our students are linguistically unprepared to leave their community high schools and would benefit from more time to complete their diplomas or, at the very least, develop a solid foundation of English language skills. I see my role as advocating for students to have more time at high school and more explicit language instruction so that they are as well positioned as possible for success beyond high school.

One gold nugget that I've discovered or learned from teaching and working in schools during COVID:

Many ELLs struggled with online learning because of the volume of written text that they were required to navigate. What became obvious is that online courses need to be constructed with ELL best practices in mind.

Gaylene Mackay



Current role on executive:
Secretary

Information I'd like to share about my work:

I have been working in the world of ESL/EFL/second languages for 25 years.

Youssra Badr



Current role on executive:
Member at Large,
Edmonton Public

Information I'd like to share about my work:

As I transition from my current role as an ESL consultant to a diversity consultant, I see so much

intersectionality in these positions. I plan to continue advocating for all our students to get what they need in order to be successful.

One gold nugget that I've discovered or learned from teaching and working in schools during COVID:

We are so resilient, especially our students.

Paulina Nowak



Current role on executive:
Member at Large, Calgary

Information I'd like to share about my work:

Currently I am an ELL consultant for K–12 schools for the Calgary Catholic District.

One gold nugget that I've discovered or learned from teaching and working in schools during COVID:

I did not work in the schools during COVID, but I made a lot of visits. A resource that was of great value to teachers was ReadWorks, because they were able to continue with assigning reading even if they were at home. Also, I've confirmed that relationships—with students, with parents and among colleagues—are still as important as before, if not more so.

Caterina Lazor



Current role on executive:
PD Director Central Alberta

Information I'd like to share about my work:

I am an ESL instructional coach and middle school teacher with Elk Island Catholic Schools, and the PD director, central Alberta, for

the ESL Council of the Alberta Teachers Association. My passion for supporting ELL students and teachers has permeated every element of my life, including my classroom and the professional development I bring to teachers across Alberta. I am honoured to share my love for supporting multilingual learners through my role with the ESLC!

One gold nugget that I've discovered or learned from teaching and working in schools during COVID:

As we have learned and grown as educators through COVID, one element that has stood out to me is ensuring that culturally responsive teaching is present for students, online or in person. Research suggests that educators whose practices address culture and language cohesively hold greater promise of turning ELL students into successful language learners. Keeping the connection with students and ensuring that they have a sense of belonging, no matter what your classroom looks like, is so important!

Annie Fung



Current role on executive:
Publications Director

Information I'd like to share about my work:

I am going to be supporting two specialized learning support teams in our division as the ESL consultant. Twice the fun and learning!

One gold nugget that I've discovered or learned from teaching and working in schools during COVID:

Kids and school staff are so resilient! Teachers are particularly creative and work so hard to support students. One big question for our ESL consultant cohort last year was how we can find supplementary tools to assess students' reading skills online. We know there is no "magic test," but having different assessment options is always a good thing! Some of our great colleagues found ReadTheory (<https://readtheory.org/>) and we were able to meet the staff that ran it in the background. ReadTheory is a nonprofit, and reading material is written by teachers. Check it out—contact their office for ideas and support.

Reports from Members at Large

Youssra Badr, Edmonton Public

On June 22, 2021, the Edmonton Public Schools Board of Trustees passed the district's new HAAB.BP Anti-racism and Equity Policy. This policy was created in collaboration with community members, students and staff. The goal of the policy is to support the division in its journey toward dismantling and ending systemic racism in our schools.

Next steps:

- An Equity Advisory Steering Committee is in place for the 2021/22 school year to provide leadership and support for the goals and outcomes of the antiracism and equity action plan.
- Subcommittees will be created to support the work of the action plan: one to support schools, one to support the division's work on the collection of race-based data and one to focus on human resources.

Why is this important for teachers and students? This work is paramount to student success. Focusing on and prioritizing antiracism and equity in our division will make a difference to all aspects of student learning and well-being.

As this work progresses and develops, updates will be shared on the EPSB website.

Wisdom from Other Specialist Councils

Curated by Annie Fung

Play, Oral Language, Writing and Cultural Relevance in Northern Rural Kindergarten Classrooms: Teachers' Roles

Jade Kim, Audrey Madsen and Shelley Stagg Peterson

This article was originally published in the Early Childhood Education Journal volume 47, number 1.

Although the students mentioned in the article may not be ELLs, we can see our vital roles in designing lessons that will scaffold language and writing using culturally relevant contexts and dramatic play. The authors also discuss their findings on using thematic studies and drawing on students' strengths and experiences in order to build student confidence and academic skills.

Building Mathematical Confidence: Using Math Talk in a Second Language Context

Allison Robb-Hagg

This article was originally published in delta-K, the journal of the ATA Math Council, volume 56, number 1.

This article was fascinating! The author examined how well Math Talk strategies helped French immersion students talk mathematical reasoning in French. She also wondered what was deterring her students from communicating mathematical thinking and reasoning in French— isn't this what we also wonder for our ELLs? There are some gems in terms of strategies and research here if you do work with ELLs in math, and it is definitely relevant to us in the ESL world since we want our students to develop academic language and to gradually become self-sufficient in subject areas.

Working Together to Support Mental Health in Alberta Schools

This article was originally published in the Alberta Counsellor, January 2018.

As we welcome back our students, this may be a good refresher for all of us in remembering the connections between mental health and brain development, and help us to optimize our students' strengths as we navigate through some knowns and unknowns this year.

Math Focus 7 and English Language Learners

Monique Wilson

This article was originally published in delta-K, the journal of the ATA Math Council, volume 56, number 1.

One interesting math article deserves another. If you have been around *Accent* as long as I have, you know that we hardly ever get any math-y anything— so a math article specific to ELLs gets my full attention! The author critically examines the *Math Focus 7* textbook (Nelson Education 2007) in the context of use by ELLs. She raises some interesting points about issues of the lack of cultural diversity and cultural context in the textbook, but this also inspires us to examine our teaching resources more critically as well. Moreover, there are some findings about challenges for ELLs in math, including the sentence structures and tenses commonly used in math books, that will help us be more aware when trying to adapt and to program more appropriately for our ELLs. A further step for us as teachers is to provide feedback to publishers.

Editor's note: these insightful articles are available in the Resources section of the ESLC website, at www.eslcata.com/articles-recommended-in-accent-2021.

Publishing Under the *Personal Information Protection Act*

The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) requires consent to publish personal information about an individual. Personal information is defined as anything that identifies an individual in the context of the collection: for example, a photograph and/or captions, an audio or video file, and artwork.

Some schools obtain blanket consent under *FOIP*, the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. However, the *Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)* and *FOIP* are not interchangeable. They fulfill different legislative goals. *PIPA* is the private sector act that governs the Association's collection, use and disclosure of personal information.

If you can use the image or information to identify a person in context (for example, a specific school or a specific event), then it is personal information and you need consent to collect, use or disclose (publish) it.

Minors cannot provide consent and must have a parent or guardian sign a consent form. Consent forms must be provided to the Document Production editorial staff at Barnett House together with the personal information to be published.

Refer all questions regarding the ATA's collection, use and disclosure of personal information to the ATA privacy officer.

Notify the ATA privacy officer immediately of any incident that involves the loss of or unauthorized use or disclosure of personal information, by calling Barnett House at 780-447-9400 or 1-800-232-7208.

Maggie Shane, the ATA's privacy officer, is your resource for privacy compliance support.

780-447-9429 (direct)

780-699-9311 (cell, available any time)

Consent for Collection, Use and Disclosure of Personal Information

Name: _____ (Please print)

I am giving consent for myself.

I am giving consent for my child/children or ward(s), identified below:

Name(s): _____ (Please print)

By signing below, I am consenting to The Alberta Teachers' Association collecting, using and disclosing personal information identifying me or my child/children or ward(s) in print and/or online publications and on websites available to the public, including social media. By way of example, personal information may include, but is not limited to, name, photographs, audio/video recordings, artwork, writings or quotations.

I understand that copies of digital publications may come to be housed on servers outside Canada.

I understand that I may vary or withdraw this consent at any time. I understand that the Association's privacy officer is available to answer any questions I may have regarding the collection, use and disclosure of these records. The privacy officer can be reached at 780-447-9429 or 1-800-232-7208.

Signed: _____

Print name: _____ Today's date: _____

For more information on the ATA's privacy policy, visit www.teachers.ab.ca.



ESLC Executive Council Contacts

President

Joan Miles
Bus 403-817-4000
president@eslcata.com

Publications Director

Annie Fung
Bus 780-716-2515
anniepyfung@gmail.com

ATA Staff Advisor

Elissa Corsi
Bus 780-447-9435
elissa.corsi@ata.ab.ca

Complete information regarding the English as a Second Language Council executive is available on the council's website at www.eslcata.com.

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 visit the ESLC website at www.eslcata.com.



Copyright © 2021 by The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), 11010 142 Street NW, Edmonton T5N 2R1. Unless otherwise indicated in the text, reproduction of the material in *Accent* is authorized for classroom and professional development use, provided that each copy contains full acknowledgement of the source and that no charge is made beyond the cost of reprinting. Any other reproduction in whole or in part without prior written consent of the ATA is prohibited. *Accent* is published by the ATA for the English as a Second Language Council (ESLC). Editor: Annie Fung. Editorial and production services: Document Production staff, ATA. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the ATA or the Council. ISSN 1201-3412

Individual copies of this newsletter are available at a cost of \$2 per copy plus 5 per cent shipping and handling and 5 per cent GST. Please contact Distribution at Barnett House at distribution@ata.ab.ca to place your order.

Personal information regarding any person named in this document is for the sole purpose of professional consultation between members of the Alberta Teachers' Association.