

English as a Second Language Education

*Context, Current Responses
and Recommendations for
New Directions*

Prepared by Hieu Van Ngo



COALITION FOR EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION

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The art work for this blueprint was designed to represent how knowledge and wisdom are spread throughout a community or the world. Every great idea or concept starts as a 'seed'. Seeds, when given the right nutrients and environment, unfold their potential by growing into strong trees. Roots hold trees firmly in the ground while the leaves and branches stretch and reach for the sunshine and the rain. Aided by the wind, the seeds from the trees can travel far and wide to start new generations in new territories.

About Erindipity Designz

Inspired by ancient art, archaeology and multi-cultural imagery, Erindipity Designz artists Jan and Erin Johnson (mother and daughter) have developed a unique selection of exciting products and customized design services. Hand-painting original art images, these artists create memorable visual messages and design themes, in rich primal colours that uplift and inspire.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In February 1992, community groups and individuals vigorously protested Calgary Board of Education cutbacks which targeted English as a Second Language services. Shortly thereafter, the Coalition for Equal Access to Education was formed. Since then, many individuals, community groups and organizations have contributed their expertise and support, and the Coalition has established itself as a strong, unified community voice. Friends and members of the Coalition have been instrumental in promoting awareness about ESL issues, and providing innovative ideas to improve public education.

The Coalition acknowledges the commitment and valuable contribution of individual members and groups:

- Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth
- Calgary Catholic Immigration Society
- Calgary Chinese Community Service Association
- Calgary Family Service
- Calgary Immigrant Women's Association
- Calgary Mennonite Centre for Newcomers
- Calgary Vietnamese Canadian Association
- Canadian Federation of University Women
- Committee for Anti-Racist Education
- Council of Sikh Organizations
- Ethnocultural Council of Calgary
- Parents of ESL Students
- Sheldon Chumir Foundation
- Southern Alberta Heritage Language Association
- University of Calgary Graduate Students

We would like to acknowledge the dedication and hard work of Pearl Yip, our former coordinator. For eight years, Pearl was a passionate, competent advocate for ESL students. Her work has laid positive ground for our subsequent efforts.

Throughout the development of this blueprint, our members have provided thoughtful feedback. In particular, Beth Chatten has generously contributed her time and expertise to edit and provide insightful input.

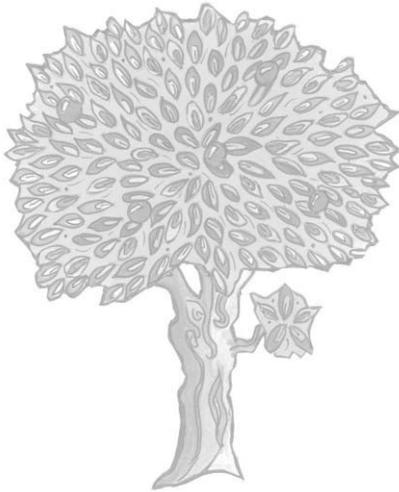
We are grateful for the continuing support of the Calgary Foundation, Canadian Heritage, Community Initiative Program, and Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Education Fund.

Thank you all for your support and contributions.

This blueprint is dedicated to *all* children of Canada.
Their collective spirit lights the future of our country.

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INTRODUCTION

Public education mirrors the landscape of cultural diversity in Canadian society. In the past two decades, the Calgary public education system has received increased numbers of culturally diverse students with English as a Second Language (ESL) needs. Yet, with the lingering effects of the educational budget cuts in 1992-1993 which resulted in the dismantling of 50 to 80 percent of ESL instructional services, most ESL students have received minimal, if any, direct ESL support. The consequent lack of high quality, equitable ESL services has contributed to the bleak reality of illiteracy, poor academic achievement, and persistently high dropout rates among ESL learners.

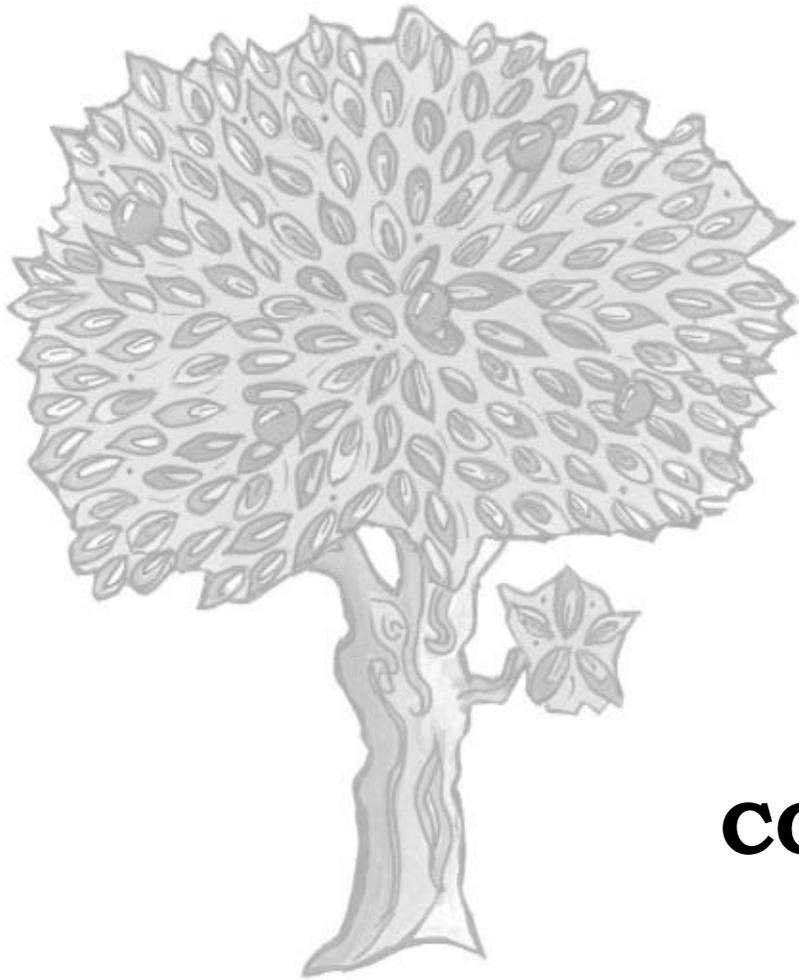
The current reality of inequitable ESL education in Calgary challenges responsible stakeholders, including the federal and provincial jurisdictions, local school boards, and the community, to promote quality learning, fairness, and excellence for *all* students. ESL issues, rightfully embedded in the contexts of human rights, governmental and organizational adaptation to diversity, removal of systemic barriers, and community participation, can neither be overlooked nor peripherally addressed in an ad hoc manner. Instead, they demand that responsible stakeholders work together to create and implement a new vision for public education. This vision must take a stand that deprivation of a child's right to equitable language instruction, a right guaranteed by various international, federal and provincial human rights legislation, compromises our cherished Canadian values of social justice, fairness, and inclusiveness. This vision must also recognize that our public education system, in its ongoing development and transformation, should not box students' learning needs into one-size-fits-all education, but rather should adapt according to the changing student demographics in order to address diverse students' unique learning needs. This vision must guide those responsible for our public education to appreciate, conceptualize, and integrate cultural diversity into all aspects of its structures and functions, including governance, administration and management, policy development, community collaboration, program and curriculum development, and teaching. This vision must mandate public education, in its decision making process, to listen



to community members who have established strong voices, and seek to give voices to those who are marginalized. This vision must also acknowledge that language education is simply the core of the educational journey of many “new” Canadians.

The new vision for public education, however, can only be achieved when governmental, educational, and community stakeholders recognize their responsibilities to all students, refrain from passing the buck, and whole-heartedly do their part while fostering collaboration to address educational challenges. In this spirit, the Coalition for Equal Access to Education has researched and developed its first blueprint, *English as a Second Language Education: Context, Current Responses and Recommendations for New Directions*. This blueprint aims to engage governmental, educational, and community stakeholders in a learning process through which they will better understand ESL issues with respect to changing demographics, ESL student population, second language acquisition process, legislation, academic performance of ESL students, the “ESL advantage” and social costs associated with failure to provide ESL students with language education. The blueprint acknowledges progress, as well as identifying tensions in current efforts to address ESL issues among governmental, educational and community stakeholders. It then provides relevant stakeholders with comprehensive recommendations on enhancing ESL services in public education.

The Calgary public education system is truly at the crossroads. It must either choose to create a new collective vision of fairness and quality learning for *all* students, or risk being part of the development of a subculture of defeat and marginalization, in which culturally diverse youth, denied basic language instruction, face life-long underutilization of human potential.



CONTEXT



"In support of our growth and prosperity, our families and communities, and our commitment to human rights, I remain dedicated to our long-term goal of increasing Canada's annual immigration levels to approximately one percent of our population."

(The Honourable Elinor Caplan, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2000)

Changing Demographics

Calgary's population is becoming increasingly diverse. Data from the 1996 census, city reports, and publications by Citizenship and Immigration Canada indicate that:

- immigrants, visible minority and Aboriginal people respectively account for 21.7, 16.5 and 1.8 percent of the total population in Calgary¹;
- over the period spanning 1981 to 1996, the number of immigrants living in Calgary accelerated from 123,800 to 170,900 immigrants, a 38 percent increase²;
- in 2000, Calgary received the fourth largest amount of immigration among major Canadian metropolitan centers³, and experienced a 23.4 percent increase in immigration⁴;
- among the top 10 source countries of immigration to Calgary in 2000, 8 were countries that do not have English as an official language⁵;
- in 1999, immigrant youth age 0 to 24 accounted for 37.0 percent of Calgary's total immigrant population²;
- of all immigrants to come to Calgary in 2000, 45.0 percent indicated on arrival that they could not communicate in English or French⁶; and
- among recent immigrants of the 1991-1996 cohort, 67 percent indicated that they use a language other than English or French at home, compared to the respective 52 and 23 percent of the 1981-90 and pre-1980 cohorts².

ESL Student Population

The changing reality of diversity in Calgary has contributed to an increase in the number of ESL students in the public school system. Over the years, Calgary has witnessed the following significant trends in its ESL student population:

- in less than a decade, the enrolment of ESL students in the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) has accelerated from 3,073 in the 1991-92 school year to 8,836 in the 2000-01 school year, a staggering 287.5 percent increase⁷;

¹ Statistics Canada (1999). Immigration, Visible Minority, Aboriginal Data. Special tabulations from the 1996 Census of Canada

² Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2000). Recent Immigrants in Metropolitan Areas.

³ Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2001). Immigration by Census Metropolitan Area, 1999.

⁴ Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2001). Immigration- Levels for Calgary (1997, 1998, 1999, 2000).

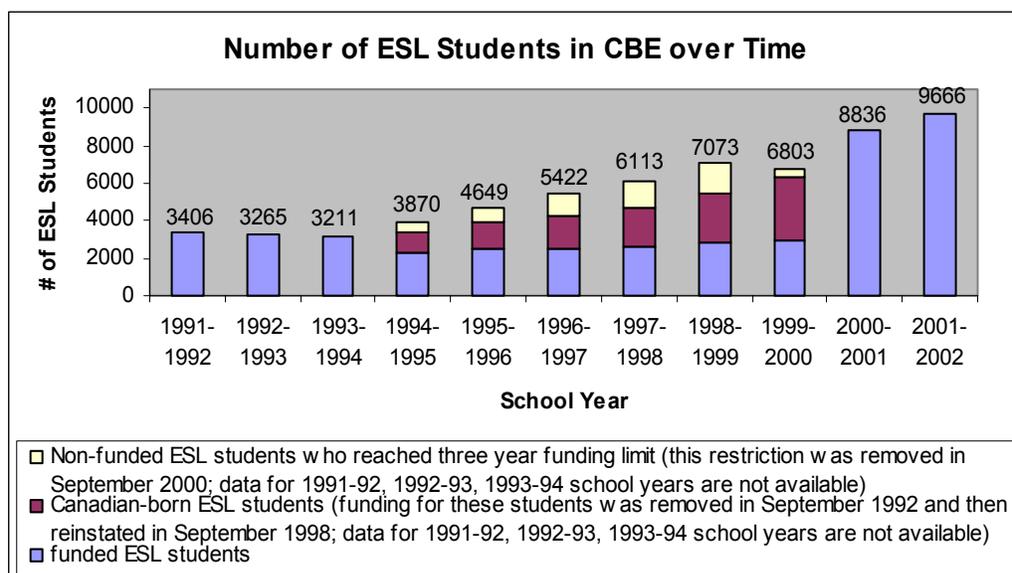
⁵ Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2001). Immigration - Top Ten Source Countries, 1996-2000.

⁶ Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2001). Immigration- Ability to Speak English and/or French (2000).

⁷ Latimer, J. (2000). ESL Review Task Force: Demographic Information. Calgary Board of Education.



- for the 2001-02 school year, in spite of an anticipated decline of 782 students in the overall enrolment, the CBE projects an increase in ESL enrolment of 830 students to the total of 9,666 ESL students⁸; and
- students who are currently qualified for ESL supplementary funding account for at least 10 percent of the total student population⁸. Some researchers, however, suggest that the actual number of students with an ESL background is 20 percent or higher⁹.



Who Are ESL Students?

ESL students are primarily Canadian born children of immigrant parents or students arriving from outside Canada. Depending on their family circumstances, ESL students may demonstrate a wide range of English abilities as well as educational backgrounds. The following describe the three primary groups of ESL learners in terms of background and educational needs:

Refugee children with both limited English skills and academic background Many refugee children, due to family dislocation, poverty, and warfare in their home countries, arrive in Canada with little or only sporadic education in their lives. Since these children often escaped their home countries in difficult circumstances, they might not have had time to learn English language prior to their departure.

"For three years my daughter did not receive good ESL support. When she moved to a new school, the new teacher said that my daughter didn't seem to understand what she was saying and had difficulty answering questions, and was very quiet. The teacher asked me to take my daughter for an assessment. I knew my daughter was normal because she has done very well in the Chinese school here in Canada- she talked and answered very well. My girl just didn't receive enough support to learn English."

(A Parent of an ESL Student)

⁸ Calgary Board of Education (2001). Preliminary Budget 2001/02.

⁹ Watt, D. & Roessingh, H. (2000). ESL Students and their Educational Success: Ten Years of Drop out.



“Learning English was hard work. I used to stay up late or wake up at 4:00AM to learn new words. Even when my English improved, I had to work hard to build confidence to express myself. Other students did not understand how hard it was to learn English. Sometimes they teased me for my incorrect pronunciation or mimicked my accent.”

(A former ESL student)

Immigrant children with strong academic background and limited English

Many immigrant children, accompanied by their parents who migrated to Canada under the Independent Immigrant and Family Class categories, may arrive with their full complement of education, albeit in another language. Depending on their levels of pre-migration preparation, they may demonstrate a wide range of English abilities. They generally have goals for higher education, and only require time to acquire English skills and complete their academic requirements.

Canadian born children with limited English Some children of immigrant parents are born in Canada, and yet do not have English skills due limited exposure to English at home. These children may exhibit a lack of language fluency as early as in their kindergarten years. Though these students may be able to pick up “playground” English easily, they need specialized ESL support to be linguistically proficient.

Second Language Acquisition

Regardless of their educational or linguistic background, all ESL students need to acquire basic reading, writing and comprehension skills in order to have the opportunity to fulfill their potential. Second language learning develops on a continuum from Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills to Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency¹⁰. Typically, ESL learners need a minimum of 2 years of ESL education to develop basic interpersonal communication skills, and between 5 to 7 years to develop cognitive academic language proficiency. In order to achieve Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency- a requirement for any academic success, ESL learners require direct and specific instruction to gain proficiency in the following areas:¹⁰

Language Proficiency This refers to ESL students’ abilities to master their viewing, listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

Learning Strategies These strategies include (1) cognitive strategies that involve selective underlining or highlighting, and annotating of text for future review; using a bilingual dictionary; using context to guess at meaning; (2) metacognitive strategies that regulate, manage, and monitor the student’s own learning, and (3) socio-affective strategies that involve cooperative learning or group work.

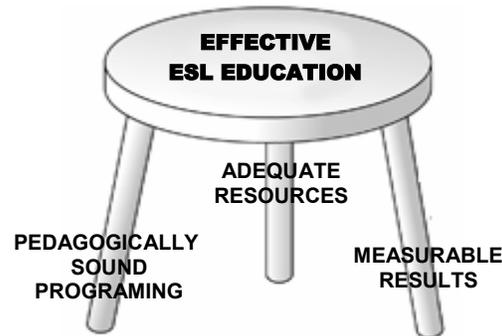
Concepts ESL students learn to understand concepts relating to personal beliefs, the worldview implicit in their culture, cultural rituals, and begin to grasp essential aspects of the human condition that transcend language and culture.

¹⁰ Roessingh, H. (2000). Model for Developing Academic Proficiency. University of Calgary.



Effective ESL Education

Effective ESL education relies on three crucial components, namely pedagogically sound programming, measurable results and adequate allocation of resources. The following figure illustrates the three-legged stool of effective ESL education.



ESL programs must be based on a sound theory of second language acquisition. Effective programs require curriculum, direct instruction, and benchmarks and criteria for identification, assessment and placement.

Effective ESL education further requires equitable resources to ensure direct, structured services, including identification, professional assessment, placement, instruction, and evaluation. Funding needs to be purposefully and differentially allocated to achieve equitable outcomes for ESL learners.

Effective ESL education must also focus on measurable results. ESL programs must outline basic curricula and minimum instruction time, collect data to evaluate the achievement and progress of ESL learners, and utilize data to determine priority areas for resource allocation and evaluation of program effectiveness.

Legislation

There are several federal and provincial policies that mandate equitable services to ESL students. The following is a brief discussion of these policies with respect to ESL education.

Alberta School Act Under this Act, school boards must provide every school age child with an education program. In addition, if a school board determines that a student has special needs, it must provide a special education program for that student. Section 4 of the Act grants every school age child the right to receive school instruction in English or French. For the child whose first language is neither English nor French, the appropriate form of English instruction would be English as a Second Language.

“Every school age child has the right to receive school instruction in English. For the child whose first language is neither English nor French, the appropriate form of English instruction would generally be English as a Second Language or ESL.”

(Alberta School Act)



"Access to instruction in English proficiency for speakers of English as a Second Language is a right, not a privilege. ...Educational success is a combination of both progress and achievement, and the ESL drop out is a sign of how urgently we need to act if we were to promote the educational success of the present generation."

(From "ESL Dropout: The Myth of Educational Equity", Dr. David Watt and Dr. Hetty Roessingh, University of Calgary, 1994)

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms Section 15 of the *Charter* guarantees to every individual the right to equality before and under the law, and equal protection and benefit of the law, without discrimination. "Law" for the purposes of section 15, is not limited to legislation, but includes regulations, policies, curricula, Minister's decisions and decisions of statutory boards. In order for a child who lacks English language proficiency to derive equal benefits from the law that grants every child the right to an education, the child must be provided with ESL instruction.

Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act This *Act* prohibits discrimination based on race, religious beliefs, color, gender, physical disability, mental disability, ancestry or place of origin in the provision of services customarily available to the public, including education. By denying a child effective ESL instruction, the child is being discriminated against since a service available to English-speaking students- public free education- is effectively denied.

United Nations International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Convention on the Rights of a Child These conventions recognize the right of every child to free education provided by the state, and indicate that education must enable the child to participate effectively in a free society. Canada has ratified these two Conventions.

Academic Performance of ESL Students

In spite of legislation mandating quality language instruction for ESL students, ESL service delivery in Alberta has thus far been inadequate. Consequently, the academic performance of ESL students is alarmingly lower than that of their native English-speaking counterparts. The following studies and reports elaborate on the dynamics of dropout and academic performance among ESL students in Alberta:

- Alberta Education (1992). *Review of Transcripts of Selected Immigrant Students who Received ESL Funding*. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education. This study examined records of 165 students in grade 8 and higher who received funding and whose educational tracking records were complete. The study suggested a dropout figure of 61 percent for ESL students, compared to the average provincial dropout rate of 34 percent.
- Watt, D. & Roessingh, H. (1994). "Some you win, most you lose: Tracking ESL dropout in high school (1988-1993)". *English Quarterly*, 26 (3), pp. 5-7. The researchers tracked the educational progress and achievement of 232 ESL students at the same large, urban high school over a five-year period. Their data suggested an ESL dropout rate of 74 percent.



- Watt, D. & Roessingh, H. (2001). "The Dynamics of ESL Dropout". *Canadian Modern Language Review* (in Press). The researchers conducted a follow up study that tracked the educational success of 505 students enrolled between 1989 and 1997. They found that the overall dropout rate for ESL students remains unchanged at 74 percent, approximately 2½ times that of the general high school population. They further found that dropout rates for ESL students vary, depending on the students' levels of English proficiency, with rates averaging 91 percent for Beginner ESL students, 79 percent for Intermediate ESL students and 49 percent for Advanced ESL students. Their findings further suggested that the percentage of ESL students completing English 30 in 1997 declined to 4 percent from 8 percent in 1994. Disturbingly, only one ESL student in this study scored better than 60 percent on the provincial English 30 exam.
- Latimer, J. (2000). *Demographic Information*. Calgary, AB: Calgary Board of Education. This CBE ESL Task Force document examined the 1996-1999 achievement test scores. Results indicated that ESL students in grades 3, 6 and 9 are between 16 to 28 percentage points behind other CBE students in language arts. They further showed that ESL students in the CBE are between 2 to 6 percent behind the provincial average among ESL students in language arts.
- Alberta Learning (2000). *2000 Grade 3, 6, and 9 Achievement Tests Results: English Language Arts and Mathematics (Written in English) for Students in Selected Program Categories*. Edmonton: Alberta Learning. Based on the percentages of students meeting acceptable standard in English Language Arts, the achievement tests indicate: (1) among grade 3 students, ESL students are between 13.4 percent to 18.3 percent behind the general student population, (2) among grade 6 students, ESL students are 15.7 to 24.2 percent behind the general student population, (3) among grade 9 students, ESL students are 25.6 to 32.5 percent behind the general student population. These trends indicate that the ESL problem is cumulative and manifests at the higher level. These provincial Achievement Tests also show that ESL students as a group are 1.4 to 10.6 percent behind students with severe disabilities.

Why Should We Strive for Equitable Investment in ESL Education?

ESL Advantage

In addition to the legislative and moral obligation to address the low rates of academic achievement among ESL learners, there are warning signals in

"For ESL learners, excellence will be realized if they are given equitable access to the academic mainstream, and the development of their English language proficiency is the foundation stone of future growth in the knowledge economy. The rest will follow. Alberta is indeed fortunate to have the solution to its future human resources needs so close at hand, unfortunately, it has been overlooked. We need only to look in our classrooms to see the bright face of the future."

(Dr. Hetty Roessingh, University of Calgary, 2001)



"The failure of schools to educate all students carries enormous economic and social costs. Education is one of society's most cost effective investments."

(Dr. Jim Cummins, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1996)

Canadian society that call for more thoughtful investment in education, especially in ESL education. These signals include:

- Canada's relatively poor ranking (15th) in the OECD countries in terms of research and development, the foundation stone of future growth in the economy¹¹;
- a negative birthrate¹²;
- the ageing and imminent retirement of the baby boomers¹²; and
- the growing demand for language proficiency and bilingualism in order to effectively engage in trading with global partners¹³.

In the light of these pressures, ESL learners could play important roles both in addressing Canada's new challenges and in ensuring its prosperous future. They possess the following characteristics that are critical in the global, knowledge based economy:

- Many ESL learners come from education-oriented cultures¹²
- Many ESL are academically competent and have university studies as a goal¹⁴;
- ESL learners can speak languages other than English; and
- ESL learners understand cultures other than Canadian culture.

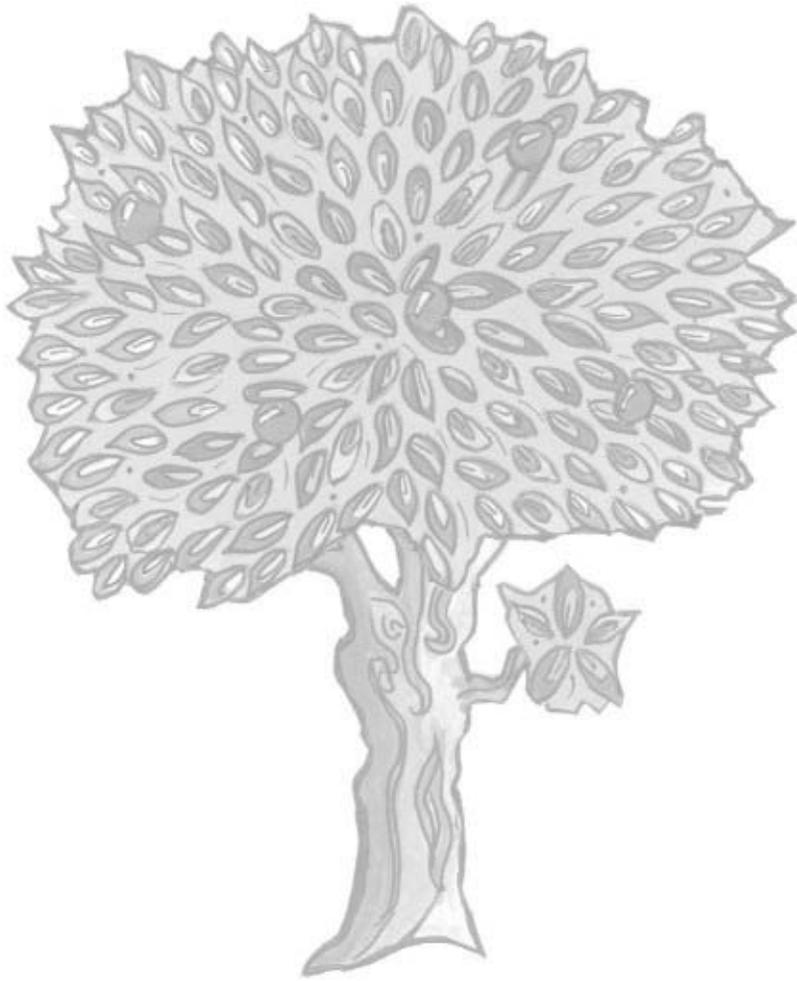
Societal Costs

Conversely, failure to provide ESL students with equitable linguistic education will not only jeopardize Canada's advantage in the global, knowledge-based economy, but also risk incurring social costs. Learners who are denied the opportunity to develop literacy and realize their full educational potential do not simply fade away. They may rely heavily on our social assistance programs and community services. Their issues may also be manifested in other forms of social costs, including crime and violence, unemployment, suicide, alcoholism, etc. Community agencies have become increasingly alarmed by the high visibility in their services of youth from an ESL background.

¹¹ Greenspon, E. (2001). "Time for the Next Challenge". *The Globe and Mail*, May 19, 2001.

¹² Roessingh, H. (2001). "Alberta's Advantage: Excellence, the New Economy and ESL". Cultural Diversity Institute. Calgary.

¹³ Watt, D. & Roessingh, H. (2000). "ESL Students and their Educational Success: Ten Years of Drop Out". University of Calgary.



**KEY STAKEHOLDERS:
Current Responses
and Recommendations
for Future Directions**



Responses from Federal Jurisdictions

No Direct Involvement in ESL Education

In Canada, immigration is the joint responsibility of the federal and provincial governments, whereas education falls under provincial or territorial jurisdiction. However, the federal government, specifically the Department of Citizenship and Immigration of Canada, recognizes the role of language proficiency in facilitating social, cultural and economic integration of adult immigrants into Canadian society, and consequently provides adult immigrants with basic language instruction through the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program. The federal government has yet to translate such recognition and support to immigrant youth with respect to ESL education.

Without a federal direct role in education, provinces and territories rely on the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada to discuss issues of mutual concern and to develop Pan-Canadian or Consortium strategies. At present, the Council has not demonstrated any specific initiative to address ESL issues.

Call for Active Roles

ESL students, many of whom come from immigrant backgrounds, are in dire need of support from both the federal and provincial jurisdictions. The following arguments call for the federal government to take a more active role, in concert with the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada, to develop national strategies to address ESL issues.

ESL Education as National Challenge Equitable ESL education is not only Alberta's challenge. Across Canada, ESL services have been severely under-funded, and in most jurisdictions, accountability for delivery of ESL services has been lacking. Since the early 1990s, ethno-cultural communities in Ontario, Alberta and Vancouver have consistently expressed concern about lack of equitable, accountable services for ESL students and the consequent impact on academic achievement.

Federal Legislation Federal policies, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Multiculturalism Act, outline the responsibility of the Government of Canada to ensure equitable access to basic services, including quality instruction in official languages. It can be argued that

"Immigration is profoundly challenging education in urban Canada, particularly in Vancouver and Metro Toronto, where roughly half of the students come from homes in which the mother tongue is other than English or French...No national statistics exist for the number of ESL students or the overall cost."

(From "First You Have to Learn English", Craig McInnes, The Globe and Mail, May 3 1993)



federal jurisdictions are obligated by these statutes to address ESL education issues.

ESL Education as Key to Integration At present, Citizenship and Immigration Canada provides basic instruction in one of Canada's official languages to adult immigrants to facilitate the social, cultural and economic integration of adult immigrants into Canadian society. The same principle should be applied to ESL education for youth. While ESL proficiency is needed for academic education, it is also crucial to the overall integration of all students with immigrant backgrounds into Canadian society. The latter clearly suggests the responsibility of the federal government in ESL education for youth.

Equitable Support for Immigrant Children and Youth As Canada continues to draw on immigration to maintain and enhance its socioeconomic well being, it needs to pay attention to services to children of immigrant parents. While many federal services assist adult immigrants to adjust and integrate into Canadian society, there are not many programs that aim to meet the specific needs of immigrant children and youth.

Recommendations to Federal Jurisdictions

Recommendation # 1: Council of Ministers of Education of Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada to develop national strategies for ESL education

We believe that federal jurisdictions have direct responsibilities to mandate high quality, equitable ESL services with national standards. In developing national strategies for ESL education, we recommend that the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada focus on developing policy in the following areas:

- Canadian benchmarks for academic language proficiency;
- National ESL curriculum;
- National identification and assessment of ESL students;
- Hiring and deployment of professionally trained ESL personnel;
- Service programming;
- Service implementation;

Jean is a 15 year old grade 10 student who arrived in Canada as a baby. Her first language is Arabic but she cannot read or write in her first language. Her Arabic skills are assessed as "immature" by Arabic speaking students who arrived in Canada much more recently. Jean also struggles with her English vocabulary and reading comprehension, though her English conversational skills are fluent. On standardized tests of vocabulary and reading comprehension, Jean scores at a grade 3.4 level.

Without adequate English and Arabic support, Jean is handicapped in both languages.



- Service evaluation; and
- Development of an accountability framework.

Recommendation # 2: Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada to increase support to immigrant youth in acquiring an official language

We believe that ESL education is crucial to both academic proficiency and integration. We recommend that the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada:

- share financial responsibility with the provincial governments in assisting ESL students to acquire official language proficiency;
- work with the provincial governments to provide ESL students with complementary support in acquiring official language proficiency; and
- invest in community-based and school-based projects that help ESL students integrate into Canadian society.

Recommendation # 3: Department of Human Resources Development Canada to collaborate with the public education system to establish vocational programs for ESL students with low literacy skills or sporadic formal education

While many foreign-born ESL students arrive in Canada with their full complement of education, albeit in another language, some arrive as immigrants or refugees with little or only sporadic education in their home countries. These students are not in a position to benefit from regular public education, be it ESL or mainstream. To ensure that these ESL students acquire relevant employment skills, we recommend the Department of Human Resources Development Canada:

- share financial responsibility with the provincial governments to establish school-based alternative educational programs that focus on both language acquisition and employment training; and
- invest in community-based programs that provide language and employment training to dropout ESL youth.

"Canada cannot afford to let immigrant children fail. If the ESL students are failing, then the entire system is failing, and it has implications for Canadian competitiveness. We have a vested interest in society in helping all children learn."

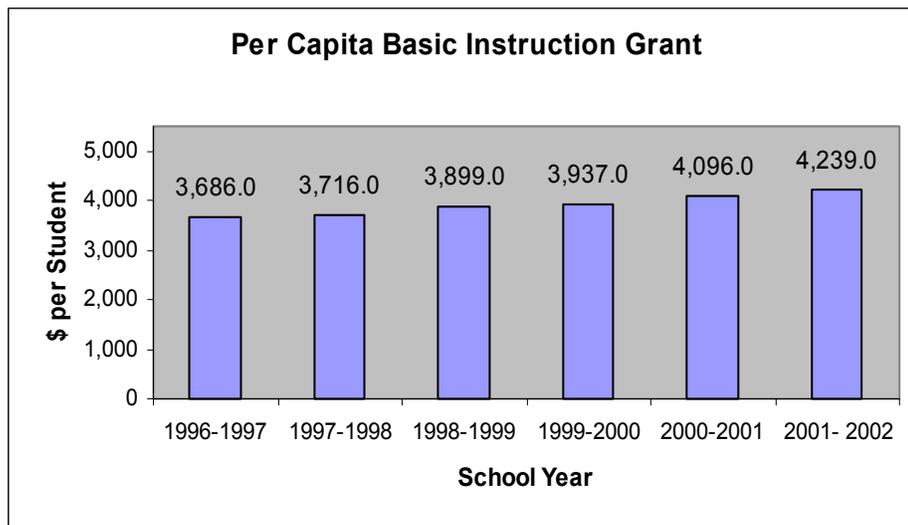
(Jim Cummins, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1993)



Responses from Alberta Learning

Funding¹⁴

Under the current Provincial Funding Framework, Basic Instruction Grant and ESL Supplementary Grant account for over 90.0 percent of the total resource relevant to direct instructional services for ESL students. While the Basic Instruction Grant is meant to provide all students with instructional services in all subjects, including ESL education, the ESL Grant is meant as a *supplementary* funding source for ESL services. In other words, the ESL Grant should not be the only source of funding for ESL services and a part of the Basic Instruction Grant should proportionally follow ESL students to their ESL classes. The following figures present rates of Basic Instruction Grant and ESL Grant over time.



¹⁴ According to the Provincial Funding Framework, funding resources to the local school boards come in the forms of Instruction Block, Support Block and Capital Block grants. Instruction Block includes Basic Instruction Grant, ESL Grant, Kindergarten, Special Needs Grants, and Alberta Initiative for School Improvements grants. Support Block covers Plant Operation and Maintenance, System Administration, and Transportation Grants. Capital Block includes Building Quality Restoration Program, Capital Revenue Contribution and Interest on Debentures. However, for the analysis of resource that is relevant to direct ESL service delivery, we will focus only on the two major grants of the Instruction Block, namely the Basic Instruction Grant and the ESL Grant.

"When I attended high school from 1990 to 1993, my school had a good, structured ESL program. We moved from beginner to intermediate to advanced ESL classes. By the time we finished the ESL program, we were prepared to do well in mainstream classes that required good English such as English, Biology.

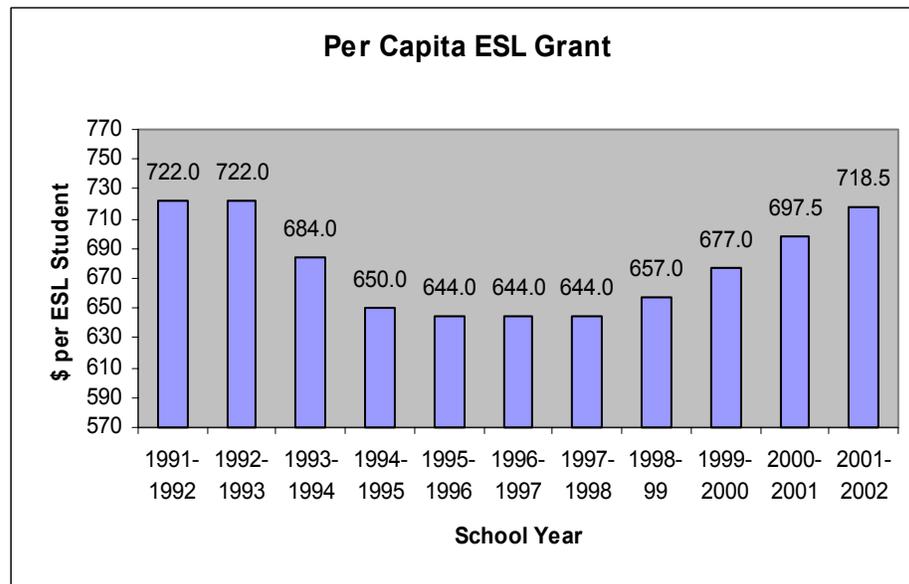
Because of good ESL support, my friends and I went on to complete our university education. Today we are engineers, accountants, pharmacists, social workers, managers and teachers."

(A Former ESL Student)



Salwa was in grade 6. She started her school during the dismantling of the ESL program in the school board. By her third year of school in Canada, she received ESL support from an itinerant teacher who was serving 6 schools at the same time. Consequently, Salwa could only get help with her English for one half hour once a week.

Salwa felt frustrated. She had been in tears several times. In her regular class, the teacher could not spend much time with her to bring up her reading and writing skills as she had too many students with special needs.



Policy

Alberta Learning Policy 1-5-1 designates ESL services as one of its education programs and services. Specifically, the policy:

- highlights cultural diversity and the contribution of culturally diverse youth in Canadian society;
- recognizes the need for language support to ESL students;
- recognizes the School Act that mandates instruction in English or French for all students;
- provides a definition of ESL students;
- outlines the responsibilities of school boards to develop and implement policies and procedures regarding ESL curriculum and instruction, programming, and service delivery; and
- mandates provincial funding for ESL programs.

Curriculum Development

Alberta Learning has developed an ESL Senior High curriculum and an ESL Elementary Guide to Implementation. The latter, however, should not be confused with a formal curriculum. A guide is not as comprehensive as a curriculum, and teachers are not mandated to meet its requirements. Alberta Learning has yet to develop Kindergarten to Grade 9 ESL curricula.



Progress

Alberta Learning in recent years has made some progress in addressing ESL issues. Such developments include:

- recognition in September 1998 of Canadian-born ESL students as eligible for ESL funding;
- removal in September 1999 of the incidence rate funding cap that allocated funding for a given year, using figures of ESL population in the preceding March (funding is now based on ESL population on September 30 of the current funding year); and
- removal in September 2000 of the 3-year cap that limited ESL funding per student to a maximum of three years.

Points of Tension

In spite of this progress, Alberta Learning needs to meet other ESL challenges in order to achieve equitable services for ESL students. Specifically, Alberta Learning has yet to address:

- the age cap that applies to all Alberta students has been detrimental to ESL students who arrive later in their schooling and are unable to acquire language proficiency and complete high school requirements in the traditional timeline;
- ESL funding for kindergarten students who arrive in schools with no English skills;
- development of ESL curricula for Kindergarten to Grade 9;
- designation of ESL as a core subject to ensure consistent, mandated and accountable services; and
- development of accountability mechanisms to ensure that funding to which ESL students are entitled follows them to their classrooms.

Recommendations to Alberta Learning

Recommendation # 1: Recognize ESL as core curriculum

We believe that the population of ESL learners has reached a critical mass in Alberta, and that their future is too important to leave to chance or to the whim of individual principals or teachers. In recognizing a subject as core curriculum, we believe that the criterion is whether the subject is core to a

"It will cost Calgary, Alberta and Canada much more in the long run if non-English speaking students are denied the opportunity to learn English in the school system."

After all, isn't the school system supposed to provide useful knowledge for students to better prepare them to work and live in society? If that is the case, then ESL should not be the first area sacrificed on the altar of fiscal responsibility. It should, instead, become part of the core curriculum"

(Calgary Herald, March 3, 1993)



Tarek arrived in Canada at a young age. By the time he reached Junior High, he had been suspended and transferred to different schools many times. His teachers and principals found him disruptive to others. Through his youth worker, Tarek revealed his struggles with English at school, isolation and longing for connection to his parents.

Tarek eventually dropped out of school and was recruited by a gang group. Last year, through the local newspaper, his loved ones found out that he was shot dead in a turf war in Vancouver.

student's academic journey. For ESL students, ESL education is indeed everything. It has been argued that designation as core curriculum implies that a subject must be taken by the entire student population of Alberta. While this is normally the case, we would argue that this is a red herring. The central issue in making ESL a core subject is the need to mandate funding, curriculum and instruction, in the same way as is done for Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, etc., **because the student has no access to any of these subjects without an adequate command of English.**

We therefore recommend Alberta Learning recognize ESL as a core curriculum to ensure:

- predictable funding structures;
- mandated curricula for all levels from Kindergarten to Grade 12;
- mandated contact hours;
- benchmarks for assessing language proficiency;
- identification and assessment of ESL students;
- hiring and deployment of professionally trained ESL personnel;
- service programming;
- service implementation; and
- service evaluation.

Recommendation # 2: Increase resources for ESL services

We believe that direct, structured ESL support requires adequate, equitable resources. With the prevalent practice at the school board level, for example in the Calgary Board of Education, of restricting funding allocation for ESL services to the ESL Supplementary Grant, it is clear that Alberta Learning needs either to increase the existing ESL Supplementary Grant or provide leadership to school boards in ensuring that some of the Basic Instruction Grant is directed to ESL services. Alberta Learning may consider the following two options to increase resources for ESL services:

Enveloping Part of Basic Instruction Grant Alberta Learning may consider establishing a tightly controlled envelope of Basic Instruction money for ESL services. Currently, mandatory funding allocation to ESL services at the system and school levels has applied only to the ESL Supplementary Grant, even though ESL students attract both the Basic Instruction Grant and the ESL Supplementary Grant. The practice of enveloping part of the Basic Instruction Grant for ESL services would



ensure that school boards and principals have the resources to provide ESL services to those who need ESL support, as well as to demonstrate accountability in utilizing resources that ESL students bring to the system. This leadership strategy has a precedent in the funding mechanism for students with Mild and Moderate Learning Disabilities.

Tripling ESL Grant Alberta Learning may also consider tripling the ESL Grant. In the current funding environment in which schools often struggle with large class sizes, complex learning needs of students, the need for greater support for teachers, insufficient resources to purchase textbooks and teaching materials, and a consequent increased reliance on fundraising, the needs of ESL students are often ignored, and in many cases the resources that they bring to schools are used to cover other school expenses. By tripling the ESL Supplementary Grant, Alberta Learning will help reduce the current unacceptable ESL teacher/ ESL student ratio of 1 teacher per 115.5 students to the rate of 1 teacher per 38.5 ESL students.

We therefore recommend that Alberta Learning increase resources to ESL services by:

- enveloping part of the Basic Instruction Grant for ESL services; and/or
- tripling the ESL Supplementary Grant.

Recommendation # 3: Remove the age cap

We believe that the age cap, which denies education to any student in Alberta from the September after his/her 19th birthday, unfairly penalizes many ESL students. This restriction denies them an equitable opportunity to achieve language proficiency and meet regular high school graduation requirements. Many students have been delayed in their schooling due to dislocation or warfare in their home countries. Others may come from a culture where literacy is not the norm. Still others, literate in their first language, may arrive in high school in their late teens, and under the current rules, will not have sufficient time before the cut-off date to acquire the sophisticated command of English necessary for academic success.

Removing the age cap would recognize that traditional timelines for schooling are not suitable for many different groups of ESL students. We recommend Alberta Learning:

- recognize that traditional timelines for schooling are no longer suitable, and are unfair to ESL students; and

"Our education system has to change its basic assumption that students would start their school at age 5 and complete high school by age 19. For ESL students, they need time to learn the language and to complete all the requirements for high school graduation. Many of them might have stayed in refugee camps for several years without any formal education. We have to look at their unique needs."

(A Community Member)



"It's never too early to teach children ESL. We should learn something from the head start programs. We don't want these kids to start their elementary years without good basic English."

(A Kindergarten Teacher)

- remove the age cap for ESL students, ensuring the continuation of funding and instruction for ESL students who wish to complete their education.

Recommendation # 4: Extend ESL funding to kindergarten

Without ESL support, kindergarten children are not equipped for their elementary education. We believe the principle of "head start" should apply to kindergarten children who need ESL support. We therefore recommend Alberta Learning:

- recognize the need for ESL support among kindergarten students; and
- extend ESL funding to kindergarten.

Recommendation # 5: Develop ESL curricula for kindergarten to grade 9

We believe that guidelines to implementation of ESL programs are not a substitute for formal curricula. The latter ensure that schools are mandated to meet the standard requirements for ESL services. We recommend Alberta Learning develop ESL curricula for kindergarten to grade 9 that reflect:

- sound ESL curriculum theory; and
- emphases on linguistic, cultural and academic needs.

Recommendation #6: Establish a provincial ESL taskforce

The ESL student population in Alberta has reached a critical mass. Yet, services for ESL students have been consistently inequitable across the province. We recommend Alberta Learning set up a provincial ESL taskforce that

- engages various educational and community stakeholders, including representatives from boards of trustees, school board senior administrators, school personnel, including ESL teachers, academics, community groups, parents, and ESL students;
- identifies issues and current responses to ESL education; and
- develops provincial and local strategies and recommendations to address ESL issues.

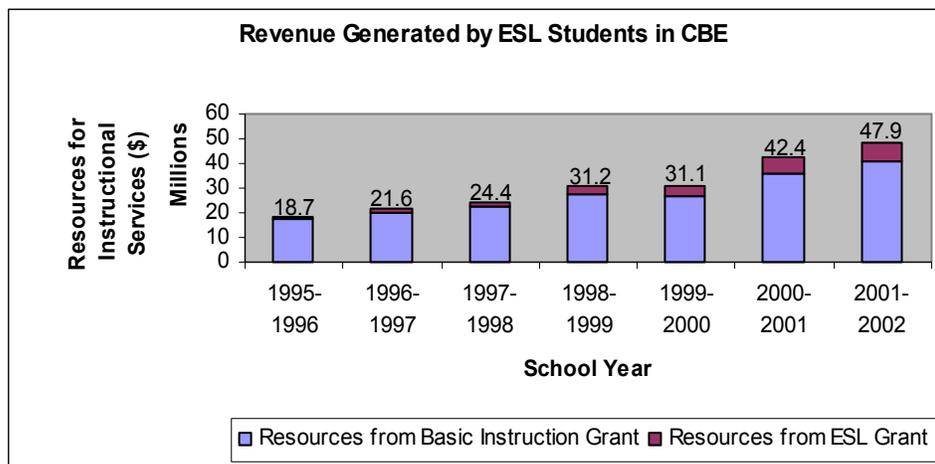


Responses from Calgary Board of Education

Funding Allocation

Funding Revenue Generated by ESL Students in CBE

ESL students bring to the CBE resources for *direct instructional services* primarily in the forms of the Basic Instruction Grant and the ESL Supplementary Grant. In the school year 2001-02, 9,666 ESL students will attract \$47,919,195, of which \$40,974,174 comes from the Basic Instruction Grant and \$6,945,021 from the ESL Supplementary Grant. At the average cost of \$70,000 per full time teacher, this resource would fund at least 568 full time teachers in the CBE¹⁵. The following figure demonstrates revenues that ESL students have brought to the CBE over the years. The recognition of Canadian-born ESL students in September 1998 and the removal of the three-year ESL funding cap in September 2000 increased the number of students eligible for funding, which accounts for the additional resources shown on the graph.



"There are 90 'coded' ESL students in this school and I am the only ESL teacher...I teach all day and can only help 40 students...The other 50, I haven't seen them yet...I have to allow my assistant to teach as a teacher, simply because I have no choice..."

(An ESL teacher from a Junior High School)

Declining Funding Allocation to ESL Services

Prior to the 1995-96 school year, the Calgary public education system, for the most part, financed its programs from direct local tax levy. To ensure equitable, quality ESL services, the CBE commonly matched the ESL Supplementary Grant with the same or a greater amount. The new funding framework, implemented in September 1995, shifted from direct tax

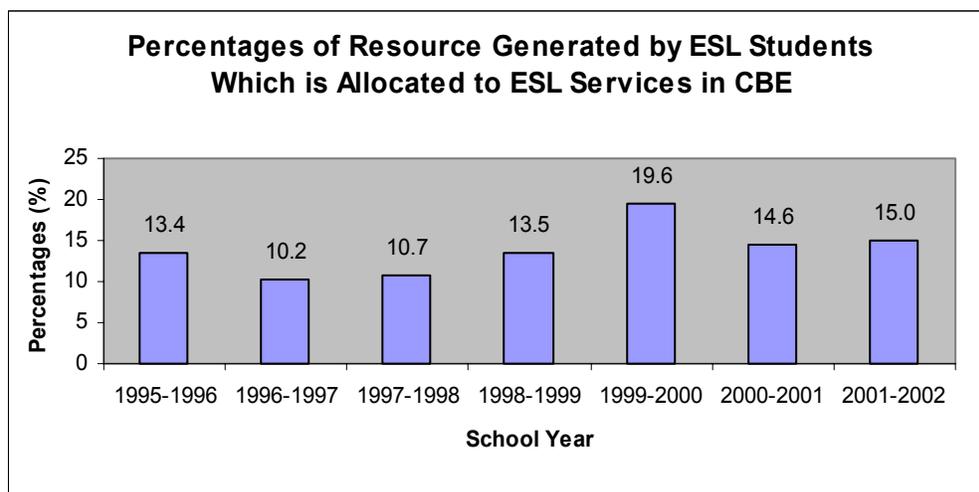
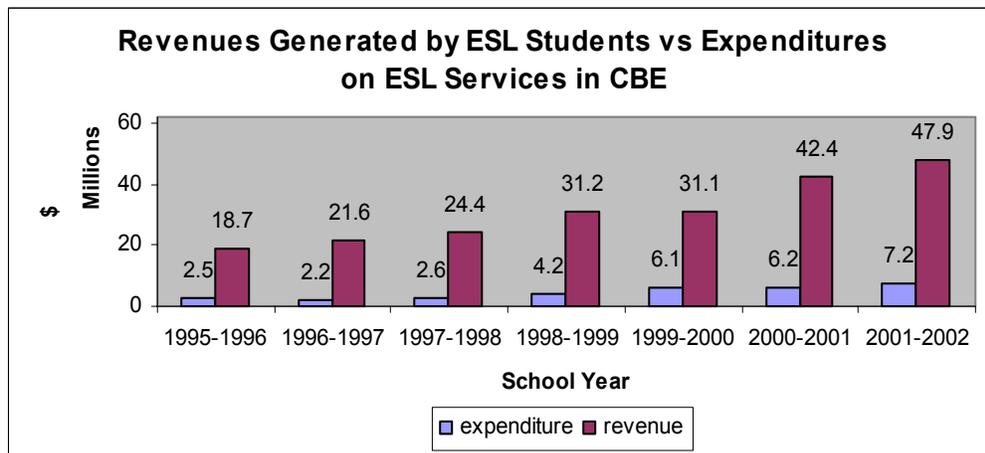
¹⁵ As outlined in the 2001/02 Preliminary Operating Budget (page 2 – 19), the CBE allocates 80 percent of the Basic Instruction Grant to teacher staffing. At the rate of \$70,000 per full time teacher, the ESL Supplementary Grant (\$6,945,021) and 80 percent of the Basic Instruction Grant (\$32,779,339) would fund 565 full time teachers in the system.

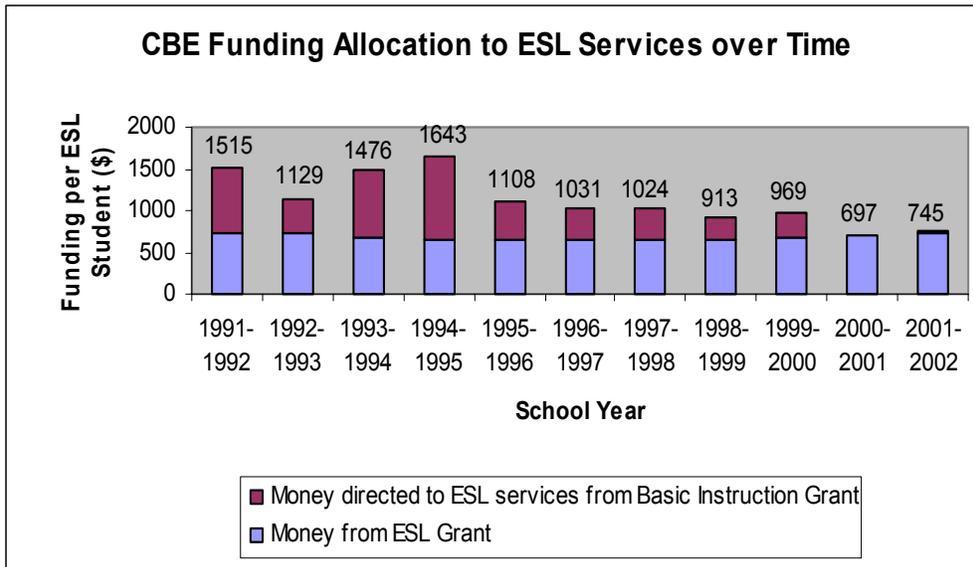


"Since I have been at XXX (this would be the fourth September), the numbers have steadily increased. Three years ago, the projection was for 20 students.... I was very excited to be given a full time job to work with them. In September, there were suddenly 60 students. Their families generally moved into XXX or XXX over those months, and Riverside Bungalow must have interviewed every single one of them. These numbers could not have come as a surprise at the system level, and yet, at the school level we were expected to "cope" until January.

(Cont.)

levy at the local level to provincially centralized funding (details of this provincial funding framework are discussed in the endnotes on page 10). Since then, the CBE has gradually withdrawn its commitment to add to the ESL Supplementary Grant some of the money that ESL students bring to the system in the form of the Basic Instruction Grant. In the 2000-01 and 2001-02 school years, the CBE restricted funding allocation for ESL education to only the ESL Supplementary Grant. Consequently, roughly 15.0 percent of the resource generated by ESL students in the CBE is allocated to ESL services. Over the years, funding per ESL student has declined from \$1515 in the 1991-92 school year to \$719 in the 2001-02 school year, a 47.5 percent decline. The following figures demonstrate (a) the disproportional relationship between the revenues generated by ESL students and the expenditures on ESL services, (b) declining allocation to ESL services of funding money to which ESL students are entitled, and (c) funding allocation to ESL services per ESL student over time.





Implications

In the light of the Alberta budget cuts in education at provincial level in 1993, the CBE disproportionately reduced ESL instructional services by 50 to 80 percent¹⁶. Such significant cuts to ESL education have resulted in the following detrimental effects on ESL service delivery:

- qualified ESL teachers have been steadily replaced by teacher assistants or school aides, who might not have any formal training to adequately address the complex learning needs of ESL students;
- the teacher/student ratio for ESL (regardless whether the teachers are qualified ESL teachers, teacher assistants, or school aides) is as high as 1 ESL instructor per 81 ESL students¹⁷;
- the qualified ESL teacher per student ratio is 1 ESL teacher to 115 students, more than triple the acceptable teacher/student ratio in Alberta¹⁷; and
- ultimately, the resulting poor academic performance and high dropout rates among ESL students as presented in Part I.

The following figures demonstrate that (1) since 1993, the numbers of ESL students per qualified ESL teacher has been increasingly high, and (2) the ratio remains unacceptable even when ESL personnel broadly includes ESL teachers, assistant teachers or school aides.

¹⁶ Watt, D. & Roessingh, H. (2000). ESL Students and their Educational Success: Ten Years of Drop Out. University of Calgary.

¹⁷ Figures were based on the CBE 2001-02 budget.

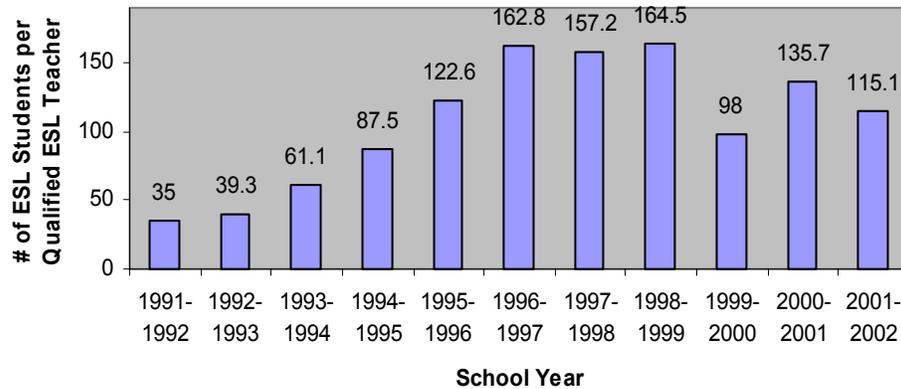
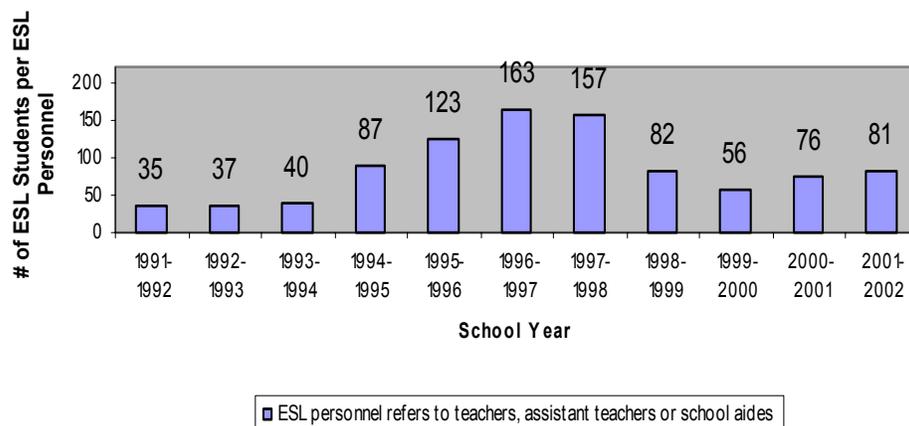
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At that point, a second teacher was hired who, of course, was gone by the end of June due to the temporary contract she was given. The next teacher, likewise, was gone in just a year's time due to cuts in ESL support last June.... It is impossible to staff the program with temporary, part time help that is generally inexperienced in ESL and has no academic preparation for the work"

(Letter to the Leadership of CBE, from an ESL teacher, 2000)



Hoang recently moved to grade 3. Everyday, he is "pulled out" of his class for one half hour to receive ESL support from a school aide. The rest of his time, Hoang is lost in his classes, unable to cope with his beginning level of English. He is usually excused from classroom requirements, and often left to look through books while other students are working on class assignments. Hoang is frustrated. He does not enjoy school and acts out often to get his teacher's attention.

Qualified ESL teacher / ESL Student Ratio**ESL personnel/ ESL Student Ratio**

Progress and Contradictions

To address the crisis in its provision for ESL students, CBE has developed several initiatives to improve its ESL services. However, within those initiatives, there are many contradictions that ultimately hinder positive outcomes in instructional services to ESL students. The following highlights the major areas of progress and the contradictions within CBE provision for ESL:

1996 ESL Review

In 1996, the Board of Trustees appointed Dr. Jim



Cummins and Dr. David Watt to conduct a review of ESL education. This effort resulted in the report entitled “Moving Forward: an ESL Review: Discussion of Issues and Draft Recommendations”, which contained 43 recommendations relating to issues of definition and identification of ESL students, funding allocation, recognition for and value of language learning, centralized services, professional staff deployment, paraprofessional deployment, school leadership, hiring future staff, professional development, congregated schools and ESL services, equity and cost-effectiveness in special needs assessment, and equitable assessment in educational achievement. Though the report was comprehensive in its scope and quality, the subsequent Strategic Implementation Plan for ESL in October 1997 excluded most of the key recommendations.

Anti-Racism and Equity Policy In 1998, the CBE developed the Chief Superintendent’s Operating Policy regarding Anti-Racism and Equity, Policy 4027.3. This policy recognizes and commits to diversity and equity in the areas of learning and teaching, language, employment, CBE environments, awareness and availability of the policy, responsibility and accountability. Nevertheless, the CBE has yet to implement the policy in many key areas, including accountability and service provision to ESL students.

1999 One-Time Funding In August 1999, the CBE Trustees designated an additional \$1.6 million in one-time funding to ESL, which resulted in approximately 52 half time ESL temporary teaching positions. Most of the money was used to top up existing positions. Though the Trustees’ initiative addressed the short-term need for more ESL teachers, it did not indicate any long-term sustainable strategy. The Trustees also designated funds for yet another Task Force to develop a new model of delivery for ESL.

2000 ESL Task Force In 2000, the CBE Trustees appointed an ESL Task Force to review previous ESL Task Force reports, surveys, statistics reports, community reports, and research papers, and to recommend new directions for ESL service delivery. This effort resulted in the publication in Spring of 2000 of another ESL Task Force Report “A Quest for the Entitlement of ESL Students”, which provided recommendations regarding ESL service delivery models, new positions, system leadership, ESL program delivery, hiring and staff deployment, professional development, funding, community consultation and diversity. Following the report, the CBE Trustees passed a motion to provide funds with which to hire an ESL System Principal. CBE has also made an effort to engage community stakeholders in its initiatives to improve ESL service delivery and accountability, including setting up an ESL Advisory Committee, and maintaining liaison with the Coalition for Equal Access to

“The present budget cannot effectively support the increasing numbers. The trends over the last ten years show a steadily increasing number of immigrant and refugee students coming into our schools. As the Calgary Board of Education builds next year’s budget, a re-assessment of the support and services it is prepared to offer its ESL population would be very welcome.”

(Dr. Brendan Croskery, Acting Chief Superintendent of the CBE, from his report to the meeting of the Board of Trustees on October 2, 2001)



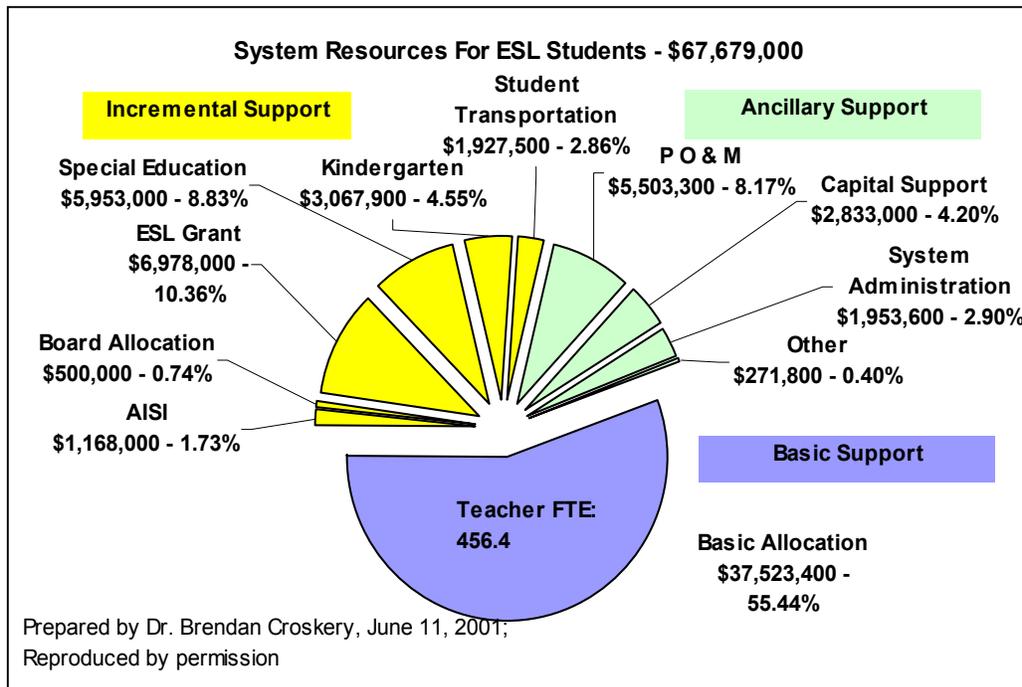
Baljinder is in her third year of schooling in Canada. She has good study skills and home support. This year, Baljinder finds the vocabulary in Social Studies and Science classes too difficult. She has problems with the reading and written assignments. Though Baljinder is a funded ESL student, her school does not have an ESL teacher this year. There is an ESL aide in the school but her energies are going to the beginning students.

Education. However, CBE has not yet taken action to address many of the recommendations of their own ESL Task Force, including funding allocation, hiring and deployment of qualified staff, and ESL service delivery models.

ESL Support as a Service Priority For the last 2 years, the Board of Trustees has consistently recommended ESL support as one of the service priorities for the 2000-01 and 2001-02 budgets. Nevertheless, the CBE administration has thus far failed to respond to this recommendation. In the 2000-01 budget, the CBE administration reduced per capita spending on ESL by 28 percent as compared with the previous year. In the 2001-02 budget, in spite of a significant increase of ESL students from 8,836 ESL students in the previous year to an anticipated 9,666 students, the CBE administration continued to restrict funding allocation for ESL services to the ESL Supplementary Grant.

ESL Ends Statements In February 2001, the Board of Trustees approved the general Educational Ends Statements which focused on quality learning in terms of knowledge, skills, character and citizenship. The Trustees acknowledged a need to further develop specific Ends Statements for students with unique learning needs, and indicated that Ends Statements for ESL would be drafted following third reading of the general Educational Ends Statements. Yet, as of November 2001, the Board has neither made public, nor approved new ESL Ends Statements.

Recognition of ESL Students' Entitlement to Funding In 2001, the Acting Chief Superintendent of the CBE recognized that ESL students will attract to CBE at least \$67 million for the 2001-02 school year in the forms of Incremental Support (i.e.: Alberta Initiative for School Improvements, ESL Grant, Special Education, Kindergarten, Student Transportation), Ancillary Support (i.e.: Plant Operation and Maintenance, Capital Support, System Administration), and Basic Support (i.e.: Basic Instruction Grant). In terms of instructional services, this ESL resource model suggests that in addition to the teaching positions generated by the ESL Grant and other special programs, the basic instruction money generated by ESL students would fund at least 456 teachers in the system. At a public board meeting on May 15, 2001, the Acting Chief Superintendent further acknowledged that the CBE has yet to "wisely" allocate the resources attracted to the system by ESL students in a way that would ensure equitable services for ESL students. The Acting Chief Superintendent's innovative proposal to look at funding entitlement of ESL students, as presented in the following graph, needs to be consistently and universally understood at all levels of CBE, and translated into equitable funding allocation to ESL services.



"I am not satisfied as acting chief superintendent that we've gone all the way, in any means, in using our resources as well as they can be used. We have a ways to go."

(Dr. Brendan Croskery, Acting Chief Superintendent of the CBE, in "Rapid Growth Leaves ESL Classes Underfunded", Calgary Herald, October 28, 2001)

Points of Tension

To achieve equitable service delivery to ESL students, CBE must have a clear commitment to concerted, action-oriented efforts to address ESL issues. Specifically, CBE needs to deal with the following points of tension:

- lack of an ESL service delivery model that is based on sound educational theory of second language acquisition;
- lack of coordinated services;
- lack of formal curricula for kindergarten to grade 9;
- lack of a rationally sound funding formula for adequate ESL services;
- lack of an accountability framework to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of ESL services;
- inconsistent priorities between Board of Trustees and Administration;
- lack of centralized services;
- lack of mechanisms for assessing and monitoring academic progress of ESL students; and
- lack of qualified ESL personnel.



Recommendations to Calgary Board of Education

Recommendation # 1: Develop ESL policies and procedures that are operationalized in practical terms to demonstrate delivery of mandated services, equity, and accountability

In recent years, in spite of a decline in the overall enrollment in the public education system, the ESL student population has steadily increased. Currently, funded ESL students make up 10% of the CBE student body. Meanwhile, many unresolved ESL issues continue to persist, and equitable ESL service delivery cannot be achieved without a more concerted, sustainable and system-guided strategy. We believe that many ESL issues have originated precisely from a lack of system leadership, and therefore should be addressed through clear policies and procedures to guide schools to provide sustainable, accountable and equitable services to ESL students. We recommend that CBE

- finalize and approve the ESL Ends Statements; and
- develop operational policies regarding equitable funding allocation, hiring and deployment of certified ESL specialists, availability of ESL programs, identification, admission, coordinated placement, programming, service delivery, progress/ dropout monitoring and reporting, accountability measures, and professional development.

Recommendation # 2: Designate ESL as a system level program

ESL students are commonly placed in neighborhood schools throughout the city, regardless of availability of quality ESL programs. School-based management, combining with a lack of system leadership in terms of accountability and service guidelines, results in an unfortunate situation in which availability of ESL services is at best compromised by other school demands and at worse simply overlooked by individual schools. We believe that it makes economic and educational sense to designate ESL as a system level program. This action will effectively ensure a more coherent, coordinated and consistent model of ESL service delivery. It eliminates the gaps between “have” and “have not” schools. ESL would not be seen as a “problem” at the school level, since *all* schools would have contributed equally “off the top” for the ESL program. Furthermore, it would be easier for the system to identify ESL students, track their progress, provide professional development, as well as to develop and implement

“The belief that anyone who speaks English can teach ESL is wrong. I have seen several schools assigning anyone from mechanical, home economics, physical education teachers to teacher assistants to school aides to teach English. These people have no clue what it takes to learn the language and the techniques that help these students.”

(an ESL teacher)



coordinated, consistent, and system-wide ESL strategies.

We believe that the future of the steadily increasing ESL student population is too important to be dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis or left to subjective consideration by individual schools. We recommend that CBE designate ESL as a system level program which

- is based on sound pedagogical theory;
- establishes congregated settings for ESL students under certain special conditions: (a) where neighborhood schools do not have a sufficient number of ESL students to implement high quality ESL programs, (b) on the understanding that these students will be integrated into their neighborhood schools once they have acquired English proficiency, or that (c) these students will return to their neighborhood schools once the schools have attained the critical mass required to provide high quality ESL programs;
- has in place an information management system to identify, monitor and track progress and achievement of ESL students;
- ensures guidelines to identify, assess, and assign ESL students to an appropriate grade level on the basis of academic proficiency, not on age;
- establishes system benchmarks for ESL student placement and degree of integration appropriate to language achievement level
- provides staffing guidelines to maximize the use of professionally trained, qualified ESL teachers as primary instructors for ESL students, and ESL assistants as support personnel for ESL teachers;
- regulates ESL program quality by laying emphasis on measurable ESL programs in terms of basic curricula and minimum instruction time;
- standardizes initial and ongoing assessment through the use of professionally trained ESL teachers and designated common assessment tools;
- ensures prompt and comprehensive collection of data to evaluate achievement, drop out and ESL student progress in the CBE; and
- utilizes data to determine priority areas for resource allocation and evaluation of program effectiveness.

Recommendation # 3: Establish a transparent, coordinated budgeting process

Though the Board of Trustees has repeatedly recommended ESL support as one of the service priorities for the 2000-01 and 2001-02 school years,

Bao is a ten year old student from Vietnam. This is his fifth year in Canada. He received minimal ESL support in upper elementary school, and in the past couple of years been fully integrated into "mainstream" classes. Bao speaks broken English, and reads at approximately grade four level. His English is not good enough to participate meaningfully in an academic content area such as Science.



"In this school, I have to be responsible for more than 90 ESL students. As you can see, we've got the worst classroom in the school, with limited space and poor light. These kids are appreciative and hard working people. They really deserve much better!"

(An ESL teacher)

the annual funding allocations to ESL service delivery have not reflected the Trustees' advice. The CBE administration, in implementing the Trustees' service priorities, needs to take into consideration (1) the total number of ESL students in the system, (2) ESL students' learning needs, and (3) allocation of a fair proportion of funds which school boards receive for ESL students. Given that each ESL student brings to the CBE a Basic Instruction grant of \$4,239 plus an ESL Supplementary grant of \$718, a total of \$5011, the case for an equitable allocation of Basic Instruction Grant to the ESL program is incontrovertible. Ideally the senior administration at CBE would produce a funding allocation that takes into account the proportion of time an ESL student spends in the ESL classroom, in adjunct/support classes and in mainstream classes.

To achieve a transparent, coordinated budgeting process, we recommend the CBE Board of Trustees and senior administrators

- learn about and agree upon the resources that ESL students bring to the CBE;
- develop a clear funding allocation formula in which the instructional resources follow ESL students to their classrooms; and
- establish clear guidelines for funding allocation to ESL services that reflect the currently acceptable student-teacher ratio.

Recommendation 4 #: Match ESL Supplementary Grant by Funding from Basic Instruction Grant

Recommendation # 3 outlines an ideal process of funding allocation to deliver equitable services. Until such a process is established, we urge CBE to correct its current inadequate, inequitable funding allocation to ESL services by matching the ESL Supplementary Grant with funding from the Basic Instruction Grant. In other words, CBE would match the current ESL Supplementary Grant funding of \$718 per year for each ESL student with another \$718 per student from his or her Basic Instruction Grant entitlement. This action is necessary to bring the current level of services at the ESL teacher / ESL student ratio of 1 teacher per 115.1 students to a more acceptable level. It is also noted that the Calgary Catholic School District has for several years matched the ESL Supplementary Grant and has deployed staff at the system level. These practices have been shown to be effective in the Catholic school system.



Recommendation # 5: Implement recommendations from the 2000 Task Force.

The 2000 ESL Task Force paper “A Quest for the Entitlement of ESL Students...” draws upon the expertise of many professionals and community stakeholders. It offers excellent recommendations relating to models of service delivery, new positions, system leadership, program delivery, hiring and staff deployment, professional development, funding, community consultation, and diversity. We believe, if these recommendations were thoroughly implemented, CBE would be one step closer to equitable ESL service delivery. We recommend that CBE develop and carry out the implementation plan, based on the Task Force report, that explicitly deals with the following areas:

- responsible personnel;
- timelines;
- activities/ procedures;
- outcomes;
- measurable indicators; and
- sustainability measures in terms of resource allocation, policy and procedures.

Recommendation # 6: Develop a five-year plan for ESL service delivery

While the issue of equitable ESL service delivery is almost certain to be a continuing matter for debate in the public education system, there are constant changes in personnel among school board trustees, administration teams and school staff. Personnel who understand the issues surrounding ESL take their learning with them when they depart. We believe that the institutional tendency to undermine ESL services or to deal with ESL issues on an *ad hoc* basis can be avoided when ESL issues are addressed within the contexts of history, sustainability, and most of all a clear sense of vision. We therefore recommend CBE develop a five-year plan for ESL service delivery that addresses all concerns and issues outlined in the first five recommendations.

“Students whose first language is not English and whose English language proficiency is insufficient to permit them to succeed in school and society have a right to explicit ESL instruction that is (a) pedagogically sound, (b) taught by specially trained, professional staff, and (c) effective in reducing barriers to educational participation.”

(From “A Quest for the Entitlement of ESL Students”, the ESL Task Force, Spring 2000)



Community Responses

Progress

The Coalition for Equal Access to Education, with its committed community and agency based membership and decade long dedication to equitable education is an example of how ethno-cultural communities, community groups and agencies have tenaciously advocated for positive change in public institutions to ensure quality education for *all* students. Other individual and collaborative efforts include:

- community development projects with emphasis on active citizenship, including equitable participation among parents in public education, at the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, Calgary Immigrant Aid Society, and Calgary Mennonite Centre for Newcomers;
- educational programs to enhance parental participation in schools at ARUSHA and Calgary Immigrant Women's Association;
- collaborative initiatives between community agencies such as Calgary Youth Foundation, Calgary Immigrant Women's Association, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, Calgary Immigrant Aid Society and ARUSHA and CBE to serve ethno cultural students in the school system.

Points of Tension

In spite of concerted community efforts, parents of ESL students have yet to realize meaningful, equitable participation in the school education system. While studies have demonstrated the positive impact of parental participation on minority children's educational outcomes, parents of ESL students are notably absent at teacher-parent interviews, school council meetings, school board meetings and educational forums. An interplay of individual and institutional factors contributes to a lack of equitable participation in school among parents of ESL students, including:

- problems of communication;
- lack of understanding of the education process;
- lack of understanding of rights and responsibilities;
- being new to the country;
- impersonal or unwelcoming institutions; and
- lack of outreach activities.

"For ethno-cultural parents, their participation in the public school system also means empowerment, access to school decision-making structures, active citizenship, and overall integration into Canadian society."

(A Community Development Worker)



Recommendations to Community Groups

Recommendation #1: Work with parents to enhance their understanding of ESL education

Due to their lack of understanding of the Canadian education system, and of ESL education in particular, some parents of ESL students have unrealistic expectations of their children's potential academic achievement. We recommend community groups and service agencies develop community-oriented initiatives that work with parents of ESL students to deepen understanding of the following areas:

- second language acquisition;
- ESL program structures;
- transferal of first and second languages; and
- cultural, linguistic and academic needs of ESL students.

Recommendation #2: Empower parents of ESL students to participate equitably in the school system

Parents of ESL students, often unaware of their right to participate in public education, or of how they can get involved in schools, do not have direct input and feedback into public education decision-making. Consequently, their interests are not well represented in the delivery of educational services and ultimately the overall education quality for their children is compromised. To promote equitable parental participation in public schools, we recommend community groups and agencies develop community oriented initiatives that

- inform parents of how public education works;
- inform parents of their right to participate in public education;
- inform parents of their children's right to equitable education;
- inform parents of ways they can help their children to enhance academic achievements; and
- engage parents in community groups that collectively identify barriers to parental participation and develop strategies to overcome those barriers.

Recommendation # 3: Maintain and enhance dialogue and collaboration with educational stakeholders to improve ESL service delivery

We believe that the path to equitable service delivery for ESL students requires collective action from the federal government, Alberta Learning, and

Lan came to Canada at the age of eight. There were no designated ESL teachers or classes in her school. Lan was "integrated" into the regular classroom without assistance with learning English. As time went by, Lan experienced growing frustration. He was not able to read or write although his spoken English was good.

Meanwhile, Lan's mother did not attend any teacher-parent interviews. She was struggling to make ends meet and did not speak English herself. The school did not make any effort to communicate with her. She was unaware of Lan's difficulties in school. (Cont)



(Cont)

Lan told his mom that he was doing "okay."

Five years after entering school, Lan dropped out. He was 13 years old. He had struggled through one year of junior high not reading or writing, and that was enough for him.

Today, Lam is 22 years old. He is still does not read or write. He is working for a furniture company that hires many immigrants without English skills.

local school boards, as well as immigrant and minority communities. These stakeholders must fulfill their individual responsibilities to ESL students, and at the same time work together to build a coherent, cohesive public education system. In maintaining and enhancing dialogue and collaboration with educational stakeholders, we recommend that community groups:

- provide direct input and feedback into the development of policies and practices that affect ESL students;
- work with educational stakeholders to establish a transparent, accountable protocol for collaboration; and
- work with educational stakeholders to achieve recommendations #1 and #2.



NOTES



NOTES

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Context, Current Responses and Recommendations for New Directions

Public education mirrors the landscape of cultural diversity in Canadian society. In the past two decades, the number of culturally diverse learners with English as a Second Language (ESL) needs has steadily increased. Though they are guaranteed the right to language instruction under provincial, federal and international legislation, most ESL learners have received minimal, if any, direct ESL support. The consequent lack of high quality, equitable ESL services has contributed to the bleak reality of illiteracy, poor academic achievement, and persistently high dropout rates among ESL learners.

This blueprint aims to engage governmental, educational, and community stakeholders in a learning process through which they will better understand ESL issues with respect to changing demographics, the ESL student population, the second language acquisition process, the academic performance of ESL students, effective ESL education, legislation, the “ESL advantage” and the social costs associated with failure to provide ESL students with language education. The blueprint further acknowledges progress, as well as identifying tensions in current efforts to address ESL issues among governmental, educational and community stakeholders. It then provides relevant stakeholders with comprehensive recommendations on enhancing ESL services in public education.

The Coalition for Equal Access to Education is an umbrella organization of community agencies, groups and individuals. Its mandate is to advocate and promote quality, equitable public education for all children regardless of cultural background, first language, or color. Key Coalition activities involve advocacy, public education and community development.

For further information, visit our website at www.eslaction.com.



COALITION FOR EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION