



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Research and Teaching: A Collaborative Process*

## 38th Annual TESL Ontario Conference

A CONFERENCE FOR TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

FIFTH ANNUAL PANEL DISCUSSION

The Future is Now: The New Era of Language Training

October 29, 2010

# The Future is Now: The New Era of Language Training

- Moderator: **Renate Tilson**, Executive Director, TESL Ontario (Teachers of English as a Second Language)
- Panelists: **Harry Bezruchko**, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities  
**Catherine Finlay**, Director of Immigration Programs, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration  
**Richard Franz**, Director, Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategic Policy Branch, Ontario Ministry of Education  
**Darlyn Mentor**, Director, Settlement Programs, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ontario Region

## Overview

Helping newcomers to Ontario integrate successfully into Canadian life is a key priority for both the province and the federal government. To that end, several government entities fund and administer language training and employment services programs in Ontario. While their programs differ, all share common objectives, a client-centric mindset, and the desire for continuous improvement.

All four of these government service providers recognize the benefits to the end client of collaborating with each other to integrate and align their programs. They have begun forming partnerships and launching transformative initiatives that eliminate program redundancies, standardize assessments and streamline processes, focus on outcomes-based data, leverage existing resources, engage stakeholders, and above all create a more accessible and seamless experience for the learner.

By collaborating on program-improvement initiatives, federal and provincial governments are advancing their common goal of facilitating newcomers' integration into Canadian society. Together, these government partners are ushering in the new era of language (and employment services) training.

## Context

The panelists discussed the new era of language training and employment services delivery in Ontario, detailing government programs and initiatives of potential interest to ESL teachers and potential help to their students.

## Key Takeaways - Ontario CIC

Darlyn Mentor explained the federal language training programs administered and funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). Catherine Finlay—Ms. Mentor's collaborator at the provincial level—joined her to explain the new CLARS initiative.

- **Providing language training for immigrants is a CIC priority that is aligned with its client-focused goals.**

A primary goal of CIC's settlement programming is to promote the successful integration of newcomers into society.

Research shows that proficiency in Canada's official languages is the number-one predictor of immigrants' successful settlement and integration, and it correlates with their employment opportunities and earning potential. Thus, it

is imperative that CIC provides Canada's immigrants with language training in order to help them assimilate into society and gain entry into the Canadian job market.

*"Language acquisition is the number-one precursor of success on the settlement and integration pathway. It is essential for us to support our clients accordingly."*

— Darlyn Mentor

- **Federal language training programs help Ontario newcomers assimilate socially and economically.**

Promoting client success means going beyond basic language training. Of the three federal language training programs in Ontario, two reflect an employment focus:

- *Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC)*. LINC is the oldest program, begun 15 years ago. LINC instruction covers Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) levels up to 8 and includes content on Canadian civics and culture.

- *Enhanced Language Training (ELT)*. Launched in 2006, ELT courses (CLB 7 and up) feature mentoring and work placement programs.

- *Occupation-Specific Language Training (OSLT)*. Launched in 2008, OSLT courses (CLB 6-8) are career-focused and include workplace-based training (but no placement component).

Federally funded language programs in Ontario serve 40,000 learners (85% of those in all of Canada). Most are skilled workers with families.

- **CIC's language training programs embody elements critical for effectiveness.**

Through the evolution of its programs, CIC has identified the following elements of effective language training programming:

- *Language assessment and referral processes* that ensure consistency of placement standards across programs and client-centric selection decisions.

- *Task-based approaches emphasizing community, study, and employment-related tasks*. Tasks integrate all aspects of communicative competence.

- *Opportunities for social engagement*. Social interaction prevents isolation and promotes independence.

- *Focus on authentic language, skills, and experiences*. Course work draws upon real-life situations.

- *The right partnerships.* Partnering with other service providers ensures that clients' needs are met in a range of areas.
- *The right supporting structures.* Support services such as childcare and features like rolling enrolments expand program reach and uptake. LINC home study and tutoring are among alternative delivery mechanisms that are offered.

▪ **Continually focused on improvement, CIC is developing new tools to promote student success.**

CIC seeks continually to improve its programs, support services, and tools. Future areas of opportunity include expanding program reach, expanding online and home study programs, creating standardized tests, and developing training and operational recommendations. TESL Ontario is researching ESL instructor competencies to help CIC devise instructor standards.

Four tools that are in development will help ESL instructors promote student success:

- *Language milestone test.* This standardized achievement test will be based on the CLBs. Assessor training materials and operational recommendations also are being developed.
- *Portfolio-based language assessment.* This binder of students' work samples over time offers a way for instructors and students to set goals and showcase accomplishments. By measuring success, the tool will motivate student progression and provide data for program monitoring and reporting.
- *Repository of online learning resources (ROLR).* This is an innovative resource-sharing solution for language instructors. Interactive, downloadable e-learning resources (CLB levels 3-8) supplement classroom activities; a four-stage training tool helps instructors get the most out of ROLR. An online tool for instructors of Francophone clients has been designed as well.
- *Coordinated Language Assessment Referral System (CLARS).* CLARS will eliminate duplication of services and repeated client assessments. All learners entering government-funded language training programs (federal and provincial) will have a common entry point, the assessment centre. All will be assessed using a common standard and offered class options suiting their eligibility and language needs. The existing HARTS system will be used for data management.

Benefits for learners include a single assessment, better matching of classes to needs, and convenient assessment locations. Instructors benefit with all students assessed to common CLB standards. Employers gain better understanding of language skill levels. Advantages for government include elimination of redundancies and leveraging of resources.

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*"Learners will be assigned a CLB level and provided with a list of courses. . . . [T]hey will have the choice; I think that's very exciting."*

— Catherine Finlay

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## Key Takeaways - Ontario MCI

Ms. Finlay described the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's (MCI) vision for transforming Ontario's provincial language training programs.

▪ **While most immigrants to Ontario are highly educated, language barriers prevent many from working in their fields.**

In the past five years, 595,000 immigrants have come to Ontario (48% of all immigrants to Canada), from over 200 countries. More than half of those aged 26-64 arrived with a university degree, and 70% indicated language ability in at least one of Canada's two official languages.

Even though immigrants are more likely to have a university degree than those who are Canadian-born, many immigrants have difficulty finding work in their fields. Barriers include non-recognition of their foreign credentials—professional and academic—as well as lack of English and/or French proficiency. Without work, it is difficult for immigrants to integrate economically and socially into their new communities.

To help eliminate language as a barrier to newcomers' success in Canada, the Ontario MCI is redesigning the provincial language training program.

▪ **Attracting newcomers and promoting their success is a key priority for Ontario.**

The vision to better serve the 120,000 learners in Ontario's provincial language training program is to create a system that:

- *Is learner-centric.* The vision is "an open door to training for all." This includes accessible programs, with easy access to information and classes at convenient times and places, as well as inclusive eligibility criteria: all immigrants, including those who become Canadian Citizens, are welcome.
- *Addresses the full spectrum of adult language training needs.* Surveying learners gives the Ministry insight into their needs. Learners need flexible programming, for example. The 2009 survey indicates that 95% are taking classes at their preferred time. Learners' top reason for taking language training is for help in daily life, followed by work-related reasons (like getting a job, a better job, or job advancement). MCI offers a range of classes, from general ESL and FSL instruction to customized and job-specific language training. Ontario's bridge training program offered to internationally trained individuals, offers instruction in workplace communication or cultural norms designed for specific professions. The University of Toronto delivers a bridge

program for internationally trained lawyers, for example.) A flexible provincial funding model allows school boards to respond quickly to the emerging needs of learners in their communities.

- *Is coordinated with federal language training programs.* Both provincial and federal governments recognize the need for improved adult learning coordination to create a more consistent experience within the two language training programs. Provincial programs now align with the CLBs as federal programs do. CLARS will open doors to provincially and federally funded language training that best meet the diverse needs of learners. .
- *Aligns with provincial objectives for adult education.* MCI and its provincial counterparts at the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities are collaborating to remove barriers to immigrants' successful integration and to meet their evolving needs. A key focus is to ease transitions for learners who require programs funded by multiple ministries.

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*"Attracting newcomers and supporting their success is a key priority for the Province. We must continue to work closely together to meet the changing needs of newcomers who choose Ontario."*

— Catherine Finlay

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## Key Takeaways - Ontario MEDU

Richard Franz explained the Ministry of Education's (MEDU) adult education objectives and initiatives.

- **K-12 ESL teachers and MEDU share common goals, each advancing the work of the other.**

An important objective for Ontario's Ministry of Education's Student Success initiative is closing the gaps that exist, for whatever reason, among various learner groups' achievement rates. The work that teachers of ESL do helps toward that goal, closing achievement gaps stemming from lack of English or French fluency.

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*"What is ESL if not closing the gap—providing opportunities for people to succeed and operate and compete and contribute to our society?"*

— Richard Franz

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Since the 2002/03 school year, the gap between the achievement of ESL students and all students has steadily narrowed. That is the case in reading, writing, and mathematics at both the primary and junior levels. On Ontario's secondary school literacy test, ESL learners have steadily improved since 2006, except for a slight dip in 2010. K-12 ESL teachers can be credited with helping to narrow these achievement gaps.

Closing achievement gaps is one of three main objectives for the Ministry of Education's Student Success initiative. The other two are increasing student achievement and creating a powerful public education system by increasing confidence in publicly funded education. Resources are organized around four pillars: 1) literacy; 2) numeracy; 3) program pathways and supports; and 4) community culture/caring.

- **The Ministry of Education encourages ESL teachers to take advantage of its programs and resources.**

Among existing MEDU programs that ESL instructors will want to know about:

- *Online resources.* The Ministry's [www.edugains.ca](http://www.edugains.ca) website offers a wealth of constantly updated resources and information to help teachers meet the needs of English language learners (ELLs). New materials available soon will include: 1) Steps for English Proficiency (STEP) 2011, a framework for assessing and monitoring ELLs' language acquisition and development; and 2) ELL with Special Education Needs, a brochure for school boards outlining effective processes for identifying special needs among ELLs.
- *Learning assessment tools in foreign languages.* In conjunction with its adult learning initiatives, MEDU has developed tools to assess prior learning in immigrants' native languages (including Mandarin, Cantonese, Arabic, Russian Spanish, Farsi, and more). They are available on school boards and educators' learning management systems.
- *Cooperative education.* The Expanded Cooperative Education program helps teens and adults earn their secondary school diplomas. This popular program (enrollment up 14% from 2006-07 to 2008-09) allows teens and adults to gain workplace experience while earning credits. It affords excellent opportunities for English language learners to hone their language skills.

## Key Takeaways - Ontario MTCU

Harry Bezruchko explained the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU)'s Employment Ontario Transformation initiative that vastly improves the delivery of employment services for the benefit of stakeholders.

- **The transformation of Employment Ontario reflects a provincial cultural shift: from program-based to customer-focused service delivery.**

Employment Ontario (EO) is Ontario's integrated employment and training network. It unites Ontario's community-based network of employment services and training partners with benefits and support programs that were transferred from the federal government for people re-entering the workforce. This change enables Ontario to better match individual potential with local business needs. EO represents a \$1.2 billion investment and serves about

one million people, including laid-off workers, apprentices, and newcomers.

“Employment Ontario Transformation” is a government initiative to enhance EO. The transformation integrates two parallel systems—existing provincial employment and training programs, and federal employment and training programs transferred to the province in 2007—into one fully integrated system. It reflects a provincial strategy to move away from a program-oriented culture to a customer-focused, integrated, outcomes-based service delivery network.

The transformation will better serve “customers”—individuals, employers, and communities—by helping them to access effective, relevant skills training, employment, and career-planning services when and where they need to.

Transformation goals include achieving “one-stop shop” access for clients and employers to receive all employment and training programs and services they require, collaborating with stakeholders, building Ontario’s learning advantage to meet future labour market needs, and implementing strategies to support rapid re-employment for those who have lost jobs.

- **ESL teachers are urged to make students aware of Employment Ontario programs that could help them get jobs.**

Anyone focused on helping ESL students gain entry to the Ontario job market should be aware of these four EO programs:

- *Employment Services.* The transformed Employment Services model addresses three important needs of Ontarians: 1) to access the full range of employment services at each EO office (service delivery gaps have been eliminated); 2) to access services tailored to individual needs without enduring onerous red tape; and 3) to access services for which the measurement

of success is results achieved for the customer (this outcomes-based model promotes continuous improvement versus the prior model focused on program expenditures and activity).

- *Second Career.* Second Career’s objective is to help unemployed people who require skills training find jobs in occupations with high demand for labour. Since its June 2008 launch, Second Career has helped more than 36,000 Ontarians begin a retraining program. Program changes and modifications have provided greater flexibility for Ontario families. The neediest are prioritized for retraining services.

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*“If you’ve been working on an assembly line for 40 years and never have done anything else, we’re going to deal with you first . . . help you get back into the labour market as quickly as we can.”*

— Harry Bezruchko

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- *Apprenticeship System.* Ontario has the largest apprenticeship learning system in Canada, serving more than 150 skilled occupations in four sectors: construction, industrial/manufacturing, motive power, and service. The 2009 Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act modernizes the system, promoting careers in the skilled trades, fostering economic prosperity, giving industry a greater role in the apprenticeship system’s governance and administration, and aligning the system with other professional regulatory bodies.

- *Literacy and Basic Skills* serves primarily adult learners who want to improve their literacy and numeracy skills to further their education/training or employment, or to increase their independence. Students must have literacy skills below Grade 12 of the Ontario Curriculum and be orally fluent in English or French. A network of 200 transfer payment agencies delivers services at close to 1,000 locations throughout the province.

## Biographies

### Harry Bezruchko

*Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities*

Harry Bezruchko has been a Provincial employee for 4 years. Currently, Harry is a senior manager at Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities responsible for policy regarding Employment Ontario programs, including Literacy, skills training and Apprenticeship. Prior to this position Harry was involved in Finance and resource management at the same Ministry. Before coming to the Province, Harry worked for the Federal Government (Service Canada) for 20 in a variety of positions, from Finance to Policy. His last job, before coming to the Province was as a senior manager responsible for employment programs for persons on Employment Insurance, Youth, Aborigines and Persons with Person with Disabilities.

### Catherine Finlay

*Director of Immigration Programs  
Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration*

Catherine Finlay is currently the Director of Immigration Programs at the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. Her responsibilities include Opportunities Ontario: Provincial Nominee Program - a provincial immigration selection program, Global Experience Ontario serving internationally trained individuals, Adult Non-Credit English and French as a Second Language training services, and newcomer settlement and bridge to work programs.

Catherine has had an extensive and diverse career in the Ministries of Health, Consumer and Business Services, Government Services, and Citizenship and Immigration in operations, policy, strategic planning, corporate support and finance, and communications. A senior executive with a strong customer service orientation, Catherine has, throughout her career, taken the lead in transforming business and services to make it easier for individuals, business and stakeholders to interact with government. A service excellence highlight was the introduction of the first ever government money-back guarantee for new online certificate services. Catherine and her team are currently working with service partners on the redesign of the Adult Noncredit ESL/FSL language training program to ensure it is more learner-focused and results oriented.

### Richard Franz

*Director of Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategic Policy Branch, Ontario Ministry of Education*

Richard Franz is the Director of the Student Success / Learning to 18 Strategic Policy Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Education. This branch is responsible for developing policies, programs and legislation to support the government's Student Success / Learning to 18 strategy. The work includes reviewing and updating the requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma, guidance and career education and cooperative education. The branch, in consultation with external and internal stakeholders, develops policies, programs and resources for the Specialist High Skills Major programs, secondary school-college dual credits, and adult education.

Mr. Franz has been with the Ministry of Education for nine years. Previously he has held senior policy advisor positions at the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In each capacity, he has worked at the intersection of policy development and program implementation. Prior to working in government, he was a program developer for a non-profit housing corporation and the Executive Director of a community organization.

Mr. Franz holds a Bachelors of Arts with distinction and a Masters of Education from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, Illinois.

### Darlyn Mentor

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

Darlyn Mentor started her career over 15 years ago, working in the settlement sector, as a multicultural liaison officer in the well known SWIS Program. Her career path has involved her working in a number of organizations over the years, including community based not for profit agencies, foundations and government. Her experience, before joining Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), includes working in the development and management of programs at the local, national and international levels. She has spent several years working at the establishment of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation and next, as a Program Manager at the Ontario Trillium Foundation. She has extensive experience as a funder, community developer and in program management. Darlyn began working at CIC at a Regional Program Advisor capacity, leading the Francophone Minority Community Initiative at a regional level and is currently the Director, Settlement Programs, CIC Ontario Region.



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