

matsol



# Currents

MASSACHUSETTS EDUCATORS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Equity And Excellence For English Learners

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Friday, November 19, 2020

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# President's Message

Dear MATSOL members,

My six-year-old son Teddy and I recently read Kobi Yamada's *What Do You Do with a Problem?* I wanted to help him think about how to process problems in this challenging year. When I ordered the book, I expected that a main character would face a big problem and need courage to overcome it, but the book held some surprises for me: The main character didn't *battle* the problem but simply *observed* it. Like the main character, I was also surprised to find that, inside the problem, there was something he didn't expect – an opportunity.



I don't know if we will ever view this year in such a positive light. But the book did make me think of the many ways I have seen educators adapt and advocate for English learners during these difficult times. Though I will be relieved when we can return to our physical classrooms and community traditions, I have seen and heard many valuable ideas that will be useful even beyond our present circumstances. On [page 19](#) in this issue of *MATSOL Currents*, Martins, Blomberg, & Allen describe a successful online learning program in Somerville, MA, with a long list of helpful suggestions about how to engage students in online learning. On [page 32](#) Miguel Hernando offers tips on how to assist struggling students in one-on-one online conferences. And on [page 26](#), Kathy Lobo gives instructions for a series of hands-on activities for students who are finally able to return to the classroom after too long a time of doing all their learning in front of a screen.

In addition to their heroic work in their virtual classrooms, MATSOL members have been spending time in advocacy — for racial justice, for equity and safety in assessment of ELs, and for adequate and equitable access to remote learning. We have been working both formally, through our Educators of Color SIG, our Racial Justice Task Group, and our new Advocacy SIG, and informally, through various professional networks. With guidance from the Racial Justice Task Group, MATSOL is examining its own structures and traditions for ways to address systemic racism from within. As a member of MATSOL's Board of Directors, I appreciate hearing from our members about their concerns. The information we get from our members helps us to develop strong position statements on issues connected to our mission. (See our recent position statements on [pages 6-8](#) of this issue.)

MATSOL's staff has adapted quickly to our changed circumstances, finding ways to maintain a full program of services for our members to help us stay connected and learn from one another. Our online open houses have been well attended and will continue in Spring 2021. Our special interest groups (SIGs) continue to meet regularly online, with the assistance of Jason Fei, MATSOL's Program & Member Engagement Coordinator. (See the reports from Individual SIGs on [pages 11-15](#) of this issue.) Under the leadership of Victoria Ekk, our Director of Professional Development, our SEI endorsement and MATSOL (15-PDP) courses have been moved entirely online and continue to be well enrolled. We offered five courses during Summer 2020, for the first time. In Fall 2020 we were able to fill four SEI courses and eight MATSOL courses; an additional three SEI endorsement courses and three MATSOL courses will start up in February. Helen Solórzano, our Executive Director, has been busy finalizing MATSOL's end-of-year financial documents and starting to put together our second virtual conference, June 1-4, 2021, in an expanded format. The Call for Proposals was sent out on January 15.

Besides the three articles mentioned in the second paragraph above, this issue of *Currents* also contains an article ([page 42](#)) arguing that the state's SEI endorsement requirement should be extended to teachers of the arts and an article ([page 55](#)) that describes how teachers can assist their students in transferring classroom learning to real-life situations. There are two personal-experience essays — one ([page 44](#)) from a lecturer in Boston University's CAS Writing Program who describes her experiences working online with students scattered all over the globe, and one ([page 48](#)) from a middle school student from Japan about adjusting to life in an American school. Finally, this issue offers reviews of three online platforms – Nearpod and Pear Deck ([page 50](#)) and ESL Library ([page 52](#)), and a review of Curtis & Romney's *Color, Race and English Language Teaching*.

Despite our physical distance from one another, I have continued to feel connected to my colleagues throughout Massachusetts as we work together to support English learners. I hope this issue of *Currents* will help you stay in touch with some of the many wonderful ways that our MATSOL members are responding to the challenges of this extraordinarily difficult year. 

Sincerely,

**Melissa Latham Keh**

[mlathamkeh@matsol.org](mailto:mlathamkeh@matsol.org)

# Recent Position Statements by MATSOL

**T**HE MATSOL Board from time to time publishes “position statements” on issues of particular interest to our members. Here are the texts of our three most recent position statements: on racial justice, on academic credit for ESL courses at the post-secondary level, and on the administration of the ACCESS for ELs test during this pandemic year.

## MATSOL POSITION STATEMENT ON RACIAL JUSTICE

**JUNE 22, 2020**

As an organization of educators, we at MATSOL want to express our sadness and anger at the recent senseless killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, as well as the longstanding racial injustices that persist in our country. It is our mission to promote equity and excellence for multilingual learners and educators, and it is our belief that this includes challenging systematic racism, language discrimination, and cultural biases in our schools, communities, and professions.

MATSOL is an organization focused on supporting multilingual students and families across the Commonwealth. We have many Black students and educators in our community. MATSOL cannot be silent as we bear witness to persistent racial injustice. We stand with our students and members who are grieving, angry, and afraid, and call for change.

We encourage all our members to join us in speaking out and taking a stand when we see members of our schools and communities being impacted by racism and discrimination. We all have an important role in shaping the field of TESOL and English language teaching to be rooted in social justice pedagogies to ensure that our classrooms allow all students to thrive regardless of their race, ethnicity, and primary language.

The MATSOL Board of Directors has committed to developing an action plan

with specific steps MATSOL can take to make change, in direct collaboration with our members.

## **MATSOL POSITION STATEMENT ON CREDIT AND TRANSFER OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC ESL COURSES**

**DECEMBER 5, 2020**

In accordance with the [TESOL Position on Academic and Degree-Granting Credit for ESOL Courses in Post-Secondary Education](#), and consistent with the [Massachusetts Board of Higher Ed Strategic Plan on Equity](#), MATSOL advocates that academic ESL courses carry degree-granting credit and be accepted for transfer at four-year institutions of higher education. Rigorous academic ESL courses are no different from other college language courses in terms of content, critical thinking skills, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Community colleges should award elective credit (humanities, liberal arts, general or other transferable graduation credit) and four-year institutions should uniformly accept that credit.

Academic ESL courses have not received consistent treatment in community colleges across the state. When measuring student outcomes in relation to English courses designed for native speakers, colleges often designate ESL courses as developmental or as “pre-college.” However, when recognized for their value in language acquisition, ESL courses are more equitably compared to world-language or communication courses and are thus aligned with other credit-bearing courses. As stated by TESOL, “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.” Classifying these courses as “developmental” marginalizes both students and faculty.

Therefore, MATSOL advocates that Massachusetts community colleges award graduation credit for academic ESL courses and ensure that these credits transfer to Massachusetts colleges and universities as allowed by the student’s program of study.

**MATSOL advocates that academic ESL courses carry degree-granting credit and be accepted for transfer at four-year institutions of higher education.**

## JOINT STATEMENT BY MATSOL AND MABE (MULTISTATE ASSOCIATION FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION) REGARDING ACCESS FOR ELS TESTING IN THE 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR

**DECEMBER 8, 2020**

On behalf of our over 2500 members, including ESL teachers, bilingual teachers, EL and bilingual program directors, and other English Learner (EL) educators in Massachusetts, MATSOL and MABE urge the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to cancel ACCESS for ELs testing in the 2020-21 school year. On December 7, 2020, the Department notified school districts that the testing window has been extended for a second time, allowing testing from January 7 through May 20, 2021, and ELs are expected to test in person in their district “to the greatest extent possible.”

Our concerns about testing remain, especially any testing that takes place during the winter months. In-person testing is highly problematic as long as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. We believe that the most important consideration is how ACCESS testing this year will impact our students. Going forward with testing this school year will have a negative impact on EL students and families, furthering educational inequity. Included in this letter is a summary of input collected from MATSOL and MABE members — educators working with ELs – who are concerned about ACCESS for ELs testing during the pandemic.

[Read the full statement here.](#) 

**THANK YOU** to the more than 50 members who provided input and gave feedback on this statement!

# A Report from the Massachusetts English Language Leadership Council (MELLC)

**Victoria Ekk**

[vekk@matsol.org](mailto:vekk@matsol.org)



**D**URING this unusual school year, the Massachusetts English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC) has met online, using the Zoom platform. We will continue meeting virtually for the rest of the year. MELLC members register to attend virtual meetings and are sent copies of all information and resources after each session.

Most districts opened the school year in a hybrid or online-only format, and EL leaders reported that their ESL and SEI teachers were finding it difficult to prepare two to three different lesson plans each day. In response, MELLC's October 16, 2020 meeting focused on ways to optimize EL instruction in hybrid or fully virtual contexts. Presenters Jessica Nguy and Liana Parsons provided information and access to a variety of lesson plans available through the ESL Unit Developers SIG. MATSOL consultant Boni-esther Enquist presented examples of how a lesson plan could be "flexed" for in-person or remote instruction by using a few high-quality technological tools. To address COVID-19's effects on ELs and their teachers, Christi Cartwright provided ways to include Social Emotional Learning strategies in a hybrid classroom environment. MELLC members joined in breakout room discussions to process the information and resources and plan how to use them in their programs.

The November 20 MELLC meeting focused on outreach to EL families, a special challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yvonne Endara (Malden's EL Director) and Boni-esther Enquist explained how they had created informational videos in Portuguese and Spanish to assist EL parents over the spring and summer of the prior school year. Andrea Parker, Senior Trainer for the Massachusetts Statewide Family Engagement Center (MASFEC) presented a number of resources for family outreach and services and spoke about plans to expand assistance to districts with English Learners. This MELLC meeting also

addressed EL directors' concerns about the upcoming ACCESS testing and the schedule and requirements for Tiered Focused Monitoring during COVID-19 limitations. DESE staff members Melanie Manares, Sibel Hughes, and Judith Magloire provided information and answered questions from the audience.

**MELLC offers a great opportunity for EL leaders to learn, reflect, and share ideas and resources with peers who face similar challenges.**

Another serious concern for EL district leaders is the call to address social justice and systemic racism in our schools. For our third MELLC meeting, on January 22, the Steering Committee asked DESE's Nyall Fuentes to show us data about dropout and graduation rates with a focus on ELs and ways to improve equity in education. Then a panel of EL directors shared their districts' plans for addressing social justice, developing an anti-racist curriculum, and ensuring equity of access to all programs. Participants broke into discussion groups to consider what they can do to promote this work in their own districts.

After our last meeting, MATSOL sent out a survey to MELLC members to gather input on their concerns about ACCESS for ELs testing. This information was incorporated into the MATSOL/MABE statement ([page 8 of this issue](#)) that was sent to the Commissioner. We are continuing to update and engage with the group on this issue.

MELLC offers a great opportunity for EL leaders to learn, reflect, and share ideas and resources with peers who face similar challenges as they work for the improvement of EL education. We look forward to continuing to support their efforts to promote equity and excellence in EL education! 

# MATSOL's Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

**MATSOL** offers a variety of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) which, except for MELLC (see page 9 of this issue), are open to all members, free of charge:

Advocacy **New!**

Community College ESOL Faculty

Educators of Color

ESL Unit Developers

Family-School Partnerships

Instructional Coaches

Low Incidence Programs

Massachusetts English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC)

Private Language Schools

Teacher Educators

For the time being, at least, meetings are entirely online. Here are reports on some recent SIG activities:

## **ADVOCACY**

The Advocacy SIG is a new special interest group for educators who want to learn about and get support for advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels on behalf of English Learners (ELs), their families, their teachers, and the field of TESOL and Bilingual Education.

For more information, please go to our [MATSOL website](#).

## **COMMUNITY COLLEGE ESOL FACULTY**

In October, November, and December, the Steering Committee of the Community College ESOL Faculty SIG worked with MATSOL staff and with Dean Christian Bednar, North Shore Community College, to sponsor a series of online Open Houses. Our most recent Open House, in December, focused on the Seal of Biliteracy and its benefits for multilingual students.

Our main focus this Fall has been on advocating for academic ESL courses to receive transferable graduation credit in Massachusetts community colleges; we put together a position paper on this topic for endorsement by the MATSOL Board ([see page 7 of this issue](#)). Elena Quiros-Livanis at the Board of Higher Education is working with us on this project.

Here is a list of current Steering Committee members and their colleges:

**Teresa Cheung**, North Shore Community College

**Eileen Feldman**, Bunker Hill Community College

**Eileen Kelley**, Holyoke Community College

**Jennifer Nourse**, Mass Bay Community College

**Bruce Riley**, Cape Cod Community College

**Anne Shull**, Quinsigamond Community College

We expect to recruit new members for our Steering Committee in the near future.

For more information about the Community College ESOL SIG, please visit our [MATSOL website](#) or write Juanita Brunelle at [jbrunelle@matsol.org](mailto:jbrunelle@matsol.org). We welcome the involvement of ESL faculty at all Massachusetts community colleges.

### **EDUCATORS OF COLOR**

The Educators of Color (EOC) SIG was established at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year to provide a space for Black, indigenous, and people-of-color (BIPOC) educators to get together, build relationships, and support one another. In our meetings, we discuss issues of concern, share resources, and explore available supports for our members. We are collaborating with the MATSOL Board and with MATSOL's Racial Justice Task Group in an effort to strengthen the voices of BIPOC students and educators both in our workplaces and within MATSOL itself. These efforts are more important than ever this year, as we struggle with pandemic restrictions and with continuing racial justice challenges.

Responding to member demand, we are meeting monthly this year instead of bi-monthly, as was the case in our first year. We generally meet on the first Friday of the month at 3:30 p.m. We hope many BIPOC educators will join us!

For more information about the Educators of Color SIG, please visit our [MATSOL website](#).

### **ESL UNIT DEVELOPERS**

The ESL Unit Developers SIG is a collaborative network for K-12 teachers and administrators throughout the state who are interested in creating, peer-reviewing, implementing, and sharing ESL curriculum units that reflect WIDA ELD standards and MA DESE expectations.

This year, our meetings have focused on a practical exploration of curriculum writing, using DESE's [Next Generation ESL Curriculum Guide](#). We offer a series of informative webinars focused on the curriculum writing process for those new to this work. You can find [recordings of past webinars](#) in MATSOL's resource forum (accessible to MATSOL members only).

Two additional resources we encourage you to check out are our [Curriculum Help Wanted spreadsheet](#) and our bank of [Distance Learning Lessons for ELs](#). Use the Curriculum Help Wanted spreadsheet to join one of the curriculum development projects we're working on, or to propose your own. Our Distance Learning Lessons provide a number of student-facing remote-friendly lessons and units to be used during this challenging time.

We welcome all who are interested in curriculum development, regardless of experience! For information about meeting times and how to join the ESL Unit Developers SIG, please visit our [MATSOL website](#).

### **FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS**

The Family-School Partnership (FSP) SIG is intended for educators who want to explore ways to strengthen partnerships with families. In a typical year, we come together 3-4 times in a virtual setting.

Over the past year we have used our meeting times to explore [Karen Mapp's Dual Capacity Framework](#), enjoy discussions with guest speakers, and collaborate with colleagues from across the state. Our first speaker of this year was Andrea Parker, from the [Massachusetts Statewide Family Engagement Center \(MASFEC\)](#), who told us about the wealth of resources that MASFEC can offer to support educators and families. At our next meeting, in February, we look forward to hearing from EL families who have established ELPACs in their home districts. During this pandemic crisis, family-school partnerships are more important than ever.

For information about meeting times and how to join the Family-School Partnership SIG, please go to our [MATSOL website](#).

## INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

The Instructional Coaches SIG is a forum for PreK-12 instructional coaches, teacher leaders, and coordinators whose roles include coaching teachers on how to meet the needs of multilingual learners. Each month's discussion focuses on a particular topic such as the roles and responsibilities of being a coach, how to support newcomers and teachers who work with newcomers, and, most recently, how to teach and support teachers remotely.

In response to last spring's very disturbing incidents of police violence against African American citizens, members of the instructional coaches SIG read Mika Pollock's *Everyday Antiracism: Getting Real about Race in Schools*, in which a group of leading educators discuss race and racism in the schools and offer advice about ways to model responsiveness to race and equity in the school community. Our reading group met several times over the summer and will continue to engage in this work throughout the school year.

This fall, our meetings have focused on successes and challenges in coaching and supporting teachers in remote and hybrid-teaching models. Next month's topic will be "Ways to Support Newcomers and Teachers Who Work with Newcomers."

For more information about meeting times and how to join the Instructional Coaches SIG, please go to our [MATSOL website](#).

## LOW-INCIDENCE PROGRAMS

The Low-Incidence SIG provides information and support to educators in low-incidence school districts about best practices, current research, state policies and procedures, and upcoming events. We gather and disseminate information, materials, and resources from MELLC meetings, DESE low-incidence meetings, and WIDA. We have recently begun taking a close look at the [Blueprint for English Learner Success](#) in order to share it with administrators and educators in our districts.

This school year we had two remote meetings in the fall and will have two meetings this spring. We are changing our meeting times to the afternoon so that more members can attend.

For more information about the Low-Incidence SIG, please visit our [MATSOL website](#).

## **MASSACHUSETTS ENGLISH LEARNER LEADERSHIP COUNCIL (MELLC)**

See our report on [page 9](#) of this issue.

## **PRIVATE LANGUAGE SCHOOLS**

The Private Language Schools SIG is a forum for administrators, staff, and teachers in private language schools that are based in or have schools in MA. We discuss and collaborate on topics and issues that affect private language schools, including accreditation, program administration, recruitment and hiring, on-boarding and training, professional development, materials and curriculum development, and more.

Unfortunately, this SIG has been inactive during the AY20-21 school year, because most private language schools are closed due to the pandemic. When it becomes possible to resume our activities, information will be posted on our [MATSOL website](#).

## **TEACHER EDUCATORS**

The Teacher Educator SIG gives our members an opportunity to share best practices and collaborate on research and advocacy projects relating to the preparation of teachers of multilingual learners. This fall, we have been sharing teacher-education resources, discussing strategies for supporting early career educators, and developing a position statement on the Massachusetts Test for Educator License (MTEL) as a gatekeeper for the profession.

During the 2021 spring semester, we will continue our advocacy efforts and group writing projects. We will also share and collaborate on instructional strategies and content for our teacher-education courses for ESL, SEI, and Bilingual Education, with special attention to the task of incorporating the new WIDA Standards into our teacher-education classes.

The Teacher Educator SIG meets online once a month throughout the academic year, on the fourth Monday of each month. Reminders and agenda are sent out via the Teacher Education e-list. All MATSOL members are welcome, but attendees must be registered members to access the meeting link. For more information, please visit our [MATSOL website](#). 

# A Report on the Annual Conference of Northern New England TESOL (NNE TESOL)

**Theresa Laquerre**

[flaquerre@abschools.org](mailto:flaquerre@abschools.org)

**NNE TESOL'S** annual one-day conference was held virtually this year, on Saturday, November 7. There were 20 sessions altogether, in four strands, on topics that ranged from writing and creativity to teaching in a virtual setting and focusing on the student. Attendees were sent a schedule for the day, with a brief description of each session's contents along with a Zoom link for that session.



The day began with a welcome from the president, Erin Ross, of the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants in Burlington, VT. This was followed by a general business meeting.

The keynote speaker was Joe McVeigh, of Saint Michael's College, co-author of *Tips for Teaching Culture* and the textbook series *Skills for Success*. Mr. McVeigh's presentation, titled "Teaching in Challenging Times: Staying Afloat," identified some of the stressors that teachers are currently facing and suggested strategies for dealing with them, including poetry and the NY Times mini-crossword. Mr. McVeigh shared one mini-crossword with his audience and allowed time for participants to type in the answers using the "chat" function. He advised teachers to be nice to themselves by doing yoga and carving out a part of the day to relax. He recommended Marla Cilley's book, *Sink Reflections*.

**Mr. McVeigh identified some of the stressors that teachers are currently facing and suggested strategies for dealing with them, including poetry and the NY Times mini crossword.**

After the keynote address, I attended a talk on “Challenges in Special Education for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students,” by Wendy Perron, an educational consultant at the New Hampshire Department of Education. Ms. Perron reviewed important linguistic and educational theories by Noam Chomsky, Lev Vygotsky, Stephen Krashen, and Jim Cummins and discussed Catherine Collier’s book, *But What Do I Do?* She announced that WIDA has asked the U.S. Department of Education for a clarifying statement regarding services for ELs who need Special Ed services in addition to English language support. It is her understanding that DOE will be releasing something soon.

**The presenters described the work being done in New Hampshire to implement the Seal of Biliteracy and provided guidance and materials on this topic.**

Next, I attended “Implementing the Seal of Biliteracy in New Hampshire,” by Jessica Paepow, Cinthia Hodgdon, and Wendy Perron. The presenters described the work being done in New Hampshire to implement the Seal of Biliteracy and provided guidance and materials on this topic. There were questions and comments from teachers all over the state who are taking various approaches to implementing the seal, at different rates.

My last session was a talk entitled “Online Pedagogy: It’s Not Just Tech Tools!” by Helaine Marshall, Director of Language Education Programs and Professor of Education at Long Island University-Hudson. Professor Marshall encouraged her audience to “create fertile spaces” for teaching and learning online following the framework of the “four E’s”: Equity, Enrichment, Engagement and Empowerment. This was a very dynamic and inspiring presentation with suggested activities for each of the four E’s. 

# Get Involved in MATSOL!

## JOIN A MATSOL SUB-COMMITTEE OR TASK FORCE

For members who would like to be more actively involved in MATSOL, we encourage you to become a conference proposal reader, to join a sub-committee or task force, or to consider creating a webinar on a topic of interest to our members. Assistance is available for all these tasks. We are also always looking for volunteers to help plan and lead our SIGs. For the latest listing of volunteer opportunities, please go to our “Get Involved” webpage, <https://www.matsol.org/get-involved-with-matsol>, which has recently been updated.

## SUBMIT TO MATSOL PUBLICATIONS

### MATSOL E-BULLETIN

The MATSOL E-Bulletin is published monthly. It includes short (one-paragraph) notices relevant to EL/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 <http://www.matsol.org/matsol-e-bulletins>.

### MATSOL CURRENTS

There’s a lot going on in the world of TESOL and EL 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, personal-experience accounts, and articles on everything of interest to MATSOL members: adult basic education, PreK-12 education, bilingual and dual-language programs, community outreach, ESL in higher education, educator-preparation programs, professional-development initiatives, Intensive English Institutes, private language schools, teaching ideas, profiles of and interviews with significant figures, and discussion of issues that our members should be aware of. We also like to publish stories from students — about their adjustment to life in New England and their experiences learning English in our English-language programs and 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](mailto:currents@matsol.org). We will work with you to get your article or report into good shape for publication. For more details and a copy of our submission guidelines, see <http://www.matsol.org/matsol-currents> or write to the editor, Mary Clark, at [currents@matsol.org](mailto:currents@matsol.org).

# How to Succeed with Online Learning

**Melanie Martins**

melkm@bu.edu

**Sam Blomberg**

sblomberg2@k12.somerville.ma.us

**Julie Allen**

jallen@k12.somerville.ma.us

**WE BEGIN** with a snapshot of a typical day in this year's Summer Program for English Language Learners (SPELL) in Somerville, MA:

*Director, teachers, and family liaisons are on a Zoom call, where they're discussing the lesson plan for the day and sharing information about what's going on with various students. Soon teenage newcomer English learners are popping onto the call and are greeted enthusiastically by their teachers. On the shared screen they see the question "How are you feeling today?" along with a word bank and pictures to help them plan their answers. Some respond orally, some in the chat. Some turn on their cameras, some don't. The director and family liaisons send out texts or voice messages to students who are not yet on the call and, as the missing students begin to show up, they, also, share how they are feeling today.*

*Now one of the teachers leads the large group in a "tech" mini-lesson. Today's lesson is on how to study vocabulary on [Quizlet](#). The shared screen displays step-by-step instructions as the teachers orally explain and translate. A student pops onto the call late, but it's not a problem because a video of these instructions will be posted to Google Classroom for her to watch later. After five or ten minutes, students are now on Quizlet and practicing how to use it.*



*Next, the director sends the students and teachers off into smaller “breakout” rooms. The breakout groups are all moving through the same lesson, but each with a differentiated approach and pace. One teacher is reading aloud the screen-shared biography of Dolores Huerta as students repeat chorally, while another has already finished with the book and is watching as the students write short summaries, each on their own slide of the shared slideshow.*

*The director takes care of late-arriving students and bounces between breakout rooms, assisting with technology snafus. More students now have their cameras on, and every student is engaged and participating. At the end of the hour, students leave the class with a basic understanding of a new tech platform, with reading and writing practice under their belt, an increased vocabulary, and a sense of accomplishment and community.*

This is a description of a typical day in the Somerville, MA, SPELL program. This year’s SPELL was an opportunity to experiment with online learning models to engage students who were hard to reach during the spring. Program directors Melanie and Julie worked with family liaisons, counselors, and teachers, including Sam, to bring this vision to life. We learned a lot through this experience! Here are some tips we’d like to share with you:

### **COLLABORATION IS ESSENTIAL.**

One reason online learning felt chaotic in the spring was that many teachers felt isolated and left to figure things out alone. This summer, our teachers shared curricula, lessons, and materials, and frequently met to co-plan. They shared a Google Classroom and used the same organizational system. No teacher was an island.

### **TEACHERS NEED EXTRA TIME TO PLAN.**

Though collaboration helps lessen teacher workloads, planning for online classes can take as long as two to three hours for a single hour of instruction. Lesson materials must be as explicit and accessible as possible, anticipating student confusion and planning how to assist students without being physically present. For this reason, our teachers were paid for several hours of planning time per hour of instruction.

### **STUDENT AND FAMILY NEEDS MUST BE MET.**

Students cannot participate in online learning without devices and a stable

internet connection. Every student needs their own device and, in cases of unstable housing, individual hotspots in place of WiFi.

Next, families need an easy, accessible mode of communication with teachers and school staff, and many families of multilingual learners do not have access to email. We found that phone calls, WhatsApp messages, or translated TalkingPoints texts were more helpful to the families we serve. Through these more accessible modes of communication, parents and students received regular reminders of class meetings, along with help in connecting to online platforms such as Zoom and Google Classroom.

1. I can login to Google Classroom and find my class work.



Yes, I can.

No, I need help.

---

2. I can join Zoom to video chat with my teachers and classmates.



Yes, I can.

No, I need help.

A check-up on student connectivity

## **SYNCHRONOUS TEACHING IS MOST SUCCESSFUL.**

Because of low attendance to synchronous classes in the Spring, many of us feared the same for the summer. But, much to our surprise, student attendance in synchronous Zoom classes was higher than in asynchronous classes. We believe this was partially due to a consistent class schedule and frequent reminders, and partially due to the community we were able to build within those classes. We worked hard to make sure that when students joined our class, they immediately felt seen, valued, and part of a learning community.

## **CONSISTENCY AND EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION WITH ONLINE PLATFORMS ARE NECESSARY.**

There are thousands of online platforms and tools, all seeming to be unique and engaging, and this can be daunting to teachers, students, and families. We recommend selecting a handful of platforms and explicitly teaching students how to use them. Tech literacy skills should not be assumed. After lessons and practice, our students self-assessed their tech skills with a Google Form survey.

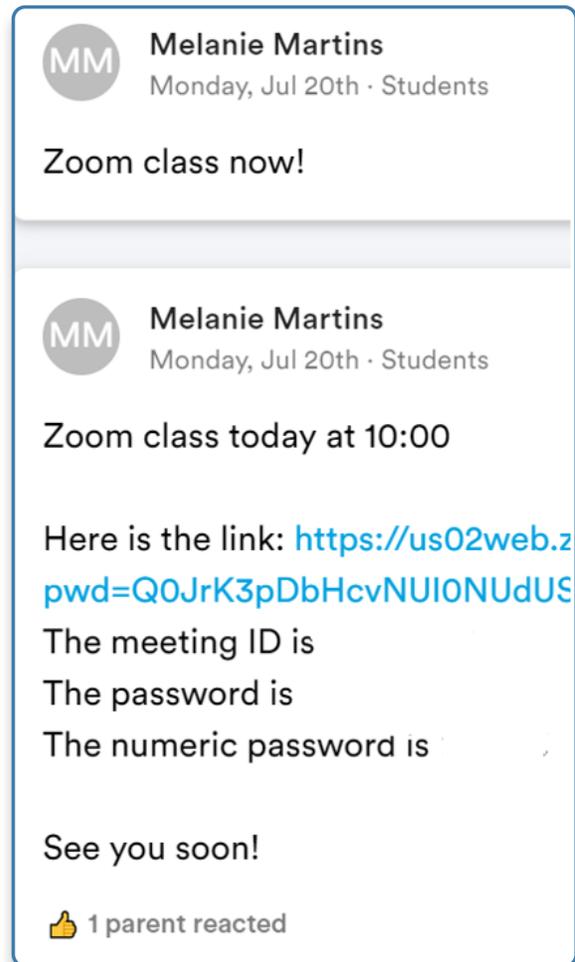
## **SOME CONCERNS ABOUT ONLINE TEACHING**

As we move towards a more technologically intensive form of education, there are inevitably concerns about rigor. But instead of worrying about how many

minutes students are putting into our classes, we need to think about their progress. We need to change the way we measure growth. Rather than looking primarily at standardized test scores, we can evaluate student progress during class activities or 1:1 office hours. We should still use formal assessments, but we can also assess the students' potential and growth in each task we provide.

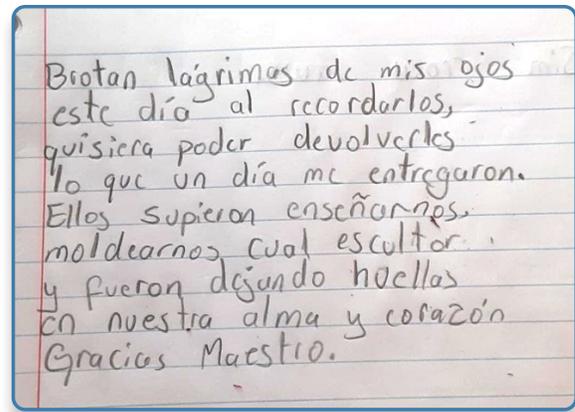
In SPELL, we saw more progress in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and problem solving than during the Fall and Spring semesters. We think this is because the skills we were teaching were all measured in replicable formats. The students knew what the routine was. With each class meeting, they improved the speed with which they accessed the material. Also, feedback during 1:1 office hours via Zoom was more directed and private than in a normal classroom setting, so the advice was taken more seriously and growth followed more quickly. As the students posted their assignments to public Google slides, it was easy to follow up with those who didn't complete the work or who needed extra help. This allowed for more intentional differentiation. Plus, the students seeing each other's work created a healthy sense of competition while providing additional examples and different approaches.

There is also a concern for students' socio-emotional growth. How can they learn the critical skills of maintaining and building relationships without face-to-face interaction? Teachers must keep this goal in the foreground. With the help of collaborating paras, counselors, subs, and teachers, breakout rooms can be used for group activities. By meeting together as a grade-band or a whole-program, students can bond as a community over a song, a game, or an icebreaker. Teachers can serve as role models on how to give compliments



An invitation to class

or thanks, allow peers to complete their thoughts uninterrupted, add to others' ideas, and encourage critical thinking. We found that our students began to mirror these practices, seek out friendships, and build relationships. The fruits of our socio-emotional labor were reaped on our final day, when students presented handwritten cards, poems, and expressions of thanks towards the whole community, completely unsolicited. Gratitude is such a valuable life skill, and these students had picked it up on their own.



A thank-you note from a student

Throughout the summer, our students demonstrated ownership of their education. Those who arrived late for the first few meetings started coming early. Those who had submitted work late during the school year began building skills in time management and prioritization. It seems that easier access to school means more engagement. When your computer reminds you of daily deadlines, it's easier to stay focused. And removing the commute from home to school meant more time for students to complete their assignments. Taking everything together, we found that online learning can avoid more pitfalls than it creates!

## TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- Begin the day on a positive note with a whole-group meeting. Engage students with icebreakers, align on norms and expectations, and model community interactions.
- Use breakout rooms for individual classroom instruction.
- Teach no more than one new platform each week, starting with an engaging application of the platform before moving on to classwork that utilizes the platform.
- Schedule your 1:1 office hour so students receive differentiated instruction and accept feedback in a safe learning environment. Create a sign-up list, so students opt into a time, and

**Throughout the summer, our students demonstrated ownership of their education. Those who arrived late for the first few meetings started coming early.**

you don't overbook yourself.

- Engage families from all angles, with messages, uplinks, and links every day from director, counselors, and teachers. All questions should be answered or at least addressed.
- Use videos, songs, interactive activities, and games to get your students out of their seats. Have students find something in their surroundings that connects with the lesson. Encourage parent and sibling involvement.
- Use websites with versatility, such as [Google Classroom](#), [Google Slides](#), [Epicbooks](#), [Quizlet](#), [Edpuzzle](#), [Signup Genius](#), [Kahoot](#), [Talking Points](#), [Screen-Cast-O-Matic](#), and [Zoom](#)
- Set firm expectations and norms and revisit them regularly. Here are some we found useful:
  - All students must listen to questions.
  - All students must respond to questions.
  - Students should take notes and be sure they show their notebooks and pens in their cameras.
  - Everyone should mute when not speaking.
  - There should be no music, TV, or any screen other than this class meeting.
- Share your resources with your team and to be open and honest with sharing, so your peers know they can count on you.
- Make your lessons relevant. We taught our students about essential workers and paired them with social activists, using texts from [Epic Books](#):
  - Grocery store workers, farmers / Dolores Huerta, Cesar Chavez
  - Doctors, nurses / Tu Youyou
  - Construction workers / Chico Mendes

**Make your lessons relevant. We taught our students about essential workers and paired them with social activists, using texts from Epic Books.**

- Educators / Malala Yousafzai, Rosa Parks

## ADDENDUM

For readers who are interested, here are videos of three of our lessons:

- [Lesson on Dolores Huerta](#)
- [Lesson on healthcare workers](#)
- [Chico Mendes sing-along and lesson on Rosa Parks](#) 

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Melanie Martins** is an ESL teacher at Marlborough High School. She is the director of the Somerville SPELL high school program.

**Julie Allen** is a sixth grade ELA teacher in Somerville. She is the director of the Somerville SPELL elementary program.

**Sam Blomberg** is an ESL teacher at Somerville High School and in the SPELL high school program.

# Face-to-Face Hands-on Learning Activities during a Pandemic

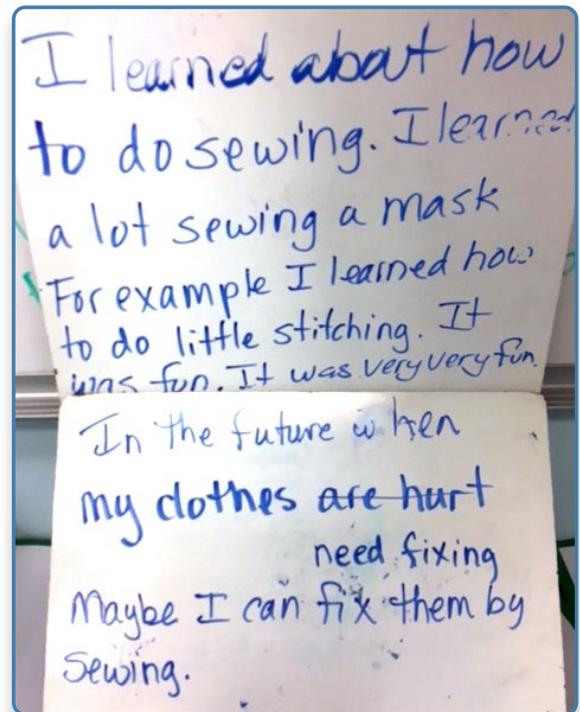
**Kathy Lobo**

katherinelobo@hotmail.com



**B**ECAUSE of the COVID pandemic, all my lessons up until November 2020 were conducted via Zoom, but my school is now following a hybrid plan — in-person classes in the morning and remote classes in the afternoon. Because the students have been spending so much time at their computers, I am looking for stand-alone lessons for my in-person classes that involve hands-on experiential learning — no computers, screens, or electricity — and that encourage listening, speaking, and relationship building, not just reading and writing.

For my first week of in-person classes, I had the students hand-sew a face mask. I made a kit for each student with four pieces of cloth cut to size, a needle, thread, two pieces of elastic, and a safety pin. The students began by looking at their kits and describing the contents. As they spoke, I wrote what they said on the whiteboard. Then I asked them to explain why they chose the kit they did: “I chose this kit because pink is my favorite color” or “I chose this kit because I am making this mask for my sister and she likes flowers.” As I modeled and instructed them what to do, I used mediated writing to help the students write an essay as they sewed their mask, using procedural language of the sort they might use in a science lab. (In the mediated-writing technique, the teacher poses a question and facilitates a discussion of the answer. Then she writes



A mediated essay on mask-sewing

an answer to the question to model how one could respond, showing how informal spoken English can be converted into a more formal written form. The students then write their own sentences, and sentence-by-sentence, the teacher and students create a passage.)

Next week, I plan to do a poetry unit, with one type of poem for each class. We will begin by creating lists of adjectives, with at least one adjective for each letter of the alphabet. The resulting poem will be an acrostic poem using the letters of the student's name. For example, a Chinese boy named Yihang wrote a multi-colored acrostic poem, as follows:

**Y**    **Young**  
**I**    **Interesting**  
**H**    **Happy**  
**A**    **Amazing**  
**N**    **Nice**  
**G**    **Great**



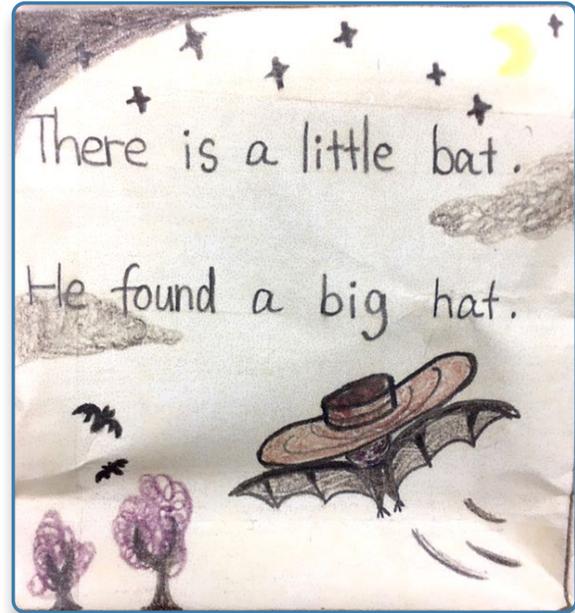
A diamante poem on the seasons

Next, we will write diamante-style poems, which will include nouns and verbs, as well as adjectives. For example,

Pattern for Diamante Poem	Student example
Noun X 1	Summer
Adjective X 2	Hot, Sunny
Word ending in "ing "or "ed" X 3	Baking, Sweating, Scorching
Noun X 4	T-Shirt, Sunscreen, Goosebumps, Down Coat
Word ending in "ing "or "ed" X 3	Snowing, Freezing, Chilling
Adjective X 2	Cold, Windy
Noun X 1	Winter

Depending on what poetry style I choose, we can explore figurative language, rhyming words, and stress and rhythm.

Possible next choices include couplets, poems in a shape, limericks, free-form poems, and poems that require a certain number of lines and syllables, as in Japanese *haiku* and *tanka* or Korean *shijo*. Depending on what poetry style I choose, we can explore figurative language, rhyming words, and stress and rhythm. The final “published” output will be a selection of poems written on a flat pattern that folds up into a cube — a “poetry cube.” Of course, during the pandemic, materials will have to be kept in a folder in the classroom or in the students’ school bags, because district guidelines preclude sharing of materials.



A rhymed couplet

Additional activities that do not involve using a computer or looking at a screen might include planting a bulb in a pot to grow indoors. Garlic is a great choice if you want to be able to see measurable change. The students can make weekly observations of their bulbs — measuring height (using inches and centimeters) and counting stems and blossoms. We can write, draw, and take pictures to make this a more interactive activity. If I don’t tell them what kind of bulb they are planting, the students may be motivated to do some research to find out what we are growing. When I did this activity last year, before the pandemic, we made charts and graphs of our data. I used this activity to further the students’



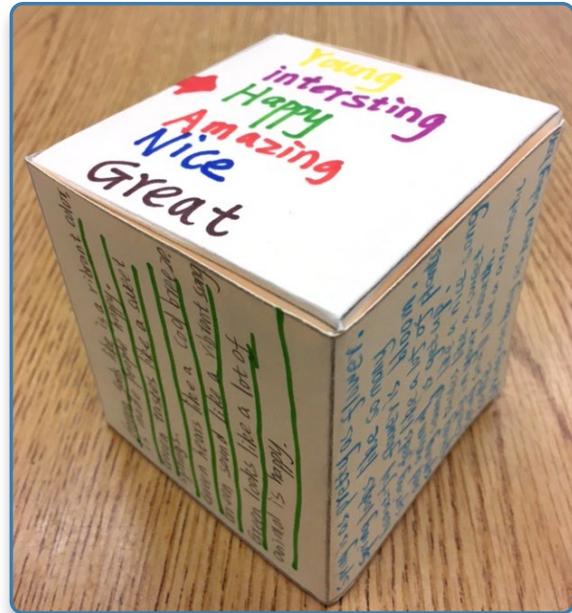
A poetry cube before folding

understanding of mathematical concepts such as *mean, mode, median* and *range* and to practice the language of description and prediction. For this year's students, I plan to provide kits to plant two types of seeds, radishes and marigolds. We will examine the seeds prior to planting and make observations as they sprout and grow.

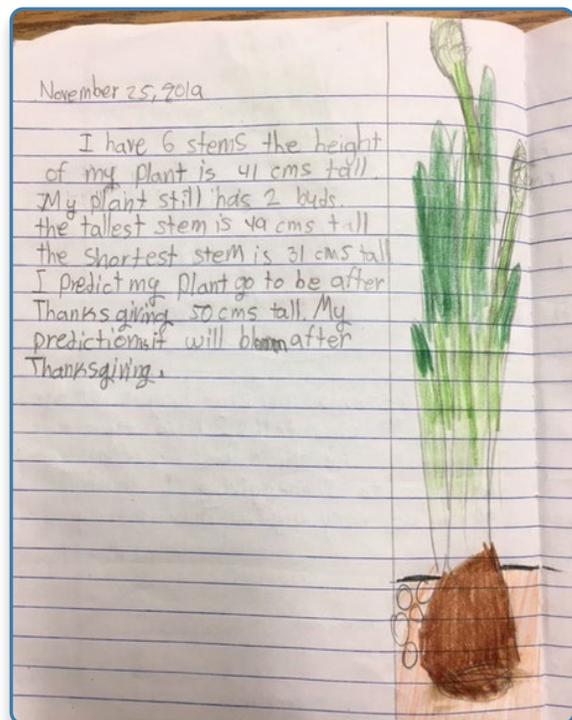
Another hands-on activity I have used is to type up a passage so that each sentence is on one line. Then I cut up the passage, prepare envelopes of cut-up sentences, and ask the students to reconstruct the passage. They may notice that a claim is followed by evidence or reasoning or may use their knowledge of text features such as topic sentences, concluding sentences, or pairs of sentences with a clear transition between them. They can share their completed versions orally to compare their results. For a small group of students, I might take a five-paragraph essay, cut it up, and have each student reconstruct one of the paragraphs.

Other possibilities that come to mind are information-gap and sorting activities in which the social distancing we must

**Another hands-on activity I have used is to type up a passage so that each sentence is on one line. Then I cut up the passage, prepare envelopes of cut-up sentences, and ask the students to reconstruct the passage.**



A finished poetry cube



An essay about bulb-growing, with accompanying illustration

maintain is an asset to the activity. Here is an example of an information gap and sequencing activity about omelet making:

1. First, use the verbs in the word bank to fill in the steps for making an omelet.
2. Then put the steps in order. (Cut the phrases into strips and sort them)
3. Finally, write a paragraph explaining how to make an omelet using “sequence” words like *first*, *next*, *then*, and *finally*.

### A FRAMEWORK FOR AN ESSAY ON OMELET-MAKING

<i>add</i>	<i>break</i>	<i>fold</i>	<i>pour</i>	<i>season</i>
<i>beat</i>	<i>cook</i>	<i>heat</i>	<i>pour in</i>	<i>serve</i>
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____ the pan	_____ some eggs into a bowl	_____ some eggs into a bowl	_____ the eggs with a fork	_____ cheese and vegetables of your choice
_____ with salt and pepper	_____ the omelet	_____ the omelet with toast	_____ the eggs into the pan	_____ some oil
_____ the omelet to cook it a little longer				

Here's a possible resulting essay:

*To make an omelet, first heat the pan and pour in some oil. Next, break some eggs into a bowl, beat the eggs with a fork, and pour the eggs into the pan. Then add cheese and vegetables of your choice, season with salt and pepper,*

*and cook the omelet. Finally, fold the omelet to cook it a little longer, and serve the omelet with toast.*

Since not everyone makes omelets the same way, this activity can lead to heated discussion about cooking techniques and preferred ingredients.

Teachers who are serving some students at home, using Zoom, while simultaneously working with others in the classroom (the “hybrid-flex model”) might consider posting or dropping off kits to the students who are at home. My students love getting something in the mail, and they are very good about waiting to open them until we meet on-line. I am running a book and pop-up card club after school where I do this regularly.

**Teachers who are serving some students at home, using Zoom, while simultaneously working with others in the classroom (the “hybrid-flex model”) might consider posting or dropping off kits to the students who are at home.**

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Kathy Lobo** is an ESL Teacher in the Newton Public Schools and an adjunct professor at Brandeis and Lesley Universities. She has served on the MABE and MATSOL Boards of Directors and was MATSOL’s president for two years. She is presently a member of TESOL’s Board of Directors. 

# One-on-One Support in the Era of Remote Learning

**Miguel Hernando**

[mhernando94@msn.com](mailto:mhernando94@msn.com)



**A**S AN ESL and science high school teacher, I work with emerging speakers and writers, mostly Spanish speakers, at WIDA levels 1-3. My students bring with them a rich variety of experiences, backgrounds, and developmental levels. But I sometimes run into situations in which there is no production from one or more students, and none of my usual instructional strategies work. In my experience, the best way to handle the situation is to work with the student one-on-one.

By the time this intervention occurs, the student may have become skeptical about the class, about my teaching methods, and about the teacher (me!). For this reason, my first objective is to make the student believe that I *can* help her improve, in both language and content. However, I also have other goals: If possible, I want to gather some insight into how the student works and what science concepts or language skills have become barriers. I also want to build rapport. And I want the student to achieve mastery in some aspect of my class and see that her grades are positively impacted by the experience.

These are a lot of objectives, but they are all important, so I have to plan carefully. First, I look at the student's grades, so that I can transmit the urgency of the situation. Then I identify an activity in which the student has done poorly (or perhaps not even attempted) — preferably, one that has a big impact in her grade. That way, if the student does a good job, I can show her that her grade is going up significantly. I intentionally focus on completing activities rather than re-lecturing on content, at least at the beginning, and I identify some good ways to scaffold the assignment — alternative ways to explain the prompt, along with visuals and examples that can offer support. I may turn an open-ended question into a multiple-choice question or even a *yes/no* question. And I may use a translator program to translate the question and some key vocabulary into the student's home language so that I can say or write some key instructions and content in the student's own language. (Luckily, I myself am a Spanish-speaker,

which helps with many of my students.)

While I have had good success with one-on-one interventions in the past, this year brought the new challenge of having to implement one-on-one instruction remotely. In my district we use video-call software for remote instruction, but most of my ELL students have internet that is marginal for video calls. They are often marred by freezing and sound distortions. For this reason, I have been using phone calls to reach my students. Phone calls tend to have better sound quality, are easy to connect, and are a technological tool that my students are very familiar with.

The next step is to find a way to monitor the student's progress. During a normal one-on-one in which both student and teacher are physically present, this is accomplished simply by looking across a table or over the student's shoulder. In the remote situation, I have to rely on internet tools. While my students' internet is marginal for video calls, the bandwidth required to share a document is much less and, in my experience, works well enough for this purpose. I sometimes use a website called [classroom relay](#) that allows me to see the student's computer screen or, alternatively, rely on a shared document in Google Docs so that, when I highlight or write on the shared document, my annotations are immediately visible to the student.

When everything is prepared, I arrange a meeting with the student. This means obtaining the student's phone number and setting a time that is convenient for her (and also, possibly, her parents). My school sets aside intervention blocks as a time to work with students individually, but before- or after-school times are also a possibility.

When I call the student, I greet her by name, introduce myself, and ask if this is a good time for us to work together. Since all of my classwork is now accessed through the computer, I ask the student to get her computer and turn it on. While the computer turns on, I try to build rapport by chatting about non-academic topics.

Once we begin working, I take one question at a time, with frequent checks for understanding. To see how the student does without scaffolds, I read the first question and ask her to tell me what she understood. Then, if necessary, I break the question into chunks. Because we are using a shared document, I can highlight different parts of the question and direct the student's attention to those. If that doesn't work, I use the other strategies I have prepared: alternative phrasing, visuals, examples, translation. I try to find a phrasing that the student will understand, and I continuously check on her understanding.

Once I can see that the student understands the question, I ask her to give an oral answer. Here is where all my planning comes into play: I can scaffold by providing simpler versions of the question and be ready with key words, sentence models or sentence starters, or very brief explanations of key content and skills. I provide instant feedback to the student. If her answer is incorrect, we go back to the drawing board. With my beginner students who are Spanish speakers, this will involve an initial discussion in Spanish before moving into English. With students who speak other languages, I open Google Translate in the background, encourage the student to do the same, and conduct some parts of our conversation through the translator. Once we have a correct answer, I ask the student to record it. If the language is too difficult, I try to find a way for the student to first provide a simplified answer, and then work with her to develop an answer that aligns with the language objective of the unit. In my experience, the questions become easier as the student gradually gains confidence.

When the activity is over, I show the student how this work has affected her grade in my class. I first communicate her prior average in my class and then, while she waits on the phone, I grade her new work and tell her the new average. In my experience, this grade update is a powerful moment that builds trust and confidence in the student.

My calls usually last about 30 minutes; students can work fast during a one-on-one session. At the end of the call, I take care to praise the student for her progress and summarize the takeaways of our work. Then we make an appointment for our next session. With that, the call ends. I use this opportunity to take notes on how the call went and anything I discovered that troubled me. This is also a good moment to communicate with other staff who work with the student.

So far, I have seen some really good results: After a call like this, my struggling students feel more connected and much more confident that they will be able to succeed in my class. 

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Miguel Hernando** is a science and ESL teacher at the Bridge Academy at Chelsea High in Chelsea, Massachusetts. He enjoys working at the interface between inquiry-based science and language development.

# Teaching for Transfer of Learning in ESL

Heon Jeon

heon.jeon@uconn.edu

**W**HEN the instruction includes characteristics that favor transfer, transfer occurs. Unfortunately, most instruction tends to exclude such characteristics (Fogarty et al., 1992, p. xvi).



## INTRODUCTION

A fundamental goal of education is learning transfer, which occurs “when learning in one context or with one set of materials impacts on performance in another context or with another set of materials” (Perkins & Salomon, 1994, p. 6452). Unfortunately, such transfer does not always take place. Teachers too often assume that learning transfer is automatic (James, 2017), but “there is no guarantee that skills and strategies learned in an English as a second language (ESL) program actually will be applied in new situations” (Spack, 1997, p. 50). We need a mindful and explicit teaching-for-transfer approach to encourage our students to *reshape* and *transform* what they learn in our classes to new situations (DePalma & Ringer, 2011; Larsen-Freeman, 2013).

## SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHING FOR TRANSFER

### TRANSFER ROADMAP

According to James (2006), “modeling for learning transfer means demonstrating learning outcomes that are directly applicable in target situations” (p. 154). Guided by the notion of modeling, ESL teachers can create an activity requiring students to create their own transfer roadmaps. In my course in academic reading and writing for university ESL students, I provide students with a sample transfer roadmap (see Figure 1). I usually list learning outcomes for the unit (left area of the sample) but leave the transfer section empty (right area of the sample) for the students themselves to generate various contexts of potential transfer. Alternatively, I may share one possible transfer context as an example. After completing the transfer roadmap handout individually, students talk as a group about their transfer contexts, and then each group shares their results with other groups. I find that transfer roadmaps can create openings for students to visualize possible routes of learning transfer.

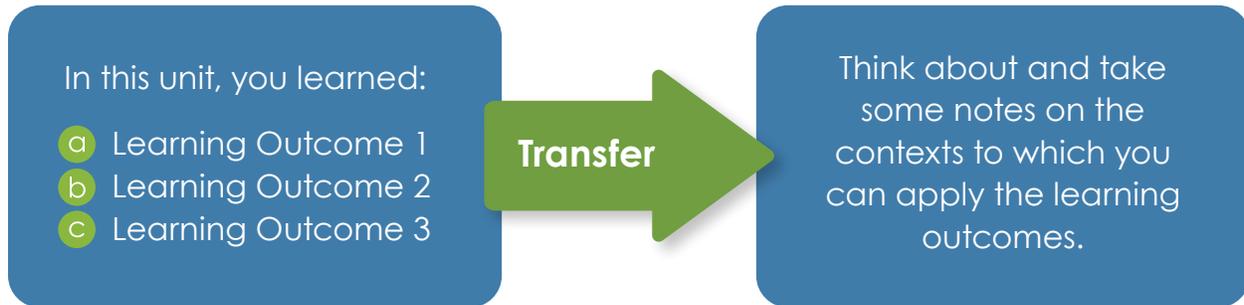


Figure 1. Sample transfer roadmap

### SIMULATING

As a further step, ESL teachers can design activities “that stimulate future applications of learning” (James, 2006, p. 154). For example, when teaching academic writing for ESL students, the teacher might bring in writing assignment prompts (e.g., lab report, literary analysis, or data analysis paper) from other courses that students may be taking in future semesters. After analyzing the prompts and compiling specific information about the tasks, the students can turn their attention back to what they have learned in their ESL class and explore ways of applying this learning to assignments in future classes. This deliberate connection-making and mindful abstraction can raise students’ motivation for taking ESL writing courses and encourage meaningful learning transfer beyond the ESL class.

### REFLECTIVE EXERCISES

Reflection is a key notion of teaching for transfer. It can help students review what they have learned and encourage the application of that learning to new contexts (James, 2017). One effective exercise might be a journal assignment in which the students are asked to describe their experiences — successful or unsuccessful — in transferring their new knowledge and skills to other situations. In my academic reading and writing class, students were required to write *transfer journals* to reflect on what they were learning about writing and to describe their experiences transferring their new knowledge and skills to other situations ranging from writing assignments in other courses to writing in social media (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, or a personal blog). I used this opportunity to ask the students not just what skills and knowledge they transferred but also how they *transformed* what they had learned to fit the new situation. In their course evaluations, the students agreed that writing their transfer journals helped them to transfer what they had learned about writing to other academic and personal contexts. The students especially appreciated the two discussion

sessions at the middle and end of the semester, in which they shared their transfer journals with their classmates. These sessions helped them to identify various routes of learning transfer from their ESL writing class to other contexts.

### PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

Interested ESL teachers might consider creating a professional learning community (PLC) with the goal of identifying instructional strategies that promote learning transfer. The group might begin by reading and discussing practical scholarship on teaching for transfer (Fogarty et al., 1992; Green, 2015; Hirvela, 2016; James, 2006, 2017, 2018; Jeon, forthcoming; Perkins & Salomon, 1988, 1994). Then they could evaluate the potential of various ESL textbooks to promote learning transfer. (James (2017) provides a very practical tool for evaluating ESL textbooks from a transfer perspective.) Finally, the group might design lesson plans for encouraging transfer across assignments within the ESL course and beyond. And they might consider a variety of instructional practices such as explicit modeling of the transfer process or asking students to keep and share transfer journals. PLCs like these can play a pivotal role in nurturing teaching for transfer in the classroom.

### CLOSING THOUGHTS

ESL teachers should be keenly aware of learning transfer and make active efforts to create a supportive transfer environment in their classrooms. If students are not able to transfer what they learn in their ESL classes to other contexts, then “the value of instruction can be called into question” (James, 2008, p.76). Transfer-promoting activities and assignments, including reflective and metacognitive exercises, can help students become active agents of transfer who consciously and creatively adapt what they have learned in their ESL classes to fit the demands of new, real-life situations. 

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Heon Jeon** is a visiting assistant professor in the First-Year Writing program at the University of Connecticut. He recently completed his Ph.D. in Foreign, Second, and Multilingual Education at Ohio State University. His dissertation explored the nature of teaching for transfer of learning in English for Academic Purposes.

# Access and the Arts: Preparing Teachers to Support Multilingual Students in the Arts Classroom

**Christine Leider**

montecil@bu.edu

**Johanna M. Tigert**

johanna\_tigert@uml.edu



**M**AINSTREAM classrooms in the United States are increasingly multilingual spaces (Lucas et al., 2008), but teachers continue to feel unprepared to meet the needs of multilingual students (Hong et al., 2019). Efforts have been made to better prepare teachers of math, social science, English language arts, and sciences (de Jong et al., 2013); however, focusing on teacher preparation only in the core content areas ignores whether teachers in other subjects are prepared to support multilingual students in accessing the language and content of their subject. As teacher educators, we take the stance that training for working with multilingual learners should be inclusive of *all* teachers. In this article, we specifically focus on arts teachers, but a similar argument could be made for teachers of physical education, computer science, consumer sciences, world languages, and so on.

According to MA DESE (n.d. a), 80.4% of all students in Massachusetts were enrolled in arts courses (including music, visual arts, theatre, and dance) during the academic year 2018-2019, with music accounting for 62.6%. The trend was similar for classified English Learners<sup>1</sup>: 81.6% of ELs were enrolled in arts courses. These numbers are encouraging because they show that, at least in Massachusetts, multilingual students have similar enrollment patterns as other students in arts education. However, the robust numbers of ELs enrolled in these

<sup>1</sup> In this article, we occasionally use the term “English (Language) Learners” (ELs), because policy initiatives like the RETELL Initiative were specifically created to ensure equitable education for classified ELs. We also use the term “multilingual learners” as a more asset-based alternative for students learning bi- or multilingually (see also Colombo, Tigert, & Leider, 2019).

classes further highlights the need for arts teachers to be trained to work with multilingual students.

## **SUPPORTING MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS: WHAT DO ARTS TEACHERS NEED TO KNOW?**

Arts education is multimodal, interactive, and often positioned as “fun.” With these characteristics, it might also be assumed that accessibility in arts education is not as big a concern as in core academic classes. However, the assumption that multilingual students just “get” the arts without instructional scaffolding and linguistic support ignores the fact that the arts, also, have complex, subject-specific language and concepts that are necessary for students to gain a deep appreciation for and engagement in these subjects. Below we briefly outline some key considerations for arts teachers who are working with multilingual learners.

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

The arts, in general, can be a space for multilingual learners to develop their overall English proficiency (e.g. Brouillette, 2012; Greenfader & Brouillette, 2013; Wellman & Bey, 2015). A visual arts class, for example, offers students a low-stakes environment for interacting with others and using language as they share and discuss the art pieces they are creating. In drama and theater classes, students are organically practicing reading, speaking, and listening as they prepare for and then deliver the performance. However, in order to build on and maximize these language learning opportunities, arts teachers, like their core academic colleagues, should have specific training in language development and instruction (Reeves, 2004, 2006; Walker et al., 2004). For example, arts teachers should be able to interpret students’ WIDA levels to tailor activities to their language abilities, learn how to elevate students’ discussions with strategies such as sentence starters, and encourage and scaffold participation with different grouping structures.

### **DISCIPLINARY LITERACY AND ACADEMIC LANGUAGE**

Each discipline has particular academic language associated with its subject matter (Moje, 2015; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012). For instance, a multilingual learner in the beginning stages of developing English might be able to participate in a drawing activity but might not be able to fully access the vocabulary the teacher uses to discuss drawing technique — terms like *abstract*, *focal point*, *perspective*, or *symmetry*. Similarly, in a music classroom, a student may be familiar with the general vocabulary to describe a musical piece (e.g.,

*pace, slow*), but not yet have the discipline-specific language (e.g., *tempo, largo*). Thus arts teachers need to know how to identify language objectives and address the language demands of their lessons through strategies such as word banks and word walls, visuals, and graphic organizers. They should also know how to create opportunities for students to use their home languages to make sense of their learning (Hamman, 2018), an option that can be especially helpful for newcomer students.

**Arts teachers need to know how to identify language objectives and address the language demands of their lessons through strategies such as word banks and word walls, visuals, and graphic organizers.**

### **CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY**

Even when teachers take language into consideration in their instructional decisions, multilingual learners may feel unwelcome or out of place in the classroom (Pappamihiel, 2002; Valdés, 2001), making them less likely to participate and engage. As classrooms become more diverse, it is important for teachers to have the skills to create classroom environments that are inclusive and welcoming for culturally and linguistically diverse students. For example, in the same way language arts teachers are encouraged to use texts that are representative of their students' backgrounds, arts teachers should consider including artists, musicians, and works of art that represent their students' cultural and linguistic heritages. This points to the need for arts teachers to learn to critically evaluate their curricular materials and use strategies such as background and interest inventories to get to know their students.

### **SUPPORTING MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS IN ARTS EDUCATION: HOW CAN WE DO BETTER?**

The knowledge arts teachers need to support their multilingual students can be developed through teacher education. We close with two main ways this can be done.

#### *Professional Development Opportunities*

Professional development focused on culturally and linguistically inclusive and responsive instruction has been shown to improve academic outcomes and opportunities for multilingual learners (López & Santibañez, 2018). We suggest

that opportunities be found for professional development that specifically addresses the needs of arts teachers. Examples might include workshops on how to diversify the arts curriculum and build in more linguistic scaffolds and attention to language. Workshops like these could be offered by school districts, institutes of higher education, and professional organizations, who could join forces to ensure that professional development is built on a solid understanding of both arts and language education.

### POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

In Massachusetts, all “core” content area teachers — namely, early childhood and elementary teachers, teachers of students with moderate or severe disabilities, and teachers of English language arts, reading, mathematics, science, civics and government, economics, history, and geography (CMR Title 603, Section 14) — are required to complete a state-approved course that leads to an endorsement in Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) and focuses specifically on supporting multilingual learners in content and general education classrooms. So far, about 60,000 educators in Massachusetts have completed the endorsement (Aguiar, 2018). In 2018, the SEI endorsement requirement was extended to include career and vocational technical teachers who work with ELs (MA DESE, n.d. b). While this is a step in the right direction, we believe that this requirement should be expanded to include *all* teachers, including arts teachers. All educators need specialized preparation to provide equitable access to multilingual learners, and in Massachusetts the SEI Endorsement training is a readily available source of such preparation. 

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# The Mid-Week “Not Class” Class: Humanity, Community, and Student-Driven Learning

**Christina Michaud**

cmichaud@bu.edu



**FALL 2020:** As an EL teacher in higher ed, I, like so many others, now teach from my living room. My students are international students at Boston University, mainly from Asia, all of them fully enrolled undergraduates taking classes in their majors. My class is a seminar-style, first-year writing course specifically designed for multilingual students. Having taught this class almost every semester for seventeen years before the pandemic, I was used to the Monday-Wednesday-Friday rhythm.

However, as I surveyed my students in the last week or so of summer, I could see that it would be impossible to proceed with my course as usual, as though the only thing that distinguished this semester from others was the little black-outlined Zoom boxes on my screen in place of the shy, eager, nervous, or (sometimes) bored faces in front of me in an actual classroom. Clearly nothing is “usual” about this semester, and it seemed insincere — even inequitable and inhumane — to simply proceed as usual.

I knew that my students would be logging in from Mexico, Germany, Turkey, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Singapore, Korea, and China, so that the sometimes 11-13 hour time difference would be a significant issue. I also knew that the VPNs that are needed in order to use Google Docs, etc. are politically problematic in some countries, and that students’ technology and internet connections might be stressed by the enormous strain that fully-remote classes (plus, in many cases, remote classes for a sibling, and remote work for a parent or two) are putting on them.

As the semester progressed, students opened up to me and shared more about their circumstances. Three students in China share rooms with a grandparent, and when they briefly turn their cameras on, I can see their grandparent sitting, moving around, or even sleeping on a bottom bunk behind them. One student is responsible for babysitting her little sister during the time our class meets, and she is sometimes interrupted by an overtired five-year-old climbing onto her lap and wrapping her arms around her neck. Another student has such an unstable internet connection at home that she goes into her mother's office at 5:00 in the afternoon, dressed for business in order to blend in with the regular workers, and remains there overnight, logging into her classes and doing all her schoolwork at her mother's desk. She leaves the office at 9:00 in the morning, just as the office workers are reporting in for the day. So far, no one has challenged her, but, because she doesn't have official permission to use the office overnight, she is anxious.

**Three [of my] students in China share rooms with a grandparent, and when they briefly turn their cameras on, I can see the grandparents sitting, moving around, or even sleeping on a bottom bunk behind them.**

I could go on, of course. There are students who are worried about their health or that of their families. There are some who don't know how their families will continue to pay tuition fees, given the uncertainty of jobs and income. There are students whose other classes this semester are all large lecture classes. All these students need to learn to write, but they also need human connection. And that's part of my job, of course: A combination of informed pedagogy and empathetic humanity is what I've been practicing, at one institution or another, for the past twenty years.

Anticipating many of these issues before the semester even started, I took my carefully honed MWF syllabus and shoved everything into the margins of the week for the entire semester. With all my content now crammed into Mondays and Fridays, those days were packed, but I relieved the pressure a little by recording 5-to-15-minute videos of my usual mini-lectures on essay structure or the complexities of shifting verb tenses in a basic summary or using key words from a thesis statement to brainstorm possible titles. I made detailed handouts with chatty marginal notes, writing down for students what I would normally say

**I don't prepare any content for Wednesdays — no slides, handouts, planned activities, or agenda. I don't even share my screen.**

as I discussed these handouts in class.

This provided space for a synchronous “not-class” class on Wednesdays. (Of course, I still have normal (Zoom) office hours, and I still make individual appointments for conferences.) Wednesdays aren't set up as typical class days, and I don't take attendance. Most students make it to class anyway, though the ones who are completely exhausted from staying up nights for classwork and then working in their families' households during the day sometimes take a pass. I don't prepare any content for Wednesdays — no slides, handouts, planned activities, or agenda. I don't even share my screen. Instead, I'm there with a smile, with a mental reminder to myself not to say “Good morning!” when in fact it's evening for most of my students and afternoon for a few. On Wednesdays, I let students take the lead in articulating their needs, whether academic or otherwise.

We begin by chatting a little: How's their week, how did that big midterm go that they were worried about, how's the weather in their city, have they been outside at all? For a lot of my students, worried about the virus, the answer is “no.” One student in India makes furtive runs to the market for food, because his parents and grandparents are all higher risk than he is and his two sisters are too young to be of help, but these expeditions are the only time he's been outside in several months. When the initial chatter subsides, I ask students how I can help them.

This question floored my students at first. There was a lot of silence, which I sat through patiently. When someone eventually said, “I didn't understand what you wanted us to do for the paper draft that's due on Friday,” I smiled and said we could talk about that.

On Wednesdays, students ask questions they probably wouldn't “bother” me with by e-mail or in office hours, but they ask them now. I answer them. We talk. Someone else asks a follow-up question. We talk some more. Students who are hesitant to speak up in “normal” classes ask questions on Wednesdays.

On Wednesdays, I let the students' own questions and needs drive the “class.”

Some students want to talk more about the reading or assignment we did last Friday and Monday, because they are still shaky on something there, while other students want to talk about the work for next Friday and Monday. I put those students in breakout rooms accordingly, but there's no "fill out this handout in your group" or "choose a group member to report back to the class." I tell them they can call me into the group, or pop back into the main room if they have questions, but I don't check up on them. When students admit that they're "just a little bit" behind in the assignment that was supposed to be submitted on Monday, I tell them they can stay in the main room, turn their cameras off, and just write for a while, turning their camera back on when they want to check in with me or ask a question.

**At some unknown point in the future, when we are back in an actual classroom, I will keep up a vestige of these midweek "not-class" classes for the way they relieve students' stress.**

Why are these Wednesdays working so well for us? Like much of teaching, part of it is psychological. Because I'm not sharing my screen or showing slides, the students don't sink into a passive-recipient model of learning but rather remain active. Because I'm not focused on "getting through" an activity or "covering" certain topics, I'm freer to look at my students' faces and check in with them individually. At some unknown point in the future, when we are back in an actual classroom, I will probably keep up a vestige of these midweek "not-class" classes for the way they relieve students' stress, foster a sense of community, and help them take control of their own learning. For now, these Wednesdays are humanizing the class for us and helping us all make it through the semester. 

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Christina Michaud** is a Master Lecturer in the College of Arts and Sciences at Boston University. Her scholarly interests include pronunciation, metacognition, and social justice in the EL classroom.

# Going to School in America

Chihiro Kawamura

**M**Y NAME IS CHIHIRO. I am 12 years old and I go to Gibbs Middle School in Arlington, MA. I am from Fukuoka City in Japan. It's on Kyushu island located in southern Japan. I came to the United States in April, 2019. At first I was nervous and missed my friends and my cousins and my grandparents.



When I first started to go to school, I was nervous and overwhelmed by the difference. But my friends were so welcoming even though I could not speak English at all and communicate well.

The impressive difference between Japanese elementary school and school in the US is about snacks and lunch. In Japan we don't have snacks at school and we have school meals that are made in the school kitchen every day. Students serve lunch by themselves and clean up by themselves. The biggest difference that I found was that students in the US have lots more freedom to say their opinion. In Japan students were expected to say the right answer rather than giving their opinions.

What helped me succeed at the school in the US was my ELL teachers and my kind friends. They made me feel relaxed and happy at school. They listened to me carefully and I was not embarrassed to speak. I was confused when many friends came to me and spoke to me one thing after the next. I was sad to say "I can't understand." I was more relaxed when friends talked to me one person at a time and listened to me carefully.

I am looking forward to learning anything new. My goal is to improve my English skills so that I can talk with my friends and understand more

**When I first started to go to school, I was nervous and overwhelmed. But my friends were so welcoming even though I could not speak English at all or communicate well.**

**I am happy to know that in the U.S. there are lots of wild animals and nature because in the future I want to be a person who protects wildlife.**

about what teachers are saying. I am happy to know that in the US there are lots of wild animals and nature because in the future I want to be a person who protects wildlife. I have liked observing animals since I was little. I started thinking about protecting animals when I read a book about endangered animals in Japan. After I came to the US I

found that wildlife is protected by people, which made me more interested in wildlife. I think everything I study right now can help me achieve my goal. For example, ELA would help because I can learn how to make convincing speeches, and history will help me think about how people in the past lived with nature and how people destroyed nature. Protecting nature and coping with environmental problems are worldwide issues, so I definitely need English to communicate with people to solve those problems. Also I believe if I could speak English more, my school life would be more fun. 



# Nearpod & Pear Deck

[www.nearpod.com](http://www.nearpod.com)

[www.peardeck.com](http://www.peardeck.com)

## Reviewed by Christina Terranova

[caterranova331@gmail.com](mailto:caterranova331@gmail.com)

**I**N MARCH 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic caused schools throughout the country to close down to in-person learning, educators had to learn very quickly how to engage and motivate students remotely. Two platforms that have become popular are Nearpod and Pear Deck. I've used both with my middle-school English Language Learner students in grades 5 through 8.

Nearpod and Pear Deck both work as “Add-ons” to Google Slides or PowerPoint presentations to help teachers teach more interactively and engage with students to find out what they know. They both integrate with Google Classroom, Schoology, Canvas, and Microsoft Teams, but Nearpod also works with four other Learning Management Systems (LMSs). They both have synchronous (live) and asynchronous (student-paced) ways of pushing out lessons, but Pear Deck has the capability to toggle between those modes quickly. Switching is more difficult in Nearpod, because it requires sending students a new code that must be generated.

A popular tool available in Nearpod is the “Collaborative Board,” which allows students to post answers to a question in the form of a virtual “sticky note.” They can add an image from a Google search onto the same post and can “like” other posts on the virtual board. In addition, Nearpod has a larger menu of features than Pear Deck, with options to use Quiz, Matching Pairs, Memory Test, Fill in the Blank, and a popular interactive quiz game called “Time to Climb,” among others. Both platforms offer large libraries of pre-made lessons in a range of content areas and grade levels.

Both platforms offer both free and paid versions, but limited storage is an issue with the free versions of both platforms. It is worth purchasing one of the various paid tiers or having your district purchase the paid version for all its educators. Nearpod has multi-tiered price offerings, with Gold at \$120/year, Platinum for \$349/year, plus School and District custom options.

Pear Deck's pricing is either an Individual Premium plan for \$149.99 per year, or its School and District Custom Plan.

**The differences come in the tools they offer (Nearpod has a larger list) and in the feedback options for students (Pear Deck has more).**

Pear Deck was the first add-on tool I became familiar with, since that was the one my district provided last spring. I liked the way it allowed me to engage my ELs with bell-ringer activities and use sliding scales and large, clickable images to gauge their feelings about various topics. One feature that is available on Pear Deck, but not on Nearpod, is the ability to provide feedback to a student in the middle of a lesson. So, when school re-started this fall, still remotely, I was initially disappointed that my district chose to purchase Nearpod instead of Pear Deck. I worried about having to learn a new platform. Happily, Nearpod is very similar to Pear Deck in the way it integrates with Google Slides, and I have used it successfully (mostly) for the past two months, despite a few technical glitches on the Nearpod end.

I find that Nearpod and Pear Deck are similar in their ability to make lessons more interactive and engaging for learners. They both integrate with popular LMSs, and with PowerPoint and Google Slides. The differences come in the tools they offer (Nearpod has a larger list) and in the feedback options for students (Pear Deck has more). Also, Pear Deck makes it easier to toggle between student-paced mode and "live" mode. Individual teachers may find it easier to work with one platform or the other, but either platform can help teachers make lessons come alive for students. 

# ESL Library

<https://esllibrary.com>

## Reviewed by Meghan Wixted

[mwixted@nsboro.k12.ma.us](mailto:mwixted@nsboro.k12.ma.us)

**A S A MIDDLE-SCHOOL ESL TEACHER**, I find it difficult to find teaching resources that are developmentally appropriate and engaging. Many ESL materials are geared towards younger learners, and my students complain that these resources are juvenile. In addition, I find that many materials don't fully address the increased linguistic demands that are placed on students at the middle school level. Luckily, last year, a former colleague of mine suggested I try *ESL Library*, a website with materials for English learners of all ages and proficiency levels. At that time, I had no way of knowing that a pandemic was coming and *ESL Library* would prove invaluable to me during remote learning.

*ESL Library* is a paid subscription-based site that offers a multitude of resources, including warm-ups, grammar lessons, debates, idioms, flash cards, and American history, just to name a few. There are many lessons about engaging topics such as the globalization of English, online privacy, cell phones in class, and advertising to children. Every lesson is offered in a printable PDF format as well as a digital format. The teacher can create classes on the website and assign work directly to students through this platform. This option was crucial for me in the spring, and I still use it now for asynchronous work on off-cohort days.

The site offers lessons for both elementary and middle-school students, as well as high-school students and adult learners. Materials are labeled as pre-beginner through advanced, with an equivalency scale based on scores from standardized tests of English proficiency, including CEFR, CLB, TOEIC, TOEFL, and IELTS. There is also a lesson-plan "calendar" that allows teachers to choose materials based on holidays and historical dates throughout the world. For example, for Saturday November 14th, *ESL Library* provided a lesson on Diwali.

When I first began using this site, I used only the printable PDFs. My students loved the everyday-idioms lessons, which are a series of lessons that follow a

**When first tasked with remote learning, I thought it would be impossible for me as an ESL teacher, but then I remembered that ESL Library offers digital versions of their materials.**

storyline. We started with a story about Jon and Amy, who meet and start to date. My 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students were very engaged with this storyline, much more than I had anticipated. They also liked the debates, because the topics were relevant and interesting. One mini-debate activity about teen botox use led to a lively conversation, especially for students who said plastic surgery is quite common in their home country.

Then March 2020 happened! When first tasked with remote learning, I thought it would be impossible for me as an ESL teacher, but then I remembered that *ESL Library* offers *digital* versions of all their materials, as well as the printable versions. So I set up my classes on the *ESL Library* platform and began assigning work. That was when I really became aware of the breadth of topics that the site covers. I was able to hand-pick activities for individual students that I knew would be interesting to them personally. I could then click on their work and see exactly what they had done and what still needed more practice. Since that time, *ESL Library* has upgraded and improved their online platform to make it even more user-friendly.

While I thoroughly enjoy this resource and use it frequently, I find that the proficiency levels are not accurate for middle-school students. A reading that is identified as intermediate level may actually be high intermediate, or even advanced, for students in this age group. Once I adjusted to this, I had no further problems, but one suggestion I would make for *ESL Library* is to add WIDA levels to their Equivalency Scale.

I will continue to use *ESL Library* in my classes even when the pandemic is over. I think other teachers would be able to incorporate these lessons into their curriculum, just as I have, and that they would find it to be a very useful supplement to their curriculum. **C**

# Color, Race and English Language Teaching: Shades of Meaning

edited by Andy Curtis & Mary Romney, Routledge, 2006. Paperback, 205 pages.

**Reviewed by Kathy Lobo**

[katherinelobo@hotmail.com](mailto:katherinelobo@hotmail.com)

**I****N THIS BOOK**, Andy Curtis and Mary Romney present and analyze the personal stories of thirteen contributors, within the framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT).<sup>1</sup> Andy Curtis is an educator, writer and past president of TESOL International. He is an expert in the field of intercultural communication with over 25 years of experience. Mary Romney is an ESOL instructor, writer, and former TESOL International board member with over 40 years in the field. The book begins with a chapter introducing the Critical Race Theory framework, followed by the personal stories of thirteen people of color who are engaged in English language teaching:

**Andy Curtis, Ph.D.**, an Englishman of Indian descent

**Shondel Nero Ed.D.**, from Guyana

**Donna Fujimoto, M.A.**, a Japanese American

**Carmen T. Chacon, Ph.D.**, from Venezuela

**Angel M. Y. Lin, Ph.D.**, from Hong Kong

**Shelley Wong, Ed.D.**, fifth generation Chinese American

**Carlos Islam, M.A.**, an Englishman of Bangladeshi and Spanish descent

**Marinus Stephan, Ph.D.**, from Suriname

**Gertrude Tinker Sachs, Ph.D.**, from the Bahamas

**Anam K. Govardhan, Ph.D.**, from India

**Mary Romney, M.Ed.**, an African American of Caribbean descent

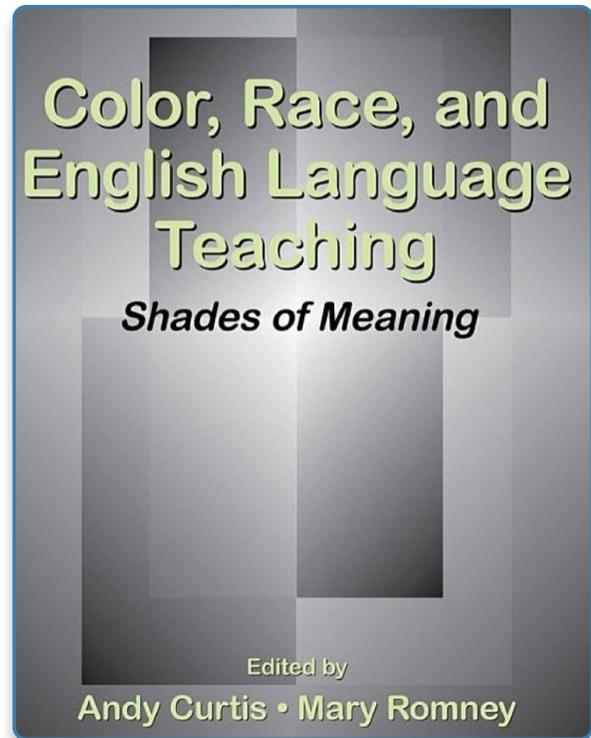
<sup>1</sup> CRT is a theoretical framework, developed in the mid -1970's, based on five major tenets: "[1] the notion that racism is ordinary and not aberrational, [2] the idea of an interest convergence, [3] the idea that race is socially constructed, [4] the idea of storytelling and counter-storytelling, and [5] the notion that whites have actually been recipients of civil rights legislation" (Hartlep, 2009, pp. 6-7). CRT "attempts to demystify racial stereotypes, racial inequalities, sexism, classism, and xenophobic practices" (p. 6).

**Suhanthie Motha, Ph.D.**, an ethnic Tamil born in Sri Lanka, who grew up in Australia

**Ahmar Mahboob, Ph.D.**, from Pakistan, who grew up in the United Arab Emirates

Each contributor was asked to respond to two related questions:

1. Can you identify critical events or conditions in your personal or professional life that are the result of you being a person of color that affect who you are now and what you do as a TESOL professional of color?
2. What have you learned from these events or conditions that have had a bearing on your life as a TESOL professional of color?



The authors then use the contributors' personal stories to illustrate themes such as the following:

- Assumptions underlying specific incidents and world events and the impact they have had on students
- Exceptionality, where it comes from and its impact on relationships within the classroom, educational institutions, and the wider world
- The status of minorities in various contexts
- "Color-blindness" in a non-English language (Spanish) and the relationship between race and nonnative English status
- Segregation along gender and racial lines
- The importance of history when making plans for the future
- Identity and acceptance and how it can change depending on whether one is at home (England) or abroad
- Student preference and the convergence of race and nonnative-ness
- Racial attitudes in Hong Kong and Canada

- Perceptions of and attitudes toward “Indianness” in different contexts
- How a “real” American is defined or identified in popular American culture
- The powerful and transformative effects of role models and mentors
- How concerns for the interests of one group can eclipse valuable challenging issues within a discussion
- Changing concepts of race to include a new verb, “enraced,” meaning “the actions/negotiations through which we acquire our awareness of race”

**As an ESL teachers who has lived and worked in Asia, Australia, and the United States, I could make many personal connections to the stories that are shared in this volume.**

The personal narratives are insightful and engaging. The book can be read in its entirety or by choosing a few chapters. Andy Curtis and Mary Romney have added five to eight questions following each story that serve as a path to go beyond an initial reading.

As an ESL teacher who has lived and worked in Asia, Australia, and the United States, who has traveled to all the continents except Antarctica, and who has led workshops and made presentations in Africa, Asia, Australia, and North America, I could make many personal connections to the stories that are shared in this volume. Frankly, I could not put the book down, so I read it straight through. This book would make a great book club read. I highly recommend it! 

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### **Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages**

2 Canton Street, Suite B-223 Stoughton, MA 02072 617-820-5099 [www.matsol.org](http://www.matsol.org)

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