

FROM THE EDITOR

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Baby Steps for Sustainable Changes in Our Practice

I was privileged to participate in the April 2015 WIDA Train the Trainers sessions at the Central Indiana Educational Service Center (CIESC). During the three days we spent with trainer, Allyson Newton, I found myself pivoting between a sense of optimism for what I firmly believe is embedded support and a strong rationale for improved instructional design for English Language Learners (ELLs) and the simultaneous sinking sensation that mainstream educators might find themselves overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information, materials, and unfamiliar terms of WIDA (MPI's, Can Do Standards, ACCESS®, etc.). Whereas the old Indiana English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards were limited to listing performance indicators aligned to the English/Language Arts Standards, at least they provided exemplars for mainstream teachers of what one might expect of an ELL by grade level and by language proficiency level. In other words, once the teacher located an appropriate parallel skill, it was a relatively simple matter to adjust the indicators to fit the content area and the skills being assessed. WIDA has elected to provide only exemplar Model Performance Indicators to encourage educators to create building- or district-specific standards across content areas, grade levels, and language levels.

Indiana's original ELP Standards were the result of immense labor and constituted a significant innovation when they were released in November of 2003. However it is sadly true that very few mainstream educators actually *used* the ELP standards during their twelve years of existence, hard as many ENL teachers and administrators worked to persuade their colleagues

otherwise. Perhaps there was something about the title, or maybe the origins, of the ELP standards that convinced many mainstream educators that those ELP standards were only for ESL classrooms and somehow did not apply to mainstream instruction. I am encouraged that there seems to be a fresh commitment from school leaders and administrators to expect implementation and to support mainstream teachers as they familiarize themselves with WIDA resources. I also anticipate local school districts will partner with our colleagues at the Indiana Department of Education to provide meaningful, productive professional development that builds capacity for thoughtful implementation of locally created Model Performance Indicators (MPI's) for content area courses.

In my years of teaching, I have learned that I can only sustain new habits and new practices if I think in terms of baby steps, of doing one small thing for a very long time until it becomes second nature. I cannot commit to writing full-blown MPI's for every lesson I teach every day, but I can commit to writing MPI's for two lessons a month for a year. And I can share those MPI's with my colleague and can take advantage of MPI's developed by my colleagues each month so our efforts are maximized. I probably will not blow up every lesson I taught this year and start from scratch, but I can commit to adding one new visual element per week to support the comprehension of ELLs and visual learners. If I have a long habit of lecturing in my teaching, it is unlikely that I will stop overnight; I could, however, start using a timer to stop myself every ten minutes to allow students to engage in a turn-and-talk pair/share in English or in the L1 to encourage oral academic language development for all of my students. Real change takes time. We must begin first by building reasonable, achievable implementation timelines and then must jointly commit to small, measurable steps to provide access to the full curriculum, to enrich classroom engagement, and to insist on equitable outcomes for ELLs.

If we encourage our mainstream colleagues to join us in making baby-step, measurable and doable commitments, I am convinced we will see real, positive, and sustainable change in instruction for ELLs over the next academic year. And if we find creative ways to celebrate those small successes, we will build capacity for mainstream teachers to build on their own success in subsequent years. ESL coaches or administrators could print custom certificates of awesomeness, invite shout-outs during faculty meetings, make mention of creative approaches in newsletters, or invite teachers to share innovations during lunch and learn sessions. And when we find a mainstream teacher who is a strong adopter of WIDA approaches, we can offer to co-present a session at the 2015 INTESOL conference next fall, so be watching for a call for proposals very soon.

In spite of our collective failure to convince our colleagues to make good use of them, I remain grateful to the original Indiana ESL Taskforce Members who blazed the trail and created the first ELP standards that ever existed in Indiana. As WIDA now moves into ascendance, let us collectively archive our tattered copies of the original ELP standards with much appreciation for the work of the Indiana ESL Task Force:

- Darlene Slaby
- Lauren Harvey
- Sheila Ewing
- Tom Good
- Peggy Harrington
- Donna Hernandez
- Kristin Hoyt-Oukada
- Dinah Michels
- Trish Morita Mullaney
- Janice Newton
- Cindy O'Brien
- Maritza Robles
- Sharon Smith
- Debbie Thomas
- Marilee Updike
- Brenda Ward
- Wendy Wildman Long

Some of these respected and beloved folks have since moved on to well-deserved retirement. Sadly our beloved colleague, Sheila Ewing, a quiet, but fierce champion for all of Indiana's children, has since passed away. Many of these leaders and pioneers continue to advocate, to

expand our collective capacities, and to blaze new pathways for Indiana's ELLs, for which we are collectively grateful.

The INTESOL Statewide Leadership group and the INTESOL Advisory Board have partnered in advocacy to bring the WIDA Standards and ACCESS® assessments to Indiana. This special WIDA in Indiana issue of the *INTESOL Journal* hopes to provide background and documentation on this historic time of transition, as well as provide educators in the field with substantive, practical, and accessible ideas for implementing WIDA approaches locally. I am grateful for each of the authors of this issue who humbly and courageously shared their initial WIDA learning at this early juncture of Indiana's journey. We are all enriched by their contributions and by their generous leadership. It is to these bright, committed, and tireless colleagues I dedicate this special issue of the *INTESOL Journal*.