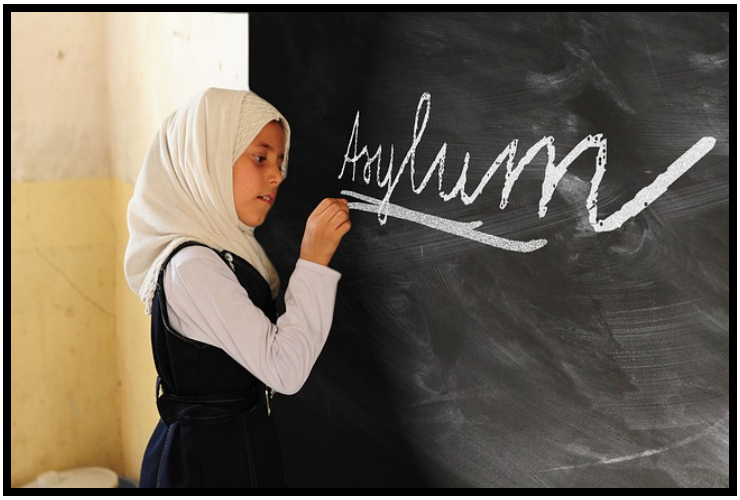
MARYLAND TESOL

NEWSLETTER

From the Editors



Last month approximately 6,000 ESOL teachers and professors gathered in Seattle for a week of networking, learning, speeches and fun. Amidst all the wisdom and celebration, there was an "elephant in the room" whose name was never mentioned but whose presence was strongly felt. Everyone worried about a post November 2016 world, shall we say, in which graduate students may not be able to come to the US, colleagues may not be able to attend future conventions and the free-flow of ideas may be held up at the border. The humanitarian, intellectual, financial and cultural fallout from such policies is too painful to contemplate. Let us hope that we will see ALL our brothers and sisters engaged in the Teaching of English as a Second Language in Chicago in 2018!

Billie H. Muñoz Editor-in-Chief, Erica Rivera Co-Editor

Spring Greetings from the President!

It has been a busy, delightful spring, thanks in no small measure to the interest sections (IS) and their many activities. If you are looking for a place to get involved with Maryland TESOL, this is a good place to start.

Among other things, we have had networking happy hours hosted by the Elementary Education IS; a graduate student mini-conference, hosted by the Graduate Student IS; a roundtable discussion on cross-cultural writing traditions, hosted by the Higher Education IS; an event featuring singable books, hosted by the Elementary Education IS; an event on improving ELL writiing techniques for learners with multiple literacies and intelligences, hosted by three IS's jointly; an event on advocating for English learners, hosted jointly by two IS's; an event on reimagining storytelling's role in teaching, hosted by Teacher Education/Professional Development IS; and more (my apologies to those not listed!)

Many of these events were free, and, for those for which there was a fee, the fee for Maryland TESOL members was typically only $5. Where else can you get this kind of high-quality professional development at a price like that?

Indeed, the interest sections are your doorway to Maryland TESOL. If you haven't identified the interest section(s) with which you wish to be affiliated, you can now do this on the Maryland TESOL website. Please check to make sure that your affiliation is listed. Some people thought they identified an IS, but find it is not listed on their profile. So get yourself connected by making sure that your IS profile is up-to-date. It will mean that you are kept informed of activities that are of the most interest to you.

The interest sections need the members – they do no run solely on the energy of the IS chair and chair-elect. We need your voice, your energy and your talents. Maryland TESOL is a community effort, and you are definitely a part! Together, we can accomplish great things for TESOL.

Karen Blinder, Ph.D

Teacher Leadership in Teaching English as a Second Language

Teacher Education/Professional Development Interest Section

What is teacher leadership?

There is a solid body of literature on teacher leadership development, indicating the positive reasons for, and ways to, cultivate teacher leadership skills. Definitions of the concept of "teacher-leadership" will vary. However, what is consistent across definitions is the basic emphasis on *student achievement*, *teaching*, and *learning* – in other words, teachers who are leaders use their knowledge and expertise to effect positive change in instruction so that student achievement is enhanced (Crowther, Kaagen, Ferguson and Hann 2002). Therefore, teacher-leadership is the influence that teachers have upon student achievement via changes in core functions of teaching and learning.

It is important to note what teacher-leadership is NOT. Teacher leadership is not about teacher power or control. Issues of Power and Control may very well be important conversations to have, and I suspect they are important conversations in most educational institutions – however, those are different conversations. Teacher leadership is not about seizing power or control from administration, but, instead working with them. One might say working in, as Crowther, et al (op. cit.) terms it, 'parallel leadership.' It is critical that teachers, principals, supervisors and other educational administrators come to a *shared understanding* of what is meant by "teacher leadership."

What are the characteristics of a teacher-leader? What is a teacher-leader able to do?

Drawing on reviews and syntheses of the key literature on teacher leadership (e.g. Heffernan 2005; York-Barr and Duke op. cit.), it can be summarized that effective teacher-leadership development depends upon three abilities: Teachers' ability to effectually 1) *access* knowledge about their field and profession, 2) *generate* knowledge about their own students, classrooms and schools, and 3) *construct and carry-out* classroom-based, teacher-initiated solutions.

These are skills and abilities that are present in teacher-leaders. Teachers who are able to accomplish *accessing* knowledge, *generating* knowledge and *acting* upon that knowledge have a better chance of becoming effective teacher-leaders. In other words, they have a better chance of influencing student learning and student achievement in their classrooms within their schools.

"Accessing knowledge" requires the ability to seek out, gather, and synthesize existing information on the profession of English language teaching and learning. "Accessing knowledge" requires the ability to read and interpret information and to critique its' appropriateness to local contexts. A further step that moves beyond mere "access of existing knowledge" is to "generate knowledge" oneself. Another way of talking about this second point, about "generating knowledge" is to say that teacher-leaders are "data-driven." Teacher leaders "generate knowledge" of their classrooms from the data of student artifacts, student work. In other words, teacher leaders examine student work for the purpose of understanding the current student needs and performance in relation to the expected level of student achievement (Chrisman 2005). This ability to focus on student work –the ability to review student work as "data sources" in generating knowledge about students and teaching— best enables teacher leaders to move to the next, and critical step, to "construct and carry out classroom-based solutions." It is here where teachers take action based on the knowledge that they have accessed and generated, where they create and implement instructional changes and curricular decisions. The focus on one's own students and classrooms is essential because the emphasis on one's own students and one's own classroom while accessing knowledge, generating knowledge and constructing solutions best enables teachers to realize teacher leadership skills.

"How can teachers develop their capacity as teacher-leaders?" "And How can teachers help other teachers develop leadership skills?"

Practical activities for developing teacher leadership skills can fall under two broad categories of Professional Development: a) Independent Professional Development, and b) Collaborative-Partnership Professional Development. In general, "professional development" can be described as continued education beyond one's formal degree. It is a process of lifelong intellectual growth through-out one's career. It includes being open to new learning, new instructional strategies, new concepts which may even challenge existing ones (Hiep 2001).

There are types of independent professional development activities in which one can engage on a personal, individual level. In other words, these activities are not absolutely dependent on outside assistance.

Independent Professional Development Activities

Professional Development Activities that Teachers can Do Independently:

Attending professional conferences,

Reading professional journals,

Joining professional organizations and TESOL affiliates,

Volunteering (as board member, as tutor),

Engaging in reflective teaching,

Conducting individual action research,

Video taping and audio taping of one's own lessons,

Participating in electronic discussions,

Compiling Print and Internet Resources,

Reviewing catalogues of newly published books,

Presenting at Conferences,

Writing and publishing (book reviews, manuals, teacher activity ideas)

Pursuing a certificate in the TESOL Certificate Leadership Program

Participating in the TESOL Leadership Mentoring Program

Traditional types of professional development that TEFL teachers can independently conduct have included, for example, attending professional conferences, reading professional journals and becoming a member of professional organizations. With the expansion of the roles of TEFL teachers in educational improvement, contemporary types of independent professional development activities have come to additionally include, for example, reflective teaching, independent action research, self-video and audio taping, electronic discussions outside of one's own setting, and writing sharing and publishing various items (See Appendix B: Resources, Handbooks, and Books with Practical Application). Further, TESOL, Inc. has created opportunities for teachers to participate in the "TESOL Certificate Leadership Program" and the "TESOL Leadership Mentoring Program."

The second category of professional development discussed here is Collaborative Partnership Professional Development. Collaborative partnerships can be broadly described as the purposeful coming together of educators to assist each other in order to accomplish a common goal, for example, increasing student achievement. Collaborative partnership activities are activities in which teachers are mutually engaged, where the input of each person is required for the success of the team. And collaborative activities, for example, activities in which one engages in collaborative action research, are aimed at bringing about "change in social situations as a result of group problem-solving and collaboration. . . the main purpose of

individual classroom investigation is to reinforce the broader goals of the group" (Burns 1999: 12). What are some specific types of collaborative partnerships?

Collaborative Partnership Professional Development Activities

Professional Development Activities in which Teachers can Mutually Engage:

Team teaching

Peer observations

Team lesson planning

Team lesson design

Teacher study groups

Teacher dialogue journals

Team workshops on textbook evaluation

Team monitoring student achievement

Mentoring new teachers

Peer Coaching

Teacher focus groups

Teacher problem-solving groups

Collaborative assessment of student work

Think-Aloud reviews of audio and video teaching

Appendix A: Resources, Educational Centers, available on Internet

All internet links are active as of April 2017

Institute for Educational Leadership (EIL)

"The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) - a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization based in Washington, DC - envisions a society that uses its resources effectively to achieve better futures for all children and youth. For almost forty years, IEL's mission continues to be to build the capacity of individuals and organizations in education and related fields to work together - across policies, programs and sectors."

http://www.iel.org/

The Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy

"The Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, a consortium of several major universities, focuses on the system-wide improvement of learning and teaching and the development of a highly capable, committed teaching force."

http://www.ctpweb.org/

The Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (CSTP, pronounced "C-step")

"The Center for Strengthening the Teaching Professions was founded in 2003 as an independent, non-profit organization intent on helping students achieve by ensuring they have the teachers they need. Guided by a board of directors representing education, business and the broader public interest, CSTP will take these steps to accomplish its mission," including: "amplifying the voice of experienced teachers to shape state policies." http://www.cstp-wa.org/

West Ed

"A nonprofit research, development, and service agency, WestEd strives to enhance and increase education and human development within schools, families, and communities." http://www.wested.org/cs/we/print/docs/we/home.htm

APPENDIX B: Resources, Handbooks, Books with Practical Application

Bailey, K., A. Curtis, and D. Noonan. 2001. *Pursuing professional development: The self as source.* Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Boyd, P., and G. Nelson, eds. 2003. *Sustaining professionalism.* Volume 3 in the Professional Development in Language Education Series. (Tim Murphey, Series Editor). Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL).

Egbert, J., ed. 2003. *Becoming contributing professionals.* Volume 1 in the Professional Development in Language Education Series. (Tim Murphey, Series Editor). Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL).

Freeman, D., and S. Cornwell. 1993. *New ways in teacher education.* In New Ways in TESOL Series (Jack C. Richards, Series Editor). Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL).

Kaser, J., S. Mundry, K., Stiles, K., S. Loucks-Horsley. 2006. *Leading everyday: 124 actions for effective leadership*, 2nd ed. Corwin Press.

Lacina, J. L. New Levine, and P. Sowa. (2006). *Collaborative partnerships between ESL and classroom teachers: Helping English Language Learners succeed in Pre-K to elementary schools.* In Collaborative Partnerships Between ESL and Classroom Teachers Series. (Debra Suarez, Series Editor). Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL)

Murphy, T., ed. 2003. *Extending professional contributions.* Volume 2 in the "Professional Development in Language Education Series." (Tim Murphey, Series Editor). Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL).

Richards, J., and C. Lockhart. 1999. *Reflective teaching in second language classrooms.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

ESOL Essay

The following is the third in a series on how young people have found success in the United States through their ESOL studies. The first two were written by the students themselves but this is an "As Told To" story because the subject is busy attending college and working full time. Her name is Lydia Van Ram Sui and she is from Myanmar, formerly Burma. We seek to support and encourage ESOL teachers of all levels to continue their important work transforming lives. Please send us the story of one or more of YOUR students (along with a photo) in the form of an interview, their own stories written by themselves or your observations of their lives to designated MDTESOL newspaper editors, Billie Muñoz and Erica Rivera at newsletter@mdtesol.org. We will send a confirmation.

I was 17 when I first came to the United States and remember my life in the Chin state of Burma very well. Over there, there was little opportunity especially in rural areas. Even in the city, life was hard. I did not personally experience any intimidation from the dictatorship government from those days but know people who did. Although I speak fluent Burmese, Chin dialect and some Malaysian, my English was broken when I first arrived. They placed me in 10th grade in Lansdowne High School in Baltimore County.

I remember my first days at Lansdowne, also. I was excited and nervous. I knew that my future was starting and that my success would depend on how well I learned now! My first class was Health. It was a class for all students, not just ESOL. It was so difficult that I cried when I got home. But then I went to ESOL class. Here, things were much better. ESOL made me happy because I saw that the students were just like me. Even though we were from different countries, we were there to learn English. The ESOL teachers, Mrs. Cristin Hickey and Mrs. Malin Jonsson, taught us everything; grammar, pronunciation and reading. It was the environment that I needed to succeed in other areas. In just one year I was on my way! That summer, I took extra ESOL classes and got my first job. I was packing boxes for a corporation. No English was required but the money was necessary. I gave 100% of it to my family. I worked and went to school full time. Yes, I was exhausted and often felt like sleeping in class. But I forced myself to stay awake and pay attention.

11th and 12th grades flew by. Graduation day came. My whole family attended the ceremony. I was the first one in my family to finish high school. They were so proud of me. My

uncle bought pizza for the whole family! Somehow I learned of the idea of community college. CCBC was close by and cost much less than a four year university. Then, I got a scholarship that pays for all my education! Right now, I am studying a double major. I am taking MLT (Medical Laboratory Technology) and Business Management. I pray to go to Johns Hopkins or UMBC to finish my four year diploma after I get my AA. Since my schooling doesn't cost anything, I try to pay it forward by sending money to students in rural areas of Burma to cover their school fees. I want to see everyone have the chances that I have had. In the future, I'd like my career to have something to do with helping "Third World" countries develop.

Looking back, I can see clearly that I owe thanks to my ESOL teachers. Mrs. Hickey and Mrs. Jonsson even came to *International Day* in order to find out more about my culture. They were awesome! Now I am working as an interpreter for my siblings' school. Where there was once broken English, these days I can help younger students by translating from Burmese to English and back again.

What Works for Parent Engagement: Examples from the Elementary Setting

By: Traci Eckhaus, Elementary Interest Chair

Research suggests that increased parental involvement in a child's education positively affects student achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Lee & Bowen, 2006). Yet, establishing and maintaining parent contact throughout the year for each of our students can be a challenge. Teachers are pulled in a variety of directions between lesson planning, grading, and test preparation. Parents, particularly of our English Language Learner (ELL) population, also work long hours. In fact, research indicates that the achievement gap between racial/ethnic groups may in part be due to a difference in parental involvement (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Time constraints limit parents' ability to support their

child's education in the home, not to mention schedule an in-person, parent-teacher conference. Still, there are several strategies that my colleagues and I use to increase parent engagement.

Resources for At-Home Engagement

I always encourage parents to read with their children at home. Many parents fear they cannot help their children because they do not read or speak English fluently. It is often my responsibility, as the ESOL teacher, to explain to parents that reading in their native language will support their children's efforts to read in English. Parents (and often other teachers) need reassurance that the skills and strategies used while reading in one language will transfer and support reading in another language.

Even still, parents are sometimes hesitant or at a loss for where to begin. The website Colorín Colorado *(http://www.colorincolorado.org)* is an excellent resource on bilingual education for parents and teachers. Among the many webpages dedicated to family support, there are "Parent Tips" on reading and writing with children of different ages and grade levels. Another online resource, Reading A-Z *(https://www.readinga-z.com)*, lets parents and children select books either in English or Spanish. Even for those parents who are illiterate in their native language, Reading A-Z reads books aloud. In this way, parents can still engage in reading with their child and discuss the stories they read together.

Strategies for Digital Teacher-Parent Communication

Technology has simplified indirect communication methods for teachers and parents. Most families now have a cell phone and/or email address. My colleagues and I use two different online methods to communicate with parents.

The first, Remind.com *(https://www.remind.com)*, is an online technology that enables teachers to send text reminders directly to parents' cell phones without sharing a personal telephone number. Teachers can create several different class lists so as to communicate with many parents at one time. Through this technology, teachers can alert busy parents about an upcoming project, test, report card, or school event. The reminder encourages parents to stay engaged in their child's learning and educational success.

The second online tool is ClassDojo *(https://www.classdojo.com)*. Again, this service allows teachers to communicate with parents via cell phones without sharing a personal telephone number. ClassDojo's purpose differs from Remind.com. ClassDojo allows parents to check their child's behavior on a daily basis as well as send text messages to the teacher directly. In addition, through a new feature called "Stories," teachers can record and share what is happening in the classroom by uploading photos, documents and cards. In this way, parents and families are able to stay involved in classroom activities virtually, even if they cannot come to the school in person.

Strategies for Direct, Parent-Teacher Communication

In-person, parent-teacher conferences are still one of the best ways for teachers to meet families and share students' progress. Research indicates that direct parental involvement is

associated with higher academic achievement (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Therefore, during conferences, it is important that parents understand the teacher and feel comfortable to speak.

The websites Colorín Colorado (*http://www.colorincolorado.org*) and Understood (*https://www.understood.org*) provide parents and families with guidance on how to advocate for their child during a conference. In my experience, many parents are often silent. They defer to the teacher and are at a loss for what questions they can ask. Providing guidance prior to conferences helps parents understand the purpose of the parent-teacher conferences and their expected role in them.

For the teacher, if a translator is unavailable, it is important to speak in simplified English for non-English speaking families. Always define educational jargon. Provide examples of leveled readers so parents can understand their child's ability in relation to the grade-level expectation. In this way, teachers can accommodate families' needs during the conference while also encouraging them to participate in their child's education at home and at school.

Parental involvement is important for children's academic success. By establishing and maintaining communication with families, directly or indirectly, teachers can encourage parents to set high standards, support learning at home, and ultimately help students achieve academic success.

References

Fan, X., & Chen, M. (2001). *Educational Psychology Review,13*(1), 1-22. doi:10.1023/a:1009048817385

Lee, J., & Bowen, N. K. (2006). Parent Involvement, Cultural Capital, and the Achievement Gap Among Elementary School Children. *American Educational Research Journal,43*(2), 193-218. doi:10.3102/00028312043002193

The Circuitous Path

The following is the first in a series we're calling "The Circuitous Path." Each article will feature an ESOL teacher who made an interesting career switch and explore the reasons why we go into ESOL. It was written by Tracey White who teaches at Arbutus Elementary School. Feel free to submit your story. You may email it to newsletter@mdtesol.org.

My Transition from Nurse to ESOL Teacher

"Why on earth would anybody want to leave nursing to become a teacher???!!!"

If I had a dollar for every time someone asked me that, I could retire today! Ok, that's a slight exaggeration but not by much.

I was a late bloomer into nursing but fell into it face first. Twenty-seven years old and graduated from University of Maryland at Baltimore. I got a job right away. I had a son a year later and soon became a single mom. Nursing was a great occupation to have in which to raise a child. Very soon after, I realized that nursing in the hospital really wasn't my calling. I much preferred community nursing. Home health and case management led me to school nursing. The life of a school nurse isn't all band aids and vision screenings. You are often the sole medical person for the entire school. Diabetes, asthma, ADHD and broken bones are all a part of your daily existence. Sometime around 2001, I decided to take classes at my church's Bible College for certificate in TESOL. I really didn't have much of an idea of what TESOL was. The thought of going back to school made me nervous, having a young child in school and my own homework to do. I was truly surprised how much I enjoyed the process.

Before graduating, I was offered a job to teach adults in the evenings on one week's notice. Needless to say, I was scared to death but didn't want to pass up the opportunity.

It took me many years not to get physically nauseous before every class. But the more I planned and taught students from the far corners of the Earth, the more I fell in love with them and the art of teaching.

Yes, in nursing, we don't take our work home with us, per say. Once the day is over, it's over. Teaching is quite time consuming after hours but it was fun finding new and exciting ways in which to get students to enjoy their evenings in my class. The more I taught the adults the more I thought about perhaps teaching full time. The idea of leaving nursing scared me and friends were concerned that I'd leave a solid career and stability behind.

I applied to Notre Dame of Maryland University to get an MA in TESOL and my teaching certification. It, along with my years teaching adults, gave me a whole new perspective on teaching and respect I never possessed in the past.

I attended my first TESOL convention in San Antonio, Texas. It was exhausting but fun and I knew I wanted to try to go every year. Seattle was my fourth convention.

As my third year of teaching ESOL on the elementary level comes to a close, I have to exclaim that I couldn't be happier. I love the lesson planning, the students and my colleagues. It's been rewarding beyond my wildest dreams. The equity classes I've also taken since graduating Notre Dame has also aided my sensitivity to my students from all languages, religions and backgrounds to keep them in mind with each lesson I plan.

My son is all grown up now and is proud of the fact that I went back to school and can say that I love what I do and I'm happy to be there. He's now in school pursuing his calling. To people who ask me why I would have the audacity to leave nursing to now teach ESOL I say, it's the best job to get you out of bed every morning, and I wouldn't change it for anything.

Local Educators Find Success in Seattle

Among the hundreds of Presenters at the recent TESOL Convention in Seattle a few weeks ago were a number of outstanding local teachers and professors. Maryland TESOL is proud of our colleagues who took their expertise on the road. The following are a few examples.

Jose Torres, author and a teacher in Baltimore City Public Schools and a instructor at Baltimore City Community College, presented on the importance of using phonics in adult ESOL literacy. The role of phonics for adults has been under debate recently and Torres' session was lively and well-attended. He used examples from his recently published *I Want to Learn English*.

Luis Penton Herrera, a teacher at Laurel High School and Adjunct Professor at several area community colleges, presented on the particular difficulties of teaching peoples who speak a language other than the primary language of their home country. For example, some of the Ixil speaking Mayans of Guatemala have found a new home in the Laurel area of Anne Arundel County. They can have double the difficulty of Spanish-speaking newcomers because so few if any materials are available in their language, they may be ostracized by the larger community, they may be more prone to interrupted education and their values might be unique to them.

Myles Hoenig, a teacher at High Point High School in Prince George's County, presented on the role of the English Language both in the world at large and in the homes of the second largest ESOL population in the State of Maryland. He had recently taken a survey to answer the question, "Do the two worlds of home and school clash around the use of language." Survey responders were mixed about the importance of speaking English versus the first language at home. There was a similar dichotomy regarding the emotions of pride and embarrassment at their ability to communicate in the second language.

Working with Incarcerated English Learners: a blessing in disguise

By Tara Theroux, Advocacy Interest Section Chair

"*It was the best of times; it was the worst of times" (*Dickens, 1859, p. 1, paragraph 1, line 1).

This quote is applicable to many situations in life. This describes my experience of teaching English Learners (ELs) in the Incarcerated Youth Center (JACS) in Upper Marlboro, MD. I feel joy in working with them and a sense of social justice. After all, I'm working with youth who are in one of the worst situations they can be in. They are incarcerated and awaiting trial as adults. Social justice is one of the reasons that many teachers, including myself, got into teaching in the first place. We strive to make the world a better place through empowering students, not to raise test scores. However, I also feel a sadness at times when I think about their impending incarcerations and the fact that the youths will likely be in prison for half of their adulthood. At times it can be uncomfortable interacting with the adult inmate population that surround the juvenile unit. The room where the juveniles are educated and live is a sanctuary, but it cannot be isolated from the larger prison population. It's a cold sterile place of metal detectors, cameras and being buzzed into each room. It's a world without the freedom of

using technology for personal and instructional use; it's a world where even going to the bathroom is made complicated.

I've been working with the EL incarcerated youth since May 2015 as part of my student caseload of small ESOL populations. I see them once a week in a consultative pull out model. For the intermediate students, I assist them with whatever skill they are struggling with in their classes, teaching the academic language necessary for success in the class. For the newcomer or beginner students, I use the high school ESOL Newcomer or ESOL Beginner curriculums where students are taught at their language proficiency level. The students have three teachers: a language arts/English literature teacher, a math teacher, and a social studies/science teacher. I see them as part of their class time or after their classes if it's possible. My caseload averages to 3-5 students. This population is mobile, and often I come in to find out that a student has been released, or sentenced, or transferred, and I haven't been able to say a goodbye.

The ELs are a diverse group; however, I have seen certain trends. In this article I will describe my students and the experience of working with incarcerated ELs.

Demographics of incarcerated ELs

All of the ELs I have worked with in the incarcerated youth center have come from one of three countries: Guatemala, El Salvador, or Honduras. Indeed, this mirrors the population of the student and general population in the DMV area (D.C., Maryland and Virginia) where a sizeable number of immigrants hail from Central America.

The majority of the incarcerated ELs may be considered unaccompanied minors. All have parents and/or other relatives in Maryland. Some may even be refugees, as at least one spoke to me about threats from gangs in Honduras. Indeed, several of them described poverty and violence, and a sense of loss at growing up without their parents. Most were in the care of grandparents or uncles/aunts, and reported feeling misplaced within their own country.

The incarcerated ELs have been in the country for a range of one to four years and their age range was fourteen to eighteen. Their English proficiency ranges from a WIDA score of 1 to 3.5. Students were enrolled in the ESOL programs in all of the possible ESOL high school classes: ESOL Newcomer, ESOL Beginner, ESOL Intermediate and ESOL Advanced. One student was enrolled in ESOL beginner in eighth grade in middle school. All incarcerated ELs except for one were literate in their native language, Spanish, which helped with their English language acquisition. Two students did not enter ESOL programs in the US, opting to work instead. The student who had little literacy in his native language had only attended up to second grade in his country and had not studied in an ESOL program when he came to the US at age sixteen, so he struggled with English language acquisition more than the other students.

What led them to the incarcerated youth center

There are multiple ways that I form a student profile and get to know my students' academic and personal profile. One of the things I do is I search for the student's last school and contact the student's former ESOL teacher. It's often the case that I know the ESOL teacher, since we both work in the same county. I ask about the student's strengths and needs and how she/he did in the class. In each case, teachers have reported that some students fell in with the wrong crowd, they became uninterested in school and their grades fell, and most started

skipping school and getting into trouble. Basically, all the students started in a downward spiral before they were incarcerated. The students were being charged for adult crimes which ranged from rape, armed robbery, manslaughter, and first degree murder. Some of the students came from or went to Cheltenham Youth Facility, or 'Boys Village', an incarcerated youth center run by the state of Maryland.

Factors that helped the ELs' student success

The students who had the least trouble with academic success in the classrooms were those who had a higher English proficiency of intermediate or above. They were able to understand the class material and verbalize their needs. All ELs had support from small classes and my assistance. They also had ESOL accommodations and bilingual dictionaries to make the curriculum more accessible. For the most part, students were compliant and eager to learn. Additionally, it helped that the EL students had other ELs and students who spoke their same native language and were from similar cultures. They could support each other and translate if necessary. A bilingual counselor was available as well.

Struggles for incarcerated ELs

The students who struggled the most were the newcomer students who had little English. In two students' cases, they had only been attending an ESOL program for a few months before they got in trouble and had to go to the incarcerated youth center. These students struggled to perform adequately in mainstream classes. While the teachers knew of their English proficiency and made some attempts to adapt the material, they did not have a lot of experience or training to work with ELs. The newcomers also had misunderstandings due to the language barrier. Additionally, like any high schoolers, they lacked maturity and a few times had gotten into fights or had disobeyed rules and had gotten themselves into a punishment unit where they did not receive classes and could not have materials. Also, another challenge was that at times students would be separated and placed in a unit with adults. This was because some had court orders for keep separate if they were involved in the crime together. In that unit, they did not receive the same amount of regular classes; they were serviced by only myself and a math/special education specialist who worked with the adult population, and they faced some isolation. The keep separate students had to be rotated between the juvenile unit and this adult unit.

Advocating for my students

As ESOL teachers, our job is not only to teach ESOL curriculum and assist in English language acquisition; our job is to advocate for our students to get instruction tailored to their English language proficiency and to help them adapt to American schools. As such, one of the main tasks I had to do was to advocate for the students. I did this firstly with the teachers, and

advocated for some modifications to the classes. Next, I advocated for the students to get as many services as possible. Particularly, I advocated for them to speak with the bilingual counselor. I knew as youth facing a difficult situation, it would be beneficial for them to talk with a professional, particularly one who can speak their native language. Also, I questioned their placement in the 'punishment' unit. I found out why they were there and how long they would be there. I advocated for a quicker release. I also spoke up if I thought the problem was due to a language misunderstanding. Additionally, I also went to speak with the student himself to ensure that the student would not act out again and land himself back in the unit.

Recommendations

Working with these youth has been immensely fulfilling. Of course, I would prefer that students didn't land in an incarcerated youth center in the first place. While there is a limit to the influence that teachers can have, there are some things we can do to prevent our ELs from becoming incarcerated. As soon as the student exhibits behavior problems, starts skipping classes and receiving lower grades, address the student directly and get the parents involved. Parent/teacher liaisons can also help this involvement. If you teach as part of a team, get the student's other teachers involved. Contact the school counselor and enlist their help. Also, if there are counselors at an international office, contact them for help. If you suspect that the student is involved in a gang, there are also resources to help with that such as gang prevention task forces. As much as possible, we need to 'wrap' our EL students, particularly the ones newer to the country, in social services to catch them from slipping into a world of violence that they left behind. As ESOL teachers, we have the privilege of not only teaching academic English, but also about American schools; as well as helping them to adapt successfully to a new culture and a new life while at the same time honoring their home cultures. Like their parents, we want them to experience more of the best of times than the worst of times in this country, and we can have an impact on our EL students.

How "Swing Differentiation" Solves The Classic Differentiation Dilemma

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Throughout my sixteen year career as a teacher, the term "differentiation" has taken on a few meanings. Going from general language arts to ESOL, that term has also taken on greater significance. However, *differentiation* can be mired in the convoluted district instructional framework that incorporates larger portions of the ESOL territory with every passing year. The stakes are already high with more emphasis on standardized testing, but the current political climate breathes even harder down the necks of those of us working with immigrant families. Regardless of so much polarization with regard to politics today, there has long been a movement to raise the stakes for ESOL students. With this also brings into question what methods and strategies are most effective in improving proficiency levels. One of the most reliable tools ESOL teachers have always used is *differentiation*. But as the term itself implies "one size does not fit all," and neither does one definition.

The person who invented the adjustable wrench probably got tired of carrying around dozens of sizes of wrenches everywhere and figured, "Why not have one wrench and adjust it to the size of the bolt?" Ingenious if you think abou it. However, differentiation doesn't necessarily work this way. Instead, it generally means taking one topic or subject or lesson and assigning activities to particular students within a group based on their proficiency levels -much like taking out 16 different wrenches for one job. This is a widely accepted practice that allows groups of students to be engaged in appropriate activities. Of course, the challenge is having to plan this accordingly, which entails essentially having multiple plans. And honestly, it doesn't always work or go according to plan. I have faced this dilemma and frustration a number of times. Until one day it dawned on me (probably much like it must have for the person with the dozens of wrenches), "Why not make one plan that students at multiple proficiency levels can all participate in simultaneously?" Of course, the question then arose: "how?" The key is in realizing ESOL students are ESOL students for a number of reasons. Finding the reasons, the common gaps they all have is what then becomes the focal point, especially with those students at the lower proficiency levels. Level 1 and level 2 students all have similar issues with pronunciation, grammar, and comprehension in listening activities. Naturally, it took some trial and error, but eventually I developed some assessment tools that helped me identify their gaps in phonemic

awareness, literacy, and from this I could make one lesson for all students in the group because I could target one area at a time; one area they could work on in small groups and truly collaborate as a whole group. From this, I coined the phrase “swing differentiation.”

Its called *swing differentiation* because instructors can swing (or adjust) the level of complexity of activities to fit the needs of all students within a group, albeit phonological, reading, grammar, or improving their listening skills. It’s still differentiation, except there isn’t a need to make multiple activities for smaller groups within a group. Over the years, I’ve refined this strategy, but still run into snags from time to time. Generally, when it comes to students with very limited to no prior exposure to the Roman alphabetic system, the process is painstakingly slow. With adult students in certain programs, there is some room to “take your time,” and it is truly necessary for them to familiarizing themselves simply with sounds associated with letters and so forth. The good news is in the K-12 system, students at younger ages tend to catch on at a more rapid rate, so swing differentiation can really be utilized. However, with adults, the “swing” tends to go backwards at a slower rate before moving forward.

I remember back during my undergraduate studies there was a professor who was always a little disheveled and random during lectures. She was always on her best game when she actually looked at our assigned textbook. One night she commented, “I like books that are in order because they keep me in order,” or something to that effect. This idea stuck with me and has likely contributed to my over critical analysis of commercial textbooks. Many tend to jump around topics, or jump over essential and key elements of English (especially with respect to phonics). This is not swinging. This is jumping around. When one swings, the motion is smooth and gradual. Working with various textbooks over the years lead to me developing my own textbook specifically because of this lack of “smoothness” in transition. I think back on those days with that messy professor. She may have walked around with papers falling out of her books, but she always knew where she was because the class textbook was in order.

This doesn’t mean every teacher should write their own textbooks. It also doesn’t mean to have blind faith in the textbooks at your school. In the same way we expect our students to “fill in the gaps” and work out the linguistic problems through practice and more practice, so should we as teachers. It is never a good idea to be stagnant and assume what worked with your last class can simply be redone verbatim with the next class. It never happens that way because every group of students has different proficiency gaps. Find the causes of those gaps and the main gaps all your students share. That’s what you target and essentially what your students need. Perhaps you were already using swing differentiation. Perhaps all you need to do is tweak it a little -like using an adjustable wrench.

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