

# CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS IN ESL DELIVERY



**TESL ONTARIO'S FIRST ANNUAL PANEL ON ESL IN ONTARIO**



# CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS IN ESL DELIVERY

**A**t its annual Conference in November 2006, TESL Ontario convened an expert panel of speakers from six stakeholder organizations engaged in the delivery of language and settlement services to immigrant newcomers to Canada. The panel members outlined the goals and functions of their respective organizations and identified some of the challenges in their work, as well as possible solutions. This document summarizes the six presentations.

The ESL panel was the first in a proposed annual forum at TESL Ontario's fall conference. The purpose in bringing the stakeholders together was to discuss emerging issues in ESL service delivery, update each other on their recent initiatives, and share best practices for achieving a broad range of goals related to enhanced teaching practice, access to training and settlement programs, curriculum development, assessment, supervision, and professional development.

The panel also provided an opportunity for TESL Ontario members to become better informed about the state of ESL in Ontario and to learn about new initiatives in the field. As part of the panel discussion, audience members were invited to respond to the presentations with their own questions and comments.

In introducing the panelists, TESL Ontario's Executive Director Renate Tilson noted that, while the stakeholders represent specific mandates and organizations, all contribute in one way or another to improving the lives of newcomers to Canada. Closer ties and sharing of information among the stakeholders holds promise that their work in ESL delivery will be enhanced. ■





## BRIEF HISTORY OF ESL SERVICES IN ONTARIO

**T**hough the first records of teaching English as a second language in Ontario date back to the late nineteenth century, delivery of ESL education on a sizable scale began in Ontario only after the Second World War. In response to the large influx of immigrants displaced by the six-year European conflict, the Ontario legislative session of 1945-46 introduced a province-wide language and citizenship program for adult newcomers, administered through the Ministry of Education.

In 1948 the board that oversaw those early ESL programs was taken over by the Department of Education in a branch called the Citizenship Division. In the 1960s and into the 1970s, ESL programs were primarily offered in Ontario's community colleges, and targeted to immigrants for the purpose either of enhancing their entry into the labour market or to help prepare them for citizenship, which involved taking a citizenship test.

With the establishment of the federally-initiated LINC program (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) in 1991, however, newcomers' access to English language learning was considerably widened, not only in Ontario but across the country. In fact, both the purpose and scope of language instruction were expanded to include broader settlement and integration needs. Policy makers at the federal level recognized the importance of facilitating newcomers' social, cultural, economic and political integration into Canada so that they could become participating members of the society as quickly as possible.

The six Panel participants were each allotted 15 minutes time to share their presentations. ■

**PANEL SPEAKER:****Sharon Rajabi – President of Teachers of English as a Second Language, Ontario (TESL Ontario)**

*Sharon Rajabi has been involved in ESL for over 20 years as instructor, curriculum developer, trainer and consultant. She is presently employed as a Consultant by the Toronto Catholic District School Board.*

**S**haron Rajabi began by drawing attention to the fact that ESL has now become a recognized professional field, with certified and experienced practitioners. Their work is informed by other professionals from a wide range of academic and applied disciplines including linguistics, educational administration, psychology, pedagogy, research, and technology.

TESL Ontario was created in 1972 as an umbrella body to represent the interests of those involved in ESL at all levels of responsibility and engagement, from classroom instructors to administrators, academics, assessors and supervisors.

The original membership comprised 250 teachers and administrators. As Ms Rajabi noted, this number has grown substantially in the past thirty-four years, so that today's TESL Ontario membership comprises nearly 4,000 practitioners serving a clientele of more than 100,000 English language learners in the province. ESL is thus a presence in virtually every Ontario community - in elementary schools, high schools, adult education and settlement programs, colleges, universities and private institutions.

This cross-section of representation places TESL Ontario in a unique position in that its members represent a diverse range of professional expertise.

Within TESL Ontario's membership are more than 1200 LINC instructors, of whom 970 are certified instructors in the federally-sponsored LINC program. More than 600 of these instructors are sponsored by Citizenship and Immigration Canada to attend the annual TESL Ontario Conference. ESL instructors, who comprise about 900 individuals in our membership, work in the ESL programs run by school boards and are funded by the provincial Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. College and university, elementary, secondary, private schools, as well as LINC assessors, comprise other sectors within the membership of TESL Ontario.

TESL Ontario took a significant step when its membership adopted the Recommendations for a Protocol and Uniform Certification Standards for Non-Credit Adult ESL Instructors in Ontario at its Annual General Meeting in 1998. These recommendations were supported by the Steering Committee responsible for outlining the certification requirements. Today, we represent a body of professionals with over 3810 certified members and are responsible for issuing the TESL Ontario Certificate for Instructors Teaching ESL to Adults in Non-Credit Programs in Ontario.

## Challenges and Initiatives

### Professional Development

Ms Rajabi pointed out that since ESL is a dynamic and growing field, with ongoing research and development, it is important for the profession to have a well-informed body of certified practitioners. An important element of TESL Ontario's mandate, therefore, has become, and continues to be, advocacy for adequate and stable resources to support professional development.

An ongoing challenge for TESL Ontario is to ensure professional development support for LINC instructors to attend the TESL Ontario conferences. These annual conferences are important venues where teachers are able to update and enhance both their knowledge base and professional teaching skills.

TESL Ontario's advocacy work in this area will continue, in order to secure PD funding for the ESL sector to provide equitable access to professional development for the ESL instructors in Ontario.

### Funding

Ms Rajabi briefly described ESL and LINC funding. She stated that since LINC allows

for funding for leased space, LINC classes and supporting services are offered in adequate locations.

Supplementary support mechanisms such as transportation and child-minding have also become integral components of LINC programming.

In April 2006, adult non-credit ESL was transferred from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI). With the strategic planning initiative in place, it is hoped that the strategies brought forward will positively affect TESL Ontario members and that funding for ESL delivery will include accommodation grants and other support mechanisms such as a transportation subsidy, so that ESL will be offered in locations more conducive to learning.

A new policy framework by the Ministry of Education (EDU), pertaining to ESL delivery in the elementary/secondary sector strives to bring support to English Language Learners (ELLs) in their language acquisition and their parents in understanding why schools do that they do to help their children.

The challenge is to find suitable and culturally-appropriate outreach mechanisms to equally ensure the participation and engagement of the parents of ELLs. As some parents of ELLs are themselves adult ESL students, a thorough outreach plan within adult ESL programs would ensure that the parents of ELLs are aware of new ministry policies and the impact of these on their

children. This will require coordination of efforts through a partnership between EDU and MCI.

At the same time, dedicating the dollars earmarked for ESL to the delivery of ESL in the elementary and secondary panel will further secure the much-needed support for our children and their parents.

## Technology

The Internet has become instrumental in language learning and a ubiquitous communication tool. Thus it is a necessity to update the technological infrastructure in schools through initiatives such as rewiring site facilities to support Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in both ESL and LINC classrooms.

Along with updated facilities, however, resources are also required for dedicated funding and support in training teaching personnel to effectively integrate technology into ESL programs.

All of these challenges require sustained attention and effort, and TESL Ontario is committed to them. Through both the annual ESL Panel and ongoing professional liaisons, TESL Ontario hopes to develop closer ties among all stakeholders in ESL in order to:

- co-ordinate and share in the process of professional development.
- contribute to the development of new strategies and policies in ESL as they are enunciated by governments and supervisory bodies.
- share 'best practices' in advancing delivery of services.
- communicate effectively with practitioners at the grassroots level to ensure that classroom personnel are constantly in tune with new developments and approaches in the field.

Finally, TESL Ontario is continuing its attempts to build a wider public awareness of the important role of ESL both within the education system and in the society at large. The proclamation of ESL Week in communities across the province, for example, is but one way that TESL Ontario has worked to better inform Ontarians about the importance of ESL in helping newcomers to integrate successfully into Canadian life. And that fundamental goal, after all, is what animates the whole process of English language learning. ■



#### PANEL SPEAKER:

**Elizabeth Gryte – Director of Settlement Programs, Ontario Region, Citizenship and Immigration Canada**

*Elizabeth Gryte has devoted much of her working life to immigrant issues. She has extensive experience as an ESL instructor, immigrant settlement counselor and immigration officer. Ms. Gryte has also managed federal government settlement programs for Ontario and was instrumental in implementing the LINC program in the province.*

**E**lizabeth Gryte began by summarizing the history of English language training for adult immigrants to Canada over the last fifty years. But with the implementation of LINC in 1992, the country-wide provision of language training for newcomers began a more comprehensive approach.

From the outset, LINC was organized by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) on a contract basis, open to a range of Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) in partnership with the federal sponsor. The service providers included educational institutions, community groups, non-governmental organizations, non-profit groups and businesses.

In addition to providing funding, curriculum development and assessment for its clients, LINC's responsibilities include certification, professional development, assessment, support to instructors, administrators and assessors, and the provision of a centralized data collection system to support its work.

The first two years of the implementation of LINC were closely studied and met with initial indications of success, but practitioners and observers within the field also began to note certain problems.

The 1993 report on LINC's delivery of ESL services in Ontario, authored by Joan Baril for the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), identified some of these:

- the duplication inherent in having two systems responsible for provision of ESL education - one federal and one provincial.
- inadequate information about LINC's delivery of its services.
- inconsistencies in the interpretation of LINC's policies and guidelines.

At the same time, the place of ESL in the overall education picture was being viewed with some skepticism in sections of the Canadian media. A persistent question, for example, concerned whether Canada should be providing English language training to immigrants at all, before their citizenship had been established.

In her 1993 report, Baril also reported questions from some observers about whether the existing LINC curriculum was providing learners with an adequate level of proficiency in English to

prepare them for the labour market, to enter higher levels of education or to integrate within local communities.

In response to these issues, the LINC program added more instructional levels from its initial three in order to provide for higher levels of language skill development. LINC also developed a set of Language Benchmarks to provide some outcome measures of learners' actual language proficiency. The Benchmarks use a progressive set of task-based competencies in three areas: reading, writing and speaking/listening. A Benchmark assessment tool was also developed, to place clients entering the LINC program into appropriate levels for instruction.

One of the recent initiatives of the LINC program has been the successful development of a data management system that can provide LINC providers with useful information on language training needs and feedback on program outcomes. The system can now pinpoint areas where the need for adult English language instruction is most critical. At this time (2006), for example, the data reveal a heightened need for ESL training in Scarborough, a suburban area in the eastern part of the city of Toronto.

In reflecting on challenges facing ESL service providers, Ms. Gryte referred to the issue of how to balance the amount of instructional time offered to clients – and the related costs - with learn-

ers' linguistic proficiency. Originally, LINC candidates were allowed only six months of language training. This has now been expanded to a maximum eligibility of three years.

It is felt by some practitioners that if English Language Learners require more in-class time to develop adequate levels of fluency, they should have it. Other observers have advocated that some realistic relationship must exist between the two elements (time versus linguistic competency), taking into account a prudent use of public resources, both human and economic.

The federal government's initial intention concerning access to LINC programs was to get immigrants and refugees into the program within the first year of their arrival in Canada. This meant that the program was only open to more recently-arrived landed immigrants or permanent residents, and Convention Refugees. Thus, access to LINC programs was, as the program's title stated, for 'newcomers'.

Canadian citizens and refugee claimants, as well as those who had already acquired citizenship were, and continue to be, ineligible for LINC. Provision of ESL classes for these learners thus became the responsibility of the provincially-organized ESL program within the Ministry of Education, private institutions, community service groups, and now the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

Initially, the contracts signed by LINC with Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) were of one year's duration. Recently, however, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) has moved towards longer contracts – up to three years. It is assumed that this move will provide more stability in the provision of ESL language training programs and more assured employment for LINC teachers.

In the course of establishing LINC programs in the early 1990s, an important need quickly became clear: adult learners with families needed child-minding services while they were receiving instruction. LINC subsequently built this service into its contracts and included the requirement for effective monitoring of such programs, along with the provision of transportation subsidies. Both of these initiatives have allowed more women and single parents to access the program.

Ontario was the leader in instituting these programs and several other provinces have followed suit. A 'training allowance', however, is not provided, as it was in the previous Canada Employment Insurance Commission (CEIC) program. Instead, LINC clients can continue to receive social assistance, employment insurance and adjustment assistance (for refugees), while in the program.

A recurring challenge in ESL service delivery has been monitoring the quality of programs with a view to enhancing both teaching and learning. It is generally accepted that instructors need to constantly advance their skills through professional

development (PD). The provision of PD for instructors, however, has been often been tied to the level of funding available. At times when ESL funding was tight, administrators found themselves having to make difficult decisions between allocating funds to maintain classrooms or support other needs, such as professional development for teaching personnel.

The 2005 Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA) is proving to be an important and hopeful element in stabilizing the funding, delivery and success of language and settlement programs, including LINC.

The Immigration Agreement is the first of its kind between the federal government and Ontario. Through it, the federal government has committed to quadruple its investment in language training by providing \$920 million in funding over five years to help newcomers successfully integrate more quickly into Ontario communities and achieve their full potential.

Under the COIA, the existing federal and provincial settlement services will be better coordinated. The goal is to expand the range of services to newcomers and establish a joint strategy so that organizations providing settlement services can help newcomers more easily locate and access community services for orientation, information, referrals, assessment and job search assistance.

Since language is a critical element for successful integration of newcomers, the federal and

provincial governments have committed to work together to expand language training. For the first time, ESL classes will also include occupation-specific language training in an effort to help immigrants reach language proficiency levels required to work in their own fields or to enroll in post-secondary education.

The Agreement is also the first to involve municipalities in the planning of, and discussions about, immigration.

With stabilized funding, more of these desired goals will be possible:

- classes dedicated to special needs in such areas as literacy and pronunciation.
- occupation-specific language training courses.
- programs for Language in the Workplace.
- distance education programs for ESL learners who cannot attend day or evening schools.
- professional development for all those engaged in ESL across a range of responsibilities, whether in the classroom or working in administration, supervision, assessment, curriculum development.

Ms. Gryte drew attention to the work of the Ontario Region LINC Advisory Committee (ORLAC), which has helped not only to shape programs but also continues to provide expert advice to the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration for the development of policies and programs.

She also underscored the important role of TESL Ontario for its continuing contributions. A noteworthy example of this cooperation was TESL Ontario's assistance in setting up emergency language training and reception for refugees from the conflicts in Kosovo in the spring of 1999.

Ms. Gryte especially applauded ESL instructors who deliver high quality language programs at the classroom level while at the same time assisting in the settlement processes so needed by a large and growing immigrant population. ■



#### PANEL SPEAKER:

**Sheila Nicholas – co-chair of the ESL Committee of the Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators (CESBA)**

*Sheila Nicholas has worked as an ESL and LINC instructor and is currently the ESL and LINC Coordinator for the Wellington Centre for Continuing Education of the Upper Grand District School Board.*

**CESBA is a non-profit organization** of school board administrators, including program coordinators and managers, principals and superintendents. The organization consists of a board of directors and ten committees. Ms Nicholas is the Chair of the ESL/FSL/LINC committee.

The primary objectives of CESBA are:

- to promote and advance the cause of adult and continuing education.
- to provide leadership for Ontario's adult and continuing education programs by being a voice for our learners and instructors.
- to create a positive public awareness of the scope and importance of adult and continuing education programs and the value provided to the learners and the community.
- to respond to the implementation and implications of provincial and federal programs and funding models and to actively address changes.

In pursuit of its goals, CESBA consults regularly with the various ministries responsible for adult continuing education programs, both at the minister and senior staff level, and develops position papers on issues that impact its membership.

CESBA has representatives on federal advisory committees such as the Ontario Region LINC Advisory Committee (ORLAC), which provides a forum for school boards that provide LINC and Immigrant Settlement Assistance Programs (ISAP), to advise on the implementation of these programs

CESBA also has a representative on the provincial ESL/FSL/CL advisory committee established by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) in March, 2006.

An important part of CESBA's work is to provide data that informs policy decisions. CESBA has in the past conducted surveys of members on programming issues and continues to carry out this function. CESBA also educates legislators by sharing information in the form of packages for Members of the Provincial Parliament (MPPs) and through constituency visits.

CESBA relies on its membership to be active in articulating concerns and celebrating successes locally and provincially, and provides the support to do this.

In addition, the ESL/FSL/LINC committee brings forward issues of concern to the Executive Director for follow-up action.

The following charts on page 11-12 summarize some of CESBA's recent challenges and solutions related to English Language Learners, Instructors, and Funders. ■

## Challenges and Solutions

### English Language Learners

Challenge	Solution
To meet the changing needs of English language learners	Through feedback from learners we are aware of changing needs and adjust the class offering to meet learners' changing needs. We encourage learners to participate in the learning process by voicing their needs through such means as learner surveys.
To remove barriers to accessing English language classes.	Continuing education holds classes during the day, the evening and on weekends, to allow learners access to ESL classes whenever they have the time. Many school boards have continuous intake, allowing learners to join at any time. And when circumstances are such that learners must leave, they are welcomed back, whenever it is possible to accommodate them. Adult education programs hold classes not only in schools, but also in a variety of community venues such as libraries and community centres. Yet some barriers are more difficult to remove, such as those arising from lack of transportation or affordable day care. CESBA is working at all levels of government to remove those barriers.
To offer the best language acquisition programs possible.	ESL adult education programs hire instructors who are specialized in ESL and in instructing adults. CESBA also supports the ongoing professional development of instructors so that they are kept abreast of the latest strategies in language instruction. CESBA also strives to provide appropriate and healthy learning venues as well as appropriate and up-to-date classroom resources and tools for the adult ESL learner. In addition CESBA is working with both provincial and federal levels of government to address shortcomings in both of these areas.

## ESL Instructors

Challenge	Solution
Equitable remuneration for ESL staff in the various roles they play across the province.	CESBA recognizes that the funding model does not recognize the workload or the time spent by ESL staff. We have brought forward these issues with our funders and will continue to do so.
To support ongoing professional development of ESL instructors.	CESBA acknowledges that excellence in teaching is fostered by ongoing professional development. CESBA members share strategies to support professional development opportunities to ESL instructors, recognizing that across the province not all school boards can provide the same level of opportunity.
To provide professional development for ESL administrators.	CESBA offers ESL administrators the opportunity to pursue excellence in programs by sharing best practices and developing common standards of program delivery through semi-annual conferences.
To foster respect and recognition for adult educators.	CESBA is an active participant in the creation of a community of adult educators whose expertise and value is recognized both provincially and nationally. We are participating in the current national forum sponsored by the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre to build a national policy on adult education and a national community of adult educators.

## Funders

Challenge	Solution
To be accountable to our funders.	Accountability is a priority within school boards. CESBA supports the implementation of fair and equitable accountability measures to ensure maximum use of public funds.
To meet the program goals of our funders.	CESBA is working with all levels of government to ensure that funding for adult education will support government priorities and adult learning needs by establishing and maintaining opportunities to dialogue with relevant ministries.
To foster and maintain a cooperative relationship with our funders.	CESBA has representatives on both provincial and federal advisory committees which deal with the delivery of English language instruction programs in Ontario. We strive to foster a cooperative relationship. It is our goal to influence and provide leadership for Ontario's adult and continuing education programs and policy.
To address the challenges member boards face in providing programming within the funding provided.	CESBA has brought forward widespread membership concerns regarding the lack of accommodation funding for adult ESL programs. It will continue to raise these concerns with our new provincial ministry, MCI.



#### PANEL SPEAKER:

### Judy Stanleigh – manager of the Language Training Unit of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Ontario (MCI)

*Judy Stanleigh began her career as an elementary school teacher in Ontario. She has extensive training experience with a variety of adult clients, from those who have previously been learners in the school system, to staff in the workplace, to directors of boards for community agencies. Before joining MCI, she worked for the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities in Ontario.*

**T**o lend perspective to the importance of developing an effective and co-ordinated approach to the provision of ESL services, Ms. Stanleigh noted that in 2005 about 140,000 immigrants came to Ontario - approximately 2,500 every week. That rate of immigration, when projected over four years (2006 – 2010) yields a total of over one-half million new arrivals.

She pointed out that the present delivery system is insufficient for accommodating the citizenship and language needs of such large numbers of new arrivals. Moreover, a new consideration for planning and policy-making is that today's newly-arrived immigrants often have greater professional expectations and higher skill levels than ever before.

Since her appointment as Manager of the Language Training Unit in MCI in 2006, Ms Stanleigh has participated in developing a more global and holistic approach towards the provision of language training for newcomers as part of their successful integration into Canadian society.

Since newcomers' attitudes and goals begin to form long before their arrival in Canada, MCI's

new approach begins the process of settlement and integration by considering newcomers in their pre-immigration period. The overall goal is to ease their pathway into successful, productive and happy citizenship.

Having English is obviously a significant element in that journey, but it also acknowledges the important linkage between the English language learner and the Canadian labour market.

In 2006, the Ontario government transferred oversight for the development and delivery of adult ESL services from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI). The Language Training Unit was established in January, 2006 to oversee Ontario's adult ESL and FSL in non-credit programs.

In the delivery of ESL and FSL services in Ontario today there are many participating elements, both federal and provincial. Existing programs include:

- adult credit ESL programs.
- adult Non-credit English as a Second Language (ESL) French as a Second Language (FSL) and Citizenship and Language (CL).
- bridge Training programs for over 100 trades and professional careers.
- LINC – the federally-supported program for basic language training.
- literacy and Basic Skills programs.

## Challenges

- ELL (English Language Learners) and ELD (English Literacy Development).
- ELT – Enhanced Language Training.

The delivering agents for this array of programs include:

- community organizations.
- colleges and universities.
- private institutions.
- TV Ontario.
- school boards.

While such a listing indicates a broad commitment to providing language instruction to newcomers, it also suggests a diffusion of focus that a more streamlined initiative could provide.

Ms Stanleigh identified one of the significant challenges in addressing immigrant language training as the newcomer's own perceptions of their language skill. Some think that their language skills are better than they actually are.

However, to integrate successfully into both professional and non-professional work situations, adequate communication and language skills are critical.

In addressing the issue of challenges in delivery of ESL services, Ms. Stanleigh identified several issues:

- services are now often piecemeal, and consequently require a stronger focus in order to achieve their goals.
- lack of coordination of policies and programs for ESL and EFL, different eligibility and assessment criteria for each program. More streamlined service is needed in both areas.
- fully one-quarter of the immigrants to Ontario are children and youth from 0 -17 years. This fact presents considerable challenge to the educational and social integration systems and calls for increased resources.
- employers need to be assisted to recognize the language achievements of immigrants through the use of language portfolios and recognition of certificates.
- different programs for language training are provided under different ministries and even different governments – a confusing picture for English language learners wanting to map out a pathway to integration, education and employment.
- overlap and duplicate program delivery.
- shortage of higher levels of English language training in occupational-specific business communication.

## Initiatives

- lack of common province-wide achievement standards and measures of accountability.
- 30 per cent of adults (18-64) immigrating to Ontario do not have either English or French as a workable language. Many new arrivals with some proficiency in either English or French find their language abilities inadequate for the demands of the professional workplace.
- newcomers cannot find comprehensive information in one source to answer their questions and direct or counsel them.
- there are no clear pathways to guide newcomers from settlement and language training to the labour market.
- eligibility criteria continue to be a barrier for successful entry into training and accreditation programs.
- the evident need for ready access to information for many newcomers.
- inadequate linkages with employers to discuss their expectations for hiring foreign-trained workers.
- lack of measures of learner success and poor development of feedback mechanisms for the English language learner.
- service providers need to take bold initiatives in instituting new approaches to learner access of language training, for example through video conferencing.

The picture at present sees the MCI building both policies and structures to address the challenges outlined above in all three sectors: settlement, language training and labour market. Initiatives which are presently under way include:

- implementation of the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement. Part of this process has involved setting up the Language Training Unit within MCI.
- successful transfer of adult non-credit language training programs from the Ministry of Education to MCI and a similar transfer of the Labour Market Initiatives unit from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) to MCI.
- expansion of the Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP) to fund settlement services for newcomers.
- setting up of the Ontario Community Builders Program to provide funding to non-profit community groups to support awareness of Ontario's diverse heritage through education, workshops, exhibits, special events designed to value and celebrate Ontario's cultural communities.
- introduction of the "Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act" to break down accreditation and certification barriers in Ontario's 34 regulated professions so that more internationally-trained professionals can get licensed and return to work in their professional fields.

- hiring of 70 immigrants in 6-month internships within the Ontario Public Service and Crown Agencies.
- an expanded, more robust immigrant information website with information in many languages on living, working, studying, doing business and accessing services in Ontario: [www.ontarioimmigration.ca](http://www.ontarioimmigration.ca).
- bridging training programs and a Loans Program to help professionals pay for tests, training, and examination costs.
- partnerships and regional employment networks that include municipal engagement.
- a proposed Provincial Nominee Program, matching newcomers with labour market needs, in which selected foreign workers can have their immigration applications fast-tracked as they fill specific worker shortages.
- a Temporary Foreign Worker Agreement designed to respond to local and job-specific needs which also gives workers the chance to boost their language skills and become more familiar with Canadian life.

Finally, Ms Stanleigh reminded us that every ESL learner has a complex life history, in which learning English is but one part, albeit an important one.

In painting a perfect picture of the future, she envisions accessible, streamlined, one-stop assessment centres in Ontario that will serve all the needs of immigrants as they map out their life pathways for schooling, for jobs, and for professional employment. In building such a structure, there is a need for an integrated services strategy and an integrated language training strategy, with clear pathways for immigrants from their pre-arrival phase, to settlement, to language training and ultimately to the labour market.

She pictures the future of ESL delivery including an Ontario-wide comprehensive adult ESL/FSL language training, assessment and referral system that is effectively linked with all government funded immigrant programs and services, from settlement to successful labour market integration.

Her vision for non-credit adult ESL/FSL Continuing Education includes establishing an Ontario-wide program with benchmarks and standards and governed by a new comprehensive transfer payment program that is aligned with the overarching strategy of the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement and a vision for Ontario's language training system. ■

**PANEL SPEAKER:****Cheryl Ende — representing ERGO, the ESL/ELD Resource Group of Ontario**

*Cheryl Ende is an experienced ESL teacher and taught at the elementary, secondary and adult levels. Currently she is Course Director of ESL Additional Qualification Courses for Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario and serves as evening school supervisor for the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board Adult ESL Program.*

**T**he **ESL/ELD Resource Group** of Ontario (ERGO) was founded in 1978, and was originally comprised of a group of ESL coordinators and teachers in the Greater Toronto Area who banded together for support and to share ideas and resources. The key organizers were Jean Hand-scombe and Elizabeth Coelho. This informal group later became ERGO. It is now an organization of ESL/ELD coordinators, consultants and designated representatives of boards of education.

ERGO's primary role is one of advocacy, to ensure that English language learners have equitable access to quality education programs from elementary to post-secondary levels and to advise on program implementation and the inclusion and acknowledgment of the needs of ESL and ELD in all curriculum guidelines and program policy documents.

ERGO also represents province-wide ESL/ELD concerns, seeking input and advice from various other stakeholders such as the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO), the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation

(OSSTF), the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE), school trustees, politicians, and Special Education representatives.

In addition to its strong advocacy role, ERGO provides leadership and opportunities for professional development through organizing publishers' displays and resource sharing at its monthly meetings and at the annual "Celebrating Linguistic Diversity" conference in April, in conjunction with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and the Toronto District School Board.

ERGO also provides leadership in the development of Ministry of Education policy and advises on the preparation of all curriculum documents to ensure that all such resources acknowledge the needs of ESL/ELD learners.

In addition, ERGO supports the implementation of elementary and secondary programs by developing and sharing resources and assists in the development of curriculum units to support the implementation of provincial documents.

Another important part of ERGO's mandate concerns its advocacy relationship for ELLs who must take and pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test given annually by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). ERGO makes a strong case for accommodations, fair practice, and a recognition that large scale assessments are not reliable indicators of the academic potential for ELLs.

Paired with this role, ERGO advises on data collection that will inform and drive future testing practices in the province.

Some of the issues to which ERGO has responded include:

- teacher training to address the changing cultural and linguistic diversity of Ontario.
- the needs of post-secondary ESL students.
- the new Provincial Report Card.
- the Ministry of Education Funding model.
- secondary school reform.
- the need for outcomes and indicators for ESL stages of proficiency.
- EQAO literacy tests at grade 3,6 and 10.
- the new Ministry of Education elementary curriculum.
- the revised Ministry of Education secondary curriculum.

After the changes in the provincial education funding model in 1998, ERGO made representations to Ontario Ministry of Finance personnel on several occasions, as well as with Peter Gooch, Director of the Ministry of Education's Finance Branch in May, 1999 and April, 2001.

One issue under discussion was the Ministry's use of the 1991 database for calculations, a set of statistics that was many years out of date. Another was the inability to accurately capture the very large number of Canadian-born English language learners within the statistical analysis.

ERGO has also produced Assessment Materials available in CD-format for initial diagnostic assessments of language proficiency.

At the elementary level, ERGO has successfully advocated for recognition of ESL/ELD learners on the Provincial Report Card. In addition, through its website <http://www.ergo-on.ca>.

ERGO provides a provincial network for communication and liaison, and a forum for discussion and response to issues, initiatives and research. ■



**PANEL SPEAKER:**

**Lidija Biro – educational officer with the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Branch, Ontario Ministry of Education**

*Lidija Biro is presently working on the final stages of the revision of the Ministry of Education secondary curriculum document for ESL and ELD, Grades nine to 12. She has worked as a secondary school ESL teacher, piloted a New-comer Reception and Assessment Centre and has taught ESL Additional Qualification courses at York University.*

**T**he Ontario Ministry of Education is now completing revisions to its curriculum document for ESL and ELD which was last revised in 1999. This is part of the Ministry’s process of review of all curriculum documents. The multi-year review process began in 2004 and is scheduled for completion in 2007. Implementation of the document is scheduled for September, 2007.

The initial stages of the review process included a number of components:

- Focus group sessions lasting one day. In the present review, the Ministry organized seven of these around the province, involving 200 participants.
- Technical analysis: 15 ESL educators from around the province met in a 5-day session.
- Research review: This was commissioned from the university sector
- Jurisdictional comparison: The review examined 8 jurisdictions in Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the United States.

- Stakeholder consultations: This step involved 6 half-day sessions and included participants ranging from the Minister’s Council for Special Education, Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, Settlement workers in schools and parents.
- Summer writing sessions: 16 educators from around the province were involved in summer writing sessions held in the summer of 2005 and 2006.

Stages of the Review Process	
Sept. 2004 – July 2005	Analysis and Synthesis
July 2005 – Dec. 2006	Revision Writing and Feedback Consultation
Dec. 2006 – June 2007	Editing, Publication and Distribution
Sept. 2007	Implementation

Highlights from the revision include:

- an updated Introduction, reflecting current research in second language acquisition and best practices for effective teaching and learning.
- a vision statement about the English Language Learner.

- a clear definition of who the ELLs are and a focus on inclusion of ELLs within the whole framework of the school.
- an ESL and ELD Course Prerequisite Chart and Pathways to English.
- information on the roles of parents/guardians, students, teachers and administrators.
- resources for anti-discrimination education and effective involvement of community partners.
- an updated and improved organization of curriculum content.
- examples and prompts to assist teachers in the classroom.
- a clearer connection between curriculum expectations and the achievement chart for assessment and evaluation purposes.
- addition of a fifth ELD course to provide students with more time to develop literacy and receive language training.

The Ministry of Education now has an English language learner lead team. One of its initiatives is the publication of *Many Roots/Many Voices*, a practical resource for ESL learners and teachers to support ELLs in every classroom. (available online at: [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/manyroots/](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/manyroots/))

*Many Roots/Many Voices* contains “Tips for the Classroom “ and “Tips for the Whole School”. It also provides resource material on how to accommodate the learning needs of ELLs, and advice on how to incorporate identity within the teaching/learning processes. In addition, it helps teachers to assess learners with sensitivity to their special needs and goals.

A new Mathematics Curriculum resource titled TIPS for English Language Learners in Mathematics has been published for Grades seven and eight (Applied Mathematics) and Grades nine and 10 (Applied). “TIPS” is an acronym for “Targeted Implementation and Planning Supports for Revised Mathematics” (TIPS4RM).

It provides teachers with Adapted Lessons for ELLs that will stand side by side with mainstream course lessons. The lesson adjustments are based on research and are designed to help develop mathematical literacy and English language development. (TIPS and related mathematics resources are available online at: [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/studentsuccess/lms/](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/studentsuccess/lms/))

Another recent Ministry initiative is the development of a K-12 Language Policy for English Language Learners. The policy will:

- provide criteria for identifying English language learners in Ontario’s elementary and secondary schools.

- describe procedures for data collection to enable tracking of these students as a group.
- use criteria and data to identify the most effective programs and approaches.
- increase accountability for provision of support services for ELLs.

In another initiative, the Ministry has produced webcasts and PowerPoint presentations on Teaching and Learning in Multilingual Ontario, such as:

- a webcast featuring Dr. Jim Cummins of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). The presenter suggests new ways of thinking about and working with students whose L1 is other than English or French.
- PowerPoint presentations which provide background information for teachers and administrators on English Language Learners in Ontario, and practical examples of how to create a multilingual School Environment as well as Sharing Space with English and French, by Elizabeth Coelho, Student Achievement Officer at the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat. These resources are available online at: [www.inspirelearning.ca/](http://www.inspirelearning.ca/)

A further Ministry initiative is *STEP: Steps to English Proficiency*, a set of assessment tools to help teachers identify and understand the learning needs of ELLs so that they have the best chance of developing full proficiency in English and achieving the high levels of literacy that are expected of all Ontario students. STEP is useful for developing continuous learning observation, similar to the LINC Canadian Language Benchmarks.

STEP consists of:

- developmental continua for assessing and tracking acquisition of English language and literacy over a multi-year period.
- a Language Assessment kit for Grades one to six (ESL) and Grades three to six (ELD).
- a Language Assessment kit for Grades seven to 12 (ESL and ELD).

It observes three components of language proficiency:

- oral communication.
- reading and responding.
- writing.

It was developed for different grade clusters because students of different ages learn English in different contexts and use it for different purposes. In general, the older students are, the more language they are learning.

STEP helps teachers to observe learners' growth and change in both everyday language and academic language.

Everyday language is characterized by:

- its primary use in face-to-face conversations.
- a focus on the here and now, with familiar content.
- a vocabulary of mostly high-frequency words (2,000 – 3,000 words).
- simple sentence structures.
- a high degree of contextualization.
- an acceptance of error.

Academic language is characterized by:

- limited interaction amongst users.
- less familiar content that is more abstract and more distant in time and space than everyday language.
- a lower-frequency vocabulary.
- complex sentence structures.
- the presence of cultural references.
- less contextual support than everyday language.
- penalties or negative consequences for error.

STEP was developed in response to a desire for common tools to assess English language learning across the province. It helps teachers and others describe more fully and precisely what we mean by English language proficiency.

Moreover, the existing assessment devices were developed for students whose first language is English, and were therefore not appropriate for English Language Learners. In addition, the test results from EQAO have been yielding important information about the achievement levels of ELLs in our schools.

## ELLs became a Priority

Over the last few years, ELLs have become a priority for the Ministry of Education for a variety of reasons.

### Demographic changes in Ontario

- both Ontario and Canada seek more people.
- immigration projections point to policies which will bring in at least 300,000 new residents annually for the next few years.

- Statistics Canada reports that the proportion of the population born outside Canada is the highest in 70 years (18.4 per cent)
- Ontario’s population is projected to grow from 11.9 million in 2001 to about 15.6 million in 2028, an increase of 28 per cent.
- immigration will account for almost 75 per cent of this growth.
- more newcomers are now being encouraged to settle outside the major urban centres.

**Advocacy by Community Groups**

Many concerned advocacy groups have reviewed the ESL delivery system in Ontario schools and developed position papers which make recommendations for change:

- People for Education – in “Public Education in Ontario’s Cities”, June 2005.
- the Atkinson Foundation – “A 10-point Agenda for the Inclusion of new Immigrant Students” by Andrew Duffy, June 2005.



- Survey of Elementary Teachers of Toronto about ESL Issues – January 2006
- the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto – “Reviewing Toronto’s ESL Programs” - 2005
- The Ontario Public School Boards Association Position Paper on Second Language Learning in Ontario – November 2005

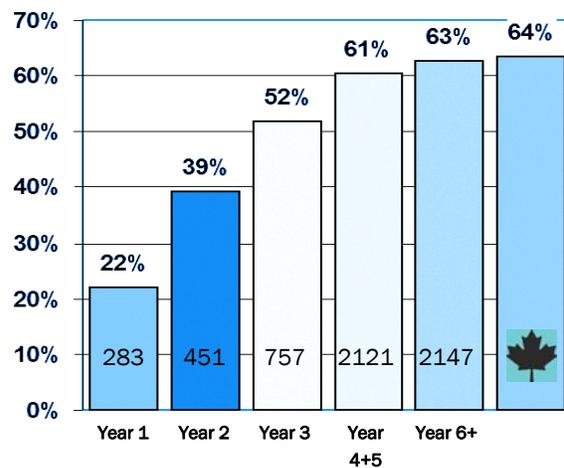
### Provincial Assessment Data

- 20 per cent of the children eligible for EQAO assessment in the spring of 2005 had a first language other than English.
- 54 per cent of these children were born in Canada.
- to determine how they are learning, it is necessary to disaggregate the data for chil-

dren with a first language other than English by country of birth and by year of arrival.

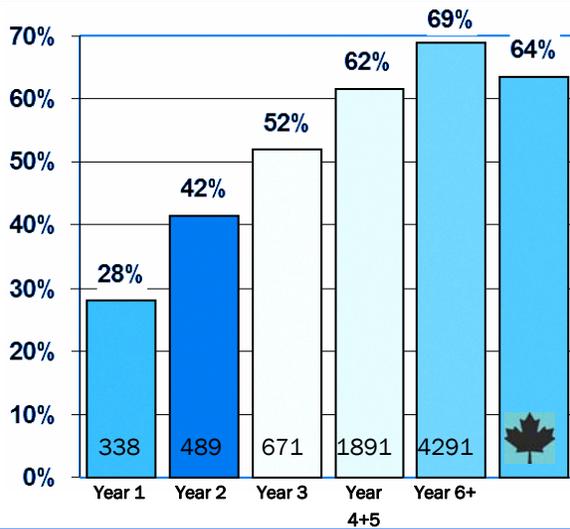
Charts based on disaggregated data for 2005 show that newcomer ELLs achieve results similar to those of English-speaking peers after they have been in Canada for 5 or more years. However, Canadian-born ELLs have not caught up by Grade six.

### READING: newcomer ELLs in Grade three by time in Canada compared with Canadian-born children



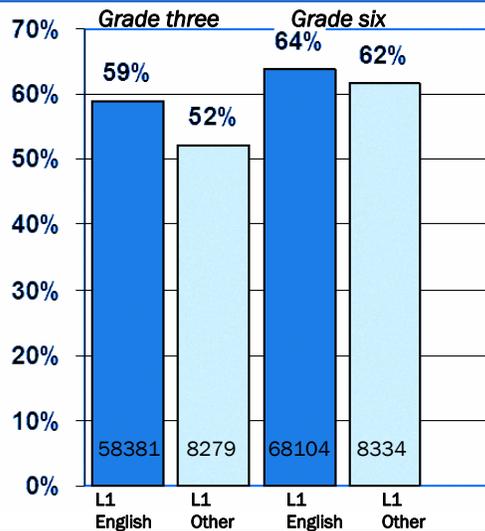
- In the first three years newcomer ELLs make dramatic gains: an average of approximately 15 percentage points per year.
- Progress levels off in years three and four, with growth of nine percentage points over two years.
- It takes more than five years for newcomer ELLs to catch up to their Canadian peers.

**READING: newcomer ELLs in Grade six by time in Canada compared with Canadian-born children**



- During the first two years performance improves by an average of about 12 percentage points per year.
- Progress levels off in years three and four with growth of 10 percentage points over two years.
- It takes more than five years for newcomer ELLs to catch up to their Canadian-born peers.
- Newcomer ELLs eventually surpass their Canadian-born peers.

**READING: Canadian-born ELLs compared with Canadian-born English speaking student: Grades three and six**



- Canadian-born ELLs have not caught up by Grade three (having had all their schooling in Ontario).
- They are approaching the performance of English-speaking students by Grade six (after six to eight years of schooling in Ontario).

## Initiatives

The next steps (2006 – 2008) planned by the Ministry of Education include:

- implementation of the new ELL K-12 Policy Document.
- implementation of the revised secondary curriculum for ESL and ELD, Grades nine – 12.
- pilot of *Steps to English Proficiency* (assessment tool)

Production of future resource documents on these issues:

- English Language Learners in Kindergarten.
- ELLs with limited prior schooling.
- workshops for teachers and administrators.

---

## CONCLUSION

The First Annual TESL Ontario Panel discussion provided an opportunity for stakeholders in the design and delivery of ESL services in Ontario to share information about their achievements so far and begin to vision ways to meet emerging challenges within the dynamic educational context of the province.

This publication summarizes the presentations of the Panel participants.

With open dialogue and sharing of ideas and resources, the future of ESL in Ontario looks bright. The first TESL Ontario Panel has proved to be an important first step in the right direction. ■

