



TESL New Brunswick Fall Newsletter November 2023

What's Happening?

Message from the TESL President



Photo submitted by Erica Thomas

Happy Fall everyone and welcome to the TESL NB October 2023 Fall Newsletter!

The hustle and bustle of the new academic year has settled somewhat and another school year is well underway. As we move into our chilly sweater weather I hope you find that you have a bit of time to focus on you! Maybe you have had the chance to get out and delight in some apple picking, hiking, or just a fall foliage photoshoot. And

now, what a great opportunity to grab a warm beverage, put your feet up and en-

joy a good read. As you peruse the newsletter you'll find professional development sessions and webinars, a teaching tip to put into practice in your classroom and learn something new about the TESL NB community.

A big thank you to Dawn McCluskey, our newsletter editor, for putting together another spectacular newsletter.

Happy Reading!

Erica

Erica Thomas, President TESL NB inc.



Photo submitted by Dawn McCluskey

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TESL NB @ATESL! A Busy and Enriching Professional Learning Experience!

Submitted by Paula Kristmanson, Kathy Whynot, and Mallory Cunningham

At the end of October, TESL NB members, Mallory Cunningham, Kathy Whynot, and Paula Kristmanson, travelled to snowy Calgary for the ATESL conference. We were so pleased to be able to share our presentation entitled— "EAL Initiatives to Support K-12 Educators Working with Newcomers in New Brunswick"— to our fellow TESL/TEAL colleagues from Alberta and from other parts of Canada. We are proud of the great work happening to support both newcomers and educators in this province and it was a privilege to be able to discuss this work with those working in similar contexts in other provinces and territories. Mallory's role as an EST-EAL (Education Support Team for English as an Additional Language) at Saint John High was highlighted as were various collaborative professional learning opportunities provided by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the University of New Brunswick.



Additionally, Kathy and Paula represented TESL Canada at this event by hosting a panel on TESL Canada initiatives and benefits and interacting with participants at the TESL Canada table in the exhibitors area. Finally, we all took part in the TESL Canada AGM which was held at the end of the day on Saturday and was attended on-line by members from around the country (including TESL NB-ers- THANK YOU!) and, in-person, by conference participants. Paula, past-president, and Kathy, vice-president, are pictured here, on the left, with TESL Canada treasurer, Eric Violago and on the right with TESL Canada board members, Dora Di Lullo-Patten, incoming VP, and Mehdi Soleimani, the new TC rep from ATESL.



Digital Literacy for Newcomer Language Learners

Submitted by David Collins



It has become commonplace now, I think, to recognize that digital skills are no longer something “extra” to offer to newcomers only if there is time; instead, digital skills are rightly seen as survival skills, and an integral part of settlement and language-learning. I work as a digital literacy instructor in an ESL context, and here I would like to share my experience.

In terms of digital literacy the early days of the coronavirus pandemic were something of a turning point: they revealed significant gaps in the digital skills of many ESL students, as well as gaps in our attempts to address them. As one of the first programs to resume teaching after the lockdown was ordered, that was certainly our experience in the LINC department at the YMCA of Greater Saint John. There was a scramble as teachers attempted to figure out how to use Zoom, how to teach over Zoom, and how to get their students to use Zoom.

I am thankful that, while we zoomed on these problems, our administration zoomed out enough to see that something more systematic needed to be done and they created the position that I currently occupy, Digital Literacy Instructor. I teach digital literacy in classes ranging from Pre-CLB to CLB 4, Stage 1 and Literacy. In this position I teach everything from the mechanics of using a mouse and keyboard, to navigating the internet and using Microsoft and Google programs.

The benefits of the digital literacy instruction being centralized in this way is that it allows a consistent and systematic approach building student's digital skills. This is especially important for the students who need it the most: trying to figure out how to find information on Google in a foreign language while still trying to get comfortable with using a mouse is a recipe for frustration. And as we know, frustration is a serious issue that needs to be managed when it comes to learning, especially computers. It may be surprising, but technical expertise in computers is relatively low on the list of skills required to teach digital literacy, far more important is the ability to help manage emotional responses and build confidence.



Managing emotions in the classroom is important because many students who do not have a lot of experience with computers (beyond their phones) find them quite daunting. While a computer's larger screen (compared to a phone) has the potential to render material more accessible by making it bigger, it tends to result in programs fitting even more information on screen in increasingly complex ways. Some of this complexity is a necessary evil, as the cues that a highly formatted interface provides, allows a program to display a wealth of information without actively interrupting the user to tell them things; in practice however, this can be quite overwhelming for new users. Learning how to do things on a computer is thus more than simply a matter of knowing what steps to take, it also becomes about knowing where to look and learning to read the language of formatting. As online advertisers know, attention is an incredibly valuable resource for using a computer, and fear of making a mistake and frustration at being stuck can instantly shut down the ability to pay attention just when it is needed most.



So, for students who are new to computers it is important to set expectations and to check in frequently. My standard refrain throughout computer class is that “computer class is easy” and that we go “step-by-step” (which I illustrate both with tiny steps and with a series of hand gestures to indicate incremental increases which, over time, amount to a lot). Then, I check in with them frequently in order to recognize the milestones that are happening.

Self-reflection, even in a casual way, can be powerful: when students recognize what they have learned and can now do it often serves to replace a sense of frustration with one of achievement.

This is especially important for the newest computer users, as there are a lot of significant milestones (and potentially frustrating moments) while students work to acquire the physical capabilities they need. For some, computer use requires developing the (pardon the pun) digital dexterity to do things like their fingers such as click, double-click, right click, drag, and scroll with the mouse, as well as learn how to press and hold keys on the keyboard.

Teaching these kinds of fundamental skills is where having a dedicated instructor and program can pay off. Beyond attending to the emotional side of things, there are a lot of subtle changes in approach that can make a big difference. As an example, I have settled on generally having students use the touch pad on the laptop rather than the mouse, as it tends to be easier for them. The reasons for this vary, but include the fact that mouse usage requires more independent finger control (different fingers for left and right click), finger-hand independence (the fingers operating separately from the hand), and the fact that the touchpad and screen are much more visually lined up with each other (using a mouse requires focusing on the screen while trusting your hand to guide the cursor from the periphery).

I have enumerated some of the differences between mouse and touchpad usage not merely to explain my choice, but also to draw attention to the actual physical complexity of what we are doing when we use computers. There is so much that we take for granted in everyday computer use, and I think a successful digital literacy program needs to find a way to build those skills and fill those gaps in a positive and encouraging way.



David Collins is the Digital Literacy Instructor and Literacy Lead for the LINC program at the YMCA of Greater Saint John.

TESL NB's Teaching Tip

Encourage Self-Correction

Training students to hear themselves speaking the language enough to self-correct is a huge milestone. Self-correction indicates that the student is building intuition and beginning to demonstrate that they are “getting a feel” for the language.

As teachers, it is important that we give students time to make the correction, instead of always filling in the answers for them. This means, especially with beginners, that we need to become more comfortable with silences or lulls in conversations as a student works it out – a technique that may take time to get used to at first, since it is normally our initial instinct to help a student as soon as we can.



To help with this, encourage your students to self-correct when they hear themselves make a mistake. Celebrate any self-correction that happens. The more students self-correct, the more their language improves.

Submitted by Geoff North



Save the Date!

TESL NB will be having their Annual General Meeting
on Thursday, November 30th at 7:00 PM!

Join us virtually, from the comfort of your home. Join
Zoom meeting:

<https://unbvirtualclasses.zoom.us/j/8841260788/>

It's a great opportunity to:

- Meet the board members
- Find out more about the organization
- Network with other ESL professionals
- And perhaps win a door prize!



TESL NB

TESL NB is a professional organization affiliated with TESL Canada that aims to support ESL and EAL teachers and instructors working in a variety of institutions in the province of New Brunswick.

TESL NB provides ESL/EAL educators with a venue for professional networking and professional development opportunities.

We welcome new members. Visit www.teslnb.ca/join-us/ to find out more.

LET'S CONNECT!

- www.teslnb.ca
- Facebook at TESLNB
- Twitter @TESL_NB
- teslnewbrunswick@gmail.com

Please reach out if you want to get involved or know more. We believe in the power and importance of professional connections.



YOUR NATIONAL ORGANIZATION



TESL CANADA

Teachers of English as a Second Language - Canada

November 6, 2023

Hello TESL Canada Members,

The TESL Canada Journal editorial team is looking for submissions for their Special Issue, Winter 2024.

Please see:

<https://mcusercontent.com/7d66c5f319c9217e9b0d2bd99/files/3d90cf31-36ec-bf30-0d3d-c59cf04a2b18/>

[TESL_Canada_Call_for_Papers_Special_Issue_Winter_2024_Ranta_and_Nikoue.pdf](#)

Thank you for taking the time to look at this request..

Sincerely,

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