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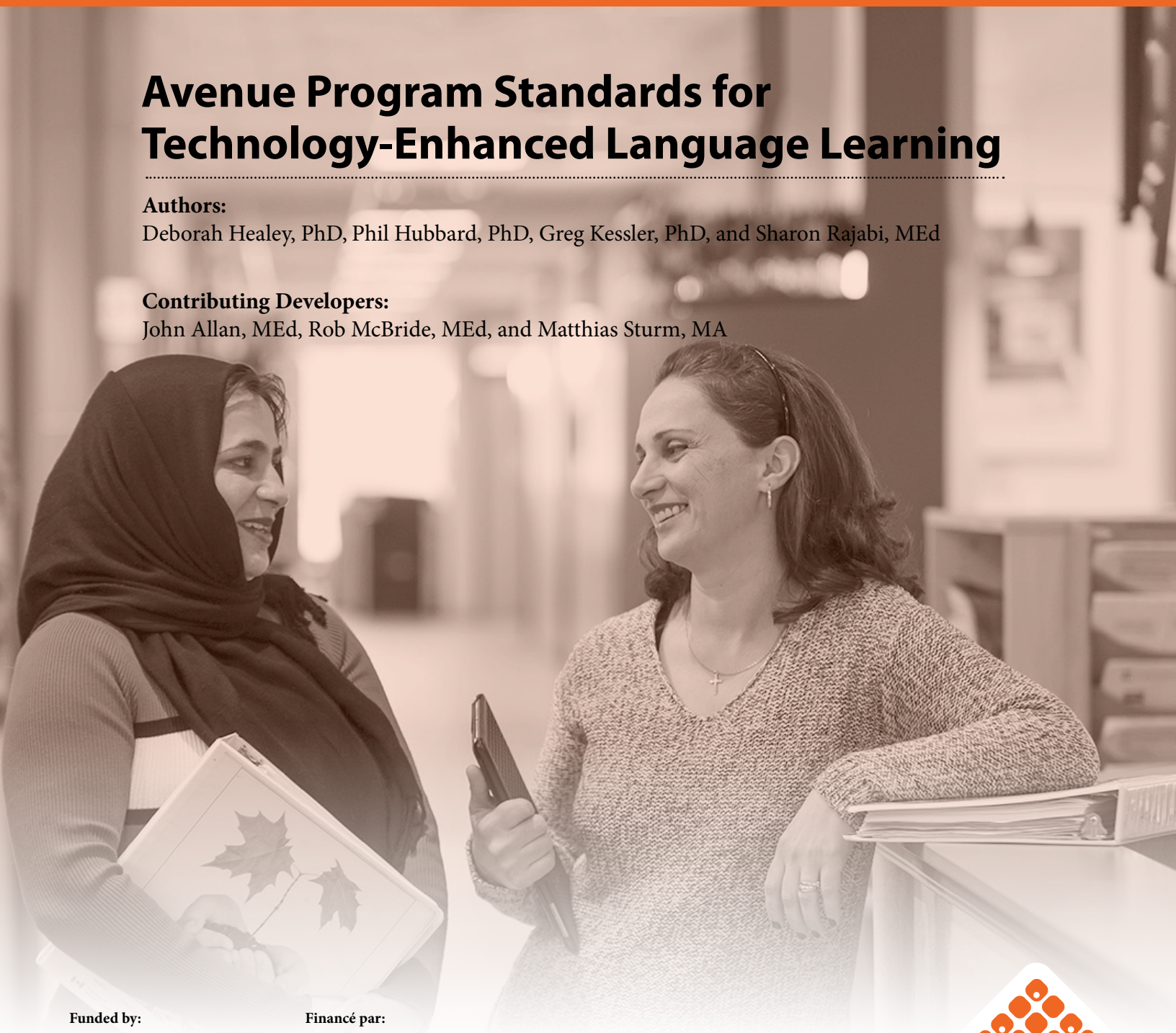
# Avenue Program Standards for Technology-Enhanced Language Learning

**Authors:**
Deborah Healey, PhD, Phil Hubbard, PhD, Greg Kessler, PhD, and Sharon Rajabi, MEd

**Contributing Developers:**
John Allan, MEd, Rob McBride, MEd, and Matthias Sturm, MA



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## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

New Language Solutions is based in Ottawa, Ontario. We acknowledge that our head office is on the traditional, unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg People. Beyond Ottawa, we have staff working in locations across Canada. New Language Solutions is grateful to have the opportunity to work as a guest in communities and territories across the country, and we honour the stewardship of the many Indigenous peoples who have resided on these lands since time immemorial.

We make our acknowledgement as a sign of respect for all Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island, past and present. We accept the true impact of the past and the pain suffered by generations of Indigenous Peoples.

As an agency that works to support the integration of newcomers into Canadian society and cultures, we resolve to support activities that are inclusive of Indigenous Peoples. We will make our best efforts to address a history of injustice to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

We encourage our frontline staff and clients to discover whose traditional territories they live on and pause to reflect on the hospitality shown to us as guests in these territories.

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# AVENUE PROGRAM STANDARDS FOR TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED LANGUAGE LEARNING

The Avenue Program Standards for Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) are designed to help those in decision-making roles in a language program. They provide guidance to administrators, here defined to include both immediate and upper-level decision-makers such as funders, directors, deans, and school boards. The terms blended learning and online learning are used deliberately throughout to indicate all combinations of online delivery in face-to-face, hybrid, HyFlex and remote situations. Program administrators are encouraged to localize these definitions to their own contexts with input from their staff and redefine them over time as it suits their needs. Program administrators can use the Can-Do statements to determine how closely aligned their program is with the standards and make progress toward meeting the standards. The standards can also serve as a justification for requests for funding to meet the standards. This document presents the guiding philosophy and the five program standards, each of which has a set of performance indicators (PIs) and detailed sub-indicators to provide clearer descriptions of what the standard entails. The sub-indicators have a text that explains them and suggestions for reflecting on how each standard applies in one's own program. A set of Can-Do statements is included after each performance indicator and together as Appendix A. Programs can use the Can-Do statements to determine how fully they meet the standards, then plan ways to address any weaknesses. One vignette (so far) is included as Appendix B to demonstrate how some of the standards and PIs were met in an actual situation. The glossary is in Appendix C.

We acknowledge that programs, especially smaller ones, have limited resources for addressing some of the standards, and we strongly encourage collaboration and sharing.

**Note on Artificial Intelligence**

This version of the standards (1.2) includes additional references to AI, especially generative AI (GenAI). The terms are not interchangeable, but what people see tends to be GenAI. Since the Avenue TELL standards project began in early 2023, we have witnessed a rapid expansion of the use of GenAI tools like ChatGPT, as well as "embedded GenAI" in a wide range of browsers and other apps. Administrative functions may use other AI tools for data modeling and predicting trends. For example, Starfish is a tool within some learning management systems that helps predict student success. Although GenAI tools are not the only AI tools in use, they are the most important for instructors, program administrators, learners, and teacher educators to be aware of and to use efficiently, effectively, and ethically. Thus, programs have a special responsibility to acquire, customize, and/or share policies related to use of GenAI. We use the term AI/GenAI to refer to situations where administrators, staff, instructors, and learners may be using a mix of AI tools, most of which incorporate GenAI.

Although it would be tempting to do so, at this point, we are not proposing a separate standard for integrating AI. The standards themselves remain the same, but we have added GenAI-focused performance indicators (PIs) and Can-Dos, as well as enriched the PI text descriptions to include more GenAI guidance. This is because we believe that AI will become more and more interwoven with many of the aspects covered in the existing standards. We anticipate that later versions of the standards will have even more to say about this rapidly shifting area of technology-enhanced language teaching and learning.

Programs should be aware of these changes and consider what elements might improve their service to stakeholders and what may create risks. Administrators need to provide opportunities and resources for instructors, learners, and staff, including information about relevant policies. For example, Canada has a *policy* on responsible use of AI in public education. Ethical use of AI/GenAI will remain a concern for all users. Programs should also encourage instructors to stay up-to-date by being curious, thinking about how a new tool might be used, trying it, and assessing the outcome. Good communication among instructors, program administrators, and learners will help programs use AI and its tools wisely.

**Guiding Philosophy**

The Avenue Program Standards for TELL serve as a roadmap on the path to recognizing and enhancing the capacity of instructors, staff, and administrators as leaders and change agents with technology. A program is best served when stakeholders are well-informed, planning ahead, and working together with a common goal of improving outcomes for learners.

- Be collaborative
- Be proactive
- Be aware

## Standard 1 is about collaboration.

**Programs have both a central philosophy and appropriate administrative structures to support collaboration in all areas involving technology and language teaching and learning.**

**PI 1.1** Administrators, staff, and instructors work collaboratively to set program standards and expectations for and to make decisions about use of technology for teaching. Learners should be involved wherever feasible.

a. Administrators, staff, and instructors collaborate in setting and revising program standards and other practices that pertain to effective use of technology.
   When stakeholders work together on issues related to technology and pedagogy, for dealing with effective use of technology and changing needs. Programs should have a systematic, ongoing process for such collaboration.
b. Learners are informed of program standards and practices and are given opportunities to provide feedback, possibly anonymous, as decisions are made.
   Learners have a direct interest in the ways a program uses technology. Their perspectives should help direct decision-makers. Learners may feel more comfortable making critical comments if anonymous, but programs are well-served by recognizing and encouraging learners who can provide helpful feedback.
c. Staff, instructors and learners get timely notice about technology related program directives such as funding approval, equipment and infrastructure renewal.
   Best use of technology comes when people have time for training and reflection. Advance notice also gives technology users time to suggest improvements and accept changes.
d. Staff, instructors and learners are consulted on instructional technology needs before purchasing decisions are made.
   Users of the technology have an important perspective on what they need in order to do their best work. Having an opportunity to comment on decisions that will affect them encourages buy-in and effective use of classroom technology.
e. Upper administrators seek and consider input from local administrators and instructors on technology-related decisions.
   Surprise directives rarely go well. Those at all levels, including upper administrators, should take concerns and suggestions of those who will be doing the implementation into account for best results in terms of acceptance and effective use.

*Reflection: Who sets program standards and processes in your program? How are all stakeholders, including learners, involved? How much do upper administrators take the concerns of implementers and users into account when setting technology policies?*

**Self-assessment**

- ☐ The program has established ways that allow administrators at all levels, staff, and instructors to collaborate on instruction-related technology decisions.
- ☐ The program has established ways that allow learners, where applicable, to collaborate on instruction-related technology decisions.
- ☐ The program provides timely notice about technology-related program directives to staff, instructors, and learners.

(See Appendix A for full self-assessment.)

**PI 1.2** Administrators, staff, instructors, and learners work together to implement effective technology adoption and use in the program.

a. Administrators, staff, instructors, and learners collaborate to encourage appropriate and effective ongoing technology implementation and use.

   Technology changes constantly. A team effort is the most productive way to ensure that technology changes are implemented effectively, with buy-in from users. Bottom-up and top-down efforts are essential to making change widely accepted and as smooth as possible. Programs should have a systematic, ongoing process for broad collaboration.

b. Learners are given opportunities to provide feedback, including anonymously, on how effectively technology is being implemented to meet their needs.

   Adult learners bring their own perspectives to the technology used in learning language, whether in their classrooms or at home. Decisions will be better accepted and more easily implemented when learners feel they have had a say in them.

c. Administrators see themselves as change agents in effective technology use, working with instructors and learners to enhance outcomes.

   Implementing change as needed is part of leadership. For change to be institutionalized, it must be more than top-down. Administrators should look for and encourage instructors and learners who disseminate changes, building skill and willingness to change in others.

*Reflection: What are the roles of administrators, staff, and instructors in enabling change? How are learners encouraged to provide feedback?*

- ☐ Administrators, staff, instructors, and learners collaborate to encourage appropriate and effective ongoing technology implementation and use.
- ☐ Learners can give feedback as needed about whether technology is helping them achieve their goals.
- ☐ The program supports administrators to act as change agents on an ongoing basis in enabling effective technology use.

**PI 1.3** Administrators, staff, and instructors work collaboratively to design systems for monitoring and evaluating technology use in the program, and learner feedback helps refine the systems.

a. Administrators have a transparent process in place for receiving and incorporating feedback from staff, instructors, and learners.

   A clear and established system for ongoing feedback from staff, instructors, and learners enables effective communication. Small changes can create large improvements when appropriately and regularly implemented.

b. Staff and instructors are informed about new and revised monitoring and evaluating systems for technology use and given the opportunity to comment before these are implemented.
   Planning ahead and incorporating feedback from users results in better buy-in and monitoring and evaluation systems that accurately measure the effectiveness of technology use in the program.
c. Suggestions from staff, instructors and learners about monitoring and evaluation systems are sought out and thoughtfully considered on an ongoing basis.
   Collaborative efforts help ensure that a variety of perspectives are considered when designing and refining systems for monitoring and evaluation of technology use. Using both bottom-up and top-down communication makes monitoring and evaluation more thorough and revisions more likely to be accepted.

*Reflection: What does monitoring and evaluation of technology use look like in your program? Who is involved? How effective is it? How do you know?*

- ☐ The program has a transparent process in place for receiving and incorporating feedback about technology use from staff, instructors, and learners.
- ☐ The program encourages staff, instructor, and learner feedback about monitoring and evaluation systems for technology use, especially before final decisions are made.

**PI 1.4** Administrators and staff participate in professional networks that help with technology implementation and evaluation.

a. Administrators participate in technology-related professional development opportunities such as conferences, trainings, and consultations.
   Those at every level of decision-making benefit from ongoing professional development to stay abreast of the rapidly-changing technology environment.
b. Administrators and staff are encouraged to join and participate in professional networks locally, regionally, and nationally.
   With the pace of change in technology, no one person has all the answers. Networking gives many more perspectives and useful suggestions from others who are going through or have gone through the same processes.
c. Staff can participate in technology-related professional development and training programs they are compensated for, such as with release time.
   While free information and training are available online, programs should consider professional development that is the best fit for staff needs and compensate those who participate. Compensation for professional development also signals that the program values continuous learning and improvement at all levels.
d. Wherever possible, programs should subsidize required training and training designed to meet specific program needs to have the broadest reach and impact.
   New policies and new technologies such as AI can have a large impact on instructors, staff, and learners. Programs should subsidize required training and training designed to meet specific program needs, whenever possible to have the broadest reach and impact. An outside consultant may be able to encourage changes that in-house trainers cannot.
e. Administrators and staff share insights from professional development.
   Administrators and staff can both benefit from ongoing learning and sharing their insights from professional development and their networks. Having and sharing different perspectives is helpful when making program-related decisions.

*Reflection: What does your professional network look like? What kind of professional development do administrators and staff engage in? How are staff involved in professional networks?*

- ☐ The program supports administrators and staff to participate in technology-related professional development and professional networks.
- ☐ The program compensates staff who participate in technology-related professional development, perhaps through released time.
- ☐ The program subsidizes required training designed to meet specific technology-related program needs.

## Standard 2 is about infrastructure.

**Programs acquire, maintain, and keep current the technology devices, systems, and applications necessary to fulfill their educational missions.**

**PI 2.1** The overall technology infrastructure is robust, supported, and regularly upgraded.

a. The program has qualified system administrators, either in-house or contracted, who are on call to resolve infrastructure problems that may arise.

   It is important for the program to have one or more system administrators who are not only technically competent but who have some understanding of the role of technology in the language teaching and learning process. They should have expertise with the devices and applications that are central to the successful running of the organization. The program staff, instructors, and learners need ready access to their technical expertise, as close to 24/7 as possible, to maintain both efficiency and morale.

b. The system at all levels is upgraded as needed to ensure network security and improve user experience.

   Infrastructure needs consistent attention and maintenance. Regular security upgrades are essential. Thoughtful attention to providing smooth teacher, staff, and learner experience with the system means that changes are made at appropriate times and with user input. Courses that are online or HyFlex (with both face-to-face and online learners at the same time) have the equipment and bandwidth to create an equitable experience for both in-class and remote learners.

c. All program devices are equipped with appropriate security for protecting personal learner data.

   Security is critical, and a security breach that exposes user data can become a huge problem for an organization. Program devices should be checked regularly for security compliance, and individuals using their own devices should be provided the necessary support to keep them secure.

*Reflection: How often is the infrastructure upgraded, and how often is security assessed and enhanced? How quickly can users get technology help?*

- ☐ The program has qualified system administrators who troubleshoot problems and update the system and applications as needed.
- ☐ The program has appropriate security on devices to protect learner data and provides training in its effective security practices.

**PI 2.2** The program has an effective learning management system (LMS).

a. The program has a learning management system (LMS) for instructor and learner resources and for tracking learner progress.

   The LMS is a user-friendly resource for instructors and learners, available 24/7 if possible. Instructors have access to a variety of classroom supports, and there may be a portfolio option accessible to learners and instructors. The LMS allows learners to make choices and to progress through material at their own pace, wherever that is appropriate.

b. Instructional materials in the LMS are designed to be level-appropriate, user-friendly, and accessible to all learners.

   Universal design for learning emphasizes the need to plan ahead rather than trying to retrofit instruction to meet individual learner needs. This is especially true for accessibility to meet any learner or instructor special needs.

c. Instructions and training for use of the LMS and other program technologies are available in multiple languages and formats: text, audio, and video

   All users should have multiple ways to access information about using the LMS. This should be available 24/7 if possible.

*Reflection: How readily available is the LMS? How accessible is the LMS to users of all language proficiency levels, including those who require accommodation for special needs?*

- ☐ The program has a user-friendly learning management system (LMS) like Avenue for storing program resources and tracking learner progress.
- ☐ The LMS has level-appropriate, user-friendly, accessible instructional material.
- ☐ All LMS users have access to level-appropriate, user-friendly, accessible instructions and training in use of the LMS.

**PI 2.3** The program has an effective administrative record-keeping system.

a. Administrators and relevant staff can see and track enrollment data, employment information, and financial information.

   Trends in enrollment data over time can help predict enrollment and staffing needs. Employment and financial information keep the program on a stable, legal footing.

b. Administrators and relevant staff have regular training in the system, especially when new elements are added.

   A high-quality administrative record-keeping system does regular updates. Even those familiar with the system may need additional training to be fully competent with all of the features available.

c. Program data is secure, backed up, and shared effectively and appropriately.

   Programs must be aware of the risks to data from hackers and technical glitches. Antivirus and other protective software is essential, as are routine backups, either locally or in the cloud. When files are shared, it should be clear which version is current so that work is not duplicated unnecessarily. There must be a process to ensure that files, especially those with employment and student data, are shared only with those who should see them.

*Reflection: How well do administrators use the record-keeping system? How often do updates and training take place? How secure is the data?*

- ☐ Program administrators and relevant staff can use the record-keeping system to track enrollment data, employment information, and financial information.
- ☐ The program has an effective administrative record-keeping system where data is kept secure and shared appropriately.
- ☐ Administrators and relevant staff have regular training in the administrative record-keeping system.

**PI 2.4** The program has robust Internet access for administrators, staff, instructors, and learners.

a. Administrators, staff, instructors, and learners have Internet access as close to 24/7 as possible.

   Today's language education is dependent on access to a wide range of resources, including multimedia. Administration, instruction, and learning are not as effective when access to resources is uncertain or unpredictable. The program may need to find ways to supply equipment and Internet hotspots if these are not generally available to instructors and learners.

b. Program resources, including those for instructors and learners, are available as much as possible on mobile devices as well as tablets, laptops, and desktop computers.

   While detailed spreadsheets are best viewed on a large screen, mobile devices are much more widely available. Those with limited income are more likely to have a smartphone than a laptop or desktop computer. Most people carry a smartphone with them everywhere, which means that anytime, anywhere access will be via a mobile device.

*Reflection: How accessible are Internet-based program resources to administrators, staff, instructors, and learners? What types of resources are not available on mobile devices?*

- ☐ The program provides robust Internet access to administrators, staff, instructors, and learners.
- ☐ Program resources for administrators, staff, instructors, and learners are available as much as possible on a range of devices, including mobile devices.

**PI 2.5** Programs plan risk management.

a. The program has contingency plans in place to deal with unexpected circumstances, such as closure of in-person instruction and a move to online service provision.

   This may be a large-scale shift, as with the COVID pandemic, or more weather- and natural disaster-related emergencies may cause changes in the mode of instruction. Plans should be in place to make a quick pivot, and administrators, instructors, staff, and learners are aware of the plans.

b. There is a clear chain of command for dealing with technology-related emergencies, and administrators, staff, instructors, and learners are aware of the plan and contact information.

   Everyone needs to know the relevant people to contact. Emergencies may relate to a large-scale network shutdown, serious data breach, sexual harassment online, or other urgent technical or legal issue. When action needs to be taken quickly, information should be at hand.

c. Administrators, staff, and instructors are aware of risks potentially posed by AI, especially GenAI.

A regular system of updates can help everyone stay aware of the ways the landscape of education is changing due to AI. Areas of concern include assessment, privacy, security of learner data, and accuracy. (See PI 5.2.c)

*Reflection: What contingency plans are in place now? In case of emergency, would administrators, staff, instructors, and learners know what to do and who to contact? What kind of AI/GenAI policies are in place or planned?*

- ☐ The program has contingency plans in place to deal with unexpected circumstances, such as a move to remote instruction.
- ☐ Administrators, staff, instructors, and learners know what to do in case of technology-related emergencies, including data breaches and sexual harassment online.
- ☐ Administrators, staff, and instructors are regularly updated about risks as well as benefits posed by AI/GenAI.

## Standard 3 is about preparing instructors to use technology effectively.

**Programs offer resources and professional development that will allow instructors to meet and exceed clearly-defined expectations.**

**PI 3.1** The program has clearly-defined expectations for instructors.

a. Instructors are expected to have a basic level of technology competence, either when hired or through PD offerings after hiring.

Technology competence is an essential skill for instructors. Programs should determine the minimum level of competence required, set that as an expectation for hiring if possible, and ensure that current and future instructors have the training they need to meet expectations. The Avenue Instructor Standards for TELL offer benchmarks for programs to use.

b. Instructors are reminded regularly about ways to keep their devices, their learners, and themselves safe online.

Online threats and misbehavior can offer serious risks to a program. Instructors should know what to do to avoid risks and how to proceed in case of a technology issue and share that information with their learners.

c. Instructors teaching in a HyFlex setting, with both online and face-to-face learners at the same time, should have the training needed to be successful in this setting.

*Reflection: How does the program ensure that instructors remain up-to-date with technology? How well are instructors and learners prepared to deal with technology-related issues and risks?*

- ☐ The program has clearly-defined technology-related expectations for instructors, such as the Avenue Instructor Standards for TELL.
- ☐ The program provides technology training to instructors as needed to make them successful in online and blended teaching.
- ☐ Instructors are regularly trained and reminded about ways to keep their devices, their learners, and themselves safe online, especially with GenAI.

**PI 3.2** A range of relevant technology resources are available to instructors.

a. Instructors have access to a range of technology and digital tools at home and work.

   Programs should consider when and where instructors prepare and teach, and tech support should be available when and where instructors need it. Instructors who cannot access the platform or other system resources need multiple ways to contact tech support. Instructors may have lost Internet access, so they need a way to telephone or text for support. They may be working late at night or early in the morning, and tech support in some form should be available to them. Programs should consider making technology infrastructure and media resources available to instructors at home if needed. Instructors expected to teach face-to-face and online learners simultaneously (HyFlex) need the technology to make that possible (multiple cameras and screens, for example).

b. Instructors have regular PD at no cost to them to enhance their competence with the technology they and their learners need.

   The quick shift to fully online instruction highlighted the importance of having instructors prepared for change. In addition to expectations about differentiation, scaffolding, and flipped learning, instructors need to have ongoing PD to be prepared for ways to use rapidly-evolving technologies including GenAI, such as ChatGPT, appropriately in the classroom. Ongoing PD helps to ensure that instructors are best able to meet program outcomes.

c. Instructors have access to internal and external communities of practice to support them in their effective use of technology and digital material in teaching.

   Communities of practice are a good source of information about emerging technologies, including GenAI. A community of practice is a helpful part of PD, but it does not substitute for more formal PD offerings.

d. Instructors get the resources they need to meet or exceed the Avenue Instructor Standards for TELL.

   The Avenue Instructor Standards for TELL are a roadmap for competence with technology for language teaching. Programs should make resources available to instructors that will allow them to meet or exceed the Instructor Standards.

e. Instructors are encouraged to keep abreast of changes in technology, including GenAI tools and risks in the classroom.

   Programs are best served when instructors are using current technology resources appropriately. GenAI offers both benefits and risks, and programs should plan ways for instructors to know how to use these resources safely and well. Programs should have a dedicated professional on hand or on call who can address GenAI issues and offer training as needed. Instructors and learners may already be using GenAI tools outside the classroom, such as automated assistants on websites, and should be aware of what they are using.(See PI 2.5.c and PI 5.2.c)

*Reflection: How easily can instructors access resources to stay current with technology? How are instructors encouraged to participate in ongoing PD?*

- ☐ The program ensures that instructors have access to relevant digital technology tools at home and at work.
- ☐ The program provides instructors with the resources and training they need to meet or exceed the Avenue Instructor Standards for TELL.
- ☐ The program encourages instructors to participate in internal and external communities of practice to support them in their effective use of technology and digital material in teaching.
- ☐ The program supports instructors in staying abreast of changes in technology, including GenAI.

**PI 3.3** Programs recognize and where possible provide compensation to encourage ongoing technology expertise.

a. Instructors are acknowledged and if possible rewarded for improving their competence with technology.

Instructors are busy, constantly deciding how to spend their time. They need to believe that spending time on technology-related PD is viewed as valuable by the program. That which is recognized and rewarded is encouraged.

b. Instructors who regularly teach others about technology are compensated for this work.

Instructors are generally more willing to apply what they have learned from other instructors, especially ones within their own program, than from a consultant brought in from elsewhere. Mentoring and teacher training work is valuable to the program and should be compensated. AI, especially GenAI, is an area where programs can benefit from having someone on hand or on call to provide training and support as needed.

*Reflection: How are instructors encouraged to participate in ongoing PD? What compensation is offered to instructors who serve as technology mentors or leaders in the program?*

☐ The program acknowledges and, where possible, rewards instructors for improving their competence with technology.

☐ The program compensates instructors who regularly teach others about technology.

☐ The program encourages instructors to become highly competent, critical users of GenAI.

## Standard 4 is about what learners need to use technology effectively.

**Programs provide necessary infrastructure, training, and technical support for learners to use technology to achieve their goals.**

**PI 4.1** Learners have access to resources they need.

a. Learners have access to the technology they need in order to make use of program resources, including class materials and ways to contact instructors outside of class.

Program administrators need to know what resources learners need and take responsibility for providing access to them. The pandemic showed many gaps in resources, and it demonstrated the learning losses that ensued when learners could not access instructors and material. While administrators should not expect learners to have constant access to instructors, programs can set realistic expectations for response times.

b. Learners have Internet access or workarounds that allow them to participate in classes effectively.

Individual teachers can provide some support to learners, but the program should listen to learners and instructors about the support learners need for full participation, including Internet access or some other way to take part in classes.

c. Learners have access to tech support when they need it.

Learners who cannot access the platform or other system resources need multiple ways to contact tech support. Learners may have lost Internet access, so they need a way to telephone or text for support. Working adults may be studying late at night or early in the morning, and tech support in some form should be available to them.

d. Learners get the help they need to understand how, when, and why to use AI and GenAI appropriately.

*Reflection: How well can all learners access needed resources, including the platform and instructors? How does the program determine whether learner needs are met or not?*

- ☐ The program ensures that learners have access to the technology they need to make use of program resources, including class materials, ways to contact instructors outside of class, and technical support.
- ☐ The program ensures that learners have access to the Internet or workarounds to participate in classes effectively.

**PI 4.2** The program uses the Avenue Learner Standards for TELL and helps learners meet them.

a. Administrators, instructors, and relevant staff are knowledgeable about the Learner Standards.
b. Administrators, instructors, and relevant staff strive to provide the resources and pathways for learners to meet them.

*Reflection: How do administrators know whether learners meet the Avenue Learner Standards for TELL? What can the program do to encourage learners to meet or exceed the Learner Standards?*

- ☐ Administrators, instructors, and relevant staff are familiar with the Avenue Learner Standards for TELL.
- ☐ The program enables learners to meet or exceed the Avenue Learner Standards for TELL.

## Standard 5 is about digital literacy for administrators and staff.

**Programs ensure that administrators and staff have the digital literacy needed to be competent users of technology, and that administrators are supported in becoming leaders and change agents with technology.**

**PI 5.1** Program administrators and staff are competent users of technology.

a. Program administrators and staff have at least a basic level of digital literacy like that expected of instructors.

    Administrators and relevant staff are familiar with the basics of the operating system and the applications that they use on a daily basis (MS Office, for example). They meet the advanced level of Skills for Success (*https://alis.alberta.ca/inspire-and-motivate/the-9-skills-for-success/skills-for-success-digital/*).

b. Administrators and relevant staff are familiar with Avenue and other digital technology used regularly by instructors and learners.

    Administrators and relevant staff should be competent users of their learning management system (Avenue) and funding and reporting portals, as well as familiar with commonly-used classroom resources such as Tutela, Ellii, and other online educational sites. This knowledge will help them understand issues with technology used in the classroom and make better decisions about it.

c. Administrators and relevant staff are competent users of administrative record-keeping tools related to their jobs.

    Administrators and relevant staff should be able to use the record-keeping software needed in their jobs effectively and to perform basic troubleshooting. They should be aware of ways that AI can be used to work more effectively and also where it is potentially a risk.

d. All users of program technology are updated regularly about ways to keep their devices and themselves safe online.

The program should have policies related to technology security and safety and provide regular training and reminders. Administrators with access to sensitive learner and employee data must be especially cautious. This is particularly important if AI is being used for administrative functions, such as email to learners.

*Reflection: How well do administrators and staff understand commonly-used classroom technology? What policies are in place related to technology security and safety? How does the program assess compliance with security and safety?*

- ☐ Program administrators and relevant staff are digitally literate and familiar with Avenue and other digital technology used regularly by instructors and learners.
- ☐ Program administrators and relevant staff are competent users of the administrative record-keeping tools for their jobs.
- ☐ The program updates all users of program technology about ways to keep themselves and their devices safe online.

**PI 5.2** Programs must be prepared for the ways that AI/GenAI is changing the way education operates at all levels.

a. AI has the potential to improve automation of routine administrative tasks and to expand learner services with chatbots and similar AI agents.

Some elements of data collection and learner services can be performed by AI agents; programs should stay aware of advances and be selective about AI use.

b. Programs should enact GenAI-specific policies consistent with institutional policies, using instructor and learner input and outside expertise where possible. Programs should stay abreast of changes so that the policies can be updated as needed.

GenAI is rapidly developing. It can create lesson plans, dialogues, and other instructional material. It can help with brainstorming and correct first drafts. It can also do many out-of-class assignments that involve research. Users should be aware of the ways that GenAI is already embedded in the technology they are currently using. Instructors, learners, and administrators should work together to set and update policies, being aware of how education applications overlap with personal and social uses of GenAI. All users can benefit from transparency in GenAI use, where users explicitly describe how they have used GenAI in their work. Some policy suggestions can be found in *Guide on the use of Generative AI - Canada.ca*.

c. Programs must consider ethical issues related to equity and built-in biases in GenAI as well as the risks posed in terms of privacy, honesty, and accuracy.

GenAI datasets are built from material on the web, with all of the inherent inequities and biases therein. GenAI tools have been accused of vacuuming up user data without permission to build their data sets. Tools can also be used to create "deep fakes" - false audio, images, and videos of people. The ease with which GenAI can produce reports and other work means that instructors and programs must be aware and take steps to address misuse of these tools. In addition, GenAI will always provide a response, whether or not it is accurate. These are all concerns that could affect a program's legal liability.

*Reflection: How might your program use AI tools? What policies are in place now regarding AI?*

- ☐ The program collaboratively sets policies related to the use of AI by instructors, learners, administrators, and staff and keeps the policies and users regularly updated.
- ☐ The program carefully considers the risks and benefits of the ways that administrators, staff, instructors, and learners use AI.
- ☐ Programs have personnel on hand or on call who can advise about risks and benefits related to AI for administrators, staff, instructors, and learners.

# APPENDIX A: SELF-ASSESSMENT

## Standard 1: Programs have both a central philosophy and appropriate administrative structures to support collaboration in all areas involving technology and language teaching and learning.

**PI 1.1** Administrators, staff, and instructors work collaboratively to set program standards and expectations for and to make decisions about use of technology for teaching. Learners should be involved wherever feasible.

| | Fully meets or exceeds | Making progress | Does not meet |
|---|---|---|---|
| The program has established ways that allow administrators at all levels, staff, and instructors to collaborate on instruction-related technology decisions. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| The program has established ways that allow learners, where applicable, to collaborate on instruction-related technology decisions. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| The program provides timely notice about technology-related program directives to staff, instructors, and learners. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

**PI 1.2** Administrators, staff, instructors, and learners work together to implement effective technology adoption and use in the program.

| | Fully meets or exceeds | Making progress | Does not meet |
|---|---|---|---|
| Administrators, staff, instructors, and learners collaborate to encourage appropriate and effective ongoing technology implementation and use. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| Learners can give feedback as needed about whether technology is helping them achieve their goals. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| The program supports administrators to act as change agents on an ongoing basis in enabling effective technology use. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

**PI 1.3** Administrators, staff, instructors, and learners work together to implement effective technology adoption and use in the program.

| | Fully meets or exceeds | Making progress | Does not meet |
|---|---|---|---|
| The program has a transparent process in place for receiving and incorporating feedback about technology use from staff, instructors, and learners. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| The program encourages staff, instructor, and learner feedback about monitoring and evaluation systems for technology use, especially before final decisions are made. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

**PI 1.4** Administrators and staff participate in professional networks that help with technology implementation and evaluation.

| | Fully meets or exceeds | Making progress | Does not meet |
|---|---|---|---|
| The program supports administrators and staff to participate in technology-related professional development and professional networks. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| The program compensates staff who participate in technology-related professional development, perhaps through released time. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| The program subsidizes required training designed to meet specific technology-related program needs. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

## Standard 2: Programs acquire, maintain, and keep current the technology devices, systems, and applications necessary to fulfill their educational missions.

**PI 2.1** The overall technology infrastructure is robust, supported, and regularly upgraded.

| | Fully meets or exceeds | Making progress | Does not meet |
|---|---|---|---|
| The program has qualified system administrators who troubleshoot problems and update the system and applications as needed. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| The program has appropriate security on devices to protect learner data and provides training in its effective security practice. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

**PI 2.2** The program has an effective learning management system (LMS).

| | Fully meets or exceeds | Making progress | Does not meet |
|---|---|---|---|
| The program has a user-friendly learning management system (LMS) like Avenue for storing program resources and tracking learner progress. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| The LMS has level-appropriate, user-friendly, accessible instructional material. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| All LMS users have access to level-appropriate, user-friendly, accessible instructions and training in use of the LMS. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

**PI 2.3** The program has an effective administrative record-keeping system.

| | Fully meets or exceeds | Making progress | Does not meet |
|---|---|---|---|
| Program administrators and relevant staff can use the record-keeping system to track enrollment data, employment information, and financial information. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| The program has an effective administrative record-keeping system where data is kept secure and shared appropriately. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| Administrators and relevant staff have regular training in the administrative record-keeping system. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

**PI 2.4** The program has robust Internet access for administrators, staff, instructors, and learners.

| | Fully meets or exceeds | Making progress | Does not meet |
|---|---|---|---|
| The program provides robust Internet access to administrators, staff, instructors, and learners. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | | | |
| Program resources for administrators, staff, instructors, and learners are available as much as possible on a range of devices, including mobile devices. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

**PI 2.5** Risk management

| | Fully meets or exceeds | Making progress | Does not meet |
|---|---|---|---|
| The program has contingency plans in place to deal with unexpected circumstances, such as a move to remote instruction. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Administrators, staff, instructors, and learners know what to do in case of technology-related emergencies, including data breaches and sexual harassment online. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | | | |
| Administrators, staff, and instructors are regularly updated about risks as well as benefits posed by AI/GenAI. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

## Standard 3: Programs offer resources and professional development that will allow instructors to meet and exceed clearly-defined expectations.

**PI 3.1** The program has clearly-defined expectations for instructors.

| | Fully meets or exceeds | Making progress | Does not meet |
|---|---|---|---|
| The program has clearly-defined technology-related expectations for instructors, such as the Avenue Instructor Standards for TELL. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| The program provides technology training to instructors as needed to make them successful in online and blended teaching. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| Instructors are regularly trained and reminded about ways to keep their devices, their learners, and themselves safe online, especially with GenAI. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

**PI 3.2** A range of relevant technology resources are available to instructors.

| | Fully meets or exceeds | Making progress | Does not meet |
|---|---|---|---|
| The program ensures that instructors have access to relevant digital technology tools at home and at work. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| The program provides instructors with the resources and training they need to meet or exceed the Avenue Instructor Standards for TELL. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| The program encourages instructors to participate in internal and external communities of practice to support them in their effective use of technology and digital material in teaching. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| The program encourages instructors to stay abreast of changes in technology, including GenAI. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

**PI 3.3** Programs recognize and where possible provide compensation to encourage ongoing technology expertise.

| | Fully meets or exceeds | Making progress | Does not meet |
|---|---|---|---|
| The program acknowledges and, where possible, rewards instructors for improving their competence with technology. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| The program compensates instructors who regularly teach others about technology. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| The program encourages instructors to become highly competent, critical users of GenAI. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

## Standard 4: Programs provide necessary infrastructure, training, and technical support for learners to use technology to achieve their goals.

**PI 4.1** Learners have access to resources they need.

| | Fully meets or exceeds | Making progress | Does not meet |
|---|---|---|---|
| The program ensures that learners have access to the technology they need to make use of program resources, including class materials, ways to contact instructors outside of class, and technical support, including support related to GenAI. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| The program ensures that learners have access to the Internet or workarounds to participate in classes effectively. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

**PI 4.2** The program works to help learners meet the Avenue Learner Standards for TELL Administrators, instructors, and relevant staff are knowledgeable about the Learner Standards and strive to provide the resources and pathways for learners to meet them.

| | Fully meets or exceeds | Making progress | Does not meet |
|---|---|---|---|
| Administrators, instructors, and relevant staff are familiar with the Avenue Learner Standards for TELL. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| The program enables learners to meet or exceed the Avenue Learner Standards for TELL. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

## Standard 5: Programs ensure that administrators and staff have the digital literacy needed to be competent users of technology, and that administrators are supported in becoming leaders and change agents with technology.

**PI 5.1** Program administrators and staff are competent users of technology.

| | Fully meets or exceeds | Making progress | Does not meet |
|---|---|---|---|
| Program administrators and relevant staff are digitally literate and familiar with Avenue and other digital technology used regularly by instructors and learners. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| Program administrators and relevant staff are competent users of the administrative record-keeping tools for their jobs. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| The program updates all users of program technology about ways to keep themselves and their devices safe online. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

**PI 5.2** Programs must be prepared for the ways that AI/GenAI is changing the way education operates at all levels.

| | Fully meets or exceeds | Making progress | Does not meet |
|---|---|---|---|
| The program collaboratively sets policies related to the use of AI/GenAI by instructors, learners, administrators, and staff and keeps the policies and users regularly updated. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| The program carefully considers the risks and benefits of the ways that administrators, staff, instructors, and learners use AI/GenAI. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |
| Programs have personnel on hand or on call who can advise about risks and benefits related to AI/GenAI for administrators, staff, instructors, and learners. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Explain: | | | |

# APPENDIX B: VIGNETTES

## Table of Contents

# VIGNETTE 1: SHARON RAJABI
# *LOOKING BACK: FROM INSTRUCTION TO ADMINISTRATION*

**Avenue Program Standards for Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL)[1]:**

## Précis

### *The Idea*

Sharon Rajabi, currently an Adult Education Consultant, has always been passionate about helping instructors and learners make use of technology. When Sharon first started in the nineties, there were very few resources. She had to figure out what to do, one day at a time. As the early work of integrating Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) into the curriculum took shape, Sharon believed it was important to share them as widely as possible to give others the benefit of the new resources and to participate in their further development. Later, Sharon found out that it was the same story with the programs; there was little PD for managers and their staff. Whether a new system was introduced or new equipment was purchased, the trainings that were offered seemed generic and were not very effective. As a result, staff found it difficult to transfer them to their own context. Sharon understood the importance of timely and relevant professional development and training opportunities and dedicated her career to help build cross-Canada expertise.

### *The Transition*

Soon after her own arrival in Canada in 1991 – and fresh from a successful search for employment as an ESL instructor at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) – Sharon Rajabi began her teaching career with developing what, at the time, was a novel course that combined language instruction with intensive employment preparation skills and computer training. As a computer science graduate, Sharon used her knowledge of technology as a foundation to prepare the course materials.

A few years later, Sharon transferred to Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) in 1994 teaching a similar course. In 1998, Sharon was seconded to work on the LINC 4&5 Curriculum Guidelines Project, which created the first LINC curriculum guidelines that introduced the integration of computer tasks in language teaching. Other project work ensued. and in 2000 Sharon was promoted to a Program Consultant to oversee the budget and operations, as well as managing various projects at the TCDSB Adult Education Program.

### *Program Administration*

In 2000, The TCDSB Adult Education Program was a large size urban program provider that offered ESL (funded by Ontario government), LINC (federal), and Literacy and Basic Skills (provincial) to about 12,000 adult learners over a hundred locations across the city of Toronto. The program hired hundreds of full time and part time instructors and tens of program consultants and administrative assistants to provide support and supervision to the sites.

[1]New Language Solutions has developed three standards to guide the effective integration of technology in Canadian settlement language programs: the *Avenue Instructor Standards* (seven standards), the *Avenue Program Standards* (five standards), and the *Avenue Learner Standards* (four standards). These frameworks equip ESL instructors, learners, and program administrators with clear objectives, practical examples, and self-assessment tools to help implement Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) in blended learning environments. By prioritizing TELL strategies, the standards empower educators to create dynamic, learner-centered experiences. Ultimately, the standards aim to elevate program quality while enriching outcomes for newcomers navigating linguistic and cultural integration.

Sharon's portfolio included managing the budget (revenue and expenditure) and the operation at each school to ensure that the sites ran smoothly and classroom needs were met. This meant ensuring that each location (and class) received their own dedicated operating budget; capital expenditures were allocated for site repairs and improvements and were done in a timely manner; and Internet connectivity and site equipment were purchased and upgraded cyclically. It also meant that technical support was available to the sites and classrooms in a timely manner to ensure that teaching time was dedicated to teaching and not addressing technical issues. The technical support was managed by the school board's IT department but realizing that wasn't enough, the program hired a dedicated technical support person to be available to the sites during instructional time.

Sharon negotiated budgets with the provincial and federal governments, did budget forecast and analysis for the TCDSB Budget Department and the funders, and oversaw financial audits. In the early days of computers in the classroom, it wasn't easy to convince the funders to dedicate a portion of the annual budget for technology. It took some convincing on the part of service providers to make sure that technology was an instrumental part of their budget.

Sharon also managed all the projects within the TCDSB Adult Education Program. The projects had to do with the development of or updating LINC or Ontario curriculum guidelines and course materials; to support the role of technology in language teaching and learning and suggest models for professional development. Some highlights are the Ontario eLearning Onyx Project (2016-2021), Ontario Curriculum Framework: Quartz Project (2014-2016); CALL: A Software Guide for LINC classroom and LINC Train the Trainer Project (2000), and a conceptual framework for LINC (2020-2021).

Sharon's other responsibilities included policy development for her program. Over the span of her career, she chaired a few working groups to develop a PD framework, a program planning framework, a support and supervision policy framework, and a privacy information management framework.

Sharon understood and appreciated the importance of community of practice and networking, which helped her gain a much deeper understanding of the issues in her work. Sharon served on TESL Toronto, TESL Ontario and TESL Canada boards for a number of years as board member, Research and Dissemination Chair, Technology Chair, and Conference Chair. She served as TESL Ontario President from 2006 to 2008.

From attending and presenting at conferences to engaging in committee work, Sharon's job included a variety of activities. She sat on a number of advisory committees that included:

- National Advisory Committee for PBLA, TUTELA, Avenue.ca and National Curriculum Framework 2019-2020
- Coordinated Language Assessment & Referral System (CLARS)-CIC & MCI 2009-2012
- National Advisory committee on a national professional development framework -Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) – 2010
- LINC Learning Objects & Online Repository -2010

**Interested in Learning More?**

**Administrator Profile** **In Sharon's Own Words** **Towards ESL Technology-use Guidelines**

## Administrator Profile:

In the mid-1970s, Sharon Rajabi travelled to England from her home country, Iran, to further her education. After completing her A Levels, she made a fortuitous decision to study computer science at the University of Essex just as the first mass-produced personal computers were about to transform society. With her degree in hand, Sharon returned to Iran in 1980 where, in addition to teaching high school mathematics, she developed and taught a course in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Sadly, 1980 marked the beginning of a devastating war between Iran and Iraq. It soon became dangerous to live in Tehran, so Sharon and her husband moved to Istanbul, Turkey, where Sharon found a teaching job at an International School. When the war ended in 1988, the couple returned to Iran with the intention of emigrating to Canada. When permission was granted in 1991, the Rajabi family – now including two young children – began a new life in Toronto.

Shortly after arriving, Sharon applied for employment with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). Her experience as a high school teacher, EFL instructor, curriculum designer, and computer science specialist was exactly what the Board was looking for. Computers were still an exciting new thing in 1991, and the Board was looking for experienced ESL instructors who could also teach computer skills to new immigrants. Within a few days of her job interview, Sharon was hired. However, as she soon discovered, there was no established curriculum for teaching computer skills to immigrants. Sharon would have to create one from scratch. As she describes it, "I worked like a dog to design a program that would begin almost immediately. I was maybe a week ahead of my students. What I came up with was a 12-week course that, with a bit of honing, would eventually become an 8-week, 200-hour course."

In 1994, Sharon moved from the TDSB to the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) where she continued to teach a similar course. In 1998, the TCDSB proposed an update to the Language Instruction for New Canadians (LINC 4 & 5) curriculum guidelines. The first LINC curriculum guidelines addressed only the first three of what would eventually become eight levels. Sharon was invited to join the curriculum team to conceptually design, develop, and manage her first project. Over the next few years, Sharon became a key contributor, writing proposals for government funding, managing projects, writing or revising LINC curriculum guidelines, and creating guidelines to incorporate computer-assisted language learning into ESL instruction. Along the way, she somehow found time to earn a Master of Education degree at York University.

In 2021, Sharon retired from full-time work at the TCDSB. Today, she works as an independent Adult Education consultant.

## In Sharon's Own Words

### *Lessons Learned*

Technology has changed spectacularly in the years since I was an instructor, but our attempts to make use of the technology of that era aren't much different from current efforts to harness new apps or new Internet resources to streamline, enrich, and improve teaching, learning, and administration. This is an ongoing story. If I were back in the classroom today, I would be using a different set of computer-assisted learning tools. If I were to teach ten years from now, the tool set would have changed again – but the intent of the instruction, if not the details, would remain essentially the same. Keeping up with technology in administration is not that different from the classroom. The equipment and software programs change periodically, yet we learn to transfer our existing skills to

build up on and learn new ones. The key is to provide multi-purpose and multi-modal professional development and training opportunities for all staff with compensation. Over the years, I have learned that training needs to include general and personalized opportunities; it's effective when it's relevant and presented just in time and in small doses. I have also learned that I have to take responsibility for my own learning. After all, there's so much that management and governments can do for us; the responsibility lies with each individual.

## Towards ESL Technology-use Guidelines and Performance Indicators

Sharon has been one of Canada's leading contributors to the development of technology-use guidelines and performance indicators for language teaching and learning.

**Standard 2: Infrastructure**

Programs acquire, maintain, and keep current the technology devices, systems, and applications necessary to fulfill their educational missions.

Sharon's current work with New Language Solutions goes back to the days of the LearnIT2teach teacher training platform and the EduLINC student learning platform. Sharon was part of the first Advisory Group that guided their development. As EduLINC became the federal government's de facto language learning platform, Sharon urged administrators at the Ontario provincial and school board levels to use Moodle-based EduLINC as their reference model in order to support universal access to learning language materials. Consequently in 2016, in partnership with New Language Solutions and funding from the Government of Ontario, Sharon spearheaded the design and development of the Onyx learning management system. Onyx became instrumental in supporting Ontario-funded ESL and FSL learning when COVID-19 struck in early 2020. In 2023, Onyx became a part of Avenue – an updated version of EduLINC developed by New Language Solutions – to create a single language learning platform for both Ontario and federally-funded language training programs across the country.

**Standard 3: Preparing instructors to use technology effectively**

Programs offer resources and professional development that will allow instructors to meet and exceed clearly-defined expectations.

Developing technology tools and guidelines is one thing. Convincing ESL teachers to adopt them is another. Early on, Sharon recognized that resistance to technology adoption is often based on lack of confidence and fear of the unknown. She understood that timely professional development is key to overcoming the barrier to learning. So, as a developer of learning platforms and computer-based instructional units, Sharon also made it her mission to demonstrate how accessible these technologies can be and how much value they add to teaching and learning. Sharon has worked in collaboration with others to develop everything from comprehensive self-paced courses on Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) to personalized face-to-face and online sessions with instructors to help them overcome barriers and learn specific skills.

Sharon has also long believed that it is important to develop standards to guide instructors in their understanding and application of CALL technologies. In 2021, she was invited by New Language Solutions to participate in a standards development project along with three American giants in the field: Deborah Healey, Philip Hubbard, and Greg Kessler. The result has been a landmark set of documents entitled Avenue Instructor Standards for TELL, Avenue Program Standards for TELL, and Avenue Learner Standards for TELL that will guide ESL instructors, administrators, and learners in their use of technology for years to come.

# VIGNETTE 2: KERRY HOWARD
# *TIES ONLINE: DELIVERING LINC IN THE DIGITAL AGE*

**Avenue Program Standards for Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL)[1]:**

## *The Immigrant Education Society (TIES) – Calgary*

The staff at The Immigrant Education Society (TIES) in Calgary, Alberta, have helped to make the organization a Canadian leader in integrated immigrant support services.

Established in 1988, TIES today operates at three locations chosen because they are home to large immigrant populations. Its Forest Lawn, Whitehorn, and Westwinds centres each offer a mix of language instruction, employment training, mental health support, and settlement assistance. Originally serving no more than a few hundred students each year, enrolment has climbed to about 2,400, including 220 learners enrolled in LINC Home Study. With a waitlist of more than 2,000 clients, TIES is actively exploring ways to expand its space and make increased use of technology-enhanced learning to keep up with the urgent need for language instruction.

Kerry has been at the centre of technological innovation at TIES since the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted classroom learning worldwide. Before 2020, technology played only a limited role in language instruction. Today, all TIES classrooms are equipped with smart boards, webcams, laptop computers, and a wide range of applications that support a dynamic, hybrid approach to learning.

The breadth of programming at TIES is impressive. Language learners can choose from LINC, Drop-In ESL, Literacy and Basic English, and computer-assisted language learning, as well as online options such as LINC Home Study, and LINC Blended. Also on offer are employment-focused English programs such as *English for Employment: Job Search (EEJS)*, Real world Instruction for Successful English (RISE), and *Workplace Online Retention Class (WORC)*, a free, online English language course that helps newcomers improve workplace communication and soft skills through approximately 30 hours of self-guided lessons and homework.

Employment programs such as *Employment Skills Training (EST)*, *Empowering Youth through Employment (EYE)*, *Job Readiness for Newcomers* and *Admin Ready: Administrative Skills for Success* provide practical skills in clerical work, computers, and accounting, alongside specialized training for sectors such as security, warehouse support, and childcare. Settlement supports services include information and orientation, settlement counselling, financial literacy, emotional wellness, and referral services.

One of TIES' greatest strengths lies in housing these services together. Language learners benefit from having childcare, health referrals, career counselling, and employment training under the same roof as their language classes. Coordinators from different programs regularly visit classrooms to introduce students to the full range of supports available. For newcomers, this one-stop approach eliminates extra barriers, making it easier to focus on learning English while also gaining the skills and stability they need to succeed in Canada.

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### *Staying Abreast of Change*

Since 2020, Kerry Howard, LINC Program Manager at TIES, has worked to equip classrooms with hybrid delivery technology. He collaborates with two other managers, Jana Ciobanu, Senior LINC Program Manager at TIES's Whitehorn location, and Whitney Loewen, eLINC/LINC Program Manager at the Westwinds location, to train staff in using digital tools, including the Avenue platform, smart boards, and cameras, to support remote learners at home.

The primary instructional model is hybrid, with about three-quarters of students attending in person and the remainder joining remotely when they cannot be on site. Remote participation rotates so that each student spends some time in class and some online—no one participates remotely every day. This approach has become essential due to rising demand for services and limited classroom seating.

TIES also offers fully online courses, as well as a dedicated literacy program that predominantly relies on in-class attendance. However, hybrid participation is available for literacy students in specific circumstances, such as illness, appointments, or family emergencies, provided they have acquired the requisite technological skills. These skills are typically developed by literacy levels 3 or 4, enabling students to benefit from the more flexible hybrid model.

In terms of equipment, the choice of technology has evolved continuously. Initially, the team invested in high-end webcams, but budget constraints have led to the adoption of more affordable yet effective alternatives that still meet the needs of remote learning.

Classrooms are equipped with the Avenue digital platform, smart boards, and cameras to support both in-person and remote learning. The smart boards are integrated with the Microsoft Suite, and additional software enables students with Smart Phones to interact with exercises and games directly on the board.

In the hybrid teaching environment, instructors use traditional PDF learning modules, which are supplemented with resources from Avenue, as well as modules and skill-building activities from the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB). A video camera, with remote-control capabilities, captures both the instructor's actions and the classroom activities, ensuring that remote students can see and hear the lesson. Remote students also appear on the smart board when speaking.

To maintain engagement, in-person students may be paired with remote participants for activities or one-on-one interactions. Remote learners are expected to actively participate in the lesson—keeping their cameras on, asking questions, making comments, and responding when addressed. Far from being passive observers, learners must be fully engaged in the learning experience.

**Interested in Learning More?**

**Personal Profile** **In Kerry's Words : Necessity Drives Innovation** **Application of Instructor Standards**

## Personal Profile:

Kerry Howard's career in English language teaching has been defined by adaptability, innovation, and a drive to support newcomers in their adjustment to life in Canada. From his first experiences teaching overseas to his current leadership role at The Immigrant Education Society (TIES) in Calgary, his path reflects both personal growth and the broader evolution of language education in a rapidly changing world.

After completing a Bachelor of Linguistics and English Literature at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Kerry first considered a career in speech pathology. Instead, his professional journey began abroad, teaching at Janghak English Academy in South Korea. For five years, he worked with middle and high school students preparing for the *Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)*, a standardized exam that measures the ability of non-native speakers to use and understand English at the university level. These years proved to be a pivotal transition, confirming his passion for teaching and introducing him to administration as he took on staff hiring and training responsibilities. This combination of classroom and leadership experience inspired him to pursue a Master's degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) from the University of Birmingham in the UK, which he began while still in Korea.

Kerry returned to Canada in 2011, first spending time in Halifax to complete his thesis. In early 2012, he relocated to Calgary in search of job opportunities. Soon after arriving, he interviewed successfully for an opening at TIES as a LINC instructor. For the next five years, he dedicated himself to supporting adult learners through Canada's federally funded LINC language program, building strong connections with students and colleagues alike. His commitment and leadership abilities led him into a supervisory role, and in 2021, he was appointed LINC Program Manager.

In this role, Kerry works with fellow managers Jana Ciobanu and Whitney Loewen to deliver a wide range of LINC classes. Morning, afternoon, evening, and weekend programs meet the diverse needs of Calgary's newcomers. Kerry's leadership was particularly important through the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. What began with an abrupt end to in-classroom language learning quickly transitioned into fully online learning, with staff and students adapting to new technologies almost overnight. Since then, Kerry has been at the forefront of refining hybrid and online learning approaches to ensure they remain effective and accessible.

Kerry's professional journey mirrors the transformational changes in the TESL field itself. The pandemic, rapid technological innovation, and the rising demand for immigrant language training have reshaped both the challenges and opportunities facing educators. As TIES continues to expand its reach and adapt to new realities—including the integration of emerging tools such as artificial intelligence – Kerry's career stands as a testament to the need for resilience and innovation in meeting the need for effective language education in supporting successful newcomer settlement.

## In Kerry's Own Words: Necessity Drives Innovation

In my years as a LINC instructor and program manager at TIES, one pressing need after another has driven us out of our comfort zone into unfamiliar territory.

When the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, most of us didn't have time even to gather our personal files or grab one of the few laptops available before schools closed. For the first week or so, teachers were calling students one by one to conduct 15-minute mini-lessons.

We scrambled to get some Zoom accounts—most of us had never heard of Zoom before—and we looked into what Google Classroom might offer. For a while, those two platforms formed our entire software suite. Gradually, we learned to use other Google tools such as Forms to help with assessments, and we made our materials more engaging with photos, illustrations, and emojis. We were constantly testing new things, and when we found something useful, we would train instructors to use it. In keeping with LINC's Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) approach, we placed particular emphasis on assessment. As soon as we figured out how to conduct them online, we began applying the process. All that intensive work paid off. Within a month, we were fully operational online. There was still much to learn, but regular classes were once again possible – in an almost entirely new medium.

### *Staying Abreast of Change*

In more recent years, when we heard about using Avenue as a learning platform, we jumped on it right away. Our online classes used it first, but everybody's using it now. The way that I look at it is, if an external funder is paying for it and other LINC providers are creating great learning materials, why would any LINC program not use it? All of our instructors have taken at least some Avenue course development training, most up to Stage 2.

Our instructors regularly come to us with new tools they have discovered to make learning more interesting. An example is Kahoot, the game-based learning platform that turns quizzes into fun, interactive experiences. On PD days, we will sometimes do a skill share. Each instructor will bring a skill or tool that they share with the group. We try to support that kind of innovation.

### *AI*

Generative Artificial Intelligence is the newest disruptive technology on the language instruction scene. We see advantages and disadvantages.

From the point of view of an instructor, GenAI can be used to enrich the learning materials available by adapting existing material to make it more useful, or to create new material modelled on successful concepts. For instance, at a recent Skill Share session, one of our instructors explained how she is using AI to take existing learning modules for a particular CLB level and create new scenarios, role-plays, exercises, and other learning materials. The key to getting good results is to learn how to give precise directions to the GenAI program regarding the products you want to create.

The most common concern we encounter about AI is cheating. Instructors are seeing flawless assignments, mostly from online learners, who previously struggled. Instructors need to recognize "tells" of AI use, such as odd bolding, dashes, textbook-style subheadings, lists, or uncommon words. Many students don't understand plagiarism or the drawbacks of letting a machine do their work—points we need to explain to every learner.

## Avenue Program Standards and Performance Indicators

Here are some key ways in which *The Immigrant Education Society's (TIES)* has made use of the *Avenue Program Standards for Technology-enhanced Language Learning* to create dynamic, learner-centered experiences when an exclusive reliance on traditional face-to-face learning is no longer possible.

**Standard 1: Collaboration.**

*Programs have both a central philosophy and appropriate administrative structures to support collaboration in all areas involving technology and language teaching and learning.*

- TIES LINC utilizes planned PD times to equip staff with the skills needed to successfully integrate technology into the classroom. Staff have in the past brought in activities and strategies to share in these sessions, which have sometimes highlighted technological tools to enhance the learning experience.
- The program also informs learners on program standards by way of formal orientation with new students and classes, as well as upon intake. Prior to entering classes, program coordinators assess device need (if applicable) and inform students of what our different modes of delivery entail. Learners in hybrid classes are informed by program coordinators that they will be studying both in person and online, while students in online classes are informed that they will be studying completely online with their instructor, and the need for a device is assessed at this time. Program standards are shared with learners via Avenue.ca courses or by email.
- Program managers have started in the past few years to involve program coordinators and instructors on technology-related decisions. This is done by way of informal focus groups where an issue is presented, and the group is tasked with brainstorming solutions and agreeing upon feasible options that enable positive outcomes.

  The LINC Program's use of focus groups began during the last IRCC Call for Proposals on language training. We consulted instructors and coordinators on unique activities for the proposal – for example, whether to offer a week-long digital skills boot camp. The process proved very useful.

  Later, when faced with limited seating capacity and the need to increase class sizes, we again turned to focus groups with senior instructors, most of them PBLA leads. We explored options such as splitting assessments between in-person and online formats and adjusting our hybrid model. The solutions developed have since allowed us to deliver effective language training within our constraints.

  Another recent example of this type of group decision-making process occurred when the program reconfigured the methodology associated with hybrid delivery. In the past, our classrooms were equipped to handle all registrants physically in the classroom for our hybrid classes, and learners were permitted to transition online from time to time to accommodate needs for flexibility. Since April of 2025, seat numbers per class have had to increase past the number that can physically fit in our classrooms. Experienced PBLA Leads were asked to work with management to come up with a solution to allow all learners the opportunity to study both in person and online without exceeding room capacity, ensuring learners maintain agency over their learning trajectory.

- To the best of our ability, TIES staff is consulted on digital tools purchased or utilized by the program. TIES is fortunate to have received adequate funding over the years to outfit all of our classrooms with smartboards and high-end webcams, enabling more efficient hybrid classrooms.

  Some technologies have become prohibitively expensive. Zoom, for example, rose sharply in cost during the pandemic. We tried a custom app as an alternative, but it lacked the functionality instructors needed and caused stress, so we returned to Zoom. The lesson: consult end-users first.

Now, when instructors submit well-justified requests, we accommodate them when budgets allow. For example, at an instructor's request, we purchased *Presentation Plus* textbook versions with interactive activities for Smart Boards, and document readers that let instructors display printed materials. Both have proven very useful in the classroom – an approach now shared by other instructors.

**Standard 2: Infrastructure.**

*Programs acquire, maintain, and keep current the technology devices, systems, and applications necessary to fulfill their educational missions.*

- At TIES, we are lucky to have had great support from IRCC and other funders to invest in capital assets that support technological integration into our programming. In our LINC department, all classrooms are equipped with smart boards and high-end web cameras, allowing us to facilitate successful hybrid delivery. In the past few years, all of the devices in our computer labs have been replaced, and online instructors have access to organization-maintained laptops for course facilitation.

- The LINC program at TIES has been utilizing avenue.ca for quite some time now. Each instructor maintains a course and utilizes the built-in tools in both hybrid and fully online courses. TIES also has its own LMS, TIES Learn, which houses Moodle-based courses that have been developed in-house. Some of the courses included are Newcomer Introduction to Classes Online (NICO), English for Employment Online: Workplace Online Retention Class (WORC), among others.

**Standard 3: Preparing instructors to use technology effectively.**

*Programs offer resources and professional development that will allow instructors to meet and exceed clearly defined expectations.*

- The LINC program at TIES strives to equip instructors with the technical knowledge necessary to effectively administer LINC classes in either online or hybrid modes of delivery. All instructors hired at TIES are required to participate in avenue.ca training and are compensated up to Transitions to Stage 2. The program requires instructors to utilize the course templates for TIES LINC classes that have been uploaded to the course builder on avenue.ca. Instructors are also expected to use ready-made materials housed on avenue.ca as well as through tutela.ca until after they complete the PBLA training offered by the CCLB.

- Instructors who teach in literacy classes are advised to use materials created by TIES' Literacy Centre of Expertise, which includes paper-based and digital tools for use in LINC Literacy classrooms.

**Standard 4: Learners have access to resources they need.**

*Programs provide necessary infrastructure, training, and technical support for learners to use technology to achieve their goals.*

- TIES has a device lending library for clients who do not have access to devices needed for hybrid and online course participation. Clients are able to borrow devices if they are low-income and do not have access to one at home. We are hoping to expand this library in the future due to the high demand and long waitlist for devices.

- The laptops and other devices in the library are all donations, mainly from corporations in the Calgary area. During the thick of the pandemic, we reached out to the *Alberta Computers for Schools* program. Their generous donations went a long way towards meeting our needs.

**Standard 5: Digital literacy for administrators and staff.**

*Programs ensure that administrators and staff have the digital literacy needed to be competent users of technology, and that administrators are supported in becoming leaders and change agents with technology.*

- TIES LINC staff are equipped with the digital skills needed to successfully run a LINC program. The administration utilizes shared documents through SharePoint, works within both internal and government systems, and has plans to explore how AI can be of use for our program delivery.

- We certainly recognize the need to run more PD around technology and digital tools, and will continue to work on that in the future.

- Before the pandemic, we were a very paper-heavy program. We had filing cabinets everywhere, with colored stickers on files to represent different things. At the start of the pandemic, we began to use Excel spreadsheets to keep track of things, but keeping them up to date was time-consuming. Within the LINC program, we soon learned how to use OneDrive for centralized document management, version control, online forms, enrollment tracking, digital portfolio submissions, and other functions.

- In 2024, the whole organization moved to a more formal system based on Microsoft SharePoint, with each group within the program having its own pillar. TIES received funding to hire a contractor to provide SharePoint training to our IT team and teaching staff, as well as assistance to individual instructors in setting up their computers to operate in the new environment. Today, as new people arrive, our IT team brings them up to speed.

- All of our coordinators use School Sense, an all-in-one, customizable software package tailored to the needs of LINC program managers. We use it, among other things, to maintain our enrollment and wait list information. As it houses all of our enrolment data, we can quickly access client and instructor data and easily generate program status reports.

- We also use iCare, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's secure online data entry system. iCare is designed for organizations like ours that are funded by IRCC to manage and report on settlement and resettlement services. In our case, it is used to record and track information on the language training services we provide.

# VIGNETTE 3: JENNIFER JONES
# *TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED LEARNING: A PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR'S JOURNEY*

**Avenue Program Standards for Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL)[1]:**

## Précis

When Jennifer Jones showed up for duty in January 2019 as the Thames Valley District School Board's new Adult ESL-LINC Learning Support Coordinator, little did she suspect that the next few years would be rocked, not once but twice, by events demanding transformational change.

At the time, the TVDSB, based in London, Ontario, operated a medium-sized program offering primarily in-person courses for newcomers to Canada. These courses were funded by both the provincial and federal governments. As is still the case today, learners ranged from Foundation Literacy to Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level 7.

Although Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) had been around for some time, its impact on ESL programs was limited due to restricted access to computers, unreliable internet connectivity, and a shortage of tech-savvy staff. Still, a few adventurous instructors and administrators at the TVDSB – Jennifer among them – had begun to explore the potential of technology to support learner success.

Their knowledge and inventiveness would be tested in the extreme when the COVID-19 pandemic – a game-changing event for language-learning programs around the world – was declared in March 2020. With classrooms abruptly locked down, program administrators and instructors faced an urgent need to reinvent how they delivered language instruction. How they approached that formidable task is highlighted in the section of this vignette entitled *Transitioning to TELL*.

Scarcely three years later, the public release of ChatGPT brought a second transformative disruption for ESL programs. The impressive capabilities of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) created both significant challenges and exciting opportunities. Protecting academic integrity became more complex, as learners now had easy access to GenAI tools that can compose essays and complete assignments. At the same time, GenAI and other types of AI tools offered powerful benefits, such as boosting administrative productivity, assisting instructors in quickly generating customized learning materials and assessments, and providing learners with innovative ways to practice and enhance their language skills independently. The TVDSB's continuing efforts to understand and harness AI are explained in *The Rise of AI* later in this document.

The TVDSB's experience in dealing with COVID-19 and the emergence of GenAI makes it clear that responding proactively by adopting and adapting technology can open effective new pathways for enhancing the language-learning experience.

[1]New Language Solutions has developed three standards to guide the effective integration of technology in Canadian settlement language programs: the *Avenue Instructor Standards* (seven standards), the *Avenue Program Standards* (five standards), and the *Avenue Learner Standards* (four standards). These frameworks equip ESL instructors, learners, and program administrators with clear objectives, practical examples, and self-assessment tools to help implement Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) in blended learning environments. By prioritizing TELL strategies, the standards empower educators to create dynamic, learner-centered experiences. Ultimately, the standards aim to elevate program quality while enriching outcomes for newcomers navigating linguistic and cultural integration.

### *Transitioning to TELL*

When the COVID-19 emergency was declared in March 2020, Jennifer and her colleagues were told by the Adult ESL-LINC Program's principal to leave the office, take everything they would need to work from home, and not return until it was considered safe. It was nearly seven months before they were able to return in September 2020.

With staff working from home, the urgent task of sustaining learning without classrooms began. Before this, there were no regular online ESL classes. With face-to-face instruction no longer possible, the team quickly pivoted to digital tools, online platforms, and virtual classrooms. Creativity and resilience were critical to maintaining continuity for learners during this global disruption.

Jennifer responded by curating a list of online and stand-alone resources organized by language level. Instructors used this list to recommend activities targeted to their learners. One key resource was the ESL Library (now called Ellii), and all full-time staff were provided with accounts. The program also acquired Oxford Digital resources suitable for all instructional levels.

To support learners in adapting to the new environment, the team created simple how-to videos, digital tip sheets with infographics, and reached out to those with basic digital literacy skills. When learners and teaching staff regained access to the buildings in late 2020 - early 2021, face-to-face digital orientation sessions were introduced, especially for foundation learners unfamiliar with computers or smartphones. For these learners, personal support from instructors was crucial.

Initially, staff relied on Microsoft Outlook for communication. While Microsoft Teams was available, few had used it, so training was provided. Soon, all staff were attending weekly Friday meetings to discuss online teaching strategies, including how to reach learners, suggest activities, and monitor progress.

Instructors were also trained to use Google Classroom and Google Meet. By the 2020-2021 school year, learners at all CLB levels were engaged in a mix of synchronous and asynchronous classes. The range of tools expanded to include Google Docs, Google Drive, and WhatsApp.

As Jennifer recalled, the first year was all about real-time problem-solving: "I don't want to sound overly rosy, but I think those early days of the pandemic strengthened relationships within our team and built trust. Everyone jumped in, figured things out, and dealt with challenges as they came. There was so much commitment – from both staff and learners – to move forward despite COVID."

Post-pandemic, the focus has shifted to strengthening the digital component of both in-person and online learning. Google Classroom remains in use for all in-person classes, while online sessions use both Google Classroom and Google Meet.

As of early 2025, over a quarter of ESL-LINC staff have completed Avenue training and are actively using the platform in the classroom, with more staff scheduled for training this year. Avenue is now a key resource across multiple delivery models: it is the sole LMS for the healthcare employment course and the flexible Anytime English stream for learners unable to attend scheduled classes. It is also used in blended classes and Stage 2 online courses, particularly to support the employment theme.

Today, the program serves approximately 1,700 learners. At the ESL-LINC program's central facility – the GA Wheable Centre in London – there are 38 classes, with up to 25 learners in each higher-level class. Learners come from a wide range of backgrounds. Ages range from early 20s to mid-70s, with a 60-40 female-to-male ratio. Educational levels vary from no formal education to university degrees. The current cohort includes learners from China, Korea, Eritrea, Syria, Colombia, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Iraq, Iran, Venezuela, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Palestine.

### *Administrative Innovations*

A key administrative innovation that supported transition planning, implementation, and ongoing operations in TVDSB's ESL-LINC program was the creation of two coordinator roles, each overseeing a core area of service delivery.

Sheila Carson leads a seven-member **Program Support Team**, which manages learner referrals, intake, waitlists, and class placement. The team also handles day-to-day questions from learners and instructors.

Once learners are placed and new teaching staff hired, the **Learning Support Team**, led by Jennifer Jones, steps in. This four-member team trains instructors and volunteers, delivers new-learner orientation, provides curriculum support, and organizes ongoing professional development (PD). Jennifer also oversees learner progress using Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA), which allows learners to carry a digital portfolio as a record of their growth.

This dual-coordinator structure allows each team to build expertise in its area while collaborating on shared responsibilities such as staffing, interviewing, and program planning.

From their base at the GA Wheable Centre in London, Learning Support team leads travel to the nine ESL program sites to deliver orientation sessions or conduct diagnostic assessments. Program Support leads primarily work centrally but travel when needed.

#### Program Development Guidance

As technology-enhanced language learning becomes more advanced, the need for clear guiding standards has grown. For the TVDSB ESL-LINC team, two key resources meet this need: the *Avenue Program Standards for Technology-Enhanced Learning* and the *Avenue Instructor Standards for Technology-Enhanced Language Learning*. Notably, members of the team including Jennifer Artan, Chris Nott, Bei Zhang, and Gita Azad contributed, along with other ESL professionals across Canada, to the development of the Standards

For example, the *Program Standards* – designed for administrators – offer a guiding philosophy and five standards, each with performance indicators that help evaluate and strengthen a program's use of instructional and support technologies.

When Jennifer first encountered the Standards, her reaction was, "We're already doing quite a bit of this!" But, she also saw gaps that pointed to valuable opportunities for professional development.

The Standards are aspirational, not prescriptive. Programs aren't expected to adopt everything at once, but those seeking to enhance their digital capacity will find practical, actionable guidance within them.

"As our program evolves," Jennifer noted, "we plan to consult the Standards both before implementing new technologies and afterward to ensure we're meeting the performance indicators."

**Interested in Learning More?**

**Personal Profile** **In Jennifer's Words: The Rise of AI** **Application of Instructor Standards**

## Personal Profile:

Jennifer Jones began teaching in 2003 when she moved to Osaka, Japan. Hired and trained by Nova, the largest private English teaching company (*eikaiwa*) in Japan at the time, she received in-house training and was quickly placed in the classroom. Though she had never taught before, the "trial by fire" approach helped her discover her teaching style through hands-on experience.

Initially, Jennifer was trained to teach adults but was soon encouraged to work with children as well. Over her year and a half in Japan, she gained a wide range of experience: teaching both adults and children, preparing learners for the TOEIC exam (Test of English for International Communication), conducting one-on-one job interview preparation sessions, and leading specialized business English classes – including courses tailored for women working in banking. Jennifer recalls that her attitude was to say yes to everything, which opened many doors.

Jennifer returned to Canada in 2004. By 2005, she had researched ESL credential programs and enrolled in the London Language Institute, where she completed her TESL Canada certificate. She began teaching in the Institute's summer ESL program for international learners and joined full-time that fall.

At the Institute, Jennifer taught ESL and supported Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) clients working toward their General Educational Development (GED) certificate, which required her to relearn high school-level math and science. She taught learners ranging from foundational ESL levels to lower Stage 2 (in CLB terms). As the school began bringing in more advanced learners, Jennifer transitioned into teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) preparation classes.

Eventually, Jennifer was invited to teach in the TESL certification program. She gradually moved into this role full-time, becoming the TESL coordinator and curriculum designer, responsible for developing lesson plans and training future ESL teachers. This marked her first step into administrative work.

In 2015, Jennifer enrolled in the MA TESOL program at The New School in New York City, specializing in curriculum design. Most of the coursework was completed online, with a five-week intensive residency on campus. She graduated in 2017.

Soon after, a former TESL trainee informed her of a position opening with the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) in London, Ontario. Jennifer applied and, following an interview in late 2018, was hired as the Adult ESL-LINC coordinator, a newly created position at the Board.

Jennifer started the role in January 2019 – just a year before the COVID-19 pandemic began.

## In Jennifer's Own Words: The Rise of AI

As AI — particularly Generative AI (GenAI) apps like ChatGPT – began spreading rapidly across society, my colleagues and I recognized the urgent need to adapt.

In our discussions around AI, my team and I have asked: What is this exactly? What ethical and other issues does this technology raise? Where are the benefits for language teachers and learners? How do we go about integrating this into our work behind the scenes for program administration and curriculum development and in the classroom for personalized learning, virtual conversations with chatbots, and assessment? What information and tools do staff and learners need to make

use of AI? It struck me that the arrival of AI could well demand the same kind of rethinking and retooling as the arrival of COVID-19 just a few years ago.

### *Beginning the Learning Curve*

Together with my co-coordinator, Sheila Carson, and several staff leads, we began our learning curve by attending events where AI was a key topic. In-house, we have an Avenue mentor, Jennifer Artan, who is well-informed on AI applications in the language learning world. Drawing on Jennifer's knowledge and the things we were learning at conferences and workshops, we began to develop presentations on artificial intelligence (AI) for both staff and learners in our program.

Although it's early days, there's a strong sense that AI will significantly reshape both what we teach and how we teach it. Over the next few months, the goal is to introduce all staff to this game-changing technology. Presentations are paired with opportunities for staff to share how they're experimenting with AI tools in their work.

### *Opportunities and Challenges*

AI presents exciting opportunities for educators to work more efficiently. Many instructors spend significant time outside work hours creating lesson materials and assessments. Can AI help reduce that burden? Some staff already using AI are enthusiastic about the time saved and the high-quality, tailored content they can generate. For instance, ChatGPT has been used to generate reading and listening tasks—along with assessments—for learners in our Path2Work program (CLB 5–7). Generative AI (GenAI) can also adapt materials to different proficiency levels by adjusting complexity. But, to use AI effectively, both staff and learners need to learn how to craft prompts that produce appropriate results.

Of course, challenges remain. Academic integrity has become more complicated, as learners can use AI to complete assignments and assessments – sometimes without realizing they're crossing ethical boundaries. Many learners lack a solid understanding of plagiarism, intellectual property, and academic honesty. These concepts must be explicitly taught. For example, learners should learn how to paraphrase, summarize, cite sources, and express ideas in their own words—skills that can be built into classroom activities.

AI also raises broader concerns. Does it reinforce cultural or linguistic biases? What about privacy and data consent? Can AI-generated feedback match the nuance of teacher input? Addressing these questions is essential as we adapt our programs to the evolving role of AI in language learning.

### *A Key Insight*

Despite technological advancements, one message is clear: teachers must know their learners. For instance, a handwritten assignment can offer a valuable benchmark. If a later, perfectly worded submission seems out of step with a student's previous work, it may signal inappropriate AI use.

Ultimately, AI offers powerful tools, but thoughtful, informed integration – supported by professional development and open dialogue – will be key to using it ethically and effectively in language education.

## Avenue Program Standards and Performance Indicators

Here are some key ways in which the Thames Valley District School Board's approach demonstrates how NLS's Avenue Program Standards for technology-enhanced language learning can animate a TESOL program.

**Standard 1: Collaboration.**

*Programs have both a central philosophy and appropriate administrative structures to support collaboration in all areas involving technology and language teaching and learning.*

- Program Coordinators Sheila Carson and Jennifer Jones and their staff regularly participate in Professional Development (PD) workshops offered through TESL Ontario and the local affiliate, TESL London. Additionally, staff frequently attend webinars or workshops provided through Tutela and other online communities. Staff are informed of upcoming events, and small numbers are sponsored to attend conferences and workshops. Efforts are made to share findings, sites, tools and resources discovered at PD events with the staff at large.
- Within the TVDSB, staff PD has also featured speakers who demonstrate the use of a particular digital tool or resource such as the Oxford Digital textbook series and AI tools such as ChatGPT. In-house PD events and workshops are scheduled at various times throughout the year and are arranged during regular workday hours.
- Jennifer Jones has been involved with the National LINC Online Curriculum Project Stakeholder Advisory Group for several years, and teaching staff have worked to pilot new Avenue units for the project. Jennifer also recently participated in the Achev Senior Care Advisory Committee; the staff member teaching the employment preparation Healthcare course is piloting those materials this year.
- Learning Support Lead Jennifer Artan is an Avenue Mentor and a TESL Ontario and Tutela presenter on technology topics. In addition, Jennifer has worked with Ellii as a content producer and presenter. For example, at an instructor's request, we purchased *Presentation Plus* textbook versions with interactive activities for Smart Boards, and document readers that let instructors display printed materials. Both have proven very useful in the classroom – an approach now shared by other instructors.

**Standard 2: Infrastructure.**

*Programs acquire, maintain, and keep current the technology devices, systems, and applications necessary to fulfill their educational missions.*

- To ensure that its overall technology infrastructure is robust, supported, and regularly upgraded, TVDSB's Adult ESL-LINC program has designated IT Support staff to provide continuous service at certain sites, or to travel when needed to support equipment updates or issues at the remaining sites. There is also a help desk feature in the staff employee portal through which requests can be made. Staff are informed in a timely manner about impending updates that will affect all sites.
- The program has implemented an effective learning management system (LMS) that makes use of both Google Classroom and New Language Solution's Avenue platform. At present, Google Classroom is the predominant repository for learning materials, but Avenue is being used more and more each term. Currently, all Portfolio Based Learning Assessment (PBLA) progression takes place through Google Drive, as learners have been collecting digital artifacts on that platform since spring 2020.

- The program has adopted HARTS (History of Assessment, Referrals, & Training Systems) as its record-keeping system. HARTS is used to store learner profiles, assessment history, and attendance information. The system is also used by teaching staff to record attendance and by Coordinators and Lead Instructors to monitor waitlists, refer learners to (or transfer them between) classes, and to validate attendance for benchmark progression.
- In addition to HARTS, TVDSB has implemented both centralized and outsourced systems for IT (Outlook email, Microsoft Teams), Finance, and HR (K212 Human Resources and Payroll System, Questica Budgeting), and an internally developed absence reporting and call-out system (TVARRIS). These systems support the organization's commitment to enhancing the learner experience, service quality, and operational performance.
- In keeping with Standard 2, a lot of effort is currently being invested in understanding how AI can be used to support our administrative and classroom operations. After some initial research and staff training, we have begun to use AI tools such as ChatGPT to complete routine administrative tasks, prepare lesson materials and develop assessments. We've been slower in adopting direct AI-support for language learners, but that is not far off.

**Standard 3: Preparing instructors to use technology effectively.**

*Programs offer resources and professional development that will allow instructors to meet and exceed clearly defined expectations.*

- In keeping with this Standard, the program has clearly defined expectations for instructors:

  Interviews with instructor candidates include questions related to experience using technology in the classroom and experience teaching online or in blended classes. Candidates who are successful are trained on the current learning management system and on Board communication tools.

  Learning Support services are available to help staff with digital troubleshooting. PD events, workshops and meetings include content on technology relevant to the classroom and on communication within the program.

  In-person instructors are expected to include a digital component in every class and reserve Fridays as purely digital days. In-person and blended instructors are urged to conduct learner assessments online.

  Staff are asked to check their email twice each day to keep abreast of day-to-day communications from Coordinators, Leads, and other staff members. Some Program Support Leads also use Teams as a tool for daily check-ins when their instructors are working remotely.

- In addition, a number of relevant technology resources are available to instructors:

  In-person and blended instructors' classrooms are equipped with necessary technology for teaching (i.e., desktops, desktop cameras, media carts, SMARTBoards, etc.). At sites where the space is for community use, instructors are given laptops, as are online instructors working remotely. In-person and blended instructors are given sets of Chromebooks for learner use onsite.

  In-house PD sessions for all staff are arranged several times a year, and smaller group or site PD workshops may take place between full staff sessions. As well, staff members with tech requests, troubleshooting needs, or learners needing further digital support, can ask Learning Support to arrange a visit to the site or classroom. Whenever possible, staff PD sessions, workshops, and meetings take place during regular work hours; anyone meeting outside of their scheduled work hours is compensated for this.

Staff have opportunities to collaborate with like-level instructors at PD events and workshops, as well as informally at their sites. All teaching staff are also afforded the support of both a Program Support Lead and the team of Learning Support Leads. The program includes several resource-sharing initiatives so that staff have access to digital resources to engage learners. Staff are also encouraged to attend PD events such as conferences, webinars, and workshops by external organizations to support a fresh, evolving practice.

A member of the Learning Support Team has given presentations to both staff and learners on how to use AI responsibly in learning. She has also visited several classrooms to work directly with learners.

Both classroom instructors and Leads using Avenue have been provided with time for training. Several members of the Learning Support Team are experienced users of Avenue, and one is an Avenue mentor. This means that staff have access to the expertise and support needed to successfully deliver programming through Avenue.

**Standard 4: Learners have access to resources they need.**

*Programs provide necessary infrastructure, training, and technical support for learners to use technology to achieve their goals.*

- During the pandemic, the Chromebook Loan Program was developed to ensure equitable access to technology across the learner population. Currently, learners in online and blended classes are loaned Chromebooks if they do not have devices at home. Learners are provided with digital orientation before beginning in-person or online classes. Classroom instructors, along with both the Learning Support and the Program Support Leads, monitor learners' success with technology. In addition, Learning Support provides remedial support one-on-one, in small groups, or by class when learners are struggling or have been out of the program for long enough that they need a "refresher".

- Learners joining a class in which Avenue is used are given Avenue onboarding support in addition to their orientation to Google Classroom and Meet. Remedial one-on-one Avenue support is available for any learner in need.

# APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY

**Introduction**

This section of the Avenue Program Standards lists and defines terms within the standards that have special significance for administrators and instructors using Avenue or otherwise engaging in technology enhanced language learning (TELL). We do not include terms that are common in non-technical English or those that relate to general teaching concepts (e.g., rubric) except when we feel their interpretation in the TELL context might need clarification.

The terms *blended learning* and *online learning* are used deliberately throughout the standards documents to indicate all combinations of online delivery in face-to-face, hybrid, HyFlex and remote situations. We encourage service providers to localize these definitions – with input from their staff – to their own contexts as it suits their needs.

Note. Some item definitions here have been adopted or adapted from TESOL (2008), *TESOL Technology Standards Framework*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL Publications, under that document's CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license.

| Term | Definition |
|---|---|
| Accessibility | A quality of a website or app that makes it usable for those with disabilities. |
| Accommodation | An adjustment of the learning environment or expectations that allows a person with a disability to participate satisfactorily in a course, for example, by providing accessibility functions, alternative formats, or additional time on assignments or assessments. |
| Administrative record-keeping system | A set of tools used by administrators to track student enrollment (name, ID, eligibility, date enrolled, date left, etc.), instructor information (name, date started, classes, etc.), and sometimes tuition information. |
| Administrators | Those in charge of management, such as language program directors, and often including human resources. |
| AI agents | Artificial intelligence bots (automated apps) that can be used to respond to typical queries and do other routine administrative tasks. |
| Antivirus | An application that scans the device and apps for malicious intent. |
| Application/App | A software program designed for a specific purpose: for example, email, texting, web browsing, word processing, gaming, or playing audio/video. |
| Artificial intelligence (AI) | Computer programs that learn from experience and perform human-like tasks, such as face recognition. See generative AI (GenAI) for productive uses for language teaching and learning. |
| Bandwidth | The amount of data that can come to and from a device connected to a wired, wi-fi, or cellular data network. More bandwidth is needed for streaming videos and less for texts. |
| Can-Do | A statement within the standards indicating whether a program believes they meet an expected criterion for a given standard, closely related to the performance indicators, but always presented in first person. |
| Blended | A course involving a combination of face-to-face and online instruction or learning, also called hybrid. |

| Term | Definition |
|---|---|
| Cellular data | The system on a smartphone that allows it to be mobile and access the Internet, apps, and websites without wi-fi. |
| Change agents | People who help instigate substantial alterations in systems or practices. |
| Chatbots | AI agents designed to interact with users through natural language (text or voice), typically answering routine questions and suggesting or linking to resources for users. |
| ChatGPT | The first publicly available generative AI program (released in November 2022) that can engage in humanlike conversations and produce coherent texts. |
| Community of practice | A group of people linked by common activities and who learn from each other in a collaborative way. |
| Contingency plans | Steps to be taken in case of emergencies of different kinds. Plans for major emergencies typically include a chain of command – who should get reports of emergencies. |
| Deep fake | An image, audio clip, or video clip that has been convincingly manipulated by AI to look authentic and is presented as authentic. This is often used for illicit purposes. |
| Device | In the Standards, this refers to any physical piece of technology that uses or is associated with a computer system—especially, desktop and laptop computers, tablets, and smartphones. |
| Differentiation | Use of varied materials or approaches to suit different learners' needs in the same class. |
| Digital literacy | Knowledge of technology: foundational use, awareness of potential with different apps, awareness of potential risks, and ability to explain technology-related decisions. |
| Digital | Referring to devices, processes, or products (audio, graphic, video, or text) in electronic form. |
| Disabilities | Physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder a person's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. |
| Embedded AI | AI components seamlessly and invisibly incorporated into a variety of apps, including browsers and word-processors. |
| Flipped learning | Having learners prepare before class with online material and activities, such as reading and listening; then classwork that incorporates face-to-face interaction; then online activities after class. The key is before-class preparation. |
| Generative AI (GenAI) | A program that draws from very large amounts of language data (datasets), generally collected from the web, to create human-like responses to prompts. The results can be text, audio, video, or images |
| HyFlex | A form of synchronous instruction that brings students who are online and those in a physical classroom with the instructor together simultaneously. |
| Implementers | Those people who put a change into practice. |
| Infrastructure | The backbone of an institution: people and systems without whom the institution would not be able to function. |
| Internet hotspots | A method of using cellular data on one device to provide Internet connectivity to other devices. |

| Term | Definition |
|---|---|
| Learning management system | A program that includes a store of teaching and learning resources, a way of organizing and finding those resources, and a way to store information about users. Many include enrollment, attendance, and grade data for learners. |
| Mobile devices | Any physical piece of technology that uses or is associated with a computer system and is on wi-fi or cellular data, so it does not require a wired connection. |
| Monitoring and evaluation | Tracking and assessment of a system or system component. Student progress reports and teacher evaluations may be part of monitoring and evaluation. |
| Operating system | The program within a device like a computer or smartphone that includes both automated and user-controlled settings, such as making network connections, setting volume and display brightness, organizing apps, and so on; for example, smartphones typically use either the Android operating system for android phones or iOS for iPhones. |
| Performance indicator | A specific, observable way that a standard can be met. |
| Record-keeping software | Software/apps designed to keep and organize data of different kinds, such as enrollment and financial information. |
| Scaffolding | Providing information and tools, often simplified, to help learners understand material and improve their performance. This provides a "ladder" to understanding. |
| Security | A component of effective use of technology; apps and methods to keep data safe from hackers. |
| Security breach | A successful attack by hackers that allow them to access data that should be kept confidential. |
| Sexual harassment | Inappropriate and unwanted actions and language that are of a sexual nature, often by a superior to a subordinate. These actions are illegal as well as unethical. |
| Special needs | Disabilities or other impairments that should get accommodation to allow people with those needs to participate fully in work and learning. See Accommodation and Disabilities. |
| Sub-indicators | More details for individual performance indicators to help clarify what is expected. |
| System administrators | Technical staff in charge of ensuring technology systems used by an institution or individuals in the institutions work as expected. |
| System | Can refer to either the operating system of a device or a combination of devices and their interconnections through networks. |
| Technical support | Staff in charge of providing assistance to administrators, staff, instructors, and students so that they can use needed technology. |
| Troubleshooting | Trying to resolve a technology problem. Previous experience or a web search for the problem can help. |
| Universal design for learning | Planning for flexibility, accessibility, and inclusivity in technology use; making sure that all users are well-served and that learners see themselves in instructional materials and activities. |
| Vignette | A short description of how an administrator, instructor, or student met a standard or performance indicators. These are actual examples. |

# APPENDIX D: LIST OF STANDARDS AND PIS

## Standard 1: Programs have both a central philosophy and appropriate administrative structures to support collaboration in all areas involving technology and language teaching and learning.

PI 1.1. Administrators, staff, and instructors work collaboratively to set program standards and expectations for and to make decisions about use of current and emerging technologies for teaching. Learners should be involved wherever feasible.

PI 1.2. Administrators, staff, instructors, and learners work together to implement effective technology adoption and use in the program.

PI 1.3. Administrators, staff, instructors, and learners work together to implement effective technology adoption and use in the program.

PI 1.4. Administrators and staff participate in professional networks that help with technology implementation and evaluation.

## Standard 2. Programs acquire, maintain, and keep current the technology devices, systems, and applications necessary to fulfill their educational missions.

PI 2.1. The overall technology infrastructure is robust, supported, and regularly upgraded.

PI 2.2. The program has an effective learning management system (LMS).

PI 2.3. The program has an effective administrative record-keeping system.

PI 2.4. The program has robust Internet access for administrators, staff, instructors, and learners.

PI 2.5. Risk management

## Standard 3. Programs offer resources and professional development that will allow instructors to meet and exceed clearly defined expectations.

PI 3.1. The program has clearly defined expectations for instructors.

PI 3.2. A range of relevant technology resources are available to instructors.

PI 3.3. Programs recognize and where possible provide compensation to encourage ongoing technology expertise.

## Standard 4. Programs provide necessary infrastructure, training, and technical support for learners to use technology to achieve their goals.

PI 4.1. Learners have access to resources they need.

PI 4.2. The program works to help learners meet the Avenue Learner Standards for TELL Administrators, instructors, and relevant staff are knowledgeable about the Learner Standards and strive to provide the resources and pathways for learners to meet them.

## Standard 5. Programs ensure that administrators and staff have the digital literacy needed to be competent users of technology, and that administrators are supported in becoming leaders and change agents with technology.

PI 5.1. Program administrators and staff are competent users of technology.

PI 5.2. Programs must be prepared for the ways that AI/GenAI is changing the way education operates at all levels.