

In This Issue...

A Message from the Editor

Building Stairways to Success to English Learners

The theme for the 2015 INTESOL conference and this issue of *INTESOL Journal* is “Building Stairways to Success to English Learners.” Though I have gone along with the will of the amazing group of INTESOL Board members with good spirit, I must admit, this theme was not my first choice. There is much about stairway metaphors that trouble me. For starters, as children of the 1970’s, for many of us there is the obvious hearkening back to Led Zeppelin’s song, “Stairway to Heaven,” which was also coincidentally and inexplicably the theme to my senior prom (what exactly was this theme supposed to mean for a bunch of 18 year-olds at a formal dance?). But I digress.

No, what troubles me about the stairway metaphor for English language learners (ELLs) is the embedded notion that if we as their teachers, researchers, administrators, and scholars could just learn to build a better stairway, then ELLs could climb faster and with less disruption to join their native-English speaking classmates at the summit. And to our credit, we have experimented with a variety of stair designs, assembled innovative building materials, trained and re-trained the best construction teams, and have learned to go toe-to-toe with zoning ordinances and building code-enforcers. We have questioned how high the rise of each stair tread should be and have raised a loud cry when we discovered how inconsistent stairways can be, even within one school building.

We also have developed timed strength and conditioning drills for ELLs to practice running up and down long stairs, short stairs, straight and curved stairs, and have become experts

at locating low-cost shoes to protect the feet of ELLs. Researchers with stopwatches have observed ELLs running the stairs and have written books on how to more accurately assess ELLs' ascent to the summit. Other scholars have focused on ELLs who refuse to wear the special shoes and on ELLs who stop mid-ascent to rest on a step. A few of us even tried to build escalators or elevators to get ELLs to the summit more quickly and with less trouble, but quickly learned that while schools were eager to move ELLs more quickly, they were not willing to let us take sledgehammers to the foundation to install the elevator.

In this issue, we offer a rich variety of approaches to support ELLs as they labor mightily to ascend whatever staircase is available to them. Annela Teemant, Yuhao Cen and Amy Wilson examine the effects of ESL coaching on secondary teachers. Michelle Greene shares the outcomes of using PhotoVoice with middle school ELLs. Amy Gaisser delves into the multifaceted identities of middle school ELLs. Elena Shvidko reveals a consistent lack of preparation for teaching ELLs in university composition classes, while in a complementary fashion Angela Herrmann observes and outlines the inherent challenge of college writing for increasing numbers of international students in large universities. Finally, Meg Troxel and Brooke Kandel-Cisco explore the use of applied theatre approaches with ELLs while Donna Albrecht points to the importance of preparation, knowledge, and ESL licensure for district-level ESL administrators, an important discovery each K-12 district should take seriously if ELLs are to make the progress expected of them.

I am grateful for the generosity of these scholars and for their clear commitment to improving conditions and outcomes for Indiana's ELLs of all ages. It has been a joy to work with each of them throughout the revision process and I am delighted to bring their collective good

work into the public sphere. Please take the time to read their contributions and when you find yourself using their wisdom, take a moment to send a thank-you card or email.

We are delighted to feature on the cover of this issue the winner of the 2015 ELL student art contest. It is fitting to locate and frame this issue and our collective work within a form of expression in which ELLs are not inhibited by imposed barriers. Congratulations to each ELL student who submitted art work to this year's contest. You have brightened our outlook and strengthened our resolve by your contribution.

So, in spite of crushing, often unrealistic demands for to climb higher and faster, ELLs will continue to climb and we will continue to tinker with the staircase. What we seldom stop to question in the stairway metaphor is the destination. Where are we going in such a hurry? What do we expect will happen when we reach the summit? Where exactly is this stairway headed and what will become of us along the way? Perhaps Led Zeppelin had it right after all when they warned us that all that glitters is not gold. But onward we go. And to quote Led Zeppelin, "It makes me wonder."

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COVER ART CREDIT:

The cover art for this issue was created by Indiana student, Mayara Martins Pereira, Grade 12, from Jeffersonville High School, Greater Clark County Schools. Her work was selected as the winner of the 2015 INTESOL K-12 Student Art Contest. She was sponsored in the contest by her teacher, Ms. Theresa Applegate. Congratulations to Ms. Martins Pereira! The INTESOL Board is delighted to feature her composition here.

