



Accent

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President's Message

by Diane Pham

It is an honour to represent the English as a Second Language Council (ESLC). As a council, we advocate for English language learners (ELLs) and promote as well as try to improve the teaching of ELLs. This need to promote and improve ELL education has not been more prevalent than it is today. As you may be aware, funding for ELLs has decreased from seven to five years, despite the fact that research has found that ELLs need up to seven and, at times, ten years to acquire the cognitive academic language proficiencies necessary to reach their grade-level norms (Thomas and Collier 1997). Research has also found that English language acquisition cannot be rushed and sufficient time needs to be provided; otherwise, our ELLs will likely not graduate from high school (Freeman and Freeman 1998). According to Cummins who was quoting Freeman and Freeman (1998), if ELLs do not receive adequate language acquisition support, then we are providing ELLs a language program that “does little to address the causes of bilingual students’ underachievement.” Educators of ELLs are aware of these facts, yet our provincial government has moved forward in reducing the funding for ELLs. This decision was based solely on budget restraints and not on what is in the best interest of ELL students. As ELL educators, we know that five years of funding is insufficient. Therefore, as a voice for ELLs we need to band together to advocate for those who have not found their voice in our province. Our students need us to advocate for them. Please write to your provincial government to tell them how this decrease in funding has affected your classroom and your students’ learning needs. A single voice may be soft, but together, we will be heard.

References

- Freeman, Y S, and D E Freeman. 1998. *ESL/EFL Teaching: Principles for Success*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Thomas, W, and V Collier. 1997. *School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students*. National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education. Washington, DC: Georgia Washington University Center for the Study of Language and Education.

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.

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Outgoing President's Message

by Sarah Clark



It has been an honour to be a part of the English as a Second Language Council (ESLC) over the last four years. I want to thank my fellow colleagues across the province for their dedication and passion when meeting the needs of

English language learners. I want to especially thank the executive for supporting the council. You were an easy group to lead because your beliefs and values aligned with keeping learners at the centre of all that we do. I look forward to working with you again in the future or seeing you at an annual conference.

Farewell and I hope to come back again one day. In the meantime, I will be focusing on my new portfolio with Foothills School Division and on being present for my three wonderful children and husband. Thank you for allowing me to lead the council.



Editor's Corner

by Annie Fung



Winter greetings! So much has happened within our English as a Second Language Council (ESLC) and in the greater ESL universe since our last publication that I'm not sure where to begin. We had another fantastic

annual conference at beautiful Kananaskis, and although I feel bad for the injured bear that was roaming near the hotel (I didn't see it but I wasn't about to go find out), I was thankful to have spent more quality time with fellow colleagues inside by the roaring fireplace talking shop. We did, however, bid goodbye to our fun-loving outgoing president Sarah Clark at the conference. ESLC did welcome Diane Pham, a seasoned ESL teacher and council executive member, as she stepped up to the plate as incoming president. We are also joined by various new executive members whom you will meet in the near future.

I am struck by how educators may "label" ELLs. See, I just did it. I said ELL. Is this what our students would like to be called? Is there really a difference between ESL (English as a second language) versus ELL? Yes, we are now acknowledging that English may not be our students' second language (it could be their fifth!), but we should get to know our students and their perspectives on their own cultures. We need to help them celebrate their identities as individuals and as individuals within many different groups. Through this journey, I'm sure we may discover new parts of ourselves too.

I am sure many of us are thinking about the many new students we will be welcoming to our

schools in the near future from Syria and neighbouring countries. I have had the honour to meet many colleagues through working at various school boards and at professional development sessions, and while many educators have voiced their worries and sometimes frustrations about how to accommodate the needs of all students, I have never heard anyone say, “I give up!” I am always amazed and re-energized after talking with you all, and I think our students and colleagues feed on each other’s resilience and hopes.

We all know that as hard as it may be sometimes, we can help each other better support all students. With that said, here are some resources that may be of interest to you as a refresher or crash course for welcoming refugee students into your schools (these links have been shared on our Facebook page). Some of your members at large (MALS) have also written about this topic in this issue. It is important to note that we should keep an eye on the latest news from our districts regarding how to welcome our new refugee students. The links here may provide you with some ideas on how to approach your work with students in the classroom, and your professional judgment on the appropriateness of these materials will surely guide you to how to adapt these materials to your teaching. We would also encourage you to provide feedback to your MALs, administrators and other colleagues as the districts move forward to more specific plans.

- Teaching Refugees with Limited Formal Schooling, by Alberta Education and the Calgary Board of Education (<http://teachingrefugees.com>).

This useful website, which is for all teachers, is “dedicated to enhancing the capacity of educators to work effectively with the sub-group of English Language Learners who face additional challenges as a result of the circumstances of their migration and their lack of opportunity for prior schooling,” and it also “provides access to information—publications, educational materials, exemplars from the field—that promote effective programming for students of this profile.”

- I Am Syria, by educators for educators in conjunction with the Summer Institute, (www.iamasyria.org/teaching-about-the-refugee-crisis-and-making-a-difference.html).

I was quite intrigued when I found this website because it was “developed by educators for educators.” It has explanations about the background of the Syrian crisis and aims to educate teachers and students on the refugee experience and other related issues. As an ESL teacher, I strongly feel that I should not only be an advocate for my ESL learners but also a facilitator of meaningful relationship building and mutual understanding by everyone in the school no matter our backgrounds and beliefs. It is certainly easier said than done, but I think it’s important to acknowledge that while our new students need to be reassured, students who have been with us since September also need our attention and patience as we all learn to adjust to bigger classes with greater diversity. This website may be useful for giving you some ideas on how to approach certain topics but again, use your professional judgment to assess what may be appropriate for you and your students.

How Can I Help?

Here are two articles from Edmonton and Calgary that answer some basic questions about what you or others can do to assist our newcomers:

- Edmonton: <http://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/how-can-i-help-syrian-refugees-coming-to-edmonton>
- Calgary: www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/syrian-refugees-immigrant-donation-volunteer-sponsor-1.3341870

If you have resources, thoughts or teaching ideas to share regarding these topics or any ESL topics, please reach us through Facebook (www.facebook.com/ATAESLC) or our website (www.eslcata.com), or e-mail me at annie.fung@epsb.ca.

Thank you again for all you do. We often wonder if we are doing enough. We are. If you ever doubt yourself, remember your students’ smiles and thank you. They know you are giving your best. Best wishes to you and yours.

Conference 2015 Recap

by Dianne Leong-Fortier

The English as a Second Language Council's annual conference, "My Language ... My Endless Horizon," October 30–31, 2015, welcomed delegates to an informative and inspiring weekend at the Delta Lodge at Kananaskis in the peaceful, natural and majestic surroundings of Kananaskis. Delegates enjoyed the planned events (wine and cheese, Halloween family activities and exhibits) and the numerous door prizes and draws that vendors and supporters donated.



Rukhsana Khan



Kuir Garang

The conference's program was diverse, relevant and enlightening. Keynote presentations by Rukhsana

Khan ("From ESL Student to International Award-Winning Author" and "Facing the Challenges of ESL Students") and by Kuir Garang ("Resettlement Hopes and Settlement Despair: From Hopelessness of Refugee Camps to Complexities of Canadian Society") were well received.

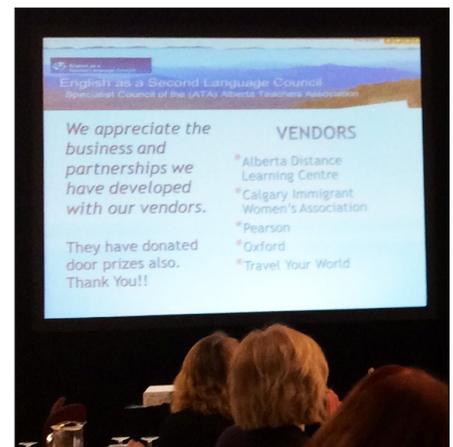
Session speakers included educators, specialists and consultants working in various contexts in schools, institutions and programs across Alberta

(Edmonton, Calgary and surrounding districts, and Brooks), the Yukon and British Columbia. There were 117 registered and 37 new members who attended the 2015 conference.

A variety of sessions were offered on such topics as bridging ELL-focused research with theory and practice, ELL pedagogy and best practices, SIOP (sheltered instruction observation protocol), teaching and learning strategies in the classroom, cross-curricular connections, ELL and technology in the classroom, teaching math to ELLs, and programs and supports for new immigrants and their families, refugees, women and youth. Survey results indicated that the conference had much to offer its attendees.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the keynote and session speakers, volunteers, exhibitors, vendors and staff from the Delta Lodge at Kananaskis for their contributions to the conference. Special thanks and acknowledgement to the 2015 conference committee: Rabih El-Masri, conference codirector (social director, site, vendors); Dianne Leong-Fortier, conference codirector (communications, marketing, keynotes and speakers); Jan Fedun, secretary, (registration, donations) and Alice Bui (swag and program).

Save the date for the 2016 conference in Calgary, November 3–5.



Reports from Members at Large

Open

by Teresa Borchers and Connie Coe

Central Alberta continues to welcome many new immigrants and refugees from different countries around the world. By offering different programs and services, various agencies often play an integral role in the lives of these English language learners as they adjust to life in Canada. Highlighted below are four such agencies:

Central Alberta Refugee Effort

<http://immigrant-centre.ca>

Services are easily accessible for everyone and designed to support the successful settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees. They include the following:

- Language instruction
- Settlement support in schools
- Translation and interpretation
- Youth program
- Men and women's support groups
- Connecting newcomers
- Public and rural awareness

Catholic Social Services

www.catholicsocialservices.ab.ca/CatholicSocialServices

With multilingual and culturally diverse staff, Catholic Social Services is able to provide various settlement, educational, language and language assessment, employment and outreach services. Our services are free and are offered in English, French

and more than 35 other languages. Here are the programs offered in Red Deer:

- Resettlement Assistance Program
- Settlement Counselling Program
- Temporary Foreign Workers Program

Central Immigrant Women's Association

www.caiwa.ca

The mission is to raise the level of awareness of immigrant women and their families in all aspects of Canadian life, and to assist them in achieving their full potential as members of Canadian society. The following programs are offered:

- Skill Development
- Health Awareness and Wellness
- Community Outreach

Red Deer Public Library

www.rdpl.org

Language Learning Tools

- Mango is an online language-learning system that can help you learn languages like Spanish, French, Japanese, Brazilian Portuguese, German, Mandarin Chinese, Greek, Italian, Russian, English as a Second Language (ESL) and more.
- Muzzy Online is an online language-learning system specifically for children that can help them learn languages like English, French, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, German, Portuguese, Italian and Russian.
- Dual language books

Digital Content

- Press Display: access close to 450 newspapers from around the world in the language in which they are published.
- e-books
 - Tumblebooks: online collection of animated, talking picture books.

Calgary Public

by Kathy Andrews



Supporting Personalized Learning for English Language Learners

I would like to introduce myself as your new member at large for Calgary Public.

My name is Kathy Andrews, and I am an assistant principal at David Thompson School. I am interested in supporting our membership through meaningful professional learning. In addition to sitting on the ESLC, I sit on the Calgary Public Teachers Local professional development committee.

Approximately 25 per cent of students in the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) are English language learners in the process of acquiring English as an additional language. English language learners' language and academic development in the CBE are supported through a wide range of programming options and personalized instructional strategies. These depend on students' backgrounds, grade levels and language proficiency levels.

A significant support for English language learners at the CBE is through learning services. This group provides a number of resource documents and links that support the professional learning of school staff and help guide the accountabilities related to identification, programming and reporting. Support for English language learning programming is also

available through requests to the area learning teams. ELL strategists and specialists are part of these learning teams and work toward building teacher capacity in working with ELLs.

Other supports for English language learners at the Calgary Board of Education include the admissions, assessment and settlement services (In-School Settlement Program—Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth) available through Kingsland Centre as well as interpreter services and diversity, and learning support advisors.

Recently the school I work at received support through learning services by being involved in a dual language project through the University of Calgary. The link to this project is below and may be of interest to our membership: <http://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/nelson-freedom-is-the-same-in-any-language>.

The result of this project was far-reaching and impactful as our students felt a sense of pride in knowing another language and felt comfortable sharing their linguistic skills with each other and community members. In addition recently our parent community has made a further investment in dual language books to support our ELL students and students who are interested in learning a new language.

These efforts have started to change the mindset to one that considers speaking languages other than English as an asset in our building!

If you have professional development ideas that are of interest to you, please feel free to contact me at kjandrews@cbe.ab.ca. I look forward to hearing from you.

Keep up with the English as a Second Language Council on Facebook (www.facebook.com/ATAESLC) and on Twitter (@ESLCATA).

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