

SPRING 2013



# NEWSLETTER

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## From The President

Hi everyone,

I think all would agree that we have just had an excellent conference, no? Between Bula's legendary organization, Ricardo's delicious delicacies, the planning team's hard work and the excellent speakers and workshops, we could not have asked for a better conference! Thank you once again to Bula and her team for all of their hard work. I myself was rejuvenated by the conference and am looking forward to the work of TESL Sask for the next year. As promised, we are already looking at prospective strategic consultants to help us make our board even more able to serve the needs of you, our members.

One change that is coming soon to the board is that our beloved Karen - the TESL Sask board assistant - has resigned from her position. We have appreciated all of her hard work and commitment while she was with us, so thank you very much Karen. Karen will be staying with us a little longer to give us time to get a new board assistant in place, so keep your eyes open for an email with a job posting sometime in the next month.

Once again, thank you for a great conference, and see you next year at the TESL Canada conference in Regina!

Deborah Hulston

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scholarships please go to  
[http://www.teslsask.com/  
scholarship](http://www.teslsask.com/scholarship)

## Winner of the 2013 Myrna Firman Scholarship!

I am a highly responsible and open-minded Sudanese female with strong interpersonal skills. I am attending the University of Regina, studying Psychology and then I intend to continue my studies in the field of psychiatry. My eventual goal is to assist people as a psychiatrist in hospitals.

My family relocated to Canada in 2007 from Syria as government-assisted refugees after my dad applied to the United Nations for protection. Our life before coming to Canada was very uncertain. In Sudan, there was war and very little opportunity to succeed and so my family had fled to Syria. When I first started high school, I was lacking confidence, felt very unsure of myself and could not speak English. In five short years, I have faced my fears head on and today I am proud to say that I continuously strive to be a positive role model for other young women.

I am very involved in extracurricular activities in both my school and the community. I have received valuable leadership training in different areas. All this community service that I have done has made me the person that I am now. I love volunteering and hopefully I will keep this up in the future.

Razan Suliman

## Building Connections for Newcomer Success: Leveraging our Community Strengths

Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools began reviewing our English as an Additional Language (EAL) programming last year because of the increased enrollment as well as new direction from the Ministry. After a re-visioning session with school principals, we came to the realization that we needed not only a division response but the broader perspective from the community to best determine how to serve Newcomers in our schools. Under the direction of Rosanne Kerr, coordinator of Student Services, and assisted by Diana Nordick, Consultant for EAL, it was decided that we would host a summit that will involve a large group of people working through an appreciative inquiry process.

This summit, Building Connections for Newcomer Success, will leverage the strengths of those who work in Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools, but will also invite the larger community in order to create a response and a vision to foster success for English Language Learners. More specifically we will

- examine the strengths of our present program for English Language Learners,
- ask participants to respond holistically to the challenges that Newcomers encounter in our schools and to assist in furthering improvements for this group,
- identify opportunities to build effective programming for the future,
- Identify partnerships in the community that can serve our Newcomers.

This Re-visioning Summit will take place on Friday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013, and we are excited to be able to reach out to our staff and the community at large in order to respond to the needs of English Language Learners and to redesign our support for them.

Diana Nordick

## TESL Saskatchewan Learners' Conference 2013 By Prudence Swaan, Learner Advocate

The TESL SK Learners' Conference was again a part of the bigger TESL SK Conference: "Living Language Together" 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 all of the wonderful sponsors that we had. Thanks to all of the people that helped put the conference together, including a special thanks to Bula Ghosh, Terry Brabender, Palma Miller, Carol Moran, Liliana Dominguez, Karen Comer and everyone else who helped with the Learners' Conference.



# TESL Saskatchewan “Living Language Together” Conference by Bula Ghosh

Living Language Together, the annual conference hosted by SK TEAL and TESL Saskatchewan on May 9-11<sup>th</sup>, 2013 in Swift Current, was a huge success. We had about 250 delegates attend the conference, which is the largest number of attendees that we have ever had. The feedback we got from the conference delegates was very positive; many appreciated the opportunity to learn about teaching strategies, networking opportunities and new initiatives that will have significant impact on what we do as EAL/ESL practitioners and administrators.

The keynote speakers were well received. Their topics were practical and realistic. The speakers provided adequate time to interact with conference delegates and share their expertise. All the keynote speakers presented workshops, and that provided the conference participants another chance to learn and ask questions to them.

As I recall, it was the first time we offered a pre-conference. We are grateful to Chinook School Division for sponsoring the pre-conference. This indicated teachers/instructors from other school divisions and other adult ESL service providing agencies took advantage of the privilege of spending a day with Maria Arguelles, keynote speaker.

The two keynote speakers on May 10<sup>th</sup> spoke on how important it is to seize every opportunity to teach Academic English language skills to EAL/ESL learners. Maria Arguelles discussed practical strategies for teachers/instructors for teaching academic language and improving comprehension skills. Deborah Short's S.I.O.P. (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) mode for sheltered instruction and learning by scaffolding did have common threads with Maria Arguelles' presentation. Deborah Short had copies of her books on the S.I.O.P. model available for perusal and door prizes.

On May 11<sup>th</sup>, we had a presentation on cultural competency from Erin Waugh, keynote presenter. Erin brought up key issues and thoughts that EAL/ESL practitioners and administrators need to be mindful about. His workshop on culture was well attended as well.

We were very fortunate to have Hetty Roessingh back again to present on the importance of vocabulary development. Her presentation was based on the extensive research that she has done in the field. She presented two workshops on vocabulary teaching. I noticed that many participants stayed longer to discuss the topic further with Hetty.

The workshops presented by Pascal St. Jean and Natalia Aleko were very well attended. They had hands-on presentations on how to access Tutela and its usefulness.

We are very thankful to EAL/ESL practitioners who presented workshops to share their expertise and experience in the field with their colleagues. Their contribution enriched everybody's conference experience. It is very important to recognize that these colleagues of ours do not receive any remuneration for their service. They do it from the goodness of their hearts. We extend kudos to the presenters. They went above and beyond to share and make the conference experience of their peers even more meaningful.

The Canadian Language Benchmarks workshop was very popular. We are thankful to Tim Helfrich, Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) and TESL Saskatchewan for providing the funds and resources to make this session happen. Unfortunately, access to this workshop was limited as the resources cost us \$50 per participant.

Special acknowledgement and thanks go out to Nadia Prokopchuk, Ministry of Education, for presenting on new initiatives by her ministry. When we had a last minute cancellation of a workshop, Nadia agreed to present her session again to fill the void. Her sessions were well attended.

There was media coverage from the Vanguard School learners and principal, Greg Schwaga. They published newsletters on May 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. It was a wonderful way of reporting on our conference while these young people were able to showcase their talents in publishing using audio, visual and print media.

We hosted learners' conferences on May 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>. The conference on May 10<sup>th</sup> was for K-12 EAL learners. On May 11<sup>th</sup>, we had adult ESL learners. On both days, we had around 30 participants. Many of the keynote speakers spoke to the learners. The learners were provided opportunities to have informal discussions with them. The adult learners, on May 11<sup>th</sup>, were able to meet and ask questions of representatives from different service providers such as the police, the Salvation Army, and Kid Sport.

The publishers' displays from Nelson Canada, Pearson ELT and Cambridge were well received. The representatives from these companies mentioned that many delegates stopped by their display and made inquiries, ordered and bought resources. There were several door prizes donated by the publishers for the conference delegates and the learners.

The Friday night banquet was attended by 160 conference attendees. They were entertained by a school choir from St. Joseph Catholic School, Great Plains College Choir and K-Fever (a very energetic dance group).

Overall, the conference was a success. We had two very diligent conference planning committees that worked hard to meet the demands of hosting a provincial conference and a learners' conference. Furthermore, the several sponsors enriched the conference experience. Thanks to Karen Comer, Executive Assistant, TESL SK, for taking care of the registration process.

We received evaluations from around 100 delegates. As we tabulate the evaluation findings, we will learn how we can serve our EAL/ESL community of learners, practitioners and administrators better in the future at our next annual conference.

Finally, we thank Shawna Jurgens (SK TEAL President) and Deborah Hulston (TESL SK President) for their leadership, which was key to our success.

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### BICS & CALP in EAL: What Cummins Argues

Language proficiency is the command of a language that a person demonstrates, regardless of his or her background in that particular language. Such proficiency might reflect his or her proficiency in grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic levels. Research shows claiming that one should be good at classroom language just because he or she is good at social language skills is not feasible, and it is clear when we read Cummins, who makes a distinction by introducing two terms in language proficiency (1979): BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency); and, according to him, communication is described on a continuum from context-embedded to context-reduced.

BICS is the language proficiency that is required for face-to-face communication; interactions in this situation are context-embedded. It is the day-to-day language that is needed to interact in a social circle. It is generally known to be the "surface" skill of listening and speaking and is typically acquired quickly by many students when these students spend a lot of their school time chatting with native speakers. CALP is the language proficiency that is required outside of a student's immediate interpersonal context; it is not context-embedded as BICS is – in fact, it is context-reduced and demands the language outside of the social circle. In short, CALP is the language of the classroom. As the name suggests, it is the basis for a student's ability to cope with the academic demands placed upon him or her in the various subjects.

Cummins argues that BICS is not very cognitively demanding as it is context-embedded, and it usually develops within six months to two years after arrival in Canada. To function academically well in a classroom environment, a student is required to develop his or her CALP, which is cognitively demanding. Cummins says that it takes an average of five to seven years for children to acquire CALP in any language. Thomas & Collier (1995) claim that that if a child has no prior schooling or has no support in his or her native language development, it might even take seven to ten years for him or her to catch up to peers, so it should not be assumed that a second language student who is fluent in his or her social English has the corresponding academic language proficiency. It leads to the conclusion that non-native speakers who have completed their ESL or EAL program are still, in most cases, in the process of catching up with their native-speaking peers in their mainstream classes.

Submitted by Raj Khatri, ESL Instructor at the University of Regina