

ESL Content Teachers Collaborative

School of Teaching and Learning

Letters from the Directors



Karen Newman
Project Director

Greetings, Colleagues, Graduates, and Friends of the ECTC!

Columbus and Ohio State have been inundated with extreme weather this winter, and as I write, I look out on High Street, where students and cars are making do as best they can in the aftermath of our latest snowstorm. Just next to my window, though, is a magnolia tree, with tightly closed buds waiting to burst forth in a few short weeks. My anticipation for what is to come reminds me of the anticipation that we teachers hold for many of our students who struggle with learning difficult concepts in a new language. Eventually, the breakthrough will come, but sometimes it's so hard for us to contain our eagerness!

In spite of the snow and canceled classes, the ECTC staff has been busily anticipating and preparing for our reunion workshop with ECTC graduates, and we're looking forward to a great turnout at our March 2, 2010, gathering on the Ohio State campus. This is a chance for us all to meet and share our successes and ongoing challenges, and to take home a few new ideas for our teaching, too. If you're reading this and haven't yet signed up, it's still not too late! We hope as many graduates (and administrators!) as possible can join our workshop, so do contact us ASAP if you'd like to participate. And if you can't join us this time, we'll certainly continue to be in touch with you about future ECTC reunions.

Enjoy this latest edition of the ECTC Newsletter, and see you in March!

Warmly,
— Dr. Karen L. Newman

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Equity and Excellence for ELLs

by Rusty Clifford, Ph.D, and Laura Spitzmueller

The West Carrollton School District's journey in ESL education began in earnest 10 years ago. That journey has been aligned and is being accelerated, and today our ESL program continues to dramatically improve as a result of our participation in The Ohio State University's ESL-Content Teachers Collaborative (ECTC). In thinking about teacher professional development in the field of ESL, West Carrollton is guided by our district's core beliefs: "Continue to accelerate the rate of alignment and change," "Continuous improvement is an institutionalized habit," "Leadership is not a person – it is personally involved," "Relationships are the basis for building assets," and "The fundamental purpose of school is learning, not teaching." As a result, fifteen percent of the action plans in our district's recent 2008 Strategic Plan address the needs of our English language learners (ELLs). Twenty-nine percent of the WCSD Strategic Challenges are inclusive of our ELL student population. Our goal, therefore, is "Equity and Excellence for English Language Learners."

Our involvement in the ECTC cohort is helping to develop and change our approach to ESL education, from a "one size fits all" program toward a focus on individually teaching and building relationships with our rapidly growing ELL population. We know that our active participation in the ECTC will inform and guide us in empowering content teachers with the tools, knowledge, and understanding essential to educating our diverse student population. We are embracing the ECTC's concept of "teachers as trainers" in order to facilitate the professional development of staff in all content areas and to enhance our cultural competence. Most importantly, this opportunity to participate in and network with other teacher cohorts throughout Ohio will: 1) help shift content teachers' perspective of ELLs from "someone else's responsibility" to "our responsibility," 2) create advocates and a diverse support group for all ELLs, and 3) open minds to understanding, educating, appreciating, and celebrating every cultural, racial, and ethnic background in our classrooms, schools, district, and community. ☪



Rusty Clifford is the Superintendent of West Carrollton City Schools. Laura Spitzmueller is an ESL teacher at West Carrollton Middle School and an ECTC participant.

News and Announcements

REUNION!!

Attention ECTC alumni and district administrators! The ECTC is hosting a Reunion Workshop for all past ECTC teachers and their district administrators on Tuesday, March 2, 2010. The reunion will take place at Ohio State's Literacy and Learning Center in Columbus, and all teachers and administrators who were involved in the ECTC program during the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 academic years are welcome to participate. Please contact Steven Wisnor (swisnor@ehe.osu.edu) for details and to RSVP by Wednesday, February 24.

Workshop II

Just a reminder that the second workshop for 2009-2010 ECTC teachers will be held on Friday, April 16, in Hilliard, OH. This will be the first time that teachers from all six districts will meet and collaborate together in-person! Additional reminders will be sent out in March, but you can contact Steven Wisnor (swisnor@ehe.osu.edu) with any questions you may have.

Conferences

- TESOL: March 24-27, 2010
Boston, Massachusetts
<http://www.tesol.org>

The 44th Annual TESOL Convention and Exhibit will take place at the new Boston Convention Center this year, and the ECTC will be in attendance! Drs. Newman, Romstedt, and Samimy will present on the impact of the ECTC on teacher professional development, and our Graduate Assistant Sunyung Song will also present on her own research work at Ohio State. The ECTC is proud to continue sharing research into professional development with a national (and international!) audience of fellow TESOL educators.

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News and Announcements, Continued

We are happy to announce that the ECTC's proposal to present at the 2010 National Council for Teachers of Mathematics Regional Conference in Denver has just been accepted. The ECTC team, along with a cohort of math teachers who have completed the ECTC program, will present on "Professional Development for Mathematics Teachers with English Language Learners." The ECTC is excited to engage content teachers and fellow educators interested in learning how teachers can better engage ELLs in their content-specific classroom.

ECTC Graduates, Please Stay in Touch!

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 e-mail your successes to 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—a professional development program in the School of Teaching and Learning in the College of Education and Human Ecology, The Ohio State University. The program is funded by a five-year, \$1.5 million award from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA).

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Share Fair

by Rebecca Varner—ESL Teacher, Copley-Fairlawn City Schools

The “RESPECT” Wall

Having English language learners in our classrooms contributes to the diversity of our school district. These students, however, are often lumped together as a single group: “ESL students.” While ELLs may share things in common—such as being new to the United States, not speaking English as their first language, or feeling like an outsider because of how they dress, look, or speak—each is a unique individual with his or her own attitudes and biases. ELL students, like their native English-speaking peers, may not always necessarily get along.

We have quite a diverse group of ELLs in Copley-Fairlawn, and at times I deal with instances of prejudice and discrimination among these students based on their religions, countries of origin, and ethnic backgrounds. In response, I try to cultivate an environment of respect in my room. One way I do this—by creating a “respect” wall—might be helpful for content teachers, as well. It can inform and develop a deeper level of understanding among all the students in a class—ELLs and native-English speakers—and help ELLs feel more comfortable and acknowledged, which may lead to better participation and achievement in class.

Step 1—Began the lesson by having every student look up the meaning of the word “respect” in the dictionary. The students can use a native language dictionary or an English-English dictionary, but everyone should have a good definition of the word in front of them.

Step 2—Have a whole-class discussion about what they understand respect to mean. Ask students to use their own words. They can also use examples to illustrate the points they are trying to get across.

Step 3—As students come up with meanings for the word, write their ideas down on the board. Ask one student per class to copy the ideas down on a sheet of paper.

Step 4—Pass out colored paper, markers, colored pencils, scissors, etc., and have each student write “respect” in their native language. They can decorate the paper how they wish; they just have to make sure the word is big enough to read from any seat in the room. Laminate these papers.

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Share Fair, Continued

Step 5—Divide the meanings and examples written on the board among the students. Have students type, print, and cut them out. These should also be laminated.

Step 6—Take all these pieces and hang them on the wall around the classroom board. The result is a very colorful and instructive display!

During the year, when students have been disrespectful to other students, to me, or to the class, the students can sit and copy down all the meanings that their classmates have come up with for “respect.” I then sit down and talk to them about how they were disrespectful, and how they can change that. Fortunately, I’ve only had to do it a few times this year!

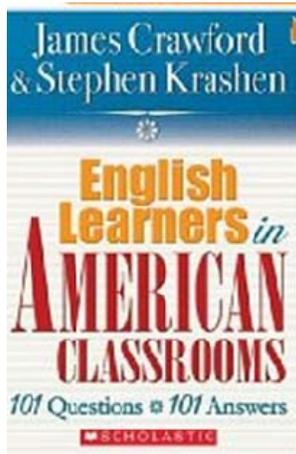
My goal overall has been to help students see each other as unique individuals. They may not agree with everything another student says or does, but every person deserves respect! ☺



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

Crawford, J. and Krashen, S. (2007). *English Learners in American Classrooms: 101 Questions, 101 Answers*. New York: Scholastic. Pp. 96. ISBN: 0545005191 (paperback).

Should ELL students receive phonics instruction? Does bilingual instruction hurt their ability to learn English? What are schools required to do by law for these students? As the number of English learners increases in the nation's schools, questions like these will be heard more and more in conversations between teachers, administrators, and parents facing these dilemmas, often for the first time.



In an age of web searching, it seems both tempting and reasonable for concerned teachers and administrators to look for quick answers using their favorite search engine. But given the high-stakes and (at times) controversial nature of language policies in the United States, quick answers need to come from reliable sources with research-based conclusions. Crawford and Krashen's *English Learners in the American Classroom* provides a concise, handy, and slim guidebook (only 96 pages) to 101 of the most frequently asked and debated issues surrounding English-language and bilingual education. The book serves as a one-stop reference for clarifying (and debunking) common perceptions of teaching and learning English.

The questions are organized around 12 major issues, ranging from ESL pedagogy to language policy throughout American history. The first group of issues (Students, Programs, Pedagogy, and Research) highlights useful ELL enrollment statistics and the benefits and drawbacks of different ESL instructional models. In particular, the authors describe how current research supports sheltered instruction and bilingual education as optimal methods for language and content acquisition. Despite its success, bilingual education in the U.S. has provoked much debate in the past three decades, and the authors critique the standard arguments used against bilingual education and its proponents.

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Book Review, Continued

Standard arguments and “common sense” attitudes toward language teaching and policy are front-and-center in this text, and Crawford and Krashen tackle these assumptions head-on. Folk-wisdom (e.g., learning multiple languages is confusing for a child; total English immersion in the classroom speeds up language acquisition) as well as popular debates (bilingualism as a threat to national unity; the English-Only movement; NCLB’s effect on ELL education) have serious implications for student achievement and well-being. As a result, educators and parents need to be well-informed about the high-stakes policies being debated locally and nationally. Questions in later sections (Legal Requirements, Politics of Language, Language Policy) center on these broader issues and their impact, both on students and the educators who work with them.

At the end of the book, Crawford and Krashen provide a “Notes” section with an annotated list of sources for the research and views they present. These citations and the breadth of coverage make this text a much more-authoritative and comprehensive guide to language issues than multiple separate internet searches would be. To be sure, the authors present readers with only an initial investigation of complex language-learning issues, and their writing leaves little doubt regarding their conclusions on controversial topics. But ultimately, the best aspect of this text is precisely its ability to address popular misconceptions, discuss them in an intelligent and concise manner, and empower readers to challenge staid assumptions with research-based evidence. ☞