Transitions are all around us. Over the years, we have witnessed the transition from four distinct seasons to more intense summers and winters; our four seasons morphed into almost two over the past few years. The transition process has often been likened to the changing of seasons. However, with climate change, we now experience this gradual transition more abruptly.

At school, the demographic transitions have defined our student populations and what their needs are. How do we cope with these transitions? Those of us in classrooms interacting with ELLs daily must cope immediately, or be left behind. Yet, we are not the ones setting policy for our ELLs and the programs that serve them.

The largest transition NYS TESOL has experienced this year has been the change from paper to digital format of our newsletter, our voting ballots, and our updated website. Organizations of all types must be ready for transitions because nothing is stagnant in today’s world. The talk of the town is the rapid pace at which information is thrown at us. It’s too fast for many of us to fully comprehend, but maintaining the pace is paramount to “keeping current.”

I prefer to think of a transition as a gradual change over time, one that weans away from the old, and little by little adapts to the new. This is not always the reality, however. Once we receive new state and federal mandates, there is insufficient time to adapt to the new before the complete transition is upon us. Contrary to this idea is the reality that many state and federal mandates do not come quickly enough, so we are faced with quite a conundrum here. Some transitions come too quickly, others not fast enough.

Our youngest ELLs transition from the world of Early Intervention (EI), regulated and funded by the NYS Department of Health, to the pre-K world of 3- to 5-year-olds, and from there, begin their journeys with NYSED. Pre-K to kindergarten, Grade 5 into middle school, Grade 8 into high school, and, four years later, there’s a transition to yet another stage of life—college or career. As educators, administrators, or parents, we often observe that these transitions happen at their own pace.

In classrooms all over the country, educators are making the transition to the CCLS. Perhaps we were already following this curriculum, but now it has a new name, is packaged in a new wrap, and must be reported and reviewed in a new format. What is promoted as “new and improved” may simply be merely a new label.

As president of NYS TESOL, I’ve transitioned into another year, thus getting to know and collaborate with new Executive Board members and their new affiliations, perspectives, and personalities. Our mission remains constant, but the individuals are the ones who drive the mission. I try to expect transitions, as they are everywhere in life. Being in a state of transition is the new “present,” and the only thing we can rely on.

As they left the Garden of Eden, Adam said to Eve, “My dear, we live in a time of transition.” So, in the end, not much has changed. Let’s support one another to embrace the transitions, those we planned and those that took us by surprise, for each change offers us the opportunity for personal reflection and growth.

Warm regards,

Susanne Marcus
President, NYS TESOL
February 10, 2014