WHO IS THE ESL STUDENT?
Definition of an ESL student:

- A student whose primary language or languages of the home, is other than English and would require additional English language support to develop reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Some ESL students may be Canadian born.

- There are no typical ESL students. They come from many linguistic and cultural backgrounds and have had a wide variety of life experiences, attributes that can significantly enrich the life of the school and help enhance learning for all students.
Group Discussion:

What are some challenges ESL students experience in our school system?
How do the challenges differ depending on the student’s personal situation?
**Categories of ESL Students:**

1. Immigrants  
   (By Choice)

2. International Students

3. Children of Temporary Foreign Workers

4. Government Assisted Refugees  
   (Displaced Person)

5. Refugee Claimants
1. Immigrants...by choice

- Normally have received formal education in their native countries more or less equivalent to Canadian standards.
- May have learned English as a foreign language in school.
- Make the choice to come to this country and have the choice to return to their native country.
- Family units are usually intact.
- Families are financially independent because parents are employed or have access to funds in their native country.
- Families may have been recruited by the government because of their education and work experience.
- May be sponsored by family members established here.
Challenges for Immigrant Students

- Must adapt to the Canadian school system.
- Have varying English abilities and their educational backgrounds cannot be assumed.
- May experience difficulties with adapting to their new culture.
- May experience a conflict of cultures between what is learned at school and practised at home.
2. International Students...

- Are here temporarily for the purpose of study.
- Are here to learn English and immerse themselves in Canadian culture.
- Pay to go to school in our province.
- Are in the province for varying lengths of time.
- Are generally highly educated students.
- Generally have studied English before coming to Canada.
Challenges for International Students

- Are usually separated from their families.
- May struggle with different cultural expectations between parent expectations and those of their new environment.
- Must adapt to the language, rules, and food of their residence.
3. Children of Temporary Foreign Workers...

- Students from this category are in the province studying while their parent(s) are on an employment contract.
- These students are similar to immigrant students in most respects except that they are here for a limited time due to their parent’s contractual employment.
- Challenges are similar to those experienced by immigrant students.
Government-assisted refugees are Convention Refugees Abroad and members of the Source Country Class whose initial resettlement in Canada is entirely supported by the Government of Canada or Quebec. This support is delivered by CIC-supported non-governmental agencies.

Canadian Citizenship and Immigration
Government Assisted Refugees

- Are referred to Canada by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

- Are permanent residents (landed immigrants) and therefore have all the rights and privileges of a Canadian citizen regarding education and access to services.

- Have left their country involuntarily due to political, social, and/or economic upheaval and are unable to return safely.

All refugees are immigrants but not all immigrants are refugees.
Challenges for Refugee Students

- May have experienced trauma.
- Have likely spent time in a refugee camp.
- Will experience vast cultural differences.
- Learn English for survival, not by choice.
- May have major gaps in education.
Challenges for Refugee Students

- May be unaware of location of family members.
- Have often lost family members.
- Generally live on a meagre income.
- Parents may be suffering trauma, culture shock, loss and disorientation.
- May have difficulty adapting to vast cultural differences and the Canadian school system.
Challenges for Refugee Students

- When placed in a grade based on age, are almost always far behind their peers academically.
- May struggle with the contrast between their own cultural expectations and those of their new environment, including school expectations.
5. Refugee Claimant

Canada offers refugee protection to people in Canada who fear persecution or whose removal from Canada would subject them to a danger of torture, a risk to their life or a risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.

(Citizenship and Immigration Canada Website)

- Arrived in Canada without status and is seeking asylum.

In 2009-2010, there were no refugee claimants in the school system.
Challenges for Refugee Claimants

- Family is uncertain of whether or not they will be accepted in Canada; face risk of deportation.
- Have likely escaped from persecution, threat or repression of some sort.
- Will experience cultural differences.
- May have gaps in education.
Conclusion

Although there are categories of ESL students, it is important to become familiar with each student’s individual profile.

Avoid assumptions based on cultural background, previous education, religion, and/or English language skills.

The ESL teacher and community organizations can be a valuable resource.
“Communication in its broadest sense is the goal of education, regardless of first or second language, or first or second culture; we build on already existing skills ... and cultural/linguistic diversity.”

(From ESL Learners with Special Needs, British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1998, p.16)
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- Hands: Department of Education, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Children in the library: Virginia Park School, St. John’s.

- Other photos and ClipArt from Microsoft
The Department of Education thanks the working group that created the series of presentations on working with ESL and immigrant students:

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2009