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TESL Canada Connects

A book is like a garden in your pocket.

Arabian proverb

Welcome to the March issue of our TESL Canada Connects newsletter. This issue features an article about a free multilingual literacy platform from the University of British Columbia.

Storybooks Canada

By Bonny Norton, University of British Columbia

According to the 2016 Canadian Census (Statistics Canada, 2016), more than 7 million Canadians speak a language other than English or French as a mother tongue, and both children and adults are seeking to improve their English or French skills. To support language teachers in Canada and the global community, a team at UBC has collaboratively developed a free multilingual literacy platform for teachers, families, and communities called Global Storybooks (https://globalstorybooks.net/). By repurposing a selection of open-licensed stories from the African Storybook initiative, Storybooks Canada , one of the sites on the Global Storybooks portal, has 40 illustrated stories, in text and audio, in 18 of the most widely spoken immigrant and refugee languages of Canada, including Mandarin, Cantonese, Punjabi, Arabic, and Somali, as well as English and French. Other derivatives of Storybooks Canada, including Indigenous Storybooks, are now freely available on the Global Storybooks portal, which now includes sites for over 40 countries across five continents (Norton, Stranger-Johannessen, & Doherty, 2020). While there are other digital stories online, Storybooks Canada and other Global Storybooks sites are unique in that users can toggle between two languages of the same story in order to promote language learning. Stories can be read on diverse mobile devices, such as cellphones and laptops; they can be projected on classroom walls; and they can be downloaded and printed in multiple formats.

Recommended Watching from Bonnie Norton

"A resource that has inspired me recently is a TEDX talk by Dr. Hyunjung Shin at the University of Regina, on what a PhD could not teach her about diversity."

https://www.ted.com/talks/hyunjung_shin_what_a_phd_couldn_t_teach_me_about_diversity

"Sick and Tired" becomes "Mindful of the Heart of Teaching"

By Charlene Neumeyer, English as an Additional Language Teacher
Ecole St. Gerard School

(Charlene Neumeyer was the recipient of a TCEF professional learning bursary to attend the 2019 TEAM and Teal Conference.)

On October 25, 2019, TEAM (Teachers of EAL to Adults in Manitoba) and Teal (Teachers of English as an Additional Language in Manitoba - K-12 teachers) hosted the *Mental Health & Wellness In & Outside the Classroom* conference. I have been teaching almost twenty years and the accumulated stress has caused me to feel sick and tired of trying to do it all, so I knew that this was something relevant and meaningful to me.

The conference started with the keynote address "Making Sense of Mindfulness" by Keith Macpherson. Keith stated that we are living in a time bombarded by noise and stress. He shared three of his Five Principals to integrate Mindfulness Practice into your daily life. 1) Everything begins with an inner dream. Slow down and think about it. 2) Expose the Saboteur. Name the worry and expose the FEAR (False. Evidence. Appearing. Real.) 3) Open Your Mind to the present moment and breathe.

My first breakout session was given by Patrice Palmer "Teacher self-care is a thing?" Teaching is a caring profession, and according to Newell & MacNeil (2016) self-care can be defined as "the strategies used to maintain our personal, emotional and spiritual needs while attending to the needs of others." According to Patrice self-care should NOT be too hard, costly or time-consuming. It should be simple and right for you.

My second breakout session was given by Trevor Pfahl "Mental Health & Finances for Teachers". Trevor wanted to help people increase their financial IQ and suggested some ways to decrease expenses and increase income.

My last breakout session was given by Ben Starkey called "The Heart of Teaching". He presented his research on the role of empathy, genuineness and positive regard in the ESL classroom. Those three traits are core conditions that are present to create a climate to grow to full potential.

I can attest that after the conference, I felt better; more relaxed, de-stressed and gained some skills to promote wellness in my classrooms. I no longer feel as sick and tired as I can reflect on mindfulness, self-care, finances and my heart of teaching. **This article has been edited for length.

Conferences Across the Country

BC TEAL Conference Thursday, April 23 – Saturday, April 25 Douglas College, New Westminster, BC

ATESL mini-conference will be in May in Calgary, tentatively scheduled for May 9. The annual conference is in Edmonton on October 16 & 17, 2020

TESL Sask / SK TEAL conference will be held in Regina, SK, Canada on April 24 - 25, at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel and Conference Centre

Manitoba TEAL Mini-PDs 2019/2020 Meeting the Needs of EAL Learners, Thursday, March 5, 2020 from 5:00pm – 8:00pm at the Manitoba Teachers Society

2020 Atlantic TESL Conference to be held April 30th – May 2nd at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia

TESOL 2020 International **Convention** & English Language Expo will be held 31 March - 3 April in Denver, Colorado