

## **Teachers Retreat June 2008**

### **Sports Special Class**

Clara Chare, Christine Horne

**Christine:** It was very interesting for Clara and I to have a talk about the Sports Class because both of us are new and not very sure how the class would work. We were both disappointed that there was not a more experienced teacher there to give us advice about the best way to go about teaching and the true expectations....

The key points of our discussion as I remember, were:

#### **1. Keeping the class active - (and awake!)**

The sports class is very large and there is a huge range in the level of English spoken and understood. This makes teaching a real challenge. We both noted that the highest level of English ability seemed to be among the ski, swim and track & field boys. The lowest level of ability among the Sumo, rugby and perhaps baseball boys. The others are kind of in between. It is difficult to keep all students interested at all times with such uneven groups.

We felt it was disappointing for those higher level students who wanted to succeed to be forced to study with the lowest groups who basically want to be baby sat! We both felt it necessary to keep the class moving, with lots of different activities as the students have a very short concentration span!! It was interesting that both Clara and I had used almost the same activity during our first class - teaching strong western handshakes with eye contact and smiles and introductions. Students enjoyed the face to face contact and were quite enthusiastic. My classroom unfortunately had no space to move around, however, that has now been changed.

#### **2. What have we been doing in the class? -**

Clara has been using the graded readers as suggested by Stacey, and she seemed to be reasonably happy with the reaction of the students. I, on the other hand, have not yet tried the readers, but have had students spend the first 20/30 minutes of each class writing basic questions and answers in their notebook. In my class, most students are trying hard and call for their work to be checked when they have finished.

Clara has also been using the Reflection log suggested by Stacey and seemed happy with the results of using that. I have not used this yet, so thought I could try that at a later date with my class.

I mentioned to Clara that I have been using a worksheet each week - usually associated with sports in some way. Students must complete the worksheet and then follow up with a related speaking task (which is scored!) This has been reasonably successful, especially with the students who want to learn. At Clara's request, copies of those worksheets have been placed in her mailbox, so she too, can give them a try.

#### **3. What, if anything, are we likely to achieve?**

Both Clara and I were a little worried about the fact that we felt it was unlikely that great achievements would be made. Both of us want to do a good job, however, we feel that the Sports Class is somewhat special and the best we could hope for was reasonably good attendance and an acceptable amount of effort from the students...

We both feel it will take us most or all of the first semester to find our way with these unusual classes. Lots of trial and error to see what works with the largest number of students., seems to be the best way.

**Clara:** I have found Stacey's worksheet (on website) very useful. This is given out to the students at the end of the class and they write reflections on their topic, new vocab, message to me. I really like this and so do they. I told them I did not bring them last week and they all groaned but I gave them a substitute sheet and they were happy with this.

I liked Christine's idea with the writing and through the above worksheet, a few students have asked for more writing. I think it is important to give this class a certain structure to make the students feel they are progressing with a particular skill (readers, listening for example). But it is also important to give them variety and include fun activities too. I have never met Stacey but I could tell she is a fun and active teacher. For example, I did a Battleships Game with pronunciation and that was a great success: easy but challenging, fun and interactive.

I think Christine and I needed some affirmation that what we are doing is basically on the right track...any feedback would be appreciated!