Student support worker: Sylvia Kadijk

Sylvia grew up in Bogota, Columbia. She first visited Canada in 1992 as a student and then decided to immigrate to Canada in 1994 to become a teacher. Sylvia graduated from Kings College in 1999 with a teaching degree. She met her husband Mark while teaching on the Sunshine Coast in 1999. They have been married since 2000 and have two daughters, Solana (14) Sara (13) who attend Winston Churchill High School and Gilbert Patterson Middle School.

Sylvia first joined Lethbridge School District No. 51 in 2012 and worked as an EA in Park Meadows, Galbraith and Lethbridge Christian School, where she has loved working closely with young students.

Now as the ESL Student Support Worker, Sylvia works closely with Immigrant Services and other agencies to provide supports for students and their families. She loves working one-on-one with students who need some extra support and connecting new families to the supports they need. Welcome Sylvia to the ESL team!

Number of local indigenous groups in Columbia: 102
Columbia is home to 49 million people, making it the second largest Spanish-speaking country:
Years when Columbia was part of a Spanish colony in the area: 1525-1819
Resources:

Country profile: Columbia

Columbia is the second largest Spanish-speaking country in the world with 49 million people.

- Columbia is a land of extremes with snow covered volcanic mountains in the Andes range and tropical beaches along its north and west coast.
- Columbia was a Spanish colony (1525-1819) and then separated into many different countries until finally Panama separated in 1903.
- Columbia has had several civil wars and several times with peace. The latest (52 year) conflict ended with the peace agreement between the FARC and Colombian government in 2016/2017.
- Columbia is a mixed population of 102 local indigenous groups, African-Colombians, and European-descendants. Many of these groups have mixed over the last 580 years.
- Columbia has had a long history of democracy. The country is governed by a president who is elected every 4 years. Laws are passed by a house of representatives and a senate.
- Some of Columbia’s exports are coffee, bananas, oil, coal, gold, platinum and emeralds.
- Many citizens have left Columbia to other Latin American countries, to Canada, and the United States because of the civil war and drug war.

Microsoft Translator App: This new translating app provides new ways of interacting with students who need support in their first language. Differing from Google Translate, Microsoft Translator provides better accuracy in Arabic translation and the option for a large group conversation. Please consider including this app in your teaching repertoire.

This newsletter:

In this newsletter, there will be regular sections for you to enjoy including: country profiles/backgrounds, stories and pictures of school activities and events for ELLs, resources and research around best practice for ELLs. This week’s profile looks at Columbia.

Words, Words, Words

In the last edition of Language Matters, I focused on oral language as the foundation for literacy. In this edition I want to extend that to thinking about the importance of vocabulary. Being able to read a word (decode) is one important part of the reading process, and in fact, becomes a relatively rote ability. Hock and Brasseur (as cited in Allington, 2015) conducted a study with 436 grade nine students with reading difficulties. The students decoding abilities outweighed their decoding abilities of vocabulary and world knowledge. It was a relative strength but their “problems stemmed from the smaller number of words they knew the meanings for, and an inability to read with understanding and fluency” (p. 29).

Our English Language Learners develop the ability to carry on basic conversations and to decode words faster than their ability to understand the meaning of the words and then to use that meaning to comprehend in situations where academic language may be used.

Clearly, knowing how to say the words isn’t enough. Our youngest to oldest students need to know what words mean and how to use them in their speaking, reading and writing. Often in our content areas, part of the struggle for students is the vocabulary.

My favourite strategies for explicit vocabulary instruction in all subjects

1. Use a TIP board. This is like a subject specific word wall, but it takes it up a notch. T stands for term, I for information (definition), P for picture or example. After instruction about a word have the students generate a definition and they can even create the picture or example. Gradually add to the TIP board as new words are learned over the course of a unit. These can be posted on the wall, kept electronically, and you could have the students keep one for future reference.

Resources in the Curriculum Resource Centre for Vocabulary:

- The Reading Strategies Book by Jennifer Serravallo
- What Really Matters for Middle School Readers: From Research to Practice by Richard Allington

- Our depth of word knowledge is determined by how we use words—receptive and expressive.
- We need to have a reason to learn new words.
- Words are concepts related to other words and can have multiple uses, which means that our knowledge of words can deepen.
- We learn words both through intentional instruction and incidentally. (p. 21)