

SIG Spotlight: Secondary Education and Higher Education SIGS Salon

by Ashley Fifer

On Sunday, March 16, 2014, the joined forces of the Secondary Education SIG and the Higher Education SIG, along with the New York City Region, held a Salon on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. The Salon was facilitated by Ashley Fifer, co-chair of the Higher Education SIG, Christine Susskind, chair of the Secondary Education SIG, and Tamara Kirson, co-chair of the New York City Region. The topic was “Transitions from High School to College,” following up on a similar panel held at the New School last December. The question of the day was: How can we guide our ELLs to overcome the obstacles they face in a higher education setting?

During the Salon, participants—aided by some wonderful wine and cheese—discussed in both large and small groups such questions as: *What stands in the way of ELLs and access to education, above and beyond a language barrier?* and *What are the tools necessary for success in a college environment?* The consensus was a realization that one main problem lies with the current paths to graduation: There aren’t enough opportunities for ELLs in vocational/technical programs. In addition, it became clear that soft skills, not only content-area knowledge, need to be addressed. The groups also discussed ways they could be advocates for their students.

All in all, it was a collegial and motivating event, and one we think will generate continued meetings and discussions on how to help our ELLs succeed in higher education.



The buzz of socializing before the “business” of learning at a Salon.



On the floor, the sofa, the chairs—wherever there's space for a conversation with colleagues.



Here, everyone made a “transition” from the informality of the Salon discussions to a formal photo!

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