

# **Taking the Region's Pulse in ESL Education: A Series of Interviews from Each Panel**

by Elly Campbell-Lawrence

We're taking the pulse of ESL Education in the Waterloo-Wellington Region. We at TESL WW want to know more about the working conditions, joys, and frustrations of members in every panel our organization represents.

This new feature will be spread over this, and the next, newsletter and is comprised of a number of interviews--each from a teacher in a different panel. We believe that this series can serve teachers in many ways. The main idea is to inform ESL teachers about each other's work lives and to pull us closer together. It could also provide useful information for any teacher considering changing panels. Then, just maybe, it could draw the attention of higher-ups to problems under their domain that they were either unaware of or haven't understood to be serious. Next, it could simply help us to remember that every job has both good and bad aspects. And finally, if any readers happen to be riding out a slump, it could remind us how very lucky we are to be doing what we do!

**Part 1**, below, contains interviews from a teacher in

- #1 Separate Board Elementary,
- #2 Separate Board Secondary,
- #3 Public Board Elementary,
- #4 Public Board Secondary,
- #5 Adult Literacy (LINC) and
- #6 University.

**Part 2:** Look for our Fall 2006 newsletter for interviews with the remaining panels or sectors:  
Separate Board Adult and Continuing Education (Non-Credit, Credit, LINC)  
Public Board Adult and Continuing Education (Non-Credit, Credit, LINC)  
Community Colleges  
and Private Schools

## **Part 1 Interviews**

<b>Interview #1: an ESL Teacher in the Separate School Elementary Panel</b>
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**Teacher's name:**

Angela Davis

**Work location and city:**

Itinerant ESL teacher, Waterloo Catholic District School Board, Kitchener

**Part-time or full-time?**

Full time

**What are the minimum qualifications to teach ESL in this panel?**

Ontario Teaching Certificate plus Ministry of Education Additional qualifications ESL part 1.

**What are the preferred qualifications in this panel?**

OTC, AQ ESL specialist as well as varied classroom experience

**What is the standard path to better your qualifications in ESL in this panel?**

AQ courses in ESL, taken evenings, summers

**Are there any ESL qualifications which are "not considered" in this panel?**

Not sure, there may be ESL training which is not part of the Ministry of Ed. AQ program, that obviously would not be given the same weight as an AQ course, but that training would still be viewed as a desirable asset.

**How many total years of teaching experience do you have?**

29

**How many years of ESL experience do you have?**

19

**What initially drew you to this work?**

In the mid '80s there were an increasing number of newcomers arriving in the elementary school where I was teaching (Mississauga) and the need to program appropriately for these students became more and more evident, challenging and of course critical to their success. I decided that taking ESL qualifications courses was one way I could be more effective in the junior elementary classroom where I was teaching. Once I entered the world of ESL teaching, I was hooked! I realized that I wanted to learn more, to do more for my students and contribute as much as I could to their academic success and to their settlement into Canadian life and culture.

**Please describe, in general terms, who your students are:**

Elementary aged students, from almost every part of the world, most recently higher numbers from African countries, Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and south east Asia. They bring with them some 47 different linguistic & cultural backgrounds. Their immigration status varies – permanent residents, refugee claimants, government sponsored refugees, students on study visas

**What certification, diploma or degree are your students working towards?**

Graduation from elementary school into secondary school

**What are the largest obstacles your students must overcome in order to meet this goal?**

Acquiring a level of English language competence that would allow them to take the secondary school courses that would lead to the career to which they aspire, i.e. do they want to go to university? College? Will they achieve those goals in a reasonable period of time, recognizing that sometimes 4 years of high school is just not enough time for ELLs (depending on how long they have been in an Ontario school)? Being limited to leaving school without credentials (in some cases) and being frustrated or discouraged from continuing through to post-secondary education is a huge issue for many of these students.

**What does your typical day look like? (semestered or not, number of classes per year, class size, span of subjects taught, other duties and responsibilities)**

- 5 to 8 groups of ELLs in a day/1 to 10 students in a group/ grades 1 to 8/
- providing withdrawal support, in class support, or additional assistance at lunch, recess, or in an after-school homework club setting
- providing language support in English, Math, Science, Social Studies, Hist/Geog, sometimes health and music
- collaborating with classroom teachers in planning program & accommodations for ELLs, delivering instruction, and assessing and reporting
- involvement in school welcoming team, assisting with registration of, and orientation for new students
- planning and delivering information sessions for newcomer parents
- organizing for interpreters as needed
- link between ESL families and school and SEPWR (settlement workers)
- responsibility for some "regular" extracurricular activities, supervision duty, and other responsibilities that come with being a staff member at a school

**What gives you the greatest joy in your work?**

The students, and the richness they bring to the school and to those who are fortunate enough to work with them. Experiencing milestones with the students is an awesome experience – each new word and phrase can be an accomplishment, watching them become more and more independent as they are able to communicate more competently, observing them become part of the school community and blooming alongside their classmates.

One of best moments has always been, and will continue to be sharing in new students' first experience with snow! I still get as excited as they do at the first snowfall of the season.

Seeing my students demonstrate their skills and talents, whether it's in a classroom presentation, making an announcement over the PA, reading at church in front of the whole school, performing at the annual talent show, or receiving their grade 8 diplomas is always very emotional – in a good way, of course.

**What are your greatest frustrations?****How is your programme funded? (both directly and ultimately)**

Ministry of Education grant for ESL programs that is provided to the School Boards

**Is this a good teaching area to get into in Waterloo-Wellington? For example, are there usually openings?**

It is a good teaching area in that there is certainly a need for teachers...whether funding allows school boards to actually increase hiring is another issue. In our board there are not usually openings unless there are retirements.

**Are there opportunities for advancement?**

Not really

**What positions could one advance to?**

The position (one only) that would be considered an advancement is that of ESL/ELD Program Consultant – a term position

**Is professional development provided through your workplace? If not, where do you find it? If so, is it adequate?**

PD is provided through the workplace. ESL teachers have access to all mandatory training and professional development opportunities that are offered to all teachers. There is financial support available to attend workshops outside of the region (annual ESL conference in Toronto). System-wide PA day workshops usually include sessions specifically for ESL teachers. Guest presenters have been brought in to work with ESL and classroom teachers.

**What is the salary range for your position?**

Paid as a teacher, according to the salary grid that has been determined through contract negotiations between OECTA and the board.

**Does the position include extended benefits?**

Yes

**Does this position generate a pension?**

Yes

**What would you miss the most if, for any reason, you were to leave this position?**

Contact with the new students and their families – sharing in their stories, supporting them as they begin their new lives in our community

**What would you say to any beginning ESL teacher at your workplace who asked you for general advice?**

- Be prepared to love and care for your students, to become emotionally attached to them and their families.
- Have high expectations for your students' academic success, they can and will live up to those expectations, hopefully with your support and guidance.
- Become an advocate – for your students, for ESL programs, for newcomers.
- Be flexible – your challenges will come from all directions, including colleagues, the system, the curriculum, the Ministry, and the community...
- Take responsibility for your own PD – read, read, read.
- Connect, network with colleagues; they are sometimes our best support.

**Interview #2: an ESL Teacher in the Separate School Secondary Panel**

**Teacher's name:**

Brigitte McKay

**Work location and city:**

St. Mary's High School, Kitchener

**Part-time or full-time?**

Full-time

**What are the minimum qualifications to teach ESL in this panel?**

Editor's Note: OTC, Ministry AQ of ESL part 1; University degree/ ESL part 1

**What are the preferred qualifications in this panel?**

University degree/ ESL parts 1, 2, 3 (Specialist

**What is the standard path to better your qualifications in ESL in this panel?**

Enroll in ministry of Education ESL courses

**Are there any ESL qualifications which are "not considered" in this panel?**

**How many total years of teaching experience do you have?**

30 (French, German, English, ESL)

**How many years of ESL experience do you have?**

15

**What initially drew you to this work?**

Interest in teaching new immigrants/ my background as a high school French and German teacher

**Please describe, in general terms, who your students are:**

High School ESL A, B, C, D, E (beginners to advanced) (Hispanic, African, European, Asian) English Literacy Development)

**What certification, diploma or degree are your students working towards?**

OSSD

**What are the largest obstacles your students must overcome in order to meet this goal?**

Acculturation/ homesickness/ The compulsory grade 10 literacy test/ knowing that it will take them longer to accomplish their goals/ poverty

**What does your typical day look like? (semestered or not, number of classes per year, class size, span of subjects taught, other duties and responsibilities)**

Semestered; three 76 minute periods per day (currently two ESL English classes plus one monitoring period to give extra help to all ESL students, to monitor their progress, to advocate and be a liaison for them between their teachers, administration, home, and peers)

**What gives you the greatest joy in your work?**

Teaching my students; seeing them achieve their goals; making a difference in their lives

**What are your greatest frustrations?**

The need to add English writing courses to the ESL curriculum; the fact that students are well supported in their first year through a complete ESL curriculum, but in the second year, compulsory courses such as civics, careers, math and an arts credit for ESL students are not offered here which leads to a great deal of frustration and failure. The students do not yet have the English skills required to achieve good marks in these areas, so their report card averages are affected.

**How is your programme funded? (both directly and ultimately)**

Through the Ministry of Education

**Is this a good teaching area to get into in Waterloo-Wellington? For example, are there usually openings?**

We are the only high school offering ESL for the Waterloo District Catholic School Board, so all ESL students come here. Openings depend on the numbers of ESL students which vary from year to year.

**Are there opportunities for advancement?**

Most of the teachers who teach ESL subjects also teach in other areas (math, history, religion etc.) I am the only full time ESL teacher at St. Mary's at present.

**What positions could one advance to?**

**Is professional development provided through your workplace? If not, where do you find it? If so, is it adequate?**

Unfortunately, the professional development workshops through OSSTF take place during our parent/teacher interview days following report cards, so for the past few years, we have been unable to attend. There are workshops through TESL, and there is a lot of information on the Internet.

**What is the salary range for your position?**

It is dependent on the years of teaching and the university degree (according to the contract)

**Does the position include extended benefits?**

Yes.

**Does this position generate a pension?**

Yes

**What would you miss the most if, for any reason, you were to leave this position?**

Interaction with the students

**What would you say to any beginning ESL teacher at your workplace who asked you for general advice?**

Know your curriculum (English grammar, rules, and exceptions to rules, etc.) very well in order to have flexibility and to take advantage of the unplanned teachable moments which are a constant in ESL classes. In the classroom, all are respected. It should be a comfortable, supportive environment where oral interaction is encouraged, and inhibitions are left behind.

## **Interview #3: an ESL Teacher in the Waterloo District Public Elementary Panel**

**Teacher's name:**

Connie Zonghetti

**Work location and city:**

Wellesley District School Board, Wellesley, ON

**Part-time or full-time?**

Full time

**What are the minimum qualifications to teach ESL in this panel?**

Teachers' College and ESL Part One, a Ministry Additional Qualification Course

**What are the preferred qualifications in this panel?**

Part 2 and Specialist courses are regularly announced but are not a requirement. I have personally found Part 2 and Specialist very useful in my teaching.

**What is the standard path to better your qualifications in ESL in this panel?**

Additional qualifications through the Ministry of Education.

**Are there any ESL qualifications which are "not considered" in this panel?**

I don't have this information. (Editor's Note: TESL Certification is not equivalent to the Ministry ESL qualifications, but might impress in addition to the expectations)

**How many total years of teaching experience do you have?**

31 years

**How many years of ESL experience do you have?**

21 years

**What initially drew you to this work?**

Twenty-five years ago I was teaching in Lahr, Germany, for the Department of National Defense (children of Canadian forces) and had a great opportunity for world travel. Visits to elementary schools in such places as Egypt, China, Russia and Greece, in addition to a personal passion for foreign languages, led me to ESL.

**Please describe, in general terms, who your students are:**

After many years of ESL teaching with numerous cultural groups in Kitchener-Waterloo, I came to Wellesley in 2002. Here, the majority of my students are David Martin Mennonites from surrounding farms. I also teach a smaller number of Old Colony Mennonites from Mexico.

**What certification, diploma or degree are your students working towards?**

David Martin Mennonites stay in school until their 14th birthday (gov't. sanctioned) and then work on their farms. Old Colony Mennonites will attend high school but their main goal is to learn enough functional English to allow them to work, earn money, and return to families and farms in Mexico, where they have deep attachments.

**What are the largest obstacles your students must overcome in order to meet this goal?**

Both groups are quite insulated within their own cultures. School time is their only English time. They are essentially "language tourists" and this, obviously, affects progress.

**What does your typical day look like? (semestered or not, number of classes per year, class size, span of subjects taught, other duties and responsibilities)**

Seven 41-minute periods per day in a six-day cycle. Groups are withdrawn from classrooms to form either language level groups or class groups. Total number of students withdrawn is 72.

**What gives you the greatest joy in your work?**

Seeing a child's personality begin to "sparkle" as he/she progresses to a level of comfort during the early stages of understanding and speaking English.

**What are your greatest frustrations?**

Too big a caseload and so many high needs. There are some very obvious inequities between the numbers on Special Education caseloads in schools and the numbers on ESL caseloads. This is a widespread problem, particularly for ESL teachers who are itinerant. Also, there is no additional help when a caseload vastly increases during a school year. ESL teachers are spread very thin.

**How is your programme funded? (both directly and ultimately)**

Through the Ministry of Education and the Board of Ed.

**Is this a good teaching area to get into in Waterloo-Wellington? For example, are there usually openings?**

Opportunities for experienced teachers within our system who hold ESL qualifications are limited.

**Are there opportunities for advancement?**

Very rarely. In 21 years, promotion has happened twice.

**What positions could one advance to?**

ESL Consultant

**Is professional development provided through your workplace? If not, where do you find it? If so, is it adequate?**

Yes, ESL department meetings and workshops. Also TESL and OISE conferences. Over the years-- some valuable, some less so.

**What is the salary range for your position?**

Salary level for ESL teachers, like all other Elementary teachers, is determined by your assigned category by the Qualifications Evaluations Council of Ontario (QECO). Currently Level A, 0 years' experience is \$34,037, level A4, 10 years' experience is \$79,089

**Does the position include extended benefits?**

Yes, when applied for.

**Does this position generate a pension?**

Yes

**What would you miss the most if, for any reason, you were to leave this position?**

The children. There is no greater joy than hearing the first English words come out and seeing the smile go up!

**What would you say to any beginning ESL teacher at your workplace who asked you for general advice?**

I am a great believer in the "affective" component in the ESL learning environment. ie. Students learn best when they feel valued and happy. Everything else flows from this. An ESL classroom should be warm, welcoming, and above all, the safest place in the world to make a mistake. I think of my ESL students as little plants. Give them "sunshine" and care and they will blossom.

## **Interview #4: an ESL Teacher in the Waterloo Region Public Secondary Panel**

### **Teacher's name:**

Robert Somerville

### **Work location and city:**

Forest Heights Collegiate Institute, Kitchener, Ontario

### **Part-time or full-time?**

Full-time teacher

### **What are the minimum qualifications to teach ESL in this panel?**

In order to qualify as a potential teacher of ESL a teacher must agree to take and successfully complete the ESL Part 1 course within a short period after beginning to teach ESL courses. The accepted period of time is generally viewed as one year after accepting the assignment. Again, this is the bare minimum qualification.

### **What are the preferred qualifications in this panel?**

It is preferred that potential ESL teachers enroll in the ESL Part 1 course prior to accepting an ESL assignment. It is essential that ESL students receive the best education possible and content learned in the ESL courses provides vital information on teaching styles, course content and understanding the ESL learner. Hopefully teachers will continue to take the remaining parts of the ESL qualifications to better their own teaching abilities and further their knowledge and understanding of ESL curriculum, delivery methods and student understanding.

### **What is the standard path to better your qualifications in ESL in this panel?**

Generally teachers who wish to move beyond the first stage of ESL will continue by taking ESL Part 2 and then move on to take the ESL Specialist course. The higher level courses provide substantial growth in ESL methodology, a better understanding of the ESL learner and foster greater leadership capabilities.

### **Are there any ESL qualifications which are "not considered" in this panel?**

I'm not sure. I believe there are community college courses and possibly university courses and programs that are not considered seriously as effective training for ESL teaching. Again, internationally recognized courses and programs may not be approved or seen as relevant in Ontario. (depends on the course / country of origin)

### **How many total years of teaching experience do you have?**

I have twenty-one years teaching experience.

### **How many years of ESL experience do you have?**

I am currently in my twentieth year of ESL teaching.

### **What initially drew you to this work?**

Having taught in the regular classroom initially, I faced the challenge of meeting the needs of a few second language students who were part of the mainstream student body. I was able to make first hand observations on the various struggles faced by these students both academically and socially. Helping these students to succeed demanded a lot of time and, as a regular classroom teacher, I didn't have the necessary time to effectively help. I felt that gaining ESL qualifications would allow me the opportunity to focus primarily on new Canadians within an ESL classroom. I wanted to make a difference in the lives of ESL students and provide them with the education that they deserved.

**Please describe, in general terms, who your students are:**

Generally, the students are landed immigrants to Canada with a number of refugees as well. From a global standpoint, a large number of the students are from Afghanistan as well as a number of countries in the Middle East. An increasing number of the students are sub-continental with the majority being from India and Pakistan. African students arriving tend to be from Sudan over the past few years. Fewer students have come from Southeast Asia and Central America yet there are always a number of these students within the ESL population. They are 14 to 20 years old.

**What certification, diploma or degree are your students working towards?**

In ESL there is always a wide range when describing career goals. There are several students who arrive and quickly work their way through ESL and into the academic sphere. They tend to move on to university and achieve great success. A much larger group set their sights on college and often tend to move through the applied stream to reach their destination. Another group struggles academically and strives just to receive a high school certificate. Although never tracked effectively, there is a significant percentage of students who are unsuccessful in achieving any academic reward. Often they retire and frequently they move from school to school in order to attempt to complete their secondary programme.

**What are the largest obstacles your students must overcome in order to meet this goal?**

First, and foremost, students struggle in gaining effective English language. Those ESL students who effectively secure English almost always move forward in their academic careers and achieve success. Language is not the solitary obstacle faced by ESL students. Adapting to Canadian culture is an onerous task for most students. Those students who arrive from a country that does not have the same degree of personal freedom tend to struggle more. It is a challenge for students to adapt to a culture and daily lifestyle that tend to be on opposite ends of the spectrum. Finances represent another key obstacle that students must overcome. A large percentage of the ESL students come to Canada with virtually nothing. For them it is a reality that they must begin life again in a new location. Housing may appear to be the most serious challenge but seeking employment, clothing and food are additional challenges they must face. It is difficult to list every obstacle since there are countless barriers. To illustrate the vast range of difficulties one current issue is transportation. A large group of ESL students live a great distance from Forest Heights. Buying a bus pass requires much of a family's disposable income, especially in a family where there is more than one child attending school. To save money students may elect to walk to school for well over an hour. Lateness and fatigue often result from this option. Truly identifying obstacles faced by our ESL population would require significant time and space.

**What does your typical day look like? (semestered or not, number of classes per year, class size, span of subjects taught, other duties and responsibilities)**

Forest Heights is a semestered school. Teachers are required to teach three courses per semester. Class sizes vary substantially from eight to thirty-three students. It is difficult to list an average class size for the entire ESL program. In the current year my classes have ranged between fifteen and twenty-eight students. I have taught most ESL courses over the years but I am now teaching ESLDO (ESL English Level 4), ESL/ELBO (ESL and ELD Level 2), ESL Introductory Business and a Civics /Career Studies course. In addition to teaching, I volunteer along with the other ESL teachers in a lunch tutorial period for the students. I am involved in periodic social activities throughout the year for our ESL students and co-lead the school's Diversity Club.

**What gives you the greatest joy in your work?**

The greatest joy is in witnessing student success. This could be seeing an ESL student graduate and move on to higher education or observing an introductory ESL student writing their first sentence in English. Student progress and success are the greatest benefits to teachers in the ESL program. A further highlight is in having a student move through the ESL program and returning to help newcomers through the first stages of their own education.

**What are your greatest frustrations?**

The most difficult aspect of being an ESL teacher is facing the reality that not all students wish to work to their potential. So often we try to instill a sense of purpose for education but there are a few students who opt not to follow through with assignments and courses despite the support and guidance we try to provide.

**How is your programme funded? (both directly and ultimately)**

I think the ESL program was initially a federally sponsored programme but has been under the provincial jurisdiction for many years. It is the provincial government that tabulates how money should be allocated. Locally, the Waterloo Region District School Board distributes the funds that may be used by district schools. I don't know exactly.

**Is this a good teaching area to get into in Waterloo-Wellington? For example, are there usually openings?**

The Waterloo Region is an excellent place currently for teachers. It is one of Canada's fastest growing centres and, therefore, provides a lot of openings for teachers. Along with the regional boom is a huge influx of immigrants. Waterloo Region is one of the foremost destinations for new Canadians to live.

**Are there opportunities for advancement?**

As in any other teaching position there is opportunity for advancement. ESL teachers who aspire to administration may work to secure a future position of added responsibility. There are no restrictions to advancement for teachers within ESL.

**What positions could one advance to?**

Within ESL it is possible to become an ESL department chair at one of the four area magnet secondary schools. Beyond this position is the role of ESL consultant and possible work at the Ministry of Education in Toronto.

**Is professional development provided through your workplace? If not, where do you find it? If so, is it adequate?**

There is a degree of professional development provided for high school teachers in the Waterloo Region. Development is usually addressed on professional development days with occasional meetings to highlight topical areas of concern. Within Forest Heights there is opportunity to focus staff on issues concerning the ESL program and student concerns. This initiative is usually made by the members of the ESL department.

**What is the salary range for your position?**

The salary range for ESL teachers is identical to all other teachers in the WRDSB with the maximum salary in category 4 reaching close to \$80,000 per year.

**Does the position include extended benefits?**

Yes. There is a full range of benefits as is stipulated by the WRDSB.

**Does this position generate a pension?**

A fully indexed pension is provided for all Ontario teachers upon retirement.

**What would you miss the most if, for any reason, you were to leave this position?**

The greatest regret would be in not being a part of student growth and development over their years in secondary school. Of all the highlights in teaching ESL none could match the process by which a newcomer, with virtually no English language skill, gains self confidence, embraces their new country, succeeds academically and moves forward to a future of unlimited potential. As ESL teachers we take on the role of not only teaching students but in helping young people prepare for life as if they were members of our extended families.

**What would you say to any beginning ESL teacher at your workplace who asked you for general advice?**

The greatest piece of advice I could offer to a teacher new to the ESL department is that the teacher must really care about the students. A teacher who places significant value on their role as an ESL teacher will definitely make a difference in the lives of their students. This impact will go far beyond merely the final course grade on a report card.

## Interview #5: an ESL Teacher in the LINC Panel

*Editor's Note: ESL and LINC are both non credit English as a Second Language for adults. The difference is in the funding source. LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) is Adult non credit ESL funded by the Federal Government. It is settlement language training with a prescribed curriculum and with many supports- ie childcare and transportation assistance, but has some restrictions such as clients can't be Canadian citizens or refugee claimants. ESL is the provincially funded (currently MET, but soon to change) non credit adult English language instruction (also subscribes to CLB curriculum, benchmarks and assessment tools) and the only restriction to these clients is their first language cannot be French or English. The Adult and Continuing Education panels of both the Separate and Public boards offer both LINC and ESL and both are adult non-credit. Both boards also offer adult ESL credit.*

### **Teacher's name:**

Lisa Mitchell

### **Work location and city:**

Naylor-MacLeod Group Limited, Guelph, On.

### **Part-time or full-time?**

25 teaching hours

### **What are the minimum qualifications to teach ESL in this panel?**

TESL Ontario Certification - I completed the eight month TESL program at Conestoga after completing a four year University degree.

### **What are the preferred qualifications in this panel?**

Experience is probably preferred. However, I was given the opportunity to teach part time after my college program which I was very grateful for. When I have spoken to employers or heard employers in this field speak, I find their focus is on personal qualities of the teacher including patience and open-mindedness.

### **What is the standard path to better your qualifications in ESL in this panel?**

Most teachers do personal development workshops offered through TESL Ontario or local affiliates. Our contract, at times, has offered money to pay for the cost of the seminars.

### **Are there any ESL qualifications which are "not considered" in this panel?**

I'm not sure.

### **How many total years of teaching experience do you have?**

1 ½ years

### **How many years of ESL experience do you have?**

1 ½ years

### **What initially drew you to this work?**

My passion for the intercession between various peoples and cultures drew me to the work. Also, I have an interest in immigrants' experiences and, of course, a love of language.

### **Please describe, in general terms, who your students are:**

The students I teach are between the ages of 16 and 67. They come from all over the world and speak various languages. I teach LINC level 1 through 5. We are often the students' first social contact when they come to Canada.

### **What certification, diploma or degree are your students working towards?**

Many students are working towards level five English. However, some students are hoping for a level of proficiency in English adequate for them to acquire employment (usually whatever level they reach by the time they find employment). But the goals of the students in this panel may be as various as the students themselves.

**What are the largest obstacles your students must overcome in order to meet this goal?**

The largest barriers for the students are adjusting to a new culture, a new home, sometimes a new family, and other challenges faced by newcomers to Canada.

**What does your typical day look like ? (semestered or not, number of classes per year, class size, span of subjects taught, other duties and responsibilities)**

At my school, we teach all five levels through the day. The school day runs from 9 – 2:30, with a half-hour lunch at 12. We have three classes – LINC level 1, level 2-3, and level 4-5. Each class has around 10 people. We have three teachers which teach each class for one hour and rotate through the morning. We follow the LINC curriculum.

**What gives you the greatest joy in your work?**

The wonderful students!!!!

**What are your greatest frustrations?**

My lack of time, resources, and answers. Also, there is no pay for prep time or lesson planning, which is a little frustrating.

**Is your programme, and your position in it, stable? Explain.**

Every year the LINC contract must be re-submitted to the government.

**How is your programme funded? (both directly and ultimately)**

The federal government funds the programme.

**Is this a good teaching area to get into in Waterloo-Wellington? For example, are there usually openings?**

I think there might be a few openings if your timing is good.

**What positions could one advance to?**

**Are there opportunities for advancement?**

**Is professional development provided through your workplace? If not, where do you find it? If so, is it adequate?**

A little professional development is offered – I think two days a year.

**What is the salary range for your position? I don't know.**

**Does the position include extended benefits?**

No healthcare or retirement savings, but it does include some sick days.

**Does this position generate a pension? No**

**What would you miss the most if, for any reason, you were to leave this position?**

The students and the challenge of understanding and learning to teach the English language.

**What would you say to any beginning ESL teacher at your workplace who asked you for general advice?**

I would tell them to really listen to experienced teachers. It's in the teachers' everyday comments, when they are discussing their teaching, that you learn the best advice about how to breakdown the language and teach it to others. I'd also tell them the same notice that I heard over and over: the first two years are a blur of lesson planning and learning. To be honest I don't see an end to it either, but it is a labour of love.

## Interview #6: an ESL Teacher in the University Panel

*(Editor's Note: These teachers are officially known as EAP instructors, which stands for English for Academic Purposes. Their main objective is to prepare students for academic studies on a main campus.)*

**Teacher's name:**

Deborah Ricketts

**Work location and city:**

Renison College, University of Waterloo

**Part-time or full-time? Part -time**

**What are the minimum qualifications to teach ESL in this panel?**

University degree and TESL certification

**What are the preferred qualifications in this panel?**

Same as above

**What is the standard path to better your qualifications in ESL in this panel?**

Yearly professional development credits obtained by attending workshops and conferences

**Are there any ESL qualifications which are "not considered" in this panel?**

**How many total years of teaching experience do you have?**

15 years

**How many years of ESL experience do you have?**

8 months

**What initially drew you to this work?**

My travel experience and interest in diverse cultures

**Please describe, in general terms, who your students are:**

Undergraduate and graduate international students. The program is designed to meet the needs of students wishing to attend universities where English is the primary language of research and instruction.

**What certification, diploma or degree are your students working towards?**

Same as above

**What are the largest obstacles your students must overcome in order to meet this goal?**

Culture shock, knowledge of Canadian customs, idioms, slang, listening comprehension, and conversation skills

**What does your typical day look like ? (semestered or not, number of classes per year, class size, span of subjects taught, other duties and responsibilities)**

2 semesters, both 12 weeks in duration (fall and winter) - English for Academic Success, and in July and August two four- week intense ESL programs focusing on communication skills (vocabulary building, grammar, writing, and idioms). Class sizes are small (maximum of 16 students)

**What gives you the greatest joy in your work?**

Sharing Canadian customs and culture with students, observing students' progress, growth, and rise in confidence level, learning with students, variety (nothing is routine)

**What are your greatest frustrations?**

**How is your programme funded? (both directly and ultimately)**

(Editor's Note: The programme is funded by the students. It is unclear if there is any other source of funding.)

**Is this a good teaching area to get into in Waterloo-Wellington? For example, are there usually openings?**

Teaching opportunities depend on student enrollment so if enrollment is low, there are fewer teaching positions available

**Are there opportunities for advancement?**

Yes, although they are somewhat limited

**What positions could one advance to?**

Coordinator and Director of the English Language Institute

**Is professional development provided through your workplace? If not, where do you find it? If so, is it adequate?**

Yes, professional development courses are offered at Renison College, and all teachers are encouraged to attend additional workshops and conferences throughout the year

**What is the salary range for your position?**

Editor's Note: There are both contract teachers and salaried teachers.

**Does the position include extended benefits?**

No

**Does this position generate a pension?**

No

**What would you miss the most if, for any reason, you were to leave this position?**

the organization's vision and values, coworkers

**What would you say to any beginning ESL teacher at your workplace who asked you for general advice?**

This is an institution of caring and sharing people.

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**Thank you** so much to all who participated in this overview of ESL teaching in our region.

**Readers wishing to be interviewed** from any of the remaining panels please contact the newsletter editor.

**Responses to these interviews for possible publication** are also welcome. Please include your complete name, panel, workplace, city and the email address where you could be reached should any clarification be necessary. (200-word maximum)