

Connecting ESL Communities and Professionals
A Project of ATESL with funding and support from AHRE
Additional support provided by CIC

Workshop Forum #1
ESL Programming for Settlement and Integration
Tuesday, June 27, 2006
Grant MacEwan College, Alberta College Campus, Room 627
11:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Summary

Participants:

1. Independent Consultant, ESL & Essential Skills, Calgary
2. Representative from NorQuest College & Alberta Essential Skills Society, Edmonton,
3. Representative from ESL & Volunteer Programs, Calgary
Immigrant Educational Society, Calgary
4. Representative from Rocky View Adult Education Literacy Program,
Rocky View Adult Education
5. Representative from Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Program
(VTALP), Adult Basic Literacy and all lifelong learning courses,
Community Adult Learning Council (CALC), Lloydminster
6. Representative from English Language Centre, Lethbridge
Community College, Lethbridge
7. Representative from Catholic Social Services (CSS), Edmonton
Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN), Cultural Connections
Institute – The Learning Exchange (CCI-LEX) & NAIT, Edmonton
8. Representative from VTALP, Peace Adult Literacy, Peace River
9. Christine Land, Adult Learning Coordinator (LINC Program),
ASSIST Community Services, Edmonton; Secretary, ATESL
10. Gayle Taylor, Settlement Officer, Citizenship & Immigration Canada
(CIC), Edmonton
11. Carolyn Dieleman, Manager, Language Training, Intergovernmental
Relations & Immigration, AHRE
12. Valerie Parr, Innovative Language Services Consultant,
Intergovernmental Relations & Immigration, AHRE

Main Themes: Building welcoming communities and increasing the capacity for newcomers

Session 1: How do the two sectors of language and settlement tie into one another? Are they two distinct entities? Integrally connected? What opportunities exist, outside of traditional LINC programming, to incorporate the delivery of settlement information into language training programs? How are the

language training and settlement information needs of ESL learners in your communities currently being met?

- The two sectors of language and settlement were the foundations of LINC but since the introduction of enhanced/specialized language training, there is a fear that these students may not receive the settlement aspect.
- Those immigrants who were eager to work (and who have since become citizens) might have missed the opportunity to take LINC and benefit from settlement education as there is nothing for them in terms of a government funded program. Some programs (usually cost-recovery), however, have integrated settlement into their more specialized language programs (for example, adding an hour of settlement language into an academic English program).
- Families of working immigrants often find it difficult to perform routine tasks (such as answering the phone or visiting their children's school). This makes home-life difficult and may have an adverse effect on the retention of immigrants.
- There may be individuals, or pockets of individuals, needing language training and settlement such as spouses of foreign workers or stay-at-home moms, but you need a large enough group of learners with similar needs and language levels to offer a class.
- For example, in rural areas, a certain number of immigrants is required to start a LINC program. One program which has been in operation since 1996 and which was developed to help rural communities welcome newcomers is the Rural Delivery Program (RDP). It is not full-time, may take place in the mornings or afternoons, can be one-on-one instruction and is funded by CIC. As well, the short syllabus program, provided by NorQuest and coordinated by Tom Jiry, provides language training in Northern, remote areas such as Nunavut and Wetaskiwin. This is a community based program which uses community resources and is set up based on client needs. It also funds local coordinators, instructors, tutors and onsite training for employers. Currently, there is no federal funding for an RDP in Southern Alberta. The priority in terms of federal funding dollars goes to Calgary due to the long waiting lists for LINC. Also, RDP funding dollars cover instructional fees but do not cover costs for space for delivery of services. This is a major barrier for many communities in being able to implement this type of programming.
- Since there is no funding for rental space for LINC, communities can partner up with existing organizations to offer classes (such as the Community Adult Learning Councils).

- Many communities are experiencing labour shortages, especially in the trades. As a result, employers are interested in bringing in groups of foreign workers and their families to fill in the gap. Under the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), groups of temporary foreign workers are being brought into Alberta for a limited amount of time. The PNP does have a language requirement, which is mandated by Economic Development, but many foreign workers and their families still experience significant difficulties in communicating in English both on the job and in everyday life in their communities. This creates a tremendous need for English in the Workplace (EWP) programming that integrates settlement and language. Unfortunately, employers do not always see the importance of language and/or settlement training for their workers or their workers' families and are, therefore, unwilling to commit to providing language and settlement training for their employees even though they are required to fund ESL training for 6 hours a week for their workers.
- Employers are being short-sighted in failing to provide language and settlement support:
 - o If the workers' family does not settle well, the worker is unlikely to stay.
 - o Retention is very low for single males. There is a better chance of keeping an immigrant if he is well-grounded and well-settled in the community.
 - o It may be possible to help employers see that it would be better to train a worker and his family rather than to have to find someone new in a short period of time.
 - o There is a need to educate the employer.
 - o There is also a need for settlement counselors in rural areas.
 - o The business/profit motive needs to be stressed when "selling" EWP. There is a need for "awareness training" amongst employers. If employers are educated as to the benefits of providing EWP and settlement information and/or counselling, they may buy into the idea more.
- Economic Development gives spec sheets to employers, such as the fact that the retention rate of male workers is very low. Employers need to be looking at the entire families' needs from the children to the stay-at-home moms to the seniors.
- The Immigration Strategy for the Province of Alberta was discussed and it was agreed that the Project Manager would obtain copies following this workshop for distribution to all participants.
- At the Calgary Immigrant Educational Society (CIES), drop in classes, funded by AHRE, run year round and rotate around themed cycles related to settlement and everyday living such as health & nutrition,

- transportation, shopping, etc. The sister program to this in Edmonton is the Learning Exchange (LEX) program.
- The coordinator plans all the lessons and organizes about 50 volunteers. All of the instructors are volunteers.
 - Learners range greatly in language proficiency from pre-benchmark to CLB 8.
 - Some learners come while waiting for LINC and others after finishing LINC.
- We tend to think of settlement as only applying to people with a lower English proficiency, but even advanced learners need settlement training (e.g., communication skills, searching for a job, interviews, employers' expectations, etc.). From the employee's viewpoint, there is a lot to learn about workplace culture after getting a job while from the employer's perspective, there are issues of safety and retention. Employees often get a job only to lose it due to insufficient language skills and/or lack of fitting into the workplace. There is a need to challenge the traditional definition of "settlement" to include higher level language tasks and competencies in order to increase employee success on the job.
- Many employers will not pay for their employees to take English courses. At the same time, working immigrants might not have the time or money to pay for these courses on their own. Employers need to be made aware of this, even if it is only for the sake of safety.
- Some suggestions for addressing the settlement and language needs of working immigrants and building welcoming communities and welcoming workplaces:
- Funding: Employers might be willing to send their workers if it is free.
 - Work placement programs: Full time classes for 7 and a half months, followed by a practicum.
 - Visit employer associations to promote, raise awareness and get them on board.
 - Mentor and coach consultants.
 - Make use of the Welcoming Communities Toolkit to build community capacities
 - Be pro-active not only in attracting newcomers but in welcoming them once they arrive and in providing ongoing support throughout the settlement process
 - Create "fast fact sheets" for employers and for communities with essential information regarding the settlement of newcomers into the workplace and into the community – use past challenges to create success for the future

- It is essential to raise awareness in all facets of a community – non-profit organizations, workplaces, community members, etc. in order to build a capacity for newcomers.
- Some resources identified in Session 1 include:
 - Literacy Alberta Website
 - Welcoming Communities Toolkit
 - Immigration Strategy for the Province
 - ERPAC (more information below)

Session 2: Looking at the overall lay of the landscape in your communities in terms of the arrival of newcomers, what groups of individuals are, and increasingly will be, in need of language and settlement training? What does this training look like? What are the issues and challenges you face, or anticipate facing, in providing this training in your communities? Is there a need for an ESL stream of training that includes settlement as a key component? How would this type of ESL fit with LINC?

- Settlement needs to be a part of the ESL curriculum, but we should not expect language instructors to be settlement counselors; teachers should only be expected to provide the language training necessary for settlement. Providing language training related to settlement is separate from providing the settlement counseling itself. That being said, settlement needs to be brought forward as a focus for language development within the ESL classroom.
- There is a need for qualified settlement counselors who can provide ongoing professional settlement support to newcomers in their communities; this need is particularly acute in smaller rural communities where there is limited or no access to settlement services such as those that are provided by LARCC and ILVARC in the larger centres.
- Suggestions:
 - Provide plain language workshops for settlement counselors
 - Bring guest speakers from the community into the language class to provide settlement related workshops on topics of interest
 - Provide cultural training for referral agencies
 - Provide professional development opportunities for ESL instructors and settlement counselors
 - Find ways to support volunteer tutors
 - Use instructional videos to provide training
 - there was a video produced by NorQuest with funding from Advanced Education which deals with one-on-one teaching

strategies (information available on NorQuest's website) or from AHRE

- Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN) also produced a video, with funding provided by the Edmonton Community Adult Learning Association (ECALA) which demonstrates techniques for teaching small groups of conversation students (contact Suzanne Gross)
- Tutors / Volunteers
 - Don't always have the appropriate background or experience
 - Constant turnover in larger programs
 - May not always feel comfortable and, therefore, need of a great deal of support
 - May want/need a set curriculum with prepared lessons which is time consuming
- It is important to support professionalism and accreditation; however, in many communities, it is hard to find qualified and/or accredited ESL teachers.
 - Video/training workshops (soon to be released) on teaching
 - Develop a tutor training program
 - Bow Valley College offers training sessions for volunteer teachers
 - Lorene Anderson has developed a mini-curriculum (please contact her directly for more information)
 - University of Saskatchewan offers a well recognized CERTESL program through distance education which includes course work, exams and a practicum
 - There is a great need for more professional development opportunities in outlying areas – need for a greater variety of mechanisms for providing TESL training, such as mobile training – than what is currently available through ATESL
- Literacy Alberta has produced a satellite model of a video entitled Strengthening Pathways to Professional Development (SPPD) which may be of interest to some
- There has been an increased interest in the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB's); communities are using CLB's in order to assess and meet the needs of their ESL learners
- Judy Hasinoff has been working on developing a resource list of ESL websites
- Another resource for communities is the ESL Resource Package for Alberta Communities (ERPAC)
 - The curriculum is based on the CLB's
 - 8 levels

- Designed for use with volunteer tutors in any small Alberta community
 - Useful for workshops or mentoring situations
 - Two-hour lessons on a variety of different topics each week
 - Funded by the Rural ESL Delivery Enhancement Project
- Acronym List
- VTALP: Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Program
 - Funded by Alberta Advanced Education, delivered by CALC
 - CALC: Community Adult Learning Council
 - CERTESL: Certificate Program in TESL offered by the U. of Sask.
 - ECALA: Edmonton Community Adult Learning Association (equivalent in Calgary: Calgary Learns)
 - RDP: Rural Delivery Program
 - RIA: Rural Innovation and Access
 - Funds ESL, literacy, community issues, workplace,
 - Maximum of \$15,000
 - Goes to CALC's
 - ERPAC: ESL Resource Package for Alberta Communities
 - Produced by Norquest, funded by Rural ESL Delivery Enhancement
 - PNP: Provincial Nominee Program
 - SPPD: Strengthening Pathways to Professional Development
 - Literacy Alberta

Session 3: What actions, possible solutions, pilot projects and/or best practices can you recommend to address the language training and settlement needs of ESL learners in your communities? If these needs are not addressed, what will the impact be on these individuals and on the communities in which they are living and working? How does the presence or absence of quality, appropriate language and settlement programming affect the community integration process of newcomers to Canada and their potential to fully participate in Canadian society?

- Why are some immigrants not willing and/or able to take advantage of settlement and language programs?
 - Pressure to work and provide money for their family here and in their country of origin (and/or have become Canadian citizens)
 - Need childcare and/or transportation
 - The program doesn't meet their particular needs.
 - Cultural issues (e.g. gender roles, family obligations)
 - Waiting lists
 - Inland migration or second landing
 - Isolation

- Isolation of learners is a problem; how can we reach out to newcomers who are not accessing programming? How do we get information about language training to the client? Some find the services and some don't.
 - ATESL should develop a website that links to all ESL resources and contact info for learners and for people with whom you can consult on various topics.
 - Work with settlement counselors and referral agencies to ensure counsellors have correct and sufficient information to make appropriate referrals
 - Link the family to the school by way of a liaison/settlement worker
 - Tie ESL programming into other programming such as computer training
 - Create family literacy programs wherein children encourage their parents to learn and learning occurs as a family; great motivating factor for adult learners
 - Meet the learners in their communities and/or in their homes; for example, there is a pilot project of a food processing curriculum which is being delivered right in the home in one community
 - Promote and advocate for EWP by creating partnerships with industries and industry associations.
 - Counselors can help newcomers set realistic goals and plan for language training.
 - Provide emotional support for newcomers (e.g. for those who are working to support family)
 - Create a centralized method of disseminating information on what is available.
 - Follow up on newcomers.
 - Provide a way for newcomers to integrate with members in the community (other than their own ethnic community). For example, programs at schools, intercultural weekend retreats by schools, etc.
- What happens when the learners do not find their way to language/settlement programs?
 - Lack of integration; congregate in one's own ethnic community
 - Confused identity – children live in one world at school and another at home
 - Learners go back to their own cultural group outside the classroom

Final comments:

- Many communities are receiving large cohorts of newcomers such as the Sudanese workers who arrived in Brooks to work at the meat processing plant. This puts a strain on the community to provide services such as childcare, transportation, LINC programming, settlement counseling, etc. Doing research on and having insight into future migration patterns can help communities prepare for and better respond to the needs of its newcomers.
- Inland migration is also something to be aware of. According to statistics, 58% of inland migrants are women while 42% are men.
- Providing interpretation services in the very basic levels or having a bilingual facilitator for those groups that share the same L1 could be useful. In this way, the facilitator could translate the process or the “how” part of the lesson while the ESL teacher would be left to deliver the actual content in the hopes that this would free up more time for language learning.
- There are large numbers of part-time learners who are working full or part-time.
- There is a need for higher level materials such as the ESL Multi-Media package that was produced by the Calgary Board of Education which is geared towards CLB 5 – 10. Copies are available by contacting Lorene Anderson.
- Challenging and broadening our traditional definition of settlement (for example, looking at job search as a settlement issue) is key to responding appropriately to our learners’ and communities’ needs for ESL programming for settlement and integration.