



Fall  
Quarterly  
October  
2014

# THE PMSD ESL CONNECTION

## A Message from Dr. Catherine Sweeney

### Pocono Mountain School District Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction

Welcome back for another exciting school year! In this article I would like to make suggestions to parents on how to support their children at home. The single most effective thing a student can do at home is to read regularly. If this is done over a long period, it will benefit your child in various ways: it will obviously develop her general ability to understand what she reads, but it will also increase her vocabulary and provide models of grammar and sentence structure that will help her in her own writing.

For speaking practice your child could give a summary of the main events in the stories they have read or heard, or they could state some of the important information they have learned from non-fiction sources. Writing can be practiced if your child keeps a journal in which, for example, they record their response to the books they have read or movies or TV programs they have seen. They could also create their own fiction stories.

As for grammar and vocabulary: in my opinion these are best learned in the contexts of reading or listening. However, there are many grammar and vocabulary practice books available, and if your child has one that

she enjoys using, there is no reason why they should not spend an hour or so a week on such exercises.

The suggestions made above will help your child to improve their general English proficiency, and this of course will have a beneficial effect on their other school work. You may, however, wish to help them more directly with their assignments in other subjects, such as science, social studies, math, etc. In this case, the best thing you can do is to have good reference materials at home, *in your own language*. Your child can consult these to increase their general understanding of the topic they are learning. It would also help very much if you could discuss with them what they have read, again in your own language. This will deepen their background knowledge and prepare them to understand the difficult English they will hear and read in school.

The final piece of advice is perhaps the most important: having your child involved in an after-school activity is a great way for your child to mix with native-speakers of English and practice their speaking skills. This mental and physical relaxation is the best way to prepare children for the rigors of the next school day.

## DATES TO REMEMBER



- ☉ October 13th: NO SCHOOL for Columbus Day
- ☉ October 15th: 1st Adult ESL night at CREC at 6:00PM-7:30PM
- ☉ October 16th: HOME/SCHOOL CONNECTION @ CREC at 6:00PM-8:00PM
- ☉ November 13th: 5:30PM-8:30PM Parent/Teacher Conferences
- ☉ November 14th: 8:00AM-2:30PM Parent/Teacher Conferences—NO SCHOOL
- ☉ November 26th: 2 hour early dismissal
- ☉ November 27th-December 1st: NO SCHOOL—Thanksgiving Break
- ☉ December 2nd: SCHOOLS REOPEN
- ☉ December 24th-January 2nd: SCHOOLS CLOSED for Winter Break
- ☉ January 5th: SCHOOLS REOPEN



## Adult ESL



Pocono Mountain School District's Adult ESL program will kick-off on October 15th. This is an opportunity for parents and guardians of district ESL students and employees of the district who wish to increase their English abilities to sign up for the program. Questionnaires to determine program interest and topics will be completed. Please join us October 15th at Clear Run Elementary Center, Computer lab 6, 6pm - 7:30 pm.

## A Glance at ESL Around PMSD

### SECONDARY NEWS

**WJHS:** "WJHS welcomes back 8th grade students and warmly welcomes 7th grade students to class. 8th grade students are getting back in the groove with literary terms, vocabulary, and grammar review. 7th grade students are getting accustomed to the junior high with keeping on top of current events, grammar review, and the writing process. We look forward to all the year has to offer in learning and expanding our horizons!"

**PMWHS:** Welcome to our 9<sup>th</sup> graders and ESL students new to our district along with former ESL students. The year began on a very positive note and we are excited to begin reading our novels and expanding our English vocabulary. Good luck to all!



**EJHS:** EJHS ESL is up an running! Students are frantically filling their heads with content vocabulary, grammar skills, and reading. Our current book is "The Cay" by Theodore Taylor. Our main character has lost his sight. Ask your child about how their lives might be different if they were to lose one of their senses!

**PMEHS:** EHS classes have been busy completing some base-line testing for growth monitoring. We are getting to know each other as every class has received new students! Our novel is "Tears of a Tiger" by Sharon Draper. The central theme is teenagers making good decisions and dealing with loss. We have completed four vocabulary chapters and will soon start some writing projects. Also, after school tutoring has started for students looking for teacher support. I will be available Tuesdays after school for any student who signs up! Any questions, please email me! (mmascia@pmsd.org)

- EHS - is your child looking for help with a course? Did you know teachers are available after school to help? Tuesdays and Thursdays students can sign up to stay after school with a teacher for help! Tutoring is from 2:35 - 4:05. Students who have a ride may leave at that time. Or, if they do not have a ride, they will report to the library and continue to study until the 5:30 activity bus. There is no need for anyone to struggle in a class when there is help available!

### ELEMENTARY NEWS

**SIS:** In September 2014, Swiftwater Intermediate School welcomed staff and students in grades 4-6. The ESL teachers at SIS are Ms. J. Malinowski and Ms. J. Menendez.

The beginning of the school year is always an exciting time to reconnect with old friends and to meet new friends, too! We are happily settling into a routine that includes practicing listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Also, we are in the process of planning many new and exciting events to promote our new "COOL" school-wide positive rewards program.

**CRIS:** Here at Clear Run Intermediate School, we have welcomed our students into the new year. We are working on "Getting to know you" projects in addition to other ELA activities in our classes. We look forward to a very productive year with the support of our ESL parents.

**CREC:** Kindergarten ESL students have been working on may Fall activities and well as reading a story about *Johnny Apple Seed*. First Grade ESL students are reading the story *Ants* and learning about ants in class. Second grade ESL students have completed many All About Me Activities. All three grades are having a grade start to the school year!

**TEC:** Welcome back everyone! TEC's ESL classes recently started. Hope everyone had a great summer. Looking forward to getting to know the students and learning more about them.

**SEC:** Greetings all and happy fall! Ms. Cooper, Ms. Menendez, Ms. Davis, and Ms. Yarashas have been busy with ESL screening and school wide DIBELing. We are looking forward to officially welcoming our students into our classrooms soon. We know that we are going to have the best year ever!

## **Exit Criteria for Pennsylvania's English Language Instructional Programs for English Language Learners**

Pennsylvania requires any student who receives ESL support to meet a required set of criteria to exit from the program. All students who receive ESL are assessed annually by the PA State English Language Assessment, which is known as the WIDA ACCESS. Students' English abilities in speaking, listening, reading, and writing are determined based on the results from this assessment, which was administered in February. Students are assigned to a 'tier': A, B, or C, based on their placement test score.

**\*Both of the required exit criteria must be met, AND one of the two additional exit criteria** provided below to exit from an English language instructional program:

### **Required Exit Criteria, Students in Grades 3-12:**

1. Score of BASIC on the annual Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) math or Algebra I Keystone AND PSSA reading or Literature Keystone.

\*\*\*PSSA and Keystone exam scores must be from the most recent academic school year.

#### **Special Circumstances:**

- *For students transferring from other states, the results of academic achievement assessments used for accountability in other states may be considered when the academic proficiency level is comparable to BASIC on the PSSA/Keystone assessments.*
- *For students that are in a grade that is not assessed with a PSSA or Keystone assessment, each of the remaining exit criteria must be met to exit (Required Exit Criteria #2, Additional Exit Criteria #1, Additional Exit criteria #2).*

2. Score of 5.0 on an ACCESS for ELLs Kindergarten assessment (accountability score) or score of 5.0 on a Tier C ACCESS for ELLs assessment.

- Cutoff score flexibility is available in special circumstances.

**NOTE: The W-APT may ONLY be administered to a student *once* in any school year.**

<u><b>Grade Level</b></u>	<u><b>ACCESS Score</b></u>	<u><b>Required W-APT Scores*</b></u>
1-5	4.6-4.9	5.0 in each domain
6-8	4.7-4.9	5.0 in each domain
9-12	4.8-4.9	5.0 in each domain

*\* A student must score 5.0 in each domain (listening, speaking, reading and writing). A composite proficiency score will not be used.*

A score of PROFICIENT on the reading PSSA or Literature Keystone assessments can be used along with the other required criteria outlined in this policy (Required Exit Criteria #1 and Additional Exit Criteria #1 or #2) to justify exit for students who achieve a composite proficiency score of 4.5 to 4.9 on the January administration of the ACCESS. In this case, W-APT scores are not necessary to demonstrate progress from the time of ACCESS administration to the end of the school year.

### **Additional Exit Criteria:**

1. Final grades of C or better in core subject areas (Mathematics, Language Arts, Science and Social Studies).
2. Scores on district-wide assessments that are comparable to the BASIC performance level on the PSSA math or Algebra I Keystone AND PSSA reading or Literature Keystone assessments.

Questions may be directed to Linda Long (lilong@pa.gov) Lovinda Weaver (lweaver@pa.gov) or Tami Shaffer (tshaffer@pa.gov).

# ESL STAFF SPOTLIGHT

A new feature to our quarterly newsletters will be an interview of one of the ESL teachers around the district. Our first teacher to let us get to know her is none other than Pocono Mountain West Junior High School ESL Specialist, Ms. Dianna Marrazzo. Ms. Marrazzo was interviewed earlier in September. See what she would like to share about herself.



## Ms. Marrazzo's Interview

7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, ELA/ESL Teacher at WJHS

This is my tenth year teaching in the Pocono Mountain School District. I have been at the West Junior High School since the building opened in 2006. I graduated from Marywood University and have attended college for approximately eight years earning my bachelors and masters degrees, as well as an additional sixty credits. Reading is one of my favorite pastimes. Currently, you will find me reading the novel, "Sing in the Morning, Cry at Night", written by Barbara J. Taylor, an English teacher at the West High School. I encourage all my students to read and hope that they, too, will enjoy reading as much as I do. Spending time nurturing my vegetable and flower gardens and playing with my 12 year old Jack Russell Terrier, who I have had since he was seven weeks old, are my other favorite pastimes. I also enjoy crafting and sewing. Finally, my favorite movies all have happy endings!

## HOME/SCHOOL CONNECTION

Please join us on October 16th for "ESL Movie Night!" We will be showing three specialized ESL webinars provided by the WIDA Consortium. The webinars focus on Parents and ESL, and the topics include:

- What does it mean to be an English language learner?
- How is my child expected to use language in school?
- What does the ACCESS for ELLs Parent/Guardian Score Report tell me?

Also, at the end of the webinars, ESL teachers will answer questions about Pocono Mountain's ESL program.

So, bring a blanket and share some snacks as the WIDA professionals share information about ESL!

**WHEN AND WHERE:** October 16th from 6pm - 8pm in Clear Run Elementary Center's Cafeteria.

**\*\*SEE THE COUPON TO THE RIGHT FOR A SPECIAL FREE TREAT!! BRING IT TO CREC ON THE NIGHT OF OUR "ESL MOVIE NIGHT."**

## COUPON

**This coupon is good for free popcorn at the Home/School Connection Night on Thursday at CREC.**



**To redeem, please cut this coupon out and bring it with you to CREC on 10-16-14 at 6PM.**



# Why ESL? What are the benefits of ESL?

## What happens at the Elementary Level?

- Students receive small group instruction without missing the English Language Arts class.
- Students receive more individual attention.
- Students feel comfortable speaking in a small setting.
- Students are in a literature rich environment.
- Skills from the ELA classroom are targeted and reinforced.
- ESL certified teachers use research based strategies to instruct children
- Vocabulary development is targeted.
- Students are given opportunities to practice English language skills in the four domains: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
- Students' ESL teachers collaborate with core subject teachers to plan, instruct, grade, monitor progress, and when necessary provide accommodations.
- Students can adjust to or feel more comfortable in the school environment.
- ESL teachers strive to enhance parent involvement and communication.



## What happens in Secondary ESL?

Secondary level ESL classes are content based English Language Arts (ELA) classes. The regular ELA curriculum is followed with accommodations and adaptations made as necessary with a focus on English language mastery. ESL provides newcomers with support that is both academic and psychological to enable students to bridge the gap between cultures. Upon passing the class, English Language Arts credit is granted. The ELA room provides a "haven" for students to receive encouragement, an opportunity to interact with students who are also newcomers, assistance with academics, and support with any of the experiences one would encounter when delving into a new culture and a new country.

# Parent-Teacher Conferences Are Near!!!

## Elementary AND Secondary\* Conferences

On Thursday, November 13th, Elementary Parent-Teacher Conferences will be held from 5:30PM to 8:30PM at your child's building. Conferences will also be held from 8:00AM to 2:30PM on Friday, November 14th. There will be NO school for students in grades K-12, November 14th.  
*\*Secondary conferences are available again during the day this year!*

### General Conference Tips

1. If needed, please ask the school to provide an interpreter/translator.
2. Be prepared. Write down some things you may want to talk to the teacher about.
3. Be on time: Arrive on time or even a few minutes early.
4. Stay Positive.
5. Stay on track.
6. Listen to what the teacher has to say.
7. Ask questions if you do not understand.
8. Stay Calm.
9. Stay within your scheduled conference time, other conferences are waiting after yours.
10. Share information from the conference with your child.
11. Leave the conference on a good note: Before heading home, parents should let teachers know the best way to be contacted.



<http://www.thelearningcommunity.us/resources-by-format/tips-for-parents/parent-teacher-conferences.aspx>

## \* Secondary Conferences\*

### Junior High and High School

Parents need to contact their child's guidance department secretary to schedule appointments to meet their child's teachers.

\*\*\*\*\*NOTE\*\*\*\*\*

**To the Parents of college-bound 12th grade**

**students:**

**Please be sure your child has applied to the college of choice.**

**Follow up should occur with assigned guidance counselor.**

## Pocono Mountain School District

### Mission & Vision Statement

*\*To prepare all students for tomorrow's challenges and opportunities.*

*\*To create a culture of achievement, improve student performance, maintain safe schools, and promote strong character.*



## Home Help Tips for Parents of ESL Students

- Establish specific routines for your child to follow.
- Practice vocabulary daily with your child using household objects.
- Read to your child daily in your native language or English.
- Practice good study habits daily. Set aside a time for your child to study on a regular basis.
- Have family meetings where your child is the leader of the discussions. Allow your child to speak in either English or the native language.
- Visit the ESL resource site at the PMSD main web page. Plentiful resources for parents to use at home are available.
- [www.pmsd.org](http://www.pmsd.org)

The Pocono Mountain School District's ESL Program is a regular education program that is aligned with the Pennsylvania Department of Education's ESL standards.

A specialized, certified ESL teacher works with students in large or small groups.

A program designed to assist students with the reading, speaking, listening, and writing of the English language.

ESL is NOT a bilingual program.

