

## Project Summary: Post-TESL Professional Development

### Project Overview

The Post-TESL Certificate is a series of five professional development courses developed by Bow Valley College with the support of the Government of Alberta. The courses are designed to provide in-depth, sustained professional development in relevant, high-interest topics to ELL practitioners, with the aim to impact teaching practice and provide support during implementation of new learning. These courses were developed with the support of an advisory committee from across Alberta. Each course is a 12-hour, 4-week online course. The courses were developed and taught by experienced ELL instructors. Participants who successfully complete any four Post-TESL courses receive a Post-TESL Training: Advanced Teaching Strategies for Diverse Classrooms certificate from Bow Valley College.

Demographics of immigrants and refugees to Canada are constantly shifting, as is awareness of the diversity of this population and how to best meet student needs. ELL practitioners need effective PD so that they can continue to develop their teaching practice and better meet the learning needs of ELL students in Alberta. These Post-TESL courses are focused and in-depth, with opportunities for reflection and support during implementation, so that teachers have an opportunity both to develop knowledge and skills and to put these new ideas into practice. The Post-TESL courses have reach and flexibility and meet the needs of working professionals; they are fully online and accessible across regions. The Post-TESL courses also offer effective possibilities for career development.

### Project Activities and Timelines

The development of this project was divided into five stages:

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|---|------------------------|
| 1. Formation of and Consultation with an Advisory Committee | May 2018-June 2019     |
| 2. Framework Development                                    | Feb.-April 2018        |
| 3. Course Development                                       | May – Dec. 2018        |
| a. ESL Literacy Material Design                             |                        |
| b. Strategies for Teaching Refugees                         |                        |
| c. Teaching in a Multilevel Context                         |                        |
| d. Inclusive Teaching Practices                             |                        |
| e. Teaching English for the Workplace                       |                        |
| 4. Course Delivery  | Sept. 2018 – Mar. 2019 |
| a. ESL Literacy Material Design                             |                        |

- b. Strategies for Teaching Refugees
- c. Teaching in a Multilevel Context
- d. Inclusive Teaching Practices
- e. Teaching English for the Workplace

## 5. Project Review and Revisions

Oct. 2018-April 2019

The response to the release of the Post-TESL courses was immediate and positive; the courses filled as soon as registration opened and waitlists were created for all five of the post-TESL courses. In total 21-44 participants were registered for each course, with a further waitlist of over 100 participants for each course. The completion rates for the courses were well above anticipated, with completion rates of 89%-100%.

### Project Outcomes

#### 1. **Outcome:** Increased knowledge of newcomer needs

**Report on outcome:** All five courses had a completion rate ranging from 89%-100%. The overall completion rate for the post-TESL courses was 94%.

94% of course completers identified increased knowledge and awareness of the learning needs of newcomers.

#### 2. **Outcome:** Increased skill to serve newcomers effectively

**Report on outcome:** 93% of course completers identified that they have enhanced instructional skills to serve newcomers effectively.

95% of course completers identified an increase in self-confidence in their ability to address the diverse needs of learners.

#### 3. **Outcome:** Additional increased accessibility to Post-TESL professional development in Alberta.

**Report on outcome:** A total of 54 individuals, filling 147 participant spaces in the courses (some of whom completed more than one course) from across Alberta completed a Post-TESL course. Of these participants, 24 (44%) completed four or more Post-TESL courses and received a Post-TESL Certificate from Bow Valley College.

## Challenges and Trends

The feedback from the Post-TESL courses has been overwhelmingly positive. Instructors report that participants were highly engaged. There was also a high rate of implementation of new ideas and learning, both within the four weeks of the course and at the 6-week follow-up. 70% of course completers reported implementation of new ideas learned in the course within six weeks of completing the course, while in one course, 94% of course participants reported they had already implemented new learning in their teaching practice within the four weeks of the course.

Some challenges and trends that emerged during this project:

### Challenges

- **Webinars and synchronous learning:** In the original framework for the Post-TESL Certificate, the courses included synchronous elements in the form of webinars, in which the participants and the course facilitator were online at the same time. In the first three courses, there were two synchronous webinars per course, and participation in these webinars was mandatory in order to pass the course. In the final two courses, there was one webinar and participation was not mandatory. In all five courses, the webinars were also recorded and the recording was posted in the course space. Participants had high engagement in the webinars, and feedback to the content and experience was very positive. However, a number of issues with the webinars arose:
  - **Technical challenges:** A number of participants experienced technical challenges with logging into the webinar space and hearing the audio. It was difficult to troubleshoot the technical issues as there was a lot of variety in the participants' computer systems as well as their experience level, and the timeframe for technical support was so immediate. The facilitator was also busy conducting the webinar and could not step away to give technical support.
  - **Scheduling challenges:** It was difficult to find a time when all participants were able to attend the webinars. Because of these challenges, for the final two courses webinars were no longer mandatory. However, while participants were generally very satisfied with the webinar experience, anyone who missed the webinar was less satisfied with the experience of watching the recording.
- During the revision process of the courses the webinars were removed. The Post-TESL courses are now fully asynchronous, which is to say that participants do not need to be online at the same time. This addresses both the technical and the scheduling challenges of synchronous learning.

## Trends

- There was greater demand for the Post-TESL courses than anticipated, and once registration was opened the courses very quickly filled. Waitlists were established, and for the first course, *ESL Literacy Material Design*, the instructor was asked to teach two sections rather than one. An average of 31 people registered for each course, with an additional average waitlist of 106 people for each course.
- Multiple registrants completed more than one course. Of the 54 individuals who completed a post-TESL course, 37 completed two or more courses, with a total of 24 people who completed four or more courses and have received a Post-TESL Certificate from Bow Valley College. This was unexpected for the pilot run.

## Conclusion

The Post-TESL courses offered through Bow Valley College provide ELL practitioners with effective professional development, but the ultimate goal of the Post-TESL Certificate is to support ELL students in Canada. This is evident throughout the courses, with the focus on student-centered teaching, the recognition of the diverse needs of an increasingly diverse student population, and the development of strategies for effective and inclusive teaching practice. Access to Post-TESL professional development courses gives ELL practitioners throughout Alberta opportunities for growth and new learning, so they can better meet the needs of the English language learners.