

Strategies for Internationally Educated Teachers (IETs)

Observing in classrooms is one way to learn about the Canadian school system

Sergio – an IETC

I went to this program where I could observe several schools because my exposure before coming to Canada was just what I watch in movies about what the school is about, and that is mostly American schools, right?

I sought support to improve my oral and written communication skills

Maggie – an IETC

I think I needed to improve my English, that's one way to survive and to realize my goal to be a teacher. So I came to ACSC for help and when I wrote my initial version of my paper, I went to ACSC, so teachers there helped me a lot. While improving my essays, I improved my English including writing and speaking.

Classroom observation provided a view of Canadian culture and the education system

Sergio – an IETC

So this program of observing classes was also very, very helpful to me. Perhaps it would be great to see not only a classroom and how classrooms are being dealt with, but also the whole culture of the whole community of the school is all about that I realize how things were in my practicum internship: The different extra-curriculum activities, and the role the ESL department or the guidance department do to the students.

You can learn from associate teachers

Maggie – an IETC

And for the associate teacher, in my first practicum, I learned a lot from my associate teacher. We worked in this way: Because my associate teacher has two math classes, both are math classes at the academic level. In the morning the first session she taught, I observed and helped other students. And in the afternoon, I taught. In the morning I observed the way she taught and observed how she communicated and managed the classroom. And in the afternoon I tried to use the teaching methods I thought she did very well, and also I tried my own way. And after the teaching she gave me some feedback on what I did good and what I needed to work on. It really helped me a lot.

Deal with problems in a professional manner

Clyde - an IETC

There were some ATs who weren't very helpful, sometimes, you know, you have to swallow a lot of stuff, saying, "I am bigger than this," and deal with it in a mature fashion in a professional way also, even though sometimes you stressed to the limit to be professional, sticking to your guns, sticking to what you believe in without people trying impose their view on you.

Talk to teacher educators about assignments

Maggie – an IETC

And the second way, I got much help is my TS co-coordinator: she's Karen Sheppard. Because we have a big assignment, everybody knows that the portfolio we have five papers to write reflections. Every time I went to her to ask her opinion before the final deadline. She was very nice to give me some extra help, gave me her opinion and helped me on the right track

Ask questions and use all the available resources

Sergio – an IETC

I actually knew that because I would be a teacher in Canada, I would have in a way to accommodate myself to Canadian, to the Canadian reality. And even though Canadian reality includes people who immigrated here, people from different like a very diverse population, there is a unifying factor, which is Canada, and some of the customs and languages spoken in the school, that sort of thing.

Tara – an IETC

At the end it paid off and it helped me to be successful in the course, and one more thing that really helped me is that I tried to socialize and to be with English native speakers in the course and be friends with them. Not just to be with ESL teacher candidates.

Sergio – an IETC

I consider myself a pretty sociable person, very approachable. And I don't think I changed much in that respect. I just acted the way I am truly, and that gave me the chance to mingle with the different classmates or to contact, to communicate with the different instructors or to when I have to be, when I have to talk to administration or teachers in schools, and most of the time I was fine.

Katherine – an IETC

The personal strategies I would say I used most often were that I did a lot of questioning. If I didn't understand something, I would either put up my hand in class and ask a question or I would approach the instructors, or I would ask other people to gain information. So other approaches would probably be accessing other resources that are available here at OISE and from my colleagues and from the library or from the Internet. I must say that Internet has been, it wasn't something that I really utilized back home, but coming here has made me realize how much valuable assistance the Internet would provide. So I guess it's something that's sort of you learn, that I learned here. 'Cause I didn't have an e-mail account before coming here. Yes, those were resources that I would say, helped. And I did a lot of reading and asking and talking to people about what their experiences was like. And I would say that the whole practicum experience had been invaluable because you have theory that they teach in class but it's really different when you see it being practiced. And that's when you believe that hey, it really works, it's not just the theory. And it's applicable and it can be used by teachers and it does work better than old, traditional methods.

Be prepared to work hard. Flexibility and open-mindedness are key

Tara – an IETC

I think that it's very important to be prepared. They have to know that they have a tough year ahead but it doesn't mean it's impossible to do it. They just have to try hard. I think it's very important that if they have time, work on their English, improve their English before they come to this course. They have a full summer between the time they get their admission and they start the course. If they can improve their English written and spoken, it's going to be a great help. They also have to be very adaptive. In this year you learn that you have to be very adaptive, very flexible. You are exposed to a new culture, you have to be very open to the new culture and try to learn and adapt yourself to this new culture, and of course there are many help resources in OISE. If they don't seek help, they are not going to get help. So my advice is that seek help, there are many people who are here and who are willing to help you but you have to go to them for help.

Tara – an IETC

I think my final word is that international teacher candidates have to understand that as much as it's their part to make an effort and try hard to make it. There are lots of supports available at

least in my case where I know in OISE and it's very important that they try hard but they also try to take advantage of the support.

A few effective strategies:

- Learn about the Canadian school system by observing classes before the practicum
- Work to improve your English proficiency and seek additional support
- Build a professional relationship with associate teachers
- Ask questions and socialize with people
- Utilize Internet resources
- Take advantage of your practicum experiences to try new teaching strategies
- Be adaptive, flexible and open to new ideas