

Needs Analysis of Teacher-Teacher Interaction in a Distance Education Environment

A Case Study Presented by Sonia Martin
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REALIZE 2014



Language
Education
at a Distance

LINC Home Study

What is LINC Home Study?

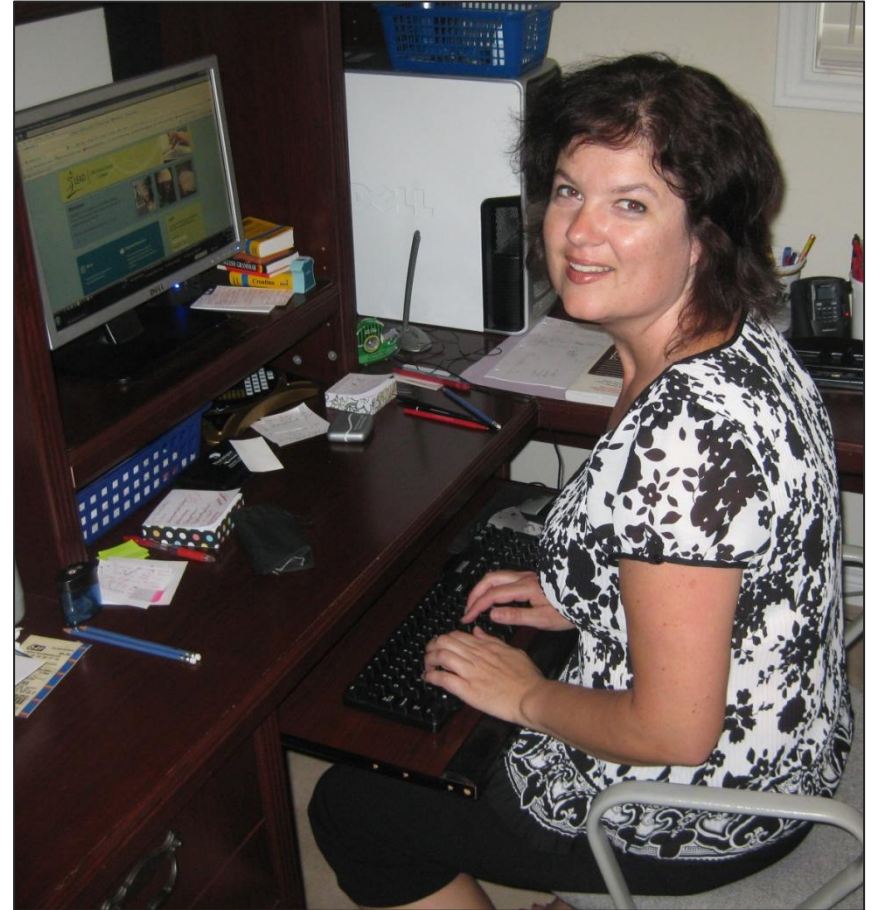
- Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada
- Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- Students study independently via learning management system or books/CDs



What is LINC Home Study?

- Students receive weekly individualized instruction via telephone / Skype
- TESL certified teachers work from home

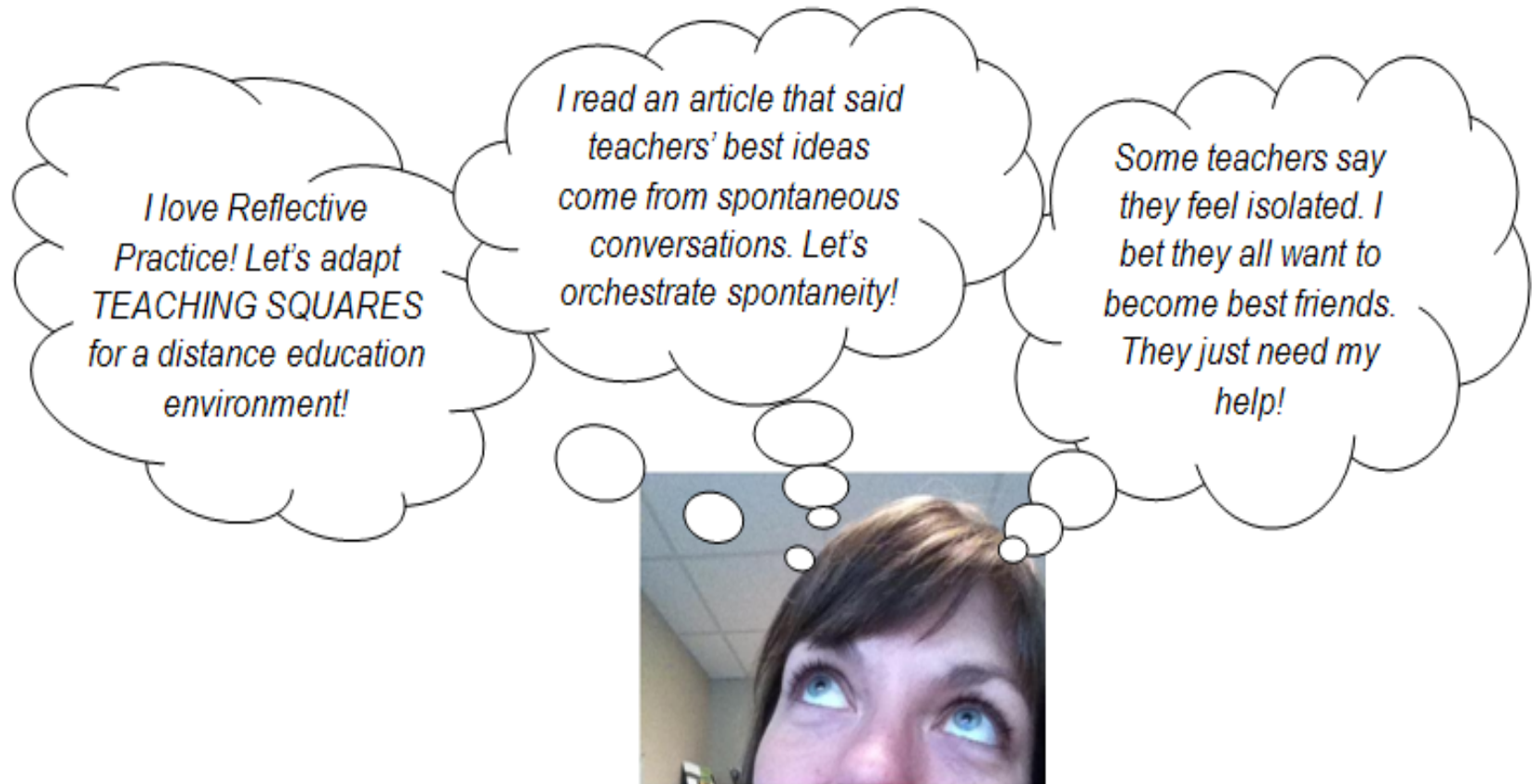
80+ teachers in Ontario



Why a Needs Assessment?

- Feedback from teachers indicated a desire for more interaction
- Opportunities to interact without office involvement (online forum, etc.) not being maximized by most teachers
- Administration required more info before making changes to status quo

Why a Needs Assessment?



Method

- Goal:

to eschew preconceived notions of what teacher-teacher interaction should look like, and get to the crux of what LHS distance education teachers truly need

Method

- Reviewed previous surveys and feedback
- Reviewed literature (see bibliography)
- Consulted *A Guide to Assessing Needs* (Watkins 2011)
- Conducted a pilot survey
- Surveyed Ontario-based teachers
- Conducted Focus Groups
- Discussed results with key administrators

Method

- Survey questions constructed to avoid administrative bias

e.g. Question 1

“1. Imagine you have great teacher-teacher interaction at LINC Home Study. What would that look like? Include in your description the who, what, why, where, how, and how often of optimal teacher-teacher interaction.”

Method

- Focus group questions developed from survey responses

e.g. Question 1

“When asked to describe their ideal teacher-teacher interaction situation, many respondents recommended a combination of several types of interaction: online, in-person, teacher-led, and office-initiated. What are your thoughts on this? How does this differ from what we are currently doing?”

Survey Results

- 62 respondents / 82 teachers
= 76% of total population
- 88% expressed agreement or neutrality to the statement “LHS administration provides enough support for me to interact with other teachers. (e.g. Encouragement, ideas, opportunities, resources, etc.)

Survey Results

- Pie-in-the-Sky ideas varied greatly
 - 51 different descriptions
- Common themes of preferences emerged
 - 38% in-person
 - 27% virtual
 - 24% variety of options
 - 19 % teacher led

Focus Group Results

- 17 participants, 4 sessions
- Excellent ideas were brought forth
 - Virtual teacher lounge
 - Teacher-led, minimal office involvement
- Viability weighed
 - Security concerns

So What?

- Good news! LHS is already meeting much of teachers' interaction needs!
- Continue to provide a variety of different ways to interact
 - Quarterly virtual teacher meetings
 - Option to participate in special projects
 - Monthly voluntary PD sessions
 - Annual in-person PD event
 - Mentor program
 - Online space (Forum)
 - Sharing of biographical information
 - Sharing contact and social media information
 - Teacher meetings for conversation programs
 - Meeting at conferences

Now What?

- Opportunity to address the gap
 - ✓ 38% in-person
 - ✓ 27% virtual
 - ✓ 24% variety of options
 - 19 % teacher led
- Visual buffet
- Bimonthly teacher-led collaboration sessions

Lessons Learned

- It is helpful to assess needs before taking action on ideas
- Distance education needs cannot be met simply by adapting face-to-face methods
- Variety is key

Questions



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