Dear MITESOL Members,

Greetings fellow MITESOLers. I hope this message finds you rested, relaxed, and still enjoying the last weeks of what has turned out to be a lovely summer in Michigan. The six short months since our last newsletter seem to have flown by, and in this time, MITESOL has accomplished a great deal. In this message, I briefly summarize our organization’s major activities and accomplishments since February.

One of MITESOL’s long-term goals is to increase membership and participation in the organization, particularly from among currently underrepresented groups. These include K-12 educators, adult educators, and ESL professionals in the Upper Peninsula, as well as undergraduate and graduate students in applied linguistics, TESOL, and related fields. This year, we have undertaken several initiatives to work toward this goal.

One way we are seeking to increase participation is by making the annual conference more affordable for students and members who are employed only part-time. To this end, we reduced the 2015 registration rates for student- and part-time members ($40 & $60, respectively, through 9/7 for these groups). We are also offering grants to defray the cost of conference attendance. At our April meeting, the Board developed three new travel grants: (1) the MITESOL Conference Grant for Adult ESL Professionals; (2) the MITESOL Conference Grant for K-12 ESL Professionals; and (3) the MITESOL Conference Grant for ESL Professionals in the Upper Peninsula (2 awards). Each grant covers the recipient’s conference registration fees. In addition, the UP grant provides a stipend of $300 toward travel expenses. (For more information, please see our website.) This year’s grant recipients will be recognized during Saturday’s luncheon at the Conference.

A third way in which we are trying to increase participation is by offering State Continuing Education Clock Hours (SCECHs) for conference attendance. K-12 educators can earn up to 10 SCECHs for attending MITESOL 2015, thanks to Past President Jeanine Clever’s work to secure MDE approval. For more information, please refer to the SCECHs section of the 2015 Conference website.

Over the past half year, MITESOL has also moved further into the twenty-first century, adopting a variety of new technologies to better communicate with members, increase our visibility, and conduct our business. We opened a Twitter account (@mitesol) in March, and immediately began tweeting from the TESOL Convention in Toronto to share highlights with members back home who were unable to attend. In April, we welcomed a new webmaster, Trisha Dowling (EMU & LCI), and adopted new online conference management software (OpenConf), which has made proposal submission and reviewing more user-friendly and efficient. Exhibits Manager Ashley
Greetings Fellow MITESOLers!

As you can tell from Ellen Brengle’s board notes, p. 6 in this issue, and Colleen’s letter above, MITESOL is busy. On p. 6, you’ll find more on the TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit Colleen mentioned. Pages 3-5 list and show MITESOL’s current leadership, including newcomers, and there are even some positions up for vote. Please take a moment to get to know the nominees and notice the Adult SIG leader position has no current nominee at all. There are also two open appointment-based positions. You might consider serving.

As for our current Adult SIG leader, Ashley Garrigan, her update is on p. 9, preceded by Cynthia Macknish’s Post-Secondary SIG update and followed by a fun look at the most recent MITESOL reception at the TESOL conference.

From there, we’re proud to bring you another group of research and practical articles. We receive those submissions mostly from our membership, so if you’re not in this issue, consider sending us something for next time (see p. 8 bottom for more details). Please also let us know about your recent and upcoming publications, presentations, and accomplishments so we can share them with the MITESOL community. Barbara Gottschalk starts things off with the story of how a modest grant and the use of opera made all the difference for some ELLs. Patrick T. Randolph says his goodbyes on the final page of this issue, but not before he espouses the power of exercise in language learning. Kathy Cornman contributes a close look at the development of student support in UM-Flint’s ELP. I, myself, had a great experience this past winter assigning students to draw their language goals; I’ve included a brief report on how it went, along with a few samples of student work. Finally, Adam Kavetsky reports back on his practicum in the Czech Republic.

Till next time, be well,

Aiman W. Mueller & Ildi Porter-Szucs

MITESOL Messages Co-Editors
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First, the MITESOL Board would like to welcome Trisha Dowling, of LCI & EMU as Website Manager. Trisha is a graduate of Eastern Michigan University’s M.A. TESOL program (2014). She earned her bachelor’s degree in Spanish from Saginaw Valley State University. Trisha has worked in K-6 settings with migrant and refugee populations and is currently teaching at Language Center International and Eastern Michigan University. She enjoys being involved in the TESOL field and developing as a teacher through research, presentations, and conference attendance.

The MITESOL Board would also like to welcome Sharon Umlor, of GRCC, as Head of the Sociopolitical Concerns, Advocacy, and Policy Task Force. Sharon has taught adult English language learners in Grand Rapids Community College’s Adult Education Program for the past five years. She has an M.Ed. in TESOL from Grand Valley State University and extensive experience teaching English at the secondary level to a diverse group of learners in the West Michigan area. Issues of special interest to her include academic writing fluency, curriculum design, and ease of access to services for all English language learners.

Voting News: Candidates for Open, Elected Positions on the Board

The MITESOL Board is happy to announce that all future voting will be done through an online service, rather than at the annual conference. Please look for the ballot and more candidate information coming in the fall.

The MITESOL Board is pleased to put forward the following slate of officers to the membership for a vote (four in all).

Review of Shifts in Leadership: Recent Appointments to the Board
President-Elect & 2016 Conference Chair: Jolene Jaquays, of UM-Flint. Jolene has been a teacher in the English Language Program at UM-Flint since 2011. She completed both her M.A. in TESOL and her B.S. in Education at Central Michigan University. Her thirty-year teaching repertoire includes teaching English, ESL, Spanish, and yearbook to preschool-through-graduate-level students. Jolene shares her professional knowledge and keeps up with current trends in pedagogy at statewide, national, and international conferences. Jolene enjoys sharing her enthusiasm for language and American-cultural students by providing an engaging educational setting for her students.

Communications Coordinator: Josie Pickens, of EMU. Josie has a B.A. in Portuguese from The Ohio State University and is a part-time student at Eastern Michigan University, working to complete her M.A. in TESOL. She has moved a total of 17 times (both within the U.S. and internationally) and the most recent move, in 2013, brought her to Ann Arbor, Michigan. She has experience managing a regional social media page since 2012 and looks forward to managing the social media outlets for MITESOL. She is also looking forward to teaching English to adults and helping them become acclimated to life in a new country upon completion of her Master’s in 2017.

K-12 SIG: Stacy Tanner, of Novi Community Schools. From teaching to volunteering, Stacy has worked in the field of education for nearly 15 years. Born and raised in a family of educators in Southern California and from a father who immigrated to the United States, Stacy’s love of teaching, learning, and language was nurtured from an early age. As a young professional, Stacy served as a teacher, site director, and family consultant in early childhood. After completing a graduate degree from the University of Michigan (ELMAC) with an ESL Endorsement, she has been teaching English learners for the last 3 years in Novi Community Schools and has also served as an EL coordinator for two districts. When she’s not in a school, you’ll find her outside teaching horsemanship to people of all ages. She has been MITESOL’s Communications Coordinator for the past year.

Professional Development SIG: Richard W. Forest, of CMU. Rich is an Associate Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at Central Michigan University and Director of CMU’s English Language Institute. His research interests include EAP writing, signalling in academic discourse, and interdisciplinary collaborations between corpus-based linguistics and traditional humanities disciplines (e.g., religion, history, literary analysis). His most recent publication is Signalling Nouns in English (2015, Cambridge University Press), co-authored with Professor John Flowerdew of City University of Hong Kong. His current research is on how institutional discourses shape the trajectories of ESL students during their studies at US colleges and universities.

Open, Elected Positions on the MITESOL Board

The MITESOL Board has an open elected position. We are looking for an individual to fill the role of the Adult Education SIG Leader (two-year term). Descriptions of this role and the responsibilities that it entails can be found at http://mitesol.org/page-1774502.
Open, Non-Elected Positions on the MITESOL Board

The MITESOL Board has two open positions that are appointed, rather than elected. We are looking for an individual to fill the role of Conference Proceedings Editor (two-year term) and another individual to serve as Conference Exhibits Manager (two-year term). Descriptions of these roles and the responsibilities that they entail, can be found here [http://mitesol.org/page-1774502](http://mitesol.org/page-1774502).

If you have questions about any position or would be interested in serving in one of them, please contact Jeanine Clever, at jeanine.clever@farmington.mi.us.

Pictured below are leaders who are diligently continuing in their same positions on the Executive or Advisory Boards:

Jeanine Clever  
Past President

Andrew McCullough  
President-Elect & 2015 Conference Chair

Colleen Brice  
President

Ellen Brengle  
Secretary

Michael Pasquale  
Professional Dev. SIG

Ildi Porter-Szucs  
Newsletter Co-Editor

Jim Desler  
Treasurer

Jane DeGroot  
Membership Coordinator

Akiko Ota  
CALL SIG

Aiman W. Mueller  
Newsletter Co-Editor

Pamela Bogart  
Listserv Manager

David Van Over  
Workplace ESL & ESP SIG

Marian Woyciehowicz Gonsior  
Conference Proceedings Editor

Cynthia Macknish  
Post-Secondary/Higher Ed. SIG

Jaana Terhune  
K-12 SIG

Ashley Garrigan  
Adult Ed SIG & Exhibits Manager
Board Notes

Ellen Brengle, Secretary

Since leaving the icy cold of February and moving into the lazy days of summer, the Executive Board has been busier than ever. No lazy days for us! Thanks to strong leadership from President Colleen Brice, two Board meetings, one AM and one PM, have been held on our February and April meeting dates in East Lansing. While our morning meetings included the entire Board (Executive, Advisory, and task forces) and were primarily concerned with on-going business, our afternoon Executive Board meetings were used to begin addressing several larger undertakings. Below are some of the issues and projects we’ve been tackling:

- Planning for the annual MITESOL reception at TESOL
- Continued search for a new international sister TESOL organization
- Awarding of the Michigan Marckwardt Award to Jennifer Brooke of MSU
- Institution of a new, badly needed conference proposal system (OpenConf)
- Technology improvements: Wild Apricot for conference/membership registrations and website, establishment of a social media presence, search for a MITESOL member webmaster and all-around tech guru
- Cultivation of new leadership members, both present and future
- Establishment of new, lower MITESOL conference rates for part-time and student members, and consideration of other great ways to use MITESOL funds
- Change from individual paper evaluations of MITESOL conference sessions to a general conference on-line evaluation
- Re-examination of the MITESOL mission statement, the structure of the Executive and Advisory Boards, Board member responsibilities and descriptions of positions, SIG leaders’ responsibilities, and the timing of the transition meeting (possible move from November to February)
- Planning, organizing, searching for keynote speakers, soliciting and reading of proposals, and more planning and organizing for the MITESOL 2015 conference, capably led by incoming President, Andrew McCullough.

Please consider joining us at our next Board meeting (9:00-12:00, Wells Hall, MSU, 8/22) to contribute your suggestions, or simply to work with a great group of volunteers.

News from the 2015 Advocacy & Policy Summit

Colleen Brice, President, and Ashley Garrigan, Adult Ed SIG Leader and Conference Exhibits Manager

This summer, we had the honor of participating in the 2015 TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit, held in Washington, D.C, June 21-23. This annual conference brings together an array of TESOL professionals to learn how to effectively advocate for English language learners. We attended as representatives of MITESOL.

The three-day summit offered a wealth of information related to EL advocacy, including a panel presentation by members of the U.S. Office of Civil Rights, as well as sessions by Dr. Libia Gil, Assistant Deputy Secretary and Director of the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), and Christopher Coro, from the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. We were apprised of the state of current legislation, including the Every Child Achieves Act (ECAA), and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and how these laws could positively or negatively affect the English-language-learning populations that we serve. Since sessions touched on ELs in all settings—preK-12, Adult Education, and Post-Secondary—there was something for all attendees to take back and share with their affiliate members.

(continued on next page)
The highlight of the summit was the opportunity to visit Capitol Hill to speak with members of Congress about pressing issues facing EL students and their families. We met with Senator Debbie Stabenow and with advisory staff of three Michigan Congressmen: Justin Amash, Sander Levin, and Tim Walberg. These meetings provided us the opportunity to apprise our legislators of the demographics, diversity, and needs of our English learner populations in Michigan, and to share our concerns about the repercussions on ELs of current and proposed legislation. After our meetings, we sent each Congressional Representative a follow-up letter, offering them advice on currently pending legislation impacting ELs (namely, Title III of the ECAA, and Title II of WIOA). Copies of these letters will be available on our website under “resources.”

The Summit also provided us with valuable tools for advocating for ELs within and through our organizations. These include:

- **Office of Civil Rights Data Collection**, an online database containing breakdowns of EL populations, by school or by district, throughout the country
- **A “Dear Colleague” Letter** prepared by the Office of Civil Rights outlining the common issues on which preK-12 schools are non-compliant in serving EL populations and an accompanying **EL Toolkit** provided by the Office of English Language Acquisition that describes what these issues mean for students, families, and teachers
- **Policy briefs** and **TESOL position papers** on the **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**, and the most recent version of the revised Elementary and Secondary Education Act, now called the **Every Child Achieves Act (ECAA)**
- **Overviews and updates on current education legislation**

We have posted links to these resources on our website. We encourage all members to review these resources, familiarize yourselves with current legislation and policies, and share what you learn with other educators, administrators, and legislators.

We will be presenting an in-depth session on the Summit and current legislation affecting ELs at the upcoming MITESOL conference. If you are interested in becoming a better advocate for your students and their families, look for the session: “2015 TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit: A Legislative Update and Review.” Resources from the Summit will be distributed, and there will be an open discussion on how we as teachers and administrators can best advocate for our learners. MITESOL has also proposed a new special interest group (SIG) on Policy and Advocacy, so we can more actively fight for fair EL policies in our state. Check out the Saturday morning session led by Sharon Umlor (GRCC), “ESL Policy & Advocacy SIG: How We Can Advocate for ELs.” We hope to see you at one of these sessions.
MITESOL News

Post-Secondary SIG Update

Cynthia Macknish, Post-Secondary SIG Leader

As summer winds down, I hope everyone is doing what needs to be done, whether writing, researching, planning, doing projects, traveling, resting, or spending time with family and friends. Whatever you are doing this summer, I hope it is fulfilling. I wanted to update you on a few things happening in our field. First, of course, MITESOL 2015 will be held October 9-10 at Michigan State University, East Lansing. This year’s theme, Assessing Our Students, Our Programs, Ourselves: How Do We Measure Up? should raise some interesting discussion and debate for us in post-secondary institutions and I encourage everyone to participate. Visit the website at http://mitesol.org/MITESOL2015 for details.

In keeping with the theme of this year’s MITESOL conference, Glenn Fulcher has published a new book with Routledge titled: Re-examining Language Testing (http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9781138774704/?utm_source=adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=sbu4_lmf_4mx_1em_9lin_cla15_x_74911). If any of you decide to use this book in your teaching in the coming semesters, send us your review.

Some interesting topics in post-secondary ESL/TESOL being discussed in recent publications include:


I’m looking forward to exchanging views and discussing some of these and other issues at our SIG meeting at MITESOL 2015. Looking forward to seeing you there in October!

YOUR ARTICLE HERE!

Even while this issue may seem jam-packed, we’re a digital publication without the strict space limitations of print publications. If you’ve got news from the field, let us take a look! We publish in February and August each year; watch the MITESOL listserv for the call that comes out two months prior (deadline one month prior) and take time to let us know what you’ve been up to in the world of TESOL. Have you read a new related book, tried a new teaching technique, or developed a research project? This is your chance to share your experiences with the rest of the MITESOL community.

—co-Editors Aiman W. Mueller aiman.w.mueller@att.net & Ildi Porter-Szucs ildips@yahoo.com
MITESOL News

Adult Ed SIG Update

Ashley Garrigan

The annual MITESOL Conference is rapidly approaching. As the field of Adult Education serves such a diverse population of learners, I hope to attend a variety of presentations pertaining to our work. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, or WIOA, is a common theme among adult education providers today, and the Adult Ed SIG Meeting, which will be held at the Conference, will address this new legislation and other topics that are relevant to SIG members. In other conference news, the MITESOL Board was pleased to offer several Conference Travel Grants. One such grant will be awarded to an Adult Ed professional who is a first-time attendee at the conference. The winner of the grant will be announced at the end of August. Look out for these grants when conference time rolls around again next year! Finally, SIG members might be interested in checking out the review of the 2015 TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit (pp. 6-7) which Colleen and I attended in June as the MITESOL affiliate representatives. Information about policies and legislation affecting adult ELLs are also available in this issue of the newsletter and will also be available at the conference. If you have any ideas, information, or queries for the Adult Ed SIG updates, please send them to SIG leader Ashley Garrigan at garrigal@mail.gvsu.edu.

MITESOL’s Reception at the 2015 TESOL Convention

Colleen Brice

MITESOL hosted a cocktail reception for Michiganders who attended the 2015 TESOL International Convention. Held at the award-winning Hothouse Restaurant, in Toronto’s historic St. Lawrence Market neighborhood, on Friday, March 27, the event was a resounding success. Over one hundred people attended—even a few who were not on the guest list. Attendees were greeted with one complimentary drink ticket each and served a delicious array of hot and cold hors d’oeuvres, which included wild mushroom crostini; Moroccan-spiced chicken with roasted peppers, arugula, and aioli on ciabatta; vegetable & shrimp spring rolls; warm pastry cups filled with ratatouille; and an assortment of flatbreads.

The reception offered participants the opportunity to reconnect with former colleagues and to make new friends, and helped us to recruit not only new members to the organization but also new leadership from within it. Two members from the east side of the state—Jolene Jaquays, of UM-Flint, and Ildi Porter-Szucs, of Eastern Michigan—agreed to run for president-elect in 2016 and 2017, respectively.

In addition, Trisha Dowling (EMU graduate, currently at Language Center International) volunteered to be MITESOL’s new webmaster and Josie Pickens (graduate student at Eastern Michigan) expressed interest in coordinating MITESOL’s social media communications. I’m happy to report that Trisha has been officially appointed Webmaster, and that Josie is running for Communications Coordinator in our upcoming election. Here’s to the women of the east side!

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MITESOL’s Reception at the 2015 TESOL Convention (cont. from previous page)

In addition, the reception provided the Board a chance to thank the many members who have contributed to MITESOL over the past year and to recognize the accomplishments of several individuals. We presented an award certificate to Jennifer Brooke, graduate student at Michigan State, who was the recipient of our 2015 Michigan Marckwardt Travel Grant. This award, given annually, helps sponsor student participation in the international convention by paying for registration fees. Jennifer co-presented two sessions at the convention, as part of the Master’s Student Research Forum: Turning Academic Essay Teaching Inside-Out and Scaffolding Extensive Reading into Literature Circles.

We also presented a certificate to Patrick T. Randolph, of Western Michigan, in recognition of his receipt of a Best of Affiliates’ award from TESOL International. TESOL chose Patrick’s 2013 MITESOL presentation, Breaking the Ebbinghaus curse: A Guaranteed Technique for Vocabulary Acquisition, as one of the best sessions offered at its affiliates’ conferences that year. In honor of this, they included his session in the 2015 Convention program.

Finally, I had the honor of meeting a member whose award-worthiness had somehow slipped under MITESOL’s radar prior to the reception. Congratulations to Khila Pokharel, recent graduate of Central Michigan, and recipient of a prestigious TESOL International Albert H. Marckwardt Travel Grant. The grant helped support Khila’s attendance at the Convention, where he presented both a poster (Preparing to Teach EFL/ESL Abroad) and a Teaching Tip session (Beat the Teacher).

Overall, it was a wonderful evening. Many thanks to the staff of the HotHouse Restaurant for their exceptional service and to my two amazing colleagues from the west side of the state (Jane DeGroot, Membership Coordinator, and Ashley Garrigan, Adult Ed SIG leader) for helping me plan the event, woman the door, and everything else.

If you missed the 2015 Reception, don’t worry. We’ll be hosting another one at the 2016 Convention. Keep an eye on our FB page for forthcoming details. Looking forward to meeting you in Baltimore . . .
How One Small Grant Made a Big Difference

Barbara Gottschalk

Want to make a big impact on behalf of your students? A well-timed grant can help you influence the curriculum and benefit all students, not only English language learners. This article tells the story of a grant that did just that at my school; I'm hoping it will encourage readers to apply for grant projects of their own and to consider funding from all sources, but particularly from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs.

This project began when I was pondering how to help upper-intermediate and advanced English language learners at my elementary school. They didn't require pull-out support; instead they needed project-based learning that focused on authentic, relevant content-based activities. My general education colleagues, like good teachers everywhere, realized the value of these activities but, swamped by the daily demands of the classroom had difficulty implementing them. This is where I could facilitate. Like many ESOL teachers, I support students at many different grade levels so I have a more global view of learning (both literally and figuratively!) than my mainstream colleagues.

Michigan Opera Theater (MOT) had performed The Araboolies of Liberty Street, a wonderful story about the benefits of diversity, at our school the previous year. A group of young English-language learners even presented a song from the opera in our school's talent show. After seeing how “singing a story” resonated so strongly with these students, I resolved to bring opera to Susick in a bigger way by applying for an arts in education residency grant with MOT from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs. It was a perfect time to take our school's involvement with MOT to a new level.

We got the good news about receiving the grant after a long, tedious meeting about the new M-STEP. Fourth-grade teachers thought it was a great project but were feeling overwhelmed. Thankfully, our school’s music teacher was all in; her support was key in convincing 4th grade teacher Mrs. Mutter to volunteer her class for the residency’s core group of students. This experience, though, showed me the deleterious effects excessive testing can have on worthy projects like this, which I pointed out in an op ed in the Detroit News.

Mrs. Mutter challenged her students to create an opera about the three states of matter, a topic 4th grade students were studying in science. This also connected to Common Core State Standards for English language arts. Teaching artists from MOT visited Susick every Friday morning for 16 weeks to help students write the libretto, compose the songs, and practice the performance. MOT artists had done summer opera camps for children before, but it was their first time for a school residency. We told the MOT people we wanted students to create and perform an original opera that:

• Involved everyone. A core class did the opera, but our music teacher created a dance prologue with the other two 4th grade classes so the entire 4th grade performed. MOT also presented The Pied Piper of Hamelin to the whole student body at the beginning of the project to build opera background for everybody.

• Took place during the school day in a general education class. Some MOT members wanted more rehearsal time after school, but we simplified the opera instead. Holding after-school rehearsals would’ve disadvantaged children without transportation options.

• Used content the students were already studying. It saved time and it’s also a good pedagogical practice. The science topic met this goal perfectly.

• Integrated other areas such as art and music. Our art teacher had students create the background sets while the music teacher had students create the musical prologue.

Technology also enhanced the project. All classes watched a video about the performance before the opera; students in the opera also viewed videos of rehearsals to improve their final performance.

(continued on next page)
How One Small Grant Made a Big Difference (cont. from previous page)

A laptop and projector showed subtitles during the opera and afterward, a captioned video of the performance was posted on our school’s webpage. We wanted to provide reading practice for students, but a hearing impaired parent also told us it made her feel included.

The opera taught everyone about the three states of matter, not just the 4th grade performers. In a random survey of 40 students in grades K-3 who were asked one week later, “What were the three states of matter the 4th graders were singing about in the opera?” 75% of the students were able to respond unprompted, “solids, liquids, and gases.” This is remarkable because these young students hadn’t specifically studied the states of matter yet in science and the sample included young English language learners as well as special education students.

Finally, the following comments overheard during the residency perfectly capture the benefits of this kind of activity—how it can expose new people to the arts, facilitate curriculum integration, and show students the value of hard work toward a polished product:

• “I can’t believe how much science they’re learning.” Mrs. Withrow, music teacher
• “I’m seeing a completely different side of my students.” Mrs. Mutter, 4th grade teacher
• “I’ll be so glad when it’s over, but so sad when it’s over.” 4th grade student
• “We need more opera.” Art teacher Mr. Palo’s comment during a staff meeting on school improvement

The funding application period is closed for this year, but please consider applying for an Arts in Education residency grant next year. For more information about the program click here.

The Key to Successful Language Learning: Physical Exercise in the ELL Classroom

Patrick T. Randolph

Introduction

“Physical activity is cognitive candy.”

—John Medina

What is one of the most important ingredients in the classroom for our ELLs? At the same time, what ingredient is often overlooked despite its timeless benefits? The element I am referring to is perhaps the most crucial tool for memory, learning, attention, and health for the human mind—the element is none other than physical exercise!

As we head back to school this fall, I’d like every teacher to keep in mind the overwhelming benefits of physical exercise in the classroom; and I am not talking just about K-12. They are still the lucky ones as most primary- and secondary-school children can still reap the benefits of their physical-education classes. I am talking about all levels of learners: from kindergartens to adult-education programs, from community colleges to graduate classes. We all need exercise, including the instructors.

(continued on next page)
The Key to Successful Language Learning: Physical Exercise (cont. from previous page)

The Problem

“…if we’re not moving, there’s no need to learn anything.”

—John J. Ratey

The human brain has developed while the body has been on the move. That is, “Learning and memory evolved in concert with motor functions that allowed our ancestors to track down food, so as far as our brains are concerned, if we’re not moving, there is no real need to learn anything” (Ratey, 2010, p. 53). In fact, movement and learning are so intertwined, learning doesn’t really happen all that well unless the body remains in an active state. This leads us to the central problem of classrooms around the world—our students are sitting down! Now, of course, they need to sit in order to write, concentrate, and process the new material, but they also need healthy amounts of oxygen for learning to take place (Adams, 2011). The solution to the sitting problem is to get them up and moving as much as possible without interfering with the learning process.

Year after year, month after month, day after day, research in neuroscience tells us that exercise is the key to a better brain (Jensen, 2008; Medina, 2009; Ratey, 2010). Essentially, it enhances learning in three central ways: first, exercise optimizes attention, concentration, motivation, and memory; second, it helps in neural binding, which is necessary for new information to be learned; and third, it causes neurogenesis or the production of new, baby neurons (Ratey, 2010).

To elaborate on the undeniable importance of physical exercise in the classroom, I’ve constructed five arguments in defense of daily exercise for our ELLs. These are summarized in the following section.

Five Arguments for Exercise

“Walking is the best possible exercise.”

—Thomas Jefferson

(1) The Hunter-Gatherer Argument

This argument is essentially based on a look at scientific history. As far back as 2 million years ago, man was on the move. Anthropologists, Richard Wrangham being one of them, believe that our ancestors walked up to 20 kilometers per day in their hunter-gatherer societies (Medina, 2009). The human being thought on its feet, survived on its feet, and evolved on its feet. And, as above, Ratey tells us “as far as our brains are concerned, if we’re not moving, there’s no real need to learn anything” (2010, p. 53). Sure, we continue to develop as a race, but it is virtually impossible to tell the brain—that has been on the move for centuries—to sit still and learn. Movement is in our evolutionary DNA, so it’s really only natural that we learn best when movement is involved.

(2) The “Walking Helps Me Think” Argument

The English idiom “think on one’s feet,” as we know, means to think and react quickly, to be mentally agile, wide awake, and very alert. This old adage is based on a profound truth, and it makes complete sense. How often have you taken a job interview and walked as you talked on the phone, or how often have you come up against a problem in your work, gotten up, walked around and solved it in the process? Walking really does help. A number of studies at the Harvard Medical School and the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia have shown that walking increases the necessary amounts of oxygen and glucose for the working brain. In fact, walking is better than more demanding exercises like running or biking because in walking, your muscles require less demand for oxygen and glucose, and these vital fuels can be used directly by the brain (Adams, 2011). Moreover, when we walk, there is a brain trinity at work—the midbrain, motor cortex, and the cerebellum all help and coordinate movement. This trinity also causes neurons to fire, which helps us think and problem solve (Sousa, 2011). So, in every sense of the phrase, we really do think better on our feet!
The Key to Successful Language Learning: Physical Exercise (cont. from previous page)

(3) The Brain-Blast Argument
This argument is based on the relationship between neurotransmitters and exercise. As above, many neuroscientists have clearly shown that exercise builds new brain cells and improves memory, attention, and learning (Pereira et al., 2007). But how does this all happen? How can exercise really help the brain focus, be attentive, remember information, and learn? Such a question is not easy to answer as there is so much going on inside that neural universe of the brain. What we do know, however, is that during exercise, very important neurotransmitters are released. These chemicals help regulate our emotions and cognitive processes. For example, such neurotransmitters as acetylcholine, dopamine, epinephrine, norepinephrine, and serotonin are released during exercise, and these are all key facilitators of mood, memory, learning, attention, and motivation. What's more is that exercise also helps produce brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF); this is a crucial substance that (1) strengthens already existing neural connections, (2) helps create new neurons for learning and memory, and (3) speeds up the learning process in general (Ratey, 2010). In short, exercise, even the smallest amount, will benefit the brain more than anything else we know at present. To use Ratey’s term, exercise is “Miracle Gro” for the entire brain.

(4) The Hard, Cold Research Facts Argument
Studies demonstrating better student cognitive performance after exercising are abundant. Chung et al. (2009) produced a study that showed how word recall tasks were accomplished much faster after exercising and enhancing the brain with oxygen. At Naperville Central High School, students who participated in an hour workout before their classes improved their reading and comprehension skills by 17 percent as opposed to the 10.7 percent increase by students who opted not to take the special exercise class (Ratey, 2010). Winter et al. (2007) offered a study from Germany, where adults learned vocabulary words at a rate of 20 percent faster after exercising. The learning outcomes were carefully examined after one week and again after eight months. To date, no studies have shown any negative effects of exercise on the brain, but, rather, only positive results continue to be published month after month.

(5) The “It Makes Me Feel Like A Million Dollars” Argument
Perhaps this argument is the weakest statistically but the strongest based on plain simple reality. Unless one is terribly out of shape, exercise makes the brain, body, mind, and heart feel better. If you take a walk, a swim, or go for a run, the end result is a feeling of rebirth, freshness, and rejuvenation. Generally speaking, classrooms that exhibit a healthy balance of study and movement produce better thinkers and happier students (Jensen, 2008; Sousa, 2011). So, although this argument might be slightly subjective, I still maintain that more instructors should make exercise a part of their lessons because it makes everyone feel like a million dollars.

Maintaining Exercise in the ELL Classroom

“Only ideas won by walking have any value.”
—Friedrich Nietzsche

Studies have shown it’s best if instructors can get their students up and energized every 20 minutes (Jensen, 2008). This might seem like a difficult goal, but there are actually a number of activities that teachers can do to keep the neurotransmitter levels high and offer oxygen boosts frequently during lessons. The following are physical activities I use on a daily basis that work wonders in the classroom. (For a complete and detailed list of both physical exercises and academic-based activities to promote exercise, see my article in The ITBE Link, 41 (2), 1-8.)
Updates From the Field

The Key to Successful Language Learning: Physical Exercise (cont. from previous page)

A Walk in the Hall: As discussed in Argument #2, walking provides a great oxygen blast to the brain. So, before class starts, or even in the middle of class, it is a great idea to take your students out into the hall for a brisk two-to-three-minute walk. This activity is simple, but the physiological benefits are immense.

Classroom Exercises: Another simple yet fun and highly effective idea that increases oxygen levels in the blood is to do stretching or nano-exercises at the beginning of class and then repeat them every 20 minutes or when time allows. An example of these full-body exercises is provided in the following YouTube video link: Patrick T. Randolph’s Exercise for the Brain (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E65StVJTzVU).

Clap for Success: Everyone feels good when they are praised. That in itself “elicits a healthy flow of neurotransmitters that will help in motivating the brain to learn” (Randolph, 2013, p. 5). One great way to do this is to get your students to clap for each other when one gives a correct or creative answer. This well deserved clapping is fun, gets the blood moving, and helps the students stay focused and excited.

Gestures and Miming: Gestures and miming are wonderful ways to reinforce vocabulary. After the vocabulary terms of the day have been introduced, have the students create a gesture for each of the words, phrases, or idioms in pairs. While one partner creates a gesture, the other partner guesses the term. Then, that guessing-partner can use a gesture to define the term. The use of the gestures or body movements is also a powerful way to help the students truly learn the vocabulary items in question.

Concluding Remarks

“Our nature consists in movement.”

—Pascal

Before stepping back into your classroom this fall, I highly suggest that you reflect on the ideas presented in this article. For the more neuroscientists conduct research on how exercise helps the brain, “the more evidence we find that exercise stimulates the good chemicals, the ones that enhance mood, learning, and memory” (Jensen, 2008, p. 41). Physical activity is a great brain builder and the crucial ingredient needed in every lesson to help our students grow and, most importantly, have fun in the learning process.

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Patrick T. Randolph teaches at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where he specializes in creative and academic writing, speech, and debate. He has created a number of brain-based learning activities for the language skills that he teaches, and he continues to research current topics in neuroscience, especially studies related to exercise and learning, memory, and mirror neurons. Randolph has also been involved as a volunteer with brain-imaging experiments at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He lives with his wife, Gamze, daughter, Aylene, and cat, Gabl.

References


Updates From the Field

The Key to Successful Language Learning: Physical Exercise (cont. from previous page)

References cont.


A Three-Pronged Approach to Enhancing Student Success: Curriculum, Tutoring, and Advising

Kathy Cornman

After reviewing pass/fail rates and anecdotal feedback from both students and teachers, the English Language Program (ELP) team at the University of Michigan-Flint opened discussion surrounding the need to increase student support. Generally speaking, universities are equipped to handle academic support in the form of psychological and tutorial services. However, many are not prepared to address the unique needs of second-language learners. As a result, the ELP began to expand its student services, most specifically to address student success, retention, and matriculation. Ultimately, a three-pronged approach—curriculum revision, tutoring, and advising—was established.

Curriculum review is an ongoing process in the ELP, a Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) accredited program. Given that, the ELP team recognized that this initiative would require rethinking the basis of both program and curricular components. Assurance of reliable and consistent assessment of student achievement, thus progression through the levels, necessitated standardization of grading categories and criteria as well as the creation of in-house mid-term and final exams.

The ELP began by reviewing the Reading & Writing (RW) strand. Course objectives, student learning outcomes, and assessment were evaluated and realigned following the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). An explicit grammar component (and textbook) were integrated into all levels (six) along with designated time allotted each day for explicit grammar instruction.

Following successful implementation of the revised RW curriculum, work began on the review and revision of the Listening & Speaking (LS) strand. Consistent with the RW strand, the grading categories and criteria were standardized and the objectives and student learning outcomes were modified and aligned with the CEFR. In addition, particular emphasis was given to the need for explicit pronunciation. A pronunciation resource (textbook) was designated for each level. A class-set of textbooks was purchased allowing teachers the autonomy of tailoring the level and length of instruction to best meet the needs of a given course from term to term.

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Three-Pronged Approach (cont. from previous page)

The final curricular modification was the full integration of Civic Engagement (CE) into the LS curriculum. Preplanning for this initiative took place in the form of professional development on the part of the assistant director and academic coordinator. The academic coordinator was designated with the role and responsibility of acting as CE Coordinator. The CE coordinator began meeting with the program manager and civic engagement coordinator in the Office of University Outreach, whose mission (in part) is as follows: “The University of Michigan-Flint embraces experiential learning pedagogies because practice and evidence-based research have shown that giving students real-world experience with academic concepts is critical for students’ success as learners, future professionals and thoughtful members of the broader community.” The collaboration between departments was key to the success of such an initiative. Thus, the LS course descriptions were modified to include the following: “Students will participate in a Civic Engagement (CE) project where they will develop basic listening and speaking skills; expand their vocabulary in an authentic environment; learn basic note-taking skills; and compose a reflection of the experience” (Excerpt from LSI curriculum).

Concurrently, the academic coordinator began researching and attending professional development sessions on ELP specific tutoring and advising programs. Initially, the tutorial services were included as part of the responsibilities of the student scholars working in the program. The pilot term proved to satisfy the great interest and need for tutorial services. At the end of the term, in a debriefing session, areas in which adjustments would have to be made to better serve the student population were discussed and implemented the next term. Again, research and professional development helped to provide information and best practices to fill the voids. Once a basic proposal for a fully operational tutorial program was presented to the administration, approval was given to begin the process of hiring and training tutors.

The interview process resulted in the hire of two graduate-level students. Both tutors had experience in second language acquisition and living/studying abroad. The tutors received training prior to beginning to work with the ELP students. Tutors also underwent both formal and informal observations as well as regular meetings with the academic coordinator. As gleaned from numerous sources, promotion is key to a successful tutoring program. Thus, promotional material was created, and the academic coordinator and tutors visited each classroom to introduce themselves and promote the tutorial services. Information presented below defines the basic framework and is taken from the promotional material provided to students in the form of a brochure and verbally.

**When can I receive tutoring?**

*Monday – Thursday*

11:45am-12:45pm (during lunch)

3:45pm-4:45pm (after class)

**Why tutoring works:**

- Tutoring provides personalized, one-on-one attention.
- Tutoring gives the students a chance to ask questions.
- Tutoring creates extra study time (focused, on-task).
- Tutoring builds study skills.
- Tutoring provides opportunities for advancement.

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Three-Pronged Approach (cont. from previous page)

How to sign up:

- Students can sign up for tutoring at the front desk, in the ELP Office.
- Appointments are scheduled for 30 minutes.
- Walk-in tutoring available on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Students should arrive on time to ensure the tutorial begins on time.
- Students will lose their appointment time if they are five or more minutes late.
- All tutors will provide competent, friendly, courteous service.

What to expect from your tutors:

- Tutors will work with students in a conversational manner to improve their understanding of an assignment; develop ideas for writing; revise drafts; work on targeted areas of grammar, style, bibliography citation, formatting, vocabulary development, spelling, presentation preparation, or speech acts (discussion, conversation, or interview).
- Tutors cannot complete homework or assignments; or write, edit, or proofread papers for students.
- Tutors may use or refer students to educational software available in the ELP to help grammar, speaking, or listening tasks.
- Tutors cannot guarantee that student performance in class will improve by a certain grade or percentage points as a result of seeing a tutor (although multiple visits over time often lead to improved skills).
- Each tutor will fill out a report documenting what took place in the tutoring session.

Tutoring is designed for students to increase and foster independent learning...

Tutors have been trained to enter tutorial information into an electronic data-management system. The system is capable of creating reports which will be used for the purpose of annual reporting.

Information contained in the data bases follows below:

- First/Last Name
- Student ID
- Session Date/Time
- Tutor (by name)
- Recommendation Source
  - Assessment Specialist
  - Assistant Director
  - Academic Coordinator
Updates From the Field

Three-Pronged Approach (cont. from previous page)

* Teacher(s)
* Student-initiated

• Class
  * Reading/Writing
  * Listening/Speaking
  * Level (1-6)

• Reason
  * Teacher recommendation
  * Teacher required
  * Self-Initiated
  * Signed up/Walk-in

• Length of Session
  * 0-14 minutes
  * 15-29 minutes
  * 30-45 minutes
  * 46-60 minutes

• Session Type
  * Individual/Pair/Group

• Please check area(s) you would like student to receive help with:
  * Reading/Writing
  * Listening/Speaking
  * Classroom assignment
  * Homework
  * Grammar
  * Vocabulary
  * Test/Quiz review
  * Presentation prep
  * Other

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Three-Pronged Approach (cont. from previous page)

- Summary of session – a textbox where tutors enter a brief summary of area(s) covered and pertinent information regarding the session.

The final prong of the approach was the development of an ELP advising program. The academic coordinator researched and attended professional development workshops on the implementation of advising in ELPs. Now in its second academic year, the advising framework is as follows:

Every student is seen three times each term:

- **Initial visit** – get to know you session, establish expectations, and provide Q&A time
- **Mid-term** – review mid-term exam and grade, discuss attendance and current academic status (discussion is framed as encouragement to continue excelling or to seek tutoring to boost performance)
- **Final** – review final exam and grade, summarize academic status, and prepare for the next phase (promotion to next level, preparation to matriculate)
- **Other** – discuss issues such as poor attendance, personal problems...

Advising records are kept in an electronic data management system (like tutoring) that is both user friendly and generates reports making statistical analysis and reporting easily accomplished.

To date, the ELP has witnessed these initiatives move from the pilot phase to becoming more developed and integrated deeper into its student services. Monitoring all aspects of the initiatives continues in an effort to make necessary improvements and adjustments. Administrative and student satisfaction has been positive. The early results of these initiatives working in combination are favorable.

The ELP has seen an increase in student retention, success and matriculation, through an engaging and consistent curriculum; tutorial support for students lagging behind or eager to improve at a more rapid pace; and, finally, academic and personal advising to ensure that all aspects of the students' health and well-being are supported.

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Drawing Language Goals in Adult ESL

Aiman Wesley Mueller

This past winter I taught a beginner adult ESL class at the Literacy Center of West Michigan in Grand Rapids. Future 2: English for Results by Lynn el al. constituted a portion of the curriculum. One especially effective expansion activity called “Goal Visualization: Where, Who, What” asks students to draw their language goal (Diaz et al., 2010, p. 249). I provided scaffolding and adjustments suitable for my particular students and the activity could be adapted variously for a wide range of levels. At the level of my students, the process of the assignment gave students a nonverbal means of reflecting on and expressing their language progress and goals, which are important relative to motivation and participation in English education in general. As well, the assignment asks students to present their work, which gives them a sense of pride. Sharing their goals also works toward building a community and raising mutual awareness within the classroom. Altogether, this simple assignment was well worth the benefits, which were felt all through the rest of the semester.

The process of the assignment is quite simple. I opened up the class to discussion of language goals giving and taking examples until most or all students had some ideas. I then gave students colored paper and pens to draw themselves in a place and with people where and with whom they would like to speak improved English. The alternative conceptualization was to draw the situation where improved English would take them. Some students launched into the drawing quickly while others were best served by some one-on-one guidance.

When most of the students had completed their drawings I asked each, one at a time, to come to the front of the room. I would use the ELMO to project each student’s drawing as he or she explained it to the class. That part of the assignment meant a lot to the students and may have even increased the significance of their own goals to themselves.

As a final step, I gave the students a scant handout with spaces for their names and the date and then the start of three sentences: In my English goal picture, I am (at) . . .; I am talking with . . .; We are talking about . . .. That step was not only a means of learning language and transferring the reflection process from image to written words, but it also served as a means of recording their ideas to share in this very article.

The student who drew the picture to the left writes, “In my English goal picture, I am outside school. I am talking with my friend. We are talking about how are you and do you have homework, study.”
Drawing Language Goals in Adult ESL (cont. from previous page)

In the next picture (left) there is a house with a leaky roof; a bucket is put down to catch the drips. The student’s writing is less clear, but he is taking directions from his boss on what needs to be fixed in the house his construction company is working on. He asks his boss clarifying questions and understands the responses quickly.

In the last sample (below), the student represented two goals. On one side she shows herself understanding an activity in her ESL class. On the other, she shows her children asking her questions and herself being able to answer and help them. She writes, “In my English goal picture, I am at school and home. I am talking with teacher and help my children. We are talking about answer a question.”

Other students showed themselves using English comfortably in various workplaces, with doctors and nurses in the hospital, and in the neighborhoods socializing. Every ESL student wants to improve his or her English abilities, and this assignment is oriented toward language acquisition in that it requires speaking, listening, and writing. More importantly, this assignment was an easy way to help students more clearly connect their classroom work with their individual lives outside the classroom. It was clearly an engaging and rewarding activity.

References


Aiman Wesley Mueller is a writing instructor at Grand Valley State University and does additional contract work in ESL. As well, he is an editor, including a co-editor of MITESOL Messages.
Reflections on a Practicum at the University of Hradec Králové, the Czech Republic

Adam Kavetsky

When people ask me about my experience teaching in the Czech Republic, I have one stock answer: that beer was cheaper than water. When I truly reflect on my experience, especially the role that the International Exchange/Erasmus Student Network Buddy System (ESN) played, I can say that friendship flowed like such liquid.

The International ESN Buddy system is a non-profit organization across many European universities that has the mission of ensuring that Exchange/Erasmus students not only have social events and other cultural outings to participate in, but that there is also a network of people from many different countries that come together to laugh, learn, and help each other in need. The network provided newly arrived international students a contact person or “buddy” who had the job of helping the student get settled in and oriented with their new surroundings. The network also created many culturally enriching experiences including trips to nearby and famous cities, weekly student presentations on their home countries, and sightseeing adventures at low cost. More than the culturally enriching activities that the ESN Buddy System organized, it created a cohort of international students and native Czech students that turned a possibly lonely experience in a strange land into a world-expanding adventure.

My personal practicum experience was notably different than others’ who have previously taught overseas as part of their M.A. TESOL studies. I arrived in the country a week late and missed out on many orientation activities that the ESN Buddy System had organized for incoming international students. Within two weeks of my arrival I became very sick and was out of commission for several weeks following, causing me to miss out on many cultural and social experiences organized by the ESN Buddy System. Still, the resource of the ongoing ESN Buddy System was an immense help to me when I needed to know important locations and available services in town. The liaisons at the University of Hradec Králové were very understanding and allowed me ample time to recover. At the same time, the “buddies” provided invaluable comfort and encouragement during a difficult time.

The actual practicum experience itself was very positive and was enriched by the presence of other international and native Czech students in the ESN Buddy System who were also studying or teaching English. I taught at two primary schools and had rather different experiences between them, which I was able to reflect upon with teaching or English-studying colleagues. At one school, it was more of a co-teaching experience with a lot of feedback and planning going into each lesson. At the other school, I had a much more autonomous teaching experience, in which I was given a quality textbook to teach from and had to do very little prep. My fellow teachers in the ESN Buddy System were very helpful to bounce ideas off of and to gain illumination on the Czech educational system. The most memorable experiences were in my discussion classes, possibly due to the age range of the students: 13-15 (which is close to the age of some of the younger students in the ESN Buddy System); this provided some insight to the Czech youth culture. I got to know some very bright kids at both schools and some unforgettable “buddies” through the ESN Buddy System. I experienced exceptional response from many of the students who were as excited to speak with a native English speaker as were many of my fellow international students. This practicum experience was immeasurably enriched by the International ESN Buddy system. I met many diverse individuals and made friends from all over the world whom I will never forget while creating many true stories to tell.

Adam Kavetsky has earned his M.A. TESOL degree at Eastern Michigan University and can be reached at akavetsky@gmail.com
Farewell

Dear Friends and Colleagues of MITESOL,

My family and I would like to offer a heartfelt handshake and hug of gratitude for all of your support during the past three years. It has been a great honor and a fantastic experience to work with you and learn from you at the various inspiring statewide conferences like MITESOL, Ferris State’s Lighthouse Symposium, and MSU’s National Geographic Learning Symposium. I have sincerely appreciated what these conferences have done for my professional and spiritual development. Yes, without doubt, MITESOL and the MITESOLers throughout the great state of Michigan have been extremely supportive, inspiring, and a genuinely great group of colleagues.

I would like to give a special thank you to Joseph I. Ruppert for being a major motivating force who brought us here in 2012. Dave Ragan never missed any of my presentations—near or far—for three consecutive years. Former MITESOL President, Jeanine Clever, also deserves a special bow of thanks for her dedication and for her help in making our time here precious and unforgettable. And I would also like to thank the editors of the MITESOL Messages and Proceedings for their great work: Aiman W. Mueller, Allie Piippo, Ildiko Porter-Szucs and Marian Gonsior.

I have accepted a senior lectureship at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln, and have begun my duties there as of the 17th of August, 2015. My family and I are looking forward to the new adventure. I will, however, maintain my MITESOL membership and will most likely see all of you once more at this year’s MITESOL Conference at MSU.

Thank you again for a most wonderful three-year experience of great teaching ideas and special friendships. My family and I certainly appreciate all of you.

Patrick T. Randolph