



NEWSLETTER

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From The President

Hi all,

I hope you are enjoying the sunny, snow-filled winter. The TESL Saskatchewan board enjoyed the winter weekend of January 18 and 19th at our pre-TESL Saskatchewan conference board meeting. We are carefully planning an event, May 10 and 11th in Swift Current, that we hope will inspire many of you to attend, present, and share your knowledge with other TESL professionals in the province. We are also proud to be hosting the 2014 TESL Canada conference in May, and the planning committee is in full swing and looking for those who would like to be involved in any way. Please contact teslsask@gmail.com for information about either conference.

This year, as a board, we are working at ensuring that what we do as a board is clearly communicated, and transparent to all. We want you as members to feel involved, encouraged, and heard. If you ever have comments or thoughts on how the organization can be improving the work that we do for you, please feel free to send us a note anytime! I look forward to seeing you at the conference in Swift Current!

Deborah Hulston

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LEARNERS WANTED!!**Living
Language
Together
Conference****Swift
Current,
2013****EAL/ESL
Teacher,
Instructor &
Learner****Pre-Conference:
May 9, 2013****Conference: May
10 & 11, 2013**Location: Great Plains College,
Swift Current Campus, 129 – 2nd
Avenue N.E., Swift Current

To register or for more information:

Bula Ghosh (306) 778.5477 or
bulag@greatplainscollege.caLee Cummins (306) 778.9200
Ext. 206Mark Benesh (306) 778.9200
Ext. 205**The Part-Time English Program, U of S
Language Centre - by Lnn Bytyqi, Coordinator**

University students, professionals, newcomers... the Part-Time Program attracts a variety of students into its classrooms. These students all desire to improve their English language skills, and here they find focused courses, small groups, and dedicated teachers in a university environment.

The Language Centre has always offered evening classes, but in 2007 the program was revitalized. Currently, there are 9 classes available per term, offered once or twice weekly, for intermediate and advanced learners. The most popular are the writing and speaking classes; students are assessed and placed into either the intermediate or advanced level. University grad students are filling up the graduate-level writing course, which focuses on specific tasks appropriate to their needs. The pronunciation course appeals to upper-level speakers who wish to refine their speaking skills, and those planning to write the TOEFL or CanTest can take the preparation course. Recently, some advanced skills-development classes were added in reading and listening.

If your students, colleagues, or friends wish to polish up a specific skill area, send them down to the Language Centre for a consultation and assessment. We'd be happy to help them achieve their goals!

**Update from Saskatoon Public Schools
by Shauna Tilbury, Facilitator: EAL**

Saskatoon Public Schools has had a very busy fall! To date this year, we have welcomed over 450 newcomer students through our Newcomer Student Centre. Based on projections from the Ministry of the Economy, we are expecting the pace of growth to continue in 2013.

On October 12, 2012, we had the pleasure of hosting Dr. Ying Hoh, School Psychologist from Coquitlam, B.C. Dr. Hoh shared her expertise with educational psychologists and speech language pathologists from across the province. As the number of newcomer students in Pre-K to grade 12 grows in Saskatchewan, so do questions regarding when and how to assess English language learners who may be experiencing learning challenges. Dr. Hoh's presentation confirmed our understanding – there is a great deal of information that must be collected when choosing to assess English language learners for learning disabilities such as the student's language proficiency level in English and in the first language when possible, educational background, family background, and other holistic factors that may affect the pace and quality of learning. Dr. Hoh acknowledged the challenge of determining when to assess a student – too soon and we may not have given the child the opportunity to develop enough language for completion of a valid assessment; too late and we may have missed a valuable opportunity for early intervention – but did say that there is no minimum time that a student should be in the country before assessment. Ultimately, it is the detailed information collected regarding the student, and the professional team's thoughtful examination of this information that will best determine when an assessment should be made, and with what tools.

To continue our learning in 2013, Saskatoon Public Schools has invited Dr. Bruce Perry to speak on the topic of trauma on November 4 and 5 in Saskatoon. The presentation will be open to all, as trauma cuts across all demographics and social backgrounds. Keep your ears open and your eyes peeled for more information in the near future.

HAVE YOU STARTED SIOPping?

Submitted by Raj Khatri, U of R
ESL Instructor

The SIOP Model is a "comprehensive, well-articulated model of instruction" for teachers teaching English language learners. It was developed by researchers Jana Echevarria and Mary Ellen Vogt at California State University, Long Beach and Deborah J. Short at the Center for Applied Linguistics during the research project through the Centre for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE), a national research Center funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education from 1996 through 2003. SIOP is sometimes referred to as SDAIE (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English) as well. Sheltered Instruction is a uniquely designed strategic approach for teaching content to English learners, which makes content concepts comprehensible to the learners while simultaneously helping them develop their language. It successfully demonstrates that the key to acquiring language is its meaningful use, accompanied by frequent interaction. 'Compelling' Strategies that create a high level of learner engagement and interaction for 'comprehensible input' are discussed in this model.

"The theoretical underpinning of the model is that language acquisition is enhanced through meaningful use and interaction... In effective SIOP lessons, there is a high level of student engagement and interaction with the teacher, with other students, and with text, which leads to elaborated discourse and critical thinking (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008)." SIOP was at first just an observation instrument to observe and rate teachers' lessons and their delivery, but later it turned into the SIOP Model, which focuses on the instructional practices to appropriately work with linguistically and culturally diverse groups of learners.

The SIOP Model discusses the following 8 components, which further contains 30 different features for teachers to incorporate in their classrooms:

1. Lesson Preparation
2. Building Background
3. Comprehensible Input
4. Strategies
5. Interaction
6. Practice/ Application
7. Lesson Delivery
8. Review and Assessment

The author is of the strong belief that this model, although basically suited for content-based ESL and sheltered content courses, works very well for (language) skills classes as well since it is for teachers teaching linguistically and culturally diverse students.

If you'd like the author of this article to present this model or provide references for your department or school, he would be happy to do that – this would all be volunteering! He can be reached at suraj.khatri@uregina.ca

In the Classroom By Garry Braun

I am a teacher at F. W. Johnson Collegiate in Regina. I teach EAL as well as English Language Arts. Many of our students at Johnson are Karen speakers; others come from Bhutan and Nepal. These students come with significant gaps in their education. Last year, we as an EAL department decided to give these students a "booster year" in which we focused on literacy skills. The hope was that by building the requisite language skills before they entered mainstream classrooms, they would find greater levels of success when they did become a part of these 'academic' classes. We scheduled them into Practical and Applied Arts and Physical Education classes in the afternoons to give them opportunities to integrate into the Johnson community. The teachers have embraced this vision and are keen to have our EAL students in their classes. As our shop teacher said, "As long as they can demonstrate to me that they are aware of the rules around safety, they are always welcome." Working hard at building English language skills is beginning to pay dividends as the EAL students are more comfortable with classroom procedures and have a greater capacity in the English language by the time they are sitting with their Canadian-born friends in regular classes. I want to share one story that illustrates the importance of investing time at the front end in order to see better results later:

We had just finished watching Roman Polanski's version of Macbeth when one of my Thai students asked me a question about the beginning of the movie. I was having a hard time understanding his question since consonants were dropping like fall leaves in a strong wind. Finally I figured out that he wanted to return to the very beginning of the movie when the three witches were on the beach. Aside from the fact that there are always technical challenges in finding a particular scene, I wasn't sure the search would in any way be fruitful, but I decided to humour him.

"There. Right there, Mr. Braun," he shouted.

We watched the witches burying various macabre items, and with each one, he was excitedly jabbering away about what happens later in the play. I rewound the scene once more and saw that he was absolutely right. One of the witches buried the rope from a hangman's noose. This, of course, foreshadows the hanging of the traitorous Thane of Cawdor, paving the way for Macbeth to take his place. Another witch buries a human hand and carefully places a dagger in the palm of the hand, signifying Macbeth's imminent murder of Duncan. Aung couldn't explain this all in perfect English, but I could see the light go on and, having watched the movie myself a number of times, I have to admit that I had never made that connection. So don't tell me that EAL students are not capable of absorbing concepts and making interesting connections. Once again it reminds us of how important it is for EAL learners to see visual representations of printed material.

“Why are Saskatchewan children and youth who speak an Aboriginal first language not provided with ESL/EAL instruction?” By Harlan Weidenhammer

The question I respectfully ask you is, “Why are Saskatchewan children and youth who speak an Aboriginal first language not provided with ESL/EAL instruction?”¹.

I believe in diversity. Our survival depends upon recognizing, protecting and valuing the diversity among human kind. The source of much social conflict is the rejection of diversity. In nature, when one type dominates exclusively, it becomes most vulnerable, because the weakness of one is the weakness of all. Belief in the necessity to preserve, value and facilitate diversity is the foundation of my teaching. Learners are best served by enabling them to find, explore and develop their personal gifts and talents. When they have confidence in their unique identity, they are best able to resist pressure to conform to gang culture, despair and hatred of the other.

The identity of children and youth who speak an Aboriginal first language is ignored and their needs as learners are not addressed, because it is the practice of the educational system to promote a skills development approach to Primary and Secondary education. That model appears to be an effective means to provide children and youth with the competence to enter an industrialized Southern economy. In Northern communities where an Aboriginal language or a dialect of English predominates, children and youth need recognition of their strengths and abilities, and a curriculum that teaches meaningfully what the students need to know in order to become productive citizens. The conviction that children and youth must be supported in achieving independence as learners is the reason for my rejection of the Behaviorist model of industrial education. Industrial education demands that learners conform to the practice of skills acquisition. All school subjects are defined as collections of skills. Competence and success in school is measured by the acquisition of skills. Statistics of skills achievement in individuals, classes, schools and divisions are collected assiduously as measures of success. Students are treated as standardized products of a system that increases their value by the addition of skills components in language, mathematics, science, history and social issues. Those students with the most measurable skills components are celebrated; those with the least are failed. Students who must learn English as they learn in English need the support of a meaningful curriculum and engaging instruction.

Meaning is the vehicle and structure by which learners can be addressed and challenged with respect and engagement. When learners are not told meaning, but engaged in the negotiation of meaning, their unique talents and experiences are validated and challenged. Validation of a learner’s meaning does not imply acceptance or compliance. Instead, it establishes a starting point for negotiation which acknowledges the learner’s independence and equality with the teacher. Meaningful teaching is achieved through the significance and purpose of instruction, not through authority or threat of failure.

Practice of Make It Meaningful requires the engagement of students in learning what is being taught. Engagement requires the learner’s attention, ability to see and hear the purpose of the practice and an understanding and appreciation of the subject being taught. Older students may reflect strategies to compensate for lack of proficiency in the subject by adapting the protocol of the classroom: copying answers; copying chunks of text that seem to correspond to the question; writing illegibly to discourage a critical reading. The need to disguise poor English competency is the result of the denial of their identity as second language learners and their instruction in English, with the exception of a few Dene or Cree credit classes, throughout their school experience. Students must acquire English while they are learning in English. The Provincial Curriculum does not address the needs of these Aboriginal children and youth.

The consequence of requiring students who have a limited competency in English to learn in English is that learners mask their lack of competency by engaging with school and formal learning as a game to be played by generating something and cooperating with the activity. School is experienced as a desert of meaningful, engaging, immediately useful instruction. The remedy must engage the learner in a meaningful relationship with practice to develop bilingual competencies and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. The failure of present Provincial Curriculum to address the needs of the most rapidly growing group of youth in the province is a crisis.

1. I asked this question in letters to the Saskatchewan Minister of Education and twelve other holders of offices significant to the issue of Aboriginal youth education or English as an additional language teaching. I have not received a relevant, responsible answer.

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www.teslsask.com/blog/

Training Standards Considered for K-12 EAL Teachers Submitted by Shannon Storey

The Ministry of Education is in the early stages of considering the establishment of clear standards of training for K-12 teachers assigned responsibility for EAL assessment, resource teaching, specialized classroom teaching and program planning.

Although the Ministry is still some distance away from establishing a specific guideline for teachers with explicit EAL responsibilities, staff responsible for EAL are considering a standard similar to that established in 2002 for Special Education teachers. The Special Education qualifications guidelines prescribe a minimum of six courses (18 credit units) of training in the field, with a teacher being approved by the Educator Services branch of the Ministry on the basis of a review of the precise Special Education courses the candidate has completed. Completers of recognized Master's or Additional Qualification Certificates in the Special Education field do not have to go through the individual review process in order to be recognized as Special Education specialists.

Standards for K-12 EAL specialists have been slow to emerge, in part because the province does not yet have nearly enough appropriately trained EAL teachers to meet the quickly growing need. TESL Saskatchewan and SKTEAL members can hope that the Ministry's move towards a provincial standard will increase the speed at which teachers begin to earn TEAL credentials, in the same way that the establishment of Special Education standards has contributed to a significant increase in the availability of well-qualified Special Education teachers. Appropriate TESL courses are already available on campus at the University of Regina, which offers two undergraduate courses and five Master's-level courses in TEAL, and at a distance from the University of Saskatchewan, which offers a six-course Certificate program that ladders into its 10-course Additional Qualification Certificate in TEAL. A menu of on-campus TEAL courses at the 400 and 800 levels is also in development at the University of Saskatchewan.

Fundamentals for Success (F4S), U of R ESL Program by Deborah Hulston, Academic Coordinator

The University of Regina ESL program has expanded its offerings to meet the needs of students who can only attend our program part-time in the evenings, or who want to fast track their academic success by studying in the evenings during our regular semester, or intensively during the day between our regular semesters. The group of courses is called Fundamentals for Success, and currently includes Fundamentals for IELTS Success, Fundamentals for Writing Success, Fundamentals for Communicative Success, and Fundamentals for Literacy Success.

We are looking to expand these classes, and are always open to suggestions. If you or someone you know is in need of part-time study in Regina, feel free to send them to us! Our trained, experienced, and TESL Saskatchewan or TESL Canada accredited instructors are here to help students meet their language learning goals!