



ELSA Net

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2014 | Issue 28

Communities of Practice

Feature Articles

The ELSA Net Conference

Page 6-7

Reflections from a CoP Mentor

Page 14

Sowing Seeds for Settlement Success

Page 15



Contents

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SERVICES FOR ADULTS

3	ELSA Net Update
6	Feature Article
7	Resources
12	Child Care Resources
14	From Our Members
16	From Our Students
19	From Our Community

Our Mission

ELSA Net empowers its members, throughout the province of British Columbia, to help their clients achieve language and resettlement goals by providing leadership, communication networks, and resources.

Our Vision

Excellence in Settlement Language Services

Our values reflect our passion for education and support our success.

Excellence
Diversity
Unity
Communication
Accountability
Teamwork
Ethics

The ELSA Net Newsletter is available in PDF format on the ELSA Net website: www.elsanet.org.

Contributions to future editions of the ELSA Net Newsletter are welcomed at esl@elsanet.org.

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*Special thanks
to our contributors!*



ELSA Net Update

Message from ELSA Net President

*Alison Whitmore,
Coquitlam Continuing Education, SD43*

Firstly, a word of thanks to Past President of the ELSA Net Board Katie Graham of S.U.C.C.E.S.S. She demonstrated an unmatched ability to focus priorities while maintaining a sense of humor and equilibrium (Keep Calm and Carry On!) ~ thanks for your hard work and dedication over the years Katie! As I step in to my new role, I acknowledge that this will be an interesting year to be President.

All members of ELSA Net can be proud of the work that is so ably managed by Brenda and the employees of ELSA Net. The settlement language training sector in BC relies on ELSA Net for support, information, communication, resource development and networking. ELSA Net is 'the expert representative voice' for all of us.

We had a successful year in 2013. This includes fee-for-service training, transition information, communication, and day-to-day support for individual organizations. The year successfully culminated with the planning and organization of a conference attended by hundreds of teachers, support staff, childcare workers and managers.

At this time, we need to be patient and maintain objectivity while grappling with factors that have changed and situations that remain unclear to providers. We will be dealing with many changes to specific policies for language delivery; childcare provision; assessment and referral; student progress: advertising and branding of LINC; the transition to CLB - LINC levels: hours caps, etc. These changes will be challenging but manageable. ELSA Net will continue to ask questions and provide members with information as we transition.

Moving forward, we need to focus on organizational changes, while supporting our staff. We remain committed to assisting our members in their provision of quality settlement language training.



*Brenda Lohrenz - ELSA Net ED
Alison Whitmore - ELSA Net President
Katie Graham - ELSA Net Past President*

Message from the Executive Director

Brenda Lohrenz, ELSA Net

As we move into a new funding environment, reaching out to other parts of the country suddenly moves from a professional development pastime to an employer-driven mission! Some of you have attended TESL Canada, TESL Ontario or even the recent REALIZE online conference to connect with a more extensive network of fellow settlement language providers. As we venture forward, we have opportunities to learn

how things are done in other parts of the country that enhance immigrants' language learning and settlement outcomes. We can also share some of the excellent promising practices and innovations that were conceived right here in BC.

With the National Settlement Conference in November 2013, delegates from BC had another opportunity to share on what Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)

has termed 'Vision 2020'. Looking ahead, what do we foresee for our sector, our newcomers, our workplaces and schools? There were lively discussions taking place on topics ranging from 'new funding mechanisms' to 'responsive programming and delivery' to 'creating greater opportunities to serve clients in areas with limited or no services'. Language delegates to the conference had the opportunity to synthesize some responses that were submitted to CIC through the TESL Canada Settlement Language National Network. For more information please see <http://www.tesl.ca/about-us/board-of-directors-committees/settlement-language-national-network/>

The National Language Advisory Body (NLAB) meets in Ottawa annually (and online year round) as a

ELSA Net Update

Message from the ED

mechanism for collaboration, consultation and planning between the settlement language training sector and CIC. It brings together language experts to input on national policy and programming and allows for dialogue to enhance movement towards a national vision. This mandate is daunting as for many it heralds a brave new world of settlement language educators speaking up and speaking out nationally on behalf of client/student needs, hopes and aspirations. When we collaborate with our colleagues in other regions, we are contributing to ensuring a higher standard of service regardless of where a newcomer lands - an impressive objective, but also what should be a reasonable expectation for immigrants and refugees to Canada.

There are important ways to participate in this brave new world and extend your own voice and community of practice - and how fitting that this was the topic of our final 'ELSA Net' Conference. Your umbrella organization is now embracing a new chapter of existence, but remains a network dedicated to services for our members in the BC settlement language sector in support of their newcomer clients. As a strong and committed partner in your community of practice, we are looking forward to enhanced collaboration as we cultivate connections with colleagues from coast to coast.

ELSA Net Conference 2013 and Legacy Project

The ELSA Legacy Project encapsulates the past, celebrates the present, and embraces the future. As we have moved forward into this new decade, so too does our English Language Services for Adults Community of Practice. ELSA Net was inaugurated over 13 years ago "to empower its members to help their clients achieve language and resettlement goals by providing leadership, communication and resources."

This legacy memorial, constructed by artist and ELSA teacher Theresa Howell, celebrates the ELSA community:

- our strength
- our passion
- our future

See more at www.elsanet.org.



"Thank you for being the leader umbrella organization for ESL instructors in BC."

Wish for "more and better services and ideas for integration and fulfillment into the society."



ELSA Net Update



ELSA Net Conference 2013 and Legacy Project

"PD Training with ELSA Net is outstanding!"

"Thank you for all your excellent work for the ELSA program and ELSA staff and students."

"Thank you for all your support over the years."

"Thanks for taking care of us so we could take care of our students."

"ELSA Net has provided so much valuable support."

"ELSA Net is absolutely relevant, so hands-on. It is survival for our organization." from ELSA Regional Provider

ELSA Net Board of Directors 2014

ELSA Net Society Officers

Alison Whitmore, President
Nina Miller, Vice President
Richard Sim, Secretary-Treasurer
Katie Graham, Past President



Lower Mainland - Public

Louise Thorburn, Burnaby Continuing Education
Richard Sim, Vancouver Community College
Marta Batory, Richmond Continuing Education - Alternate

Lower Mainland - Private

Sheryl Zehr, Burnaby English Language Centre
Julia Tajiri, Vancouver Formosa Academy
Christine Woods, New Westminster English Language Centre - Alternate

Lower Mainland - Non-Profit

Nina Miller, MOSAIC
Susan Schachter, Little Mountain Neighborhood House
Wei-Wei Siew, South Vancouver Neighborhood House - Alternate

Surrey / Tri-cities / Delta

Alison Whitmore, Coquitlam Continuing Education, SD43
Ewa Karczewska, Immigrant Services Society
Lois Taylor, Douglas College - Alternate

Fraser Valley

Corinne Vooyo, Abbotsford Community Services
April Neave, Chilliwack Community Services - Alternate

Vancouver Island South

Todd Kitzler, Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria
Winnie Lee, ICA of Greater Victoria - Alternate

Vancouver Island North

Robert Dawkes, Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society
Jackie Martin, Cowichan Intercultural Society - Alternate

East and South Central BC

Paul Lagace, Kamloops Cariboo Regional Immigrant Society
Cam Martin, Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society - Alternate

North and North Central BC

Joan Haack, IMSS Prince George
Marie Grinstrand, Northwest Community College - Prince Rupert Campus - Alternate

Assessment Centres

Wes Schroeder, Western ESL Services
Vasso Vahlas, Surrey Language Assessment Centre - Alternate

Feature Article

Conference Review – Communities of Practice: Learning from Each Other

by *James Harder, Vancouver Formosa Academy*

Walking out of the Waterfront SkyTrain station, I looked at the North Shore mountains and float planes taking off from and landing in Burrard Inlet and made my way to the Vancouver Convention Centre for the 2013 ELSA Net Conference. Inside, after registering and stopping to chat with some ELSA associates, I entered the hall for the conference's keynote address. And as I sat quietly during the Squamish Nation greeting and song of welcome, I looked around at the group of listeners.

The conference's theme, Communities of Practice, asks us to understand our work in terms of the work groups we belong to, our interest in the work we do, and our efforts to improve our work as we interact regularly with these groups.

Throughout the day, I encountered the diverse communities at this conference represented by the various roles people fulfill: child minders, support staff, instructors, representatives from the federal and provincial governments, managers, assessors, vendors at the publishing displays, and ELSA students, all in various positions as workers, volunteers, workshop presenters, and attendees.

We can also understand these communities according to other criteria: by levels of knowledge and skill; by qualifications; by our relationships to others; by how we work—in person, online, or some combination of the two; by the times of the day we work; by geography, in the various regions across the province; and by the levels of enthusiasm we bring to our work. We are a diverse group but our common goals bind us together.

These communities intermixed at this conference, especially at lunch and at the various workshops. At the morning workshop I attended, it was good to meet another attendee with whom, I was surprised to discover, I shared a mutual friend. At the afternoon workshop I attended, the central message seemed to echo some of what was said during the keynote address: we're often alone in the work we do, and for this work to evolve and improve we have to meet with others to talk about this. One of the most gratifying aspects of the workshops for me was being audience to the ELSA student volunteers' sincere introductory and closing remarks.

There were more opportunities to network at the lunch. The food was delicious and the room itself was splendid. I think people were happy seeing their colleagues outside of the work environment. It was also good to see people reconnecting with colleagues who work different



shifts and former colleagues and old friends who are now working at other LTOs and in other contexts.

Physically bringing people together at the same time, in the same space provides robust opportunities for the development of communities of practice. But for an event like this to be a true success, one has to hope that these communities of practice will continue to develop outside of this setting. Away from events such as this conference, it's easy to get lost in the daily concerns of our work. But mindful participation in a community of practice can provide a powerful reminder of what we've learned.

Feature Article

Messages put forth during both the post-lunch legacy gala and the pre-keynote government addresses emphasized the importance of acknowledging people who have made extraordinary contributions to this sector over the years. Creating and belonging to a community of practice helps to honour these people and their work. We were reminded also that newcomers are falling behind economically and socially in Canada. This situation is obviously difficult to remedy, but wholehearted participation in a community of practice can at least help build a locus for meaningful conversations about bettering our support for them.

A few ideas from Dr. Farrell's keynote have stayed with me since the conference. Ideas about meeting with others to talk about what we practice, about building relationships and learning from each other, about bonding with co-workers, renewing commitment, and supporting each other: I think these ideas, put into practice, will always energize the work we do.

Leaving the convention centre at the end of the day, I gazed again at the beauty that this panoramic intersection between nature and the city offers before heading to the SkyTrain station, feeling fortunate to have been at a conference at such a place. On the train, I ran into one of the presenters from the afternoon workshop I'd attended. I thanked her for her work. She asked me if I thought it was worth it. "Yes," I answered. "Of course it was. Yes."



Keynote presentation, ELSA Net PD Conference 2013

Resources

Resources for Working with ESL Literacy Learners

by Tina Chau, *Decoda Literacy Solutions*



Are you working with ESL students who are literacy learners? Do you want more ideas or materials to use with them? Here are a few of the resources that you can borrow from the Decoda Literacy Library:

The Active Reader Foundation Level by Linda Kita-Bradley (2011)

All New Very Easy True Stories: a picture-based first reader by Sandra Heyer (2006)

ESL Classics (song book & CD) by Maureen Stewart (2006)

Eye on Literacy: a series of 9 wordless picture books with detailed lesson plans and teaching materials, available individually (2012)

Learning for LIFE: an ESL Literacy Handbook from Bow Valley College (2009)

Longman ESL Literacy: student and teacher books by Yvonne Wong Nishio (2006)

Successintesi resources by Donna Bowler: lesson plans and curricula on a variety of topics from a BC teacher (2009 - 2013)

Wow! Stories from Real Life: a low-beginning multi-skills text by Natalie Hess (2008)

And, of course, there are numerous free online resources. Here's a small sample. Visit the links to learn more:

ESL Literacy Network: <http://www.esl-literacy.com/>

ISSofBC ELSA videos: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL62sv-yq31hJ-IRbzI2JUBaPOXIdq6esB>

The Official Westcoast Reader:

<http://www.thewestcoastreader.com>

Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab:

<http://www.esl-lab.com>

The Decoda Literacy Library offers free library service throughout BC. Your loans are mailed to you with a prepaid return label. Use our website at <http://decoda.ca> to search the online catalogue and request books, browse materials lists by topic, or learn more about borrowing.

For help or ideas, contact us by email at library@decoda.ca or give us a call at 604-681-4199.

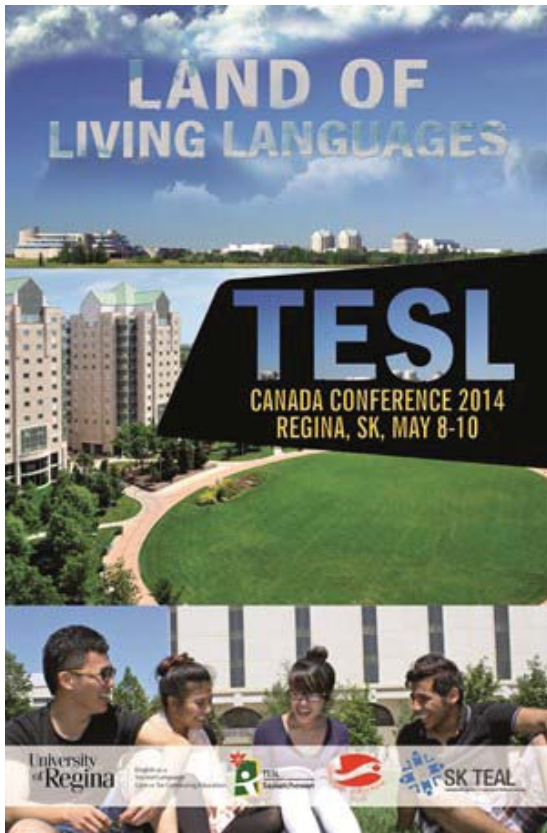
Resources

Conferences and Professional Development Opportunities

ELSA Net Training, Task Based Language Teaching for Low Levels, February 28, 2014. Connect and share ideas with other teachers working at similar levels around BC. Joann Chernen from VCC will take session participants through a 9-step formula specific to an integrated 4-skills Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach to speaking and writing tasks. The session will focus on CLB Stage I learners (CLB 1 - 4).

See <http://www.elsanet.org/site/resources/> for info on all ELSA Net Training.

BC TEAL 46th Annual Conference, *Innovation and Change: Meeting the Challenges*, Friday and Saturday, May 23 - 24, 2014. The conference will be held at Kwantlen Polytechnic University's Richmond Campus. The plenary speakers are Randi Reppen, author of *Grammar & Beyond* and expert on Corpus Linguistics (Friday), and Lionel LaRoche, cross-cultural trainer and expert on workplace cultural diversity. For more information, go to <http://www.bctéal.org/conferences/2014-annual-conference>.



TESL Canada Conference, Land of Living Languages, May 8 - 10, 2014. Visit their website at <http://www.tesl.ca/conferences/conference-2014/>.



bc teal 46th annual conference
 may 23/24, 2014

Plenary Speakers

Friday: **Randi Reppen**,
 Professor of Applied Linguistics,
 Arizona State University

Saturday: **Lionel LaRoche**,
 Founder and principal,
 Multicultural Business Solutions

KWANTLEN POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
 8771 Lansdowne Road
 Richmond, B.C.

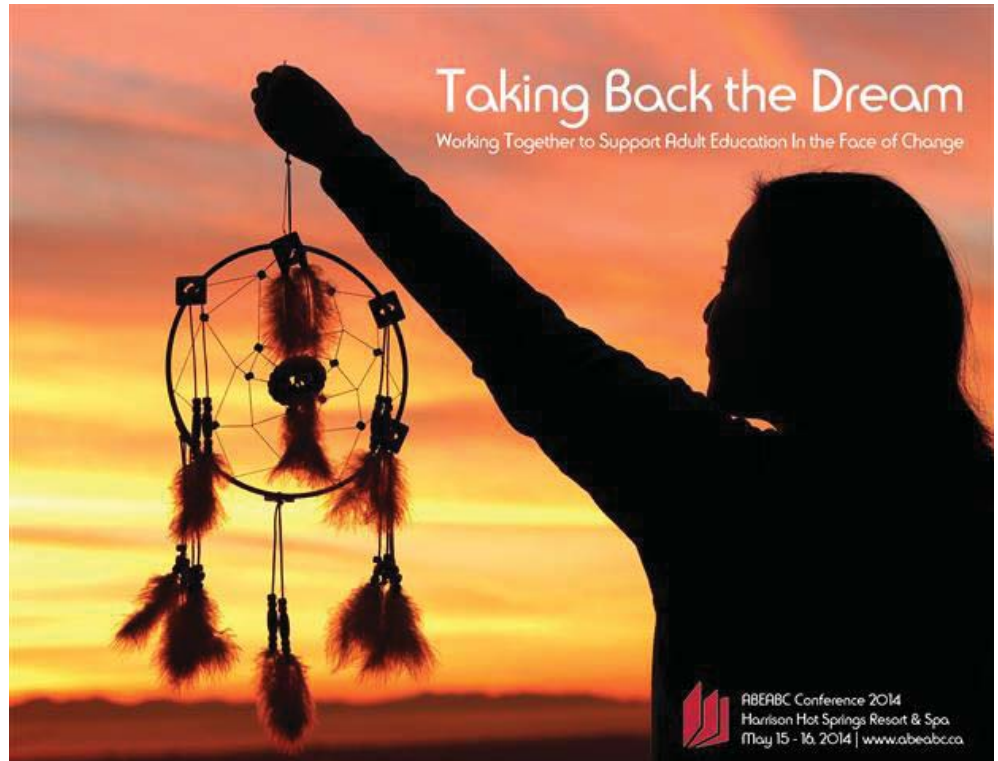
BC TEAL
 www.bctéal.org
 Phone: 604.736.6330
 admin@bctéal.org

Resources

TESOL International Convention & English Language Expo,

March 26 - 29, 2014. The 2014 International TESOL Conference will be held in Portland, Oregon. This conference provides an exciting opportunity to connect with thousands of other professionals in the field of ELT. You will gain awareness of what is happening globally in the field, learn from renowned experts, and discover the broad range of opportunities that are available professionally in the field of ELT. Don't miss it! Visit their website at

<http://www.tesol.org/attend-and-learn/international-convention/convention2014>



Start Your Own Professional Development Group!

Take charge of your own professional development, tailor it to your specific needs or interests, and discover an enriching experience of professional and personal growth. There are many ways to find the supports and collaboration that you need without relying on your organization or workplace. Here are a few suggestions:



Reading Circles: We all wish there was more time to read, and sometimes the motivation to do so is low unless we have others to help. A book club provides a great way to keep up to date with latest research, refresh your knowledge, or do research on specific areas of interest. Meet once a month to discuss a book, article, or chapter of interest.

It's Just Lunch: You might associate these words with a dating service, but why not start regular

lunchtime meetings with other professionals in your field to get to know each other and share ideas? It doesn't take time out of your work day. Do this weekly or monthly and open it up



to colleagues at your workplace or extend it to others at various organizations. Choose a focus topic or theme as a guide for the conversation.

Research Groups: Working on a research project or materials development can sometimes be isolating. If this is the case with you, start a research group as way to share projects and get feedback from one another. Look for others who are working on similar types of projects. Set up meeting times, establish an agenda, and prepare to present what you are working on at the time to others in your group.

You might be in a community that does not have many others in the field to connect with. Use Skype or the conference rooms on Tutela as a way to create PD groups that can meet from any distance.

Resources

Connecting with a Community of Practice

Tutela

Tutela's tagline says it all: "Tutela.ca is the thriving online community that connects current and future ESL/ FSL professionals across Canada, with a focus on language training for adult newcomers." Tutela houses resources, webinars, discussion forums, video conferencing facilities, and more. It's a great tool for creating professional development groups with members in diverse geographic locations.

Visit <http://tutela.ca/>



ESL Literacy Network

Bow Valley College in Alberta is a national leader in ESL Literacy. Bow Valley College produces and maintains the ESL Literacy Network, an online community of practice that provides resources and information to support the professional development of ESL literacy practitioners.

Visit <http://www.esl-literacy.com/> for more information.

Social Media and Online Tools

Facebook is a great platform to help instructors keep up to date with what is happening in specific areas in the field of ELT. Did you know that Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA) has a Facebook page? Check it out, keep informed, join in discussions, and learn about ongoing opportunities.



Twitter is another tool that can be used to help you stay engaged with the latest news in the field. Be sure to follow ELSA Net on Twitter and join in the conversations about events and resources.



LinkedIn is the popular social networking platform for professionals. Access resources, read blogs, and participate in professional dialogues with others in your field of work or research.



An Important Announcement from The Westcoast Reader

Patty Bossort, Editor, The Westcoast Reader

For many years, ELSA and ELSAP programs have received the WCR free of charge. However, because Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) will not be funding *The Westcoast Reader*, we will not be able to continue delivering it free to your program after March 31, 2014.

You will still be able to subscribe to *The Westcoast Reader*. However, you will have to pay for the subscription. We will be charging a subscription fee for the paper starting with the April 2014 edition. Our subscription rate is \$0.50 per paper. Therefore, for a class set of 20 copies for 10 months, you will be charged \$100 annually. This fee will cover the printing and distribution costs.

We are informing you of these changes now, so that you will have an opportunity to build it into your budgets for the next fiscal year. We hope you will subscribe and continue to enjoy this unique resource for new readers.

In order to receive an April paper, we need to receive your completed subscription form and cheque by March 7. If you have questions about subscribing, please contact Patti-Lea Ryan at 604-984-1756 or wcreader@capilanou.ca

The Westcoast Reader new subscription rates:

\$0.50 per copy

Order by March 7 to continue receiving this great resource in April 2014 and beyond.

Please contact Patti-Lea Ryan at 604-984-1756 or wcreader@capilanou.ca

Resources

Family Day

Family Day in BC is on February 10, 2014. This holiday provides an opportunity to focus on topics dealing with family. There are a number of resources online. Follow these links to find ideas for lesson plans on family:

ESL Flow provides a number of lesson plans and worksheets on topics related to family.

<http://www.eslflow.com/ESLfamilylessonplans.html>

Family Tree Templates provides free templates of family trees.

<http://www.familytreetemplates.net/>

ESL Holiday Lessons provides a lesson on the International Day of the Family, which is on May 15th. http://www.eslholidaylessons.com/05/international_day_of_families.html



Volunteering Opportunities in the Community

Go Volunteer is a website that enables you to search for specific volunteer opportunities by type and location. It presents a great way for your students to get connected in their communities and to practice their language skills outside of the classroom. Visit their website at <http://govolunteer.ca/>.

Volunteer BC provides a number of links to volunteer resources, training sessions, and other opportunities. Visit their website at <http://www.volunteerbc.bc.ca/>.

Leisure Guides or Recreational Guides offer a variety of options for your students to get involved in their communities, make new friends, practice English, and integrate into Canadian society. The guides include information on classes, recreational activities, volunteer opportunities, and workshops geared to people of specific ages in various locations.

Use the guides in your classes as a reading text for developing lessons, projects, or research assignments. Have your students participate in something from the leisure/recreational guide and report back to the class about their experience.

go volunteer



Child Care Resources

CHILD HEALTH ACROSS CULTURES

*The Health, Well-Being and Special Needs of
Children from Diverse Backgrounds*



*A resource for teachers and others with an interest in
strengthening the health of children experiencing
more than one culture*

Judith A. Colbert, PhD

*Author of Welcoming Newcomer Children:
The Settlement of Young Immigrants and Refugees*

Child Health across Cultures

by Dr. Judith Colbert, PhD, is a resource for teachers and others with an interest in strengthening the health of children experiencing more than one culture. It includes the following topics:

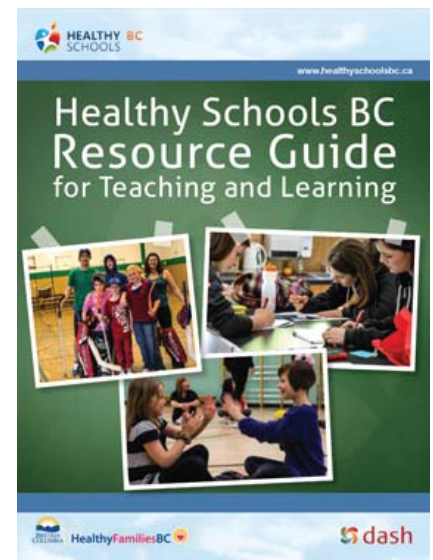
- Chapter 1: Why is Child Health Important?
- Chapter 2: What is Health?
- Chapter 3: Health Beliefs and Practices across Cultures
- Chapter 4: Patterns for Understanding Health Issues
- Chapter 5: Ideas about Prevention and Intervention
- Chapter 6: Ideas about Disabilities and Health Conditions
- Chapter 7: Migration, Settlement and Health
- Chapter 8: Teacher/Professional Response

Click the following link for more information
www.welcomingchildren.ca

To order this text, follow this link: www.volumesdirect.com

Healthy Schools BC Resource Guide for Teaching and Learning

provides classrooms and schools with a step-by-step process to address health-related goals. It examines health holistically to include social, emotional, and physical wellness and supports improvements in health and learning. The guide is intended for students in all grades and can be integrated within and across various areas of the curriculum. It can be used by students, educators, school support staff, parents, and health professionals. To learn more, follow this link: <http://healthyschoolsbc.ca/healthy-schools-bc-resources/teaching-and-learning-guide.aspx>



ELSA Child Care Workers Training Workshop and Sharing Session *Understanding Sensory Processing: Challenges and Strategies for the Young Child*

Presenter: Lenora Delaney, Occupational Therapist
Date: February 21, 2014
Time: 9:30 am – 4:30 pm
Location: Holiday Inn Express Metrotown, Burnaby
4405 Central Blvd, Burnaby, BC V5H4M3

Child Care Resources

Immigrant Parents as Literacy Supporters: Building Bridges between Cultures

by Jessica Holyoak, North Shore Multicultural Society

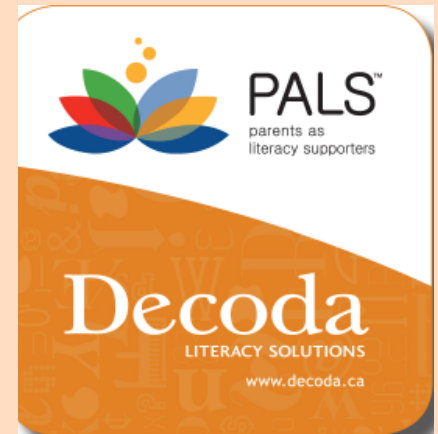
Encouraging the development of language and literacy skills in the preschool and kindergarten years makes a big difference to a child's ability to adapt and thrive in school and in their new community.

The Parents as Literacy Supporters (PALS) program engages parents and caregivers in early literacy-learning activities. The program includes a specialized delivery model for newcomer families—Immigrant PALS (IPALS). This program enhances the family's ability to understand the Canadian education system, and to build connections with other families, the school, and the community.

North Vancouver School District 44 and the North Shore Multicultural Society offer this service to Korean and Farsi-speaking families in the local community. An English-speaking IPALS facilitator and two first-language cultural facilitators support the group. Each session incorporates a mix of English, Farsi, and Korean materials (songs, poems, and activities). Participants benefit not only from the program curriculum, but also from the exchange of cultural information between language groups.

When starting in the program, participants tend to seek out others from their home country. However, as the program progresses, the differences begin to fade and the groups become more comfortable with each other. This benefits the children, who will ultimately enter the diverse population of Canadian schools. Although there are challenges, the positive impact each group has on the learning and growth of the other outweighs the difficulties. The multicultural model of this program reflects the multicultural makeup of Canadian society.

For more information on the PALS program, go to <http://decoda.ca/children-families/pals/>
For practitioners guides, go to <http://decoda.ca/product-category/early-learning-practitioners-guides/>
For more resources, go to <http://decoda.ca/children-families/resources-child-family-literacy/>



*Photos by Sara Tabatabaee
North Shore Multicultural
Society*



From Our Members

Giving Back: Lessons Learned through 30+ Practicums

by Paul Carter, ISSofBC

As teachers, we all have to start with a practicum and the experiences we have as student teachers can have a huge impact on the way we approach our learners, our colleagues, and our own teaching styles in the years that follow. A student teacher with a positive, encouraging, and forthright mentor will always have a more successful practicum experience. Student teachers come in with a wide variety of competencies, skills, experiences, and challenges. And as mentors, we need to find a way to play to an individual's strengths while addressing any areas of concern at the same time. Student teachers are under a lot of pressure from many different sources and can often suffer from a lot of anxiety during their practicums. A sponsor teacher's extra attention to preparation and compassionate, active listening can serve to reduce the student teacher's stress levels and thus enable them to function at a higher level in your class.

Reminding the student teacher that a practicum allows the mentor a rich opportunity to reflect on their own

teaching decisions, see their own class from a new perspective, and gain new insights, ideas, techniques, and materials from them can help to reduce tension even more. This levels the playing field and the work the sponsor and student teachers do together can become more collaborative as the practicum progresses. All of this combined with respectful, thorough, detailed, and honest debriefings after each lesson can lead to a successful and enriching practicum for all involved. Learning to excel as a sponsor teacher is a slow and complex process, but the rewards can be immeasurable.



From Practicum to Providers - Former VCC TESOL practicum students Farhat and Ravi catching up with their mentor teacher Paul after the ELSA Net conference in 2013.

*Farhat Mustafa, ELSA Instructor at S.U.C.C.E.S.S. in Surrey
Ravi Uppal, ELSA Instructor at DIVERSECity Community Resources Society in Surrey
Paul Carter, Online Resource Developer at ISSofBC in Vancouver.*

Reflections from a Community of Practice Mentor

by Elise Emnacen, Excel Educational Centre

ELSA teachers are dedicated professionals who care about their students and strive to deliver useful and meaningful lessons to the learners in their classrooms. As a mentor to an ELSA 6/7 Communities of Practice - Smaller Communities pod in the fall of 2012 and again in spring 2013, I say this with confidence and pride. Across the board, the participants—teachers from Vancouver Island, the Fraser Valley, the Okanagan, and Interior BC—brought their personal experiences, professional experiences, and knowledge of their communities to the classroom. And when certain resources weren't on hand, they would do their own research and find what they needed. I was happy to see such a common dedication from teachers in such a diversity of communities.

In the pilot application of the ELSA 6/7 Smaller Communities Curriculum, it was encouraging to see how teachers adapted it to their classrooms, community demographics, and local community resources. We are all from different communities with uniquely different clientele, yet there is great uniformity and consistency in the content and delivery of the ELSA Program throughout the province. Continuing pods, in which instructors teaching the same level can connect regardless of where they teach, promote professional support, maintain a thread of consistency, and calibrate standards. Networking with and beyond our local school contexts, as we did in the Smaller Communities pods, can bring inspiration and professional satisfaction from the sharing of ideas. We belong to various communities, but we are united as we connect, collaborate, and build a stronger and integrated province-wide community of teachers teaching newcomers.

From Our Members

Our Community of Practice at BELC

by Sheryl Zehr, Burnaby English Language Centre

Our community of practice at BELC (Burnaby English Language Centre) is a work in progress, but we are pleased that many of our staff members have been here a long time and tell us they are pretty happy here.

Here are a few things we have learned that have helped us promote a culture of collaboration and ongoing professional growth:

- We have designed our staff common area to support a culture of sharing, which includes a designated place for teachers to put out resources they have developed.
- Management often mingles with staff at coffee breaks or after class to offer support and promote sharing of small student or class problems before they become big ones.
- To provide opportunities for staff to grow professionally and make a difference at BELC, we invite instructors to contribute according to their strengths—for example, developing curriculum resources, mentoring, presenting to colleagues at an in-house workshop, supporting others in IT use, etc. We try to offer recognition for these contributions and whenever possible, we also pay them to do these extra tasks.
- We provide lots of in-house PD that is guided by the specific needs of our staff and if something new is introduced (e.g., formative assessment tools), we have a follow-up meeting a week or two later where teachers share an example of something they've developed and obtain further support if needed.

We still have a lot to learn and look forward to further developing our community of practice at BELC.

Sowing Seeds for Settlement Success

by Paula Mannington, Abbotsford Community Services

Abbotsford—fondly known as “The City in the Country”—is surrounded by one of the most bountiful agricultural regions of Canada. Befitting of this landscape, our Abbotsford Community Services ELSA classes, similar to others across the province, provide fertile ground for cultivating communities of practice with newcomers. Recently, students in the English for the Workplace level 4/5 class at Abbotsford Community Services experienced their first community of practice as learners on Canadian soil. The opportunity emerged from a student initiated suggestion to develop a group electronic slide presentation about a cultural celebration. The project quickly took shape and the class was soon actively engaged in developing an array of skills that are important in the Canadian workplace: planning and time management; sharing diverse perspectives; pooling knowledge and skills; adhering to agreed upon roles and responsibilities; and developing stronger communication skills. The pace was hectic but the final outcome was well received by three different ELSA classes. In addition to practicing specific CLB speaking targets and key Essential Skills, the class created a display board that captured highlights of the project. A common theme in students' post-project writing was the power that peer support and encouragement had on building the confidence to take risks and see the project through to completion. Creating communities of practice in our classrooms is much like the farming practices that take place in the areas surrounding our picturesque city: it's a nurturing process that helps learners harvest settlement success over time in their new fields of life.

Abbotsford
Community Services
EFW 4/5 Student-
Created Project
Display Board



From Our Students

Reflection on What I Learned in 2013

by Lisa Cheng, ELSA Student, Excel Educational Centre

The most exciting thing I did in 2013 was volunteering in my community. When I started volunteering and took the training courses, I had the chance to learn to interact with new immigrants as a volunteer worker, and also had a chance to understand myself better through the personality test provided by the facilitator.

During the volunteer work, I learned to communicate with new immigrants, explored beautiful Richmond through bus tour activities, and got involved with young newcomers in youth connection workshops. While working with seniors, young students, and other newcomers, I saw that everyone showed great interest and enthusiasm in learning about Canadian culture, local lifestyle, language, and adapting their new life in Canada. I am grateful that I am being helpful to others, and all these experiences also help me think about myself, my career, and self-improvement for the future. Being an immigrant to Canada myself, there are still many things I could and I should do here. I am glad that I have stepped out and become a part of my community, and finally have adapted to life in Canada.

Two Places I Like to Learn

by Hui Ching Lee, ELSA Student, New Directions

Since I have landed in this new multicultural country—Canada, I have started to learn. Many things seem similar to my home country—Taiwan, but it is completely different: different people, different language, different customs. I need to learn about all of these day by day.

To help me learn, I have started to learn English in New Directions. New Directions is just like a big family, a family with members from different countries. The staff and teachers there also treat us like family. They teach us about Canadian culture and help us to integrate in Canada as soon as possible. My teachers encourage, and help me establish my confidence. I really enjoy learning there. Nowadays, I can chat with my neighbors more smoothly. I really appreciate their help.

In addition, the library is also one of my favorite places here. I had never seen the library system before. It is so convenient: you can borrow books on line then pick them up at the nearest library from your home. I still remember the first time I applied for a library card. The librarian was so nice. She helped me with patience, and I did not feel pressure. Her attitude has impacted my heart deeply.

I feel I can live in Canada more confidently now. Even though the air is chilly, I still can feel the warmest feeling from everywhere. How lucky I am to live here.

Learning from Your Kids

by Chiayuan (Joshua) Kao, ELSA Student, New Directions

Many of us who have immigrated to Canada did not speak English in our original country. So we try to find ways of making English part of our daily lives. Except for the first English book I read here, Drive Smart, I read my kids' textbooks and materials from school. The contents build up our awareness of Canada. Besides that, kids can also correct your pronunciation!

In my own family, we have set up a Family Study Time during weekdays. It takes place at the big dining table in the living room, 1 hour after dinner until 9:30. The kids may have their homework to do, and we have our own from ELSA classes to study for. If there's nothing special to be focused on, our children read English novels.

Also during that time, we have chats about classmates, school events, life plans, or problems that we have encountered. Parents learn cultures and customs through kids while having chats concerning their school life. Having such a gathering time daily improves family harmony. And this effect may go far beyond your expectation, both for English and family.

From Our Students

My Second Year in Canada

by May Yao, *ELSA Student, Excel Educational Centre*

2013 was my second year of living in Canada. I learned several new things, but the biggest accomplishment I made was researching Canada's universities, which played an important role to help my daughters.

Canada's advanced education system is the major reason my family decided to immigrate. My husband and I hope our daughters can complete university successfully in Canada in the coming years. So I have been very concerned with university related news since I came here. I'd never tried to search for information in English until my elder daughter brought home in November some brochures of several universities. She was applying to universities in December and needed help to make her decision. Driven by that urgent need, I researched all the admission requirements of the universities she was interested in through the websites of each university and in one week had an overview of Canadian universities. With the help of that knowledge, I offered my opinion about location, grade requirements, and academic strength or weakness of the universities, which finally helped my elder daughter make her decision to apply to six universities.

I am happy with what I learned from the research because it will help my younger daughter to apply to university in 2014. I also have a new plan for myself in 2014, which is attending adult high school to complete some subjects that are required by Health Care courses at VCC.



Adjusting to a New Society

by Zheng Lou (Grace) Tian, *ELSA Student, New Directions*

Newcomers meet great challenges in adjusting themselves to a new culture. But how do they adjust themselves to the host country and accept the new situations? I will take myself for example to state what I have experienced.

In August 2011, I moved to Canada with my two daughters. My husband decided to stay in China in order to provide better economic support for our family. It was obvious how much I'd have to adjust to a new cultural and language environment. Moreover, the most prominent change that I experienced in this new land was the shift from being a professional to a housewife. I had to prepare foods for kids and did the house chores every day. Fortunately, I am always optimistic in any new environment, and full of passion to learn new knowledge. I found we had the opportunity to enjoy so many styles of foods due to the multiculturalism in Canada. So I decided to try the recipes from neighbours, ELSA classmates, and other friends. Now I can cook many foods well, and I feel a great sense of achievement when I share foods with my friends.

In conclusion, I've learned we'd better take advantage of the aspects of the new culture, and try to make contributions to the society in the future.

From Our Students

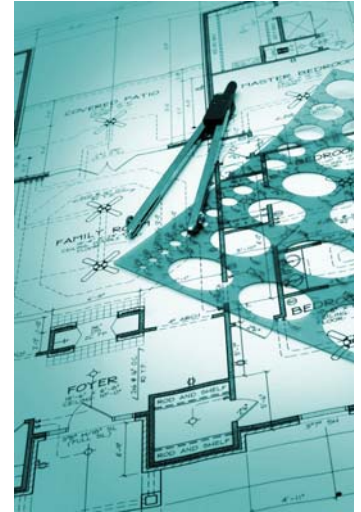
Getting Used to Life in Canada

by Anna Wang, *ELSA Student, New Directions*

My name is Anna Wang. Our family came here from China in July, 2010. I chose White Rock as my landing place. Thanks to the development of science and information technology, now we almost can find out everything we need through the internet. I even rented an apartment before our departure, so we could live in our own place the first night we landed in Canada.

The second point I want to share is adapting to your new community and society by being a part of it and part of your child's life. In order to help my daughter with improving her English, we proactively attended the activities in White Rock Library, such as the summer reading club and chess club. Another association which my daughter took part in within her early period of living here is Scouts, which often went camping or hiking at the weekends. They needed some parents to join them as the volunteers.

Through these various activities, my daughter not only had a good time there, but also got to know lots of new friends. And I also have devised channels to make the communications with the local people. The more you know, the easier and more comfortable you feel living in Canada. I am proud to say that we have adjusted pretty well in Canada and we love it here.



Building My New Life

by May Tseng, *ELSA Learner, New Directions, Langley*

Obviously, 9,500 kilometers is a long way. When I was crossing the Pacific Ocean, I knew I was not just only crossing the geography zones of the earth but also crossing an important stage in my life. I came from Taiwan in 2011. At that time, I made up my mind that I need to build my new life in Canada.

First of all, I tried to get my driver's licence. Unfortunately, I took the test twice and failed. Finally, I got my driver licence before the end of 2011. My second challenge was language problem. I started ELSA classes at New Directions. After joining English classes, I felt that I was not alone any more. There were so many new immigrants there. We had the same problems. We learned English, made friends, and shared all kinds of traditional foods. At that moment, I felt that I was not alone: we were in a new world. We were in Canada.

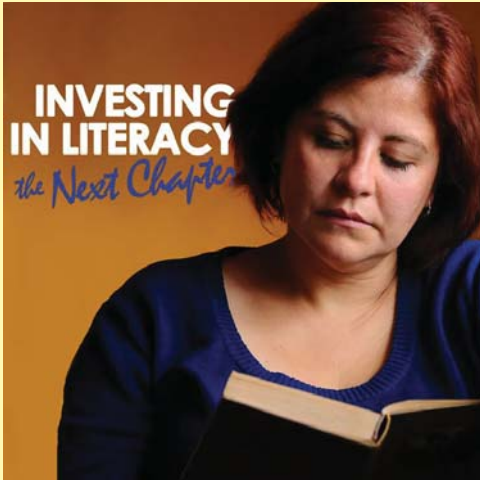
After one year in New Directions, I found a volunteering job at the Agriculture and Farm Museum. I help the library to arrange the books. This is the first time I work together with Canadians. I learned about some parts of Canadian culture and typical daily English there. I really love my volunteering job. After all, I think I am getting more and more Canadian style now. If you're a newcomer, don't hesitate to ask and don't be ashamed to speak out. This is the best way for new immigrants to learn English.

From Our Community

Community Adult Literacy Program

by Eva Touzard, Progressive Intercultural Community Services, Surrey

The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), published by Statistics Canada, shows that 48% of adult Canadians have limited literacy proficiency. For immigrants, ELSA schools provide free English classes, while Canadian citizens, foreign workers, and visitors have to find different venues. This is a problem for many. And the Community Adult Literacy Program (CALP) is one solution. For over 20 years, non-profit organizations, with post-secondary education institutions as partners, have been funded by the province to deliver programs to adults wishing to improve their literacy.



Practically, how does this program work? Without dedicated volunteers, CALP would not exist. I am always amazed at how many people come forward with the ardent wish to give back to the community. Volunteers come from a diversity of backgrounds. In 12 hours, the CALP coordinator trains the new volunteer tutors how to help their learners. The program is learner oriented and does not follow a prescribed curriculum. In the first meetings, the volunteer tutor discovers through friendly conversations the learner's needs and desires. Together,

they arrive at a reasonable and achievable goal. Some learners speak perfectly well, but somehow fell between the cracks in school and can't read or write; others want to improve their pronunciation, or read their children's newsletters from school, or take a driver's test; and some want to increase their basic math capabilities as they relate to shopping and taxes. All learners appreciate the tender loving care the volunteers offer.



Tutor and learner commit to meet once a week for two hours in a public place for five months. During that time, wonderful relationships are formed that continue long past the term of the program.

View the complete program listings at

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2013/10/province-invests-in-literacy-programs-to-benefit-adult-learners.html>.

From Our Community

Decoda Literacy Solutions: Helping to Build Communities of Practice

by Leona Gadsby, Decoda Literacy Solutions

Decoda Literacy Solutions is the leading non-profit literacy organization in British Columbia. Supporting a network of 102 community task groups, Decoda provides resources, training, and funds to address community-based literacy and learning priorities in over 400 communities.

To achieve our vision of a culture of community-based literacy and learning, we support two different, but interconnected communities of practice.

Because significant differences exist between communities, our work is based on an understanding that community literacy issues are most effectively addressed at the local level. Decoda supports representatives from diverse local community organizations, including schools and colleges, to discuss and implement actions that support literacy development for people of all ages in the context of their communities. Research conducted by the University of British Columbia confirms that this process ensures that programs are more responsive to community needs, facilitates access to services, and helps avoid duplication of efforts.

Over 2000 representatives meet in community literacy task groups, facilitated by literacy outreach coordinators. To find out more, please contact your literacy outreach coordinator (see the contact information on our website).

While communities and regions differ, literacy practitioners have many shared



needs. To support literacy practitioners as a group, Decoda uses email and social media to distribute information and ideas. In addition, Decoda offers professional development through webinars, regional meetings, a provincial literacy conference, and a lending library. ELSA practitioners are welcome to follow Decoda on Facebook and Twitter, attend webinars of interest, and borrow from our library.

For details, visit our website at <http://decoda.ca>.



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