

# SAHLA

*Southern Alberta Heritage Language Association*

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## **SAHLA Spring workshop: Good teaching strategies and good tasks for the language classroom.**



On Saturday June 23 and Sunday June 24, SAHLA hosted 20 teachers from various community language schools for a very informative and inspiring Spring Workshop, entitled Good teaching strategies and good tasks for the language classroom. The workshop was presented by Constantine Ioannou, Executive Director of International Languages Educators' Association (ILEA) Ontario, and Coordinator of International Projects with the Ottawa Carleton District School Board.

ILEA Ontario and SAHLA are working in collaboration! Our organizations wish to start collecting sample rich tasks for the language classroom that teachers can use, modify, adapt for their languages, grades and levels. Task levels will be based on the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference.

At the workshop, participants discussed what constitutes good tasks for the language classroom, criteria for evaluating a summative task in a classroom and other considerations for ensuring tasks are meaningful and performance-based. A summary of good teaching strategies for language classrooms was provided followed by group work on the creation of rich performance tasks for anybody's classroom. Participants spent time drafting out, presenting and revising sample tasks to be shared with teachers within Calgary and in other parts of Canada.

# February 21 is International Mother Language Day

Vancouver Sun Editorial: By Abdus Salam, Special to the Sun February 21, 2012

November 17th, 1999 was the day when UNESCO declared that February 21st each year would be observed as 'International Mother Language Day' and from the year 2000, this day has been marked as the day when All Mother Languages throughout the world are celebrated in their own uniqueness and at the same time have a chance to know and show respect to all the other languages.

Also interesting is the fact that the very first proposal to the UN and UNESCO for this day to be observed went out from the Lower Mainland of Greater British Columbia.

In keeping with the long tradition of Canadian involvement for peace in the world it is noteworthy and significant that such a proposal of respecting each other by respecting ones and others language would only bring the different cultures and people even the ones on the verge of extinction to breathe new life and hope afresh and feel that they are also inclusive of the greater human society.

Canada's assertiveness in making peace can be traced to Lester B. Pearson's efforts as External affairs minister when in 1956 he diffused the Suez crisis. His proposal was instrumental in the creation of the 'UN Emergency Force' which was the First Peace Keeping Force. The world sees this Peace Keeping force even now scores of years later in strife ridden regions of the world interceding and dividing the combatants and endeavoring to maintain and establish peace. Such was the contribution of one Canadian diplomat and for which of course when awarding him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957, the committee quoted that Lester Pearson "saved the world".

Canada was another pioneer in devising the Race Free immigration system; the policy that took shape under Prime Minister John Diefenbeiker in 1962 and the Discrimination free Points based Immigration System introduced during the time of his successor Lester Pearson and which is prevalent till today. This went a long way for the successful multilingual and multicultural fabric of Canada that we see and experience today.

Termed the Godfather of Glasnost, USSR's ambassador to Canada Alexander Yakovlev was the intellectual force behind liberalization in USSR under Gorbachev when he saw and studied the agricultural and other sectors in Canada.

Canada had been an inspiring beacon throughout the world not only for multiculturalism and the practice of democracy and Charter of Rights but also in social fields where its own people have been immensely benefitted.

The Universal Health Care, Pension Plan and Student Loan are to name a few as our nation has carved out a neat niche for itself in the world stage where it is relevant as an assertive, soft Power, a role which by dint of its own sincerity it has successfully managed to play in the world stage.

Now the time has come for Canada to play another role and that is of integrating people of various languages living in various extremities of this planet so that people in general feel important and view the rich and powerful not as masters but friends. Imposition of ones own culture or language or ideas and trend assuming it to be superior cannot impose or bring peace but only the exercise of mutual respect can and this can only bode well for humanity.

Canada which holds the distinction of so many firsts towards augmenting peace also is incidentally the birthplace of the organization that initiated to establish a universal day to celebrate, protect and appreciate the beauty of all the mother languages remembering the ultimate sacrifice of the Bangali people to protect their own mother tongue way back in Feb 21st, 1952 in the streets of Dhaka , Bangladesh. The first Mother Language Monument in Canada termed 'Lingua Aqua' has also been erected at the Bear Creek Park, Surrey which is dedicated to all the Mother Language Lovers of the world.

Canada should go steps ahead and way beyond others in raising this subject and awareness at world forums, in diplomatic circle dialogues and world bodies about equality of people , equality of languages and equality of cultures so that the world dares to stare at a better and peaceful future for all mankind.

Its left to be seen now if the Canadian beacon remains aloft in this case also, just like it has been before.

Abdus Salam is one of the founders and director of The Mother Language Lovers of the World. He is based in Vancouver.

# Children show gift for language

## 'Window of opportunity' ends around 4

**Clara Ho**

**Calgary Herald**

**Monday, January 23, 2012**

English, francais or espanol?

Multilingual parents needn't worry about confusing their children with multiple languages spoken at home, as new research findings out of the University of Calgary re-veal children can acquire and switch between languages effortlessly as long as they start young and interact regularly in those tongues.

However, that "window of opportunity" for children to pick up languages starts to diminish by age four, with noticeable differences for those who start learning new languages at age seven or eight.

"Children acquiring two or more languages from birth acquire native competency in those languages," said Jurgen Meisel, research fellow at the university's language research centre and an Emeritus professor from the University of Hamburg. "Adult learners rarely or never become native speakers of the language they learn. Those who come close make up somewhere between two and five per cent (of adult class-room language learners)."

Meisel's most recent re-search findings show that from about 18 months up to age three, children have a "language-making capacity" through brain maturation during which they can acquire two or more languages with-out much difficulty. That age range is when children start to grasp the grammar of language, that is, the construction of sentences. In Meisel's long-term studies of young children in Ger-many who were exposed to both German and French from birth or at a very early age, he discovered those children easily switched between the two languages depending on the situation or context. They also showed no difficulty in grammar or sentence construction, even though the verb and subject orders are different in both languages.

On the other hand, children who started learning after the age of 7 or 8 rarely attained the capacity and confidence of a native speaker, he said.

Benefits of multilingualism range from more career opportunities, to delaying the onset of Alzheimer's, according to research, he said.

For native French speaker Damien Hubert, it had always been his plan to raise his sons in a multilingual environment. Hubert's eldest son Azari, 6, was born in Mexico and quickly picked up Spanish, all the while speaking French at home with his parents.

Later, when the family re-located to Australia, Azari learned English as well and now flips back and forth between the two languages - at times sprinkling in a little bit of Spanish - depending on who he was chatting with.

Hubert, director of Alliance Francaise in Calgary, said his three-year-old son Romeo has also demonstrated a strong fluency in both French and English.

"I travel a lot and have lived in different countries, and I think it's amazing if you have the opportunity to talk to the people and to understand them ... It's a great advantage to speak different languages," he said.

These research findings come just after the Calgary Board of Education reported a 30 per cent decline in the number of elementary and junior high students studying French, after the board made second language instruction optional.

Now students at 24 schools no longer have the option of learning Canada's second official language from Grades 4 to 6, and two junior highs have cut the program because of a lack of interest.

But Sheila McLeod, director of global learning, said the board's other second language programs are going strong and seeing increases in enrolment.

There are now 7,250 students in French immersion, an increase of more than 300 students from the last school year. The Spanish bilingual program, which saw its numbers jump from 2,168 to 2,500 from last school year, is now the largest in the country. The Chinese bilingual pro-gram, while still relatively small, grew from 265 to 385 students.

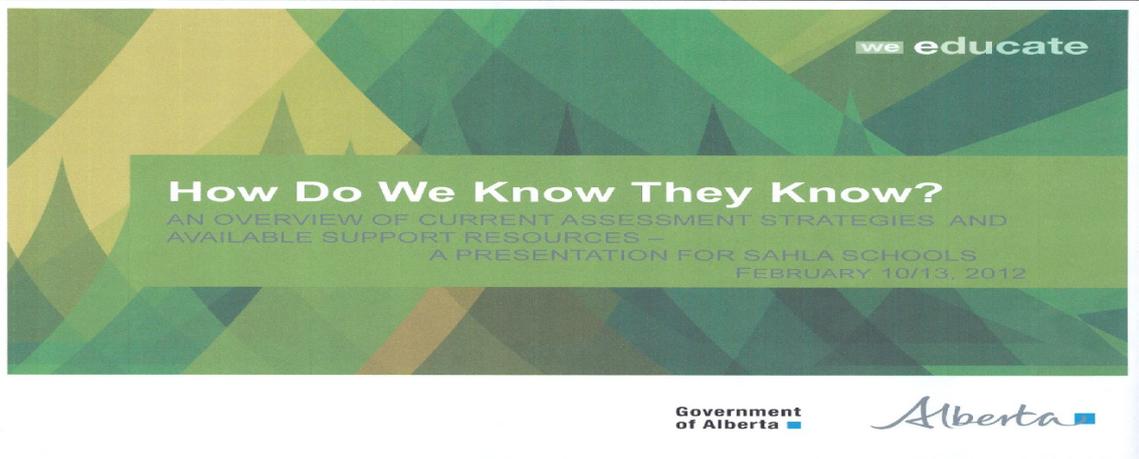
And though the language and culture program saw a decline, there are still 24,409 students choosing to learn French as a second language, McLeod said.

"We understand the importance of learning a second language. There are lots of students who fit the profile (of those in the study)," she said. "Some parents even choose to put their children in French immersion and bilingual programs, and that might be a third or fourth language. And those kids have done re-ally well."

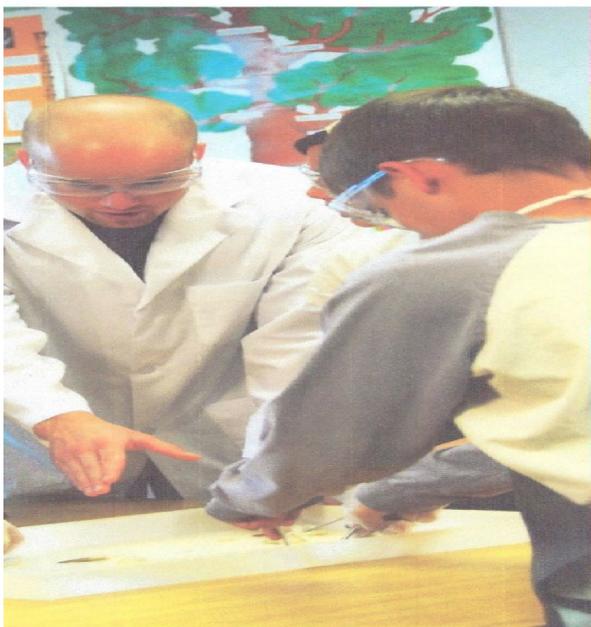
While she said she recognizes the value of starting second language education at an early age, the board al-lows students to start certain language programs at higher grades to be inclusive.

"We want children to be able to enter (a second-language program) where they can."

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**Christina Bexte**  
**Program Manager, International Languages**  
**Alberta Education**  
**SAHLA Workshop**  
**Feb. 10/13, 2012**



**we educate**

### What is Assessment?

Assessment is:

- gathering and considering of information about what a student knows, is able to do and is learning to do.
- integral to the teaching–learning process, facilitating student learning and improving instruction.



### Evaluation is:

- a judgement regarding the quality, value or worth of a student's response, product or performance based on established criteria and curriculum standards.
- often confused with assessment.

Through evaluation, students receive a clear indication of how well they are performing in relation to learning outcomes.

