



M A R Y L A N D TESOL NEWS

MARYLAND TEACHERS OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

www.marylandtesol.org



Essential Questions: Essentially a powerful tool for unlocking higher-ordered thinking skills in students

By Tara Theroux,
Secondary Interest
Section co-chair

All teachers know that higher ordered thinking is the goal in education; yet why are the majority of questions reported to be lower level questions such as those in the Bloom's Taxonomy areas of Knowledge, Comprehension and Application? Some teachers may report that they don't have time to spend on in-depth topics due to testing pressure. However, using higher ordered thinking questioning through Essential Questions can give teachers more bang for their buck.

Essential Questions do not have to be asked every day; they consist of a few higher ordered questions that encompass a unit of study for any core-subject as well as a performing arts class. Some may be over-arching questions that are revisited

continued on page 7



Teaching English in Difficult Circumstances

by Zakia Sarwar, Hon. Executive Director, Society of Pakistan English Language Teachers

English is now acknowledged as the global language, because it is primarily the language of science/technology, business and international communication in all corners of the world. It is also seen as the language of power and upward social mobility and a cherished goal for millions of parents and young adults, aspiring for success in career. Kachru's had noted this trend much earlier when he talked about his classic circles and pointed out that the 'inner circles' - who were the original users of English namely, America, Australia Canada and England-- were long ago outnumbered by the 'outer circles' of colonized nations, as well as the constantly growing 'expanding circles' where English was used for business and communication. This phenomenon has given rise to the 'World Englishes', in which nonnative varieties of English are viewed with tolerance and understanding. In turn, this has greatly affected English Language Teaching (ELT) worldwide. In the countries where English is the first language, there has been a great deal of interest and research in Mother tongue and Second Language Acquisition (SLA), which has brought in different teaching methodologies and sophisticated technologies to meet the

growing needs for gaining proficiency in English. An interesting contrast is that very little indigenous research has been done in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) where the target language is extensively used; but most of its bearings are taken from research in Mother Tongue (L1) or SLA studies. However, there is huge difference between mother-tongue, second language (ESL) and foreign language learning (EFL).

Very briefly put, L1 or Mother tongue acquisition can be seen as a 'bath'. The users are fully immersed in it from the time of their birth, or even earlier - in their mother's womb when they 'hear' their language all around them.

L2 Second Language is learnt due to needs (mostly by migrants) so it's like a 'shower'... immersed from outside, but at home and in the learners' community everybody uses their native language. But they need English for their survival in their adopted country, so greengrocers' language level is limited to meet his communicative needs.

L3 or Foreign Language (EFL) is like a 'sprinkle'. The target language -- that is

continued on page 6

Contents:

Teaching English in Difficult Circumstances	1
Essential Questions: Essentially a powerful tool for unlocking higher-ordered thinking skills in students	1
2014-2015 MDTESOL Board	2
A Message from the Editors	3

A Message from the President	4
Maryland TESOL Grants and Awards	8
The Common Core Needs More	9

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A Message from Your MDTESOL Newsletter Editors

From Chester Gates and Billie Muñoz

The Peace Corps Mission is very simple:

To promote world peace and friendship by fulfilling three goals:

1. To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women
2. To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served
3. To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans

The first two goals are usually met in-country as volunteers work with families, neighbors, and government officials to realize their primary and secondary projects. Many things can get in the way: disease, accidents, death, revolution, or bad weather. Nevertheless, most volunteers work through the worst of it until they are either at the end of two years, or they are carted off to safety by the United States government.

The third goal is accomplished somewhat as volunteers send photos and stories back home. These dribbles of information are exciting for a short time, but the novelty fades as mortgages, staff meetings, high gas prices, and exercise regimens gain the upper hand for attention. Interest is renewed when the volunteer returns home, but the world is a busy place, and Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) have to compete with *Scandal* and the Apple Watch. It's hard to get people interested in the world of the RPCV when Africa is confused for a country and people think of China as a place of a million people.

Here in the USA, it's hard not to teach ESOL and understand that the globalization that policy wonks in suits blather on about on Sunday talk shows happens every day in our classrooms, even if that globalization seems lopsided. There are people from myriad cultures coming to a civilized nation and expecting the minimum of hospitality. We try to ensure it for a few hours a day.

If you attended TESOL this year, you are among that myriad.

Unless you are a native Canadian, travel to TESOL this year meant entering a new land. You needed a passport to cross over that invisible border, and you may have needed patience as you navigated Canadian social norms. You could have retreated into the

comfort of 4G bliss, but you did so at overseas rates. A kilometer is not the same as a mile. You could get a hamburger and fries, though the fries might have had gravy and the hamburger, mayonnaise. You may have been the object of quiet groans if you asked why signs seem to be in two languages. And there may have been a few "natives" who resented your presence, even as they took your Canadian Dollars.

You had a chance to fulfill the second Peace Corps goal. Smile. Be nice. Enjoy Toronto.

That pesky third goal is what happens when you're there and you come back. It is the sum of the people you talked to from around the world and the questions you asked when you attended your workshops. You have a chance to better understand what it means to make English a world language, whether for good or bad, in far-flung corners of the world, where Wi-Fi often fails and electricity doesn't last. You have an opportunity to bring those chance encounters back to your classrooms, conference rooms, and cubicle as you prepare for yet another TESOL meeting in a year in Baltimore. Let us know about them, too. Take a moment to tell us about those experiences in a short letter and we'll print them in the newsletter.

Baltimore is close to home, but TESOL extends far, far away.





A Message from Your MDTESOL President

from Debra Suarez



Welcome to the Maryland TESOL Newsletter! It has been a long winter in Maryland, and as spring finally blooms, it is a perfect time to think about New Beginnings! I'd like to share some of the exciting new beginnings that Maryland TESOL has on the horizon for its membership.

MDTESOL Awards!

MDTESOL has two awards that are now open for competition: The MDTESOL Professional Development (PD) Grant is a small grants program that is intended to support the work of practicing teachers. The purpose of the PD Grant is to recognize individual efforts that benefit ESL students. Applications are due May 8, 2015 via the MDTESOL website.

The MDTESOL Ann Beusch Award is bestowed upon individuals working outside of the fields of ESL and International Student Services who have made sustained, exemplary contributions to the ESL field and its students. Nominations are due May 8, 2015 via the MDTESOL website.

Please see further information for both awards in this newsletter, via emails to our membership, and on our website. [link to <https://www.mdtesol.org/>]

MDTESOL Interest Section Opportunities

We already have had exciting professional development events this year. Our Interest Sections for Adult Education and our Interest Section for Graduate Students have both hosted very successful events that were well attended. We are continuing these Interest Section PD events for the remainder of the year. You can learn more about these events via e-mail to the membership, on our website, and further in this newsletter.

Member Center Resource Library and Video Gallery!

Did you miss the MDTESOL Fall Conference? No worry! You can access the videos of our keynote speaker, Dr. Stephen Krashen, and other materials from the Fall conference. These videos and other resource materials are **available for free** to MDTESOL members. Please see the "Member Center" on our MDTESOL website [link to <https://www.mdtesol.org/>] for access to the Resource Library and Video Gallery.

Pilot Strategic Plan

For the past two and half years, the MDTESOL Board has worked diligently to create a Strategic Plan which will guide MDTESOL's processes and organization for the next five years. We will share this plan for comment

and discussion at the Spring Annual Dinner on May 21, 2015.

Spring Dinner May 21, 2015: Expanded Meeting, Social Hour and Jazz Entertainment!

Come celebrate! During the academic year, MDTESOL members busily engage in professional development events during our Fall conference and during our many Interest Section events. We work hard all year, but MDTESOL's Annual Spring dinner is our time to celebrate. This year, we look forward to an expanded business meeting during which we will discuss MDTESOL's Pilot Strategic Plan. We will continue the ever-popular Social Hour, followed by dinner and – for the first time – jazz entertainment! Please join us this year for the annual Spring Dinner on May 21st. Find out more about the Spring Dinner via e-mail to the membership, our website, and the flyer in this newsletter.

2015 Fall Conference: MDTESOL Conference Expands to Kent County

Perhaps you have heard by now that MDTESOL will hold its Fall 2015 Annual Conference at Washington College in Kent County! [link to <http://www.washcoll.edu/>] Since the location is central to most of Maryland, we are hoping that this location will better enable MDTESOL members to meet, collaborate and share throughout the state! The Call for Proposals will be announced soon – so keep a look-out in your member in-box and on the MDTESOL website. The Fall 2015 Conference is sure to be a positive turning point for MDTESOL as a state-wide organization.

TESOL 2016 in Baltimore, Maryland!

MDTESOL will be a proud co-sponsor of the TESOL International Conference in Baltimore. As the conference draws near, there will be opportunities for engaging in volunteer and professional development opportunities.

As you can see, the MDTESOL has been very busy creating engagement opportunities for its membership. Please take advantage of these opportunities: Apply for a PD grant! Nominate someone for the Anne Beusch Award! Attend the Spring dinner! Submit a proposal for the Fall conference!

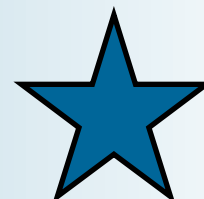
Thanks for all you do for the English language learning field in Maryland!

Sincerely,
Debra Suarez
Maryland TESOL President



2015 MD-TESOL SPRING DINNER

With live *jazz* entertainment
by “Night & Day”



Thursday, May 21st
6:30-9:30 pm

Ten Oaks Conference Center
5000 Signal Bell Ln
Clarksville, MD 21029

\$20 for members

\$30 for nonmembers

Register online at

www.mdtesol.org

Or pay at the door

- Social hour and cocktails: 6:30 pm
- Dinner: 7:00 pm
- Meeting: 7:45 –9:30 pm.
 - Elect the new board and recognize the outgoing board.

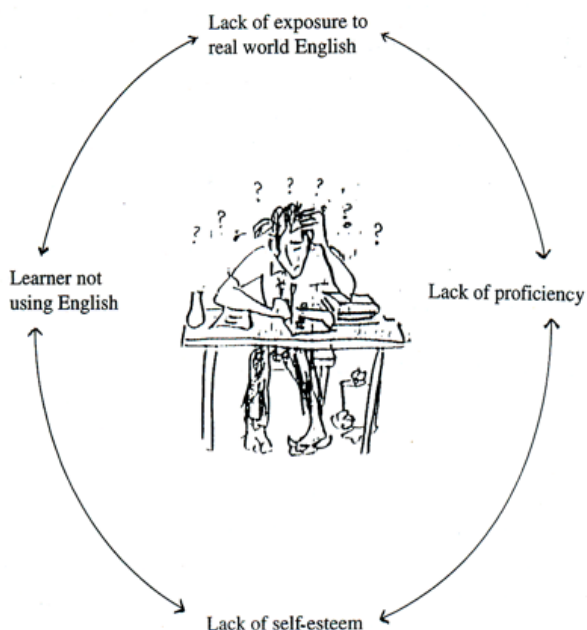


Don't miss this great event!

The MDTESOL Strategic Plan will be presented
for discussion and vote!

English -- is not used by the community at large. They can perform the daily functions of their lives without knowing English. However, it is perceived to be 'the language of upward social mobility', so every one wants to learn it. It is often taught in schools as a 'subject' for one class period a day, using Grammar Translation method, so a learner has minimal exposure to the real world language, and rarely uses it meaningfully. Consequently, explanations and meanings are conveyed to a learner in his native language. So he is not able to function well in using the target language in real life, if and when it's needed. The hapless learner is therefore caught in a vicious circle of not knowing English due to lack of exposure to real world English, resulting in low proficiency in English leading to low self esteem. (Sarwar 2000)

Fig. 2. The Vicious Circle Which Engulfs the EFL Learner



The unhappy learner is only one part of the story. The teachers of English in difficult circumstances have to contend with issues such as large classes of 100+, limited resources (often no textbooks, no blackboard in the class, besides cramped seating spaces for learners in sweltering heat), outdated, uninteresting, and irrelevant syllabi, besides teachers being hampered by their own lack of proficiency in English, and very little support in terms of professional development. Day in and day out, facing these challenges for teachers is a Herculean task.

Coleman (1989) shared some findings from his Lancaster/Leeds Research Project on Language Learning in Large Classes, about how teachers who face these issues feel, when they teach in difficult circumstances. First of all, they feel self

conscious, nervous and uncomfortable, because it is tiresome to be the continuous focus of 100+ eyes all day long. Secondly, large classes are difficult to handle due to class management issues and the noise level. Thirdly, it becomes difficult to grade/evaluate any oral or written work effectively so teachers are under great stress as they are always buried under endless piles of homework. Last of all, teachers feel that since individual attention cannot be given, very little learning takes place. (Sarwar: 2001)

This really paints a very bleak picture of the teaching-learning scenario for the majority of users of English in 'Outer' and 'Expanding' circles where the target language is most in demand. What makes matters worse is the ignorance of current insights into quality education, as well the apathy of most governments, which are often crippled by political instability and social upheavals. Education in these circumstances gets to be the lowest in the priority list of policy makers. However, there is a silver lining to these dark clouds due to the emergence of professional development organizations in the past three decades or so, which provide a forum to language teachers, specially in South Asia and South East Asia. Specially to be noted are teachers in Afghanistan, (ELTAA) Bangladesh (BELTA), India, (ELTAI) Indonesia, (TEFLIN) Malaysia, (MELTA) Nepal, (NELTA) Pakistan, (SPELT) Sri Lanka, (SLELTA)- to name just a few – who have become aware of the power of networking and sharing their experiences with each other to groom themselves professionally and learn from each other. As independent networks, they are able to overcome bureaucratic red-tape and delays, and aspire for academic excellence. Their enthusiastic and supportive organizations give them a realization that they are not alone in their predicaments and fellow teachers around the world face similar situations. Besides the limited formal training avenues offered to a few of them through their governments, a much wider avenue of continuous professional development (CPD) is available to members of these organizations. Moreover, it also provides them opportunities to explore collaborative action research, since their teaching learning scenarios are similar. (Sarwar & Gautam 2014)

What should the international TESOL community do, if they want to play a proactive role in improving the teaching/learning scenario in regions where teachers are desirous of CPD, and want to impart quality education to their learners, but lack the resources to do so? "Pair and share" is a policy, which members of TESOL and IATEFL could consider adopting through organizational and personal networks to explore ways for collaborative action research, and share their ideas and publications with teachers who teach in difficult circumstances. These teachers do not have access of

continued on page 17

throughout the year and can offer a chance for cross-curricular work. Since they are higher-ordered, there is no ‘one’ correct answer, and they cannot be answered without using supporting evidence. They tend to fall into three categories: Transfer, Make Meaning and Acquire (McTighe, Wiggins, 2013). Transfer questions are those where students transfer skills or information to another subject matter in an interdisciplinary manner. Make Meaning questions ask students to use their background knowledge, make meaning and apply the information. Lastly, the Acquire category refers to mastery of a concept or skills.

How can we use them in class?

- At the beginning of the unit: to elicit and assess prior knowledge and incite interest.
- To focus student learning throughout the unit of study: post them visually and consistently revisit through discussion and writing.
- Sub-essential questions can be used in the Cornell notes taking system.
- As an assessment at the end of the unit.
- As overarching questions that can be answered throughout the year (also posted in the classroom).

How do we create Essential Questions?

The following is a list of tips for creating essential questions:

- Determine what kind of Essential Question you want this to be: for a unit(s) of study, or an overarching question throughout the year.
- Unpack the standards (such as Common Core State Standards) and create an essential question based on the standard with similar wording.
- Think about the three types of Essential Questions (Transfer, Make meaning, and Acquire) and decide if you want to focus on certain types or all three.
- Brainstorm and revise the Essential Questions. Make sure that they are higher-ordered and will be revisited throughout the unit/year. Less is better than more since they should be explored in depth.

What are some examples of Essential Questions?

Essential Questions can be created for all content areas. I have used some of the following examples with ESOL students:

- **Language arts:** for a unit on reading strategies and as overarching questions: What reading strategies

do I find the most helpful? (Make meaning) What kind of a reader am I? (Make meaning) How can I use these learning strategies in my other classes? (Transfer)

- **Language arts:** What are examples of ‘author’s purpose’ that I use in writing for my own classes? (Make meaning) What are the authors’ purposes’ for the textbooks in my other classes (math, social studies, science) and how do I know? (Transfer)
- **Math:** What should I do when I am stuck on a problem? (Make meaning)
- **Science:** Should we use nuclear energy? (for a unit on energy=Transfer)
- **Even newcomer ESOL students can use Essential Questions.** On the Cornell notes system, I would translate the Essential Question and they could write their answer in their first language in the ‘Summary’ section. They could also discuss in their first language if they can’t express themselves in English and if they have other students who speak the same language. Students could also work in a group and discuss it in their first language and the higher-level ELL could translate their answer into English. This way, you are not excluding newcomers from higher-level thinking! Some examples of Essential Questions for newcomers include: 1. Why study grammar? 2. I don’t understand English. What can I do?

So, we can see that while it may take time to create EQs, it’s essential that we do!

Works Cited

McTighe, Wiggins (2013). *Essential Questions: Opening Doors to Student Understanding*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD



Maryland TESOL Grants and Awards

Maryland TESOL offers three honors annually: the Professional Development Grant, the Ann Beusch Award, and the Lifetime Achievement Award. Please submit an application for a Professional Development Grant, and/or nominate a colleague for the Ann Beusch Award.

The Maryland TESOL Professional Development Grants Program

The Maryland TESOL Professional Development (PD) Grant is a smallgrants program that is intended to support the work of practicing teachers. The purpose of the PD Grant is to recognize individual efforts that promote, benefit and/or enhance the service to students of English as a Second Language. Through this program, MDTESOL funds projects and initiatives which crosscut a variety of agents and our extended communities. All MDTESOL members are eligible to submit a grant application. Successful grant applications are those that will serve to connect and enhance ESL services through teachers' initiatives. Small grants of up to \$1,000 will be awarded at the Annual Spring Dinner. Recipients must publicize a summary of how the award was used to benefit our profession as a presentation at the annual conference, and as a written summary to be published in the MDTESOL newsletter. The award is presented at the Spring Dinner. *Applications due May 8, 2015* via the [MDTESOL website](#).

Ann Beusch Distinguished Service Award

The Ann Beusch Award was established to honor the accomplishments of former Supervisor of Foreign Languages and ESOL of the State of Maryland, Ann Beusch. The Ann Beusch Distinguished Service Award honors individuals who exemplify the spirit and dedication to international students that Ann demonstrated during her long tenure as a State Supervisor of ESOL and Foreign Languages. The award is bestowed upon individuals *working outside of the fields* of ESL and International Student Services who have made sustained, exemplary contributions to the ESL field and /or its students. All current members of MDTESOL are eligible to submit nominations. The award is presented at the Annual Spring Dinner. *Applications due May 8, 2015* via the [MDTESOL website](#).



The Common Core Needs More

by Anne Marie Foerster Luu, ESOL teacher, Montgomery County Public Schools
and Adjunct Instructor, McDaniel College.

It has been several years now that Montgomery County Public Schools has been transitioning to a curriculum aligned to the Common Core State Standards. As teachers work together to create new learning experiences that teach English and content at the same time, we are sharing our heretofore isolated knowledge of content and pedagogy. English-language teachers are modeling lessons, differentiating materials, and helping content teachers find language-learning opportunities in multiple contents and contexts at the same time. Content teachers are helping English-language teachers learn more about the content of math, science, social studies, and more. School leadership is learning more and more about the complexity of language learning that goes beyond vocabulary lists and bilingual dictionaries. Families are becoming more involved as language practice after school and at home has become more possible through the growth of family outreach programs and the use of technology. Everyone is in the mix, and the opportunities are great to move the education of English Learners to greater and greater heights.

Regardless of this exciting progress, we need to capture the opportunity to centralize the student in the process of helping our colleagues understand their academic needs. I learned about teaching English Learners from Dr. Shelley Wong, presently an Associate Professor at George Mason University, and Dr. Suhanthie Motha, presently Assistant Professor at the University of Washington. They taught me that learning English is not a content in and of itself, but I fear that we might get bogged down by the mechanics of teaching the Common Core State Standards without understanding the English Learner. They taught me that understanding the child from multiple perspectives helps us create the best learning environments for children and youth. They are not simply vessels into which we can pour content and language.

Herein lies another opportunity. As we partner with colleagues to address the challenges of the Common Core State Standards, we can also foster a common understanding of the experience of being an English Learner and the impact that the challenges have on learning. Fundamentally, believing that our English Learners can achieve the standards is our first step. Clint Smith, former public school educator from the DC Metro area and writer, tells a story about how his father grew up in the Jim Crow south and always told him, “Clint, I didn’t want people to feel sorry for me. I wanted people to believe in me.” And from this influence, among others, Clint Smith notes that his goal is to write about his students to “break them out of the cultural caricatures that they are too often compartmentalized in.” (TEDxManhattan, March 2014) Jose, a student who is

also from the DC Metro area, notes at the public release of Connecting Youth to Opportunity report, “People have to tell you, ‘Yes, you can do it. I see a bright future ahead of you.’” (MCPStv, June 2014) And Dr. Rita Pierson, may she rest in peace, cautions us, “Kids don’t learn from people they don’t like.” (TEDTalks, May 2013). English Learners are vulnerable to issues of poverty, racism, low expectations, lack of connectedness, and politics. The child in the classroom wants to interact, learn, achieve, and grow. Dr. William Perez (2012, p32) says that we need to become representative of a safe environment for students to be able to explore their own potential.

So as we move around the “what” of the Common Core State Standards, let’s consider a few questions:

- Are we aware that before we communicate with words, body language and facial gestures send the initial message of welcoming, confidence, and alliance?
- Are we recognizing the impact that a child’s personality has on his/her acquisition of English?
- Do we have ways of connecting students to each other inside and beyond the classroom to foster relationships that are critical motivators to learning English?
- Are there systems in place for communicating with families?
- Are we developing learning processes that engage English Learners with their peers over motivating questions and relevant content?
- Are we, the teachers in the classroom, communicating sincere care and concern for our English Learners?
- Are we, the teachers in the classroom, sending messages to our English Learners that imply, “We are going to support you through the tough times and celebrate with you your successes?”

Dr. Cristina Igoa tells us to build a nest that makes our learning environment safe for all children. So, let’s add more to the Core with our understanding of English Learners and the challenges they face each day. We all can demonstrate that we believe in our English Learners.

Resources

Identity, Inc. Connecting youth to opportunity: how Latino youth perspectives can inform a blueprint for improving opportunity in Montgomery County, Maryland. Commissioned by The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region. <http://www.thecommunityfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/>

[HS-CYO-LatinoYouth_Report_PDF-FINAL.pdf](#) June 2014

Igoa, Cristina. The inner world of the immigrant child. May 1995

MCPStv, Report on Disconnected Youth in Montgomery County Released at Gaithersburg HS. June 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkKxLgFLbM0> Captured December 31, 2014.

Perez, William. Americans by heart: undocumented Latino students and the promise of higher education. November 2011

Pierson, Rita. Every kid needs a champion. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFnMTHhKdkw> Captured December 31, 2014.

Smith, Clint. Celebrating resilience - reframing the narrative around our students. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OixDnLzXpuU> Captured December 31, 2014.

TESOL International. Implementing Common Core State Standards: The changing role of the ESL teacher. http://www.tesol.org/docs/default-source/advocacy/ccss_convening_final-8-15-13.pdf?sfvrsn=10 April 2013.

updated research and educational trends and the pair and share activity will provide them with a chance to acquire knowledge in the current trends of education and updates in educational research. This would really be a “win-win” situation because the proactive TESOLers and IATEFLers will be also be enriched by this exchange and will gain invaluable insights into teaching and learning of language and its issues in the developing world, which would widen their horizons too.

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Sarwar, Z. (2000) *The Golden Gates of English in the Global Context* in Language in the Global Context. Editors Ho Wah Kam and Christopher Ward Anthology series 41 published by SEAMEO Regional Language Centre Singapore. Pgs 32-56

Sarwar, Z. (2001) *Adapting Individualization Techniques in Large Classes*, in Innovations, in English Language Teaching. Editors David R Hall and Anne Hewings Hienneman London & New York in association with Macquarie University and Open University Sydney. Pgs 127-136

Sarwar, Z. & G . Gautam (2014) *Learner Autonomy through Project –based Learning*, TESOL Convention in Portland

Sarwar, Z. & G. Gautam (forthcoming) *Empowering Learners in Large Classes* in Teaching English in Difficult Circumstances Editors Fauzia Shamim and Harry Kuchah, Palgrave



Secondary Education Interest Section 2015 Spring Event

Supporting Long-Term English Language Learners:

**Dr. Margarita Calderon,
Professor Emerita, Johns Hopkins University**

When: Saturday April 25, 10-1 p.m.

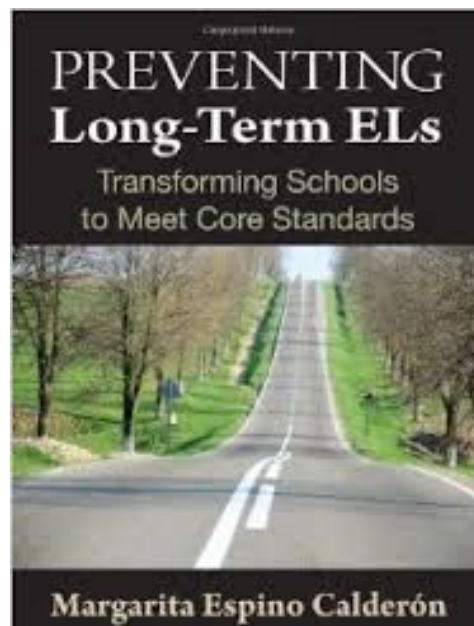
Agenda: 10-10:15: networking

10:15-12: 45: training

12:45-1:00: refreshments

Where: East Columbia Meeting Room, East Columbia Branch,
Howard County Public Library
6600 Cradlerock Way, Columbia, MD 21045
<http://www.hclibrary.org/index.php?page=63>

Cost: FREE for MDTESOL members and non-members
Please RSVP to Ashley Jenoff - asjenof@carrollk12.org





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MARYLAND TEACHERS OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

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