

# REALIZE! 2015 Project Report

This report provides information on the REALIZE 2015 project deliverables and serves as a summary of accomplishments English Online achieved planning and executing the project.

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## REALIZE! 2015 Forum

In the fiscal year of 2014-2015, English Online organized and delivered second National Online Forum for EAL/ESL practitioners in Canada as per funding agreement with Citizenship and Immigration Canada. This report provides information on the REALIZE! 2015 project deliverables and serves as a reflection on accomplishments and challenges English Online encountered planning and executing the project.

REALIZE! 15 was the second National Online Forum for English as an Additional Language (EAL)/English as a Second Language (ESL) practitioners in Canada delivered by English Online. Building on the success of the REALIZE! 14, national community of educators was actively involved in this year's forum by assisting in planning and organization of gala event, presenting and moderating sessions, participating and contributing to the national dialogue about practices of teaching, learning, assessment and many other pertinent topics in EAL/ESL field. With this online forum English Online brought together EAL/ESL educators from across the country for a unique Professional Development experience.

The following report reflects how REALIZE! Forum Goals were achieved:

- Create Diversity of Content and Participants
- Reach Local and Smaller Communities
- Explore Topics in Depth
- Produce Lasting Resources
- Provide Technology Training for the forum tools
- Demonstrate a Sustainable PD model for the EAL/ESL Industry

## Best Practices in Teaching ESL

Best practices in Teaching ESL is a series of free professional development opportunities for ESL/EAL practitioners across Canada. It serves as an introduction to online format and lays the foundation for REALIZE! Forum. Best Practices in Language include **monthly webinars** and **newsletters**. Teacher Services at English Online also provide **community coordination on Tutela.ca** by monitoring groups and community forum. This year, English Online took initiative to develop an online **mentorship program** for ESL/EAL practitioners.

### Webinars

As part of REALIZE! project and introduction to online format of professional development, this year English Online hosted **6 webinars**. In total, **11 presenters from across Canada** were trained on online presentation delivery and successfully delivered **11 sessions**. In addition, English Online Teacher services developed and delivered 2 online workshops for this PD series.

English Online issued **51 certificate** of attendance for live webinars and **56** – for viewing recordings of the webinars in this year.

**Table 1. Best Practices webinars**

Date	Webinar Title	Views
May, 2014	Self-Discovery and Language Learning in the ESL Literacy Classroom	261
	REALIZE! 15 Tune In	69
June, 2014	A Call for Human Feel in Our Increasingly Blended World	160
	Professional Happiness in the field of ESL	111
September, 2014	Teaching Discussion Pragmatics in an Academic English Program	197
	English Grammar Uncloaked	117
November, 2014	Google: A Toolbox for Teachers	100
	Exploring Learner Autonomy in English Language Learning	36
December, 2014	The Malleability of Language: Context and Creativity in the Classroom	101
	Corpora as an Authentic Resource of the Language and Beyond	81
March, 2015	“Why is English so weird?” Looking to History to Answer Tough Learner Questions	N/A
	The Unusual Suspects (EAL and Nutrition Partnership)	N/A
<b>Total</b>		1,233

*“I look forward to receiving my PD certificate by email and hope to get in a few more sessions soon. Thank you for making this service available to teachers such as myself who have trouble attending as many seminars and workshops as we might like.”*

## Teacher Newsletters

Teacher Newsletters provided consistent and compact information about TESL. English Online created and distributed seven **(7) Teacher Newsletters**. They contained updates on ongoing projects; upcoming events section; and research on monthly topic where teachers could find useful ideas, links and resources.

**Table 2. Teacher Newsletters**

<b>February 2015 Teacher Newsletter</b> – Learning how to teach spelling and seeking healthy food and nutrition resources
<b>January 2015 Teacher Newsletter</b> - REALIZE! starts in one week!
<b>October 2014 Teacher Newsletter</b> – Reflecting on Teacher and Learner Autonomy

[September 2014 Teacher Newsletter](#) – Back to School

[July – August 2014 Teacher Newsletter](#) – Relax-and-learn Summer List (including Canadian Anti-spam Law regulation information)

[June 2014 Teacher Newsletter](#) – Teacher’s Happiness in Today’s Blended World

[May 2014 Teacher Newsletter](#) – Teaching Reading to Literacy Learners

## Group and Thread Facilitation on Tutela

As Tutela Community Coordinators, English Online:

- managed REALIZE!15 National Online Forum group (**259 group members**) to spread information and facilitate asynchronous communication for REALIZE!15 participants.

## Mentorship Program

As part of Teacher Mentorship initiative, English Online developed the following resources:

- Mentorship Program rationale and description
- Teacher Mentor/Mentee Needs Assessment Surveys
- Teacher Mentor/Mentee Exit Surveys

We made a decision not to conduct Needs Assessment and Matching Survey in March 2015 or publicize the program on Tutela due to uncertain funding situation for next fiscal year.

## Planning and Coordination of REALIZE! 2015

Preparation and coordination of REALIZE!15 continued in a similar format to the previous year. English Online recruited the National Forum Advisory Committee to assist in planning the event, as well as bringing representatives from different provinces together to provide their vision on the Forum implementation. As part of promotion campaign, English Online presented and exhibited REALIZE! resources at different regional and national TESL Conferences. During the process of preparation, forum resources were updated and new ones were developed. An integral part of the event success was online technology training delivered to all stakeholders – presenters, moderators, and participants.

## Advisory Committee

The National Forum Advisory Committee was recruited by English Online Inc. and provided assistance in planning, organizing and delivering the REALIZE! Forum event, including development of the REALIZE! Forum agenda, content, promoting the event and moderating online sessions.

The Committee included EAL/ESL community members with reach and scope in their professional communities and those with experience in planning /organizing or assisting with conferences. The committee comprised **12 volunteer members. Three (3)** of these members were English Online Inc. representatives - Executive Director, Lead of Teacher Services, and Coordinator of Teacher Services. **Nine (9)** Advisory Committee members represented three regions:

- Western region (BC, AB, SK, MB) - 3 representatives
  - Lisa Rochman (AB), Kathryn Rockwell (BC), Sara Yen (BC)
- Central region (ON, QC) - 3 representatives
  - Diane Ramanathan (ON), Elena Maggio (ON), Lorraine Hudson (ON)

- Eastern region (NB, PEI, NS, NL) - 3 representatives
  - Oksana Schkurska (NS), Michael Landry (NS), Carol Derby (NS)

For more information about REALIZE! Advisory Committee members, please [visit our website](#).

In the aforementioned capacity, Advisory Committee conducted **eight (8) monthly meetings** during which planning, coordination, REALIZE! 15 information dissemination strategies and other important aspects were discussed.

### Presenting at TESL Conferences

In 2014-2015, English Online attended 3 TESL Conferences presenting workshops and maintaining REALIZE! booth. The workshops delivered by English Online Teacher Services team aimed to publicize REALIZE! 15 and introduce the concept of free professional development and its benefits.

- **TESL Canada** (May 8-10, 2014, Regina) – English Online managed REALIZE! booth during the conference and disseminated information about the REALIZE! Forum among the national audience of educators.
- **TEAM Conference** – (May 30, 2014, Winnipeg) – Teacher Services presented on English Online services for ESL/EAL practitioners including REALIZE! Forum, Best Practices webinars and Teacher Newsletters.
- **TESL ON Conference** (October 16-18, 2014, Toronto)– co-presented with Advisory Committee members and former EO webinar presenters and volunteers on REALIZE! project and free professional development opportunities with English Online. This presentation resulted in an invitation to deliver **a webinar for York Region District School Board** (adult ESL program PD day November 14, 2014) about self-directed online PD opportunities and the REALIZE! Forum.

### Forum Resources and Technology Training

In the course of forum preparation, referring to REALIZE! 14 Participant feedback survey and Advisory Committee input, English Online updated existing resources and manuals, and developed new ones to address the needs of diverse groups of participants:

- a Group PD manual,
- system checklist,
- tips for engaging on social media and professional networks for the forum.

To support efficient delivery of online sessions during two days of the forum, English Online trained **eighteen (18) volunteer moderators** on the use of Big Blue Button web conferencing software and online moderation skills. According to REALIZE! 15 Volunteer Moderator Feedback survey, **99%** of respondents **strongly agreed or agreed that they had received comprehensive moderator training and support** from English Online team.

All REALIZE! 15 presenters received comprehensive training and support in preparation for their online presentations. In total, English Online team trained **forty five (45) presenters**

**100%** of presenters said that the **REALIZE forum fulfilled their expectations** in academic/professional terms and **they would recommend REALIZE forum** to others.

in BigBlueButton, **delivering more than thirty five (35) hours of training.** According to REALIZE! 15 Presenter feedback survey, **85%** of respondents agreed that presenting at the **REALIZE! Forum improved their skills with online conferencing tools.** They also indicated that the **REALIZE! team gave them confidence to present online (90%** of respondents). **100%** of presenters said that the **REALIZE! forum fulfilled their expectations** in academic/professional terms and **they would recommend REALIZE! forum** to others.

## REALIZE! 2015 National Online Forum

Successful delivery of online sessions during two days of the Forum owes to responsibility and efficient communication of all stakeholders – moderators, presenters, volunteers, BigBlueButton ongoing technical support, REALIZE! team, and participants.

### Participation Statistics



Picture 1. REALIZE 15 Participant badge

This year, **seven hundred ninety eight (797) participants** registered for the REALIZE! Forum.

During two days of the Forum, a **Welcome Message** by Mr. Yves Saint-Germain, **2 keynote addresses**, and **thirty two (32) online workshops** were delivered.

On Friday, January 23, the average number of participants in concurrent sessions was **two hundred sixteen (216)**. **Eight hundred fifteen (815)**, includes 266 concurrent live views and 549 YouTube Playbacks) participants joined keynote address **Integration: Looking Ahead to Leadership** by Paul Holmes<sup>1</sup>.

On Saturday, January 24, Nikos Theodosakis with his keynote address on **Mattering** gathered the audience of **four hundred forty nine (449)**, includes 156 concurrent live views and 293 YouTube Playbacks) educators. Concurrent sessions accommodated **one hundred forty eight (148) participants** on average in each time slot. **The busiest session** of the Forum was *Step 1: Assessment, Step 2: Evaluation by Lisa Herrera (BC)* gathering the audience of **one hundred and six (106) participants** (see Appendix).

English Online has received **319 requests** to recognize participation in the Forum including certificates and digital badges. As a result, we issued **257 certificates of participation, 117 participant, and 7 contributor badges**<sup>2</sup>. Also, this year English Online issued **45 presenter, 18 moderator, and 11 volunteer badges** to recognize different levels of involvement in REALIZE! Forum. Significant increase of interest in badges advocates for growing recognition and participation in online professional

**797 participants** registered for the REALIZE 15 Forum.

<sup>1</sup> Please see View of the archive and keynotes in Table

<sup>2</sup> Total number bigger than 100% due to multiple requests per participant

development among Canadian EAL/ESL educators.

### REALIZE! 15 Forum Archive

The advantage of REALIZE! Forum is in the accessibility of recorded sessions that can be viewed even after the live event has aired. More and more educators from across Canada are viewing the resources and numbers continue growing.

Table 3. REALIZE!15 Forum Archive Views

Recourse		Views
Video Gallery		224
Keynote Address	Paul Holmes – <b>Integration: Looking Ahead to Leadership</b>	635
	Nikos Theodosakis - <b>Mattering</b>	374
<b>Total</b>		1,233

*“In our last PD we watched parts of 6 different videos, and I received some good feedback on this from the teachers. What a fantastic resource. I hope your funders know what **a great resource** the REALIZE! conference provides for us, **even after the conference has finished**. Thanks so much!”*

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## Testimonials

### Participant Testimonials

*“This type of forum gives EAL deliverers across Canada a sense of community where ideas can be shared and we can all continue to learn and grow from each other.”*

*“**Flexibility** of attending within the confines of my work schedule. Joining online means I didn't have to travel or take time off. I also appreciated that the forum was **free!**”*

*“Networking with people from across the country. It's **free!**”*

*“The sessions and the **presenters were very good**. I enjoyed being able to participate online from my home. In some ways, the REALIZE! forum seemed **more personable** than many conferences where participants attend in person.”*

*“Experiencing a **new type of conference format** and seeing how it **has improved since the pioneer event** last year.”*

*“The **simplicity of attending** and being able to **learn from other professionals**. I don't have much chance to do so.”*

*“What I enjoyed the most about it is the **relaxed atmosphere** where you can **learn and grow in the comfort of home**. Learning does not need dressing up, driving the car and formality.”*

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*"I think the REALIZE! conference is **extremely well-run**. There are some glitches, as there always are when using Web 2.0 technology, but your **team does an incredible job** of mitigating these glitches. Loved everything - **very competent organizers and presenters.**"*

*"The organization and calm, cool technical support. You provide a **great role model for presenting and teaching online**. The **workshops are very relevant**, and the **presenters** that I have seen have been **very worthwhile.**"*

*"The format (watching & participating from my office computer) felt fun to me, and I enjoyed the learning. **I like that my management gives us the push to enroll in it as required PD.**"*

*"The **feeling of immediacy** despite the great distances involved, and the **excellence of the presentations.**"*

*"Everything was great; appreciate how quickly tech problems were resolved. The **moderators were outstanding.**"*



Picture 2. REALIZE 15 a team of presenters from BC

### Presenter Testimonials

*"To be able to follow presenters located all over Canada. It was very **convenient to present** without needing to travel **saving time and money** and interruptions on regular work schedule. Thanks so much to Carol the moderator of the session and to Yuliana and Natalia."*

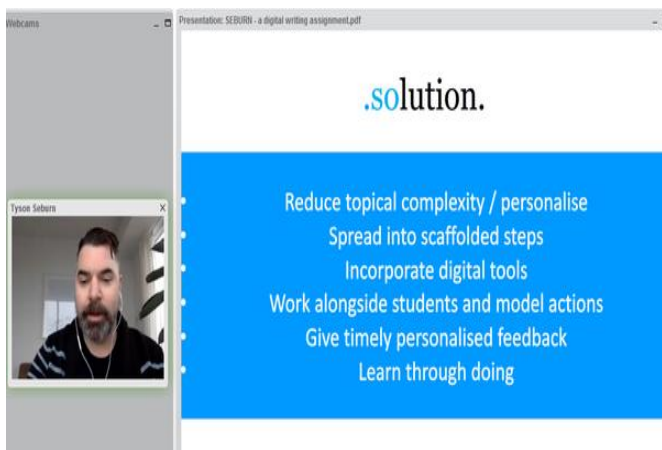
*"I **enjoyed the support** prior to the event and during the session (via the moderators). I **enjoyed the interactivity** via the chat box (had*

*to turn off Twitter during my presentation as it was more than enough trying to keep up with the chat)."*

*"This was **originally a scary thing** but through training and support it was **much easier than I had first thought.**"*

*"**Excellent experience from start to finish.** Thank you."*

*"I thought that it was an **excellent way to network with professionals across the country**. I was surprised by how sessions were easily referenced in others sessions - a **great way to build on each other's strengths.**"*



Picture 3. Tyson Seburn presenting from Toronto, ON

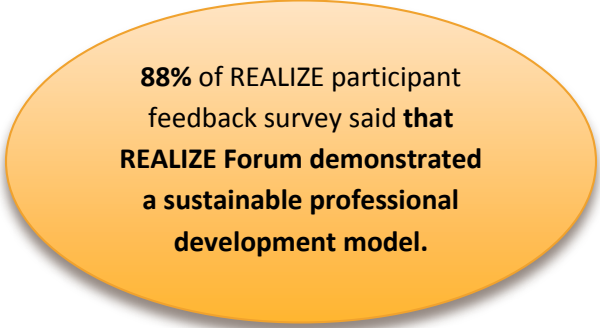
## Expected project outcomes

English Online professional development opportunities helped to achieve a more efficient and effective delivery of Language Service programs nationally. The shared knowledge dissemination of language practise across the country allowed language professionals to develop their professional practise. Additionally, they improved parallel language outcomes nationally. The focus on Canadian-specific context ensured practitioners from coast-to-coast could compare methods to improve the lives of newcomers.

REALIZE! project achieved the following outcomes:

### Increased access and consistency of PD opportunities for ESL practitioners

**87% of respondents** believe that online events like REALIZE! Forum reduce a sense of geographical and professional isolation faced by teachers in remote areas, and **88%** said that REALIZE! Forum demonstrated a sustainable professional development model.



**88%** of REALIZE participant feedback survey said that **REALIZE Forum demonstrated a sustainable professional development model.**

*"[The REALIZE! Forum] **reduced sense of isolation** experienced even in a urban area."*

*"[...] hope that REALIZE! goes on for many years to come. It would be wonderful if **an informal network of communities comes out of this** that continues the conversations on a regular basis throughout the year. I think that this would be a **great mentoring opportunity** for senior/junior instructors around the country."*

*"This is the kind of forum that **solves geographical and financial worries** that often hamper efforts to professional and personal development."*

*"Yes, yes and yes. It was interesting how comfortable and relaxed this year's REALIZE! felt - **it is no longer an experiment but an established event**. The PD was on a good professional level."*

### Better understanding and use of technology and Web 2.0 tools for education and purposes

**64% of respondents** felt that this Forum helped them better understand the use of technology and Web 2.0 tools for education.

*"I **learned some useful things** and **became more familiar and more confident/comfortable with the use of online forums for PD**, both locally and nationally (as well as internationally)."*

*"[I enjoyed the most] **new technology opportunities**."*

**Increased knowledge and dissemination of Language best practices across the country**

**85% of respondents** said that this Forum provided great possibilities for sharing and dissemination of best practices across the country.

*“Learning more about the CLB especially how to design lessons and assessment tools around listening and speaking. It was an excellent forum and left me with a lot to think about and do.”*

*“The Forum has allowed me to look “outside my classroom window”, gave me a bird view of what’s happening in ESL teaching community across country and expended my knowledge in the field through different presentations and discussions.”*

*“Variety of applicable information to use in my class even right away.”*

*“[I enjoyed the most] interacting with professionals around the country and learning new approaches in language teaching.”*

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## Appendix

### A: Attendance Statistics

Table 4. Attendance Friday, January 23

Attendance Statistics						
Friday, Jan 23	Welcome Message (CIC)					
	138					138
	Keynote (G Hangouts on Air)					
	Youtube (concurrent viewers)	Google Plus (concurrent viewers)	Youtube Playback			
	202	64	549			815
	11:45 am -12:45 pm CST					
	Task-Based Learning and Teaching (NS)	Creating Animated Presentations Using Powtoon (ON)	Transcending stereotypes, dispelling ethnocentrism (ON)	Pinterest: A Multi- Use Tool for ESL Learners and Teachers (MB)		
	79	47	40	50	0	216
	1:00 pm -2:00 pm					
	Intercultural Communicative Competence in ESL Programing and Instruction in Alberta (AB)	Online & Blended Learning: What do our learners say? (BC)	Teacher-Teacher Interaction in an Online World (ON)	Partnerships and Collaboration - LINC Classes in an Employment Centre (ON)	Step 1: Assessme nt, Step 2: Evaluation (BC)	
	40	52	19	15	106	232
	2:15 pm -3:15 pm					
	Using Essential Skills in the English for Work and Business Classrooms (NS)	Designing CLB Listening Assessments Using the CLB 2012 (AB)	Round and round and off we go! Reading Circle spin-offs in ESP classes (AB)	Yes, There ARE Patterns to English Spelling! (ON)	Moderate d Ed-Tech chat	
	30	97	15	52	25	219
	3:30 pm - 4:30 pm CST					
	Demystifying CLB Lesson Planning (BC)	E-nabling PBLA Online (ON)	Perspectives on Blended Learning in the LINC Program (BC)	Action-Oriented Feedback (BC)		
	77	32	44	45	0	198
	Average attendance per time slot					216.2

Table 5. Attendance Statistics January 24, 2015

Attendance Statistics					Total	
Saturday, Jan 24	<b>Keynote (G Hangouts on Air)</b>					
	Youtube (concurrent viewers)	Google Plus (concurrent viewers)	Youtube Playback			
	107	49	293			449
	11:45 am -12:45 pm CST					
	Create and Share Materials Online with Padlet and Skitch (Faith Marcel,ON)	Reflective learning and teaching in adult ESL literacy: a PBLA approach (ON)	Talk It up: The Speaking Portfolio in Application (AB)	Embracing the Blogosphere (ON)	Moderated Water cooler chat	
	42	49	44	16	5	156
	1:00 pm -2:00 pm					
	How We are Flipping the Script (Sarah, Thomas,USA)	Using online forums for writing development (BC)	No more Grammar Panic	Moderated Administrators' discussion:		
	36	25	40	46	0	147
	2:15 pm -3:15 pm					
	Co-creating a technology- based community resource (BC)	Portfolio- based Language Assessment: Making a Difference for Students (BC)	A digital writing assignment for EAP students (ON)	An Integrated Approach to ESL and Family Literacy (AB)		
	26	63	32	21	0	142
Average attendance per time slot					148.3333	

## B. REALIZE! 15 Cost Savings

The REALIZE! project has established a sustainable model of professional development for ESL/EAL practitioners in Canada in only two years of its existence. The REALIZE! Forum possesses several opportunities for cost efficient, accessible and long lasting professional development resources. Since its pilot implementation in 2014, the REALIZE! team has succeeded in the following areas of improvement:

- Involved as much as 58% new participants in the Forum
- Increased opportunity for Q&A during workshops by 12% and networking opportunities by 18%
- Allowed for more attendees participating on two days as opposed to one (62.6% of attendees indicated two days gave them more flexibility)
- Fulfilled presenters' expectations in academic/professional terms (100%)

Hosting an online professional event such as REALIZE! has proven to increase significant savings of time and resources in organization, commuting, accommodations and other facets. In the chart below, estimated REALIZE! 15 project savings are broken down by participant registrations.

Province	AB	BC	MB	NB	NF	NS	ON	QU	SK	Other	Total
Registrations	143	171	194	39	16	43	140	4	62	26	838
If Registration fees for 2 days were (\$100/day)	28,600	34,200	38,800	7,800	3,200	8,600	28,000	800	12,400	0	\$162,400
If Airfare was needed	68,640 (\$480pp)	99,693 (\$583pp)	0	26,910 (\$690pp)	11,248 (\$703pp)	30,229 (\$703pp)	78,260 (\$559pp)	2,468 (\$617pp)	24,118 (\$389pp)	0	\$341,566
If Hotel for 2 days (at \$100/day)	28,600	34,200	38,800	7,800	3,200	8,600	28,000	800	12,400	5,200	\$167,600
If Incidentals 2 days (at \$60/day)	8,580	10,260	11,640	2,340	960	2,580	8,400	240	3,720	0	\$48,720
<b>Total Savings</b>											<b>\$721,124</b>

### C. Lasting Resources Statistics

One of the benefits of REALIZE! Forum is seen in producing lasting resources that can be accessed after live event has aired. The archives are used by individuals and SPO's through the year.

	REALIZE! 14	REALIZE! 15		Total Views (so far)
<b>Video Gallery views</b>	1,219	171 (as of March 10, 2015)		1,390
<b>Keynote Speech views</b>	N/A	630 (Friday Keynote)	372 (Saturday Keynote)	1,002

### D. Improvements from 2014

The REALIZE! team has been striving for excellence to improve organization and delivery of the event. In the chart below,

REALIZE! 14 Conference Recommendations	REALIZE! 2015 Forum Actions	Outcome
To allow earlier start in preparation for Gala event (formation of NOCAC in April and setting timelines for Call for Proposals between June – October)	Advisory Committee formed in April, first meeting – May 6, 2015  Call for Proposals July 3, 2014 – November 8, 2014	Allowed more time for planning and promoting the Forum.
Involve more members of smaller communities and local organizations in NOCAC	Advisory Committee members represented 5 provinces (NS, ON, AB, BC, MB)	Allowed more possibilities for involving more presenters and participants from different parts of Canada
Finalize and publish the Schedule and Program at least two months prior to the event	Forum schedule and program published December 23, 2014	Allowed better planning for in-house PD events at SPOs
Enhance technical criteria for submitting PDF versions of	Presenters notified about technical requirements in the	Enhanced presentation

presentations (prior notification from presenters if there are links/video/audio files to be included into presentations)	initial welcome email.	preparation process.
Enhance means of communication to allow efficient and timely flow of information regarding the conference	Communication flow spread evenly using different media (emails, Twitter, forum website, mail-outs, postcards, face-to-face presentations, interpersonal communication)	91% of REALIZE! 15 Participant feedback survey respondents agreed that the REALIZE! Team communicated event information effectively
Introduce badges prior to the conference and publish application submission criteria	A REALIZE! blog post with badges info and criteria published before the forum.	Received 117 participant badge requests compared to 9 at REALIZE! 2014.
Extend conference over two (2) days/ two (2) half days (Friday and Saturday are preferred days indicated in two community surveys conducted by English Online)	Extended over two days.	62.6% of REALIZE! 15 Participant feedback survey respondents indicated having two days instead of one gave them more flexibility.
Keynote address on the same day of the conference	Two keynotes presented on each forum day.	SPOs were able to streamline Keynotes at their in-house PDs.
Deliver sessions in more interactive format and allow more time for Q&A Sections	Included Educational Technology, Water cooler and NLAB chat to allow more interactivity. Effective participant interaction strategies were included into presenter training.	Increased interactivity by 18% and effectiveness of Q&A by 12% as compared to REALIZE! 14
Publish video recordings of the sessions within a shorter period of time after the conference	REALIZE! 15 Video Gallery published February 28, 2015 (REALIZE! 14 Video Gallery published starting March 11, 2014)	Allowed for in-house PD at the SPO's that were unable to participate in the live event

Archives can be viewed from our Website <http://www.myenglishonline.ca/for-teachers/REALIZE!/>



## E. Reflection on Critical Comments/Suggestions from REALIZE! 15 Participant Survey

As part of our need to constantly improve and make REALIZE! an important part of the community we ask participants for areas where we can improve their experience. We have grouped these comments into areas of improvement in the following categories, and a brief reflective comment on our learning (the unedited comments can be found on the next pages).

- **Event Communication:** For the next REALIZE! event we will have to provide more detailed instructions with regards to Tutela REALIZE! group and forums or look for an alternative solution (open forums on the REALIZE! forum website) and make this information part of participant training and manuals. Also, we will have to discuss with the Advisory Committee additional ways (besides presentations, webinars, national emailing and mailing campaigns) to promote the event/call for proposals nationally.
- **Diversity of Topics:** REALIZE! forum encourages diversity of topics and bases the selection of the submitted proposals on the most popular topics as revealed by the ESL Community Survey 2013 <http://www.myenglishonline.ca/2013/11/conference-topics/> and participant registration information for REALIZE! 15 Forum. For the next event, we will include more research topics, as well as more sessions for program coordinators and administrators.
- **Technical Aspects:** English Online strives to provide comprehensive support and training to all participant groups by conducting synchronous orientation and training sessions, creating Participant and Group PD manuals, System checklist and suggestions for maximizing learning experience. As we gathered from the feedback survey, this year participants indicated several technical problems they faced during the event. After a close discussion with BBB team and analysis of other users' experience, we concluded that the majority of the issues mentioned in the survey were on the user (participant or presenter) side. To remedy this situation and avoid the frustration next time, English Online will put all REALIZE! training materials up- front in advance in an open online course format, so participants can complete and review it at their own pace. Synchronous session will also be offered closer to the event.
- **Chat** – Online synchronous chat provides valuable opportunities for networking and interaction during webinars which would not be otherwise possible in an online environment. But we understand that it might seem overwhelming and distracting at times, especially for the first time attendees. Therefore, English Online suggests including tips on how to manage session chat (i.e. scroll down, collapse the chat, etc.) in the training materials as well as educating prospective participants about the benefits and effective ways of using the chat during synchronous online sessions.
- **Presenters:** All REALIZE! presenters receive online training on how to present online and use BigBlueButton web-conferencing software. The training comprises one group orientation session, where different aspects of online presentation as well as REALIZE! forum expectations are discussed, and a 1on 1 training session with a presenter. Presenters also have access to orientation session recording and presenter manual to review at their own pace. This year, for 60 % of REALIZE! presenters it was their first experience presenting in an online format. English

Online delivered more than 35 hours of 1on1 training sessions to ensure presenters were comfortable with technology and their presentation slides and content met the REALIZE! Forum requirements and expectations. For some of them it was a smooth debut, others had a bumpy experience. With more practice and exposure to online presentation tools and technology, presenters will be able to hone their digital skills and feel more confident about using a web camera and other interactive tools, and moderating the chat during their presentation. Events like REALIZE! provide ESL practitioners with many opportunities to develop and improve their digital skills and raise their confidence in presenting online. As in a face-to-face setting, successful presentation also depends on presenters' personality and their sense of commitment. This aspect is beyond Forum organizers' control.

- **Keynotes:** The choice of the Keynotes was a challenging task. REALIZE! team and Advisory Committee had a list of 10 possible candidates. English Online took into account candidates' expertise, reputation and experience delivering key notes at other similar events, as well as recommendations from the community survey (2014). After careful consideration and multiple attempts to contact those on the list, the final choice of the keynotes was based on the positive reviews and feedback we received from other event organizers; the fact that those candidates accepted REALIZE! invitation and their reasonable rates . As REALIZE! Forum gains more popularity, English Online might be able to attract more renowned keynotes but that will call for more funds to be allocated for the Keynotes.
- **Recordings:** One of the goals of the forum is to provide lasting and accessible PD resources. All REALIZE! sessions are recorded. To make the recordings available for viewing requires considerable time and effort: we need to download, process, review/examine for possible edits (i.e. tech problems, irrelevant conversations etc.), edit, upload to YouTube and then share the recordings on the website. All the steps except for video editing and publishing on the website are performed by English Online. This year REALIZE!15 recordings became available for viewing within a month from the event (in February 2015), which is 2 weeks earlier than the last year. English Online understands the importance of timely access to the Forum recordings. Therefore, for the next REALIZE! event, English Online will try to reduce and optimize the editing process by delegating processing, reviewing, editing and publishing of the recordings to a professional contractor (if budget permits). This will also allow English Online to expedite the issuing of badges and certificates.
- **Accessibility:** To address different time zones and participants' availability and based on the feedback we collected on REALIZE! 14, REALIZE! 15 forum was extended to two days. This year concurrent session started later in the morning to accommodate those in Western region (AB & BC). Those in the Atlantic region were still able to attend early morning Welcome session and the Keynotes. The Keynote recordings were available for playback the same day for those in the Western region and beyond.

Addressing comment about inability to access sessions due to their full capacity and/or not being registered: REALIZE! forum is open and can be accessed without registration. The purpose of Registrations is to have an approximate number of potential participants to help English Online plan orientations sessions and technology, distribute event information efficiently and

get to know the REALIZE! audience. Registration however does not affect participant's ability to access and join the forum sessions. All live sessions can be accessed from the REALIZE! website on during the Forum. During the Forum, BBB software did not have a set limit of participants per session and was not set up to restrict access to those who wanted to join. After discussing similar comments with BBB team EO concluded that it was an issue on the user side. To minimize those instances, English Online highly recommends testing user systems before the Forum and participating in the orientation sessions for attendees.

## F. Raw Comments for Improvement

<b>Event Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• better explanation on how forum continues in tutela. Unique platform, not as intuitive. for instance, do i start a new thread every time i have a question? are threads cross listed? or is there a forum for one session and many threads out of that session?</li> <li>• I would like to know where to access posts in the REALIZE! forum Group on Tutela.</li> <li>• I believe that surveying the interest of the audience about their preferable topics will be helpful.</li> <li>• please share the workshop scheduled further in advance if possible so that we can plan our time effectively.</li> <li>• What would be helpful is a one-page flyer/description that language training providers could customize for their own staff (in order to disseminate)</li> <li>• Get Open Badges faster!</li> <li>• Include Saskatchewan and also post a call for presenters so that Saskatchewan could lead a session. You may not know it but we are doing some pretty cutting edge stuff here!</li> <li>• I didn't get into my first choices of topics on three occasions so I learned the hard way to register quickly. Perhaps that could have been brought to participants' attention beforehand.</li> <li>• correcting the mistakes and organizing the schedule</li> <li>• I think that the next time, it would be beneficial to all to include more diverse topics and also more diverse presenters. Also, plan ahead and notify people more in advance.....jeesh!</li> <li>• the only thing I would change is the final wrap-up session of the day - it started about 15 minutes early on both days.</li> </ul>
<b>Diversity of Topics/Themes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please include more topics that are broader than just the teaching sphere. Some topics might include, L2 Motivation, new work in SLA, test anxiety, counselling and learning, goal-setting, etc. Not everyone is in the classroom, but we all still work in the field. Some research topics would not go unappreciated.</li> <li>• Perhaps to have more practical tools that can be applied in a classroom quickly. What I learned in the Spelling presentation was something I incorporated into my daily teaching.</li> <li>• More topics for managers, perhaps?</li> <li>• The welcome/intro session was redundant and not relevant. It's an enormous amount of information to absorb - I would prefer the same amount of information over two separate conferences.</li> <li>• add more topics on educational process</li> <li>• More topics would be awesome!</li> <li>• More variety to sessions.</li> <li>• Possibly more topics to choose from but I was satisfied with what was offered this year</li> <li>• Perhaps fewer sessions on 'technical' aspects of teaching but more 'traditional' topics</li> <li>• Need more presentation on the basics for novice teachers. e.g. CLB basics, teaching pronunciation, using authentic materials</li> </ul>

<p><b>Technical aspects</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology must be invisible. There was too much chatter about what was happening with bandwidth, links, sound transmission, etc. This impeded appreciation of the work of the presenters. Additionally, presenters - and perhaps society in general - will have to become more savvy with the webcam interface (looking at the camera, etc.)</li> <li>• Once technical issues are overcome (and there were many that I observed and experienced), and presentations are not peppered with comments about how things are working by presenters, moderators and chat room participants, THEN it will be more beneficial</li> <li>• For the first speaker I was unable to access the session on YouTube because of my security setting on YouTube and it took me awhile to figure it out.</li> <li>• There were a few technical glitches to start. (But they were resolved)</li> <li>• Connection problems. Lost audio during presentation. It was my first on-line forum so now I am more familiar with the format and I will be able to navigate better. eg raising your hand</li> <li>• make it accessible for everyone who wants to attend without garbled audio and not being able to enter the webinar while waiting</li> <li>• Technical aspects: audio / video/ network connection could be improved.</li> <li>• Just some technology issues, reception could be improved.</li> <li>• Some technical problems. some of them were our problems and some were REALIZE!'s.</li> <li>• address some of the technical challenges that surfaced this year</li> <li>• higher speed internet</li> <li>• had a problem at first with our internet connection. I was cut out three times but was able to log immediately. I need to check on this beforehand. I also had a hard time deciding where to attend.</li> <li>• Finding ways to prevent technological problems in the first place would definitely reduce frustration on the part of the presenters and those viewing the presentations. Eventually the problems in the presentations I viewed were resolved, and we the participants were kept informed, but this took time away from the presentations.</li> <li>• We kept losing our sound with some of the speakers and waited a long time to restart.</li> <li>• Some of the tech issues were distracting and time consuming.</li> <li>• Easier way to see what workshops coming up - instead of scrolling through - maybe screen with panes with direct links.</li> <li>• MAYBE - an augmented reality type "meeting" would be engaging.</li> <li>• Apart from the technological glitches and hiccups, not much</li> <li>• The audio and video were sometimes not clear during the forum. It would be nice if these will be tested before the scheduled forum.</li> <li>• While the BBB platform is good, I don't know that that it is the best out there - I'm still hoping for improvements to make it a little more seamless.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Chat</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think the chat bar on the right of the screen is a bit distracting. Some times participants would have entire conversations in the side bar.</li> <li>• Allowing everyone to chat at the same time means that information was just flying by, too quickly to be read. My questions weren't answered because they were buried in the chats.</li> <li>• the chat rooms were distracting especially when so many in workshop. Difficult to respond and register comments made because too much movement in chat room.</li> <li>• Since the Conference covered such a wide geographical area there were several times when a segment of the chat feed was discussing something completely unknown to the rest of the group (an issue specific to their region). Acronyms were unknown as well. Not sure how these types of issues can be overcome, especially during a 1 hour presentation.</li> <li>• found the running chat rooms quite distracting actually during the presentations. Often chat room participants would go off on a tangent that had nothing to do with what the presenter was talking about. It was difficult to focus on both the chat feed and the presentation. I think this is a common problem with live webinars.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Presenters</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think that some of the presenters were excellent at presenting online. However some presenters relied too heavily on power-points which are valuable but I appreciated also being able to see and hear the speaker, and have time to chat in the forum.</li> <li>• Some presenters were completely unprepared and it felt like a waste of time. We turned off a few presenters because of their poor presentation style and also because of audio/video problems.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Keynotes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage keynote speaker to understand we're looking at them! Smile, facial expressions, acknowledging audience would have improved keynote session.</li> <li>• Keynote on Friday did not provide any new information.</li> <li>• better keynote speakers</li> <li>• I found it difficult to understand the keynote speaker (no fault of his own). I find watching/listening to someone on video stream/Skype distracting and difficult. Thank you for all your hard work in putting this forum together, I just prefer to watch speakers live.</li> <li>• Keynote speakers should not be going over well-known techniques but should be future oriented.</li> <li>• Keynote speakers were unevenly matched. One was much stronger than the other.</li> <li>• The keynote speaker was relevant but too long.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Recordings</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I look forward to the taped sessions, that I wasn't able to attend.</li> <li>• It will improve when I am able to see the sessions on REALIZE! website.</li> <li>• We were not able to listen to any of the afternoon sessions on Friday because we had to work. Perhaps these could be available online after the conference.</li> <li>• My interests were schedule conflicted. I would like to have access to recorded presentations for continued self-directed learning.</li> <li>• There were too many interesting talks taking place at the same time. Isn't there some way that a talk can be looped so if a person can't attend they can switch over an hour later when their own talk had ended and move more or less seamlessly into the talk they had missed?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Accessibility</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting earlier in the day</li> <li>• On a Saturday/Sunday as opposed to Friday, so we can attend more sessions</li> <li>• more registration spaces available so that I can access sessions of interest to me</li> <li>• The times were not great for Atlantic Province access, but I don't know that there is a remedy for that.</li> <li>• being able to free up more weekday time to participate, not having to get up early in BC :)</li> <li>• By having they keynotes not quite so early (being on the west coast)</li> <li>• If there could be different time options that might help. I'm not sure how that would be possible.</li> <li>• It was great, I just want to do it again...maybe consider a winter/summer version.</li> <li>• I'd like to suggest that the REALIZE! ORGANIZERS suggest to the programs, at least in Manitoba that leeway be given to teachers to choose their own workshops. I wanted to capitalize on as many workshops as I could do in a day and my program had a structured day that limited me. I took the day off with no pay and my program WSD wouldn't pay for Sat.</li> <li>• Make sure the workshops and keynotes are available all year round so we can refer to them again. Also, they could be available at other times for new 'attendees' to access.</li> <li>• If we had paid ProD to attend, I could attend more, but on my own time I had other commitments.</li> <li>• A lot of good topics with the same schedule.</li> <li>• By giving the opportunity of attending all webinars.</li> <li>• It is very difficult to really pay attention all day when sessions are only 15 minutes apart. I don't know how you could stagger some sessions so that people could have a bit more of a break.</li> <li>• I think a mix of online and real-life forums would be best - say 2 on-line events to one live event; the networking opportunities are much more real in real-life events.</li> <li>• Most of the sessions were full when I wanted to register so I was not able to access many.</li> </ul>