



NOTES for ESL

The Newsletter of the ESL PSA
of the B.C. Teachers' Federation

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President's Message

Marc Tremblay
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Hello ELL teachers,

As we prepare for another spring, our lives just seem to get busier. First term is behind us and another set of assessments are due very shortly. Time flies when you can leave the school and it's still light.

I recently came across an article written by Colin Sowden¹, *Culture and the 'good teacher' in the English Language Classroom*. I was most fascinated after reading the article and wanted to share with you his perspective on what he describes as the profile of a good teacher. Sowden discusses that life experiences make teachers better. He explains how opportunities such as learning a musical instrument, having a child or achieving a greater fitness level may be as relevant to your work as improving your teaching practice. He goes on to say that such personal growth will help us deal more easily with inter-cultural challenges. Therefore, the more we understand the world, human relations, and ourselves, the better able we will be to empathize with others and make connections. As Brumfit (in Sowden) says "The ability to relate to learners, the role of enthusiasm for the subject and the interaction of these with a sense of purpose and organization were as relevant in 1500 as in 2000"(2001, p.115). Success as a teacher depends not only on the approached or methods that you follow but also on your integrity as a person and the relationships that you are able to develop in the classroom.



President's Message continued...

How does that apply to me? My life experiences have certainly made me a better teacher. Having taught in 10 different schools and 2 school districts I feel that I have worked with a vast cross section of students from British Columbia. I often tell stories to my students based on my 30 years of teaching experience. These stories have lessons or teaching points that relate to topics of study. Students love a good story. In many ways my ELLs can relate. Sowden's article alludes to the fact that being authentic in the classroom is a key factor for being a better teacher.

If we accept that our profession is an art rather than a science, and if we recognize that our personal qualities, attitudes, and experiences are what finally count, providing that these are informed by best current practice and research, then as language teachers we can free ourselves from the kind of mechanistic expectations that have dogged us for so long. If we accept this we become genuinely free agents, able to decide for ourselves not only how best to carry out our job but also how to direct our future professional development and enthusiasm for our profession.

To ensure that your ESL PSA continues its service to teachers and the community at large, there are a number of actions you can take. **Get Involved! It's easier than you think!**

1. Maintain your membership

Membership fees fund our operations, the annual conference, Vision Day, and more. High membership numbers show the BCTF that BC teachers support the ESL PSA, and bring our voice to the table.

2. Write for the ESL PSA Newsletter

Share your ideas and your leading work with the PSA members and the general public. To find out how, visit <http://ellpsa.ca>

3. Take a Leading Role on the Executive Committee

4. Start an ESL PSA Local Specialist Association (LSA) – Chapter

If you start a PSA chapter in your BCTF local, your concerns will always be on the ESL PSA Executive Committee meeting agenda, and space is reserved for you in the newsletter. What's more, you'll build local networks to support ESL PSA initiatives.

1. Sowden, Colin. *ELT J* (2007) 61 (4): 304-310. doi: 10.1093/elt/ccm049

Please see the ESL PSA Executive list for contact information.

Marc Tremblay

Editor's Introduction

It is the responsibility of every classroom teacher to support every student in his or her class. Teachers who support refugee students, therefore, often face a seemingly impossible challenge, as this 'support' is often so much more complicated than it is for students in the regular class. Barbara Mitchell, ESL PSA Member-at-Large from Victoria is a proud supporter of our work, because she believes the ESL PSA embodies social justice, a cause dear to her heart. It is often the ELL teacher who acts as advocate, counselor, surrogate parent, safe-space provider, and finally teacher, for these most vulnerable students.

This edition of *Notes for ESL* features a number of articles and resources exploring best-practices for supporting refugees. These consist of social emotional supports as well as educational supports. Some refugee students' priorities mean they may not get as far as an educational need, as their mental state requires simply a safe place to come. Only after the sense of security is established can educational need be addressed.

Keep working hard! These kids need us.

Ross Powell Powell_r@surreyschools.ca

The ESL PSA Executive for 2013-2014

	<p>Vice President: <i>Our vice-president has retired and resigned her position. No one has stepped forward but we hope to find a suitable candidate to appoint and then conduct a formal election at our AGM in 2014. If you are interested in getting involved, contact Marc at mtremblay@sd45.bc.ca</i></p>	<p>Secretary: <i>Stacey McEachern is a high school social studies and ELL teacher in Vancouver. She has lived abroad and completed her TESL diploma at UBC. Her goal is to advocate for the learners who need a voice in their schools and communities. smeachern@vsb.bc.ca</i></p>	
	<p>Treasurer : <i>Analisa Feuz is a District Helping Teacher in LST with the Surrey School District. Previous to this position she taught at the elementary and secondary levels.</i> feuz_a@sd36.bc.ca</p>	<p>Member-at-Large: <i>Vicki Schrader teaches ELLs at Semiahmoo Secondary in Surrey. Educated at UBC, Vicki enjoys collaborating with colleagues and doing what she can to support other teachers of ELLs. She and Carole Davis maintain a website: SecondaryELLinSurrey.wordpress.com</i></p>	
	<p>Member-at-Large <i>Barbara Mitchell first taught in ELL volunteering at the Settlement House in Toronto as a teenager and later volunteering in Israel and Japan teaching English to both Adults and Adolescents. She believes drama, music, and art enrich and enhance speaking, writing, listening, and reading skills in a second language. She is presently the ELL teacher at Spectrum Community School. bmitchell@sd61.bc.ca</i></p>	<p>Member-at-Large and Webmaster: <i>Sylvia Helmer is a founding member of the ESL PSA and has held various positions on the executive. Sylvia 'retired' from the VSB last June, but remains a sessional instructor at UBC preparing new teachers to work with English as an Additional Language Learners. shelmer@shaw.ca</i></p>	
	<p>Member-at-Large <i>Debbie Gomes has been teaching ELL and English in Vancouver for 17 years and loves all of the different challenges it brings each day. She is department head of ELL at Eric Hamber Secondary and is International Student Advisor for VSB as well. dgomes@vsb.bc.ca</i></p>	<p>Member-at-Large <i>Liz Seitz is a Kelowna middle school teacher who has enjoyed extensive traveling and plans to continue teaching, learning, mentoring and enjoying the diverse cultures of the world.</i> elizabeth.seitz@sd23.bc.ca</p>	
	<p>Member-at-Large <i>Ian Weniger Hey teach! I got my "licence" from UBC in 1994, but I was helping new Canadians with their English before that. I work in a Vancouver high school these days, trying to do a lot with a little. My wife also teaches at the same school, my older son is a graduate and my younger son just started grade eight here.</i></p>	<p>Newsletter Editor <i>Ross Powell was a District Helping Teacher in LST with the Surrey School District. He now works as a faculty associate with the SFU PDP. He has taught for 25 years, mostly in English and ELL at secondary schools. powell_r@surreyschools.ca</i></p>	

Working with Refugee Learners

by Sylvia Helmer

As we watch the news and hear of wars and struggles in places around the world we have reasons to be grateful for living in a country such as Canada. It is also why so many immigrants have arrived and stayed, and why Canada is one of the top five receiving countries when it comes to accepting refugees.

What is considered a refugee?

The Geneva Convention defines refugees as follows: *A refugee is a person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."* [Definition 1951, 1967; taken from "Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees," Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, August 2007.]

When it comes to supporting the children of refugee families, teachers need some guidance as well. The Ministry of Education ESL Standards defines these learners as follows:

"At any grade level [Primary, Intermediate or Secondary], there may be new students who can be characterized as preliterate (See Glossary) learners. The age and level of developmental maturity of these students make them part of a particular school population (whether Primary, Intermediate or Secondary), but they will have received limited formal schooling or pre-schooling. These students are generally recent arrivals to Canada, whose backgrounds differ significantly from

the school environment they are entering. Some may have received schooling that was interrupted for various reasons, including war, poverty, or migration. Some may come from a remote rural setting with little prior opportunity for sequential schooling."

Preliterate students may have

- *little or no experience with print*
- *semi-literacy in a native language*
- *minimal understandings of the function of literacy*
- *limited awareness of school organization or culture*
- *performance significantly below grade level*
 - *insufficient English to attempt tasks.*

It is quite possible the child has never seen a drinking fountain or does not understand how urinals differ from toilets... We take a great deal for granted, making assumptions about what 'everyone knows'.

Glossary definition: Pre-literate: *having no ability to read or write in any language and very little awareness of the conventions of reading and writing (e.g. English text is read from left to right, letters indicate a sound, letters are combined to create words)*

You will no doubt have noticed that the definition suggests learners 'may have' such literacy and learning challenges. Some refugees had an excellent education up to a point when their immediate world/surroundings no longer allowed such 'ordinary' things as going to school to learn. Others never had the opportunity for what we in North America consider such a 'normal' childhood.

If you have been working with English Language Learners [ELLs] you have already learned that there is much diversity in terms of readiness and preparation for learning – and learning in English. How much more so might it be when we are considering refugee learners? For starters, let's summarize how refugee learners and immigrant learners differ.

How are Refugees different from Immigrants?

REFUGEES	IMMIGRANTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ abrupt and sudden departure ■ interrupted or unavailable schooling ■ miss home and fear to return ■ children may be without family and may not know if family members are safe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ a planned departure ■ going to school daily was normal ■ miss home but can return as needed ■ usually arrive as a family unit or choose to arrive separately

Given the potential variations this can include, working with a refugee learner requires some careful thought and planning. Most of us cannot begin to imagine what such a scenario might be like as a lived experience.

It goes without saying that supporting this unique group of learners is complex. Everything we have learned about our work with ELLs who are immigrants applies but as has been noted there are a number of additional concerns that may complicate our efforts. Some starting points to consider in your preparations for such learners include the following:

- Be informed: Culture, language, values, education, history and social situations will/do all have an impact.
- Provide age appropriate and relevant learning: High interest/low vocabulary and the basic building blocks of literacy are needed, but not in same format as kindergarten learners, unless the child in question IS that age.
- Acknowledge and draw upon learners “different ways of knowing”: Both languages require validation and ideally both would support ongoing development in English.
- Acknowledge different ways of using/structuring language: “Once upon a time” . . .is a way of telling a story that is part of how we organize learning – not so for all culture groups.
- Flexible schedules: Is full time from the day they arrive the most appropriate approach for that learner?
- Visual and real-life experiences are key ways to build confidence and learning: The Language Experience Approach [LEA] - do, talk, write, read – is an ideal way to integrate language and content learning even for absolute beginners. To learn more about this approach go to: <https://k12teacherstaffdevelopment.com/tlb/understanding-the-language-experience-approach-lea/>
- Remember that literacy is MUCH more than reading and writing! Your task is to help learners to use their sometimes vast “survival skills” to access all aspects of life in this new land and new learning environment.
- Consider the basics of life in your school and your town: it is quite possible that the child has never seen a drinking fountain or does not understand how urinals differ from toilets. If there is a need to bus to school, does the child or the family, have the money or understand how to take a bus or deal with a traffic light? We take a great deal for granted, making assumptions about what ‘everyone knows’. This you cannot allow yourself to do when dealing with refugee learners.

In your classroom create:

- A safe learning community
 - A literacy-rich environment – print rich and print-friendly; story-rich; book-rich; visual-rich
 - predictable routines
 - heterogeneous groups
 - daily activity, talk, reading, writing [LEA]
 - lots of ‘practice’ talk: one-to-one; pairs; groups
 - mini-lessons that are context-rich – LEA is ideal
 - a way to include frequent “breaks” - with optional, intriguing [not busy work] activities to enrich cognitive development [note that being indoors all day may also be a new challenge]
 - theme-based learning because it:
 - allows for many layers of content integration.
- capitalizes on students’ background knowledge/learning.
 - validates student prior learning/knowledge, etc.
 - provides natural opportunities for spaced repetition, review, reiteration in new contexts – across subject areas.
- Opportunities to engage with carefully chosen materials that:
 - reflect student cultures and ways of knowing,
 - include repetition, patterns, rhyme, visuals.
 - address concept development in “manageable bites”.
- Opportunities to learn to talk and talk to learn; learn to read and read to learn; learn to write and write to learn.

Bibliography: Working with Refugees

Further Reading in Print:

Helmer, Sylvia and C. Eddy. *Look at Me When I Talk to You: ESL Learners in Non-ESL Classrooms. 3rd edition.* Toronto: Pippin Press. 2012.

Rubinstein-Avila, E. “Conversing with Miguel: An Adolescent English Language Learner Struggling with Later Literacy Development.” *JOURNAL OF ADOLESCENT AND ADULT LITERACY DEVELOPMENT. 47: 4: December 2003/January 2004.*

Waxler-Morrison, Nancy et al (Eds.) *Cross-Cultural Caring: A Handbook for Health Professionals. 2nd Edition.* UBC Press: 2005. [Chapter 8 is entitled: Refugees in Canada]

NB: There is an overview and introduction to this volume available at:
<http://www.ubcpres.ca/books/pdf/chapters/waxmor.pdf>

Further Reading Online:

Alberta Education: Teaching Refugees with Limited Formal Schooling
<http://teachingrefugees.com/instructional-programming/resources/>

Bridging Refugee Youth and Children’s Services [BRYCS]
<http://www.brycs.org/publications/index.cfm>

While American, this organization’s website is a vast storehouse of information on all aspects of working with refugee youth and their families. Some of their weblinks include helpful booklets, others are good sources of information about cultural groups.

Some examples:

Growing Up in a New Country: A Positive Youth Development Toolkit for Working with Refugees and Immigrants by Susan Schmidt, Lyn Morland, and Jennifer Rose [June 2006: 54 pages]

<http://www.brycs.org/documents/growingupinnewcountry-web.pdf>

Raising Children in a New Country: An Illustrated Handbook

<http://www.brycs.org/documents/RaisingChildren-Handbook.pdf>

Growing up in a new country

<http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/GrowingUpInANewCountry-Web.pdf>

Refugee Families from Iraq

<http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/iraqi-cultural-backgrounder.pdf>

Refugee Families from Burma

<http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/burmese-cultural-backgrounder.pdf>

BC Ministry of Education: Students from Refugee Backgrounds: A Guide for Teachers and Schools [October 2009] http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/ell//refugees_teachers_guide.pdf

Guidelines for Educating Limited English Proficient Students with interrupted Formal Education

[LEP/ELL/SIFES] 2011 <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/docs/NYSEDSIFEGuidelines.pdf>

NB: while focused on processes in the state of New York, this document includes a variety of tips and templates that could be adapted for your context.

Human Rights Watch has several publications of merit including:

No Sanctuary: Ongoing Threats to Indigenous Montagnards in Vietnam's Central Highlands [131 page, June 2006 report by Human Rights Watch] <http://hrw.org/reports/2006/vietnam0606/vietnam0606webfullwcover.pdf>

Secondary ELL in Surrey. This teacher-created blog has a great number of resources. The refugee learner section is here: <http://secondaryellinsurrey.wordpress.com/informational-reference-items-caroles-book/refugee-students/>

Unwanted and Unprotected: Burmese Refugees in Thailand

Extensive report by Human Rights Watch. Information on various ethnic groups – see table of contents of report at:

<http://www.hrw.org/reports98/thai/index.htm#TopOfPage>

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families has a variety of 'backgrounders' on several refugee populations in North America at present or in transition to this area. Check them out at:

http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/refugee/cultural_links.htm

NB: Also see resources in the article on p. 14, Always Prepared

Are you aware? Trauma and Refugee Learners by Sylvia Helmer

[There is no cure for trauma] *However, students must learn to care for themselves and move on.*

Dr. Y. De Andrade

In a heartbeat a seemingly quiet and biddable child can become something quite other. Why? It is the result of trauma experienced. Trauma counseling is needed but on a day-to-day basis, you are the support that can help the child move forward one small step at a time. Being aware by learning as much as you can in advance is critical. Then, when an 'event' occurs you can react appropriately and be the supportive anchor the child needs.

What you may see/notice

- ⇒ Avoidance of particular activities or situations
- ⇒ Complaints of physical ailments like headaches, stomach aches, or vomiting
- ⇒ Difficulty completing tasks
- ⇒ Difficulty concentrating
- ⇒ Exaggerated startle response
- ⇒ Impaired memory
- ⇒ Irritability or hyper-alertness
- ⇒ Preoccupation with violent events – conversations, drawings
- ⇒ Recollection of traumatic events
- ⇒ Signs of excessive distress upon separation [or in anticipation of separation] from caregiver
- ⇒ Unrealistic worries about potential harm to self or others

What may have triggered these behaviours?

- ⇒ anger
- ⇒ denial
- ⇒ disturbing memories
- ⇒ feelings of being in danger
- ⇒ feelings of betrayal
- ⇒ violent nightmares or daytime 'flashbacks'
- ⇒ nothing obvious

How does this happen at school?

- ⇒ Dark hallway
- ⇒ Uniformed policeman in school
- ⇒ Sound of boot-like feet
- ⇒ Fire alarm bell; earthquake drill
- ⇒ Sudden loud noises, including laughter
- ⇒ Anything seemingly 'out of control' – e.g. other students "horsing around"
- ⇒ Others 'staring'
- ⇒ Misinterpreted body language – gestures, etc.
- ⇒ Not being able to communicate

Triggers: [out of our control]

- ⇒ Cause learners to relive traumatic experiences and events

Buffers: [can be created to help students manage the 'triggers']

- ⇒ A predictable experience such as following a set schedule, knowing when the bells will go off – at the same time every day – classroom routines, etc.

Caution:

- ⇒ A trigger witnessed by another child will 'rub off'

First Steps to Make Your New Learner Feel Safe:

- ⇒ calm environment
- ⇒ open and friendly body language
- ⇒ a school map
- ⇒ a routine/school schedule
- ⇒ opportunities to socialize with other children
- ⇒ new input in stages – consider a staggered entry into full school days
- ⇒ clarity for the learner of 'safe/good people at school – who , why , where, when
- ⇒ parent/caregiver orientation and easy access to the school

“Doing School” is Hard Work!! – What can we [not] assume the learner already knows how to do?

- ⇒ Sit
- ⇒ Sit still
- ⇒ Sit quietly
- ⇒ Hold a pencil/pen
- ⇒ Use a book
- ⇒ Copy, or, not copy
- ⇒ Recognize letters and numbers
- ⇒ Recognize own name
- ⇒ Do simple arithmetic
- ⇒ Understand the concept of numbers
- ⇒ Stay put in one room for long periods of time
- ⇒ Ask permission to move around
- ⇒ Left-to-right; top-to-bottom

[Adapted from: PTSD in Children, National Centre for PTSD]

Refugees: You Can Still Teach by Ian Weniger

I tell people who ask 'what do you do?' that I teach English and Socials to new Canadians. My students didn't choose to come here; they came, or were sent by their families. The stories of our students' voyages are part of what many of us consider to be the essential Canadian project: from the first legends of creation when people met the spirits traveling, to the first treaties and battles of the first peoples of this world, to the first contact with European traders and occupiers, to today's global human migrations, all share the similarity of fitting a new part to a traditional way of being.

Many of these new families are refugees, just like most immigrants. People who emigrate to look for better work are refugees from poverty and despair. Often they have very good education and value the same for their children, so most of my students are supported in their efforts to study their English lessons. Of course, chasing the Canadian Dream means parents work long hours and don't see their kids, let alone encourage them to participate in the English-Canadian world. That's par for the course in my school, ELL or not.

Connecting to refugees means telling stories, and lots of them. Teaching through stories means giving confidence to narratives that don't always involve happy characters or happy endings. Teaching stories means examining the structure of a plot and accepting some of the storyline as "just the way things were". This acceptance is not just to honour mystery as a willing suspension of disbelief, but mainly to let students know that their own stories

might not make sense to them or that they make perfect, frightening, sense that they'd rather suppress for now.

I really love to catch kids learning when they don't realize it as they increase and enrich their vocabulary and sentence structure as they try to tell about the stories they read or heard, and make up a few as they go along. Children are naturally curious and try to create plausible or entertaining narratives with the things they know and heard or saw somewhere, especially somewhere uncomfortable or painful.

The stereotypical refugee student has not really been to school. Some refugees have only known school in a refugee camp, which might have taught them English but not much else. The trauma of fleeing from an unstable life, or of living in a camp, or of leaving their region for the relative affluence of Vancouver, is rarely dealt with. There is an understanding among my refugee students that they have no obligation to share their stories of persecution, and that I will only identify their culture or language. Some students from the same home country are oppressor and oppressed, but the only acknowledgement of that fact I allow is the difference in languages. Some students in the dominant culture are only vaguely aware of minorities in their country, while others are very aware and proud that they are the “most developed” group compared to aboriginal people.

These attitudes are very similar to how most Canadians regard First Nations. Most new Canadians seem to know this term "First Nations" like it was the

first fact about Canada that they learned at the airport or something...

Teaching refugee students with their gaps in academic progress and unfamiliarity with school culture and implements like recess, bells, binders and homework sometimes resembles students who are "internal" refugees. These students didn't attend school regularly because their neighbourhoods experienced gang-war flare-ups, so their academic and literacy skills are surprisingly weak in their home languages.

The most challenging refugee students come from places where school is not yet a part of culture. Education as a part of daily communal work and ritual is rarely practiced but it is the core of First Nations' teaching and learning as they rebuild from the criminal horrors of residential school. These students' families find supporting school-based learning very difficult as parents and children are unused to going separate ways after breakfast, then returning at dinner to decompress and share stories.

"Dammit, Jim, I'm a teacher, not an anthropologist or

social worker!" Of course my job would be easier if I could just provide learning opportunities that matched reading and writing levels and I didn't need to provide support to families beyond a couple of prescriptive comments. Fact is, though, I have to take students as they come. If they come with the trauma of an odyssey to refuge, I have to roll with their punches.

Fact is, though, I have to take students as they come. If they come with the trauma of an odyssey to refuge, I have to roll with their punches.

The reward comes when the patience of respect that I try to offer to any student gives enough confidence for her to share her most vulnerable story with a teacher or a class. That story could be about the trauma of a violent scene or it could be about the tenderness of finding a friend at lunch after months of loneliness. The

student finally recognizes the words and the classroom as friends with which to share his feelings and communicate effectively.

Refugee students are still children, but they are the ones who came a lot farther and bring a lot more memories to class than I had back in the day. I don't have to be a social service expert to connect to them; we can be aware of emotional needs and still provide the language learning that will support their growth, if not their recovery. We can still teach.

An International Survey about Bilingualism and Children with and without Disabilities

You are invited to take part in a research study looking at services provided to children with and without disabilities that support the development of bilingualism. You do NOT need to be a bilingual specialist or a disabilities specialist to participate.

You can participate in the study if:

1. You are an administrator or a professional (e.g., early educator, teacher, speech-language pathologist, psychologist, etc).
2. You work with children and youth of any age (birth through high school graduation).
3. You work in British Columbia or your work impacts children or youth in British Columbia.

This study is being conducted by Stefka Marinova-Todd (Principal Investigator) and Pat Mirenda at the University of British Columbia. For more information and to access the survey please click on this link: <https://surveys.dal.ca/opinio/s?s=20668>

RECIPE for Teachers of Additional Language Learners by Carolyn Shitanishi

Provide and combine in a large classroom:

- a generous amount of theory-based language activities
- 10 months of meaningful content that serves the learners' purposes
- plenty of opportunities for social interaction
- 180+ days filled with student choices
- one roomful of real literature (in first and second languages)

Mix the above ingredients with the following:

- one fruitful, learner-centered curriculum
- a wonderful year filled with authentic learning experiences
- a stupendous, risk-free environment

Add:

- 1 pitcher full of themes organized around big ideas
- a grand focus on student background knowledge, strengths, culture, and interests
- one big, fat, ongoing integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing

Sprinkle in and blend well:

- a handful of high expectations and firm discipline
- one classroom supply of portfolio assessment folders
- daily collaboration between students and teachers

Toss in:

- 20 bundles of occasional laughter (to add flavour to the learning process)

Gently stir in:

- one heartfelt of patience and understanding
- a tremendously large package of faith in the learner

Let learners stand (or sit) at room temperature while actively constructing their own knowledge within a rich context.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

- Do not overteach or results will be disastrous.
- No need to prepare recipe ahead of time; allow learning in process to take place.
- Take time to celebrate language learning experiences and cultural diversity within the classroom.

YIELD:

One strong community of empowered learners who are skilled language users.

The Welcome Centre: How our Programs Support Refugees by Kris Hull

Hi, I'm Kris Hull and I've been working with the refugee population in Surrey now for the last 8 years. I've been at the Welcome Centre now for 4 years. At the Welcome Centre, I teach a program for 13-19 year old students called the ELL Bridge Program where the basic aim is to improve the students' English ability, help them acculturate to Canadian schools, introduce them to their community and services available to them and basically give them a softer landing into high school. I ask myself, what would I need to know, fresh off a plane, to be able to step out into Surrey and survive as a new Canadian. That's my grid for everything I do. I ask how would I ask directions, shop, exercise, interact with Canadians, etc.

We also have a program called Foundations, that is a similar program for the new Canadian parents of Surrey students. It is very similar to the Bridge Program in curriculum and methodology, but for an adult population.

The last program is the Bridge to Success Program. I teach this program every Friday and teachers from the Invergarry Adult Learning Centre teach the rest of the week. This program is for 17-20 year olds with the aim of getting them some Invergarry credits, job skills and improving the students' language skills. I teach the work experience/Canadian culture portion of this program. These students have finished their time in high school, are serious and committed to furthering their education and want to move forward. Some leave high school to come to the Bridge to Success program if it is a better fit for them.

I think the biggest ah-ha for me early on is just how motivated these students are to succeed and learn. I was surprised the first few holidays and breaks where students complained about having time off and whined about not being able to attend school for two weeks! These student have come from incredible backgrounds and some have been through horrific trials and yet they are excited and motivated to begin their new life in Canada. With this in mind, I start every day with the mentality that I am going to provide them the richest, most relevant and engaging day I possibly can. I feel I owe this to them, as they have come so far and put in so much. It's good to

remind myself of this daily, so that I never just pass the time, but rather give them something of value each day and help them move towards their goals.

Technology has been a great resource for us. Using the Smartboard has been a great addition to the lessons. We also have access to iPads which has been a great way to introduce them to technology as well as so many apps that are designed to work them through spelling/grammar/math/speaking/reading/ listening exercises at an individual pace, that I just couldn't accomplish as a single teacher. I have found Raz-kids Reading very helpful, as each student has their own account and they can read from home and I can monitor their progress and time spent reading. I have set up a simple website, on Google blogger, www.mrhull.org where students can go and hear their spelling words narrated on a YouTube video. It also has other things we've worked on in class and website links for them to go to for extra practice. Other than that, I try to get them talking as much as possible. Everything we do involves tons of questions and answers. I'm trying to make sure they are reading, writing, speaking and listening in everything we do. We have lots of fun and learn English in the process!

Newsletter Submissions

Send newsletter submissions to
powell_r@surreyschools.ca.

Articles can be of any length, but please 'get to the point' as they say, and don't be surprised if the editor has changed things somewhat once your article gets published. Please send along some art or graphic to accompany your article separately, with a credit to the artist/photographer where necessary. You must get permission to publish pictures of children. Opinion pieces will be labeled as such.

Send all articles in plain text; I'll turn it into a format that fits.

Three newsletters are published every year:
next submission deadline: May 15, 2014

Not all articles submitted will be published.

Success for Refugee Students: Not Always What You'd Expect by Judith Robson

When it was announced that our Vancouver high school was going to receive a group of refugee students, we were very excited. We had had refugee kids before so we felt that we were reasonably prepared. We knew about literacy and that many refugee students weren't able to either read or write even in their first language. We were also aware that some came with working knowledge of numerous languages. We had also worked with students who had had huge educational gaps in their learning. Some kids had experienced events far beyond their years. They had been parenting young siblings, or taking care of the family home and some had even been the family's breadwinner. As a result of their experiences, some of our former refugee students had had difficulty settling into the role of 'student'. We were prepared for a lot of hard work and that as teachers, we may not be as successful as we would like. After all, the odds of student success for these youth have to be considered. Refugee students arriving in high school with only a few years to learn academic English may not graduate along with their peers with a B.C. Dogwood certificate. At best, these students may get a minimum wage job working in the back of a restaurant.

The group we were receiving were the Jarai from the mountainous regions of Vietnam. These people who are also known as "Montagnard", had been marginalized and even persecuted by their government for their support of American troops during what we call the Vietnam War. The Vietnamese themselves also marginalized them because they are not always rice growers therefore not considered contributing members of society. Yes, it was a lot of work and as we expected there were literacy and learning issues and a lot of other challenges. But now in retrospect, I think we would all agree that this group has become relatively successful. So how were the Jarai different from other refugee youth who struggled and sometimes quit school?

The Jarai have a well-structured and tight community. In fact when they arrived in Vancouver all twenty of them lived together in one South Vancouver house. The Canadian government arranged this accommodation because they were aware that in Vietnam these people lived, worked and prayed together. It was extremely important for them to stay together. I believe that is what made the difference.

They were spiritually, emotionally and socially connected to their family, their church and now to their school. I remember in particular one young Jarai boy who loved to sing. He performed confidently in his Vancouver based church and also with-out hesitation at school. Today in his mid twenties, he is married to a Jarai woman, sings on YouTube, and owns his own house painting company in Vancouver. What makes his story even better is that his business partner is a Canadian born English speaker.

As a group they had a keen philosophy of wanting to belong.

So what is the message here? Recently, a survey was conducted regarding how strongly people felt connected to their community. It became apparent from the results that immigrant families often struggle with depression and loneliness because they don't feel a connection. How much more then would such feelings be part of those who arrived as refugees, often separated from family in violent ways? In the case of the Jarai though, they relied on the support not only of government agencies but the support of their Church, their school and their family – even when it was extended family. As a group they had a keen philosophy of wanting to belong. We can learn from this. Help ELL students feel they belong. Keep all of our students especially our ELL kids connected. Include them in clubs, volunteer work and sports. Connect them to community programmes and organizations. Be strong advocates for these students and hopefully everything will work out. No one said it would be easy; this is the story of a group who made it work!

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/life-of-solitude-a-loneliness-crisis-is-looming/article15573187/?page=all>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWajVBCfw-E>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrtyEsUfr-M>

PS: To learn more about the Jarai/ Montagnards see the Human Rights Watch document cited in another article in this issue of the newsletter.

Looking for some Local Support? Form an LSA of the ESL PSA

A LSA (local specialist association) is a local affiliate of the PSA (Provincial Specialist Association). Groups of teachers from any district can get together and form a local specialist association. Administrative and financial support are available. The details are in the April 2012 Newsletter and the PSA Guide-book which is accessible online at: <http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/PSAs/Guidebook/PSAGuideBook.pdf>

It's an easy process, and will set up a rewarding professional experience for you and your colleagues.

New (Dinner) Feature:

Multicultural Recipe

This edition's recipe has been submitted by our President, Marc Tremblay.

French Canadian Meat Pie

1 pound minced pork, or 1/3 pound of each-ground veal, beef and pork
1 small onion, chopped finely
1 clove garlic, minced
½ tsp salt
½ tsp Savory or sage
¼ tsp Celery salt
¼ tsp Ground cloves
½ cup water
½ cup breadcrumbs
Pastry for double pie crust

1. Place all ingredients (except bread crumbs and pie shell) into sauce pan and bring to a boil and cook uncovered for 20 minutes.
2. Cool the mixture and pour into pastry lined pan. Cover with top crust, cut steam vents and bake in a 400 degree oven for 45 minutes, or until golden brown.
3. Serve hot with potatoes or rice and your favorite vegetables

The theme of the next Newsletter is
preliterate English learners.

If you've got some theory, practice, stories or questions, please send them along. Who knows something about early learning and ELL's?

Refugee Voices

Meet the Somalis is a collection of 14 illustrated stories depicting the real life experiences of Somalis in seven cities in Europe: Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Leicester, London, Malmo, and Oslo. The stories allow readers a unique insight into what everyday life is like as a Somali in Europe. *Meet the Somalis* is based on the firsthand testimonies of Somalis in Europe interviewed during six months in 2013.

<http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/meet-the-somalis.pdf>

submitted by Diane Tijman. District Curriculum Coordinator, ESL and Multiculturalism, Richmond School Board, with the notice that 'with regards to the short stories, my Arabic SWIS worker cautioned me that some of the statements about Muslims aren't true.'

Just as Marc Likes it! Mmmmm!

French Canadian Meat Pie



Always Prepared: A Welcome Toolkit by Sylvia Helmer

Many of you have had the experience of a school secretary or perhaps the records clerk coming to your classroom door – during class teaching time – and presenting you with a new student for your class. If that student is an immigrant or a refugee, things are a bit more complicated. Since getting a new student is not an uncommon occurrence, many teachers, especially at the elementary level, have a ‘package’ ready for such events. If they are lucky they even have an empty desk available.

Of course we would all prefer plenty of notice of such an event but reality is sometimes otherwise. As a good former ‘scout mom’ I argue that it is wise to be prepared. If you have advance notice you may be able to further augment your toolkit [see the example of Amal’s arrival on the ESL PSA Blog: <http://supportingtall.wordpress.com> by looking for the posting from February 24, 2014]. However, having materials ready for whenever a new learner arrives at your classroom door has much merit. That way s/he will feel welcomed and able to participate in “school” at some level. For younger learners items that can be coloured are always a favourite. For all learners things

to manipulate or leaf through are important. While it is far less likely that a student will suddenly arrive in your English 10 class, it can happen so being somewhat prepared to deal with such a learner in an inclusive and friendly fashion –remember they may have limited English skills and they will most certainly be feeling very out of place and nervous.

First Days Folders serve two main purposes. It is meant to provide a welcome, and to engage the newcomer in interesting and productive work from the start. For example, when a new learner arrives, though you may not have time immediately to focus one-to-one, the learner gets a folder and has the option of colouring or simply looking through things to start. The intent is to engage the student in both language and content learning immediately – not to mention allowing some time to adjust to the classroom and students while observing and leafing through the folder ingredients. The learner feels included, engaged in learning in the new school, somewhat safe with a potentially familiar set of tasks, and not as isolated from the rest of the class.

FIRST DAYS FOLDER

Ingredients: [one per learner]

NB: I have used a duotang as I can 3-hole-punch most of the materials for easier storage.

- writing and colouring materials, ruler, eraser, etc.
- paper - lined and unlined; construction paper
- exercise book [if appropriate]
- school map with your classroom marked clearly, as well as the gym, the office and the lunchroom/cafeteria
- class schedule
- pictures of the students in the class with their first names [The extra proofs etc that are available after school photos is ideal for this, especially at the elementary level where the students are together all day.]
- vocabulary cards with pictures, in envelope or baggie [attached to duotang’s inside cover]
- hands-on materials such as a tangram [plastic tiles in a baggie] with a page of potential ‘pictures’ to create with the tiles
- simple puzzles – word search, mazes, basic math computation pages, etc.
- magazine/s [from library discards] that is age-appropriate

Other resources that would be ideal to have on hand:

- Oxford Picture Dictionary, Canadian Edition
- picture books as appropriate – both story books and information books
- grade level texts to browse

It may also be useful to create/have available:

- **Name card** - Learners can create this [by copying a model in the duotang] using construction paper. It is a good way to get to know the whole class at the outset but when a new learner arrives later, that can be an initial activity. In addition, an ID card for backpack or bag, and/or a business card size ID card to put in a shirt or jeans pocket can be handy for those learners who might find themselves lost in a still new and alien building and not knowing how to reorient themselves or how to ask for directions. Whether large or small, there will be space for the name in English and in the home language. Be sure to get the pronunciation of the students' names right by listening with care. [NB: Watch for name orders that are different from what you are used to seeing to ensure you are getting the right *called* name – and in some cases, surname.]
- **ID Card** – Mount on light card and have student place one in backpack/school bag and again, one could be business card size. They are practicing the copying and can be helped to learn to “read” their names and phone numbers, for example.
- **Welcome to our School** - Basic information that is usually given to the family at the start of the school year should be included here. In many countries fire drills and earthquake drills are not part of school routine. It is important to help the learner understand this procedure BEFORE the first drill. Consider what refugees from war zones are likely to think when the fire bell goes off! Or worse yet, what would be the reaction when classmates and the teacher suddenly dive under the tables and desks?
- **Alphabet cards** in print and cursive script. There are such cards – the length of a ruler – available in dollar stores and such. They can act as an oversized bookmark and as a reference for learners new to the English alphabet or to cursive writing. You can also get decks of cards, one per letter, for use with basic activities.
- **“I’m All Worn Out” Activities:** Additional language learners in particular, need frequent breaks from the intensity of learning in a new language. Providing a variety of activities that do not focus on language provide this ‘low stress’ time. Some possibilities include:
 - Paper for drawing
 - A tangram template with sample figures to complete
 - Paper for Origami – with visual instructions
 - Home language books or stories to read or browse through – picture books if there is no home language literacy. Don’t forget the nonverbal picture books.
 - Graphic stories and novels...even though they cannot read the text they enjoy leafing through the book and sometimes even recognize the story from the pictures.
 - Writing paper – writing in the home language can be relaxing
 - A computation math sheet makes some eyes light up
- **Bilingual Picture Dictionary:** This is going to be the student’s lifeline to communication and can be very helpful in your attempts to communicate and help the student learn. If a bilingual dictionary is really not available, it may be possible to ask parents to buy one as an alternate option to school purchase. An English picture dictionary will still be of much value as it at least allows “visual” communication. Even the electronic variety can be a big help when used judiciously.
- **Easy Fiction and Non-Fiction Books:** Have lots of picture books available for browsing for all ages of learners. The Eyewitness books are a popular item in most elementary school libraries. Even if there is little that the learner can actually read, the mental exercise of walking through these books, examining the visual details, helps keep minds active and engaged. With a bit of thought and planning, the books you select will be relevant to the next unit of study or theme to be covered in class. Remember that the learners may understand what you are talking about with the class – as least as far as the topic is concerned – but they are not yet able to demonstrate that knowledge and understanding to you in English. Having seen the books previously, your presentation will then help them put labels to the visuals they examined, further facilitating the learning process.

- Secondary teachers talk to your elementary colleagues or friends who have younger learners. There are so many materials available these days that are not “childish” but highly visual and very supportive of new learners in English.
- The new National Geographic series for young learners are highly visual, full of photographs of ‘realia’, but very basic in terms of language.

➤ **Magazines:** These can be for browsing or for cutting/pasting/sorting activities. Students enjoy the hunt for even basic things like colours and numbers and can be challenged to find pictures of newly learned objects – desk, table, pen, boy, girl, etc. Ask your teacher-librarian to let you have discards from the library - Does anyone really throw away all those gorgeous pictures in the National Geographic magazines? Elementary schools often have library subscriptions to Owl, Chickadee, etc., all of which are highly visual.

A very few resources to help you work with refugee learners follows. There are many online programs to support early literacy and it is likely your school already has a subscription to such as Tumble Books or RazKids. Do check to see what is available through your district. Needless to say there is much available for free as well. Vetting various sites is the time-consuming part.

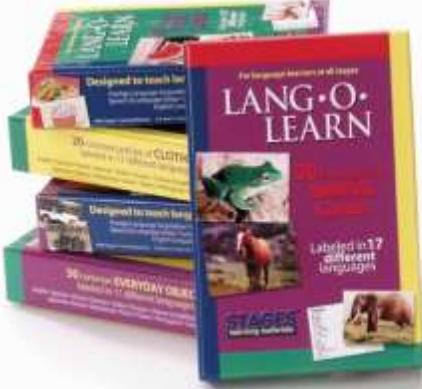
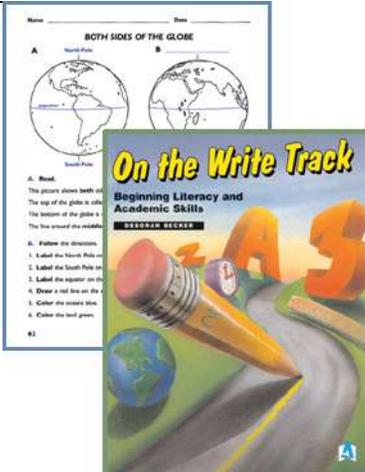
Resources to help you support your refugee learners [or beginner ELLs]

Alberta Education: Recommended Text Resources for Content Development

<http://teachingrefugees.com.66-18-244-250.previewme3.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Recommended-text-Resources-for-Content-development.pdf>

www.manythings.org - especially "Easy things for Beginners"

Lanternfish [Jobs, worksheets and flashcards for the ESL and TEFL teacher] <http://bogglesworldesl.com>

<p>Lang-O-Learn Vocabulary Cards</p> <p>Full colour photographic images, labeled on the reverse in 17 common languages. Includes separate sets for Food, Animals, Vehicles, Clothing, Everyday Objects.</p> <p>Available from: www.stageslearning.com</p>	
	<p>On the Write Track: Beginning Literacy and Academic Skills [1997] by Deborah Becker</p> <p>Student Text: ISBN 978-1-882483-38-9 Teacher’s Guide: ISBN 978-1-882483-39-6</p> <p>The author found herself working with later to literacy teens and, after much cutting and pasting, creating and scrambling and searching, she created this book. Its purpose is to help students who have had delayed, interrupted or no formal schooling to learn the basic literacy skills needed to promote their ability to function independently. Each chapter combines activities and exercises in real-life, age-appropriate contexts with just enough predictability and repetition to ensure student success.</p>

1 Including a First Workbook of English
ENGLISH
THROUGH PICTURES



E.A. RICHARDS / CHRISTINE M. GIBSON

2 Including a Second Workbook of English
ENGLISH
THROUGH PICTURES

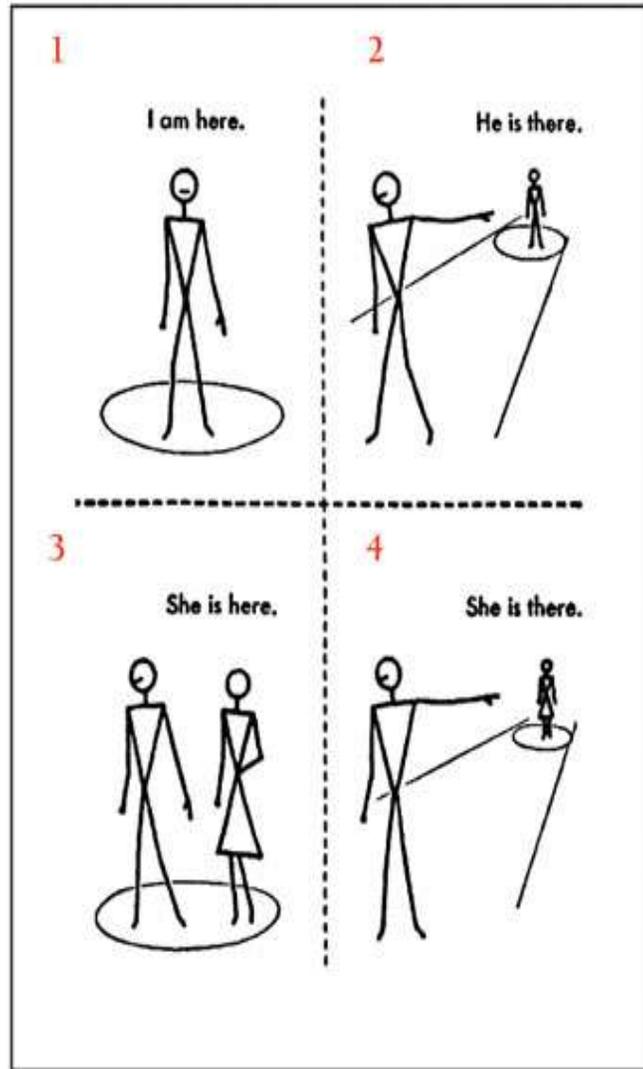


E.A. RICHARDS / CHRISTINE M. GIBSON

3
ENGLISH
THROUGH PICTURES



E.A. RICHARDS / CHRISTINE M. GIBSON

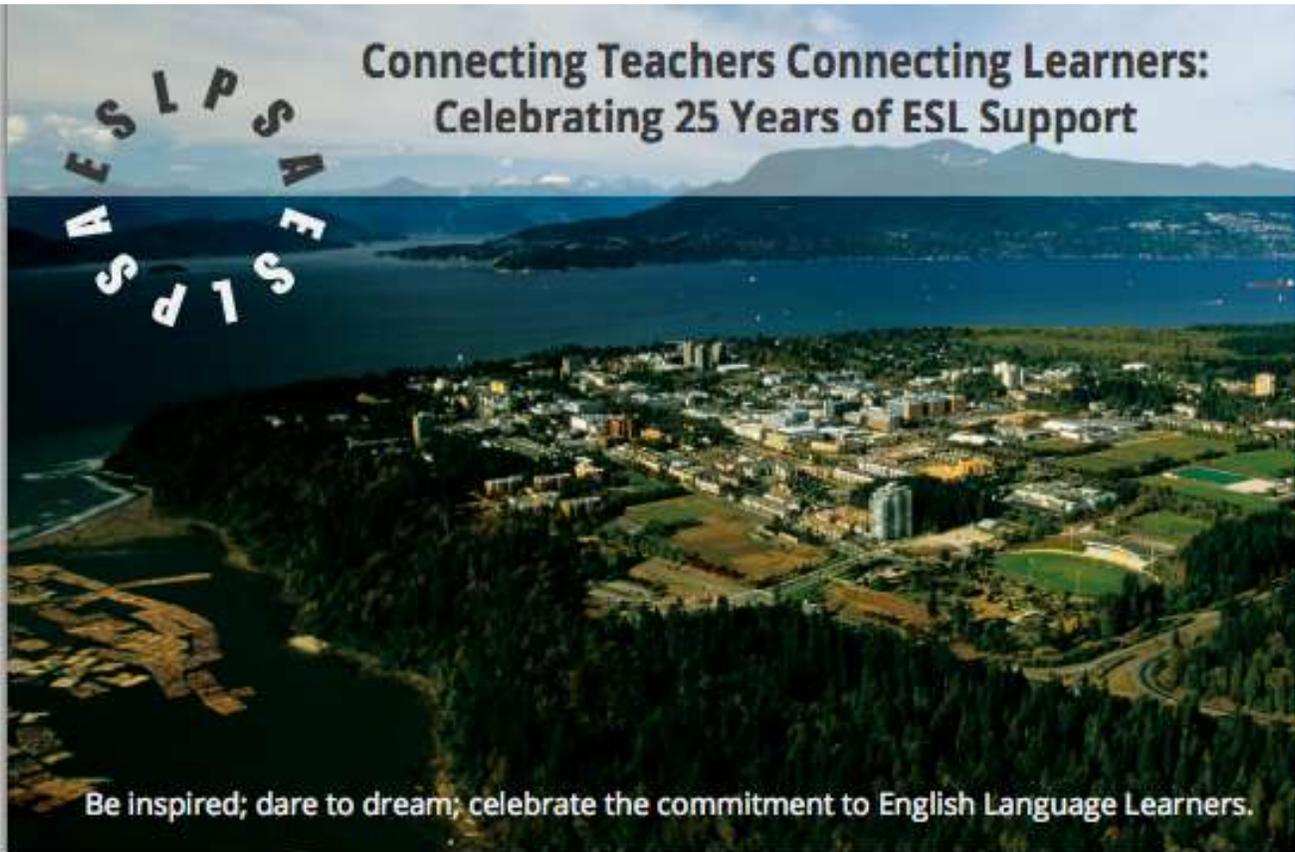


English Through Pictures: [Book 1](#) and A First Workbook of English ISBN 0-88751-111-2

English Through Pictures: [Book 2](#) and A Second Workbook of English ISBN 0-88751-113-9

English Through Pictures: [Book 3](#) ISBN 0-88751-115-5
Available from www.pippinpub.com

This updated version of an 'elderly' series is very popular with older learners as a take home and learn with the family. As one Literacy teacher reported, 'They loved the book to death. Its bindings have crumbled from much page-turning.'



Friday, 24 October 2014

FEATURED SPEAKERS

Venue

University Hill Secondary,
on the beautiful UBC campus



Jim Cummins

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

Deborah Short

Academic Language Research & Training and Center for
Applied Linguistics

Steven Talmy

University of British Columbia

Friday, October 24 is the Provincial Professional Development Day. Tell a few friends about this fabulous line up of internationally renowned experts in the field of English Language instruction.

Registration will be through the website: visit <http://ellpsa.ca/>