TESOL International Association conducted surveys of TESOL members and nonmembers in January and February 2012 to learn more about the professional development needs of specific groups within the English language teaching field. The surveys included both quantitative and qualitative questions.

Key trends from the survey on K–12 ESL, along with the insights of various member experts who participated in additional qualitative data collection, are provided below.

Respondents to the K–12 ESL survey

This survey was sent to TESOL members and nonmembers in traditional core ESL countries who had K–12 ESL selected in their TESOL profile.

- Most of the 380 respondents were TESOL members (78%) as well as members of their local TESOL affiliate (66%).
- Most of the respondents were from the United States (84%), with more than 6 years of teaching experience in K–12 ESL and with relevant education to the field of ESL (ESL endorsement or MATESOL).

Key trends and concerns

Teaching context

- Teachers like their job mostly because their work involves working with students and because they can see their students grow academically. Here is a sample comment:

  Seeing children progress in their language and in the mainstream curriculum. Helping parents to learn about the school and our system.

- High-stakes testing requirements for ELLs and the lack of understanding of the nature of language learning by mainstream teachers and administrators impact the quality of ESL teaching. Here is a sample comment:
Content level teachers that are intimidated by having another certified teacher in THEIR classroom. They are not willing to give up authority and design lessons more appropriate for ELL needs.

- Figure 1 shows other factors that impact the quality of teaching ESL.

![Graph showing factors affecting the quality of teaching ESL](image)

**Figure 1: What Impacts the Quality of Teaching ESL**

- On the other hand, there is a push for the *push-in* method and collaboration between ESL professionals and content-area teachers. But how do we do this without de-professionalizing the ESL profession? Some sample comments:

  *ESL teachers are asked to push in or co-teach in the mainstream classroom with mainstream teachers even if they may feel uncomfortable with the mainstream teacher with whom no relationship has been developed. In addition, ESL teachers feel uncomfortable to teach content areas they are not familiar with. Thus, they end up being considered more like an aid and support in the mainstream classroom rather than a real teacher.* (Judith B. O’Loughlin)

According to Ester de Jong, the challenge is how to not lose ELL-specific expertise as more and more ELLs are placed in mainstream classrooms.

**Teacher training and professional development**
• There is a need to train all in-service and pre-service content-area teachers to teach ELLs, so these teachers can address the needs and characteristics of the ELL population. Here is a sample comment:

_The main problem is that general education teachers don’t know how to teach language and they don’t know what language to teach. They do teach vocabulary, but they generally choose words from the content of the lesson - the so called technical vocabulary. The words needed to speak or write as an academic are not usually taught because these words and structures are not as obvious._ (Linda New Levine)

• There are not enough ESL professionals. Here is a sample comment:

_As a result of the massive budget cuts that have gone into effect in school districts in many parts of the United States, teachers have been fired and others have not been hired. Even before this happened, the numbers of ESL teachers were limited in many school districts_ (Linda New Levine)

• Teachers do not feel comfortable with using technology in the classroom, teaching reading to non-readers, or working with mainstream teachers.

• Figure 2 shows additional elements ESL teachers do not feel comfortable with.

![Figure 2: Areas of Improvement](image)

• Some of the topics of interest for future workshops that were identified are teaching reading; collaboration with mainstream teachers and co-teaching; teaching ELLs in the content areas;
teaching low, non-literate students or SIFE (students with interrupted formal education); teaching special education ELLs; technology.

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