

FALL 2013



# NEWSLETTER

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## From The President

Can you believe it is almost Christmas? Time is flying by this year, but TESL Sask has been busy making plans for a great year of growth and exciting projects for TESL Sask. The two major projects we have been working on are our strategic planning for the organization, and the TESL Canada conference to be held at the University of Regina in May 2014.

We are happy to say that we successfully contracted a fantastic group of strategic consultants - HMC Consulting based out of Broadview, Saskatchewan. With their help, and with the work of the board at 2 dedicated strategic planning retreats (one coming soon in December and one in January), we plan to restructure and refocus the board so that we may be more responsive to the needs of TESL Sask members. Expect a survey very soon asking for your input in the planning process!

The other major project we are working on is the planning of the TESL Canada conference. Plans are in full swing, and we have a great group of volunteers who are forging ahead with building what promises to be an exciting conference. You can check the TESL Canada website for regular updates, and for a link to the conference proposal submission form. We are excited to have the expertise of Suresh Canagarajah, Sara Cushing Weigle, and Margaret Early joining us. This is a conference you will not want to miss!

Please take the time to complete the survey carefully, and review the plans for the TESL Canada conference. It is your support and involvement that keeps us going! We hope you have a wonderful holiday season!

Deborah Hulston

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visit our website at:

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## Moose Jaw Multicultural Council (MJMC)

MJMC has three classrooms for pre-literacy to LINC 5 clients. Skill levels in each classroom vary markedly. At present our client base is lower than usual, but in the past month we have had five families arrive with more on the way.

We have been busy with special events that involve the clients in the community. We read with the Five Hills Health Region's Transition to Employment clients, and both their volunteers and our clients learn about each other. We also really value our special weekly volunteer tutors who come to our facility to help individual clients needing assistance. SaskTel Pioneers Group helps us with volunteers and donations of school supplies and literacy reading materials.

Staff and clients are learning to call the former Gateway Office by its new name, the Moose Jaw Newcomers Welcome Centre. Their new name better reflects the work that they do. We have welcomed two new SWIS workers and they are busy building student/school/parent relationships. Our onsite licensed daycare keeps us entertained as they go on outings and play in the gym. We share a full kitchen with the daycare, so often we would like to share the lunches they make because they smell so good.

Carol Moran

## Saskatoon Open Door Society

As usual, things are very busy at the Saskatoon Open Door Society. Phil Anton is our new Executive Director, replacing the interim ED, George Rathwell. On a personal note, this month is the 30th anniversary of my first volunteer teaching here. Our Language Training Unit now has 30 part-time ESL classes--mornings, afternoons, evenings and Saturdays—at our 1st Ave. building, our 3rd Ave. building (a class for senior citizens) and Queen Elizabeth School. The LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) program, funded by the federal government, accounts for 26 of these classes. The remaining four are called "Stage 1" (not the same as the CLB's "Stage I"), with provincial funding. Class sizes range from 8 to 14. We have licenced childcare centres at our 1st Ave. and Queen Elizabeth School locations. Many of our teachers are getting ready to take their students to the Festival of Trees at the Western Development Museum, which is always a fun and popular field trip, at the end of November.

In addition to ongoing classes, we have a short pronunciation course--which I developed and usually teach twice a year--for clients in our Employment Services Unit who are CLB 5 or higher. Of course, other units at SODS provide many opportunities for clients to practice English, such as Conversation Circles, women's and men's programs, a parenting program, sessions for citizenship preparation, and short employment-related programs.

Donald Campbell

## Saskatoon Public Schools

We continue to see an increase in our student enrolment overall, and especially in students who require support to learn English. Our Newcomer Student Centre has welcomed and assessed close to 400 students since August this year.

Along with an increase in students who are learning English comes a demand for more support for the classroom teacher. EAL students cannot be the sole responsibility of the EAL teacher, yet classroom teachers feel ill-equipped to support EAL students. There are many considerations to keep in mind when working with any student, and in that regard, our EAL population is no different. However, affective and experiential factors may be different or magnified for EAL students, and one must also consider cultural and linguistic factors for any student who comes from a different cultural experience than that of our current school model. Because teaching is an increasingly complex and difficult task, we must learn to approach challenges collectively, supporting one another as we grow in our ability to enable EAL students to be successful.

For this reason, one focus of our English as an Additional Language strategic plan this year is collaboration. We are continually seeking ways to work with other units within our school division, other organizations and, this year, other school divisions. Because we are facing similar challenges, our school division was excited about the potential for partnering with Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools, Regina Public Schools and Regina Catholic Schools in a pilot project funded by our Ministry of Education. Our four school divisions undertook training in a model that is intended to provide knowledge and skills to classroom teachers to assist them to work with students learning English.

Our school division is currently piloting the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol® model in three of our schools in order to move towards an approach to teaching that best supports students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In a nutshell, the SIOP® model includes many strategies that teachers already know as best practice: connecting students' background knowledge with new content in the lesson, teaching learning strategies to students, scaffolding, giving students an opportunity to practice and apply new knowledge, setting objectives, planning connected activities and assessment, and using multimodal techniques to improve comprehension. In addition, through the SIOP® model, teachers learn about setting language objectives. In our school division, these are connected to the Common Framework of Reference.

Three teaching teams were trained in the spring of last year: three EAL teachers and six classroom teachers. Currently, each EAL teacher is co-planning and co-teaching for part of the day with a long term goal of gradually releasing the classroom teacher into full responsibility for planning and teaching lessons using these effective teaching strategies. In this way, and through additional professional development on these strategies for all teachers, we hope to enable classroom teachers to realize they have many skills that already support EAL students, and can make small adjustments in their approach that make big differences for many students in the classroom.

Shauna Tilbury

## **Kelsey and Wascana LINC Programs Link Up!**

SIAST's two LINC programs met each other for the first time in their 20 year history. Thanks to the innovative thinking of the Kelsey LINC Professional Development Committee, 40 instructors came together on Monday, September 9, to spend a day comparing their two LINC programs and to learn how to better serve students through the implementation of Action Research techniques.

LINC is an acronym for Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada. LINC is funded through the federal government's department of Citizenship and Immigration.

Due to current English language training needs, SIAST's two LINC programs have a combined Wait List of 1600 people. Kelsey Campus offers 33 LINC classes and Wascana Campus offers 19. CIC would likely fund more classes if SIAST had the space for them.

The reason the two LINC programs came together was to learn how to use Action Research as a means to providing even better services to the hundreds of ESL students that they both serve. This all day intensive workshop, lead by Dr. Allan Quigley, was the result of expressed interest by the LINC instructors. One instructor concluded that, "Together, as one group, we are able to compare and contrast best practices and brainstorm how to do things better."

Not only was the day innovative because of the two LINC programs coming together, but the whole idea of using Action Research to further the development of LINC programs is in itself rather novel.

The Saskatchewan Action Research Network is dedicated to "building a cultural of inquiry in the field of adult education". SARN is a group of researchers and researcher trainers who advocate for and practice evidence-based research. SIAST's Basic Education division was heavily involved with the initial development of SARN. See [www.sarn.ca](http://www.sarn.ca) for more information.

The results of the Action Research projects that the two campuses are collaborating on as a result of this PD day will be published online, on the Saskatchewan Action Research Network's (SARN) website as well as on the CIC LINC website, Tutela. Publishing these projects will enable others instructing in LINC programs, or working in the field of ESL for adults, to reap the benefits of the findings.

According to Kelsey LINC Program Head, Maria Zalesak, "By bringing the Kelsey LINC Program together with the Wascana LINC Program, we are making the best use of our funding as well as creating an opportunity to create best practices for our LINC programs at SIAST as well as across Canada."

Brenda Sherring, Program Head of the Wascana LINC Program, observed that during the day it was "easy to see the positive reaction and response that all LINC level instructor groups had to the idea of doing research together for the betterment of their students."

The first project will be published within a few months.

Brenda Sherring

## 2013 TESL SK Conference Revisited

In 2013, the TESL Saskatchewan and SK TEAL annual conference, Living Language Together, was held in Swift Current on May 9 to 11. The conference was a huge success. It had a few special features –a pre-conference and conference newsletters. The pre-conference was sponsored by Chinook School Division. Students from Chinook School Division published newsletters on the conference on May 9 and 10.

The conference committee members were representatives from the two local school divisions, TESL Saskatchewan board and Great Plains College. The committee members worked tirelessly with smiling faces to help organize such a successful conference.

The conference participant survey indicated that most of the participants were pleased with this annual learning event. They liked the hands-on ideas that were put forth by the keynotes Maria Arguelles and Deborah Short and also by other workshop presenters. Hetty Roessingh's presented on her research in learning vocabulary, and it was thought provoking. Workshops on how to access the Tutela web site drew a lot of interest. Tutela is a repository for ESL teaching resources and a site for networking with ESL instructors and service providers. Workshops on the new Canadian Language Benchmarks resources were also popular and ran to capacity. We received many positive comments on Erin Waugh's keynote presentation on cross-cultural competency. We had at least 225 attendees on each day of the conference. The pre-conference was attended by 90 instructors and administrators.

The Learners Conference for K-12 learners and adult ESL learners was very well received. Several organizations and speakers were invited to speak to the learners. We had 50 learners register to attend the conference. The committee that worked on organizing the Learners Conference did a marvelous job. On May 10, K-12 learners attended the conference. The adult learners had a variety of guest speakers present on topics of their interest on May 11. All participating learners had the opportunity to have interactive sessions with the keynote presenters.

Our conference participant survey helped us to learn about things that we could do better next time. Accessing our conference web site and the payment process did pose challenges this year. We needed to have information on workshops on the web site at least six weeks earlier to help participants select their workshops prior to attending the conference. We did not receive enough responses to our Call for Presenters. Future conference committees will need to find better ways of compensating workshop presenters and that might increase the number of presenters.

We would like to acknowledge the people and organizations that provided support directly and indirectly towards the success of the conference. Tim Helfrich, Ministry of Economy, helped us to obtain financial support for the Learners Conference and Canadian Language Benchmark workshops. Nadia Prokopchuk, Ministry of Education, provided valuable information on the new possibilities for EAL learners and service providers.

Great Plains College, Chinook School Division and Holy Trinity School Division sponsored coffee breaks and provided all the support locally to help organize the conference. Thanks to members of the conference committee for their diligence and being there whenever and wherever assistance was needed. We are grateful to Karen Comer for helping us with the registration and updating the web site. We are grateful to Shawna Jurgens, SK TEAL President, and Deborah Hulston, TESL SK President, for their leadership and continuous support in making the conference a success.

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## 2013 TESL SK Learners' Conference Recap

The TESL SK Learners Conference was again a part of the bigger TESL SK, "Living Language Together" Conference at Great Plains College in Swift Current on Friday, May 10th, 2013 (for High School Learners) and Saturday, May 11th, 2013 (for Adult Learners). We had a good turnout of about 60 learners this year.

After registration and lunch on Friday we were pleased to have the opportunity to have Dr. Maria Argüelles, an educational consultant, as the keynote speaker for the learners. Her presentation was on *Learning vocabulary faster and better -Focus on Academic vocabulary*.

Friday evening we had a wonderful banquet where teachers and learners (both high school and adults) were able to enjoy a wonderful meal and an entertaining program of song and dance provided by some of the learners from Swift Current.

Saturday registration opened at eight o'clock and at 9:00am learners joined the regular conference to listen to a keynote presentation by Erin Waugh, an Intercultural Communications Facilitator. He delivered an intercultural training workshop that was very informative and interesting.

After coffee the learners had an opportunity to listen to a workshop by Mariana Neves. Mariana has worked for SIAST for almost 20 years in various capacities and presented a workshop *English Language Proficiency at SIAST* on the CLB required levels for SIAST programs.

In the afternoon the learners visited the publishers briefly and then they all participated in a networking activity. At 1:30pm Dr. Hetty Roessingh presented her workshop on *Learning Vocabulary*.

We were happy that all of the learners received a door prize thanks to the generosity of the wonderful sponsors who supported us for this conference. Thanks also to all of the people that helped put the conference together, including, special thanks to Bula Ghosh, Terry Brabender, Palma Miller, Carol Moran, Liliana Dominguez, Karen Comer and everyone else who helped with the Learners' Conference. It was really a pleasure working with everyone.

I also had the pleasure of giving a presentation this year on Portfolio Development, which was a wonderful opportunity to share information and meet some more of the conference participants.

-Prudence Swaan