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A Message from the President

In May 2014, I assumed the duties of President of MATSOL and began my term by making a short speech at the annual MATSOL conference at the Sheraton Hotel in Framingham, Massachusetts.

When I stood before the 600-plus people in the hotel ballroom, I introduced myself as a facilitator and advocator. I am a facilitator in my job as an ESL teacher at the Chenery Middle School in Belmont, Massachusetts, where I work with teachers, students and the families of students in grades five through eight. As

From left to right: Kathy Lobo, MATSOL President; Rosa Aronson TESOL; Executive Director; Helen Solorzano MATSOL Executive Director

a trainer for RETELL (Rethinking Equity and Teaching English Language Learners), I also spend a considerable amount of time preparing and facilitating RETELL courses, which are now required for core academic teachers in Massachusetts K-12 schools. This year I also had the honor of serving as one of the Associate Conference Program Chairs, with the job of helping to facilitate TESOL's March 2014 Conference in Portland, Oregon.

I also described myself as an "advocator." I chose "advocator" rather than "advocate" because, for me, the "or" ending adds the person and action to the meaning of the word; it calls me to action. As a teacher and facilitator at my school, I advocate for my students every day. Now, as I start my term as president of MATSOL, I hope to become a more effective advocator not only for my students and their families, but also for you, the professionals in this field, the Massachusetts Educators of English Language Learners.

As I pointed out in my speech, much of what we do is invisible, and our students and their needs are often invisible, too. Please trust that I and the other members of the Board are doing all we can to make your work and your needs more visible. One special attendee at our 2014 annual MATSOL conference was Rosa Aronson, Executive Director for TESOL International. As a result of her attendance at our conference, our work as the local TESOL affiliate has become more visible to TESOL International.

This past year a committee of the Board worked tirelessly to put together a new strategic plan for MATSOL, which will be launched and implemented this year. (Be sure to read the plan summary in this issue of Currents.) One of the goals in our strategic plan is Professional Development & Member Activities: How can MATSOL meet the professional development and support needs of all members? Please reach out to me and to the other members of the board to let us know how we can meet this goal and serve you better. We, in turn, will reach out to you for your help and support. I look forward to working for and with you as the president of our professional organization!

Respectfully yours,
Kathy Lobo
MATSOL President

MATSOL's New Strategic Plan

HISTORY

In June 2013, MATSOL embarked in a strategic planning process to identify the issues our organization is currently facing and to determine our direction for the next 3-5 years. The board established a strategic planning committee composed of Katherine Earley, President; Kathy Lobo, President Elect; Juanita Brunelle, Member at Large; Esta Montano, Member at Large; Helen Solórzano, Executive Director; and Paula Merchant, Director of Professional Learning. This committee met five times from June 2013 to January 2014. On October 20th, in the middle of the process, the full Board of Directors met in an all-day retreat to review the committee's progress and provide input to guide further planning.

Executive Director Helen Solórzano took charge of the data collection that informed our decisions. A member survey was sent to all MATSOL members as well as some non-members, and board members conducted interviews with external stakeholders. Helen compiled the data, and the committee used this information for its analysis of MATSOL's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.

Based on the results of the survey, the board confirmed three categories that compose our membership:

- PK-12 ESL, dual language, and bilingual teachers, coaches, administrators, teacher preparation faculty and graduate students.
- PK-12 Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) teachers and administrators.
- Adult and Higher Education educators, including ESL/ESOL teachers and administrators in Higher Education, Adult Basic Education (ABE), workplace programs, and private language institutes.

The committee then redefined the organization's mission and vision and agreed on core values. It soon became clear that MATSOL is more than just a professional organization that works to improve the quality of teachers of English language learners; we are also agents of social change who believe that quality education for English language learners is a moral imperative for a just and fair society.

To help communicate MATSOL's identity to the public, the committee proposed adding a tag line to our title, to be included in most communications – MATSOL:

matsol Massachusetts Educators of English Language Learners

Massachusetts Educators of English Language Learners:
We chose the term "Educators of English Language Learners" because it is an inclusive term that can represent all our members and stakeholders, while acknowledging that nomenclature differs in different segments of our field. The legal name *Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.* will be retained for official documents.

The strategic plan that emerged from this effort identifies four areas of concern for our organization:

1. Professional Development & Member Activities: How can MATSOL meet the professional development and support needs of all members and maintain financial health?
2. Advocacy: What type of advocacy should MATSOL pursue and how can we support and engage members in this work?
3. Communication & Branding: How can MATSOL better communicate to the public about our field and what we do?
4. Organizational Strength: How can MATSOL sustain/increase the level of programming and services, considering current resources and volunteer engagement?

The Strategic Plan was adopted by a unanimous vote of the Board on April 9, 2014. A summary of its main points is provided below:

MISSION, VISION & VALUES

MISSION STATEMENT

MATSOL's mission is to promote excellence and equity in the education of English language learners.

VISION STATEMENT

MATSOL is a leader in creating positive change in the field of English Language Learner education.

CORE VALUES

Professionalism: We believe in sound, research-based educational practices and policies for educators and English language learners alike. We believe that educators of English language learners deserve the recognition, respect and compensation due as professionals and experts.

Educational Quality: We believe that all students have a right to high quality education that empowers them to achieve their life goals.

Multilingualism and Multiculturalism: We believe that proficiency and literacy in more than one language is an asset that should be encouraged and supported. We value the multicultural perspectives and knowledge that both educators and students bring to our schools and society.

Collaboration: We believe in collaborating with other stakeholders to achieve common goals.

Diversity: We believe that diverse identities, backgrounds, and perspectives strengthen and inform our work.

STRATEGIC GOALS

Professional Development & Member Activities

- Goal 1: Intensify and diversify MATSOL's offerings in a strategic way to meet the needs of our members.
- Goal 2: Increase professional development and member activities to meet the needs of our diverse membership, while maintaining the financial health of the organization.
- Goal 3: Collaborate successfully with other organizations to accomplish common goals.

Advocacy

- Goal 1: Become a more influential organization in the field.

Communication & Branding

- Goal 1: Make MATSOL immediately recognizable as the leading organization for educators of English Language Learners in Massachusetts.
- Goal 2: Ensure that publications are benefitting members and representing MATSOL.

Organizational Strength

- Goal 1: Develop clearly defined board and staff roles in order to work together effectively and cohesively.
- Goal 2: Increase and sustain paid positions and volunteer capacity to support programs and activities.
- Goal 3: Increase revenue generation to support expanded programs, activities, and staffing.
- Goal 4: Promote diversity within our field and organization.

Strategic Objectives were also developed for each Strategic Goal. These are included in the full text of the MATSOL Strategic Plan 2014, which is available to members at www.matsol.org/mission-governance.

Conference Planning: A Peek Behind the Scenes

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For the past few years, I have been involved with conference planning on the state and international levels, first with MATSOL and then with TESOL. Here is a brief account of what I did to help facilitate the TESOL 2014 Conference that took place in Portland, Oregon this past March.

I served on the Conference Planning Team as an Associate Program Chair. In this role, I traveled to Portland three times, beginning in summer 2012, and to Dallas, Texas and Washington D.C. each once. My responsibilities included establishing a theme, choosing team leaders, identifying keynote speakers, reading proposals, and helping to schedule conference sessions.

Over 7000 people attended the Conference, from over 100 different nations. The pre-conference institutes began on Wednesday, March 25, followed by the three-day conference from Thursday, March 26 through Saturday, March 29, and, finally, post-conference institutes on Saturday afternoon. The program book that listed all the offerings was 240 pages in length.

I had three main responsibilities at the conference itself: bags & program distribution, TESOL K-12 Dream Day (a full-day interactive educational program for primary and secondary mainstream and ESL teachers and administrators), and Tea with Distinguished TESOLers (30 teas total over the three days). Additionally I looked after the Keynote Speaker, David Graddol, and ran the daily "Global Meet and Greet" events. Finally I hosted a special event (with over 700 in attendance) to welcome new members and first-time conference attendees, and have been asked to host this again next year. I ducked into some sessions during the conference, but was not able to stay for many in their entirety.

The planning for both 2015 and 2016 is well underway. In fact TESOL has already

chosen their conference sites through 2020 (Toronto 2015, Baltimore 2016, Seattle 2017, Chicago 2018, Atlanta 2019, and Vancouver 2020).

At the 2015 Conference in Toronto, I will represent MATSOL as MATSOL's President, and will attend special meetings for TESOL's affiliate organizations from around the globe. I hope some of you will be able to join me in attending the conference and that you come to the MATSOL Members' Social that is traditionally held on the Thursday evening of the conference. This is a fine opportunity to hear new ideas and build our professional network of support and collegiality. C

Submit to MATSOL Publications

MATSOL E-BULLETIN

Published monthly. Includes short (one-paragraph) notices relevant to ELL/ESOL education in Massachusetts. Submission deadline: the 25th of each month for publication in the first week of the next month. For more details, see www.matsol.org/matsol-e-bulletins.

MATSOL CURRENTS

There's a lot going on in the world of TESOL and ELL education, and we'd like all of it to be reflected in Currents! We want reviews of books and materials, reports on meetings and events, and articles on everything of interest to MATSOL members: adult education, K-12 education, community outreach, ESL in higher education, educator-preparation programs, professional-development initiatives, Intensive English Institutes, teaching ideas, profiles of and interviews with significant figures, and discussion of issues that our members should be aware of. We'd also love to have stories from students — about their adjustment to life in New England and their experiences learning English in our English-language programs or elsewhere. We welcome articles with scholarly content as well as those that share interesting experiences or give practical advice. If you have something to share, don't hesitate to send it to us at [currents@matsol.org]. If necessary, we can help you get it into good shape for publication. For more details, see www.matsol.org/matsol-currents.

An Update on the Newcomer Curriculum: Spring 2014

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Phase 2 of the PreK-12 Newcomer Curriculum Project is well underway. On February 14, 2014, a dedicated group of thirty-eight PreK-12 ESL professionals braved snowy weather to gather at the DoubleTree Leominster to continue work on the project. Under the guidance of Genevra Valvo (Waltham Public Schools) and Sonya Merian (Holliston Public Schools), the group worked to expand and revise the draft newcomer scope and sequence created in 2012 by other volunteer working groups.

HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

The draft newcomer curriculum was initiated by Genevra and Sonya in June 2012 and developed by more than 30 volunteer participants from districts across the state. The goal was to create a one-year scope and sequence that could be used for teaching newcomers in districts with a variety of program models, student populations, and local resources. Soon after the group's first meeting, MA DESE officially adopted the WIDA English Language Development Standards, and staff turnover at the Office of English Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement prompted them to turn to MATSOL for support. In 2013, Genevra and Sonya presented their draft maps to the Massachusetts English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC) and to MATSOL's Low Incidence Special Interest Group. Using feedback and suggestions from these groups, they then refined their map templates to facilitate a thorough edit and expansion of the curriculum more closely aligned to WIDA.

CHANGES TO THE CURRICULUM MAP TEMPLATE

Since WIDA defines ELD standards quite differently than Massachusetts' former English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes, many districts strug-

gle to envision how an ELD curriculum based on the WIDA standards should look. In our newcomer curriculum template, each month (September through June) is framed by an essential question that unifies the other components by a common theme. For example, the essential questions for September include, "How do I talk about myself, my school, and my family?" and "How do I get help when I need it?"

We then explore the language, knowledge, and skills associated with those essential questions, organized into the following categories:

- Academic language functions *(identify, distinguish, describe, etc.)*
- Word/phrase level, sentence level, and discourse level language features
- Sociocultural considerations
- Sample topics
- Sample resources
- Formative and summative assessment prompts or activities

WANT TO BE INVOLVED?

Genevra and Sonya are currently consulting with various groups about future steps in developing the ELD curriculum. We welcome your feedback and involvement in this multi-stage project! Visit our ELE Curriculum Task Force website to view the draft newcomer curriculum and to keep up with future updates to the project. If you have not already visited the site, you will need to click the "Request Access" button when prompted and wait for us to share the site with you.

ELE Task Force website: https://sites.google.com/site/elecurriculumsite

Community College ESOL Networking Meetings

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MATSOL sponsored five Community College ESL Networking Meetings during this academic year, all held at Quinsigamond Community College. These meetings are helping us to be informed advocates for courses, programs and services for ESOL students at community colleges throughout the Commonwealth.

We are currently conducting a survey of our programs to gather up-to-date information. We urge you to attend our meetings to show support and to share concerns for our ESOL programs on our campuses.

The following position statement on Massachusetts Community College ESOL Programs was drafted by the Community College ESL Networking group and unanimously approved by the MATSOL Board of Directors on April 9.

MATSOL POSITION STATEMENT ON MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY COLLEGE ESOL PROGRAMS

I. ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR ESOL COURSES

MATSOL endorses the following policy statement from TESOL International Association:

Position Statement on Academic and Degree-Granting Credit for ESOL Courses in Postsecondary Education *Approved by the TESOL Executive Committee, June 2012*

With the growth in the number of nonnative-English-speaking students at postsecondary institutions in the United States and other English-speaking countries, there has been an increased demand for English as a second language (ESL) or English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses in postsecondary academic institutions. Unfortunately, ESL or ESOL courses are frequently mischaracterized as developmental or remedial courses, and thus are not always acknowledged for academic or degree-granting credit. These policies and practices fail to recognize that ESOL courses offer a rigorous, standards-based academic program that requires students to perform at a level similar to and on par with the subject matter in other degree-bearing courses, such as courses in English composition

or in foreign language. TESOL International Association advocates that ESOL courses in postsecondary academic institutions receive academic, degree-granting credit.

In postsecondary institutions, nonnative-English-speaking students require a strong foundation of advanced language and academic skills. To enter specific academic and professional communities such as business, humanities and the arts, science, engineering, and medicine, learners require not only additional expertise in content, but also specialized knowledge in vocabulary, grammar, discourse, and pragmatics.

Postsecondary ESOL coursework is designed to continue the normal cognitive, academic, linguistic, and cultural development that accompanies the acquisition of an additional language, and does not equate with remediating first language skills. The material studied in these ESOL courses demands the highest level of second language proficiency, including knowledge of contrastive phonetic, syntactic, semantic, and rhetorical information, as well as an understanding of university expectations and classroom norms in a new culture.

Just as native-English-speaking students earn degree-granting credit for their foreign language study and for courses in linguistic analysis, nonnative English speakers enrolled in ESOL courses are similarly entitled to academic credit for their study of English as a second or foreign language.

II. EQUITY FOR DIVERSE POPULATIONS

MATSOL urges leaders of higher education institutions to exercise fairness and equity in administering program changes and cuts so that culturally and linguistically diverse student populations are afforded equal opportunities to pursue their educational and career goals.

III. INCLUSION OF ESOL FACULTY IN PROGRAM CHANGES

It is vital that ESOL faculty, the experts in the discipline, have significant input when changes or reductions in Community College ESOL programs are being considered. ESOL faculty support educationally sound decisions that take into account the language acquisition and cultural factors that are necessary for our students' success.

IV. ACCESS TO ESOL COURSES STATEWIDE

Current wait lists for ABE classes are long, and will only become longer if more students are funneled into the ABE system without also increasing capacity. If students no longer served by Community College courses are to be redirected to Adult Basic Education classes, higher education leaders must support additional ABE classes becoming available to meet the increased need. The Department of Higher Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education which oversees ABE programs must work together statewide to ensure that students do not lose access to educational opportunity. C

An Update on Adult Education in Massachusetts

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There is lots of news in the world of ABE/ESOL:

- The Massachusetts State Budget for Fiscal Year 2015 is near the end of the legislative process. Governor Patrick proposed level funding for ABE at the FY'14 level of $30 million +, but MCAE (the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Basic Education) has been advocating for a $5 million increase, to $35 million, and many state legislators signed on to budget amendments to do this. However, the House of Representatives budget (released in early April) and the Senate budget (released in late May) have cut over $1 million from the state ABE budget line item, reducing it to just over $29 million. That could have serious con–sequences for state-funded ABE programs. It is important for ABE/ESOL programs, students and others to lobby their legislators to reverse this cut.

- A Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued in March for so-called Social Impact Financing (SIF), otherwise known as "Pay for Success," with over $15 million to fund ABE programs that are effective in transitioning students to college and/or careers. "Pay for Success," or Social Impact Financing, is a new model in which the private sector invests in bonds that underwrite investment in social services of various kinds. The Massachusetts Legislature passed legislation enabling this kind of initiative around three years ago; to date, the investments have gone to programs to reduce youth recidivism (re-incarceration for criminal activities) and long-term homelessness. Other states have been pursuing similar efforts recently, but Massachusetts and Governor Patrick want to be out front in showcasing what is hopefully a national model.

  This is the first time that this type of financing has been avail-

able for adult education programming, and, of course, there are concerns in the field about "privatizing" adult basic education in this way. The money for the bonds comes from a variety of private-sector investors, including Goldman Sachs, J.P. Morgan Chase, and The Boston Foundation. The theory behind it is that the private sector may be more effective in leveraging outcomes and making programs accountable. The funding will cover three years of direct services programming, and then three additional years of follow-up and evaluation. Indicators of student success are placement in college and/or career at specified levels.

- Congress is apparently finally about to reauthorize the Federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA), which has been unchanged since its first passage in 1998. WIA Title I governs workforce development, while WIA Title II governs Adult Basic Education in the U.S. The version under consideration in the House would place adult education in closer alignment with workforce development and college/career readiness. Renamed the "Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act" (WIOA), it contains some important new provisions, including:

  - Greater emphasis on college and career readiness, and on distance learning
  - Representation of ABE for the first time on Workforce Investment Boards
  - Comprehensive planning, to include input from business leaders
  - Allowing states to increase funding for correctional education
  - Alignment with Title I goals

  Some of the more worrisome provisions include:

  - Lack of adequate funding for the new and larger role ABE is called upon to take
  - Lack of a national ABE research entity
  - Lack of a strong, funded technology component
  - Short timelines for programs to move students successfully into college, well-paid jobs, and/or high school equivalency certification

- Omission of "civics" from integrated ESOL programs
- An apparent move of ABE services away from low-skilled adults who will take longer to move to college and job readiness, and from adults who enter ABE programs for reasons other than college or job readiness.

National advocacy organizations are nevertheless recommending support for the WIOA in the hope that some of its negative components can be ironed out in implementation, and in the belief that this is a significant improvement over the existing WIA. A Congressional vote is expected quite soon.

- OVAE, the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, part of U. S. DOE, has renamed itself OCTAE: the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education. This rebranding presumably reflects the new Federal effort to direct adult education towards preparation for careers and post-secondary education.
- Results of a broad international assessment of education competency in 33 developed countries, called "PIAAC" (the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies), were released on March 8. The U.S. fared poorly in this assessment, and ranked very low on many of the skills that were assessed. The data indicated that educational preparation in the U.S. has declined over the years, and that youth are faring worse on many skills, especially numeracy. While this is troubling news, it may provide a strong argument for increased attention and funding for education in the U.S., including adult basic education. The assessment was conducted by OECD, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- Massachusetts has adopted a new set of "College and Career Readiness" standards ("CCRS") designed to prepare students more fully for college and career. (They are working along with, rather than replacing, the ACLS "Curriculum Frameworks" that were used for many years). The new standards are aligned with the PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) initiative that is already in place in K-12 education, and, increasingly, in ABE.

- The GED (General Education Development) exam in Massachusetts has been replaced by the new HiSET system and test. The GED, which was owned by the Educational Testing Service, was privatized a few years ago and sold to Pearson-Vue, a multinational multimedia and education company and publisher. As a result, several companies developed new versions of the old GED and marketed them to states. Over the past year, states have individually selected one or more high school equivalency tests. Massachusetts recently chose the new HiSET (High School Equivalency Test) to use as a transitional system while adult education in Massachusetts moves towards higher educational standards.

  As a result of these changes, students in Massachusetts are no longer able to take the old GED, and the HiSET is very different from the GED in both content and administration. As this is a transitional system, it may change again and a different, more rigorous test may be selected in the future. Information about the new high school equivalency test can be found at www.doe.mass.edu/ACLS.

- In early November, Ann Serino, the Director of Adult and Community Learning Services at the Mass. Dept. of Education, which oversees public-funded adult basic education in Massachusetts, passed away suddenly. She was formerly the Director of Operation Bootstrap in Lynn for many years, and well-loved in the ABE field. A search for a new Director is about to be completed. The ACLS Interim Director is Jolanta Conway. C

Hands-On Guided Reading with ELLs

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After completing the RETELL course and obtaining an SEI endorsement, I have gained a new perspective on literacy in the elementary classroom, particularly guided reading. Guided reading lessons are intended to help students tackle books with increasing complexity of text structure, vocabulary, and theme. Teachers choose texts carefully, with the goal of helping each student become a better reader and deeper thinker. However, during my RETELL experience, I found myself asking whether guided reading in its traditional form is meeting the needs of our ELL students.

It is always a struggle to engage students in tasks that are difficult for them, and it is no different with ELL students. The RETELL course presents a wealth of information about making all areas of learning accessible to ELLs, but one that particularly affected my thinking was the use of hands-on activities. All teachers know the value of hands-on activities for increasing student engagement, but for ELL students, these activities can be essential to helping them access the curriculum.

I connected this idea with a practice I already use in my fourth-grade classroom: culminating activities to motivate guided reading groups. For example, after reading *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*, a group might learn to fold origami cranes. Knowing in advance that they will participate in an activity at the completion of the book makes my students more excited to take part, but I decided that wasn't enough. I wanted to design an activity that would not only engage my ELLs and help them access a text, but also enhance their knowledge of the English language in a way that an extension activity by itself could not accomplish.

My guided reading group consisted of six students, three of whom were ELLs. I had two main goals for this group: first, to use non-fiction text features such as captions, diagrams, pictures, and timelines to aid comprehension, and secondly, to cite specific details in the text to support their explanations of text mean-

ing. Another individual goal for some of the students was to use descriptive language when talking about texts. I found a non-fiction text that would be of high interest to my group: *Chocolate Wasn't Always Sweet: A History* by Marilee Robin Burton. This book created the opportunity to expand my goals for each lesson by including an understanding of chronological text structure, step-by-step processes, and descriptive language appealing to the five senses. What was our activity? Nothing made more sense than a chocolate tasting.

The text we used describes the sensory experience of eating chocolate from the vantage point of all five senses. After completing the text, I provided my group with ten different types of chocolate to taste, ranging from 90% dark chocolate to the typical milk chocolate bar found in every checkout aisle. We used the text, as well as picture vocabulary cards, to help us understand how to categorize each chocolate sample. Vocabulary words such as *glossy, bitter, rich, mild, silky, moist, melt, smooth, waxy* and *gritty* were important to our task; these words came to life for my students as they tasted and compared the various chocolate samples. We also used a thesaurus to find additional descriptions for each chocolate sample, investigating shades of meaning that lie beyond the words students already knew. For example, *soft* and *hard* are words that my students seized on to describe the chocolate, but more precise words like *brittle, crisp, creamy*, and *buttery* were needed to capture the subtle differences in each bite. Our end result, besides a group of enthusiastic readers, was a list of chocolate samples with a description of how each appealed to the five senses, a rating from best to worst chocolate in each student's opinion, and an explanation of which type of chocolate each student liked best and why. Because the text explains the process of how chocolate is made, the students were able to describe how their favorite chocolate was made and compare that to the kind they did not like as much.

Overall, this guided reading experience was a success for all students involved. I was more than pleased with the record level of student engagement, the personal connections that students made to the text, their facility in navigating non-fiction text structure, and their increased proficiency in using descriptive language. The culminating activity made a major difference: I will never look at guided reading groups in the same way again. C

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Monica Filgo is a 4th grade teacher at Atlantis Charter School in Fall River, MA. She also teaches ESL at Tufts University during their summer programs.

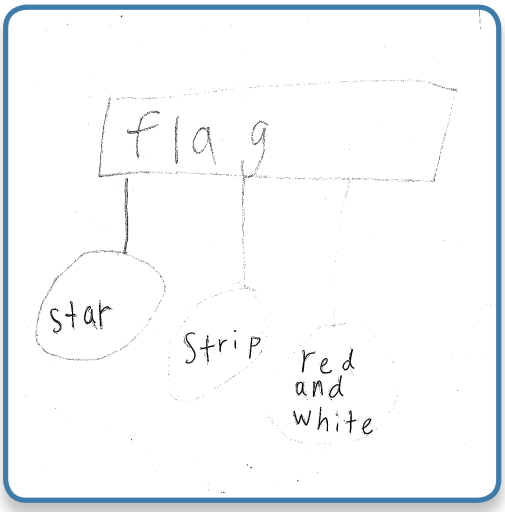
Graphic Organizers Streamline Learning for ELLs

ADAPTED FROM THE OFFICIAL BLOG OF MAYOR ROBERT J. DOLAN OF MELROSE, MA

www.cityofmelrose.org

Alicia Serafin, an ELL teacher at the Lincoln School in Melrose, MA, uses graphic organizers to help her students organize their thoughts and work at a high level while they are still acquiring academic vocabulary. "I teach students two specific graphic organizers — top-down webs (Graphic 1) and two-column notes (Graphic 2) — so that when they are learning the content they are already familiar with the graphic organizer and can focus on the content alone," she said.

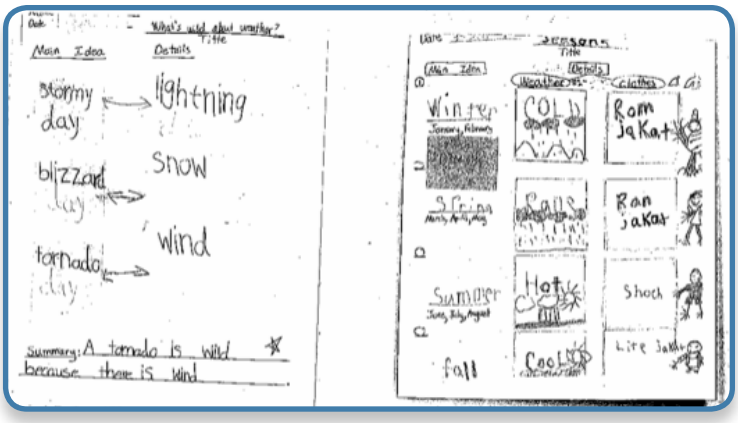
This is important, because while students may see Serafin once a day — she works with them in their literacy block or writer's workshop, or they come to her classroom for a separate class — they are in regular classrooms the rest of the day and must keep up with their peers. Using the same graphic organizer over and over helps them to grasp higher-level concepts while they are still building their vocabulary.



Graphic 1: An Example of a Top-Down Organizer

Serafin pointed to a "top-down web" created by a student in a writing class. "We use top-down webs for planning writing, for improving reading comprehension, and for learning new vocabulary," she said. In a top-down web, the student organizes information hierarchically, by writing the topic in a shape at the top and then arranging sub-topics and details in different shapes below. In this case, Serafin said, the concept she was trying to convey to the kindergarten student was that a written piece must have

a beginning, a middle, and an end. The student organized his essay by drawing pictures instead of using words. "He may not have words there, but he can still think clearly about the beginning, the middle, and the end," she said. "Even a newcomer who doesn't have all the words can demonstrate how he thinks at a higher level. He can learn the content while still acquiring the language."



Graphic 2: Examples of Two-Column Notes

Two-column notes flip the top-down web on its side; in this case, students use the structure to move from a main idea to details. In one class, Serafin began with a bucket of plastic fruit and pulled out different examples of "details": an orange, a pear, a banana. Then students transitioned to the graphic organizers, using words and pictures to select a main idea and elaborate on it using relevant details. One student drew a two-column organizer about how animals differ from one another. "This is a big question for the unit, how are animals different?" Serafin said. "My student knew *feathers* but needed help with (animal) *hair*. Now that she has the study skills, she can use those skills to learn not only that content, but new content as well."

While ELLs often pick up conversational vocabulary relatively quickly, academic vocabulary such as *compare and contrast* — the language of the classroom — can be more difficult. Serafin works on teaching her students that vocabulary along with the learning skills they need, such as picking out the details that support a main idea. Using just two graphic organizers, and using them consistently, makes that job easier for the students. "We are taking a systematic approach to teaching these particular graphic organizers so we are able to focus on the content," she said. C

ABOUT THE SUBJECT

Alicia Serafin, the subject of the article, is an ELL Teacher at the Lincoln Elementary School in Melrose, MA. She received her Masters of Arts in Teaching ESL from Salem State University and her MBA from UCLA Anderson School of Management. She also holds a Supervisor/ Director license in ESL. Prior to working in Melrose, Alicia worked as an ELL Teacher in Salem, Massachusetts and in business for Deloitte Consulting and for market research companies. She can be reached at aserafin@melrose.mec.edu.

Teaching the ART and Craft of Writing: Treating Words and Pictures as Equal Languages for Learning

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> *I like Picturing Writing because it help me speak English and help me learn English, and help me make my pictures better.*
> **- Lorena from Brazil, age 11**

> *I like Picturing Writing because makes me to learn and makes me happy.* **- Anilette from Tanzania, age 9**

Picturing Writing: Fostering Literacy Through Art, and Image-Making Within The Writing Process are two art-and-literature-based approaches to literacy learning designed to meet the needs of diverse learners in the classroom. Because pictures serve as a universal language, these art-and-literature-based approaches to teaching writing have found a natural home among English language learners and their teachers. By providing students with visual and verbal modalities for thinking and expressing their ideas, these alternative literacy models invite students to enter the reading/writing process from a position of strength and enthusiasm.

ARTISTS/WRITERS WORKSHOP

Picturing Writing and Image-Making teach the ART and craft of writing within the framework of the artists/writers workshop, which is an expansion of the writing workshop. Artists/writers workshop treats words and pictures as parallel, complementary, and equal languages for learning. This helps to eliminate the bias within our educational system that favors those students who work easily with words.

The artists/writers workshop follows four basic steps:

- A literature share followed by discussion
- Modeling of an art or writing process
- A work session
- Group share

The workshop always begins by sharing quality literature. This structure allows teachers to take advantage of the many quality picture books available today that can be used to show how professional writers *and* artists apply their craft to make meaning. As students study the parallel and complementary languages of pictures and words, they discover, for instance, that the lead sentences in a story and the "lead picture" often both provide information about the setting. When students read the lead picture for meaning, they *see* that it often includes information not only about the place, but also about the time of day, the weather, and possibly the season. The notion of setting moves from abstract to concrete as students observe and articulate the various setting elements that are addressed in the lead picture. Next the teacher models a lead picture to introduce a class story, and the students create their lead pictures to introduce their own stories; in this way the purpose of this literary element is once more reinforced.

During the group share, students discuss each other's setting pictures, all the while learning how to read their images for detail and description. By the time they are ready to create the setting for their own stories, they already understand the concept. They then turn their attention to analyzing how authors establish a sense of setting with their words. Throughout the process, students discover that there are many parallels between the work of the artist and the work of the writer. When it comes time for them to write a story to accompany their own lead picture, they need only read the picture they have created and describe the details that are embedded in their visual representation. When a student's lead picture and lead sentences are presented together during the writing group share, classmates come to understand the complementary nature of pictures and words. Combined, their picture and words convey more meaning than either alone is able to express.

PICTURES FIRST

Within an artists/writers workshop, the art strand, which focuses on the language of pictures, always precedes the writing strand, which focuses on the language of words. This reversal of the traditional writing process (in which students typically write first and then illustrate their writing) affords English language learners and

others who struggle with verbal skills the opportunity to first develop their thinking in pictures before facing the challenge of getting words down on the page. In my observation of student work for over two decades, the more details students include in their images, the deeper their thinking, and the more detail they are able to include in their writing (Olshansky, 2008).

For English language learners, a pictures-first approach has the added advantage that it provides students with a universal language to think and develop their ideas before having to find the English words to convey their meaning. As students search for those words, their ideas remain permanently recorded in their pictures should they lose their train of thought. Students' artwork also provides a common language in a classroom where student speak many different languages.

MEDIUM MATTERS

While a "pictures first" approach offers students critical tools for thinking and developing their ideas, the medium also determines the message. The quality of image and depth of thinking available to students who use the standard classroom art materials (crayons, colored pencils and markers) differs significantly from that of students using richer art materials (Figure 1).

Recognizing that most teachers do not relish the idea of having a wide range of messy art materials available in their classroom, I have spent the last two decades honing two art processes that teachers find fairly manageable and user-friendly: crayon resist (crayon drawings washed with watercolor) and collage made from hand-painted papers.

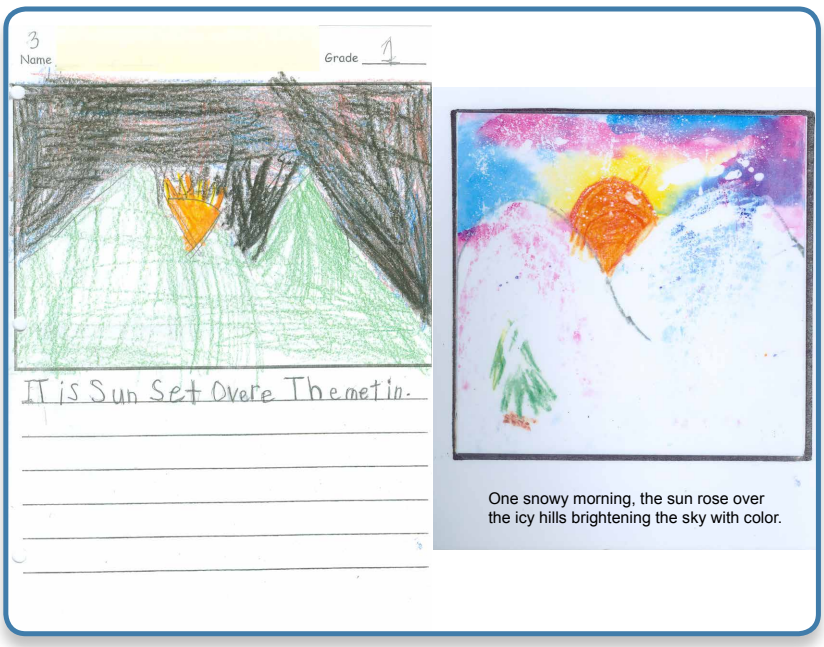

Figure 1

While crayons are tools that most young children are familiar and comfortable with, adding a watercolor wash to their

crayon drawings creates a more professional-looking, more nuanced finished product. In the crayon-resist process, students use crayon to create controlled, representational aspects of their image and then apply a watercolor wash, which often produces a pleasing, unanticipated result (otherwise know as a "happy accident").

Additional supplemental art techniques can be used to create more detail and deeper meaning. For instance, wet watercolor sprinkled with salt can create the effect of water glistening. This technique not only helps students to deepen their thinking, but also increases their interest in capturing that meaning in words. For the classroom or ELL teacher, this presents the opportunity to teach "silver-dollar" words such as *glisten, sparkle,* and *shimmer*. Khahn, age 11, shared her new-found love of language as she reflected on her writing, "I try to use silver dollar word because I think it beautiful" (Olshansky, 2010).

For teachers interested in exploring more deeply the potential for rich thinking and descriptive language, my favorite art form is collage made from hand-painted papers. Originally inspired by the work of collage artist/writer Eric Carle, I have found collages made from hand-painted papers to offer unparalleled opportunities not only for constructing meaning (literally), but also for inspiring and supporting revision. Collage offers students the opportunity to manipulate shapes on the page as they compose their images, and the many colors and textures within their portfolios of hand-painted papers serve to stimulate their thinking, suggest new meanings, and inspire richer language.

Gaining mastery of either or both of these art techniques offers students opportunities for richer, deeper, more nuanced thinking. Beyond that, the published books students create using either of these art techniques (on topics aligned with their grade-level curriculum) generate a tremendous sense of pride and accomplishment.

TWO ART-BASED LITERACY MODELS

For teachers who would like the support of professionally prepared materials, I have spent decades developing and refining two art-and-literature-based writing programs that channel the deep thinking that results from converting artwork into quality writing.

One of these programs, Picturing Writing: Fostering Literacy Through Art, uses a simple crayon resist-based art process supplemented by an assortment of simple texturing techniques to support students' writing (Figure 2). This approach

can be used to introduce foundational art and writing skills and acquaint students with the routines of Artists/Writers Workshop. Units of study integrated into the curriculum teach a variety of genres, including basic descriptive writing, poetry, research-based poetry, narrative writing and research-based narrative. Opportunities for informational writing, persuasive writing, and reflective writing may also be incorporated into various book projects.

Figure 2

My other program, Image-Making Within The Writing Process, uses collage made from hand-painted papers created by the students. These rich explorations in color and texture use a variety of simple texturing techniques and provide the raw materials for constructing a story. While the collage process is a bit more involved, it offers endless opportunities for students to revise their images, and thus their story, before gluing their collage shapes onto their background paper (Figure 3). Additionally, utilizing hand-painted papers instead of solid-colored construction paper sparks a depth of thinking otherwise unavailable. This, in turn, can inspire the use of more descriptive language and more detailed story writing.

Figure 3

While each art process holds the potential for generating quality writing, ensuring that students take full advantage of this potential should not be left to chance. To make sure that students access detail and description from their pictures, each process offers many layers of scaffolding. The Picturing-Writing and Image-Making processes

both utilize a structured oral rehearsal process (either via one-on-one support, with peers, or during the group share) in which students are taught how to read their pictures to access detail and description. They also utilize specially designed brainstorming sheets that require them to read their pictures for meaning and descriptive language before they write. With both the oral-rehearsal process and the brainstorming sheets, it is important to ensure that ELLs have access to the descriptive language they will need. Thus both Picturing Writing and Image-Making offer structured language-development activities that focus on building word banks specific to the topic the students are writing about. These are just a few examples of the ways that art-and-literature-based models can be used to support the literacy development of students with diverse learning and language needs. C

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Beth Olshansky has developed two proven art-and-literature-based literacy models and is author of *The Power of Pictures: Creating Pathways to Literacy Through Art* book/DVD and the producer of several DVDs filmed in the classroom. To view video excerpts of sample projects facilitated with English language learners, click on the following live links
http://www.picturingwriting.org/videos/video_ell-picturing-writing.html
http://www.picturingwriting.org/videos/video_our-stories.html
http://www.picturingwriting.org/NH_Chronicle.html

To learn about summer teacher-training opportunities, visit:
http://www.picturingwriting.org.

Improved Student Learning through Teacher Inquiry

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> *There's a gap in teacher knowledge base [for teaching English Language Learners (ELLs)]. The gap isn't with the students, the gap is with us . . . As we, as teachers, increase our capacity to meet the needs of our students then we're going to see improvement. So that perceived achievement gap — it's not with the students, it's with us. We're the ones that need to close that gap and we need to focus on how we can improve.*
>
> **- Allison Audet, Worcester teacher**

Stephen Covey, the author of The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, encourages his readers to categorize challenges into two circles. The outer circle, the circle of concern, includes challenges that cause worry and angst but may be out of our immediate control. The inner circle, the circle of influence, includes challenges that we can actually do something about. By taking action over what is in our circle of influence, we become proactive agents of change.

In this article, we will describe a program that uses Covey's philosophy to address a challenge that is pointed out by Uriarte, et al., 2011 — namely, a gap in our knowledge of how to teach our growingly diverse student population. In Covey's terms, this gap is inside our circle of influence; it is something we can control. By taking ownership over our own learning, we can adjust our behavior, instruction and assessment and become more effective teachers for our students. It is important to remember, however, that the learning process is iterative. It doesn't happen in one professional development session or in one course, but through a willingness to engage in a conscious inquiry cycle, a cycle of action and reflection that requires taking instructional risks and measuring the outcomes of those risks to inform future instruction. (Tung et al., 2011)

TEACHER INQUIRY AS A SOLUTION

> *Without inquiry we can allow ourselves to stagnate in our methods and we may miss out on exceptional learning opportunities. Teaching should be a cycle of inquiry. Through questioning of practices, student success, and curriculum we allow ourselves to self-assess and better perfect our teaching.*
>
> ***- Chavani Taylor, Worcester teacher***

The Worcester ELL Teacher Residency Program (WELLTR), an ESL Masters program in collaboration with the Center for Collaborative Education, Cambridge College, and the Worcester Public Schools, was designed to address gaps in teacher knowledge through intensive training combined with classroom application. WELLTR teacher residents are encouraged to see themselves as agents of change, proactively meeting the challenges that lie within their circle of influence. Teachers consciously apply the cycle of inquiry — on a daily basis for small issues and then, over the course of a school year, through a more formal action research project on a larger issue. Whether on a smaller or larger scale, the process starts by defining the challenge and forming a hypothesis about the causes. Teachers then identify solutions and create a viable action plan such as a new scaffolding strategy, a new differentiation method, or a new approach to a student with a learning issue. After implementing their strategy, teachers then evaluate or reassess the intervention and reflect on whether it made a difference. Teachers go through this process multiple times a day for small classroom challenges and over longer periods of time for larger issues. The evaluation process requires collecting multiple measures of data, including student work, formal assessments, and teacher observations. This data helps to frame the problem and informs the teacher's decisions about next steps. The cycle of action and reflection facilitates teacher learning and leads to positive student growth and achievement.

Effective teachers adopt inquiry as an intrinsic habit whereby they are continuously addressing their own knowledge gap about ways to meet the needs of their ELLs. "Instilling an 'inquiry state of mind' into yourself keeps education moving forward," says instructional aide Katelyn O'Leary. "It's self-evaluation and self-improvement…it keeps [us focused on] requirements of differentiation, scaffolding, and individualization that are necessary for a [diverse] population." Teachers who take charge of their own learning develop this "inquiry state of mind" with a mission to reach every learner in their classroom and adapt their practices to meet students where they are. As teacher Nicole Girouard explains,

"I am a change agent by helping children get the education they deserve. I can change my teaching to suit their needs [so that they] become successful."

TEACHER INQUIRY IN WORCESTER SCHOOLS

When asked to reflect on his day-to-day inquiry process, history teacher Sean Carroll discussed a time when his ELLs were struggling to engage with in-class texts. After exploring possible clauses, he implemented specific strategies to target this issue. Sean found that to engage his students, especially his ELLs, in the longer readings, he had to "take things that are huge and overwhelming and give them to [the students] in pieces," a text-modification strategy known as "chunking." Sean described how taking instructional risks and implementing research-based strategies helps him grow as a teacher and empowers his students to believe that, with the appropriate supports, they can meet the standard.

Kim Langhill, a first grade teacher, noticed that her ELLs struggled to show their content knowledge on summative classroom assessments. Recognizing that language can be a barrier, she reviewed her formal assessments and made changes to make them more accessible. "I'm much more aware of rephrasing and rewording the question and directing the kids to look at the visuals that are there to help them," Kim reported. By taking out the unnecessary words in word problems, incorporating visuals, and offering her students multiple ways to show what they know, she saw an improvement in student performance on classroom assessments. Kim's engagement in the inquiry cycle has allowed her to target the specific needs and challenges of her ELLs.

The preceding examples reflect small-scale, day-to-day inquiry that addresses immediate student concerns. WELLTR teacher residents also partake in a large-scale teacher action research project that aims to solve more complex, long-term issues at the student, classroom or school level. Ashley McPartland, an instructional aide at a school for Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE), noticed a student lack of engagement, which was manifested in the form of behavioral issues. After reviewing the literature on SIFE students, the effects of trauma, and the process of acculturation, Ashley implemented several strategies to teach behavioral expectations. She found that when she took steps to acknowledge student voice through student input and self-assessment, students became more engaged and felt more in control of their learning. "My responsibility is not only to decrease language barriers and the achievement gap, but also to find ways to reach and teach the whole student and reduce any barrier to academic success to the best of my ability," she said. "One person can in-

crease protective factors for traumatized children, but a school-wide approach brings many people together and increases protective factors ten-fold."

Language arts teacher Melissa Poirier focused on the issue of ELLs struggling to comprehend complex expository text. For her project, she researched effective reading strategies and scaffolds, and then developed her own graphic organizer to use with students needing extra support to access the material. Multiple measures of data collection showed resulting improvements in both engagement and reading comprehension. Prior to engaging in this kind of teacher inquiry, Melissa was aware that "these 'problems' existed but I never knew how to address them or if I could solve them. After identifying a possible solution, I realized other teachers have had the same problem and now ask for [my] graphic organizer [so they can] resolve the problem in their classrooms."

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD

In the cases described above, WELLTR teacher residents implemented the inquiry process individually. However, WELLTR also explores the importance of collaborative inquiry as an essential, systemic practice for schools. Teacher Katerina Kambosos suggests that collaborative teacher inquiry can happen when teachers "find a peer mentor to share best practices with and problem-solve concerns." When teacher inquiry is combined with opportunities to share this learning with others in professional learning communities and through collegial observations, the impact on teacher and student learning can be substantially deepened and expanded. "Finding that there is a common [issue affecting ELLs] can be empowering because you are not alone and you can brainstorm together," says teacher Maria Poirier, "[When we] spread the knowledge of 'good practices' then they grow and share." The circle of influence is expanded.

This approach builds on the belief that educators are lifelong learners who must continuously adapt to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body. By promoting teacher inquiry, we can encourage lasting professional development. And when that inquiry is teacher-driven, educators can make informed changes in their everyday practice that have a significant impact on student growth. Over time, when inquiry becomes habitual--both individually and systemically--the gap in teacher knowledge can be addressed proactively so that every student can have equal access to a meaningful education.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sarah Ottow is the Director of the Worcester ELL Teacher Residency Program. With fourteen years of experience teaching and coaching, she is passionate about teacher empowerment that focuses on the success of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. At CCE, Sarah works in urban schools to support both teacher and student learning with an emphasis on equity for ELLs.

Jacqui Holmes is the Program Assistant for the Worcester ELL Teacher Residency Program and the Quality Performance Assessment team. At CCE, Jacqui brings her experience working in public schools to support professional development, classroom resources collection and sharing, and systems building to further the impact of CCE's partnerships.

Creating Opportunities for Pre-Service Teachers to Work with English Language Learners

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During the period from 2007-2013, supported by a grant from the US Department of Education, Saint Michael's College, in Colchester, VT, designed and implemented a new professional development model which we called Project CREATE (Curriculum Reform for All Teachers of ELLs). This six-year grant made it possible for faculty from our Departments of Education and Applied Linguistics to revamp our teacher education curriculum and establish professional collaborations with content and ESL teachers at the elementary, middle and high school levels in our partner school districts in the Burlington, VT, metropolitan area. The goal of the project was to develop a cadre of well-trained teachers to provide academic literacy support for the growing number of new Americans who were attending these schools.

The Burlington area is the venue for a federal refugee resettlement program that relocates new Americans from recently war torn countries to three Vermont school districts (Burlington, Winooski and South Burlington). From 2000 to 2007 the English learner population in these school districts grew from less than 5% to nearly 18%. (It is now nearly 20%.) Before Project CREATE, teacher training for English learner instruction had not kept pace with the increase in the English learner population; only one in four teachers in our partner school districts had had more than four hours' training in English learner instruction. Up until 2012 the Vermont Agency of Education did not require English learner training in teacher education programs.

THE REFORMS

To improve English learner instruction and academic literacy in our partner schools and in our teacher education programs, Saint Michael's Education and

Applied Linguistics faculty designed a three-pronged approach to reform our own curriculum, provide professional development for teachers in our partner schools, and place pre-service teachers at these schools. These reforms integrated three distinct frameworks: culturally and linguistically responsive teaching (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008); academic language instruction from a sheltered perspective (Echevarría, Vogt & Short, 2004; Gibbons, 2002) and from a systemic functional linguistics perspective (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2008; Zweirs, 2008); and co-teaching between ESL and content teachers (Davidson, 2006). We wanted to create a body of knowledge and teaching practice that, as Lucas and Grinberg (2008) suggest, would "infuse attention to teaching ELLs across the curriculum" (p.620). Rather than adding a course or two, we wanted to integrate English learner instruction into all our courses, to make these principles integral to all aspects of teaching for our pre-service teachers (Lucas, Villegas & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008).

As the first prong of the project, we reshaped our teacher education program to integrate English-learner instruction, in a developmentally scaffolded progression, throughout our general education licensure endorsement areas at the elementary, middle, and secondary levels.

The reforms to our secondary program are illustrated in Table 1. Under the new system, illustrated in Table 1, our curriculum and placements were designed to align with each other and set up a developmentally appropriate progression for undergraduate pre-service teachers with limited cultural and linguistic experience.

The second prong of the project established collaborations between Saint Michael's College faculty and teachers in local school districts, with a focus on teaching academic content through explicit instruction in academic language (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2008; Schleppegrell, 2004). These collaborations provided opportunities for Collaborative Action Projects (CAPs) in which ESL and content teachers from our partner schools teamed up with faculty from the Education and Applied Linguistics departments to develop and try out academic literacy practices in content classrooms. These CAPs had a research element: the collaborating partners worked together to develop and evaluate academic literacy practices for their content classrooms. The teachers took away new practices and new ways to evaluate their practice, and the faculty brought these practices back to their pre-service teacher courses.

Table 1. Project CREATE Curriculum and Field Placement Reforms in Secondary Education.		
Course	**Curriculum Reform**	**Field Placement Reform**
Schools and Society	Awareness of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning.	From arbitrary field placements at suburban middle schools to purposeful placement in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.
Adolescent Development in a Culturally Responsive Classroom	Emphasis on diverse cultural contexts that impact adolescent development and learning. Integration of SIOP and WIDA teaching strategies.	From four visits with a student to discuss social issues in high school to shadowing and tutoring an English learner weekly over the course of a semester.
Literacy and Curriculum Development in Middle and High Schools	Academic language instruction in specific content areas using a systemic functional linguistics framework.	From a weekly field placement in a local middle or high school to twice-weekly field placement in a culturally and linguistically diverse content-specific classroom at a middle school.
Cognition and Individual Differences	Critical thinking skills in understanding learning as it relates to the social construction of disability. Examination of social, political and historical influences from a socio-cultural perspective.	From a field placement in a local high school to a weekly field placement tutoring New Americans at the local Boys and Girls Club.
Secondary Student Teaching	Integration of curriculum development, instruction and assessment from a culturally and linguistically responsive teaching framework.	From a field placement in a local high school to a field placement in a culturally and linguistically diverse middle or high school.

The changes in Saint Michael's curriculum, along with the work from the CAPs, set the stage for the third prong of the reform – the practicum progression for pre-service teachers. Along with their education courses, our pre-service teachers were, at the same time, given a progression of field placements that first introduced them to culturally and linguistically diverse learners and then provided a setting where they could become actively involved in the teaching and learning of these students. As shown in Table 1, the focus of the placements moved from awareness of culture and language in teaching and learning to strategies for meeting English learners needs, to techniques for engaging students in content–specific academic language.

FINDINGS

To measure the effect of our program reforms on pre-service teachers, we collected data on pre-service teachers who completed student teaching and graduated from Saint Michael's College from 2008 to 2012. The data included responses from exit surveys and individual interviews of selected pre-service teachers, as well as a review of the teaching portfolios required for an initial teaching license in Vermont. Data collected from pre-service teachers who graduated in 2008 served as a baseline, because these teachers had not received the benefits of any curricular or field placement reforms. The 2009 through 2011 pre-service teachers experienced an increasing number of reforms, and the 2012 pre-service teachers experienced all the reforms described in Table 1.

To evaluate the effectiveness of our reforms, we looked for trends from year to year within each teacher education program and also across programs. In the survey responses and interviews, we looked to see what reforms were most meaningful to our pre-service teachers and to what extent they could cite particular instances of reform as impacting their teaching practice. In our review of the portfolios, we looked for actual changes in planning, instructing and assessing students from 2008 to 2012.

The survey responses and interviews showed significant change in three areas: 1) understanding of the importance of the student's cultural and linguistic context for teaching content-specific curriculum; 2) willingness to collaborate with others in planning and teaching strategies that scaffold academic language in content-specific courses (language arts, math, science, and social studies); and 3) use of assessments as diagnostic instruments, that is, the use of assessments to inform teaching practice rather than simply evaluating student

performance. Underlying these three findings was an attitudinal shift among pre-service teachers. While the 2008 pre-service teachers often cited the low skills of English learners as a reason why it was difficult to teach them, the 2012 pre-service teachers talked, instead, about the strategies they used to meet the needs of their English learners — thereby moving from a deficit framework to a culturally and linguistically responsive framework.

In our review of student portfolios from 2008 through 2012, we focused on planning, instruction and assessment at both the lesson level and the unit level, to see how well the content of the portfolios matched up with the perceptions of the pre-service teachers as represented in their survey responses and interviews. While our first finding — understanding of the importance of the student's cultural and linguistic context —was not as robust in the portfolios as in the survey and interview data, we found significant portfolio evidence of the other two findings: an increased willingness to collaborate, and the use of assessments as diagnostic instruments. The portfolios showed a gradual shift in collaboration from consulting exclusively with cooperating teachers and special educators to also consulting with ESL teachers. In addition, they showed a marked change in how our pre-service teachers used assessments. Those from the 2008 cohort had generally used assessments as a check for student understanding in formative assessments or to evaluate student performance in summative assessments, but the 2012 cohort readily used assessments, especially formative assessments, to modify instruction. Furthermore, the 2012 cohort differentiated instruction more frequently, including not only preparation of multilevel reading materials but also development of multilevel assessments based on students' language proficiency.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM REFORM

While our findings show that teacher education programs can develop pre-service teachers who understand the importance of cultural and linguistic context, are willing to collaborate, and can use assessments as diagnostic instruments, these findings also suggest that, in order to obtain such results, reforms must be multifaceted and comprehensive. The integration of field experiences with the program curriculum does make a difference in how pre-service teachers learn to teach. Furthermore, the field placements need to model effective English learner instruction and collaboration between ESL and content teachers. The close integration of learning at the course level and the reinforcement of principles at the practice level are both essential if pre-service teachers are to learn to teach effectively in today's multicultural classrooms. C

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Blended Learning in an Intensive TESOL Certificate Course

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While programs for pre-service teachers have long led movements toward more active learning in higher education (student engagement in the classroom coupled with language-teaching practicums), "blended" learning, with a mix of on-line and in-person learning opportunities, is not yet in widespread use. Although publishers of textbooks provide on-line resources, both audio and video, faculty members need time to explore how to use these resources effectively.

In June of 2013, with support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the World Language Enrichment and Acquisition Program (WLEA) at Hampshire College in Amherst, MA, offered an intensive TESOL certificate course that made use of blended learning. The TESOL certificate enables the holder to teach in English language programs in the local area or overseas. Our course was open to community members and to Five-College students from Hampshire, UMASS, Mount Holyoke, Smith, and Amherst College. Course participants met face-to-face Monday-Friday for four weeks from 9:00 am-4:30 pm, on the Hampshire campus. As an additional tool to continue participants' learning and sharing outside of class time, we adopted the Moodle Learning Management System (LMS), which is currently used throughout The Five Colleges.

An outside expert in TESOL training was hired to teach the intensive on-campus course, develop a detailed trainer's manual appropriate to Hampshire's unique pedagogy, and incorporate a blended learning component, using the Moodle LMS. Moodle, which was designed by Martin Dougiamas, is an online platform that can be used in both blended learning and 100% online courses. The acronym stands for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment. Moodle's pedagogical approach is based on a constructivist and social constructionist view of education, emphasizing that learners and teachers can both contribute to the educational experience. Currently, Moodle is translated into more than 95 languages and has over 70 million users, making it the most

widely used online learning platform. It is very teacher/student friendly, as it can be adapted to suit the needs of the user and is provided freely as open-source software. By adding the Moodle component, we hoped to

- Enhance student engagement and learning;
- Provide opportunities for students from multiple campuses and in the community to take the same course and learn collaboratively in and out of the classroom;
- Allow multi-campus and multi-discipline sharing in the development of the course, and multi-campus interest in the outcome;
- Use resources efficiently by adapting an existing resource rather than inventing a new one);
- Strengthen our multi-campus program.

The course was designed to provide participants with a solid foundation in TESOL methodology and to promote their growth as teaching professionals. Coursework included daily required readings and reflective postings on Moodle, interactive lectures and workshops, observations via video of English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) classes around the world, planning and delivery of ESL/EFL lessons to peers, with subsequent feedback, and successful completion of the following assignments:

FACE-TO-FACE:

- Designing a demonstration of an individual skill and teaching this skill to peers
- Crafting a group lesson plan
- Designing an individual lesson plan
- Engaging in the microteaching and feedback sessions for the items above
- Analyzing and demonstrating to peers a selected method of ESL/EFL instruction

ON MOODLE:

- Formulating a strategic plan for professional development
- Creating a professional artifact of choice (e.g., a curriculum vitae, a teaching philosophy, an application to serve as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant)
- Writing a guided literature review on a topic of choice (e.g., global English, learner differences, motivation in the ESL/EFL classroom)
- Compiling a course-final portfolio accompanied by a reflective cover piece

The course was highly effective in meeting the needs and interests of the participants, as demonstrated by their reflective cover pieces, where they reported that they had gained confidence in their ability to teach ESL/EFL and facility in the skills and teaching techniques required for successful classroom practice. In addition, many participants stated that the use of Moodle created an integrated and flexible learning environment, and that this on-line tool was used more effectively in this course than in the other courses they had had at Hampshire College. The following quotes from the participants' reflective cover pieces and from face-to-face feedback sessions provide evidence of their overall response to the course and to blended learning using Moodle:

- *Taking the TESOL Certificate course has provided me with so many amazing opportunities and resources that will help me develop my potential teaching career. I loved that we had all of the resources for our TESOL course available for us on the Moodle site. It allowed me to go back and review anything that I may have forgotten. Furthermore, through online posts and our assignments the course has helped me improve my writing skills, my ability to take feedback, and my ability to confidently articulate my ideas.*
- *Overall, I am incredibly thankful to have taken this course, and believe that it will have a significant impact on my future. One of my goals is to apply for a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant grant and teach English in South Korea. I have been inspired by those around me, and am so excited to pursue my first steps as a TESOL certificate practitioner. The Trainer used Moodle effectively, better than in any of the other classes I have taken at*

Hampshire. I am now highly motivated, knowing that I have a solid base to refer to and resources available on the Moodle site.

- *Throughout the course we made use of daily reflective journals, which played a key role in the development of my own ideas about teaching and understanding of my own learning styles. The reflective journals benefited my progress within this TESOL course by helping me to connect the teaching methodologies and styles with my own learning experiences. Having the chance to submit our reading response on Moodle in an open forum allowed me not only to flesh out my own ideas, but also know what other students in the class thought about the assignments. I learned that we were all on the same page, and that brought us all closer together. Having a Moodle component definitely helped make a strong cohort of students because everyone had a voice.*
- *I feel like this course really allowed me to acquire the foundational teaching techniques and skills that will now enable me to go out into the field, to start teaching and to continue to learn and grow. If I have the opportunity, I would like to add a Moodle component to any ESL course I teach. It saves students money and time to have all the materials in one place and provides more flexibility in terms of submitting assignments.*

In summary, the TESOL participants found that Moodle effectively complemented the face-to-face workshops by providing them with a wealth of resources that were located online in one user-friendly location. Participants were able to submit assignments on Moodle and continue their learning individually or in collaboration with their classmates outside of class time. Based on the participants' performance in the course and on their reflective assessment of their accomplishments, we felt that the ultimate goal of the course had been achieved: Our students had developed the skills and confidence they needed to join the global community of ESL/EFL instructors. C

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The Accreditation Conundrum: Reconciling Objectives, Assessment, and Student Learning Outcomes with the Natural Acquisition of Language

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As of December 14, 2013, international students on F-1 visas were no longer allowed to enroll in non-accredited ESL programs (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, n.d.). This requirement of the Accreditation of English Language Training Programs Act, which was signed into law by President Obama three years earlier, forced the hand of all non-accredited ESL programs: they must either gain accreditation or close their doors. Not surprisingly, this caused a substantial increase in applications for accreditation, mostly from stand-alone Intensive English Programs (IEPs) that fall outside the umbrella of institutional accreditation provided by host universities and community colleges. However, because of the added prestige that goes with ESL-specific accreditation, many university and community college IEP's are also applying for specific program accreditation on top of the institutional accreditation provided by their affiliated organization. (Last, 2013).

As one of Boston's stand-alone ESL programs enrolling international students, my own program, Language Skills, chose to apply to CEA – the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation – one of two accrediting bodies approved by the federal government to accredit stand-alone ESL programs (Custer, 2012). I can happily say that, as of December 2013, Language Skills is now accredited by CEA.

With this article I'd like to give readers of MATSOL Currents a glimpse into the changes accreditation brought to our program, and what other programs might expect with regard to both the benefits and challenges of the accreditation process.

First, a little background on Language Skills: We are an independent English language school with around 40 students at any one time, spread across five

or six classes in our intensive English program, our TOEFL preparation program, and our TESOL certificate program. The students come from all over the world with the purpose of taking a full-time immersion English course. Many students come from Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese and Arabic speaking countries but we are always receiving applications from countries and home languages that we have not hosted before. The average age of our students is 25, and their most common goal is gaining admission into a graduate degree programs at one of Boston's colleges or universities, or improving their career prospects in their home country with improved English abilities.

Before accreditation, we already had carefully chosen textbooks, a system for placing students into appropriate levels, and a system for assessment and advancement through the levels. However, we gave considerable autonomy to our teachers to design their own courses and make sure their students were reaching both their own personal goals and the general goals of the course, based on the descriptors of the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, Council of Europe, 2001), which is attached as a appendix to this article. We consistently received positive feedback from our students, who often cited the attention they received from our faculty and staff as a highlight of their trip to Boston.

So we were hesitant, at first, about the accreditation process. In our initial contact with CEA at one of the accreditation workshops that they hold near their offices in Washington D.C., we learned that we would be expected to provide "a written curriculum that includes the goals and objectives for each course and level" along with "a means . . . to assess student outcomes in relation to the goals and objectives of the courses and . . . proficiency scales with expected student outcomes for each level" (CEA, n.d.). Other key elements of accreditation focus on student services, marketing, organizational planning, and human resources; however, this article will focus specifically on program goals and objectives.

If you go back to read my earlier description of our program, you will see I did not mention either curriculum or assessment as a strong suit. As a school that aligns itself philosophically with the Communicative Method, we felt that our primary responsibility was to create an atmosphere that fostered natural language acquisition and to hire qualified faculty who believed in our mission. Would an increased focus on objectives, assessment, and student learning outcomes hinder the natural acquisition of language?

In his famous book *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, which played an important role in inspiring our school's pedagogical philosophy, Stephen Krashen addresses this very question:

Tests have a huge impact on classroom behavior, and need to be selected to encourage students to engage in activities that will help them acquire more language . . . If students know in advance what sort of test will be used to measure their achievement in a course, they will, naturally, tend to study for the test, and teachers will feel pressure to teach to the test. I suggest we harness this natural tendency and select tests that will encourage student preparation that in itself causes more second language acquisition. (Krashen, p. 176)

As we revised our curricula to put a stronger focus on student learning outcomes and assessment, we kept Krashen's advice in mind.

We began by creating a curriculum-design committee composed of both teachers and administrators, who read the academic research, collected information from external resources provided by book publishers and the Council of Europe (who created the CEFR), and reviewed the feedback we received from internal surveys of both faculty and students.

The first decision of the committee was to retain the CEFR descriptors as course goals, for two reasons: 1) the CEFR seems to be gaining widespread acceptance as a correlation tool among book publishers (*Interchange* 4th Edition, *Q: Skills for Success*, *Focus on Grammar*, to name a few) so we were confident we could find classroom material that would support these goals, and 2) the communicative nature of the descriptors would help protect us from Krashen's pitfall of creating assessments that fail to measure or promote second language acquisition. For example, CEFR's B1 "Threshold" level specifies, among other things, that the learner should be able to "produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest." A logical way to assess this skill would be an in-class essay, and English learners would prepare for the assessment by writing practice essays, thus promoting natural acquisition. Compare this to a grammar-based course goal which states, for example, that the learner should be able to "use the present perfect tense." In this case, the logical assessment tools would consist of fill-in-the-blank questions or other traditional testing methods, and the preparation for those assessments would consist of sitting down and "learning" (as opposed to "acquiring") the relevant paradigm, thus undermining the communicative nature of the course. We concluded that the CEFR

descriptors would not only align with appropriate classroom materials, but would also encourage the type of assessment (and preparation for assessment) that aligns with our pedagogical philosophy.

The next job of the curriculum committee was to figure out exactly how to assess our CEFR-based goals. With wording like "simple connected text," the CEFR descriptors tend to be rather broad and abstract, leaving a lot of room for variation among assessors (in our case the teachers). Tests should be reliable, practical, economical, easy to score, and easy to interpret (Krashen, 1982, p. 176; CEA, 2014, p. 39.) So we were left with a new challenge: how could we turn our broad CEFR-based course goals into well-defined student learning outcomes (SLO's) that could be assessed reliably, while following Krashen's admonition that assessment should encourage preparatory activities that foster acquisition?

We did it like this: For each 16-week level, the course goals are the CEFR descriptors. Then for each 4-week session within the level, we created eight student learning objectives (SLOs), four of which were communication-based. The communication-based SLOs are measured through both in-class activities and end-of-session assessments, which we call "communication assessments." For example, as was mentioned earlier, one course goal for our B1 level is that students should be able to "produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest." Among the SLOs that spell out this goal is that the student should be able to "write a one-page reaction to a listening passage on a familiar topic." A communication assessment for this SLO could be an in-class essay based on a level-appropriate listening passage. Students would prepare for this assessment by listening to level-appropriate authentic material on familiar topics and writing short essays in response.

The remaining four SLOs for each session are grammar-based. We considered removing grammar assessment altogether, as there is no clear link between grammar points and the "can do" statements of the CEFR. However, because we do value grammar instruction as a way to reach students with different learning styles, encourage student confidence, and provide a communicative activity (after all, we do teach it in the target language!), our grammar objectives remained, but with one caveat: they should clearly support our communication SLOs. For example, in the session where the students are asked to write a reaction to a listening passage on a familiar topic, they are also asked to "use gerunds as subjects and objects." This grammatical construction seemed to fit nicely with the communicative topic: "The radio program is about skiing," or "My listening is about Steve Jobs. He loved meditating." After setting up our frame-

work of course objectives and assessments, the rest of the work for our committee consisted of textbook selection and writing out specific SLOs that were supported both by the text and by our CEFR course goals.

Even without the framework provided by the accreditation process we could, on our own initiative, have created a curriculum with strong objectives, assessments, and SLOs. But without the Accreditation Act forcing our hand, I can't be sure that we would ever have made these improvements. Our major challenge in carrying out this process stemmed from the issue I have just discussed, namely reconciling our institution's pedagogical philosophy with the firm academic structure that CEA requires. However, the benefits we gained are undeniable. While we still hear some of the old feedback applauding our faculty's dedication and attention to each student, we now also receive compliments about the strength of our academic program. And our teachers love the increased structure. New teachers marvel at our level of organization and attention to detail. This is all in addition to the confidence we gained from going through the process and receiving the affirmation that the CEA badge represents. C

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APPENDIX: CEFR PROFICIENCY DESCRIPTORS (COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2001)

COMMON REFERENCE LEVELS: GLOBAL SCALE

Proficient User

C2

Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.

C1

Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

Independent User

B2

Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

B1

Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in

an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

Basic User

A2

Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

A1

Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

The Triple Package

by Amy Chua and Jed Rubenfeld
Penguin Random House, New York. 2014.

REVIEWED BY EILEEN FELDMAN

The achievement gaps in American education have been the subject of much discussion. From educator/education writer Jonathan Kozol to *New York Times* writer Paul Tough, popular researchers, along with economists, neuroscientists, psychologists, and medical doctors, have suggested answers to the question of why some individuals succeed more than others in education, careers, and social position. Yet the gaps continue to widen. Amy Chua and Jed Rubenfeld, both professors at Yale Law School, add their insights on this troubling situation by identifying three traits that lead to success: a superiority/exceptionality mindset, a sense of insecurity and need to prove oneself, and strict self-discipline/impulse control—*The Triple Package*. With these traits as foundation, the authors argue, anyone in America can achieve success and impart it to children.

The first seven chapters of the book are concerned with American history and the embodiment of *The Triple Package* in immigrants' histories. Chinese, Jewish, Nigerian, Indian, Cuban immigrants' stories are highlighted; the triumphs of some of their successful members are encouraging to ESL professionals. Also of note are non-immigrant individuals such as Steve Jobs, an orphaned American who exhibited *The Triple Package*, and the Mormons, whose religion embodies those traits. However, the authors go on to describe how material comfort and concomitant changes in the American psyche have led to a diminution of those *Triple Package* values – hence the achievement gaps.

The eighth chapter, "America," deals with America's Triple-Package Constitution, which imposed checks and balances, individual restraint, and impulse control on the young democracy. But changes came as more of us achieved the American Dream and began living for the moment, with accompanying loss of impulse control. In the 1960s, there was the pleasure principle, live-for-the-moment movement; in the 1980s, educators latched onto the self-esteem

movement. During this time, education (and the new workforce) continued suffering. Now the spark has been ignited for a return to old values. The subsection "Where Do We Go from Here" proposes an updated *Triple Package*: a superiority complex for an America based on equality and inclusion; insecurity about America's ability to compete in global classroom rankings and marketplaces; and improved impulse control leading to less screen time, less following one's passion, more hard work, and more diligence. Chua and Rubenfeld suggest that these traits can be restored in America, but they stop short of suggesting how. Possibly changes can be made in school curricula and standards to put more focus on these themes.

There is a parallel between the argument in this book and the research of Paul Tough (2012), as set out in his recent book *How Children Succeed*. Tough describes several programs that are designed to develop grit and perseverance in students: 1) "One Goal" chess programs, with students' failures not covered up but analyzed for improvement; 2) quarterly character report card giving teachers and parents vocabulary and ways of measuring character traits; 3) the KIPP program, which teaches the self-control skills that are necessary for high school and adds the social intelligence skills that are needed in college. These programs address Chua and Rubenfeld's call for the development of a new "Triple Package." Scientists, economists, and doctors are becoming involved in this movement. Stay tuned! C

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Additive schooling in subtractive times: Bilingual education and Dominican immigrant youth in the Heights

by L. Bartlett and O. García. Vanderbilt University Press. 2011

REVIEWED BY LISA CULLINGTON

Research professors Lesley Bartlett and Ofelia García engage us in an eye-opening account of education for English language learners, or as they term, *emergent bilinguals*. Using data from four years of a qualitative research study, the authors identify the characteristics of a successful language learning program at the high school level. While this is not necessarily a pedagogical guide, it does provide a framework for understanding the context of language learning in a United States public secondary school.

The authors begin by describing the research site and methods for their study, which took place at Gregio Luperon High School in Washington Heights, New York. The school's population consisted primarily of immigrant students and staff from the Dominican Republic, but diversity increased among both staff and students during the course of the study. Based on their belief that educational policy is altered by the context of the school and the community, the authors begin by describing the school site, as well as education in the Dominican Republic. They then move on to a discussion of the educational policies at play in their study. The main portion of the analysis focuses on their term "languaging," a topic that is of particular interest to ESL professionals. This concept is broken up into several subparts — linguistic interdependence and common underlying proficiency; academic language, literacy, and adolescents; dynamic bilingualism and translanguaging; and macroacquistion, all of which are used to support the goal of helping students build their literacy in both English and Spanish.

The last section of the book describes lessons learned, for teachers and researchers alike. The book makes a strong case for using a student's native language in instruction and for bilingual education more broadly. This research project highlights the need to extend a student's literacy in their native language in order to support their literacy skills in English. What the book does not do, however, is move beyond the topic of English/Spanish emergent bilinguals. How does the situation change when the context is different? When the student body presents multiple languages and countries of origins, how should schools modify their programs? While these questions lie outside the scope of this research study, answers are needed to inform educational policy throughout the country.

Despite this limitation, Bartlett and García successfully use their study of bilingual education at Luperon High School in Washington Heights to show that, in the current climate of negativity and perpetual failure for immigrant students, it is crucial for teachers and administrators to move away from a deficit perspective. As these authors argue, we must build on what immigrant students bring with them to the classroom in order to enhance not only their English language skills, but also their first-language literacy skills and their identities as bilingual students. C

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Understanding and Using English Grammar, 4th edition

by Betty Azar and Stacy Hagen

Pearson Longman, White Plains, NY. 2009.

REVIEWED BY RIMA ALRAJHI

The Azar and Hagen Grammar Series consists of three books: *Basic English Grammar*, which aims at the very beginners' level; *Fundamentals of English Grammar*, which is suitable for intermediate learners; and the last one, *Understanding and Using English Grammar*, which is intended for upper-intermediate or advanced learners who have some prior knowledge of English.

Understanding and Using English Grammar, Fourth Edition, contains nineteen chapters. The first one is a revision of all tenses. The rest of the chapters deal with basic grammar terminology, modals, parts of speech, questions, and prepositions.

This textbook applies the Grammar-Based Teaching (GBT) approach described by Azar 2007, which uses grammar as a "springboard for interactive, communicative practice opportunities." It helps learners to interact effectively with native speakers by providing a considerable number of examples from daily life. It also helps them achieve success in academic study. A further advantage is that it focuses not only on language functions (grammar), but it also on the four language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Azar and Hegen's book could be taught in classrooms or used as a self-study. The instructions are easy to understand, and there are appendices dedicated to scripts and vocabulary. The book itself is affordable, and an electronic copy is available online. Also, it has a CD Rom which learners can use to listen to the correct pronunciation and increase their listening skills. Other products such as a workbook and teacher's guide are also available.

The layout is attractive, with a number of colorful and meaningful pictures in

each chapter. Each image represents a specific grammatical rule, which is a good method of learning for visual students. The exercises are written in black and blue ink. The sequence of lessons is flexible, so that absent students can catch up and understand the new lesson without needing to go back to the previous one. There are a good number of lessons in each chapter. Each chapter starts with a general question that measures the learner's knowledge about the coming rule. The rules are presented in a helpful and straightforward manner, in attractive charts with illustrative examples.

The textbook is filled with a variety of exercises. Learners are sometimes required to participate in group activities, so that they can benefit from each other. This can reduce the stress and anxiety that can be produced by dealing directly with the teacher. The activities concentrate not only on the grammar rules, but also on other skills. The "Let's Write and Talk" exercises ask learners to use the rule by writing sentences and then sharing their answers with the rest of the class.

The authors pay attention to speaking by introducing at least one activity in each chapter, called "Let's Talk," which requires students to answer several questions that are closely relevant to the grammatical rule being studied. Students are free to create any answer as long as they apply the rule. Examples are provided at the beginning of the question as a guide.

Understanding and Using English also provides listening sections in each chapter, which require learners to listen to a CD Rom and then answer several questions. Speech varies between slow, casual and relaxed, or fast, even intense. The authors explain how Americans reduce some sounds in spoken language, such as the contraction of "had" and "have." The pronunciation of the final *-ed* of regular verbs is explained in a very detailed way, with a definition of linguistic terms such as "voiced" and "voiceless," and a list of these sounds in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

To sum up, *Understanding and Using Grammar* is a good choice for learners who want to improve their English in their social and academic life by focusing on all domains of language: listening, reading, writing, and reading. This book is a most suitable choice for English learners, regardless of their age, cultural background, and goals. C

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