QATAR TESOL NEWS

THE SECOND QATAR TESOL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Second Annual Qatar TESOL International Conference will take place at the College of the North Atlantic (CNA-Qatar) on April 13-14, 2007 (Friday and Saturday). *Challenges and Solutions in ELT* is the theme.

Stephen Bax of Canterbury Christ Church University Is the Plenary Speaker sponsored by the British Council in

Stephen Bax is a Plenary Speaker

Doha.

He has extensive experience in Arabic-speaking cultures.
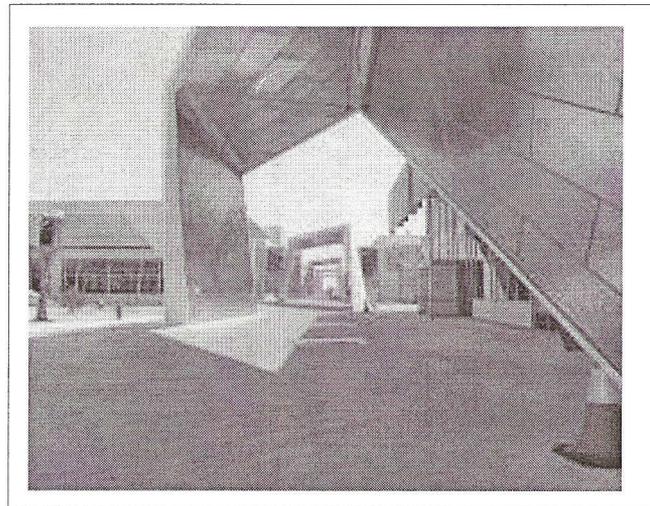
College of the North Atlantic-Qatar will host the conference on April 13-14, 2007.

Stephen has taught in the Middle East, South East Asia, Africa and Europe. He contributes to Diploma, MA and PhD programs, as well as short courses.

His main interests are teacher training and development, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, supervisor training and development, CALL (computer assisted language learning) and ICT (Information and Communications Technology) - especially the integration of technology with language learning and teaching. He speaks Arabic, Spanish and French.

TESOL TEFL TRAVEL GRANT

The TESOL, Inc. TEFL Travel Grant is given to assist EFL Professionals (living outside the U.S. or Canada) in attending a TESOL Convention. The recipient receives travel and basic expenses not to exceed U.S. $2500. TESOL members who are currently practicing

EFL teachers, teacher trainers, or supervisors with at least five (5) years' experience in a non-English-speaking setting are eligible to apply. Preference is given to applicants who have never attended a TESOL convention.

Go to the TESOL Awards and Grants Web page at http://www.tesol.org/awards for the application and supporting documentation requirements. Nominations deadline is November 1st.

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL QATAR TESOL CONFERENCE
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Dr. Mohammed Abbas Ali of Bahrain is the second Plenary Speaker. Dr. Abbas Ali is the EFL Curriculum Specialist in the Directorate of Curricula
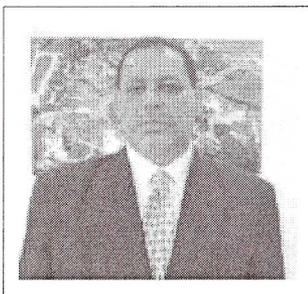
Dr. Mohammed Abbas Ali of Bahrain is a Plenary Speaker.

for the Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

A third Plenary Speaker will be sponsored by the State Department Specialist Program. Rebecca Smoak, the Regional English Language Officer, will announce the speaker in the near future. She has also announced that her office will sponsor a Friday reception at the conference.

Qatar TESOL members, educators in the Gulf and friends of Qatar TESOL are invited to submit a proposal. Those proposals which apply the theme to the context of the classroom in the Gulf will be favorably viewed.

Educational reforms are being implemented in the region. Government policy is forward looking. Model schools are being built. How are ELT professionals meeting the challenges they encounter in the classroom? What solutions are they putting into practice in their context? How are their students responding to these solutions and is learning improving? What techniques, methods and activities meet the needs of the students and, therefore, result in increased learning on the part of the students?

Deadline for the Call for Proposals is November 30th.

Contact Michael Birchall, the Conference Chair at mbirchall@qf.org.qa for more information. If you wish to volunteer for the Conference Committee, contact Michael Birchall as soon as possible since committees are forming now.

Contact Michael Birchall, the Conference Chair, to join the Conference Committee at mbirchall@qf.org.qa.

BRITISH COUNCIL SEMINAR GRANTS

The British Council would like to draw the attention of Qatari English teachers and supervisors to the following ELT seminars which are to be run in the UK in the coming months.

Teacher Associations

This seminar will examine the role of Teachers' Associations in the professional and personal development of teachers. Cambridge, December 2006

English next

One year on from the publication of David Graddol's English Next, this seminar looks at the implications of Graddol's research for people working in the field of English Language and asks how far the central messages are unraveling.

October December 2006 venue to be announced.
Blended learning (ICT in ELT)

More and more tools are becoming available to support the learning of English and other languages. What are these tools and how can they be integrated into learning programs alongside face-to-face teaching?

April/June 2007, venue to be announced.

If you are
* a committed teacher of English

* a Qatari national,
* working for a Qatari institution, and
* willing to lead a public session in Doha based on whichever of the above seminars you have attended,

You may be eligible for a British Council grant to cover the costs of the seminar, excluding travel expenses (your institution may be able to help with these).

Please contact Chris Nelson, Deputy Director, The British Council: chris.nelson@qa.britishcouncil.org. State your interest in the seminar and how you think it would benefit yourself and your colleagues if you attended it.

CREATING A COLLABORATIVE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT CULTURE
BY DR. MOHAMMED ABBAS, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, BAHRAIN

Introduction

Generally speaking, the bottom line for the different activities that take place among teachers, whether inside schools or outside them, should be geared towards providing students with different kinds of opportunities to maximize their learning. In order to help our students receive the best instructions, and to benefit from their schooling, teachers ought to act as role models for them in areas of cooperation, strengths and commitments.

This article sheds light on the importance of creating a collaborative English department culture. It first defines both the school and English department culture, and then discusses the different aspects of the English department culture, namely the Why? and the How? Finally, it reports the results of a small study of the English department culture in Bahraini–run, government secondary schools.

School and Department Culture

Halsall (1997) defined school culture as the set of assumptions, beliefs and values that predominate in a school, and which operate in an unconscious or semi-unconscious way. The main characteristics of effective school collaborative cultures are:

- Teachers working with and for each other on a range of tasks such as curriculum planning and design, resources preparation, action research, paired teaching and the observation of each others' teaching and mentoring. A cooperative set of relationships is operating rather than an individualistic or competitive set.
- Voluntarism: Collaboration arising from teachers' views regarding its value to themselves and to the students.
- A collective commitment to the school's vision, values, purposes and development priorities.

According to Halsall (1997) school collaborative cultures do not simply emerge from nowhere. They are the products of shared goals, pursuit of a common vision and a shared sense of direction. The second characteristic is collegiality: a mutual assistance, joint work and sharing; the sense that "We're all working on it together." The following points contribute to the development and maintenance of a collaborative culture, or are more likely to arise out of it.

- A belief that everyone can and should make a difference to students' progress, development and achievements and that, "It's the responsibility of us all."
- A belief in the notion that improvement is always possible, that it is a continuous process and an always shifting end.
- A belief that teachers are learners and that maximization of student learning is dependent on this.
- A belief that everyone, both teachers and students, has something to offer and, consequently, deserves a sense of mutual respect.
- Openness: a willingness and ability to speak one's mind and to listen to others with a view to being constructively critical and possessing a readiness to handle disagreements.
- A willingness to take risks, to try something different in the knowledge that if it does not quite work out, there will be an acknowledgement of the intent and of the effort made, and an absence of unconstructive criticism.
- A readiness to celebrate peoples' efforts and successes, both those of teachers and students, manifested in such things as verbal and written praise and the celebration of (student) achievement evenings.

"No man is an island, . . . "
John Donne (1573-1631)
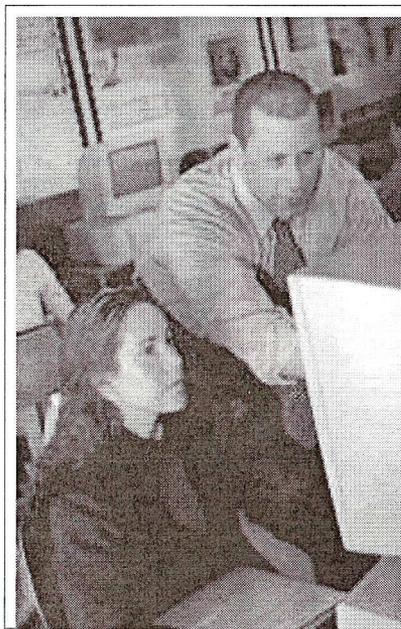
For the sake of having a shared understanding, it seems appropriate to develop an operational definition of a department culture. Effective department culture can be defined as *the kind of culture where staff members are psychologically comfortable and professionally supportive. A place where teachers have the tools and the professional support they need and where they have opportunities to collaborate and learn from each other.*

The above definition emphasizes a number of fundamental interrelated aspects, which contribute to effective department culture. However, as department culture is a vast area to cover here, I shall only deal with one aspect of it, which is *the collaboration and learning from each other.*

Why?

Let us examine the famous passage by John Donne (1573-1631): "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the

continent, a part of the main . . ." The above quotation emphasizes the need for the whole of humanity to unite regardless of their differences, as they have many things in common, and perhaps are heading for the same destiny. It is true that no teacher is an island to himself. The truth of the matter remains that although teachers share the same department, teach the same subject and have to adhere to the same curriculum, in practice the teaching profession is looked at as a lonely profession. Teachers are reluctant to share their success or failure with colleagues (Wallace, 1998). I would strongly argue that teachers can break down this professional isolation through conscious and purposeful collaboration.

Undoubtedly, effective collaboration is a fundamental element of good teaching. The ability to collaborate effectively with other teachers is not only vital when launching a new project or activity, but it should be an ongoing practice. As Guskey (2001, p. 19) explains:

> Viewing professional development as special events
>
> that occur on three or four days of the school year
>
> severely restricts educators' opportunities to learn.
>
> But if we view professional development as an
>
> ongoing, job-embedded process, everyday presents
>
> a variety of learning opportunities . . . . The challenge
>
> is to take advantage of these opportunities, to make
>
> them available, to make them purposeful, and to use
>
> them appropriately.

Teachers need to be critical observers of all the different phenomena that they encounter. They need to be continuously engaged in experimenting with new ideas and techniques, which they have acquired from different sources, including their colleagues. In fact, fellow teachers represent a wealth of information and invaluable teaching experience. The ability to tap these valuable resources through cooperative interaction is a key factor in developing and refining one's teaching skills. In fact, it is often more productive to negotiate meaning and to develop ideas with others than alone. Interaction can take many forms, other than passing comments during the weekly staff meetings.

How?

There are a number of ways that teachers can work collaboratively. For convenience sake, some of these are highlighted. Among them is having a collaborative and supportive atmosphere, in which teachers' efforts are recognized and further enhanced.

1) Leadership

The established senior teacher (i.e. department head) system

in the Kingdom of Bahrain's secondary schools allows English teachers to develop their own effective department culture. Here the senior teacher plays a vital role in creating a healthy and cooperative department culture. This certainly requires putting into practice a number of leadership skills, such as identifying the potential strengths of each member of the staff, as a range of abilities which complement each other can be found within each department. Moreover, being able to negotiate and collectively implement the annual department plans, which should include the aims of the intended activities and programmers, implementation procedures, evaluation techniques, assigning of responsibilities for various tasks, continuously sharing feedback to overcome problems and change directions, and making decisions.

In order to reach a common agreement concerning the implementation of an ambitious, but realistic and achievable plan, a genuine discussion and a real melding of ideas should take place. Sometimes this collaborative process requires the senior teacher to step forward as a leader. Other times it means building a consensus with the ideas of others; thist means coming together to create a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. This requires honest discussion, willingness to respect a variety of ideas and ways of thinking and the ability to bring diverse, fresh and original ideas to light.

It is important that each teacher has the opportunity to reflect and experience the sense of being worthwhile through the role(s) he/she has chosen. Furthermore, teachers need to be supported by

. . . success in accomplishing certain projects is the success of the whole team; therefore, team spirit has to emerge.

different means to succeed in their endeavors. This requires the senior teacher to make him/herself approachable to new and different ideas. It is inevitable that some teachers might be more cooperative and give more of their time and effort. However, it is also equally important that everybody sees that success in accomplishing certain projects is the success of the whole team; therefore, team spirit has to emerge. As a result, the other factor mentioned in the definition of the effective department culture would indirectly be addressed, namely being psychologically comfortable.

In fact, the magic key for transforming non-cooperative members of the staff is by making them see their own potentials through the creation of proper dialogues, adaptation of their creative ideas, and/ or by delegating certain responsibilities to them. It is true that when people feel that they are involved and have a voice in matters that affect them, they have a greater commitment, and will definitely do their best to make it work and to achieve the objectives. For the sake of improving the weekly meeting of the English department, the author has used the SWOT analysis model and found it very effective (Refer to Appendix A).

2) Planning Together and Sharing Resources

The first stage of sharing between colleagues is during the lesson planning when teachers decide on the objectives and the teaching activities; they explore the different options on how best to teach the objectives achieved; even what appear to be impossible tasks can be, thus, tackled with confidence.

Informal discussions with a trusted colleague contributes a lot to her/his development as well as boosts morale. The teacher may share negative or positive information. The teacher may wish to find the best way to present a lesson, or a solution to a problem. Sharing problems, solutions to problems and successes is professionally rewarding.

3) Peer Observation

Peer observation is considered one of the most powerful types of professional development. Feedback from a colleague is a method for discussing teaching techniques and improving teaching expertise. A colleague can help an instructor think of new approaches to teaching. Observing innovative teaching techniques implemented by a colleague helps a teacher understand how to introduce them into the lesson effectively. The different perspective of a colleague enables the instructor to imagine what the students see during the class such as were the instructions clear or was the white board used effectively. This collegial activity provides a very rich and stimulating discussion and on-going dialogues between the colleagues involved.

4) Action Research

A teacher begins an action research project by collecting data and analyzing his/her classroom practice. The instructor next forms hypotheses, implements them, and then tests them. Finally, the researcher publishes the results to benefit the educational community. Action research links professional development and evaluation. Figure 1 below details the action research process.

Action research is best carried out by teachers in pairs or small teams. Most teachers have similar concerns and encounter similar problems. The author conducted an action research project more than a decade and a half ago, even though he did not realize that it was an action research project. He found the process very fruitful.

Action Research Process

1. *Identify an issue & develop a research question.*
2. *Learning more about the issue . . . reading the literature.*
3. *Developing a strategy for the study.*
4. *Gathering & analyzing the data.*
5. *Taking action & sharing the findings.*

REFLECTION: Before, during and after.

The Study

The study was conducted to analyze the different aspects of the English department culture in government-run secondary schools in Bahrain. The data was gathered via a semi-structured questionnaire developed by the author. The content validity of the questionnaire was ascertained by Mr. Mark Almond, TESOL Lecturer at the Canterbury Christ Church University, England, U.K. (Refer to Appendix B). The respondents were English language secondary school teachers: 37 from 11 boys' schools and 34 from 12 girls' schools. Participants responded to 14 items.

First, the respondents were asked to state whether they had their **own English teachers' room** or shared a room with teachers of other subjects. The majority of both groups (76.5% of the male and 86.4% of the female instructors) reported in the affirmative. This response is encouraging because when English teachers have their own room, they can work collaboratively, share lesson plans and debate projects.

An annual work plan or departmental goals gives direction to an English department. When asked, the overwhelming majority of the two groups (100% of the males and 94.1% of the females) stated that they had their own working plan. This healthy practice identifies the teachers who are carrying out the tasks and establishes timelines for each task and goal.

Third, the respondents were asked who contributed to **setting the goals** of their English department; whether the senior teacher solely, the school administration, or the entire English staff. Again, the majority of both the male (81.0%) and the female (79.4%) instructors explained that the entire English staff contributed to determining the annual departmental goals. Only 8.1% of the male and 20.5% of the female stated that the goals are determined solely by the senior teachers; the fact that these respondents come from the same schools indicates that the practice is limited to a few institutions. (The remaining results were insignificant.) It is most important that the entire English staff share in setting the departmental goals since they are the ones who are entrusted with their implementation. Usually instructors become committed to those matters they contribute to. The successful execution of the plans means that their input has been of value; they will be encouraged by this success to make further contributions.

Fourth, the majority of both groups (89% of the male and 94.20% of the female teachers) claimed that **roles in contributing towards department goals** are divided among staff members. This is very important since teachers naturally feel more valued if they are assigned to carry out worthwhile tasks. However, 10.8% of male and 2.9% of the female teachers indicated that only certain teachers are assigned certain roles, a chosen few. Perhaps senior teachers are biased in favor of (or against) certain teachers; or it might mean that those teachers who reported this are not really satisfied with the kind of responsibilities assigned to them.

In department meetings the usual practice is to discuss different aspects related to the implementation of department goals and annual goals. **The frequency of staff meetings** is, therefore, quite significant. In item five, the majority of the male (70.2%) and female (73.5%) teachers claimed that meetings were held weekly. Only 19.8% of the male and 20.5% of the female teachers respectively indicated that they usually have their department meetings every fortnight. The rest of the respondents indicated that they only have department meetings whenever they feel there is a definite need.

In item six, the vast majority of the respondents (78.3% of the male and 85.2% of the female) stated that their senior teachers alone usually **set the agenda.** However, only 16.2% of the male and 5.8% of the female teachers indicated that all contribute. This indicated a top-down way of conducting the meeting. This dominating way of setting the agenda is not conducive to fostering enthusiasm in the discussion or the implementation of activities on the part of the staff since they were not involved in the initiation of the agenda.

Seventh, the overwhelming majority of the respondents (100% of the males and 94.1% of the females) reported that their **English department meetings were effective.** The participants stated that the meetings usually have concrete outcomes such as discussion of teaching methods or assessment. Perhaps this result might seem to contradict the previous questions about who usually sets the agenda. But respondents might see the two issues from entirely different angles. The reasons given for the effectiveness of the department meetings make this clear. Also, it is perhaps possible that teachers are culturally accustomed to a top-down approach on the part of their superiors.

In response to item eight, about half of the participants (54% of the male and 50% of the female) indicated that **both administrative and technical issues were discussed in their department meetings.** This is quite crucial as guidelines state that the major portion of department meetings is to be devoted to technical rather than administrative matters. The senior teacher is supposed to be concerned with the technical aspects of their specialization. In theory, administrative matters should not take much

. . . guidelines state that the major portion of department meetings is to be devoted to technical rather than administrative matters.

meeting time as they should be handled by memos, issued by the school administration or higher authorities such as the Ministry of Education. Teachers do not usually have a say in such matters; they only have to follow directions. No discussion is required.

In response to the ninth item, the overwhelming majority of teachers (75.6% of the male and 85% of the female) reported that **their ideas are usually listened to.** Only 2.7% of the male and 11.7% of the females reported that their suggestions are usually not listened to. However, 20.6% of male and 2.9% of female teachers reported that their ideas are listened to only sometimes. It can surely be argued that people usually feel more committed and apply greater effort when they feel that their suggestions are taken seriously.

Next, the participants responded that they received **positive support from their senior teachers.** Their encouraging responses follow: *Arranges peer visits* (64% of the male and 78.3% of the female); *facilitates the production of teaching materials* (62% of the male and 72.9% of the female; *encourages teachers to work together in planning lessons or holistic planning* (74% of the male and 97.2% of the female); *provides constructive advice* (80% of the male and 70.2% of the female); and *encourages you or other colleagues to conduct workshops* (74% of the male and 86.4% of the female).

In item 11, respondents were asked to describe their **English department culture as supportive, collaborative, unsupportive** or other. Slightly less than half of the respondents from both groups described their department culture as both *supportive* (43.2% and 47%, male and female respectively); and *collaborative* (40.5% and 35.2% male and female respectively). However, 16.2% of the female and 17.6% of the male teachers described their department culture as *unsupportive*. Perhaps these opinions stem from negative personal experiences such as an uncooperative colleague or a senior teacher biased in favor of a teaching staff member.

Then, participants in the study listed **aspects found most helpful**: *Producing teaching materials*; *freedom in expressing their concerns; exchanging their views and ideas; working with colleagues on holistic planning; exchanging experiences with colleagues*; and *respecting each other.*

In response to item 13, instructors **itemized activities that contribute to student success**: creating *interesting learning environments; being honest with students; working with colleagues to overcome common problems and challenges; producing e-lessons with colleagues; supporting students in developing a liking for English*; and *giving students extra activities to enhance proficiency.*

Finally, the educators were asked to write ideas on **how to improve the culture of their English departments.** They suggested the following: *reduce teachers' administrative duties; reduce teachers' teaching loads; get more cooperation for all teachers; obtain more aids and equipment*; and *create favorable situations in which teachers work as a team.*

Conclusion

Educators can and should continue to advance their professional expertise, skills and knowledge throughout their careers. Continuing professional development is important not only for their own sense of progress, but nowadays it may even make the crucial difference between survival or facing the possibility of being terminated due to unsatisfactory performance.

It can be strongly argued that advancement depends not only on formal training or external input such as courses, lectures or conferences, but also from *collegial** support. Many teachers feel unable to implement the new ideas gleaned from workshops or conferences in their own teaching situation. As a result, they might feel frustrated and even develop a cynical view of in-service training and initiatives. They might begin to avoid continuing professional development.

Another issue and one that is quite genuine is that teachers might refrain from discussing challenges encountered in the classroom out of fear of losing face. This fear can become an obstacle that prevents teachers from sharing their problems and experiences with their colleagues. It is only by working collectively on common problems that they can be overcome.

Note:

Collegiality vs. Congeniality: A Distinction

Collegiality can be defined as respect for one's colleagues (fellow teachers) and for their professional endeavors. In this respect, a distinction should be made between collegiality and congeniality. *Congeniality* suggests that people get along socially with their colleagues and respect each other. They may have common interests. This may lead them to plan some social activities on the weekends and engage in social gatherings.; Such activities strengthen and enhance social relationships, which is desirable. However, *collegiality* is concerned with professional activities such as sharing and cooperating with a group of teachers.

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Appendix A: SWAT Analysis

Weaknesses: What makes your English department meetings less useful?	**Strengths:** What makes your English department meetings useful?
Threats: What anticipated problems would make them less useful?	**Opportunities:** What can make the meetings more useful?

Appendix B: Questionnaire

This questionnaire is for purely academic purposes. It aims to study English department cultures in government-run secondary schools.

I would be very grateful if you could give very frank and honest answers. The information you provide will be handled confidentially.

Name: _____ (optional)

Gender: male   female   (Circle the appropriate answer)

Teaching experience: _____

No. of years you have been teaching in your current school: ____

Qualifications: _____

School: _____

Please write or circle the appropriate answer.

1. How many English teachers are in your English department, including yourself?
2. Do you have your own English teachers' room, or do you share a room with teachers of other subjects?
    - A. A room for only English teachers
    - B. Share with teachers of other subjects
    - C. Other situation (please explain) ____
3. Do you have an annual working plan (i.e. specific goals to achieve) for your English department?
    - A. Yes
    - B. No
    - C. Don't know
    - D. Other _____
4. Who sets these goals or plans?
    - A. Senior teacher only
    - B. School administration
    - C. The whole English staff
    - D. others (please specify) _____
5. How do you contribute towards achieving these goals?
    - A. The roles are divided among staff members.
    - B. Only certain teachers are assigned certain roles.
    - C. Others (please specify) _____
6. How often do you have your department meeting?
    - A. Weekly
    - B. Every fortnight
    - C. Other (please specify) _____
7. Who sets the agenda for the meetings?
    - A. Senior teacher only
    - B. All teachers contribute to the agenda.
    - C. Others (please specify) _____
8. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your English department meetings? Why?
    - A. Effective because _____.
    - B. Not effective because _____.
    - C. Other answers _____ because _____.
9. What do you usually discuss in your department meetings?
    - A. Administrative matters, e.g. passing instructions, etc.
    - B. Technical matters related to certain aspects of teaching, etc. (Give examples.)
    - C. Both a & b.
    - D. Other matters (Please specify.) _____

10. Within your department, are your ideas and suggestions lis tend to?
    A. Yes.
    B. No.
    C. Sometimes.
    D. Other (Please specify.) _____

11. Concerning professional development, what does your senior teacher do to support you and other colleagues?
    A. Arrange peer visits.
    B. Facilitate the use and production of teaching materials.
    C. Encourage you to work together in planning your lessons (i.e. holistic planning), etc.
    D. Provide constructive advice.
    E. Send you to enrichment programs.
    F. Encourage you or other colleagues to conduct work shops, etc.
    G. Other examples. (Please specify.) _____.

12. What aspects of your English department do you find to be the most helpful to you as a teacher? Give specific examples to support your answer. _____.

13. How do you describe the English department environment? Support your answer with specific examples.
    A. Supportive.
    B. Collaborative.
    C. Unsupportive.
    D. Others. (Please specify). _____.

14. Do you feel responsible for your students' success or failure?
    A. Yes.
    B. No.
    C. Don't know.

15. What do you usually do to ensure the success of your students?_____.

16. What are your suggestions to further improve the existing situation of your English department? _____.

17. Is there anything else you wish to add? _____.

TEACHING TIP: Invent a New Animal

by Sharon M. Spencer, UAE University, Al Ain, United Arab Emirates

Quick Guide

Key Words: Composition, descriptive writing
Learner English Level: Beginner to low intermediate
Learner Maturity Level: Elementary through adult
Preparation Time: 30 minutes to one (1) hour
Activity Time: 30 to 45 minutes

In any composition class, descriptive writing is a standard assignment done at some point in the semester. Typically, students are given topics such as describing a favorite place or a special person.

I have had success using the descriptive topic of inventing a new animal numerous times with different age groups and in different educational settings. Students of any age enjoy this activity because it allows them to use their imagination and sense of humor. Even students who experience difficulty producing written work are motivated by this activity.

Getting Started:

1. Gather a variety of pictures of animals. The pictures should be roughly the same size and in color if possible. *National Geographic* is an excellent source for animal pictures.
2. Cut the animal pictures into thirds. For example, a picture of an elephant should be cut up into equal thirds of head, body or torso and bottom.
3. Mix and match animal parts to create a new animal with three different parts. You could create an animal made of a horse's head, a fish's body or middle , and a rabbit's bottom.
4. Paste the parts on a piece of paper and give the new animal a name. One formula is to take a part of the name of each of the three animals:

   Horse + fish + rabbit = ***horfibit***

Of course, since it's an invented animal, any name is acceptable!

   Cat + dog + elephant = ***cadophant***

The Guidelines:

Write a set of guidelines that your students use when writing their description. You may want to include the following criteria:

A) Name of new animal.
B) What region or countries the animal lives in.
C) What environment such as mountain, forest, etc. the animal lives in.
D) What climate the animal lives in such as cool, tropical, etc.
E) What the animal eats.
F) Special skills or behavior of this animal (runs fast, very friendly, etc.).
G) Special characteristics of this animal (poisonous, skin changes color, etc.).
H) Predators (What animals, if any, eat this animal?)
I) Other information about this animal, for example is this animal often a pet?

Notes:

Prepare three to four sample pictures to show the students. This gives the students an idea of how the final product

Qatar TESOL was founded on April 2, 2005 . . .

. . . when the Qatar TESOL President, Sara Al-Kuwari, signed the affiliate agreement with TESOL, Inc. The purpose of Qatar TESOL is to establish a network of teachers, supervisors and researchers who are committed to improving teaching in English as a Foreign or Second Language in Qatar and/or the region.

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TEACHING TIP: INVENT A NEW ANIMAL CONT FROM PAGE 8.

should look; it also motivates them.

Students are not going to be working with the pictures you prepared. These are simply samples. They will not have animal pictures on their papers. They will simply think of three animals, imagine a new animal and then write about it. If you do want students to put pictures on their paper before writing, consider the *variation* described below.

Emphasize to the students that this is a creative activity; they can be as inventive and imaginative as they want. Tell them that they are not constrained by facts. For example, they can even make up the name of the country where the animal lives, or they can invent a fish-like animal that *doesn't* live in water.

Variation:

Cut up dozens of animal pictures. The students select body parts, arrange, paste and write. Or let students bring in pictures from magazines. This variation takes one hour or more.

Sharon Spencer, winner of the Macmillan Teaching Tip Prize, Autumn, 2006.

Congratulations, Sharon!

Macmillan Publisher Representative, Sheila Hutton, offers the prize of Learning Teaching, a teacher resource book by Jim Scrivener, plus the verb wheel pack.

In the next contest, a second prize, Straightforward will also be awarded. Submit your Teaching Tip to Jane Hoelker at jhoelker@gmail.com.