



Accent

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President's Message

by Diane Pham



As of January 29, 2017, Canada has welcomed 40,081 Syrian refugees since November 2015,¹ and almost 5,000 refugees have settled in Alberta, with the highest influx in Edmonton and Calgary (2,218 and 2,255, respectively).²

As a result, there has been a greater demand on teachers to provide a curriculum that currently does not exist in Alberta. We do not have a program of studies for guiding students with limited or no formal schooling. Teachers have access to websites, workshops and webinars, but they have nothing in the form of a formal document outlining what it is that these students need to learn or teacher resources to

help these students acquire the academic language necessary to be successful in our schools. With most students, it is the basic communicative language that we are working toward, and that in itself poses a major challenge because of their complex learning needs.

How do teachers educate students who do not even meet the first level on Alberta's English as a second language (ESL) proficiency benchmarks? Teachers—being the hard-working, caring and passionate educators that we are—have found ways to make it work. We talk to community partners to educate ourselves about cultural awareness, and we share resources that would benefit our students with other teachers across curriculum areas, grade levels and school districts. We spend endless hours on the phone, on the Internet and at meetings to gather resources for our refugee students. We give up our weekends and holidays to attend workshops in order to equip ourselves with the skills and tools to help our immigrant students deal with trauma or culture shock.

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Teachers are no longer simply educators. Our profession has evolved, and we often find ourselves providing wraparound services for our students. Teachers continue to do what we need to do on behalf of our students, but when the government allows these processes and structures to continue without adequately supporting teachers, our well-being is the cost. One school board (that I am aware of) has taken it upon itself to fund this shortfall so that its ESL teachers are supported. However, not all school boards can fiscally support their ESL teachers without adequate funding from the government.

In 2011, it was announced that funding for ESL education would be reduced from seven years to five years per student. When curriculum redesign was initiated, Minister of Education David Eggen promised that his “government is committed to developing curriculum—including the fundamentals of reading, writing and math—that ensures children have the best possible start in life to prepare them for rewarding careers in a diversified economy.”³ This promise, at present, seems to be selective and exclusive, since ESL education is not part of the mandate.

At the ATA’s 2015 Summer Conference, representatives from the minister’s office spoke to Alberta educators about curriculum redesign. I, along with many others, questioned why ESL was not included. The response was that ESL will be part of curriculum redesign—just not at this time. When will ESL be part of the conversation? When will the ESL program of studies be updated? The program of

studies has not been reviewed since 1997. ESL education should not and cannot be an afterthought when it comes to providing “the best possible start” for all learners.

Teachers, I strongly encourage you to share your stories and the challenges you experience in your classroom or school as a result of decreased ESL funding and the lack of a current ESL program of studies. Hopefully, our provincial elected representatives will become more deliberately committed to ESL education and will provide teachers with the support we need to help our ESL students succeed.

In 2017, I wish for ESL teachers to be heard and to be provided with the necessary tools and resources, a current program of studies, and funding to help English-language learners (ELLs) succeed in schools throughout Alberta. If you share this wish, please join me by writing to your MLA to seek more support for ESL education.

Notes

1. See www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/milestones.asp (accessed March 9, 2017).
2. See www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/map.asp (accessed March 9, 2017).
3. See www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=429254F30CF8B-FC56-7936-ADA544AE037D475C (accessed March 9, 2017).



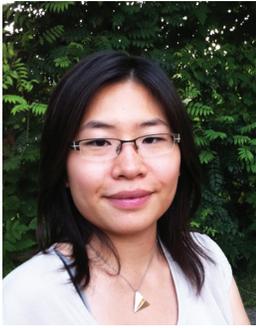
The English as a Second Language Council (ESLC) is seeking a 2018 conference director.

For more information, contact Diane Pham, ESLC president, at ataeslcpresident@gmail.com.

Don't miss out!

Editor's Corner

by Annie Fung



I look forward to seeing what 2017 holds, but 2016 will be one of the most memorable years in my ripe old age, because I acquired the title of Mummy last June. Besides keeping busy as a diaper changer, a human rocking chair and a personal milk dispenser, I have tried to

keep myself up to date with the distant galaxy of teaching and current world events.

At times, as I am holding my darling drooling baby boy, Henry, in my arms and watching the news, I feel a mixture of contentment and anxiety. I am so grateful that I am safe and happy with the baby at home, and yet changes and conflicts around the globe are having an impact on us at the very moment I'm wiping spit-up off my shirt. Wonderful examples of kindness and empathy are being demonstrated, too, but as I look down at my son, I am reminded of the weight that rests on my shoulders to show him the world and how to navigate it.

It would be too simplistic to boil down the conflicts we are seeing to "a clash of cultures" or to say that "people should be nicer to each other," but as a Canadian citizen and a teacher, I *can* teach my son to appreciate his own uniqueness and the diversity around him and show him how he can have a positive impact in his community and beyond. With the rise of "alternative facts," it is even more imperative that we teach our children to think critically. While not everyone may agree with inclusive education, this is one of the first social environments children will be introduced to in our schools, and we must help them understand what inclusion is and why we have it. Gaining appreciation for their inclusive environment and developing critical-thinking skills will not only help children understand their identities and roles in society but also lead them to explore contrasting views confidently and analytically.

There are many great resources out there, but one that has been mentioned again and again and that, of course, is very useful in terms of the teaching context in Alberta is the Alberta Teachers' Association's (2010) *Here Comes Everyone: Teaching in the Intercultural Classroom*. It may seem at first glance to be heavy reading, but it is broken down into concise sections to help teachers explore their own cultural identities and then to provide ample guidance in how to set up a more inclusive environment and how to respond to cultural differences when assessing student work, among other topics. I cannot do the writers and their work justice in this short editorial message, but I do believe that *Here Comes Everyone* is an important read. I always find something new and thought-provoking every time I scan the document, and now, as a mother, I see many concepts and topics of conversation I can share with Henry at home, when he's older. I can see the usefulness of the resource in explaining to even young children what culture and cultural differences are and why we should reject "colour blindness"—that is, treating everyone the same and ignoring each person's uniqueness. Alternatively, I am also reminded that parents and teachers should be careful not to overly highlight others' differences. Most of all, the writers recommend that we maintain high expectations for our children in terms of how they treat themselves and others. I encourage you to refresh yourself with this guide.

The ESLC is continuing our work to bring you practical resources and research-based information through *Accent* and our website (www.eslcata.com). Check out the tips and strategies in our website's Monthly Focus Archives and blog entries. We also welcome your help in sharing useful teaching resources and information. Please e-mail me (anniepyfung@gmail.com) or share with us on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/ATAESLC/). Last, don't forget to check out the factoids about the members of our new executive council, including

areas of interest in ESL and contact information (we'd love to chat with you!).

In the meantime, below I've included some resources you may find useful.

Have a wonderful spring with your students! As always, we salute you!

Recommended Resources

Teaching Refugees with Limited Formal Schooling

<http://teachingrefugees.com>

Created by the Calgary Board of Education and Alberta Education to assist teachers in working with refugee students and families, this website offers a wealth of information to help teachers understand where their students came from and what they may have experienced, as well as practical lesson ideas, based on Alberta Education's ESL benchmarks, for students with limited or no formal schooling. It also contains useful information on making referrals, accessing outside resources and connecting with the greater community to support refugee families.

Conflict Resolution at School and on the Playground

<http://cncr.rutgers.edu/conflict-resolution-at-school-on-the-playground/>

Rutgers University's Center for Negotiation and Conflict Resolution provides this list of websites for working with children on conflict resolution at school and in other settings outside the home.

Resource Guide for Supporting Children with Refugee Experience

www.surrey.ca/files/Resource_Guide_-_Supporting_Children_with_Refugee_Experience.pdf

In 2014, the Surrey Welcoming Communities Project published this resource guide as part of its Refugee Myth-Busting Campaign. It offers perspectives on what refugee children may have experienced while being displaced, relocated and resettled, as well as on posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and how to assess and support refugee children.

Reference

Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). 2010. *Here Comes Everyone: Teaching in the Intercultural Classroom*. Edmonton, Alta: ATA. Also available at www.teachers.ab.ca/sitecollectiondocuments/ata/publications/human-rights-issues/mon-3%20here%20comes%20everyone.pdf (accessed March 8, 2017).



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 username and password. Specialist councils are your source for conferences, networking, publications, resources, workshops, online communities and professional development.

ESLC Executive Factoids



**Diane Pham,
President**

Calgary Board of Education
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Areas of Interest in ESL

Program planning and assessments

My Favourite Anything

Spending time with my family

A Message to ESLC Members

Thank you for joining the profession and being part of something big!



**Dianne Leong-Fortier,
Vice-President**

University of Calgary,
Student Enrolment
Services, Student
Accessibility Services,
Academic Strategist
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gmail.com

My Favourite Anything

Golfing, fine arts pursuits, origami, puzzles and birdwatching

A Message to ESLC Members

I adhere to particular models and approaches to ESL lesson planning and instruction that I believe are most effective. I think that teachers choose approaches that support their own values and beliefs, background and experiences. I apply a few approaches and models at different levels and points during the teaching and learning process in the ESL classroom. In her book *Languages for All* (Pearson Canada, 2013), Katy Arnett uses the reflection tool developed by McTighe and Wiggins in 2004 to aid teachers in the lesson planning process (see Figure 6.8 in Arnett's book). The questions are considered in the tool to ensure that student learning goals are achieved.

Areas of Interest in ESL

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), Response to Intervention (RTI), differentiated instruction, brain science and Understanding by Design (UbD)



**Samantha Tomlinson,
PD Director South and
Calgary Catholic Member
at Large (MAL)**

eslcexecmember@gmail
.com

Areas of Interest in ESL

The role that culture and identity play in language learning, and instructional design that supports ELL development (specifically academic language acquisition and assessment)

My Favourite Anything

Hiking, travelling, reading mystery novels and watching Saturday-morning cartoons with my two daughters

A Message to ESLC Members

We, the PD directors for southern Alberta, would appreciate your guidance regarding desired professional learning formats and topics. Be sure to contact us to request professional learning events in your area or to be added to our list of facilitators. Expect invitations soon, as we are cooking up some upcoming professional learning events.



**Dayna Duman,
PD Director South**

Calgary Board of Education
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gmail.com

Areas of Interest in ESL

Turning the challenges
faced by ELLs into
instructional opportunities,
furthering the language
learning of intermediate and
advanced ELLs, and the

role of oral language in developing academic
language

My Favourite Anything

Reading with my two little ones any time—but
especially when curled up together on Saturday
mornings

A Message to ESLC Members

As Samantha Tomlinson said, we would appreciate
your input on professional learning opportunities.
Please contact us to request professional learning
events or to be added to our list of facilitators. Watch
for invitations to our upcoming events.



**Nancy Musica,
PD Director North**

Edmonton Public Schools

Areas of Interest in ESL

Supporting teachers in
developing comprehensive
ESL programs, ESL
assessment, exceptionalities
and ESL, academic
vocabulary and (yes, I'll
admit it) grammar

My Favourite Anything

My family, friends, reading, travel, movies, and
volunteer work with the ESLC and Scouts Canada

A Message to ESLC Members

Keep an eye out for our ESL survey, coming to you
soon. We are collecting information about our
members and their needs, and looking for ideas to
help us plan upcoming events and PD opportunities.
Also, keep checking our website (www.eslcata.com)
as it focuses on a new theme each month and
provides resources, ideas and links related to
teaching ELLs. (The themes are archived, so you can
check back in case you missed some.)



**Joana Dosedall,
Calgary Catholic MAL**

Calgary Catholic School
District

joana.dosedall@
learn.cssd.ab.ca

Area of Interest in ESL

Supporting teachers and
schools with programming
and instructional strategies
for ELLs

My Favourite Anything

My family getaway in
Invermere, BC. The change

of pace and lifestyle in Invermere allow us to spend
true quality time together, embracing the outdoors all
year round!

A Message to ESLC Members

The following quotation from Kristin Souers and
Pete Hall's book *Fostering Resilient Learners*
(ASCD, 2016) relates to my personal beliefs about
teaching: "Taking the time to build a strong
relationship, demonstrating empathy, and engaging
with each student as an individual human being will
further propel us" (p 145). The foundation of any
classroom is the ability to develop relationships with
our students. Once that foundation has been laid,
anything is possible!



**Kathy Andrews,
Calgary Public MAL**
Calgary Board of Education
kjandrews@shaw.ca
Area of Interest in ESL
Dual-language books and
education

My Favourite Anything

I enjoy spending time outdoors, even in winter! I love to ski and snowshoe.

A Message to ESLC Members

I am fortunate to be part of the Calgary Board of Education, which has many resources and services to support ELLs. Please e-mail me if you would like to connect with other ELL teachers in the Calgary area.



**Teresa Borchers,
Central MAL**
Red Deer Catholic Schools
teresa.borchers@rdcrs.ca
Areas of Interest in ESL
Assisting schools in
welcoming and supporting
all ELLs and their families,

with a special interest in vocabulary development and reading comprehension

My Favourite Anything

Favourite ELL resource—Elizabeth Coelho’s book *Adding English: A Guide to Teaching in Multilingual Classrooms* (Pippin, 2007)

A Message to ESLC Members

Our ESLC is here to support you in meeting the needs of your ELL students. Please don’t hesitate to reach out for support!



**Lynn Farrugia,
Edmonton Public MAL**
lynn.farrugia@epsb.ca
Areas of Interest in ESL
Advocacy, and
multicultural children’s
literature featuring the
stories of immigrant and
refugee children and youth

My Favourite Anything

No surprise—the colour purple!

A Message to ESLC Members

Thank you for all your hard work supporting our ELLs and their families. You are appreciated!



**JoAnne Snihurowych,
Edmonton Catholic MAL**
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Areas of Interest in ESL
Elementary, refugees and
SIOP

My Favourite Anything

Chocolate and travel

A Message to ESLC Members

Get involved, share your passion for teaching ELLs, and remember to have balance in your life!



**Roslyn Marcelo,
Edmonton Catholic MAL**

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Areas of Interest in ESL

High school ESL
programming

My Favourite Anything

Favourite role—being a mommy!

A Message to ESLC Members

It takes a village to raise a child! Let's do this together!



**Jana Fedun,
Conference Director 2017**

Calgary Catholic School
District

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Area of Interest in ESL
Kindergarten

My Favourite Anything

Spending the summers in Osoyoos, BC

A Message to ESLC Members

We are all champions of the students in our care, and I encourage you to share with the council any useful tips or strategies that have been successful in the area of ESL. Together we can grow and learn for the benefit of our ELL students.



Lisa Etty, Secretary

Greater St Albert Catholic
School Board

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Areas of Interest in ESL

Helping others by
advocating for students,
educators and families;

learning and sharing knowledge with teachers, students and families; welcoming newcomers; and sharing information, resources and support

My Favourite Anything

I love to learn, to practise yoga, to cycle, to travel and to meet people.

A Message to ESLC Members

The ESLC is a wonderful council! There are few

classrooms that do not have ELL students, and the support we provide for our ELL students helps all learners. Many teachers already have great strategies for supporting, differentiating for and accommodating ELL students, but some may have questions or need clarification. As a council, we strive to share our combined and diverse knowledge of ESL to help our colleagues increase their knowledge and understanding of ESL. We share this expertise, but we also learn from each other while advocating for ELL students, educators and numerous stakeholders. However, it does not end there, because it's also about building relationships—relationships with students, families and colleagues. As lifelong learners, we learn a great deal from each other, so please feel free to join and share your journey with us.



**Rachel Reynolds,
Webmaster**

Edmonton Public Schools
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.com

Areas of Interest in ESL

Supporting teachers in
inclusive settings, academic
vocabulary and supporting
reunification families

My Favourite Anything

I love when my children (I
have two young boys) or
my students finally have an
“Aha!” moment and break
through into the next level
of learning.

A Message to ESLC Members

Check out the new Monthly Focus section of our
website (www.eslcata.com). We hope that this will
provide you with more tools at your fingertips and a
reason to regularly visit the website. E-mail us with
topics you’d like to see addressed in this section or
throughout the rest of the site. We love hearing from
you and will implement whatever ideas we can.
Thanks for your support and membership!



**Annie Fung,
Publications Director**

Edmonton Public Schools
anniepyfung@gmail.com

Areas of Interest in ESL

Supporting teachers in
inclusive settings, ESL
programming, academic
vocabulary and assistive
learning technologies

My Favourite Anything

The new man in my life—Henry, our new baby boy,
and his 10,000-watt make-you-melt smile!

A Message to ESLC Members

Yes, I’m cheating here. I’m using this space to invite
you to share your ideas and stories about ESL with
us for *Accent*. E-mail me at anniepyfung@gmail
.com. I’d be happy to brainstorm and clarify ideas
with you. Your submissions do not have to be long
pieces of writing. We’d love to hear from you!



**Kathy Hoehn,
PEC Liaison**

Calgary Catholic School
District
kathy.hoehn@ata.ab.ca

Area of Interest in ESL

Working with elementary ELL students

My Favourite Anything

Family, friends and the ATA!

A Message to ESLC Members

Please encourage your colleagues to become ESLC
members.

Welcoming Newcomers—What Works?

by Nancy Musica



I have heard this question often posed to newcomers: What really helped you when you first came to Canada?

So many times, the answer is simple. They will say that someone smiled at them or someone helped them.

That's it. And it really made a difference.

I have also seen newcomers begin to volunteer and help support other newcomers. I've spoken to high school students who say that they want to give back, and some even choose a career in helping others as a result of their experiences. How positive—and so connected to their welcome to Canada!

So, it's not always hard, but helping to support newcomers in schools and creating a welcoming and supportive environment may take some extra time and effort.

As an ESL consultant with the Inclusive Learning department of Edmonton Public Schools, I have the privilege of working in many schools to support staff, students and parents. I see so many innovative ideas and recognize the incredible effort and progress we have made in our goal to make our schools welcoming to all our students and their families. Often it comes down to the people involved and the genuine caring stance they maintain, even on the most stressful and busiest of days.

I could tell you so many stories, but instead I will list some of the things I have seen in my K–12 schools. (And many of my schools are doing all of these!)

What's Working in Schools?

- Genuine desire and effort to be welcoming
- Dual-language staff members, including teachers, community workers, education assistants (EAs) and caretakers
- Inclusion of ELLs in regular classes with peers

- Sheltered ESL classes for part of the day
- Support coaches and agency workers on site
- ESL resources in classrooms
- Dual-language books
- Welcome posters (with words of welcome in other languages)
- Displays showing where students are from and other cultural information
- Parent information nights for newcomers
- Schoolwide family events
- Field trips in the community
- PD opportunities for staff

So, what is most important for our newcomer students—if one could actually pin it down? I recently read the book *My Two Blankets*, by Irena Kobald and Freya Blackwood (2015), with my 12-year-old daughter. This is a story about the difficulties of being new and learning new ways of speaking and living. At the end, I asked her, “What is the most important thing here?” She said, “To learn English” (she's her mother's daughter). I said, “Making a friend.”¹

How to Learn English at School: A Sense of Belonging

- Access to translation
- Friends
- Participation in schoolwide events
- Learning in the classroom with English-speaking peers
- English-language-development support—ESL
- Reading instruction and practice
- Open door policy for parents and families

What Else Can Help? Plan a Parent Night at School

Some schools have developed a series of parent nights to share ideas about how to help students be successful in school (for example, one parent night focused on implementing effective home reading). Intercultural consultants are invited to help with language support. Community partners are also

invited. These events can be formal or informal. And the students are included!

In their article “Promoting Involvement of Recent Immigrant Families in Their Children’s Education,” Shari Golan and Dana Petersen (2002) present a conceptual framework or model for how teachers and immigrant parents and families can be trained and encouraged to work as partners to improve student performance. Some of their ideas are outlined below, but you can read the full article online.

Address parents’ direct needs

- Parents’ primary language
- Available child care
- Convenient meeting times

Make personal connections

- Learn parents’ names
- Extend personal invitations to attend
- Provide warm, individualized and nonjudgmental communication
- Respect parents’ feelings and concerns
- Pay attention to parents’ personal situations
- Show appreciation
- Provide parents with your contact information outside the class

Raise awareness and concern around student achievement and the need for parent involvement

- Their right to be involved in their children’s education
- Potential problems that may arise if they are not involved
- Potential benefits if they become involved

Establish a clear and common goal

Demystify how the school system works by providing basic information on school programs, policies and staff and on how to advocate effectively for one’s child

Suggest concrete behaviours parents can use to support their children’s academic success

- Establish a regular time and space for doing homework
- Have children view books or read daily
- Limit television viewing
- Have the necessary supplies available
- Model frequent reading

Create a sense of community and a peer support network encouraging parents to meet, learn each other’s names and stories, and establish friendships

Recommended Resources

I went to good old Teachers Pay Teachers (www.teacherspayteachers.com) and found some useful resources that I was able to download as soon as I paid for them (in US dollars):

- Word Cards Hello (in 50 languages) (\$1.50)
- Photo Flash Card Bundle (540 cards in 10 categories) (\$6.80)
- ESL Newcomer Introductions! (\$4.00)
- Newcomers Classroom Welcome Kit for International and ESL Students (\$3.00)

The following free resources are also good!

A Guide for Engaging ELL Families: Twenty Strategies for School Leaders

www.colorincolorado.org/sites/default/files/Engaging_ELL_Families_FINAL.pdf

New Moves: An Orientation Video for Newcomer Students

<http://settlement.org/ontario/education/elementary-and-secondary-school/help-your-child-succeed-in-school/new-moves-an-orientation-video-for-newcomer-students/>

I’m New Here: Classroom and Community Guide to Welcoming Immigrants

www.curiouscitydpw.com/2016/01/19/im-new-here-welcoming/

Teaching Refugees with Limited Formal Schooling

www.teachingrefugees.com

Resource Guide for Supporting Children with Refugee Experience

www.surrey.ca/files/Resource_Guide_-_Supporting_Children_with_Refugee_Experience.pdf

Caring for Syrian Refugee Children

http://cmascanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Supporting_Refugees/Caring%20for%20Syrian%20Refugee%20Children-final.pdf

So—don't you just hate these questions at the end?—

- What resonated with you?
- What will you incorporate immediately into your practice?
- What do you need to think about or get more information about?

Questions? Comments? Ideas about what's working? Let me know! Contact me at nancy.musica@shaw.ca.

Note

1. Want to see? You can view a reading of *My Two Blankets* at www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqnBRiTdZkM. Also watch the one at www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzE4dkbtyc0—perfect for this theme.

References

- Golan, S, and D Petersen. 2002. "Promoting Involvement of Recent Immigrant Families in Their Children's Education." www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/promoting-involvement-of-recent-immigrant-families-in-their-children-s-education (accessed March 15, 2017).
- Kobald, I, and F Blackwood (illus). 2015. *My Two Blankets*. Boston: HMH Books for Young Readers.

My Great Big China Adventure

by Lynn Farrugia



It all began many months ago, when one of my supervisors asked if I had a valid passport. Fortunately, I did, because I and a few of my colleagues had been invited to speak at the Canadian International School of Guangzhou in China. I was surprised,

honoured and, to be perfectly honest, a wee bit scared. You see, I had never travelled overseas (sure, I had been to Mexico and Hawaii, but those don't really count). I also had never been away from my children and husband that long, and I was going to miss my daughter's 21st birthday.

The Canadian International School (CIS) of Guangzhou is an Alberta Education–accredited K–12

school in southern China. A Chinese bilingual school associated with CIS and a new Arabic bilingual school are on the same campus.

CIS was implementing Alberta's K–12 ESL proficiency benchmarks and wanted support for its teachers, so the planning began. My supervisor, Marlene Hanson, spent time communicating with the teacher in China, Shannon MacLeod, who is currently on leave from Edmonton Public Schools, to organize the professional development sessions. What began as a school PD day for approximately 50 people morphed and grew as the weeks and months passed.

When we departed for China on November 6, 2016, the plan included having a day of observations in the school, as well as time to debrief and connect with the teachers and do a couple of presentations at the school the next day, including a parent evening. The final day was to be a conference at the amazing

hotel where we were staying. The morning of the conference was to include keynotes from Yilin Sun, past president of the TESOL International Association, and from my colleague Jayashree Ramaswami. I was to do a keynote, as well. The afternoon would involve breakout sessions from JJ Kennedy of Edmonton Public Schools, as well as Jayashree. I would present a couple of breakout sessions with Rosa Billota, a retired teacher from Edmonton Catholic Schools. By this time, the conference attendees had grown to include “kindergarten teachers” from associated schools that educate 2,300 two-and-a-half- to five-year-olds. That added up to approximately 300 participants!

Our long journey consisted of three plane trips over two days, and we arrived late at night in Guangzhou, a city of 13 million people, with another 11 million in the surrounding area. The next morning we hit the ground running, with a tour of the school campus and meeting with some of the faculty. We were also informed that the government had invited teachers from Chinese public schools in the area to attend the conference. That brought us up to a total of 600 participants!

The sessions were very well received. The teachers were hungry for professional development as it is rare for them to have access to this kind of learning. We received wonderful feedback from the

participants, and I am so very proud of the work we did to support these teachers.

On our final evening in Guangzhou, we attended a special event and fundraiser hosted by the owner of the CIS. Wow, what a night! Amazing food (including the chicken head), wonderful entertainment provided by children from many schools, an auction of extraordinary art, and performances by special artists and entertainers. Boy, did we feel out of place with all the ladies in Oscars-worthy ball gowns!

We were able to extend our stay in China to include some vacation time. We took the high-speed bullet train to the rural and very lovely and peaceful Yangshuo County. We spent four days there and had fun taking a cooking class; visiting a fascinating “wet market”; taking a bamboo raft ride down the river; and enjoying lovely walks, good food and rather questionable wine. The final part of our trip was three days in Hong Kong. Wow, busy place, lots of people, fabulous architecture and lots of shopping!

What did I learn while I was there? I learned that children are children no matter what part of the world they live in. I learned that I am far braver than I ever believed I could be. I also learned that I have a love-hate relationship with humidity. (My skin felt fabulous, but my clothes didn’t.) Most of all, though, I learned that I do not want to be away from my family for two weeks ever again.



Preservice Specialist Council Carousel

by Lynn Farrugia

On behalf of the ESLC, Lisa Etty and I attended the Preservice Specialist Council Carousel on Saturday, January 14, at Concordia University of Edmonton.

The specialist councils were invited to set up tables to promote their work and to encourage preservice teachers to sign up for a free membership to one specialist council of their choice. Preservice teachers attended this event at no cost and were able to choose two breakout sessions from a variety of sessions on pertinent topics. They were served a light breakfast and had time to visit the specialist council tables.

Our goal was to increase the ESLC's membership through this event and to share

important resources that may be of help to preservice teachers in their practicums. Our display included highly recommended teacher resources and multicultural literature featuring refugee and immigrant children and youth. We handed out the six brochures from the ESLC's Understanding ESL Learners series, our sticky notes and candy.

We also had door prizes: one free registration to our upcoming ESLC annual conference in November and some \$25 iTunes gift cards. The overall response from the students was gratitude and interest. Many expressed that they had noticed many ELLs during their classroom observations and that they wanted more information in order to support these students.

Upcoming ESLC Executive Retreat

by Diane Pham

The ESLC is in the second year of its strategic plan. We have four areas of focus: advocacy, creating partnerships, member engagement and professional development. In March, ESLC executive members will go on a retreat to plan and implement strategies to further support ESL teachers in Alberta.

The advocacy team has been diligent in gathering stories from teachers to share with the minister of education. These stories illustrate the challenges ESL teachers face as a result of the cuts in funding to ESL education.

Our creating partnerships team has looked at the idea of forming regionals or special interest groups, as well as connecting with other specialist councils and community agencies to provide joint PD opportunities.

The member engagement team has embarked on the digital journey of providing information and resources electronically to our members. The team has

also created a members' needs assessment survey to give members the opportunity to tell us what the ESLC could do for you in terms of your needs as an ESL educator. We will roll out this survey soon.

Our professional development team is reviewing current ESLC resources and is considering publishing a new resource for teachers. Since September 2015, the PD team has been working with the member engagement team to publish the blog on our website (www.eslcata.com). In addition, our conference team will be engaging in further discussion and planning sessions to provide you with the most innovative and current ESL PD opportunity possible.

We look forward to another retreat rich in discourse and the sharing of ideas and experiences in order to plan and implement ways in which we can further provide resources and services to ESLC members.

Conference 2016 Review

by Jana Fedun

The 2016 ESLC annual conference took place in Calgary on November 4 and 5 at the Courtyard Marriott Calgary Airport. Delegates from all corners of our province attended.

The conference featured three amazing keynote speakers: Elizabeth Coelho, who has had a long and distinguished career focused on English-language learners; Marichu Antonio, executive director of the Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary; and Emmanuel Jal, child soldier, acclaimed recording artist and peace ambassador.

Attendees agreed that the varied breakout sessions covered many practical and useful topics in the area of English-language learners. New this year were breakout Cultural Connections sessions, which promoted greater understanding of the Sudanese, Vietnamese, Filipino and Syrian cultures. Those in

attendance at the Friday social had the opportunity to reconnect with old friends and make new ones and to learn Bollywood dance moves.

Overall, attendees agreed that the conference was excellent and topical and that it left them feeling inspired, informed, and ready to bring new knowledge and strategies into the classroom.

The 2017 conference committee is hard at work planning for the upcoming conference in November. Please check the ESLC website (www.eslcata.com) for conference information.

On behalf of the conference committee, I would like to thank those who attended our 2016 conference. Your support for our council and the work we do for the English-language learners in our schools and classrooms is sincerely appreciated.



Elizabeth Coelho (centre)



Emmanuel Jal (centre)

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Supporting Personalized Learning for ELLs in the CBE

by Kathy Andrews

I would like to introduce myself as your member at large for Calgary Public. I am an assistant principal at David Thompson School, in Calgary, and I am interested in supporting our membership through meaningful professional learning.

In addition to sitting on the ESLC executive, I sit on the Professional Development Committee of the Calgary Public Teachers Local No 38. Approximately 25 per cent of the students in the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) are ELLs in the process of acquiring English as an additional language.

The language and academic development of ELLs in the CBE is supported through a wide range of programming options and personalized instructional strategies. These depend on students' backgrounds, grade levels and language proficiency levels.

Learning Services offers significant support for ELLs. 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 ELL programming is also available through requests to the area learning teams. ELL strategists and specialists are part of these teams and work toward building teacher capacity in working with ELLs.

Other supports include admissions, assessment and settlement services (such as the In-School Settlement Program provided by the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth), interpreter services, and diversity and learning support advisors—all available through the Kingsland Centre.

Recently, my school received support through Learning Services by being involved in a dual-language project through the University of Calgary.¹ The project had far-reaching and impactful results. Our students felt a sense of pride in knowing another language and felt comfortable sharing their linguistic skills with each other and with community members. Our parent community has made a further investment in dual-language books to support our ELL students, as well as students who are interested in learning a new language. These efforts have started to change the mindset in our school—the ability to speak languages other than English is seen as an asset!

If you have PD ideas that are of interest to you, please feel free to contact me at kjandrews@shaw.ca.

Note

1. For more information about the project, see Chris Nelson's Calgary Herald article at <http://calgaryherald.com/%20news/local-news/nelson-freedom-is-the-same-in-any-language> (accessed March 16, 2017).

Reports from Members at Large

Calgary Public

by Kathy Andrews

Here's What

Currently, 25 per cent of students in the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) are identified as ELLs. The language and academic development of ELLs in the CBE is supported through a wide range of programming options and personalized instructional strategies, depending on students' backgrounds, grade levels and language proficiency levels.

A significant support for ELLs is 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.

Alberta's K–12 ESL proficiency benchmarks (www.learnalberta.ca/content/eslapb/) continue to be used to support programming for ELL students and to assess English-language development. Schools are expected to report on ELL students' progress twice a year in relation to these benchmarks.

So What?

As the ELL population continues to grow, so will the CBE's response to the diverse needs of immigrant families and youth. This has been highlighted as the CBE has welcomed over 400 Syrian students to its schools.

One way these students can be supported is through diversity and learning support advisors (DLSAs). DLSAs provide culturally and linguistically appropriate professional services and supports to CBE staff, students and families. They work with schools to build an understanding of

students' strengths and abilities and to acknowledge students' learning experiences and differences, which contributes to the CBE becoming a culturally competent and inclusive learning organization.

DLSAs collaborate with CBE staff and culturally and linguistically diverse students and families to

- support schools in building cultural capacity and inclusive practices;
- assist students' integration and success in the CBE;
- support students' and families' knowledge about the CBE, its schools, and its programs and services;
- engage and provide direct services to culturally and linguistically diverse students and families;
- support school principals and directors with mediation and conflict resolution;
- advise families about the informed consent process;
- provide consultative support to schools;
- participate in school and area learning teams;
- support families in becoming active learning partners with schools;
- infuse a diverse perspective about learning;
- initiate and support consented referrals to community agencies;
- advocate for equitable access and supports; and
- liaise with key community and religious leaders.

Now What?

The emphasis will continue to be on developing teachers' competencies to support ELLs in inclusive settings. Teachers continue to need support in developing lessons that include both content and language objectives. In addition, a continued focus at the CBE has been on successful high school completion of ELLs through the high school redesign initiatives.

Central

by Teresa Borchers

Understanding the Filipino Culture and Learner

Red Deer Catholic Schools continues to welcome families from around the world, including the Philippines. Approximately 50 per cent of our English-language learners were born in the Philippines or are Canadian-born but from families that speak a dialect of the Philippines in their home.

To assist our schools in better understanding the Filipino culture and learners, our division has worked collaboratively with the Central Alberta Refugee Effort (CARE) to develop PD. We have explored the following questions together:

- What should everyone know about the Filipino culture, traditions and beliefs?
- How is the education system in the Philippines similar to and different from that of Canada?
- What are the learning behaviours and attitudes of students in the Philippines?
- What are the similarities and differences between the Tagalog and the English languages?
- What supports helped you learn English? What made learning English challenging?

The following are the main points we learned from this project:

- Filipino families have close family ties and respect for their elders.
- Education is deemed very important in the Philippines.
- Parents are actively involved in their children's education in the Philippines.
- Academic competition (such as quizzes and exams) is a major part of school life in the Philippines.
- Children having little or no homework in Canada can be difficult for Filipino parents to understand, and it makes it difficult for families to support their children in learning English at home.
- Some families may not fully understand the use of technology in Canadian schools (such as the need for headphones or a device).
- Families want to know how they can be involved in their children's education in Canada.
- Families prefer a personal conversation or a personal invitation to parent-teacher interviews.
- The Tagalog language is not gender-specific, and nouns do not need to agree with the verb (for example, "He listens to music" is "He listen to music").

We are grateful to CARE for supporting our school division in learning more about the Filipino culture and learners and for continuing to offer this PD in schools, as well as at the 2017 ESLC annual conference in November.

Cross-Cultural Interpretations of the Teacher Role in “Learning Through Play” Pedagogy

by Christine Massing

Informed by constructivist views of teaching, learning through play is one of the primary pedagogical approaches used in North American early childhood classrooms. Such an approach generally assumes that the child directs play and exploration by choosing materials, themes and partners, while the teacher’s role varies from playing alongside the children and asking open-ended questions to simply observing them and documenting their learning. However, in many cultural contexts, learning and play are quite separate; play is to be free and unsupervised, while learning is viewed as teacher directed and occurring in school contexts. This disjuncture can potentially lead to conflicts between teachers who embrace play-based approaches and culturally diverse families who bring different ideas about the relationship between play and learning. Using data from a study of East African immigrant/refugee women studying in an early childhood teacher education program, this article focuses on the students’ interpretations of learning through play in Canadian early childhood education settings in relation to their own experiences in their countries of origin. The importance of cultural and religious values, such as respect for one’s elders, undergirded their beliefs about the central role of the adult in structuring and directing learning.

Theoretical Framework

The study is framed by sociocultural theory, informed by the work of Vygotsky (1978), which is premised on the assumption that children develop and learn through active engagement with others in specific contexts (such as home, school and community). Expert peers or adults guide children in gaining competence in the skills, practices and knowledges that are valued in those contexts. Socialization patterns thus differ depending on cultural and familial values, beliefs and priorities in child rearing, and may shift or be

altered depending on the context of development (Grusec and Davidov 2010; Heath 1983; Rogoff et al 1993; Super and Harkness 1986). In dominant Western contexts, Kağıtçıbaşı (2007) explains, young children are often socialized for cognitive competence; therefore, abstract reasoning, extensive verbalization, and “school-like” literacy and numeracy skills are actively promoted to ensure school success. Adults are more likely to play with children or engage in face-to-face verbal conversations or interactions to enhance these skills (Haight, Parke and Black 1997; Rogoff 1990). In contrast, cultures that prioritize social competence emphasize the development of respect, obedience, responsibility and social skills (Kağıtçıbaşı 2007). Accordingly, adults might reinforce such values by maintaining more physical distance from children, by not playing with them beyond infancy and by directing their behaviour. In general, Rogoff (1990) argues that adults structure children’s socializing experiences by making arrangements for their activities, toys or play materials, and play or other interactional partners that are reflective of their cultural or familial goals. While various scholars have studied aspects of such cross-cultural differences, the cultural and religious values influencing these socialization patterns are an underresearched topic (Livas-Dlott et al 2010), particularly in African immigrant and refugee groups. For the immigrant/refugee women who participated in this study, the disjuncture between these two sets of socialization goals was evidenced by their perspectives on the role of the adult during learning through play in the Canadian context.

Methodology

The primary site for the research was a single class in an early childhood program in a community college in a midsized city in western Canada. I collected data for at least two or three full days a week

over three semesters of study in the college, the community and early childhood field placement sites. Qualitative data were collected in the form of observational field notes, interviews, focus groups, informal conversations, spatial maps, document collection and analytic memos. Four Canadian instructors and 20 first-generation immigrant/refugee students consented to the research. I focus here on the participants from Africa (Sudan, Somalia, Congo and Ethiopia), all but one of whom were Muslim. I analyzed the data inductively by chunking the data into categories, developing a coding framework, engaging in focused coding of the data and completing a pattern-level analysis to identify themes. These analyses elucidated the participants' various experiences and perspectives on play and learning.

Findings

Play “Back Home”

The participants recalled their childhood play as free and largely unsupervised by adults, involving natural or repurposed materials, and occurring in outdoor environments. Although many participants had played with dolls, more frequently they had used natural materials, such as leaves and sticks, as Ameena explained: “Our toys are outside. . . . We make things together, we create together. Children make their own toys. Yeah, natural” (focus group). Such materials were used in freely chosen, child-directed forms of play, such as sociodramatic play (playing house), explorations of the environment or games with rules (skipping and hopscotch).

Once children could walk independently, the participants explained, they would play outdoors with other children. As Ameena recalled, “Mostly we played outside with other children, with the neighbours. It’s not like here. They just send you outside. . . . We play outside, we enjoy and then we come back, like, nighttime” (interview). Numerous participants explained that parents gave the older children some instructions, and they then ensured that the younger ones respected those strictures. Regardless of the age difference between siblings, Fatima stated, “You have to respect them—or anybody who’s older than you.” Geena commented that adults rarely supervised or intervened in their play, but “if you make any mistake, your brother or

sister or neighbours will tell [the parents]” (focus group). Beyond infancy, adults did not act as children’s play partners; as Katrina emphasized, “You cannot see the woman of the house, or the adult of the house, go and sit in the street and play [with the children]” (focus group).

Learning “Back Home”

Coming from countries where child care or preschool programs were either nonexistent or highly uncommon, the participants associated learning solely with the context of formal schooling. One participant began school in kindergarten, while the others, all Muslim, attended *madrassa*, or religious school, starting at age four or five, and then went to school the following year. Even though the participants came from fairly affluent families, most remembered having only paper, pencils and the occasional book in their early years classrooms. Bijou declared, “It’s just in our minds and we write it down. No materials” (interview). Similarly, Christa confirmed that “in Africa they still don’t use technology in school. In your head is the answer to everything” (focus group). The few puzzles and games they had at Geena’s private preschool were permitted for use only “in the hall area,” not the classroom, thus clearly demarcating the different contexts for play and for learning (interview). Ameena emphatically stated that “our toys were outside. . . . You play outside” (interview).

In their schooling, the teacher employed a didactic approach whereby she or he transmitted information to the children, which the children were then responsible for copying and repeating over and over until memorized. Fatima further explained, “You have homework. You read all evening and then in the morning when you go [to school] you don’t look at the writing. He takes one part and you have to say it by heart” (interview). Teachers were positioned as authorities in their school experiences, as described by Bijou: “The teacher makes the rules. He asks the questions and you only have the right to talk when he asks you a question. . . . They are in control of everything” (focus group). Young children began learning these rules, along with the Koran and Arabic language, in the *madrassa*. Obeying the teacher was strictly enforced, often through physical punishment. Therefore, the respect for elders taught within the home extended into the school, as Fatima affirmed:

“We teach the children your teacher is your second mother, like respect” (focus group). Asmaa added that in school young children are “learning the rules. They teach you how to respect the older people” (focus group). Accordingly, school-based learning was structured in such a way as to reinforce the teaching of the “same values” as in the home (interview, Geena).

Tensions Around Learning Through Play

Given the separation between play and learning in the participants’ own experiences, when they were introduced to learning through play as a pedagogical approach in Canadian settings, various tensions became evident around the context, interactional patterns, materials and curriculum content. However, the adult role was the overarching area of dissonance because, in their experiences, children were not seen to learn important cultural and religious values, such as respect, when the adult shifted from the role of a director to that of a facilitator or play partner.

First of all, the participants viewed play and learning as occurring in distinct contexts: play happens outdoors and learning indoors. Correspondingly, they perceived indoor spaces as domains where the teacher exerted authority and children obeyed, which was at odds with their observations of children in Canadian classrooms, who directed their own activities. It should be noted that even during the participants’ seemingly free and unstructured playtime back home, children were expected to follow the directions of their older siblings, who were acting under the authority of the parents. These experiences thus introduced the value of respect for one’s elders in order to prepare children for the *madrassa* and formal schooling, wherein the structure was even more explicitly designed to reinforce such beliefs.

The hierarchical positioning of adults as authority figures back home was bolstered by maintaining distance from children, which diverged from the normative interactional patterns in Canadian early childhood education sites, where the teachers were at the child’s level. As Ameena explained, “We never sit with the children face to face. We don’t talk that much” (interview). To show respect, Geena added, “If children talk to older people, no eye contact” (focus group). Coming from contexts where “a quiet child is a good child” (focus group), the participants felt that

Canadian teachers and children alike “talk too much.” The participants were similarly unaccustomed to asking children open-ended questions to understand or extend their understanding of concepts in play, because the adults in their lives had mainly asked closed-ended questions designed to manage their behaviour (for example, “What are you doing?”) or test their knowledge (for example, “What is this?”).

In addition, since the participants had used a very limited array of materials in their play and schooling back home, many of the materials in early childhood sites were seen as distracting and superfluous, serving only to diminish the positioning of the teacher as the main transmitter of knowledge. Some participants, like Christa, were especially dismissive of how materials are used to support constructivist approaches: “In Canada, children learn about toys. . . . In Africa, there are no puzzles like in Canada. Children know how to read. They know how to count. No puzzles. They learn from the teacher” (focus group). Unsurprisingly, when participants saw teachers assuming an observer or facilitator role, they interpreted play with toys as a vehicle for learning about the materials themselves rather than for appropriating concepts.

Furthermore, the participants believed that learning literacy and numeracy skills was the central task of early schooling, but they were not convinced that children could construct these understandings without direct teaching. As other studies (such as Tobin, Arzubiaga and Adair 2013) have confirmed, this prioritization of academic skills is especially common among immigrant families. Geena explained,

The basic things like reading, story time, is very important. I don’t know why they think play is important [in Canada]. If we are learning ABCs, we have to sit in a desk, not like here, playing and learning ABCs. Like, we had to sit and I had a pencil and tried to write ABC or 123. . . . No playing. You can’t play while you are learning. If you want to play, you play outside. (interview)

Since the participants perceived the teacher to be the sole conduit through which children learned concepts in school, they felt concerned when children were simply left to, as Geena stated, “do things by themselves” (focus group). They maintained that such a shift in the teacher role was not necessarily an efficacious means of teaching academic skills in the early years.

Discussion and Implications

Overall, these participants' own experiences with play and schooling were inscribed with specific cultural and religious values that resonated with the pattern of socializing for social competence (that is, respect for elders and obedience). These socialization goals were in conflict with the goal of socializing for cognitive competence in Canadian early childhood education settings in which the adult assumed a more indirect teaching role, conversing and playing with the children. While Pels (2003) found that Moroccan newcomer parents prioritized their children's academic achievement slightly above values such as respect and obedience, the findings in this study suggest that these participants believed that, in the early years, children must first learn values and then could be introduced to academic skills. Research with newcomer families has demonstrated that parents' beliefs and priorities shift over time, particularly if they think that the practices used in early schooling are designed to support their child's success in the new context (Isik-Ercan 2010; Song and Wang 2006; Tobin, Arzubigi and Adair 2013). Certainly, the participants in this study did come to appreciate play-based learning and incorporated some new approaches into their own practice, though they had difficulty shifting fully from a director role to that of a facilitator.

The participants strongly believed that the role of the adult is critical in establishing a context for academic learning. As Asmaa asserted, "They have to learn behaviour, and we teach them what is good and what is bad" (focus group). Consistent with other studies with different immigrant groups (Lahman and Park 2004; Li 2001; Pels 2003; Vandenbroeck, Roets and Snoeck 2009), then, they found Canadian classrooms to be quite permissive and worried that the relative freedom children enjoyed would cause them to become disrespectful. Geena lamented that "the children here know everything is optional" (interview). Even though children develop prosocial skills through their play (Colliver 2016), such as getting along with others and learning to respect others (older and younger), differing cultural interpretations of respect, coupled with the reduced authority of the adult, were seen to compromise such teachings in the Canadian context. Pedagogical documentation may be one

means of making the teaching and learning of values (that is, character education), such as respect, more visible to families. However, it is important to note that cross-cultural studies indicate that a directive or controlling parenting style does not necessarily mean that parents lack warmth and, consequently, it can have a positive impact on the child's development and learning outcomes (Grusec and Davidov 2010; Kağitçibaşı 2007; Kermani and Brenner 2000).

When immigrant and refugee children experience a mismatch between the socialization goals in the home and in the school, it can lead to challenges in their adjustment processes (Ali 2008; Kağitçibaşı 2007). While teachers cannot reproduce the role of the adult as conceived by these participants, eliciting familial socialization goals and practices through sustained conversations, home visits or informal events allows teachers to observe families in order to better understand and affirm home knowledges (González, Moll and Amanti 2005; López, Scribner and Mahitivanichcha 2001). Such strategies may allow teachers to employ what Rogoff (1990) refers to as "bridging"—that is, using their knowledges as a familiar base from which new ways of teaching and learning can be understood and enacted. Furthermore, Bodrova, Germeroth and Leong (2013) posit that it is important to find a balance between overly structured academic programs and play-based programs in which the teacher simply provides time, space and materials and then follows the child's lead. Scaffolding children's play to extend their learning is one means of addressing this dilemma (Bodrova 2008). Some possible strategies might include pointing out relevant features of the task (or play), controlling the child's frustration, demonstration or modelling, helping the child use toys and props symbolically, developing the child's understandings of various scenarios and roles, and maintaining the child's motivation and interest (Bodrova 2008; Wood, Bruner and Ross 1976). As Kermani and Brenner (2000) found, culturally diverse children may respond better to scaffolding strategies that are more aligned with their cultural values and socialization patterns, such as providing instructional directives, modelling and correction. Sensitive intervention on the part of the teacher, then, can serve to reassure families that the teacher is directly

involved in learning through play and that the children are not left to learn by themselves.

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