



English as a Second Language Council

of The Alberta Teachers' Association

Accent

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President's Message

by Dianne Leong-Fortier



Welcome to the summer issue of *Accent*. We hope the professional articles in this issue will inspire you, just as we hope the events that the English as a Second Language Council (ESLC) offered this past year inspired and informed you.

The ESLC is empowered by its members and the dedication of teachers and leaders who advocate for the needs of K–12 teachers who teach English language learners (ELLs). By establishing best practices and providing professional development through an annual conference

and regional PD events, the ESLC strives to nurture professional communities of practice, acknowledge current research in language acquisition development, and promote policy that adequately supports program development to meet the diverse cultural and linguistic needs of ESL students.

As ESLC president, I look forward to working with the newly elected and appointed members of the 2018 executive committee, which includes representatives from the north, south and central regions of the province. The ESLC is pleased to support the recent formation of the Alberta Colony Educators (ACE) special interest group (SIG), inaugurated in January 2018.

The executive committee has exciting work in the next few months and recently met in Canmore this past April at our strategic planning retreat to improve and expand our four targeted focus areas: advocacy, creating partnerships, member engagement/awareness and professional development. To learn more, read the specific

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article in this issue about the retreat. Additionally, the ESLC's successful application for an ATA special projects creative grant supports subcommittee work on the development and publication of a new pamphlet focused on the topic of supporting refugee and limited formal schooling learners. This will complement our previously published Understanding ESL Learners series pamphlets.

I recently attended the TESOL International Convention and English Language Expo in Chicago, Illinois, in March 2018. It was truly a vibrant and inspiring global conference with over 6,000 delegates including ESL educators and leaders from across the globe at all levels from K–12, postsecondary and nonprofit organizations. Please see the article in this issue about this conference entitled “TESOL International Convention and English Language Expo.”

How do we build our networks and bridges to support ESL teachers and students in Alberta? We build a culture of collaboration and mentorship by connecting with colleagues who teach ESL students in mainstream and sheltered classrooms—supporting and learning from one another. Furthermore, it is especially important to invite preservice and beginning teachers to join the ESLC early in their career development, thus building a culture of mentorship. “The profession needs robust visions of PD for English learner-focused mentoring of new teachers in order to address the demographic imperative of our increasingly diverse student populations” (Achinstein et al 2012). I encourage members to become involved in various ways to strengthen and grow our communities of practice. Be empowered and supported—invite colleagues to join the ESLC, contribute to the council, attend regional PD events and experience the benefits of membership in the ESLC. Go to www.eslcata.com to learn more about bursaries, awards, PD opportunities and

information about conference 2018 to be held in Edmonton, November 2–3.

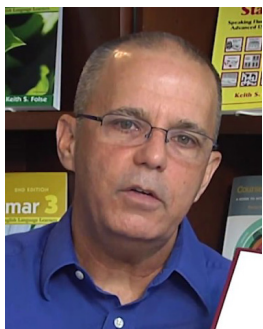
I would like to thank Diane Pham, our past president, for her tenacious spirit, hard work and leadership during the past two years. I would personally like to say a huge thank you to Diane Pham and Jan Fedun, conference 2017 cochairs. The conference, which was held in Lake Louise in November, was well attended due to a successful preconference event and a roster of excellent keynotes and speakers. Many new ESLC members and educators attended from across the province, which is reflective of our mission statement—Alberta teachers across the province want to feel supported and inspired by best practice exemplars and language acquisition models. Teachers need professional development that supports collaboration and communities of practice, and that advocates for teachers of students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds within a climate of open communication and inquiry.

We look forward to conference 2018 to be held at the Chateau Lacombe Hotel in Edmonton November 2–3. We are pleased and honoured to have keynote speaker Keith Folse, who taught ESL/EFL for 38 years in the US, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Kuwait and Japan. He has written 68 books on vocabulary, reading, speaking, writing, grammar and listening. Finally, we look forward to building our networks across the province, helping to connect rural and urban teachers to support one another. We hope to see you in Edmonton November 2–3. Save the date!

Reference

Achinstein, B, S O'Hara, R Pritchard and J Zwiers. 2012. “Strategic Mentoring for New Teachers of English Learners.” *Language Magazine: Improving Literacy and Communication*, June. www.languagemagazine.com/strategic-mentoring/# (accessed May 2, 2018).

Empowering Learners: Upping Our Game and Inspiring Futures



KEYNOTE AND FEATURE BREAKOUT

TESOL Professor Keith Folse

(Author of 68 books and taught ESL in the US, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Malaysia and Japan)

LOCATION

Chateau Lacombe, Edmonton

NOVEMBER 2–3, 2018

Early Bird Rate \$280 by June 30, 2018
\$300 after June 30, 2018

GROUP DISCOUNT AVAILABLE

For five or more staff members (contact
Nancy Musica, nancy.musica@shaw.ca)

HOTEL DISCOUNT

Special conference ATA room rate at
Chateau Lacombe (includes parking)

Register and stay tuned for updates at
www.eslcata.com/conference.html

Conference 2018

Keynote Speaker Keith Folse

by Nancy Musica



I am just going to throw it out there. There was a time in my life when I would not admit to being a grammar gal. Now, and maybe this is a positive aspect to life experience, I embrace it. Yes, I am excited about a grammar book! And it's a big thick one that's heavy to lug around.

Sure I have others at home (many never cracked), but this one is different and worth buying, reading and hefting. It's practical, answers questions I didn't even know I had, and is full of fun facts about the English language, as well as info on our students' languages and why they make grammar errors in English! If you are new to teaching ESL, *Keys to Teaching Grammar to English Language Learners: A Practical Handbook* (2016), by Keith Folse, might be a lifesaver!

Here are a few enticing bits from the book:

- Only one in six nouns that end with plural *s* (a grammar marker) are actually pronounced with the *s* sound (the most common pronunciation is *z*)!
- We should consider four articles in English: *a*, *an*, *the* and *no article* or when to omit.
- What's the difference between "I like to read" and "I like reading"?
- Why do we say, "more expensive" and not "more cheap"?
- When can you feel badly? Or can you?
- Have you thought of the difference between "I have a few good friends" and "I have few good friends"?

In light of tracking down the author, Keith Folse, and inviting him as a 2018 Conference keynote speaker, I thought I'd share a little about the book and some work some Edmonton Public teachers are doing. *The Keys to Teaching Grammar to English Language Learners: A Practical Handbook* is not an exhaustive reference book about ELL grammar.

Written for classroom teachers (K–12, ESL, EFL), it teaches the most common ELL grammar points in an accessible way through real ELL errors. Folse defines grammar as "the systematic patterns of any language" (p 3).

Chapter 1. An Introduction to Grammar for English Language Learners

- Explains the differences between ELL grammar and traditional grammar
- Includes quizzes and opportunities for some practice and points out that, yes, we teachers can spot the grammar errors, but can we explain why they are errors and teach how to correct them?

Chapter 2. Basic English Grammar: Usage and Terminology Terms

- Common grammar errors by native speakers
- Eight parts of speech
- Basic grammar labels for sentence structure
- Why the 12 English verb tenses matter

Chapter 3. 16 Keys to ESL Grammar

These are the most common problematic areas for ELLs. Each key includes typical ESL errors, an accessible grammar explanation, vocabulary information, a native language interference chart and ideas for teaching the grammar point. So what are the 16 keys? I bet you can guess at least half of these!

- Four on verb tense (to be, present, past, future)
- Four more verb-related (infinitives and gerunds, phrasal verbs, modals, passive voice)
- Count and noncount nouns
- Prepositions
- Articles
- Pronunciation of *-s* and *-ed*
- Adjective clauses and reductions
- Word forms
- Conditionals and wish
- Negating (added in the 2016 edition)

Chapter 4. Being in the Hot Seat: Answering Unexpected Questions

- Twenty easy-to-read common hot seat questions ELLs ask and the answers! We've all been there—trying to explain something about the English language that just doesn't seem to make sense! These questions and answers will help.

Chapter 5. Specific Techniques for Teaching ESL Grammar

- Be armed with adequate knowledge about ESL grammar
- Consider your mindset on teaching grammar
- Improvise
- Twenty-five techniques for presenting, explaining, practising and assessing grammar

Appendices

- Five sections that are practical for reference and practice.

Application: The Collaboration Group— aka Grammar Groupies

In the NCCS (North Central Catchment Schools) within Edmonton Public Schools, teachers and staff from 21 schools are asked to self-organize into collaboration groups and choose a specific topic to explore over the year. The groups, around 75 of them, meet about six times over the school year. There are various opportunities and methods to share the learning, discoveries and results with colleagues. Collaborators include teachers (from pre-K to 12), EAs, APs and library technicians.

As you may have guessed, a collaboration group was formed with FFOG (fellow fans of grammar) to study Folse's book on grammar keys. Together this year we have worked through some keys, shared some applications—teaching ideas we've tried with students (including elementary, junior high and high school) and some key visuals, charts and notes. It turns out the English language is chock full of rules and there are (fun) ways to teach them. The book has been instrumental in helping us understand the most common errors ELLs make and why. Add in seven creative teachers and you have some action research moving into classrooms, as well as some newly created and shared resources.

Looking for your grammar people? Thinking of forming a book club to help you into some

educational reading? Or, and you're not alone, trying to figure out why your students make the errors that they do? And where to start? This might be your book!

This book can shed light on some questions:

- We know ESL students tend to make errors that native English speakers don't—why is that and which errors should we pay attention to and when?
- Do errors differ based on first language? Why?
- Does knowing aspects about my students' first language help me to teach them?
- Are there some rules or ways to shortcut the information?
- How do I teach this in a meaningful way and get it to stick?

Comments from the Group

It's a go-to book for me—like the canon of English. I can rely on it to make sure I'm teaching my students correct grammar—a real security. Step by step, it's helpful for lessons and discussion: the how-tos!

The Division II students eat this up and say things like, "It's kind of cool to learn English!" One said, "I'm really smart" because he found some things he could actually do!

—Lynn Merrell, Florence Hallock School

What I really like is that it explains things that I know naturally, but I don't think I know how to explain, like when to use "on" and "at." It was there in the book (Key 6 Prepositions).

I use it when I am helping the students with their writing and moving them toward self-editing.

I'm planning to create some games to practise some of the grammar keys with my Grade 2s!

—Andrea White, Glengarry School

I found the keys useful for designing a summative assignment with a basic understanding of the passive tense and expanding on to how that can change the tone of the sentence. This brought us to the assessment assignment, where students were creating a passive active tense poem.

—Janina Strudwick, Queen Elizabeth High School

The information in Folse's grammar book and our group's work has been an invaluable look at how to improve our ELLs' use of the English language.

—Bette Yelich, Queen Elizabeth High School

Warning: Grammar Can Be Painful

Below are some tips:

- Present in an authentic context.
- Provide supportive, corrective feedback.
- Consider students' level of proficiency.
- Provide time to hear, read and practise.
- Make it fun!

More Folse Fun Facts

- Yes, the ATA library has a copy of *Keys to Teaching Grammar to English Language Learners: A Practical Handbook*.
- Keith just published a new book in March 2018 entitled *The Grammar Answer Key: Short Explanations to 100 ESL Questions*.
- I would highly recommend another engaging book by Folse that I am using it in my work daily: *Vocabulary Myths: Applying Second Language Research to Classroom Teaching*, 2004.
- Attend the 2018 Conference in Edmonton (November 2–3) and meet and greet author Keith Folse, our keynote speaker!

Keep in touch with the
English as a Second
Language Council



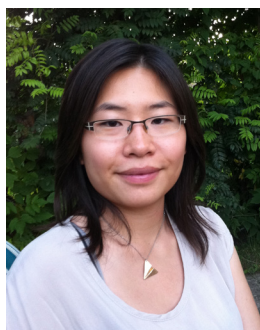
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Editor's Message and Those ESL Benchmarks!

by Annie Fung



Happy spring! At the time of writing, there's still snow on the ground, but we can be optimistic. Instead of being depressed by the snow and ice, I am actually quite happy with the record number of article submissions to this issue of *Accent*! Thank you very

much to those of you who have submitted your work to share with other dedicated educators in Alberta! It is always humbling and fascinating to learn about others' work with ELLs no matter what grade or classroom setting. I was particularly drawn this time to Keith Folse's work with grammar as discussed by our PD director north, Nancy Musica, and Lisa Smith's article on creating a literacy block for students. As a fellow grammar geek, I am very thankful that Nancy has successfully arranged for Keith Folse to visit us as our keynote speaker for the ESLC conference in November in Edmonton. Nancy is correct in that Keith Folse's book is a tad on the heavy side, but I find the layout to be digestible and his explanations extremely helpful in explaining certain grammar points to my students. Nancy's article as well as all of the others in *Accent* are pleasurable and educational to read!

Calgary MAL Lisa Smith also mentioned using a literacy block to assist students with reading as well as a time to assess students based on Alberta Education's ESL benchmarks. We are coming to the end of the school year soon, but I know your brains are never far away from teaching and assessing students, so allow me to talk to you about these ESL benchmarks. No—don't skip the page! Some of you may find ESL benchmarks a bit dry and think they are just tools for assessment and funding, but Alberta Education and fellow colleagues have worked hard to make the benchmarks more accessible and user-friendly.

By making time to work with the benchmarks, I contend that they can be powerful in helping students and their parents to understand second language acquisition and how teachers will assess their language skills as well as how the document can be used for self-assessment.

Many years ago I remember encouraging my principal to bite the bullet and pilot the usage of the ESL benchmarks at our school when the document just came out. Of course, it was tough at first to become familiar with the document, but if we treat it as a useful tool, a useful tool it can become. This is also my attitude when I speak to students about being assessed under the ESL benchmarks and second language acquisition. I firmly believe that ESL students, even if they are beginners, should be taught at least a little about second language acquisition and how the ESL benchmarks work for various reasons. First, from personal experience as an ESL learner and teacher, parents and students often have certain unrealistic expectations about how much time it would take for students to reach a native-like proficiency at their new Canadian schools. Consequently, the families may end up dealing with unnecessary stress related to schooling. Second, providing a clear roadmap for students in terms of helping them understand that language learning takes time and develops in a spectrum, have alleviated a great deal of stress for the students and their parents as well as for me. Not everyone likes to hear that it may take an ELL over seven years to reach native-like proficiency in English (Collier 1995; Cummins 1981). Now that that cat is out of the bag, it has been easier to help direct my students' attention to focusing on what they can do to move ahead with their language learning. Third, because the students were educated and encouraged to use terms such as *academic* and *subject-specific vocabulary* or *fluency*, they slowly became more confident when discussing their language development with me. Furthermore, we all agreed that we are more on the same page when we have such discussions because we are using similar lingo.

Of course, the positive results I've seen are due to a lot of preparation on my part and support from my administration. From taking extra professional development on the ESL benchmarks and student assessment and organizing parent–student ESL information nights, to modifying school projects to align better with the benchmarks themselves, the work was tedious at times but also challenging and satisfying to see the results. Obviously, everyone may have different opinions on the usefulness of the ESL benchmarks during this process, but my experiences overall were quite positive. Please check out the sample of activities and resources below that may inspire you to do something more with those benchmarks. I would love to hear your feedback!

Don't Forget to Network, Network and Network!

Because the level of support for classroom teachers with ELLs varies between school districts in Alberta and for smaller school boards, it may be harder to obtain regular support for ESL teaching and benchmarking. Reach out to each other within the board and across the province through ESLC, Alberta Education or other means. Even though I am fortunate to be in a larger school board, I have found ample extra support from my colleagues provincially and beyond.

Help Students and Parents to Understand ESL

Other than enlisting the wonderful help of your consultants and colleagues, you can help yourselves and your students. You do not need a PhD in ESL to help students and their families understand a little about second language acquisition and to demystify those ESL benchmarks! Much of the background information from the ESL benchmarks documents themselves would more than suffice. Remember, power is knowledge!

Topics and URLs to browse while researching or refreshing your learning on ESL learning and teaching:

- Understanding the Acquisition of English as an Additional Language
www.learnalberta.ca/content/eslapb/understanding_the_acquisition_factors.html
- Encouraging the Use of Home Languages

www.learnalberta.ca/content/eslapb/encouraging_use_of_home_languages.html

- New to Alberta's Schools
www.learnalberta.ca/content/mychildsllearning/parenttipsheets.html

What topics should I cover?

In the PowerPoint that I have used and modified over the years that I share with my students at the beginning of the year and at parent information sessions (if possible, try to arrange for a few language interpreters to help welcome and assist the families), I've found it helpful to lead discussions on the following topics:

- What are some common scenarios for newcomers (for example, stress with learning new cultures and languages, looking for jobs, high expectations for students to master English quickly)?
- What is ESL? What are the four language skills?
- How long does it take to reach native-like proficiency? (Collier 1995; Cummins 1981)
- BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills)/CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) (Cummins 1989) and iceberg (Hanley 1999)
- ESL benchmarks (What are they? How many levels are there?)
- How will a student be assessed at school?
- How can parents help children study at home? (Provide resources about local homework clubs and language practice websites.) Encourage families to use their home languages and explain why.

Tour of ESL Benchmarks Website at Alberta Education

Depending on your preference and your student demographic, you may want to go further with guiding your students to explore the ESL benchmarks online.

After the initial reading and writing assessments that I do at the beginning of the year, I would begin talking to students about second language acquisition and the ESL benchmarks followed by an exploration of the website itself so that students know they can look at these documents for themselves with their parents or with someone's help. Part of my intention is to help students understand there is transparency with learning and it is wonderful for them to ask questions.

Below are some activities that I do using the website, and these are largely modified from participating in workshops by Alberta Education, my school district and so on:

- Speaking and listening. Discuss the ESL benchmarks for speaking and listening as a class. Have students view speaking videos (hide the levels listed!) and lead a discussion on what language markers they notice and then discuss in small groups what ESL benchmark level the student speaker is in the video. These videos can be revisited by students and teachers from time to time to explore a variety of topics or for self-assessment. If anything, by referring and using the benchmarks to build my course materials and teaching, the skills that need to be taught and practised are always at the forefront.
- Reading and writing. Discuss the ESL benchmarks for reading and writing as a class. In small groups, have students examine writing samples provided on the website (again, with the levels hidden) with question prompts to guide their discussion (for example, What types of words are used? What do you notice about the mechanics and grammar?). You'd be amazed at how much your students may know about grammar during these discussions. Even if they didn't know the terms, they may be able to identify many mistakes in the samples. This exercise challenges students to become "teachers" and "experts," and they usually love it. By examining these samples, they are better able to appreciate where their writing levels are at and where they should aim. If you have a younger group of students, this activity can be broken down into smaller tasks or an extended period of time. Perhaps instead of introducing this activity at the beginning of a year, why not use it as a mid-term "check-in"?

Self-Assessment and Using ESL Benchmarks in Classroom Assessments

- ESL benchmarks Kahoot! Why not put some of these questions on ESL benchmarks and second language acquisition on a Kahoot! Game as a preview or review? Who says benchmarks are boring? (<https://kahoot.com>).
- Summarize the most important skills and assessment categories for students. You may consider what is most important in your program of

studies and how it may align with certain language skills from the ESL benchmarks in order to create summary charts for certain units of study or for your course. I appreciate that not everyone teaches straight English ESL, but such summaries could be useful for students to do self-assessment and also help you focus as you design your course materials. Don't forget that ESL benchmark descriptors, when modified, can become useful "I can..." statements, too! Here is a quick sample from the high school levels (modified from Alberta Education's ESL benchmarks):

What Do We Want to Achieve? ESL 3–5 Reading Benchmark Goals	
Skill Required	Description
Predicting	What will happen next in a story based on what you've read already (ESL 3)
Making inferences	Using contextual clues in text (ESL 3/4)
Synthesizing/ drawing conclusions	Putting together all of the information you've read and forming/ understanding main ideas (ESL 4)
Summarizing	Identifying the most important points of a text (ESL 4)
Word Analysis	Using parts of words you know (for example, prefixes, suffixes) to guess the meaning and functions of words (ESL 4)
Metaphors and figurative language	Understanding meaning of words/phrases beyond the literal meanings (ESL 4/5)
Reading with fluency/ intonation and expression	Practise reading excerpts (ESL 5)

- New item that I've added this year: A discussion and scenarios based on communicative

competence. While I found that my students generally had a much greater appreciation for second language acquisition and the ESL benchmarks after this introductory unit, they still had trouble transferring this theory to practice. Granted their learning and assessments are based on skills they are able to demonstrate in the four language areas, and they are not penalized by not understanding theories in second language acquisition. However, I kept wondering what may help students make better connections. Enter a short introduction and discussion on communicative competence (Hymes 1966, 1972)! I did not focus on this topic because I was afraid at times of overwhelming my students with language theories, but I designed it so that it was about understanding the pieces of it (for example, the effects of understanding culture when learning a language or communication includes gestures and symbols). All four areas of communicative competence—strategic, discourse, sociolinguistic and linguistic (Hymes 1966, 1972)—were introduced by common, often humorous scenarios to entice students to discuss how communication broke down due to a missing piece in the puzzle. For example, why did the waiter react angrily to a certain gesture the other person made? Through a lot of discussion about their own cultures and what is acceptable in the English-speaking cultures, students were able to comprehend the importance of understanding and showing certain nonverbal behaviours. In the end, along with the use of visuals that represented each of the four areas of communicative competence, students came to understand more of what “good communication” means. Therefore, when we come across a phrase that is used in their writing or during a presentation, I am able to pause and discuss how good communication was modelled or what can be done to make it better. My students have said to me that they are less worried about just the grades because they are

able to focus more on working on good communication skills, and in the end, their grades would thank them anyway because those communicative goals were achieved.

I hope that some of these ideas will help you and your students through your ESL teaching journey. Last but not least, please keep your contributions coming for *Accent*, and take one moment to pat yourself on the back—the things you do big or small for your students are appreciated! Please send your submissions, questions and feedback to ataeslcpublicationsdirector@gmail.com. Until next time!

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Strategic Planning Retreat

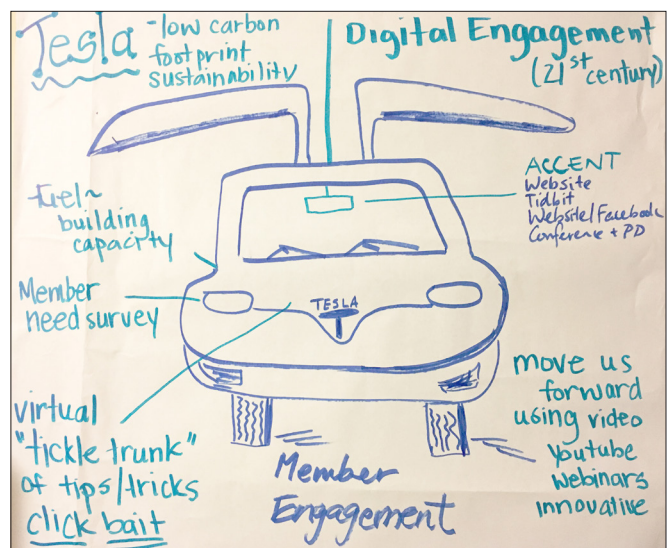
by Dianne Leong-Fortier

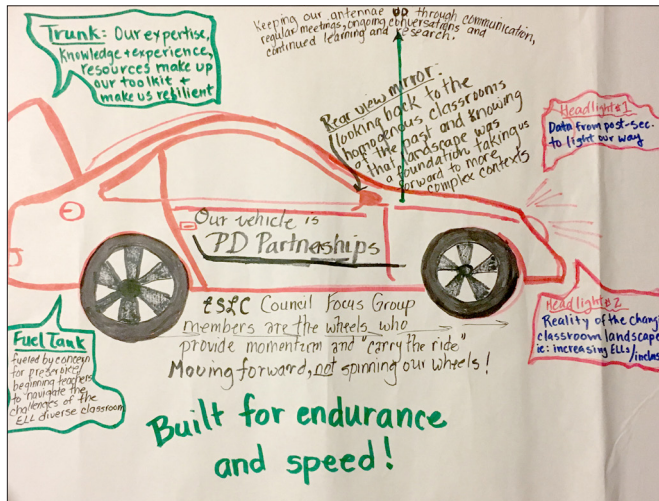
With newly elected and appointed executive committee members, a strategic planning retreat is crucial for succession planning and mentorship between new and continuing members. Although new members may find their new roles quite daunting, knowing that seasoned mentors are there to learn from and follow makes their experience enjoyable, inspiring and a positive professional learning experience.

Held in Canmore in April, the retreat was well attended by our executive committee team who bring to the council years of experience at the teaching and leadership level in various subject areas including teaching and supporting English as a second language (ESL) programs and English language learners (ELLs) in our province. We were pleased at the AGM that we now have representation on our executive from the northern, central and southern regions of Alberta, both urban and rural. This is very timely and much needed, because we know that we need to connect with teachers outside of our urban centres.

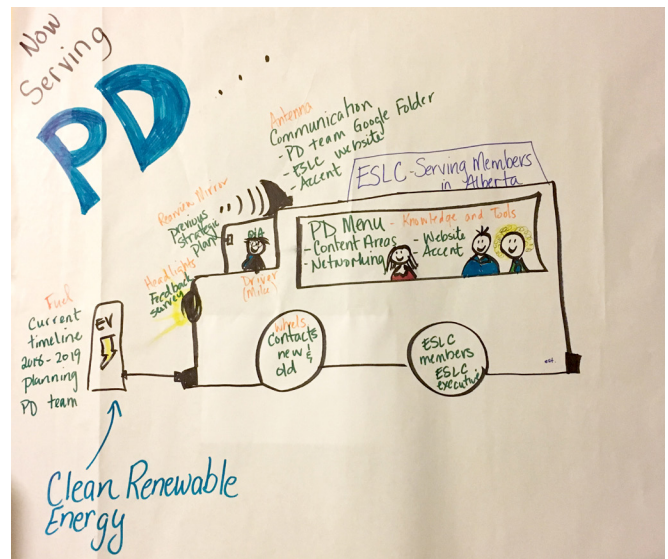
The agenda included an introduction and a review of who we are, as we had new constitutional and handbook changes. Working through those changes in the last two years was challenging and intense but much needed.

Additionally, we met, brainstormed and dialogued in different group activities that focused on themes of strategic planning—clarifying and prioritizing, end-of-day summaries and reflection, building for success, building capacity and closing with thanks-giving, and summarizing comments. Our retreat outcomes included the work we do in teaching, researching, networking and leading; contributing to professional development, advocacy, inquiry and building communities of practice; exploring possibilities for best practices as teachers of ESL and clarifying prioritizing goals and objectives for our focus groups. Keeping in mind our vision statement, it is important to acknowledge and reference that our strategic planning reflects the Alberta Teachers' Association's (ATA) four strategic directions: the nature of learning, the working lives of teachers, public and member engagement, and an agile and resilient learning organization. Likewise, our strategic planning aligns with the ATA's four roles of PD leadership (see <https://tinyurl.com/y8vvohh3>). Considerable time was designated to our four focus groups: advocacy, creating partnerships, membership engagement and professional development. Consequently, each group continued to build onto previous goals and action tasks in their





strategic timelines (three-year plan 2016–19). We revisited our SWOT analysis and discussed whom we currently network within our educational work environments and how we might develop new connections in the immediate future. We are a creative group, and we each built a “car-presie” (presentation) to demonstrate our goals and tasks through the metaphor of a car, which included the antenna for good communication, wheels to keep us in motion, rear-view mirror to keep an eye on where we have been, headlights to help us find our way, the trunk to store knowledge and tools, and fuel in the gas tank when we need it. Images of our four car-presies are included in this issue. Each group has identified specific tasks and action to take, and it was very enlightening to observe the executive team brainstorming together to design future opportunities for members. Questions and topics included building regional PD events, webinars and other communication and educational enrichment resources to be accessible on our website to engage membership; establishing communities of practice;



advocating for the needs of ESL teachers in urban and rural areas; inquiring into policy and research; continuing to develop the Alberta Colony Educators special interest group; and creating partnerships with postsecondary education faculties and TESL programs; and connecting to preservice teachers through the yearly carousel and Beginning Teachers’ Conference.

I look forward to the work the ESLC has to do in the near future, value the expertise and knowledge of our executive and, most important, invite ESLC members to consider volunteering for a role on the executive at our next AGM that will occur in November at our annual conference. Executive members are appointed and elected. In my teaching career, I have been involved in a leadership role on two ATA councils. It is most rewarding not only for professional development but also for personal enrichment and for the friends you make along the way. Many of the friends I have made are lifelong friends whom I have known for at least 20 years.

TESOL International Convention and English Language Expo

by Dianne Leong-Fortier

Being a member of an Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) specialist council enriches a teacher's career and practice. Through the leadership and support of the ATA, teachers have many opportunities to learn and connect with colleagues in the teaching profession. The council enables educators to support one another, be informed of current research in the teaching profession, access professional development and actively contribute to professional development in their schools, districts and across the province. I am a strong believer in lifelong learning and have been encouraged over the years to research and seek quality professional development opportunities in Canada and beyond that will enhance my own knowledge, teaching pedagogy and practice.

I recently attended the TESOL (www.tesol.org) International Convention and English Language Expo in Chicago, Illinois, in March 2018 (www.tesol.org/convention-2018/schedule-at-a-glance). Attending an international convention that attracts educators worldwide is an amazing experience, especially when the demographics includes all education levels from K–12, postsecondary and nonprofit organizations. TESOL is an international association of professionals advancing the quality of English language teaching through professional development, research, standards and advocacy. TESOL's (2017) core purpose is "to advance professional expertise in English language teaching to speakers of other languages worldwide." Their goals include advocacy, governance, professional learning and engagement, research, and standards (p 6). I was highly impressed by the number (6,000) of convention

delegates, but what was most significant was the strength of the organization, which was built through member involvement in interest groups that engage in subcommittee projects and research throughout the year through blogs and communication networks. After member registration, all members initially designate their specialization and choice of special interest groups, which are literally prolific and engaged communities of practice. I was strongly impressed by various aspects of the convention: (1) the location—the largest convention centre I have ever seen; (2) the quality, diversity and number of presentations; (3) attendees (multicultural); (4) the mentoring and active learning through daily and hourly mini-workshops (including poster sessions every day at lunch time in the main exhibit hall); (5) online webcasts showing all day every day throughout the week; (6) the professional qualifications and expertise of the presenters, organizers and attendees; and (7) the additional week-long special events program offered at the Electronic Village and Technology Showcase, which included additional sessions outside of the main convention program sessions. It was an outstanding convention! Sessions were offered from 7:00 AM to 5:45 PM daily. There were accreditation/credentialing sessions offered on Monday and Wednesday. And from Wednesday to Friday each day numerous sessions focused on various content areas: action/classroom-based research, assessment, bilingual education, CALL/video/digital media/technology in education, culture/intercultural communication, curriculum/materials development, grammar, K–12 teacher education, leadership, listening, materials/curriculum development, personal and professional development, primary and secondary education, pronunciation, reading, social responsibility/socio-political concerns, speaking, teacher training, vocabulary/lexicon, writing, no content area (various mixed topics), and on the Saturday, they offered a specific one-day event for pre-K–12 education. Program booklets for the main convention and the Electronic Village and Exhibitors showcase were available online and in print. And one of the most outstanding resources is the TESOL bookstore, available at the conference and online <http://sites.tesol.org/bookstore/>. I left the conference with many new books to enhance my practice of

teaching English as a second language. Plus, I can order and search for the ongoing new publications that are produced through TESOL's research initiatives and projects that make research finding readily accessible to practitioners. Members are involved at all levels through special interest groups and communities of practice. It feels like one is attached 24/7 to educators all over the world—learning, exchanging, developing best practice and exploring pedagogy. Subsequently, through this system, the organization is developing the leadership pipeline. Numerous courses are available online regarding leadership involvement with TESOL.

I have always been a person who acknowledges the unique talents, skills and expertise of every person. We all come into teaching through various pathways. For myself, my career did not start in K–12 but in adult education, community education and nonprofit. Therefore, I acknowledge that our personal journey and experiences enable us to bring such insight to a school, organization or community. I encourage preservice, beginning and seasoned teachers to enrich their knowledge and teaching practice through the benefits of engaging in professional development not only at the local, regional or national level but also by

looking beyond to engage with educators in the global world—to hear their voice and learn from their unique and diverse experiences and locations. Finally, join the ESLC. We need voices and experience at all ages and backgrounds. Reap the benefits of being part of the ESLC community, learn, be supported, recharge and share your knowledge and expertise with us.

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts...

—William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

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Developing a Literacy Block

by Lisa Smith

Bishop Kidd School is one of Calgary's most diverse communities. With the majority of students designated as English language learners coming from all over the world, our school is a place where we are always trying new instructional practices to best meet students' needs. One of the most pressing needs we have to address is student literacy. On average, Bishop Kidd's students leave us for Grade 10 with a Grade 5 reading level. Recognizing how this would limit their success moving forward, we made literacy the schoolwide focus for the year.

Our idea was to include a literacy block into our six-day schedule. This period would have students attend lessons directed at their instructional reading level rather than their grade level. Every teacher in the building would become a teacher of literacy. A great deal of work was required to identify students' needs, inform and prepare teachers, and collect appropriate and engaging materials.

First, we had to collect data. In order to organize students and track growth, each student required a recent reading level. We selected a resource in order to have consistency. Each teacher in the building (from art through physical education) was provided professional development on how to complete running records and accurately identify reading levels. Then the work began.

Assessing each student's reading level is a common and worthwhile practice for elementary school. Although rarely done schoolwide in junior high, it has proven to be extremely useful in guiding our practice. This information allowed us to group students into levelled reading groups. It also supported us with the completion of ELL benchmarks, aided in identifying students requiring additional support and helped us recognize learners requiring psycho-educational testing. This data will also be used to track the progress of students as well as the success of our literacy block.

Once student groups were organized, we sought out materials to support guided reading at each reading level. Students working well below grade level were placed in groups of four or five reading short narrative and nonfiction texts according to prescribed lessons

while those at or above grade level were placed in larger classes. These groups practised guided reading as well, but rather than short stories they examined novels.

Each group was expected to follow a basic guided reading lesson. Teachers were provided both instruction and resources to help guide their practice. Reading was done aloud, with clear purpose and individual responses completed afterward. The plan was to run trimesters throughout the year to allow students to move through the levels as they grow.

Our first session of literacy block was a success. Students willingly participated, teachers new to guided reading began to feel more comfortable and the "reading culture" emerged in our community. There were some hiccups and bumps though. To run it as a trimester in the school year was too difficult. The logistics of organizing material once was a challenge, three times—no way! Students needed time to get comfortable in their groups. With constant changes, our more timid kids would never feel like they could take a risk. We also didn't want to overwhelm teachers, who were making great progress.

Another significant challenge to a single literacy block was that it seemed too infrequent. Once every six-day cycle did not allow for an authentic reading experience. The novel studies could never really take off. Students needed to reread an entire chapter before moving ahead simply to remember what the story was about. To remedy this, our session was going to focus entirely on short texts.

With novels off the table it took some recalibration to select new resources. We decided to organize reading-level bins around genre and theme. Some of the topics we selected were Canadian biographies, persuasive essays, nonfiction, newspaper and magazine articles, and brochures and pamphlets. So far these new resources are a success.

Moving forward we will continue to adjust groupings, resources and teachers' support to increase our likeliness for success. As a staff we look forward to our year-end assessments. Although it will be quite an undertaking to complete this schoolwide assessment. It will be then, that we can truly measure the success of our literacy block.

2017 Preconference

by Diane Pham



Last year, we thought we would try something new. For the first time, we held a preconference to provide opportunities for ESLC members across Alberta to meet and discuss successes and challenges around the teaching and learning of English as a second language.

Data gathered at the preconference will be shared with attendees in the near future, and we hope to be able to continue the rich dialogue that started at the conference.

2017 Conference: “Literacy Across the Curriculum”

ESLC’s annual conference was held at the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise November 3–5, 2017. We had record-breaking attendance, which provided invaluable opportunities for members to connect and share stories, experiences and resources with one another. We were fortunate to be able to invite keynote speakers Susana Dutro and Margaret Early to the conference.

Susana Dutro came to Canada for the first time to present at the conference. Dutro provided Saturday’s keynote address as well as a session on English language development. She spoke about her knowledge and expertise to help teachers assist English language learners to acquire academic success. She explained the importance of a targeted and deliberate language acquisition approach. She reinforced the importance of functions and forms of language. As a Calgary Board of Education ESL teacher who has attended a summer institute to be trained in a targeted language approach using the functions and form model of English language approach, it was very humbling to hear her speak about it. To be trained using her model and then hear her speak was an extremely exciting experience for me.

We also invited Margaret Early, who provided a Canadian perspective to ESL teaching and learning. Margaret Early identifies in her keynote titled, “Teaching English Language Learners Across the Curriculum (K–12),” the possibilities and challenges of ensuring that English language learners (ELLs) gain access to grade-level content and curricular competencies, as they simultaneously extend their knowledge of language and (multi)literacies across school subject areas. Then she addressed how we might draw on the linguistic and cultural diversity in schools and classrooms as instructional assets enabling all learners to develop the 21st-century literacies that are requisite to thrive in school and beyond. Guiding principles and lenses that are relevant to implementing effective instruction for English language learners in content areas across the curriculum (K–12) were discussed. Practical, concrete instructional strategies and examples of inspirational pedagogy, drawn from Canadian classrooms, were presented.

In Margaret Early’s breakout session, “Demystifying How Language Functions to Make Meaning,” she discussed key ideas that are relevant to implementing instruction for ELLs, (K–12) across the curriculum. Specifically, it explored the language demands (for example, vocabulary, language features and cohesive devices) of the typical patterns of discourse (genres or text types) of different content areas, and ELLs’ development of literacy across the curriculum. The session was action oriented in that it provided concrete instructional strategies and practical examples to support teachers in reinforcing ELL students’ awareness of how academic language operates to represent, organize, connect ideas and enhance ELLs’ expertise in using academic language in a variety of contexts. The aim was not simply to present a set of fixed instructional strategies but rather to stimulate innovative practices and dialogue across both educators and their ELLs to learn together, as part of their everyday classroom inquiry, about how language operates to build knowledge in different content areas.

Thank you to all those who attended the conference this year. Conference 2018 will be held in Edmonton. Please visit our website for further information. We hope to see you there.

Raising Language Awareness in Spanish-Speaking ELLs

by Iris Piorno, Spanish Bilingual Teacher

In my teaching journey, I have been fortunate to venture into different language-related areas: ESL, ELA, Spanish bilingual education, adult learning and curriculum design. Having the experience of being a language learner often allows me to step in the learners' shoes and contemplate theories about what goes on in their minds, a process that scholars sometimes refer to as language awareness.

A number of studies have shown that raising the learners' language awareness could be beneficial in developing basic cognitive skills that support their academic growth. Based on this, I wish to elucidate on strategies that can help minimize some of the most common errors Spanish speakers make in their early stages of English language acquisition, and explore concepts related to factors that affect their linguistic awareness. Explicit instruction that considers the learners' first language (L1) in the development of the second (L2) has been proven to have many beneficial effects; perhaps the most valuable, for teachers, is that they can design instruction and teach strategies that encourage the learners' self-monitoring.

Since second language learners have already acquired one language, they have an advantage over their monolingual counterparts in understanding how languages work. This, however, can sometimes lead them to make incorrect guesses or inferences that result in inaccuracies dissimilar from target-like forms (Lightbown and Spada 2006). In addition to first language interference, the learners' developing second language knowledge, also known as interlanguage, is a major source of errors, which sometimes could be interpreted as the learners' efforts to discover the structure of the target language itself rather than attempts to transfer patterns from their first language. This led me to believe that having a general understanding of the most common source of errors could be advantageous for ELL teachers.

Taking Spanish as my first language, I decided to conduct a contrastive analysis between English and

Spanish to determine the best way to raise Spanish learners' language awareness and, consequently, promote target-like performance in English, both in written and oral forms. Among the most relevant literature, I found a book entitled *Learner English: A Teacher's Guide to Interference and Other Problems*, which I consider a must have for any ELL teacher, as it contains advice for not only Spanish-speaking learners but also many other languages students speak in our schools. In this book, Swan and Smith (2001) analyzed the most common elements of difficulty for Spanish-speaking English language learners and found that their written and oral speech difficulties were often predetermined by their first language. Although the errors varied in nature, they were mostly related to vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar.

As I read the Spanish section of this book, I was amazed at the high accuracy with which the authors managed to illustrate the reasons why certain parts of the language are more difficult for Spanish speakers to acquire and how these elements function in their first language. Phonology, for example, is a complex area because although the Spanish and English consonant systems are similar, the vowel systems are very different, which causes great difficulty for the learners. Most Spanish speakers typically struggle to recognize and use English vowels; in addition, their output shows strong devoicing of final voiced consonants, an even sentence rhythm and narrower range of pitch. Acknowledging these elements and the fact that a learner's difficulties are affected by their first language transfer into the second, and by interlanguage, is paramount in devising strategies that promote the learners' metacognition and can aid teachers in making high-impact instructional decisions when designing tasks and other class activities.

One way in which we can support the learners' language awareness is through meaningful integration of explicit strategies. Svalberg (2007) studied the prominent features of Language Awareness (LA)

methodology and determined that it comprises an ongoing exploration of language as a dynamic phenomenon, involving learners in reciprocal exchanges of analytical insights as they make new explorations and discoveries. Accordingly, the methods and techniques generally associated with the LA classroom are “input enhancement, discovery-type inductive tasks, text reconstruction, and open-ended discussion tasks on authentic or adapted texts” (p 292). Among the key factors that affect L2 learning are morphological/phonological awareness, the cognate advantage, and contrasts between L1 and L2 grammatical systems.

Morphological awareness is a complex construct that includes phonological, semantic, syntactic and orthographic components. According to Kuo and Anderson (2006), morphological awareness is the ability to reflect on morphemes and manipulate them, as well as to employ word formation rules in one’s language. Regarding the cognate advantage, the presence of orthographic and phonological cognates in the native and target languages has been shown to contribute to the vocabulary development of Spanish-speaking ELLs. In a related study, Jiménez, Garcia and Pearson (1996) found that the initial stages of language acquisition can be less challenging if the learners’ L1 contains cognates or Latin-based words that can assist with meaning-making in the L2, as it is the case of Spanish and English. Another study by Kelley and Kohnert (2012) to determine performance on cognates relative to noncognates at different levels of difficulty concluded that native Spanish-speaking children learning English as their second language correctly identified a significantly greater proportion of cognates than noncognates in a standardized vocabulary test of spoken English. The test results indicated that bilinguals may use the cognate advantage to infer meaning of infrequently used words and that the older the learners are, the greater the benefit they obtain from cross-language overlaps. Finally, contrasts between L1 and L2 grammatical systems could sometimes be explicitly brought up in the context of various subjects such as math, science and social studies to promote more authentic uses of language forms and encourage linguistic awareness.

Based on Lightbown and Spada’s (2006) view that teachers should provide feedback and correct persistent errors made by a great number of learners

with the same first language background, my experience teaching language learners, and a study of contrasting elements that pertain to English versus Spanish language systems, I compiled the following list of specific recommendations on how to raise Spanish ELLs’ awareness and consistently integrate this into teachers’ practice. The list consists of English language features that have no analogs in Spanish and therefore tend to be the most common sources of error and interference.

- Differentiation of English vowels where length is a distinctive feature (for example, sheep/ship)
- Emphasis on final voiced English consonants (intelligent, practised, pump, climb and so on)
- Focused practice of consonant clusters beginning with *s* (for example, Spain versus Espain)
- Syllabic length awareness for pronunciation of stressed and unstressed English syllables (*a/ppa/rently...*)
- Attention to the *s* of the third person singular in simple present tense (she studies, he thinks, it seems and so on)
- Highlighting of subject-verb-object (SVO) word order in English sentences (Spanish order is flexible)
- Order reversal of adjectives and nouns (for example, the white house versus the house white)
- Explicit instruction on the use of English auxiliaries and modals (must, should, may, could, will and so on)
- Emphasis on correct use of English question tags to counteract Spanish closing statements (yes?/no?)
- Correct formation of negative sentences and avoidance of double negatives (I don’t want no...)
- Cognate and false cognate awareness (not taking for granted meaning based on word resemblance)
- Awareness of grammatical gender transfer from Spanish nouns and adjectives to English (he, she, it)
- Awareness of omissions in subject personal pronouns (for example, Jen isn’t Greek. Is British)
- Wrong formation of possessives using *of* phrases (for example, Tom’s pen versus the pen of Tom)

What follows is a list of tasks that could integrate the above-mentioned elements into different subject areas, at any grade level, through meaning-focused and form-focused tasks. Some of them could include enhanced input, which is a visual highlighting of certain elements to help students focus their attention on predetermined forms, intentional inclusion of phrases to make certain grammatical concepts likely to arise, and indirect corrective feedback with recasting to help students develop corrections on their own. Considering

these techniques implies that teachers can utilize proactive and reactive approaches in the same lesson; they “can plan in advance to ensure that a focus on form will occur, or they can wait for a pressing learner need to arise and develop an ‘on-the-spot,’ explicit lesson in response” (Doughty and Williams 1998).

- Expressing opinions and engaging the learners in discussions that prompt them to use forms, which are generally difficult to acquire (possessive pronouns and third person singular forms in the present tense)
- Presenting a text and reading it together a second time to identify cognates, thus raising awareness of their usage in both languages
- Scaffolding vocabulary by using a grammar and vocabulary sheet to complete preliminary activities as homework and correct them in class
- Modelling reading first to allow students to notice pronunciation patterns and then asking them to retell the main points to a partner and discuss specific arguments
- Prompting students to answer questions about specific parts of the text where difficult linguistic elements appear and providing indirect corrective feedback to elicit students’ corrections of their own mistakes
- Extracting sentences from the reading to keep forms in context, and asking students to fill in the blanks with the correct word or phrase (possessives, verbs and cognates) while using contextual clues
- Asking them to define terms in their own words and illustrate meaning using a Frayer model.
- Reconstructing a text (from cut-up paper) and writing poems or songs using minimal pairs, for example, bit/beat, bin/been, this/these, hit/heat, eat/it and so on

In conclusion, there are specific language elements that ELL teachers could focus on to support Spanish-speaking students in their quest to acquiring and developing English language skills. By using instructional approaches that integrate language awareness into pedagogy and by recognizing relationships between L1 and L2, teachers can validate the learners’ first language, thus increasing their self-confidence and attention to formal aspects of English. Central to this approach is the idea of putting language materials design at the forefront of teaching to better meet the learners’ needs and exposing bilinguals to various language awareness devices at their disposal. By continuing to integrate these ideas into my

teaching and selecting specific aspects of the language to focus on, my hope is to take a proactive stance in assisting the learners as they make independent cross-language connections that allow them to move up the different levels of English language proficiency.

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Reports from Members at Large

Calgary and Area

by Samantha Tomlinson, Joana Dossdall and Lisa Smith



SAMANTHA TOMLINSON



JOANA DOSSDALL

A Community of Learning

An idea exchange networking event for Southern Alberta was held October 5, 2017, at the Calgary Separate School Local No 55 office. The response from members who attended repeatedly focused on the need and desire to participate in further networking events. Opportunities to meet and share with colleagues working to support English language learners were beneficial to their professional development as well as their confidence in supporting the success of their students.

A second community of learning was held March 6, 2018, at the St John Reception Centre in Calgary. The flier was posted to our ESLC website, sent to known district leads supporting English language learning (ELL) as well as some postsecondary locations, such as the Universities of Calgary and Mount Royal. Representation from a variety of school districts added to the diversity of the discussions with participants ranging from classroom teachers, learning leaders and designated ESL specialists spanning all divisions. Feedback collected at the end of the networking session echoed responses from participants of the first: educators want to share and discuss with other educators on topics particular to supporting English language learners.

Networking events such as these are provided to ESLC members. If you know of someone who would

like to know about upcoming professional development sessions and collaborative events, please bookmark the ESLC website (www.eslcata.com) and e-mail eslcatapddirectorsouth@gmail.com.

The Feedback

Of the 36 registered participants, 22 attended. Four of the 14 potential participants sent regrets.

This spring we will focus on networking and creating a welcoming environment along with identity recognition in schools to increase parent-school communication and student engagement in school.

Edmonton and Area



JOANNE SNIHUROWYCH

by JoAnne Snihurowych

The Edmonton and Area MALs together with the PD director north hosted an ESLC evening event on April 12 at Barnett House. It was a great opportunity to network with colleagues as well as take some ideas back to the classrooms. The format included PechaKucha-style presentations, which featured 20 slides for 20 seconds each. Short and sweet! There was time for socializing and sharing in some refreshments.

A strategic planning weekend for all ESLC executive was held April 14–15 to plan for future professional learning opportunities.

- The percentage of ELLs in schools continues to rise. In many jurisdictions ELLs comprise approximately 23 per cent of student population. Thus, every teacher is a teacher of ELLs!
- There are not enough opportunities for teachers to engage in professional learning activities and network with other teachers in the greater Edmonton area to talk about ELLs.
- To succeed in schools and in Canadian society, ELLs need to be supported, encouraged and made a priority in the classroom.

Contact JoAnne Snihurowych, member at large, Edmonton and area at 780-944-2001, ext 5115 for more information.

ELL Recognition Award for Edmonton Catholic Students

by JoAnne Snihurowych

Five years ago this past January, former ESL consultant with Edmonton Catholic Schools Karen de Milliano passed away suddenly. Karen, who was an ESLC member, attended and presented at many ESLC conferences. A year later, together with her family, a memorial fund was established to support English language learners (ELLs) who have come through One World...One Centre, the district's coordinated intake and assessment office for newly arrived immigrants.

Each spring, One World...One Centre distributes nomination forms to elementary and junior high schools looking for ELLs who have arrived within the year and who have shown "a little something special" in their work ethic and efforts to learn the English language. Typically, four students or families are selected.

On April 10, we honoured the memory of Karen de Milliano and celebrated our hope for ELLs and their families. Students were presented with iPads and iTunes cards to help them learn the English language, do research and school work, explore and communicate (using such apps as Google Translate and Microsoft Translator). The nomination

committee recognizes that this is a tool ELLs cannot afford to purchase on their own and is a unique award for elementary and junior high students.

This celebration is always one of joy and happy tears. Teachers share stories and explain why they nominated the students. The stories are about the students' hardships prior to coming to Canada and their challenges since arriving but also their tremendous successes during this brief time in Canada, their new home. These students have become leaders among their peers, are academically successful and support other newly arriving immigrants at school.

Previous recipients share how they have used the iPads in the past year; for example, use apps to develop vocabulary and sentence structure, explore educational games, learn how to create documents, open new social connections at school and communicate (through FaceTime) with families back home.

Karen would be honoured to know that new students arriving in Canada are receiving this innovative award. One of Karen's mottos was "Be the change you want to see in the world," by Gandhi, and we certainly see the evidence of this through her memory!

Avatars, QR Codes, iMovie and Much More in the Grade 2 Classroom

by Nicole Moores

Almadina Language Charter Academy is a public ESL charter school that has a specific mandate to educate English language learners (ELLs). Many of the students are born in Canada, but their first language is not English at home. In order to meet the needs of students who operate at a vast array of ELL proficiency benchmarks, teachers create unit plans that feature strategies, activities and resources that support ELLs. In addition, all teachers ensure that their daily lesson plan includes ESL teaching strategies as follows:

- Using key visuals
- Building background knowledge
- Providing explicit language instruction
- Linking common ideas
- Differentiating for different levels of ELP (English language proficiency)
- Incorporating cooperative learning strategies
- Checking for comprehension
- Providing opportunity for oral language practice
- Identifying and referring to key vocabulary
- Modelling and teaching reading strategies
- Modelling and teaching writing strategies
- Modelling and teaching appropriate language structures
- Modelling and teaching appropriate language functions

At Almadina Language Charter Academy, I teach a Grade 2 class, which includes an array of English language proficiency levels (ELP). In order to address the differing ELP levels and the vast needs of ELL students within the classroom, I find it useful to use technology (in addition to the ESL teaching strategies) to not only engage students but to tailor and scaffold lessons for them.

I had an idea for a project and with the support of our school's educational technologist, Gail Reid, we used Tellagami, QR codes and iMovie for students to research, locate, organize and present their topic.

Students presented their knowledge through diagrams, a scaffolded essay and oral language.

I specifically chose the unit on insects from the Grade 2 science curriculum because it targeted many of the outcomes across the curriculum. At Almadina we focus on teaching subjects with the mindset that the vocabulary used in the classroom can be taught using a cross-curricular approach. Therefore, I ensured that many of the words used in the class were high-frequency academic words (Tier 2 vocabulary), as I wanted this project to provide the correct cross-curricular content. This is important for ELL learners as it allows them to understand and use the targeted language and skills in future learning endeavours.

Below are the steps I followed in my class for students to succeed in creating their final Avatar project. I have included links to give more information about the tools I used in my teaching.

Step 1

For students to acquire the specific language required for the projects they spent weeks acquiring and internalizing the language from previous units taught in the classroom. I explicitly taught ELL learners key vocabulary because they may not have been exposed to key vocabulary for academic writing at home.

The language included

- Tier 2 (academic) vocabulary including but not limited to define, topic, research, design, specific;
- Tier 1 (content specific) vocabulary including but not limited to thorax, abdomen, adaptations, lifespan, habitat, diet, life cycle, carnivore, omnivore, herbivore, predator, prey, animal classification, warm-blooded, cold-blooded, survive, environment; and
- technology vocabulary including but not limited to speech selection, airplay, home screen, various apps, feature, avatar, QR codes.

Once students used the specific vocabulary confidently and independently, they had an opportunity to test their knowledge.

Step 2


Aphid


Describe your insect's anatomy.	
Describe your insect's habitat.	
Describe your insect's life cycle.	
An interesting fact about your insect.	
An interesting fact about your insect.	

Each student had a different insect to research and a graphic organizer to record answers. The graphic organizer helps ELLs to keep information organized and thorough, allowing the language to be simple and concise for students to comprehend.

This research project also met students' needs by providing appropriate websites for their English proficiency. Students accessed the websites through QR codes (similar to bar codes) that were printed on the graphic organizer. In addition, students used iPads and the app i-nigma to scan the QR code. That is when the students began their research project titled, My Insect Report.

iPads have an amazing feature called speech selection, whereby students select text to be read aloud at a certain speed. Students were taught how to turn on the speech selection and select the appropriate audio speed.

Students who needed a challenge were taught how to research websites on Kiddle, a child-friendly search engine (like Google) where additional information could be found. To conclude their research journey,

students were taught the importance of referencing their work by writing a reference list (www.superteacherworksheets.com/) for each website they used to find their information.

How to make a QR code: <https://createqr.com>
www.appspot.com

How to use i-nigma app: www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7r7wxiA8Is

Step 3

Once students completed their graphic organizer with their research content, it was time for them to put the information into paragraph form. Students needed to build from their background knowledge about how to create paragraphs from previous classroom lessons.

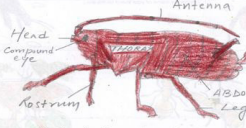
Students were given three graphic organizers (www.superteacherworksheets.com/), which allowed them to organize their research information into certain topics. This was a great way for me to check on their comprehension and check to see if they have internalized this skill—one of the ESL strategies to be used in the classroom.

Students started by writing an interesting sentence, followed by a scaffolded paragraph to a five-paragraph

Name: _____ Insect: Aphids ②

Insect Anatomy

Draw a large picture of your insect. Label the head, thorax, and abdomen. Also, label any other important body parts.



Write a paragraph to describe the anatomy of your insect.

Most Aphids have soft bodies and are green although others colors such as black, brown, and pink are not uncommon. Aphids have antennae with six segments. Aphids feed themselves through sucking mouthparts called stylets. They have long thin legs, and two joined, and two-fanned legs. All insects and Aphids have a head, thorax, and abdomen.

Name: _____ Insect: Aphid ③

Insect Habitat

Draw a picture of your insect's habitat.



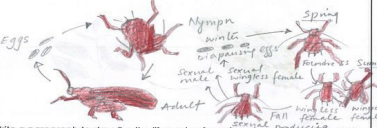
Write a paragraph to describe the habitat of your insect.

There are many cool spots of aphids found throughout North America. These garden pests are usually most active in the spring time and decrease with adverse outside temperatures. They live on plants, especially on the new plant growth and buds, and these can survive the winter. Although Aphids live in colonies they will leave to other plants when their host plant is dying or over populated.

Name: _____ Insect: _____ ④

Insect Life Cycle

Draw a picture that shows your insect's life cycle. Label each stage as egg, larva, pupa, and adult.



Write a paragraph to describe the life cycle of your insect.

In spring an egg hatches producing wingless female Aphids who soon begin to produce new wingless females. Generation after generation wingless females survive on one another until hot weather comes or maybe the plant dies and then some of them grow wings and fly off. They come in many colors and shapes. Female Aphids are parthenogenetic. Adults of the intermediate summer generations consist of females only some winged and others wingless which produce tiny nymphs rather than eggs.

Name: _____ Insect: _____ ⑤

Interesting Facts

Here are five interesting facts about my insect. Choose facts that are not already mentioned on other pages of this report.

- Aphids poop sugar.*
- Aphids have lot of enemies like lady bugs, beetles, lace wings and stinging wasps.*
- Aphids sound an alarm when they are in trouble.*
- Female aphids can reproduce without mating. Aphids give birth to live young.*
- There are over 4000 different kinds of aphids 150 of which cause problems for crops and garden plants.*

essay. Students were given folders with handouts that demonstrated how to use sentence topic starters, transitional sentences, dictionaries, thesauruses and closing sentence starters. It is important to note that before starting this project, students internalized these writing strategies and began to use them independently. This goes back to the gradual release of a responsibility model where students eventually learn the skills and strategies on how to proceed working independently. This project was one of many opportunities to apply their writing knowledge.

Step 4

Once students completed their writing, it was time to create an avatar. Students were taught how to use the app Tellagami. Each student was provided with an iPad, and one student was randomly picked to airplay their iPad to the Smart Board (using the Apple TV). I taught a student how to use the Tellagami app and then the student modelled the lesson for the class. Students were taught how to select physical traits for their avatar, select and save pictures from Safari images, how to add their picture to the background of their avatar and how to record voices on the Tellagami app.

The app allowed students to record their voice for a minute and a half, which meant the assignment needed to be broken up into chunks: an introduction, details and a conclusion, with appropriate backgrounds for each. Students were then taught how to use iMovie on their iPad. The iMovie app allowed for students to connect their multiple Tellagami recordings into one presentation with the added bonus of an evening news theme and the feature to insert headings. Students were taught to save and find their final iMovie project in the Photos app. Then students

were shown how to upload and share a copy of the project to their teachers using Google Drive.

How to use Tellegami app: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASI4cRnuQeA

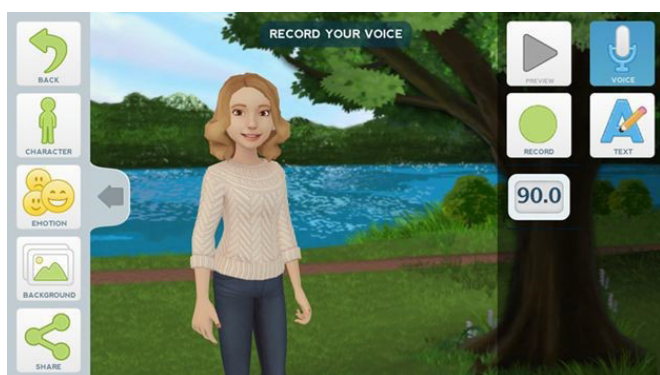
How to use iMovie app: www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFCgPVUR_yc

Final Product

Since Almadina is a Google Apps for Education (GAPE) school, teachers are able to organize their projects by creating a folder in Google Classroom. Once my students completed their project they shared a copy of their Avatar project with me. I then created a visual that included a picture of the Avatar project, which captured the attention of parents, staff and students. Next, I created a QR code that included the student's entire project. Each project contained the student's graphic organizer, writing and a snapshot of the Tellagami picture, and the student's oral presentation.

During this project, students had the opportunity to self-reflect on their learning as they listened to their recordings. They started to critically reflect on their own public speaking skills with little prompting from the teacher. They would often say, "I was too slow," "I was too fast," "I was stuck on that word." Their faces showed eagerness to modify their mistakes as they were asked, "Do you want to record your presentation again?" Knowing that their audience would be authentic—their parents—students were highly motivated to try their level best when recording their projects.

I strongly recommend using this technology for teaching language acquisition to ELL learners as it addresses many ESL teaching strategies while making the learning authentic for the students.



Scan my QR code to watch my report!

ATA Publications

These are just some of the cultural responsive teacher resources that were presented and promoted at this year's PDAC.

*Working with South Sudanese Immigrant Students—
Teacher Resources*

www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/For-Members/Professional%20Development/Diversity,%20Equity%20and%20Human%20Rights/AR-CMEF-2.pdf

*Promoting Success with Arab Immigrant Students—
Teacher Resources*

www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/For-Members/Professional%20Development/Diversity,%20Equity%20and%20Human%20Rights/AR-CMEF-4%20Arab%20Resource.pdf

*Teaching Pakistani Immigrant Students—Resources
for Success*

www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/For-Members/Professional%20Development/Diversity,%20Equity%20and%20Human%20Rights/AR-CMEF-5%20Pakistani%20Resources.pdf

*A Guide for Teachers—New to Hutterian Colony
Schools*

www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/For-Members/Professional%20Development/Diversity,%20Equity%20and%20Human%20Rights/AR-HT-2%20A%20Handbook%20for%20Colony%20Teachers.pdf

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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)



The Alberta Teachers' Association

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