

NOTES for ESL

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

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President's Message



Marlene Eccles

Following a very successful 20th Annual ESL PSA Conference, Visions 21: Best Practices Across the Curriculum and our AGM, I would like to introduce and reintroduce the members of the ESL PSA Executive for 2010-2011.

PRESIDENT: [re-elected]
Marlene Eccles (Williams Lake)

VICE-PRESIDENT:
[vacant]

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: [continuing]
Sara Raouf (Richmond)

TREASURER: [continuing]
Analisa Feuz (Surrey)

SECRETARY: [appointed for one year]
Stacey MacEachern (Vancouver)

CONFERENCE CHAIR: [elected]
Judith Robson (Vancouver)

MEMBER-AT-LARGE: [continuing]
Sylvia Helmer (UBC/Vancouver)

MEMBER-AT-LARGE: [continuing]
Dale Shea (Coquitlam)

MEMBER-AT-LARGE: [elected]

Neil Norcross (Vancouver)

MEMBER-AT-LARGE: [elected]

Marc Tremblay (West Vancouver)

MEMBER-AT-LARGE: [re-elected] Kristin Housez (Vancouver)

MEMBER-AT-LARGE: [re-elected] Betty Kosel (Vancouver)

I want to formally thank Judith Robson, and Sylvia Helmer, (conference co-chairs) and all their team of volunteers, who made on-line registration and this conference such a success. Sylvia Helmer and Leah Moe were the on-line registrars and spent many untold, unpaid hours sorting out all the little glitches that seem inevitable with an online system. Catherine Eddy, Sydney Dean and Stacey MacEachern organized the workshops, and what a fine slate of sessions it was. Dale Shea organized the publishers and book donations, while Versha Oza, beat the pavement to garner many large and small donations for prize give-aways. Kristen Housez was in charge of our first ever international luncheon and was ably aided and abetted by Ena Ma the cafeteria coordinator and her staff. Kristin also organized the wine and cheese event. It takes a little extra time and effort but I am sure we all appreciated the good selection of nibbles and beverages, not to mention having the use of 'real' glasses. As noted, it was our first International luncheon, offering selections from Chinese, Indian and Japanese cuisine. The feedback on this was very positive - something that will encourage the conference committee to make the extra efforts required to create such a feast for you again next year. Anne Wong was the on-site coordinator. She and her team of student volunteers were a priceless asset to our conference

team. A huge thank you from myself, and from all of you I am sure, to all who helped make the conference such a success. For more details of the conference, see the conference report and a review of the keynote speaker elsewhere in this newsletter.

I personally found the workshops I attended excellent - there were hands on examples that I could take back to school and use right away. For example, "How to Use Music to Develop Oral Language" showed the importance of having fun while learning language. We read the story, "Going on a Bear Hunt" and I came back to my class, read the story, and my students cut-out little bears and completed a story map together. They learned vocabulary and story mapping in an engaging and effective way. Thank you Sonya for that great idea!

As we rapidly move to the close of another year, and busy ourselves with Christmas activities, I want to encourage you to network with ESL/D teachers across this province. It is good to know that PSAs provide teachers with valuable support, resources and are advocating for all teachers in the province, not only teachers that belong to a PSA. Consider forming a chapter - check out the details on our website: www.bctf.ca/psas/eslpsa .

PSAs play a key role in supporting teachers in their day-to-day work. They publish excellent journals and newsletters, and some have now moved to online publications only. Most PSAs also maintain websites with teacher resources and are creating listservs for professional discussions.

You should also know that many PSAs offer workshops for schools and districts. To that end, PSA Council has compiled a list of these for circulation to PD chairpersons. Check it out and if you do not find exactly what you might need for your ESL learners, feel free to contact someone on the executive and perhaps we can custom-make session to meet your needs.

PSAs also contributed to the PSA Council briefs to the BCTF Bargaining Conference

on class size/composition, professional development, distributed learning, technological change, and preparation time. Several PSAs made specific bargaining recommendations to the Executive Committee, all of which were passed and adopted by the Bargaining Conference.

Wishing all of you the best in 2011.

Marlene Eccles, ESL PSA President.

ESL PSA Executive



[Marlene Eccles \(President\)](#)

Marlene is currently teaching grade two in Williams Lake, B.C. She took her ESL training through the University of Saskatchewan, and completed a TESOL certificate through UBC. She has been on the ESL executive for approximately six years and has found it to be a great support network.



[Neil Norcross \(Member At Large\)](#)

Neil has worked for 14 years as both an ESL and EFL teacher, embarking on this career while living overseas for six years in Japan. Recently Neil has had the great opportunity to work with a whole host of enthusiastic students at Eric Hamber Secondary.



[Judith Robson \(Conference Chair\)](#)

Judith's career in ESL began in Japan in 1980. She then brought her experience back to B.C. in the mid 80s where she worked in both private and public schools. Judith has now been an ESL and English teacher in Vancouver for 16 years.



[Sylvia Helmer \(Member At Large\)](#)

Sylvia is a founding member of the ESL PSA and has held various positions on the executive. She has taught all grade levels both in BC and areas of the South Pacific, worked as district ESL Consultant and Manager of the Reception Centre for Vancouver and is now seconded to UBC to work with the elementary TELL [Teaching English Language Learners] cohort.



[Kristin Housez \(Member At Large\)](#)

Kristin is a certified ESL teacher with 23 years of service and experience teaching ESL learners. Recently she was the ESL Assessment Teacher for Vancouver School Board. Kristin is currently working at an elementary school on a Resource Team.



[Analisa Feuz \(Treasurer\)](#)

Analisa currently works as part of a Helping Teacher team in the area of Learner Support at Educational Services in the Surrey School District. Prior to this, she was an LST/ESL teacher for twelve years at the elementary level.



[Dale Shea \(Member At Large\)](#)

Dale is a Member At Large in the ESL PSA. He has been in charge of the Publishers' Display at the ESL PSA conference for the last few years. He is also the ESL Coordinator in SD43 (Coquitlam).



[Betty Kosel \(Member At Large\)](#)

Betty has been a member of the PSA executive since 2006. She is currently employed as the ESL consultant K-12 for the VBE following several years as a classroom teacher. She encourages her colleagues to continue to advocate on behalf of ESL learners.



[Sara Raouf \(Newsletter Editor\)](#)

Sara is working as an ESL/Resource teacher in Richmond. She also taught English for 3 years in Japan and South Korea.



[Marc Tremblay \(Member At Large\)](#)

Marc has been teaching in West Vancouver for over 30 years. He has taught French Immersion grades 3-7 at Ecole Pauline Johnson where he became the Vice-Principal. He is specialized in ESL and Gifted Education. He has taught high and low incidence children as the resource teacher and also specialized in Physical Education teaching.



[Stacey McEachern \(Secretary\)](#)

Stacey is currently an ESL/Social Studies teacher at Eric Hamber Secondary but has also worked at language schools in Vancouver and done private tutoring. She is currently working towards completing her TESL diploma through UBC.

21st Century Students; 19th Century Teaching?

By Sylvia Helmer

We arrived for the keynote address at the PSA Conference 2010 more than a little intrigued by the title. Knowing that Dr. Lee Gunderson was the speaker who would address this topic generated a 'buzz' about what he might have to say in this regard. We were not disappointed.

The stage was set with recent data and a short history lesson. Not only are there more and more additional language learners in our schools each year, but also - and despite many specific efforts and initiatives - we continue to struggle to meet their needs at an optimal level. Dr. Gunderson noted that immigrants in the early 1900s struggled unsuccessfully to complete as many years of basic education as their 'native white' peers and this struggle continues today. High school graduation rates for immigrant learners in BC are significantly lower than their native-English-speaking peers and, sadly, this includes those children born here to immigrant parents. While the demographic of the immigrant learners has shifted from being mostly of European descent to being mostly from South and East Asian descent, the results are persistently sad.

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*Next, Gunderson pointed out that it is far too easy to 'blame the teachers' - something that also has deep roots in history. From ancient Rome and Athens to more modern diatribes about 'education as the national failure' [1957] to today's version, *Waiting for Superman*.*

something that also has deep roots in history. From ancient Rome and Athens to more modern diatribes about 'education as the national failure' [1957] to today's version, *Waiting for Superman*. While it is true that most do not begin to know how difficult teaching is in 21st century classrooms, most seem to think the 'solution' lies in just getting back to the basics - even if no one seems really clear what those basics are in today's world. Classrooms and schools in this province vary dramatically as do the students that populate them. Clearly there can be no one-size-fits-all solution.

Moving now to the focus of our conference - ESL/ELL/EAL learners - Gunderson began by reminding us how complex our learners really are. Even if you merely consider their linguistic capacities in English the current categories and labels we have to sort and support learners are inadequate descriptors that only vaguely provide us with some starting points as to how we might help them learn English and learn IN English. Further, he noted the many complicating factors that inhibit our efforts, including student/family mobility, class size and composition, socio-economic

status that can create various readiness factors and many more.

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Who is to blame for this state of affairs? According to Gunderson, the list is rather long but includes conflicting funding priorities - 0.5 billion for a new roof for BC Place; 0.1 billion cut in provincial facilities grants for schools [April 2010] - and conflicting ideas as to what is optimal in terms of teaching and learning - no required courses in ESL for all teachers; no provision for in-service training and a belief that ESL is not important, not a 'real' course.

Gunderson closed with some suggestions for how we can move to 21st Century teaching despite these obstacles. His list is short but its implications are huge and will require lengthy and frequent conversations, not to mention the money and the will to move forward. His list includes:

- ✚ appropriate workplace technology
- ✚ differentiated instruction
- ✚ abandonment of make-work use of workbooks and worksheets - including the electronic kind
- ✚ promote multiple illiteracies
- ✚ connecting schools and communities
- ✚ connecting schools and the cyber-world
- ✚ connecting schools and the workplace
- ✚ connecting schools and the world

His final question was, "Who are the heroes?" He pointed to the audience and stated that all of us who continue to work against great odds to teach increasingly diverse students - because we care - are the heroes.

VISIONS 21: Best Practices Across the Curriculum

The 20th annual conference of the ESL PSA was a success. Here is a point form summary of the highlights:

- ✦ There were 295 delegates, including 51 teachers in training.
- ✦ Representatives from 27 school districts were in attendance.
- ✦ 32 workshop sessions were featured.
- ✦ An international luncheon received rave reviews.
- ✦ A dozen publishers expressed great enthusiasm about delegate browsing and purchases. Having chosen to come and showcase their materials at our conference - when there were some 25 to choose from - was obviously a good choice.
- ✦ The wine and cheese social was a 'tasty' last chance to network with colleagues from across the province.
- ✦ The student helpers were much appreciated.
- ✦ Dr. Gunderson's keynote was excellent and raised some important issues - and gave us all that well-deserved pat on the back. [See keynote review elsewhere in this newsletter.]
- ✦ A wonderful array of donations went to lucky winners.
- ✦ EVERYONE was lucky enough to get a cedar seedling donated from Timber West on Vancouver Island [I am planting mine next to the one from last year]

Needless to say, without the efforts of hard-working volunteers and the many

presenters willing to share their skills and expertise this conference would not have happened. A huge thank you to all and a special note of thanks to Churchill Secondary staff for allowing us to invade their space, the students who assisted throughout the day, and the on-site coordinator who ensured all rooms were ready for delegates and presenters.

Responding to feedback and suggestions:

Some concern was expressed about the **lack of parking**. While the school has a large parking lot, there is never enough parking for some 300 delegates, workshop presenters, volunteers, publishers and more. Car-pooling or taking transit would be a great option to consider for next year.

Registration receipts are important for many. With our new online system, you get an almost immediate email receipt that shows you have registered, which sessions you have reserved and how much everything has cost. Please remember to keep this e-mail as it is your only receipt.

Registration costs continue to climb. Even though we are one of the 'cheapest' conferences hosted by a PSA, our overhead costs continue to rise. Interestingly enough, BCTF has actually suggested our costs are too low - especially our membership fees.

Some have wondered why our conferences are predominantly in Vancouver. Vancouver offers us several 'perks' that help us keep costs down. As a significant percentage of our delegates are Vancouver teachers, we are able to access a school for relatively little cost. Some have suggested an elementary school setting. However, few elementary schools

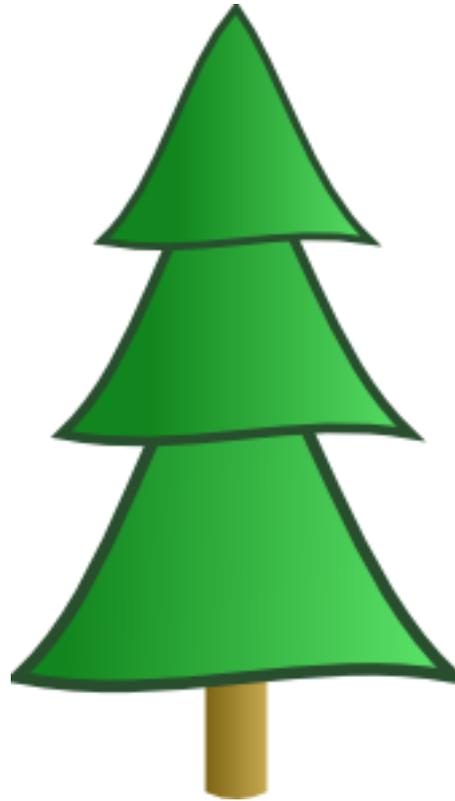
have an auditorium or equivalent facility for the keynote presentation.

If there are members who would be willing to be involved in **hosting a conference in another location**, please let the conference chair, Judith, know [jrobson@vsb.bc.ca]. It would be a nice change to hold the conference somewhere outside the Lower Mainland. It should be noted, though, that we generally have to book a school now, in order to ensure it is available come PSA Day.

Many have noted the **traditional welcome by a tribal elder** but not everyone understands its purpose. Events that take place on land that was traditional First Nations territory are usually recognized in this fashion. BC school districts have signed Aboriginal Enhancement Agreements with their local bands. These agreements are a reflection of our roles as educators, particularly including our efforts to affirm the identities of all our learners. This has become one small way of acknowledging the First Nations students and the history of their peoples.

The third annual **Swap Shop** brought us some interesting teaching ideas and tips. Too bad there were so few submissions. If you have any suggestions as to how this could be made more effective Sylvia [shelmer@shaw.ca] would love to hear from you.

AND in conclusion, a sneak preview about next year's conference. Save the date [October 21, 2011] as our keynote is already confirmed to be **Dr. Jim Cummins** of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education [OISE].



How do you like our new newsletter format? We are trying to be more environmentally conscious. We welcome your feedback. Do you like the new soft copy or would you prefer the hard copy in the mail? Contact Sara at snraouf@gmail.com and let her know!!

Vocabulary Study: Part 3

[excerpted from workshop package by
S. Helmer]

Some may have heard people refer to the AWL. If you were lucky enough to be able to go to Dr. Hetty Roessingh's session on Lexical Profiling, you would have heard her speak of this core set of vocabulary as well. This section provides some background information about this very helpful tool - a tool that will assist you with your work with EAL learners.

The Academic Word List [AWL] includes 570 word families that occur in approximately 10% of academic prose. Word family indicates that all related words to a core word are included such as in the following example:

assign, assigns, assigned,
assigning, reassign, reassigns,
reassigned, reassigning,
unassigned, assignment,
assignments, reassignment,
reassignment

NB: word 'family' is an important concept as many of our EAL learners begin by learning words as individual entities and do not immediately realize that they are linked in meaning.

Word lists such as this have been used in one form or another for some time. In 1953 Michael West created the General Service List [GSL], which was made up of the 2,000 most useful word families in English. When Averil Coxhead created the AWL in 2000 she noted that the first thousand words of the GSL, in order of frequency of occurrence, included over 70% of her

academic word list [AWL] while the second thousand covered only 5%. Since the words included on her list were the result of using a huge database of academic texts across the disciplines, this finding is significant. What it means is that about three-quarters of any academic text are going to consist of the most frequently occurring 2,000 words in English.

Coxhead then subdivided her word families into ten groupings according to frequency. This was an attempt to facilitate a sequence for teaching and materials development. The lists can be taught in order. The first list is the most frequently occurring and the subsequent lists are less and less common.

For example:

Sublist 1: area, benefit, define, environment, factor, issue, research, vary.

Sublist 10: adjacent, forthcoming, integrity, levy, notwithstanding, panel, persistent, so-called.

Her purpose in creating these lists was to support non-native speakers of English who were studying at tertiary institutions, in English. It would be reasonable to assume these academics would know the words on the GSL and equally reasonable to assume they would be familiar with the specialized vocabulary of their specific subject areas. It is the vocabulary in between these two that they needed to learn to be successful - approximately 10% of the vocabulary they were encountering in academic texts.

In part 2 of this article the three 'tiers' of vocabulary were considered. Tier 1 is equivalent to the GLS and Tier 3 encompasses the specialized vocabulary of each subject discipline. Tier 2 is the AWL.

This 10% of the vocabulary our learners encounter is the key to unlocking academic text and therefore needs the most proactive and explicit teaching.

Both the GSL and the AWL lists are found at:

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/%7Ealzsh3/acvocab/wordlists.htm>

The rest of this article provides you with some tools you may use to help you teach the AWL word families to your students.

Exercises using the Academic Word List:

<http://www.uefap.com/vocab/exercise/exercise.htm>

All the words on the Academic Word List are included in these exercises and they range across subject areas. For example, words are highlighted for special attention as you read. Then the learner is given a word bank to replace the AWL words that have now been deleted.

Sample: [words highlighted on the website are underlined here]

Cells are the basic units of life. They are the true miracle of evolution. Miracle in the figurative sense, since although we do not know how cells evolved, quite plausible scenarios have been proposed. Miraculous, none the less, in the sense that they are so remarkable. Most remarkable, and, in a way, a definition of life, is their ability to reproduce themselves. They are able to take in chemicals and convert them into usable energy and to synthesize all the components of the cell during growth that eventually leads to cell . . .

Academic Text Profiler

http://www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/r21270/cgi-bin/webfreqs/read_trial.cgi

At this site, you can type in text [or cut and paste it from other electronic sources] and have it analyzed according to word type/frequency. The following short passage has been analyzed as an example. You may want to consider:

- Which words are the AWL [Tier 2] words?
- Which words are subject specific/technical [Tier 3] words?

Some linguists understand the phoneme somewhat more concretely and view it as a representation of an ideal articulatory target. Because of the effects of the environment in which the phoneme occurs, however, it may be produced in different allophonic shapes. In any case, phonemic writing represents the basic, contrasting sound units of a language.

[Akmajian, Demers, and Harnish]

TOTAL WORDS: 54

K1 words = first 1000 most frequent words

K2 words = words 1001 to 2000 most frequent = 1 = 1.85%

AWL = Academic word list

Off-List words [specialized/technical words]

Most important of all, have fun working on vocabulary with your learners. If it is engaging and shown to be relevant to current learning, vocabulary work is well liked by students at all ages - and will serve them well as they move forward toward academic fluency in English.



The Cedar Initiative

By Kiran Sidhu

“One-to-one academic, cultural and personal support is an ongoing and crucial factor in the success of the student achieving his or her top potential.”

The CEDAR (Canadian Education and Re-Integration) Initiative focuses on students who have been in Canada between 1 and 3 years, may be at risk for dropping out of school and are having difficulty adjusting to life in Canada.

The CEDAR Initiative, housed at Palmer Secondary School in Richmond, consists of up to 22 students who are in Grades 10 and 11 and between the ages of 15 and 17 with an ESL Level of 2 or greater. These students will have four blocks of regular classes at Palmer or Richmond Virtual School (also at Palmer). Such classes may include Math, PE, ESL, and an elective.

The remaining four blocks will consist of CEDAR Initiative courses such as career and life skills support, and ESL classes pertaining to Canadian culture and integration. One-to-one academic, cultural and personal support is an ongoing and crucial factor in the success of the student achieving his or her top potential.

The goal of the CEDAR Initiative is to re-connect students to their school and community so they can go on to either graduate or to find positive options for themselves outside of the school environment.

Students who are accepted into the CEDAR Initiative will not only fit the above criteria but will also have a history of poor attendance and perhaps low grades reflecting the missing classes. Those who have been chosen to attend the CEDAR Initiative will have the advantage of a small, personalized and structured classroom environment. All students are expected to participate fully in their own successful completion of the Initiative.

Attendance and commitment to achievement are key to the success of the program. The end goal is to re-integrate students into the regular stream.

Significant Cultural Holidays for 2011

January

01 New Year's Day

February

Black History Month

03 Chinese New Year (Year of the Rabbit)

03 Korean Lunar New Year

March

08 International Women's Day

21 International Day for the Elimination of Racism

April

07-14 Passover

13 Vaisakhi

22 Good Friday

24 Easter Sunday

May

23 Victoria Day

June

21 National Aboriginal Day

27 Canadian Multiculturalism Day

July

01 Canada Day

August

01 First Day of Ramadan

30 Eid-Al-Fitr

September

29 Rosh Hashana

October

08 Yom Kippur

26-30 Diwali

November

07 Eid-Al-Adha

December

10 International Human Rights Day

25 Christmas Day

21-28 Hanukkah

26- (Jan) 01 Kwanzaa

