

## **Report Summary - ATESL Best Practices for Adult ESL and LINC Programming in Alberta**

### **Background**

Originally developed in 1994, ATESL's *Best Practices for Adult ESL and LINC Programming in Alberta* was revised in 2004, and then significantly rewritten in 2009. The 2009 version included statements of best practice for adult ESL/LINC programs in Alberta, organized into nine sections: The Program, Learner Support, Staff, CLB (Canadian Language Benchmarks), Curriculum, Instruction, Learner Assessment, Resources, and ESL literacy.

The subsequent decade (2009-2020) saw multiple shifts in practice and priorities related to EAL instruction in Canada. There were new practices and guiding documents related to EAL literacy, Portfolio Based Language Instruction (PBLA), and Skills for Success (Essential Skills).

Advances in technology for learning, accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent switch to online teaching by most EAL instructors in the province, changed how learners access learning and how instructors provide learning. Most crucially, there was growing recognition of the need for ESL providers to very deliberately address the inclusion and needs of marginalized groups of learners: 2SLGBTQ+ learners, learners with disabilities, learners managing issues related to trauma, and racialized learners. Related to this, there was the need for the TESL profession in Alberta to respond effectively and thoughtfully to the multiple calls for reconciliation, justice and equity that were seen over the last decade, most especially in relationship with the Indigenous peoples in Canada.

For that reason, in 2019, ATESL submitted a proposal to the Alberta Government to review and update the *Best Practice Guidelines for Adult ESL/LINC Programming in Alberta*. This report summarizes the process that was followed and the results that were achieved through ATESL Best Practices Project (095264524).

### **Process**

In April 2020, a project team was hired with the mandate to update the 2009 Best Practices document to reflect the changes in priorities and practices in the EAL profession over the past decade, and specifically to address inclusion, update technology, and ensure that the best practices would be accessible and useful even in non-traditional contexts. The project team initially included a project manager, a project consultant, and an administrative assistant. Later, three inclusion advisors, a web designer, an editor, and a graphic designer were also hired.

### **Literature Review**

The project began with an initial literature review of existing best practice documents, as well as the literature related to LGBTQ+ inclusion, Indigenization, and learning disabilities. This research informed the new Best Practices sections titled *2SLGBTQ+ Inclusion, Indigenization, and Supporting Learners with Diverse Learning Needs*. (See [Literature Review](#).)

### ***Needs Assessment Survey***

The project team then surveyed the ATESL membership to explore their familiarity with and use of the 2009 Best Practices document, as well as to gather information about barriers and practices related to inclusion, Indigenization, and technology for learning in EAL instruction in Alberta. ATESL members were also asked for input on how to improve the accessibility and usability of the current best practices document/website.

Feedback from 75 respondents informed the content of the inclusion and technology sections, and guided subsequent decisions related to the format and interactivity of the best practices website. (See [Needs Assessment Survey Report](#).)

### ***Drafting the Best Practices***

Three Inclusion Advisors were hired to provide expertise, input and guidance into the research and drafting of new best practice sections related to *2SLGBTQ+ Inclusion, Indigenization, and Supporting Learners with Diverse Learning Needs*. Subsequently, an *Anti-Racism* section was added to the Inclusion sections.

Additional new sections were then researched and drafted related to *Technology and Online Learning* and *Skills and Language for Work* (addressing Skills for Success/Essential Skills). The *EAL for Literacy* section was completely re-written.

For each of these new sections, best practice statements and indicators were drafted, similar in format to those in the 2009 document. In addition, resources for professional development were gathered for each section. As well, classroom resources were curated and annotated, along with other relevant resources (e.g., community resources, tools and apps). Vignettes were drafted for each section to illustrate how the best practices may be applied in a variety of contexts.

These new sections were then sent for review to selected ATESL members and ESL professionals with expertise in the different areas. Thirty-six reviewers provided input on the best practices, suggested additional resources, and in some instances assisted with the composition of vignettes (included in Mentoring/Coaching in Activity and Outcomes #4).

The remaining best eight practice sections were then updated, and professional development resources and classroom resources (where relevant) were again curated for each section.

### ***Focus Group Consultations***

Once all sections were drafted and updated, ATESL members and Community Adult Learning Program (CALP) members were invited to provide input on the best practices during focus group consultations. A total of 51 participants attended seven online focus group sessions (included in Mentoring/Coaching in Activity and Outcomes #4). These focus group discussions affirmed the content of the best practices and resulted in further enrichment and polishing of the document.

### ***Web-Portal, OER, and Print Copies***

A web-portal was designed that allowed for interactivity, glosses, and easy access to the best practices themselves, as well as easy access to resources that support the best practices – all characteristics that were requested in the needs assessment survey and the focus groups.

An agreement between ATESL and Open Education Alberta was struck that allowed for the creation of a Pressbooks OER.

The ATESL website and Pressbooks OER were then populated with the edited best practices, and 200 hardcopies of the Pressbooks were printed.

### ***Dissemination***

The updated and revised *ATESL Best Practices for Adult EAL and LINC Programming in Alberta* was then disseminated to the ATESL membership as well as to other ESL providers in Alberta as follows:

- The best practices were made available in a variety of formats: on the ATESL website, in a Pressbooks OER, and in PDF and E-PUB formats.
- The best practices were initially presented to attendees of the ATESL 2021 Conference in October 2021. Subsequently, presentations were made to Edmonton, Calgary, and Southern Alberta ATESL Locals; to a Canada-wide audience on Tutela, and to a variety of individual ESL-providing organizations in Alberta.
- Social media ads on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram announced the new ATESL Best Practices.
- An email offering print copies of the document was sent out to ATESL members and CALPs.
- Print copies were sent to all who requested them.
- In January 2022, the document was uploaded on Tutela, wrapping up the projected Dissemination phase of the ATESL Best Practices project. During this final phase it was identified that there was a need for ongoing PD delivery, online support and website management throughout 2022. This will be provided by the project manager and consultant.

## **Results Achieved**

### ***Revised and Updated Best Practices***

As a result of this project, *Best Practices for Adult EAL and LINC Programming in Alberta* offers best practices to support ESL providers. These best practices address a comprehensive range of topics related to ESL programming, including six new sections, one completely re-written section, and eight extensively updated sections:

### Updated Sections

- The Program
- Learner Support
- The Staff
- CLB & PBLA
- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Learner Assessment
- Resources

### Re-written section

- EAL Literacy

### New Sections

- Skills and Language for Work
- Technology and Online Learning
- Supporting Learners with Diverse Learning Needs
- Indigenization
- 2SLGBTQ+ Inclusion
- Anti-Racism

The core of each best practice section are the *Statements of Best Practice*, each of which is supported by lists of *Indicators* that identify ways to meet the best practice. Each section comes with a curated list of supporting *Professional Development Resources*. Those sections that relate to classroom instruction include a curated list of *Resources for the Classroom*. To encourage implementation of the best practices in both traditional and non-traditional classrooms, *Vignettes* illustrate how the best practices may be applied in a variety of contexts. Glosses, internal links, and links to resources enhance the usability of the best practices.

Of special note are the following:

- The new [Technology and Online Learning](#) section supports instructors as they incorporate e-learning and promote digital literacy in their classes. Included in this section are substantial collections of PD resources, resources for the classroom, useful tools and apps, and accounts of how teachers have applied the best practices in their classrooms.
- The new [Skills and Language for Work](#) section supports instructors as they foster transferable Skills for Success (previously Essential Skills) and prepare their learners for success in Canadian workplaces. Again, this section is supported by a substantial curated collection of PD and classroom resources, providing instructors with quick access to Skills for Success resources that are suitable for ESL learners.
- The four new Inclusion sections ([2SLGBTQ+ Inclusion](#), [Anti-Racism](#), [Supporting Learners with Diverse Learning Needs](#), and [Indigenization](#)) provide guidance for EAL and LINC providers (instructors and administrators) as they (a) address the inclusion and needs of marginalized groups of learners and (b) respond to calls for reconciliation, justice and equity, specifically related to the Indigenous Peoples in Canada.
- The needs of teachers in rural areas and non-traditional classrooms are addressed through (a) the inclusion of vignettes to help teachers apply the best practices to their own contexts, (b) a new best practice related to multi-level instruction, (c) a new best practice related to volunteer staff, (d) the easy-to-use and accessible ATESL best practices website and OER, (e) a substantial and curated collection of professional development resources, and (f) a substantial and curated collection of classroom resources.

### **An Interactive Best Practices Website**

The ATESL website hosts the best practices in an interactive web portal which is intuitive and easy to use:

- <https://www.atesl.ca/resources/best-practices-adult-eal-and-linc-programming-alberta/>

This website includes the best practices and indicators, vignettes, glosses, descriptions of and links to professional development resources, descriptions of and links to classroom resources, downloadable PDFs of each section as well as of the whole document, simplified checklist versions of each section, and orientation videos.

### **A Pressbooks OER**

The ATESL best practices are available in a PressBooks Open Educational Resources (OER) that includes glosses, internal links, and links to resources:

- <https://openeducationalberta.ca/atesl-best-practices-adult-eal-linc-programming/>

### **200 Print Documents**

Two hundred books were printed out and are presently being sent to program coordinators and others who requested them across Alberta.

### **20 Professional Development Presentations**

As of January 31, 2022, 359 ESL professionals had been oriented to the ATESL best practices in 20 professional development presentations at conferences, ATESL local meetings, in ESL providing organizations, and on the Canada-wide Tutela network (as reported in Activity and Outcomes #4). Presentations continue to be delivered. Feedback on post-presentation surveys was enthusiastic and clearly demonstrates that access to and familiarity with the ATESL Best Practices increases confidence in professional activities. (See the [Post Presentation Survey Report](#))

## **Conclusion**

*ATESL Best Practices for Adult EAL and LINC Programming in Alberta* provides a frame of reference for all those involved in providing EAL programming in Alberta. It is designed to do the following:

- Guide EAL practitioners as they reflect on their roles as instructors, administrators, facilitators, and volunteers.
- Provide goals to aspire to (the *Statements of Best Practice*) along with concrete steps to take to reach those goals (the bulleted *Indicators*)
- Prompt the desire to learn and explore more about the practices being described (the *References and PD Resources* sections).
- Provide instructors with easy access to resources they can use in their classrooms (the *Resources for the Classroom and Community Resources* sections).

Most importantly, this updated version of *ATESL's Best Practice Guidelines for Adult EAL and LINC Programming in Alberta* aims to guide and support EAL instructors and programs as they ensure that their language learners' voices are heard, their learning needs met, their rights acknowledged, and their identity respected both within their classes and in the broader Canadian community.