

# ESL Content Teachers Collaborative

School of Teaching and Learning

## Letters from the Directors



Karen Newman  
*Project Director*

This spring, the ECTC has been busy with a number of projects, including preparations for our two summer courses, paper presentations related to our ECTC work at TESOL in Denver and the International Language Teacher Educators conference in Washington, D.C., and recruitment of Year 3 districts.

We've also been eagerly anticipating our summer capstone workshop, an all-day event to be held this year on July 2, 2009, entitled "Building Strategies for Collaboration with Content Colleagues." All Year 1 and Year 2 participants, along with administrators, are invited to attend the workshop to celebrate the end of the ECTC's second year, and to make connections with colleagues across the state of Ohio.

We're excited to feature some special, invited speakers this year. Here is the lineup:

- Roger Rosenthal, Director of the Migrant Legal Action Program in Washington, D.C., will address crucial issues related to ESL and the law in Ohio.
- Katie Brooks, Susan Adams, and Trish Morita-Mullaney—a team of teachers, administrators, and teacher educators from Indianapolis—will speak about their efforts at creating and sustaining collaboration among school personnel, particularly administrators, in two of the largest school districts in their state.

We look forward to seeing everyone at the workshop, and to continuing our work together in the years to come.

Warmly,  
— Dr. Karen L. Newman

Continued on page 2

## Contents

Letters from the Directors.....	1
Workshop II.....	3
News & Announcements.....	4
Share Fair.....	6
Book Review.....	7

**Volume 2, Issue 2  
Spring 2009**

*Dr. Samimy writes:*



Keiko Samimy

This year we have been very active in presenting papers at professional conferences. In November 2008, we presented a paper at the Ohio TESOL conference on our research about our collaboration with content and ESL teachers. In March 2009, Drs. Newman, Samimy, and Romstedt presented a paper at the national TESOL conference entitled, "Transformative Identity and ESL Professional Development," which is a multiple case-study of content teachers' identity. This May, Drs. Newman, Romstedt, and Steven Wisnor will be in Washington, D.C. to present a paper at the International Language Teacher Education conference. Their presentation is based on a survey study which examined content teachers' perceived needs with regard to ELLs in their classrooms. We are very happy to be able to share our research findings at different conferences throughout the country.

Best wishes,  
– Dr. K.

*Dr. Romstedt writes:*



Kathleen Romstedt

Assessment is a huge part of secondary education in the U.S. that comes with many challenges. Figuring out how to accurately assess English language learners has a special set of challenges because their developing proficiency in English can make it difficult for them to be fully engaged in the assessment process, impacting not only class grades but also the outcome of high-stakes testing. But is it really all about English? Can testing be done in a way that gives ELLs a better shot at demonstrating an understanding of content? This summer, ECTC participants will explore how to assess not only the language skills of ELLs but also how to make meaningful adaptations to their assessment practices in their content areas in the Language Testing class.

Sincerely,  
– Dr. Romstedt



## Face-to-Face Collaboration: Workshop II

by Steven Wisnor

**A**fter four months of intensive online collaboration and study, ongoing dialogue, and many challenging yet thought-provoking homework assignments, it was finally time for everyone to meet...

For the 41 in-service teachers participating in this year's ECTC program, Workshop II provided not only a chance to see one another face-to-face for the first time, but also an opportunity to discuss their collective learning and insights together. Held at The Ohio State University in Marion on April 30, the workshop was the first ECTC event where all teacher-teams from this year's six participating Ohio school districts (Copley-Fairlawn, Findlay, Fostoria, New Albany-Plain Local, Pickerington Local, and Reynoldsburg) could work together in the same room to better understand the challenges of educating their English language learners (ELLs). Although they were meeting the entire cohort in the "real world" for only the first time, the teachers had already been working together since January on their 8-month professional development program in the "virtual" realm. Ohio State's Carmen online course management system allowed teachers to take part in and complete the ECTC's first course—Methods and Techniques in TESOL—conveniently from their own homes and schools throughout the state.

In both district-based and content-based small groups, teachers at Workshop II participated in a series of fast-paced, interactive activities designed to provide practical strategies and tools that could be implemented back in their classrooms. Early in the workshop, each content group used their newly-acquired TESOL skills to analyze and critique content-specific resources and textbooks intended to help ELLs learn academic content. Later, the ECTC team modeled ways that kinesthetic and "hands-on" activities can benefit ELLs, and teachers reflected on the multiple cognitive demands the everyday content classroom places on these students.

A major highlight of the day was a panel discussion led by three "ECTC alumnae" who completed the ECTC program in 2008. "I really enjoyed hearing from the teachers who took this course last year," commented one of this year's participants, "I was able to take away a lot of very valuable ideas from them." This year's teachers also had the opportunity to re-assess the learning goals they set for themselves when the program began. Many teachers remarked on their professional growth as content *and* English-language teachers. "I have learned many new strategies," concluded one teacher, "now I have to incorporate them into lessons." As it turns out, this is exactly what teachers are being challenged to do in their current TESOL field experience course. ☞



**ECTC Alumnae on Panel**

## News and Announcements

### *Conferences*

Mark your calendars for upcoming ESL-related conferences of interest to all teachers who work with English language learners. For more information, visit the individual conferences' Web sites. Check with your district about accruing professional development credits by attending any of these conferences!

- Ohio TESOL: October 30 – 31, 2009  
The Hilton at Eaton Town Center, Columbus, Ohio  
<http://www.ohiotesol.org>
- TESOL: March 24 – 27, 2010  
Boston, Massachusetts  
<http://www.tesol.org>

### *ECTC in D.C.!*

From May 28th-30th, at the International Conference on Language Teacher Education in Washington, D.C., Dr. Kathleen Romstedt and Dr. Karen Newman presented their paper entitled, "What Content Teachers Want: Assessing and Meeting the Professional Development Needs of Secondary Teachers of English Language Learners." Co-sponsored by the National Capital Language Resource Center (NCLRC) and the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA), the conference provided the ECTC yet another opportunity to share research and insights into professional development with a national (and international!) audience of fellow educators.

### *Reminders for 2008-2009 Teachers*

The ECTC's two summer intensive courses will begin on Thursday, June 18th, and run through Wednesday, July 1st. Classes will be conducted via live videoconferencing between sites at Ohio State, Copley High School, Fostoria High School, and Pickerington North High School. On Thursday, July 2nd, the final program event of the 2008-2009

Continued on page 5

## News and Announcements, Continued

year—Workshop III—will take place at Ohio State’s Literacy and Learning Center, 807 Kinnear Road, Columbus. This day-long event will feature several guest speakers and educators from Ohio and beyond. See you there!

### *ECTC Graduates, Please Stay in Touch!*

If you haven’t already done so, you can still submit your video reflection projects past the May 15th deadline. The feedback you provide will be very helpful for the ECTC project! As always, you can send us updated information about your recent activities, conference attendance or presentations, and experiences working with ELLs, so that we can share your successes with colleagues. Please email us at—[swisnor@ehe.osu.edu](mailto:swisnor@ehe.osu.edu).

### The ESL Content Teachers Collaborative (ECTC) Newsletter

**The ECTC Newsletter is a quarterly newsletter for participants and friends of the ESL-Content Teachers Collaborative of the School of Teaching and Learning, College of Education and Human Ecology, The Ohio State University.**

*Project Director:* Karen Newman

*Project Co-Directors:* Keiko Samimy, Kathleen Romstedt

*Project Manager & Editor:* Steven Wisnor  
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### *Fly-Swatter Review Game*

This game works well with any subject area, and it's a great way to review material before a quiz or test (and students love it, too!). It's great to use with ELL kids since they can answer questions without speaking in front of their peers and with the help of their classmates if necessary.

**Preparation** – You'll need two large poster-boards and two fly-swatters. Before class, prepare a set of questions for the game. Questions with one- or two-word answers work best (numbers, vocabulary words, names, etc.). When you have prepared a set of about 25-30 questions, write the answers on each poster. Both posters should have all the answers scattered on them, and not in the same places. Attach the posters to the wall or board in the front of the classroom (more than 6 feet apart, if possible).

**Split students into teams** – Divide the class into two equal teams. Assign Team 1 and Team 2 their own fly-swatter and poster.

**Explain the rules** – First, the students must stand behind an assigned line or desk. Each student on the team must have a turn before anyone can play twice. If the student whose turn it is doesn't know the answer, the student can confer with his or her team. When hitting the poster with the fly-swatter, students must hit the word and should not swing the fly-swatter around. Hitting anyone or anything other than the poster is not allowed!

**Play the game!** – One player from each team goes first. Ask one of the questions. Students must race to find the answer on the poster and smack it with their fly-swatter before the other team. The teacher is the judge and sits in the back of the room. Keep score on the board. After all of the questions have been asked and answered, the team with the most points wins!



- **Tip:** Students enjoy being active, and this is a fun way to review important material. However, the game may become competitive and loud, so I sometimes use an extra rule that helps cut down on noise. I ask the questions as soon as the next two students are holding the flyswatters. If one of the teams doesn't hear me because of noise, they miss out on the chance for a point. Students usually really want to win, so after a few missed opportunities, they tend to be a little quieter.

*In each issue, the ECTC team presents a brief teaching idea for you to use in your work with English language learners.*

**Cary, S. (2004). *Going Graphic: Comics at Work in the Multilingual Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. Pp. 218. ISBN: 0325004757 (paperback).**

What materials can help teachers make teaching and learning more authentic, interactive, and engaging in the intercultural classroom? One useful material that has been explored recently is comics, which depict real-life language and offer a variety of visual and linguistic elements that often appeal to many students, including ELLs.

In *Going Graphic: Comics at Work in the Multilingual Classroom*, Stephan Cary—a long-time educator and second language learner specialist—has written a useful resource text for content teachers wanting to learn how to help ELL students with their language and content learning by using comics (cartoons, comic strips, comic books, and graphic novels). Rooted in the author’s own teaching experiences and research over the past three decades, *Going Graphic* provides teachers with a theoretical framework for the use of comics, a variety of useful classroom activities, and an annotated list of recommended comics.

The book consists of four main chapters. Chapter 1 opens with helpful definitions of basic terminology related to comics and offers a theoretical framework and research review that support the benefits that comics can bring to the multicultural classroom. Cary gives a strong rationale for the use of comics for second language learning by stating that they “provide authentic language learning opportunities for all students, regardless of a learner’s second language proficiency level. The dramatically reduced text of many comics ... make them manageable and language profitable for even beginning level readers” (p. 15-16).

Chapter 2 is useful, particularly for teachers who would like to use comics in their classroom as educational materials but encounter resistance and opposition. Comics are sometimes viewed as a taboo resource containing unacceptable and inappropriate language and images. In an effort to answer the concerns that teachers may have with regard to the applicability and appropriateness of comics in the multicultural classroom, Cary takes a question-and-answer format to cover five significant issues of using comics: curriculum fit, content appropriateness, variety and availability, cost and durability, and readability. Among these five issues, readability is central to this chapter. Cary addresses many important issues on readability, such as finding comics for learners of various

Continued on page 8

## Book Review, Continued

language proficiencies, transfer of reading skills from L1 to L2, dealing with reluctant readers and effectively presenting jokes and idioms in comics to beginning students.

Chapter 3 explores twenty-five communication-based activities that involve comics across the grades and for a variety of language and content learning purposes. Each activity includes required materials, a brief description of what students do, topics and strategies, background on key instructional topics, steps on implementation, and illustrative comics. In addition, all activities are designed to reflect a wide range of content and English language development standards and integrate four major language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The chapter closes with a section called “Quick Takes,” which offers a number of additional “spin-off” activities with brief descriptions. Throughout the chapter, sample commercial comics and student-produced comics are included in order to help teachers better understand these activities and what ELL students at various grade levels can learn when given the opportunity to create their own comics through these activities.

Finally, Chapter 4 serves as a “mini-resource center” for teachers to quickly locate materials for the book activities or design their own activities. Resources are arranged in six sub-sections: Comics Reviews, Online Reviews, Online Comics, Special Interests, Comics in Other Languages, and Other Resources. The section of Comic Reviews provides a brief overview of numerous comic strips and graphic novels, and the remaining five sub-sections offer lists of publishers, comic-inspired films, online comic websites, and other online comic materials.

On the whole, this book is an important addition to those resources designed specifically for use with ELL students in the multicultural classroom setting. It is a reader-friendly text that is written in a non-academic tone. This volume is appropriate for use by teachers working with ELL students at all grade levels, as well as those who seek more authentic and innovative approaches toward teaching ELL students and responding to their academic needs. ☞