A BOUNDARY-SPANNING ESL TEACHER EDUCATION PROJECT: CONNECTING CAMPUS LEARNING TO IN-SERVICE TEACHER NEEDS

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ABSTRACT
This paper describes a research-based approach to creating a collaborative means for seeking educational change to benefit ESL learners and their teachers. We used a teacher education course as a boundary-spanning space for the sharing of expertise among teacher educators and pre-service and in-service teachers. The initiative involved the creation and implementation of a series of professional development (PD) workshops. In a cyclical process of mutual learning, workshop topics were selected based upon needs identified by in-service teachers. Student teachers then created workshops and presented them to the in-service teachers, resulting in the professional growth of both the teachers and researchers. The findings of this project point to the value of developing collaborative approaches to transforming teacher education through well-informed action.

Schools in Canada and other English-speaking countries are receiving greatly increasing numbers of non-English speaking students, including refugee claimants from civil war torn areas where they have never attended schools of any kind. These English as a second language (ESL) learners who have limited literacy and formal schooling in their first language face exceptional challenges in classrooms. In many cases, the teachers of these learners have little or no formal ESL training, and as a result, they frequently feel frustrated and unprepared, which can be detrimental to both staff and student morale. According to O'Hara and Pritchard (2008), “the provision of English language and subject matter instruction to English learners is one of the most critical challenges confronting teachers and teacher educators today” (p. 43).
Many teachers who are trying to provide educational programming for ESL learners are finding it difficult to do so, as a mismatch often exists between the supports the ESL learners require and the programming that is actually available for them. For example, in our Canadian province, some teachers are required to teach large multilevel ESL classes of up to 38 students who have vastly different levels of English language proficiency, and no provincial K-9 ESL curricula currently exist to guide their instruction. Demands such as these can result in broader implications related to preparing the next generation of teachers, as well as for the professional development of in-service teachers.

When teachers do not feel they have the time or even the necessary skills to mentor pre-service teachers, they are less likely to volunteer to serve as mentors for student teachers who are enrolled in university teacher education programs. Walkington (2007) noted that finding placements for pre-service teachers to complete their required practicum is becoming a challenge for teacher educators. She recommended that universities and schools develop collaborative partnerships in order to create mutually beneficial relationships through which universities might find placements for their pre-service teachers and schools might become better able to find new teachers that they will need in the workforce.

One of the difficulties in creating such relationships between universities and schools to benefit teacher education is that “it is very common for cooperating teachers with whom pre-service teachers work during their field placements to know very little about the specifics of the methods and foundations courses that their student teachers have completed” (Zeichner, 2010, p. 91). Therefore, we sought to explore ways to create a shared foundation of relevant knowledge between teacher educators and pre- and in-service teachers through joint professional development (PD) learning activities that would assist in the development of more fully prepared mentor teachers whereby all these stakeholders would be regarded as equal partners in teacher education. Moreover, we were guided by the assumption that if in-service teachers felt better prepared to support limited proficiency ESL learners, they would be more willing and better able to act as mentors for pre-service teachers who will be working with ESL learners in the future. Such mentorships would benefit not only teachers but also teacher education programs and ultimately ESL learners.

**Project Development**

In response to some of the challenges identified above and Walkington's (2007) call for the development of mutually beneficial relationships, we designed a collaborative, action research initiative to examine and alter our own practices by using an undergraduate pre-service teacher education course as a boundary-spanning space for collaboration and the sharing of expertise. This initiative involved the creation, implementation, and evaluation of a series of PD learning workshops that were the culminating project in the course. We were guided by the notion of action research, defined as “small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such intervention” (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 186). Furthermore, we were guided by Gauthier's (1992) view that “The most important thing in action research is to determine what one must do” (p.
190) to bring about change and to seek greater justice. Our work was motivated by this imperative to take action for educational and social change in response to the injustices faced by ESL learners and their teachers, including inadequate programming, resources, training, and support.

The project was designed by us as teacher educators but was largely initiated by teachers through the concerns that they had expressed to us. It involved working together for change and was a collaborative effort to enhance teacher education and school-based practices for the benefit of ESL learners. This is in keeping with the goals of collaborative action research, which seeks to bring about change within classrooms while also having a broader impact on communities and society (Rainey, 2000).

Our aim was not to do research “on” the teachers but to position ourselves largely as learners in relation to the teachers. We recognized, of course, the power conferred by our role as researchers affiliated with the university, but we did not wish to presume to know what the teachers’ needs were. The role of “expert” was shared, or distributed, among each of the key parties involved: teacher educators, in-service teachers, and pre-service teachers. As teacher educators, we developed a research plan based on ideas and concerns that originated from practicing teachers. Our ties to the university made it possible for us to seek funding for the project through the university’s internal research monies. The key role of the teachers was to contribute ideas for the project from their vantage point as “experts” on the needs of teachers and ESL students. Pre-service teachers took part by researching needs identified by the in-service teachers, thus gaining the expertise needed to create professional development workshops.

We sought to take action aimed at improving our own teaching practices, but an important aspect of the research involved recognizing the interconnectedness of our practices with those of others. Our hope was that the project might help to foster a sense of collective involvement by building partnerships among key stakeholders: teacher educators, in-service teachers, and pre-service teachers. To our knowledge, no similar studies or projects specific to teacher or higher education have been reported in the literature.

**Teacher educators.** The project organizers, and first two authors of this paper, are teacher educators who work in the area of ESL education. Both of us have experience teaching ESL and conducting research in the area. We are interested in working toward social justice for ESL learners, while also seeking to improve the circumstances of teachers and other educational practitioners. Working with us was a graduate research assistant, the third author of the paper, who shared our interests in ESL education and improving classroom circumstances for teachers and learners.

**In-service teachers.** Nineteen in-service teachers, whose teaching experience ranged from 3 to 36 years (average of 17 years), participated in focus group interviews to determine the teachers’ key PD needs. Their professional qualifications ranged from a Teacher’s College Certificate to a Master’s Degree in Education. Seventeen had a Bachelor of Education degree, while 1 had a college certificate and another a Master of Education degree. Nine of
the teachers were employed as content-area specialists (2 Language Arts, 2 Social Studies, 2 Mathematics, and 3 Science teachers), one was a special education teacher, and nine of the teachers were working specifically as ESL teachers. Although most of the teachers reported having some form of exposure to ESL training (e.g., attendance at an ESL in-service, workshop, or conference session), only three reported any formal TESL training. One held a TESL Certificate, one had an ESL Minor, and one had a TESL Diploma.

**Pre-service teachers.** The pre-service teachers were students enrolled in a course on instruction and assessment strategies for teachers of ESL learners. The course was an elective open to pre-service teachers in a Bachelor of Education program, as well as in-service teachers interested in pedagogical strategies for working with learners of English. In the term when the project was carried out, 16 of the students were pre-service teachers and 4 were in-service teachers; 18 were female and 2 were male; 11 specialized in secondary education, while 9 were in the elementary stream. One of the main goals of the course was to provide hands-on opportunities to explore ways to create rich language and content learning environments for ESL learners who are integrated into regular content-area classes.

**PROJECT OVERVIEW**

In-service teachers were consulted through focus group interviews to determine their professional development needs in the area of working with ESL learners. Students enrolled in the teacher education course then created workshops to address the needs that had been identified. The workshop project was incorporated into the course to create a collaborative teacher education effort to help both pre-service and in-service teachers become better prepared to meet the diverse complex needs of limited literacy ESL learners. The overarching goal of the project was to concretely link theory with practice, while providing opportunities for both pre-service and in-service teachers to become actively involved in building a repertoire of instructional strategies that have the potential to increase low proficiency ESL learners’ chances of successful English language development. Finally, the workshops were presented both to classmates and to the in-service teachers who had participated in the initial focus groups. Bringing together in-service and pre-service teachers for the presentation of the workshops allowed the in-service teachers and the students enrolled in the teacher education course to learn from each other as they collaborated to increase their knowledge and expertise in an area of mutual importance. Research focusing on the capabilities of student teachers to provide PD opportunities for practicing teachers that has the potential to impact their instructional practices is rare (Kiraz, 2004). Kiraz refers to this as “reverse knowledge transfer, from novice to expert” (p. 71).

In summary, our action research project used a collaborative, cyclical approach that spanned different levels of teaching experience as well as various educational stakeholders working in school and university settings. The various stages of the research process can be summarized as follows:
1. informal learning from teachers who expressed ideas and concerns about teaching ESL learners;
2. self-reflection on ideas, concerns, practices and social context to create a research plan;
3. engaging with teachers to systematically identify key needs and concerns;
4. reflection on the identified needs and concerns;
5. engaging with student teachers to respond to identified needs and concerns;
6. coming together of all key parties to share the responses to needs and concerns (workshops);
7. reflecting on the process.

Each of these stages is described in detail in the subsequent sections of this paper.

**ENGAGING WITH TEACHERS TO SYSTEMATICALLY IDENTIFY KEY NEEDS AND CONCERNS**

As suggested by Davison (2001), it is important for professional development to be connected to relevant teacher needs inside the classroom if it is to have an impact on teachers’ professional practices. Therefore, the primary research-based phase of our project involved engaging with in-service teachers through focus group interviews to determine their PD needs in relation to working with ESL learners. The themes that emerged from the analysis of this data would be used to determine topics for the workshops to be created by students in the teacher education course.

**SELECTING AND INTERVIEWING TEACHERS**

Purposive sampling was employed to select schools in different regions of the city that were identified by the two major school boards as having experienced recent large influxes of immigrants requiring ESL instruction. After receiving permission from the boards, we contacted school administrators at five schools, who, in turn, provided access to teachers of high need ESL learners. The two project leaders, one of whom was the course instructor, organized and conducted five semi-structured focus group interviews designed to explore the needs of teachers working with limited proficiency ESL learners at these schools. The focus group interview questions explored learners’ needs; program resources; teacher PD needs, preferences, and supports; and instructors’ perceptions of the benefits of professional development. The questions were emailed to the teachers prior to the interviews so they could have time to reflect on their answers. Teachers also received a questionnaire about their teaching background, experience, and education, which they were requested to complete and bring with them to the interviews.

Before the interviews began, teachers were asked to sign a consent form and submit their completed background questionnaires. Then they were asked to participate in a small focus group interview composed of 3 to 5 participants. The group format was chosen to allow participants to expand on the comments of others, thereby adding a richness to the dialogue that could not be achieved through questionnaires or one-on-one interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Teachers were encouraged to share their points of view even if their answers differed from what others had said, and they were assured that there were no right or wrong answers to the focus group questions. Each of the focus group interviews
lasted between 50 and 95 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded, and two graduate students were hired to transcribe the interviews and assist with data entry and analysis.

**DATA ANALYSIS**
Instructor background questionnaire data were coded and verified for accuracy. Open-ended questionnaire and focus group interview responses were entered into Excel, and then sorted and coded thematically for each question. Thematic analysis conducted by the project leader and one graduate research assistant entailed both within case and cross-case analyses using the following steps: (1) each transcript was read several times, (2) significant sentences or phrases (meaning units) were highlighted in each reading, (3) meaning units were paraphrased and clustered into categories, and (4) complete cross-case analyses were conducted to compare themes across all transcripts which produced broader themes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This iterative analysis of the response data identified recurring patterns and relationships between the instructors’ responses to each question.

**REFLECTION ON THE IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND CONCERNS**
Six main themes related to the teachers’ PD needs emerged from the focus group data: Teachers reported the need to develop (a) cultural competency, (b) practical teaching strategies, (c) ESL teaching techniques, (d) communication skills for dealing with ESL parents and students, (e) techniques for teaching multilevel classes, and (f) knowledge of appropriate resources for ESL learners. Each theme is briefly discussed in the ensuing subsections.

*Cultural competency.* The teachers expressed the need to know more about their ESL students’ cultures, background knowledge, first languages, and learning experiences. One teacher stated:

> I need to know more about their cultures and about their learning. I need to know about the children, what they’ve been doing in the refugee camps...how to help them achieve our goals. I find the more I know about their culture, the better it is for me... I need to know about these cultures and their language issues.

Another teacher commented that “there’s also a lot of PD that’s needed in the area of just helping the teachers understand what kinds of situations these kids are coming from to better understand what you can expect from them.”

*Practical teaching strategies.* All of the teachers emphasized that they need some practical teaching strategies to assist their ESL learners in achieving curricular outcomes. For example, one teacher noted that teachers need PD that focuses on “more practical stuff...things that you can take back to the class and use the next day.”

*ESL teaching techniques.* Teachers identified the need for training in a variety of areas related to ESL teaching methodology; they said they would like PD that focuses on literacy
instruction, techniques on how to teach a beginner, basic grammar techniques, vocabulary and language development, and second language acquisition.

Communication skills. How to provide meaningful feedback and communicate school expectations to ESL parents and students was another important need expressed by the teachers in this study. They indicated that it is often difficult to communicate with ESL students’ parents because the parents usually have limited English language proficiency. One teacher stated with all seriousness that he wants “to know how to communicate with [ESL learners] other than louder and slower.” This comment indicates not only a need for training in intercultural communication skills, but also a need for TESL training. In addition, some of the teachers indicated that they want information which addresses the following questions: “how to deal with students who have unrealistic [academic] goals,” and “how to keep students out of gangs.”

Techniques for teaching multilevel classes. Several teachers discussed the difficulties they face when teaching classes with students of many different levels of English language proficiency. One teacher expressed the need for “professional development on how to actually properly adapt certain information and certain materials to the needs of the different ESL students.” Another content-area teacher emphasized the need for “help with adapting [the curriculum, instruction, assignments, and assessments] to meet all the needs of my ESL kids the best way that I can.”

Knowledge of appropriate resources. Most teachers expressed frustration with the government’s recommended teaching resources, which they considered to be at a level that is too advanced for many ESL learners, and the lack of curricula/programming for K-9 ESL learners. Teachers indicated a need for curricula that specify “what they [ESL learners] need to be learning at each level.” Teachers in the study also expressed the need to (a) “connect with community resources”; (b) develop “computer skills and [learn] how to use technology” and computer resources that are appropriate for ESL learners; and (c) “how to use other engaging content-area resources.”

Engaging with Student Teachers to Respond to Identified Needs and Concerns

In response to the key needs mentioned above as identified by teachers in the focus group interviews, eight PD learning workshops were developed by the 20 students enrolled in the university course. Students were asked to design workshops that were coherent, engaging, relevant, and respectful of current teacher competence and needs. Prior to assigning topics to student groups, a graduate research assistant was asked to conduct a literature search for current peer reviewed research articles related to the teacher PD needs identified in the focus group interviews. The course instructor reviewed the articles and selected the most relevant ones to share with the students. Then the students were asked to read the articles and clearly link the theories presented in the articles to pertinent classroom applications when designing their workshops. Prior to delivering the workshops to classmates and in-service teachers, the students submitted their PowerPoint presentations, activities, and handouts to the two project leaders for review and evaluation. Then the presentations and
materials were returned to the students, who were asked to make the suggested revisions before presenting their workshops.

Two of the workshops dealt with building cultural competency; these workshops were titled *Cultural Diversity and the Karen Tribes People,* and *Cultural Sensitivity and Somali Students.* A workshop titled *ESL Literacy* focused on building ESL students’ reading and writing skills, and one titled *Grammar Instruction* described methods for teaching ESL students grammar. Two of the workshops provided tips for successful communication; one titled *School Communication* concentrated on ways to communicate with ESL parents, and another titled *How to Provide Meaningful Feedback to ESL Students* focused on developing effective ESL student-teacher communication. In addition, a workshop titled *Multilevel Science* focused on the use of computers in teaching ESL learners integrated into multilevel content area Science classes. All of the workshops included practical teaching strategies for ESL learners and provided information on specific resources that are suitable for use with ESL learners in the classroom.

**COMING TOGETHER OF ALL KEY PARTIES TO SHARE THE RESPONSES TO NEEDS AND CONCERNS**

*Workshops.* As indicated above, after making the reviewers’ requested revisions, students delivered their workshops to their classmates and groups of teachers who had participated in the focus group interviews. Interest in the workshops led to invitations for the course instructor and several groups of the students to discuss the project and present their workshops at local TESL PD in-service sessions, and also at one school board’s ESL stakeholder meeting. In an effort to reach a broader audience, the PowerPoint presentations developed for use with the eight workshops have been posted on the university’s TESL Learning Community Web site (http://www.ualberta.ca/~abbotted/) for access by teachers, particularly those who teach limited literacy ESL students in their content-area classes. This project continues to meet the needs of local teachers in that each time the course is offered at the university, new student presentations which address some of the aforementioned research themes are developed and added to the Web site. The Web address where the project presentations and handouts are posted has been shared with teachers across the province. It is hoped that the information in the presentations will provide some support for teachers who have limited access to professional development and supporting resources in their teaching contexts.

**REFLECTING ON THE PROCESS**

In discussions with the pre-service and in-service teachers, both groups indicated that they felt their involvement in the project provided them with professionally relevant knowledge and skills that would impact their teaching practice. Student course evaluations provided evidence that the project had a positive impact on student motivation and learning because of the perceived relevance and “authenticity” of the project. For example, student comments described the project as “worthwhile”, “real”, “interesting and practical”, as well as “positive and fun”. The workshops addressed not only some of the students’ own future needs, but also some of the actual current needs of practicing teachers as identified in the focus group interviews. Moreover, because they were to be conducted with “real” teachers, the students indicated that they were highly motivated to put their best effort toward
developing high-quality materials and activities. One student wrote that “it is refreshing to do an assignment that is relevant and really makes you think!” Students also reported that they gained a better understanding of the importance of evidence-based teaching practices. One stated that “the assignment served its purpose and allowed me to explore some of the topics and theories we were learning about in class in greater detail.” Finally, presenting their workshops at local schools provided students with valuable opportunities to network with teachers and school administrators. Such collaborative experiences can potentially lead to the development of professional communities of practice and future employment opportunities. One student wrote that “the workshops provided a wealth of useful information and the networking opportunities were very good.”

In-service teachers also identified benefits associated with the collaborative project. They commented that the focus group interview was a valuable activity that encouraged dialogue between professionals. One teacher stated that she “learned so much from listening to the other teachers’ needs and the way they went about addressing them.” Another teacher indicated that “this was a great PD opportunity not only because of the workshops but also because I could network with teachers from other schools.” Several teachers also indicated that they felt valued as they contributed to the direction of the university course project and were pleased to have some of their needs addressed by the students’ workshops. In-service teachers expressed a desire to see more collaborative capacity building projects like this one conducted in the future. For example, one teacher commented that she appreciated the students’ efforts to connect theory with practice in the workshops, because she “never seems to find the time” to explore research that is specifically connected to her PD needs. Another ESL teacher commented that the project resulted in a “wonderful presentation loaded with great tips and ideas to make newcomer parents feel welcome and validated in our schools.” Perhaps one of the best indicators of the value of the project came from the invitations to present the workshops beyond the originally-planned presentations for the focus group participants. As noted above, teachers invited the course instructor and several student groups to share the workshops and information about the project with a broader audience of TESL professionals and ESL stakeholders. After one invited presentation at a local high school, an ESL consultant contacted us to say “I would just like to thank all of you, once again, for taking time out of your busy schedules this morning to share your presentations to the room full of stakeholders. I’m glad you were able to showcase all the work that you’ve done. It was a really good morning!” Overall, the workshops were evaluated very positively in terms of content, value, and impact.

In addition to considering the benefits identified by the in-service and pre-service teachers, our reflections on the process considered whether the project addressed elements of effective professional development that have been discussed in the education literature. For example, Wasserman (2009) enumerated six guiding principles: First, teachers need opportunities to develop skills that are outgrowths of theories covered in the PD sessions. Second, PD must be relevant and engaging. Third, educational theories presented must be connected to classroom practice. Fourth, PD should be envisioned as a coherent program
from the beginning through to the end. Fifth, PD should promote problem solving. Sixth, PD must be respectful of teachers’ professional competence.

Rossner (1992; see also Piai, 2005), based on data collected from teachers, identified some additional characteristics of effective teacher PD that are not explicitly addressed by Wasserman’s (2009) principles. Rossner’s additional characteristics include the following:

1. [PD] is about dealing with the needs and wants of the individual teacher in ways that suit that individual....
2. much of [PD] is seen as relating to new experiences, new challenges and the opportunity for teachers to broaden their repertoire and take on new responsibilities and challenges....
3. [PD], in most teachers’ opinions, has to be “bottom-up”, not dished out by managers according to their own view of what development teachers need.... (p. 4).

Although lists of effective characteristics of PD such as Wasserman’s (2009) and Rossner’s (1992) “commonly appear in the literature on effective professional development, there is little direct evidence on the extent to which these characteristics relate to positive outcomes for teachers and students” (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001, p. 917). A study conducted by Garet et al. (2001) investigated the perceived impact of PD on teacher learning. Their study identified three significant features of effective PD activities, all of which are at least indirectly reflected in Rossner’s and Wasserman’s lists: an emphasis on content knowledge, active learning, and a connection to other relevant professional knowledge.

The collaborative teacher development project described here addressed all of Wasserman’s (2009) and Rossner’s (1992) principles of effective PD. Although the pre-service teachers did not have a chance to immediately implement their new knowledge, the in-service teachers did have opportunities to apply in their classes some of the teaching strategies identified in the workshops. Participants were actively engaged and interested in acquiring new relevant knowledge and skills. The teachers who participated in the PD were able to link the theories discussed in the workshop with their teaching practice. The project was envisioned as a coherent program from beginning to end, where faculty worked with teachers and students to create a collaborative means for seeking educational change to benefit ESL students and their teachers. It was designed as a bottom-up, long-term, coherent PD program which continues to address relevant issues in ESL teaching practice to this day through the project Web site. Both the pre-service and in-service teachers felt a sense of professional respect because they were viewed as colleagues, and their contributions to the project were valued.

The mutual value and reciprocated learning that resulted from collaboration were clearly among the most important benefits of the project. A key objective of the initiative was to foster dialogue and interaction across many boundaries. More specifically, we encouraged the creation of (a) collaborative partnerships and mutually beneficial relationships between local stakeholders in ESL education, including teachers, schools, school boards,
administrators, and university faculty members; (b) shared knowledge between pre-service and in-service teachers; (c) learning spaces for both pre-service and in-service teachers (including the development of a TESL Community Learning Web site); and (d) bottom-up, relevant, engaging, coherent, respectful ESL teacher PD activities that connected theory to practice. When such boundary-spanning activities take place, they have the potential to contribute equally to school and university improvement, pre-service and in-service teacher professional development, educational research, and university course design and evaluation through the creation of transformative spaces where “an expanded form of learning and the development of new knowledge are heightened” (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 152).

**Challenges and Future Possibilities**

The cultural and linguistic diversity in today’s classrooms creates unprecedented demands for teachers to develop knowledge and skills which meet the needs of the ESL learners in their classes. The boundary spanning PD project described in this paper was developed to address some of these needs, primarily by integrating applied research with practice and through collaboration among teacher educators, in-service teachers and pre-service teachers. Christie (2009) argues that many professional development programs have initial teacher preparation as a central focus; yet, if teaching is to be improved, PD must also be aimed at teachers who are currently working in the schools. As teachers gain experience, they are more likely to ask questions related to their own teaching contexts, including questions about their teaching practice, learners, or classrooms (Crandall, 1993). These questions can highlight some key areas for future research projects that further explore the PD needs of teachers who teach ESL learners. For example, additional research is needed to determine which elements of PD best support teachers’ efforts to enhance ESL learners’ language proficiency. Moreover, longitudinal research is necessary for examining the impact of PD projects on students in terms of student learning outcomes, as well as the impact on institutions and organizational change.

In carrying out this project we sought to respond to Zeichner’s (2010) and Wang, Spalding, Odell, Kleckla, and Lin’s (2010) calls to implement bold ideas in teacher education. Examples of such ideas include (a) emphasizing connections between research and practice (Dewey, 1964), (b) using technology to enhance learning and help colleagues access information regarding issues and problems related to their teaching practice (Lieberman & Pointer-Mace, 2010), and (c) shifting teacher education programs “toward more democratic and inclusive ways of working with schools and communities” (Zeichner, 2010, p. 89). In particular, we sought to connect research with teaching practice in local schools where pre-service teachers are placed for their field experience, and to create transformative, inclusive spaces where teacher educators and practitioners come together in new ways to improve the learning of prospective teachers, and to build a more unified teaching profession. By coming together in this way, it is possible to develop communities of practice that support and extend teachers’ professional contributions to the field (see Egbert, 2003; Murphey, 2003; Murphey & Sato, 2005).
We aimed to share the role of “expert” among the various key players involved in the project and emphasize the benefits of reverse knowledge transfer. Furthermore, in working to improve educational practices, we hoped to ensure that the locus of change was distributed among different stakeholders. We sought first and foremost to improve our own teacher education practices with a view to educational and social change to benefit ESL learners. In working toward this goal, the project also involved aiming to change the circumstances of the practicing teachers by helping them feel better prepared to respond to the needs of ESL learners. With respect to the student teachers, opportunities for reverse knowledge transfer were created through a sharing of the role of “expert”.

Overall, our findings highlight the value of research-based, collaborative PD projects designed to enhance teacher education program quality and teacher learning through extended school-university connections. As the project coordinators, we learned from every stage of the process and from all involved stakeholders. The knowledge and experience that we gained continues to inform our work as teacher educators. It is our hope that the incorporation of such initiatives into teacher education programs will assist teachers and teacher educators in addressing the needs of ESL learners, as well as other needs relevant to local teaching practices in their classrooms and beyond.

REFERENCES


**Biographical note:**

Marilyn Abbott is an Assistant Professor in the TESL program at the University of Alberta. She is interested in the impact of second language learning and teaching strategies on learning outcomes. Her primary area of research concerns how second language reading strategies interact with first language and cultural background to affect test performance. She is also interested in pedagogical practices in content area instruction that enhance learning, and issues of equity in access to academic content and testing for English as a second language learners.

William Dunn is an Associate Professor in the area of second language education at the University of Alberta. His research investigates connections between language learning and social inclusiveness. For example, he has studied forms of marginalization experienced by language learners, as well as ways in which learners gain a sense of belonging in a second language community. His related work in the area of teacher education explores ways in which future teachers can foster intercultural inquiry and promote social justice and inclusiveness through language teaching.

Trudie Aberdeen has a MA in TESOL from Temple University in Japan and is currently studying towards a PhD in TESL at the University of Alberta. She has taught ESL both overseas and in Canada. Her main research interest is in the area of ESL literacy development.