

## **Reading Development as a Pathway to International Student Success: A Targeted Reading Intervention on EAP Program Students at Mohawk College**

According to Statistics Canada, the number of international students in Canada surged from approximately 350,000 to a staggering 620,000 between 2015 and 2021. Currently, around two fifths of the entire international student body in Canada are enrolled in college programs. The increased internationalization of the Canadian educational landscape enriches Canadian society both culturally and economically. However, one big challenge that international students often face, which isn't clearly shown in government data, is being able to speak and understand English well enough to study. For students who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL students) but lack the required English proficiency credentials, higher-education institutions offer English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs as a pathway to post-secondary education. Students who undergo language instruction and complete the EAP program are subsequently granted admission to their prospective post-secondary education program of study. The CSSIC Research Fellow will lead a project aimed at implementing a student success intervention in Mohawk College's EAP program.

The project is geared toward enhancing EAP program student success via the provision of a reading intervention. Developing the English skills that are required to understand written texts in a particular academic subject area is a critical challenge that faces international EAL students, not least those who enter higher education via EAP programs. Research overwhelmingly shows that stronger English reading skills are linked to higher academic outcomes for international EAL students. Drawing on theoretical models of reading acquisition and linguistics, the proposed intervention focuses on providing additional support during the early stages of learning to read in English. The intervention study will be conducted at Mohawk College, targeting students enrolled in Level 1 of the EAP program. The quasi-randomized controlled trial design will involve four cohorts of EAP students, with two serving as control groups and two as treatment groups. Pre- and post-test measures will assess reading and related abilities, while student success outcomes will be examined based on EAP program grades.

The expected impact and significance of the project is substantial for the EAP program, the pedagogical community, and student co-researchers at Mohawk College. This project is in harmony with Mohawk College's commitment to research-informed pedagogical practices, as well as its strategic focus on promoting inclusivity, diversity, and student success. As one of the estimated 77 colleges in Canada that hosts an EAP program, Mohawk College boasts a diverse international student population, representing a quarter of Mohawk's total student body. The intervention study will provide training opportunities for student co-researchers at Mohawk College, and undergraduate and graduate students at McMaster University. Findings from the research will be disseminated locally and internationally through workshops, conferences, presentations, peer-reviewed educational publications, and in-house technical reports. This project will provide crucial support to international students who face the challenge of acquiring English reading proficiency to be able to study effectively.