President’s Corner

Dear MITESOL Members,

Happy summer! It has been a warm one! I hope this newsletter finds you well. I know not everyone gets a vacation in the summer, but I hope you all have had some time to enjoy the warmer season, and to enjoy time with friends and family or just time to yourselves.

It was a pleasure to see many of you in April in Baltimore. The TESOL Convention was a good one, by most reports (I know I found plenty to attend and do), and MITESOL hosted another fun evening for our members and our old friends.

The Camden Pub was a rustic, fun location with great food and an endless flow of beer. We can’t always treat to so much free fare, but this year we found a good deal. Thanks to Pat and the Camden Pub!

By now you know that Jolene Jaquays is the 2016 Conference Chair and President-Elect. Jolene helped me get and keep this reception organized and flowing well. Thanks, partner!

Our President-Elect, Jolene Jaquays, with Sara Okello, with whom Jolene has often presented. Sara is no longer in Michigan, so the MITESOL reception was a great place for them to show off their smiles together. Thanks for your years of involvement and service to MITESOL, Sara!

(continued on next page)
President’s Corner (cont. from previous page)

We were able to host more than 90 people in the two upstairs rooms at the Pub. Seafood chowder, some spicy chicken in a variety of forms, and other tasty treats were enjoyed by all comers.

Our own Josie Pickens was surrounded by friends from Eastern Michigan University for a portion of the evening. From the left they are Jenna Bol linger, Josie, Bethany Preston, Martina Syrova, and Thom Cullen.

We will have more of the reception photos for your enjoyment on our MITESOL website.

Colleen (Past Pres) managing conversation and tasty treats with aplomb.

(continued on next page)
As in past years, your MITESOL volunteer leadership has spent time working towards our goals of increasing membership and all that’s involved with pulling off an excellent fall conference. In fact, we’ve already planned ahead to 2017 and 2018, but we’ll save that for now.

Many of the features that last year’s fearless leader, then President Colleen Brice, and the Board were able to put in place remain in place this year. We have an active Twitter account, a Facebook page, a continually renewed home page, and an online registration system for presenters that helps streamline many of the processes.

Each of the three grants Colleen put in place last year still stands: (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 (two awards). Each grant covers the recipient’s conference registration fees while the UP grant also offers an award of $300 toward travel expenses. (See the MITESOL website for details.) If you’re interested in any of these grants, your application must be received by September 1st of this year.

This year MITESOL will again offer State Continuing Education Clock Hours (SCECHs) for conference attendance. K-12 educators can earn up to 10 SCECHs for attending MITESOL 2016. For more information, please refer to the SCECHs section of the 2016 Conference website.

This year’s Fall Conference will be held at the U of M-Flint campus, organized by President-elect Jolene Jaquays. Our theme this year is diversity, more specifically “The Changing Faces of Diversity.” We’ll have some old friends speaking to us: Professor Diane Larsen-Freeman is one of our keynote speakers! I know we will enjoy hearing from her! Jolene has some other surprises worked out for you, so I won’t spoil them all now. Let’s just say that there will be chances to interact and have some fun, as well as develop your professional résumé.

This year, thanks to my position as President and thanks to TESOL, I was able to attend a preconference day at TESOL in Baltimore dedicated to the TESOL affiliates. Among the many ideas discussed and concepts I discovered is one that I will pursue next year: forming a MITESOL foundation. Once this current year is behind us, I will be looking for interested parties to help me in the quest to establish a foundation that can help both our MITESOL organization and TESOL professionals throughout the State of Michigan in their professional development.

There are always interesting ideas percolating within the MITESOL organization. Several positions will come available for fall of 2017. If you’re interested in getting involved, talk to your SIG leaders, your Board members, or any of those who have been involved in MITESOL for some time to see how you can get involved. MITESOL will grow as we all grow; come and grow with your MITESOL organization!

Till the Conference!

Andrew S. McCullough (Andy), President
Greetings fellow MITESOLers,

I (Aiman) am halfway through tornado cleanup as we write this. You can see what I have left to do in the pic below. No injuries or deaths, but, as seen to the right, cleanup will be more extensive for some.

Thankfully, the newsletter is still in order with our president starting things off with a number of pics from the MITESOL reception at big TESOL. A couple pages ahead is our Secretary’s indispensable quick listing of board activities, but not before the layout of our board as well as bios of candidates for the Conference Chair and Membership Coordinator positions.

Those won’t be the only changes coming. Appointed positions soon to be vacated are Secretary, PD SIG Leader, and both Newsletter Co-Editor positons. Yes, that means both Ildi and I are stepping aside for the time being. Thanks are in order yet again because several talented individuals have already stepped forward for at least some of those positions. The field has a dedicated constituent in Michigan!

Don’t miss the preview of the 2016 MITESOL Conference on page 7. That’s followed by details of a travel grant offered by MITESOL and then several SIG (special interest group) updates. (More grants are described on p. 3.) You’ll also want to check out the write up of the Policy and Advocacy Summit, where our board members were able to discuss important issues in TESOL with MI politicians in DC.

If you haven’t heard, MITESOL now has a journal and the deadline for submissions to the inaugural issue has been extended. See page 16.

We then cover a lot of territory in our field updates. President-Elect, Jolene Jaquays, goes to Mexico, Chandler Lach goes to Greece, and Jeannine Lorenger stays right here in the US to tell us about collaboration among international and American students. To round out the issue, Stacy Tanner connects with ELs’ families and Emily Feuerherm looks at the needs (language and otherwise) of immigrants in Flint.

Best regards,

Aiman W. Mueller & Ildi Porter-Szucs
MITESOL Messages Co-Editors
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ildips@yahoo.com
**MITESOL News**

**MITESOL Leadership 2015-2016**

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

**Candidate for MITESOL President-Elect & 2017 Conference Chair:**

Suzanne Toohey, M.A., is currently the ESL/Title III Consultant for Oakland Schools and a member of the MDE Title III Advisory Council. She earned her Master’s degree in Bilingual/Multicultural Education from Northern Arizona University and has taught English in a variety of contexts over the past two decades. Her interest in second language acquisition began while serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in Central America. Suzanne has held positions on MITESOL’s Executive and Advisory Boards in the past, so she brings with her a great deal of relevant experience.

**Candidate for MITESOL Membership Coordinator:**

Mary Klaus, M.A., is an ESL instructor at Saginaw Valley State University and Northwood University. She also tutors international students and families in Midland, Michigan. Her instructional and research interests include creating original materials for reading and writing classes based on film and literature, assessment design, and educational technology. Previously, Mary served on the board of Louisiana TESOL and has helped plan many state and regional conferences focusing on ESL and educational technology.
Ellen Brengle, Secretary

Once again, our February and May board meetings were characterized by jam-packed agendas.

February’s main focus is always to decide on the next October’s MITESOL conference theme, and to begin making the many lists of arrangements and responsibilities. However, President-Elect, Jolene Jaquays, attended our meeting with an amazing amount of thought and preparation already undertaken for that conference. Her eminently timely theme of “The Changing Faces of Diversity” was approved, as were her prodigious selections for keynote, plenary, and invited speakers. Also suggested were several creative ideas for a conference logo. Additionally, extensive plans already made with the beautiful Riverfront Banquet Center, now a part of the UM-Flint, were outlined for the board. As a newer attraction, the 2016 conference will see the return of poster presentations, a popular mode among many presenters, including college students.

Other discussions, decisions, and accomplishments from the February and May meetings included the following:

- Our move from the MITESOL Conference Proceedings publication to the online MITESOL Journal, capably edited by Marian Gonsior of Madonna and Kay Losey and Christen Pearson of GVSU
- Extending our use of social media to inform colleagues and students about MITESOL and our annual conference, thanks to Josie Pickens, Social Media Coordinator
- Successful MITESOL reception at Camden Pub during the TESOL conference in Baltimore, organized by board president, Andy McCullough
- Marckwardt Travel Award given to Laura Eickhoff, MA student at MSU
- Movement of August board meeting to early September
- Unanimous vote to allow all board members in attendance at board meetings to vote (rather than just the executive board)
- Search for international sister organization to be undertaken by Ildi Porter-Szucs, Newsletter Co-Editor, during her stay in Eastern Europe next school year
- Continued urging by Past-President, Colleen Brice, to establish a mentoring system for incoming presidents in organizing a conference, using the Wild Apricot online conference and exhibitor registration, as well as OpenConf for proposals
- Presentation at TESOL by Courtney King, our MITESOL Best of Affiliates winner
- Attendance at the upcoming annual Advocacy Summit in Alexandria, VA by Sharon Umlor, Advocacy & Policy SIG Leader, and Trisha Dowling, Webmaster
- Decision to ask SIG Leaders again this year to give a short presentation, followed by discussion at MITESOL 2016 SIG Meetings Addition of two new MITESOL board members, Mary Klaus from Northwood University and SVSU as our new Membership Coordinator, and Austin Kaufmann from MSU’s English Language Institute as our new CALL SIG Leader—Thank you, and welcome to you both!
# MITESOL News

## 2016 Conference Preview, October 14-15

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
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| **Friday night: Keynote Speaker:** Diane Larsen-Freeman  
"The Power of Diversity in a Complex World"  
- Professor Emerita, University of Michigan  
- Research Scientist Emerita, English Language Institute, University of Michigan  
- Professor Emerita, SIT Graduate Institute  
- Senior Visiting Fellow, University of Pennsylvania | 7:00 p.m.    | Expo Hall                 |
| **Friday night: Family Feud – MITESOL style** | 8:15 p.m. |                           |
| **Friday night: Photo Booth – How Do You Represent Diversity?** | 8:15 p.m. |                           |
| **Friday night: MITESOL 2016 Reception** | 9:00 p.m. |                           |
| **After Friday's Keynote Speech,** we will be hosting a reception, featuring a buffet of hors d'oeuvres and music for dancing provided by **Happy Ogre Entertainment** | |                           |
| **Saturday: Featured Speaker:** Fatima Salemassi  
"The Right to Learn English: A Case Study"  
- World Languages Program, Director  
  Language, Literature, Communication & Writing, Madonna University | 10:00 a.m. |                           |
| **Saturday: Plenary Speaker:** Heidi Vellenga  
"Promoting Learner Identity and Respecting Diversity Through Instructed Interlanguage Pragmatics: Helping Learners Become Themselves in a Second Language"  
- Assistant Director,  
  CEA: Commission on English Language Program Accreditation | 1:00 p.m. |                           |

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<th>Friday Welcome:</th>
<th>Friday Invited Presenter:</th>
<th>Saturday Invited Speaker:</th>
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| **Barbara Avery**  
Vice Chancellor for Campus Inclusion and Student Life, Office of the Chancellor, University of Michigan-Flint | **Justin Slocum Bailey**  
Operator of Indwelling Language | **Char Davenport**  
Transgender activist in Michigan, part-time professor of English |
The Michigan Albert H. Marckwardt Travel Grant

Purpose
To support Michigan graduate student attendance at the annual TESOL International Convention & English Language Expo, MITESOL offers a Michigan Albert H. Marckwardt Travel Grant to one graduate student member, who has applied for but not received a TESOL International Albert H. Marckwardt Travel Grant.

Award
The equivalent of the conference registration fee for a student member.

Eligibility
To apply, you must:

- be currently enrolled as a student in a TESOL/Applied Linguistics/SLA or related graduate degree program in Michigan,
- be a member of MITESOL and TESOL International,
- have submitted a complete application for the Albert H. Marckwardt Travel Grant to TESOL International (by TESOL's deadline, November 1, annually), and
- have received a rejection letter in response to your application for a TESOL International Marckwardt Travel Grant.

Criteria
Applicants are evaluated according to TESOL International’s Marckwardt Travel Grant criteria, which include: your scholarship, personal attributes, involvement in and commitment to the profession (e.g., presenting and volunteering at MITESOL's conference, serving on the board, etc.), and financial need.

To Apply
Applications must include the following:

- a copy of the ≤1000-word essay/personal statement you wrote for the International Marckwardt Travel Grant (describing your current program of study and scholarship, future career plans, teaching experience, involvement in ESL organizations, and financial situation),
- a copy of the letter of recommendation you submitted for the International Marckwardt Grant, and
- a copy of the rejection letter you received from TESOL International’s Marckwardt Grant Committee (this can be sent to us later).

EMAIL all of these items—saved as PDF files & ATTACHED to your email message—to:

Andy McCullough, MITESOL President, at: mccullo4@msu.edu

Deadline
Applications must be EMAILED no later than February 1, 2017, 11:59 p.m. EST

Questions?
Contact Andy McCullough, MITESOL President, at mccullo4@msu.edu
MITESOL News

Post-Secondary SIG Update

Cynthia Macknish, Post-Secondary SIG Leader

It is hard to believe another academic year is over with another one soon to begin! I hope you all have been able to rest and/or achieve your goals for the summer.

The goals of this SIG include: promoting recognition of ESL as an established academic discipline, promoting professional standards and practices, communicating professional development opportunities, promoting research on pertinent issues, discussing issues relevant to ESL in higher education, etc. To those ends, I encourage you to contribute to this community by sharing current research, new publications, relevant ideas, upcoming events, useful resources, and comments on issues that may be of interest to our SIG. Please send your articles and contributions to cmacknis@emich.edu, and I will make sure they are shared.

On my part, I would like to share some issues for reflection and remind you of some upcoming events.

Issues for Reflection:

1. Should we be worried about the future of TESOL/ESL programs at America’s public universities in light of frequent budget cuts? (read more at: https://theconversation.com/what-berkeleys-budget-cuts-tell-us-about-americas-public-universities-54997)

2. How will the transition from NCLB (No Child Left Behind) to ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) affect TESOL Teacher Education programs? (view more at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p05nPGSbSyY&feature=youtu.be)

3. Will Brexit have any effect on enrolment at our post-secondary institutions if the pound continues to drop in value? (read more at: http://mjdennisconsulting.com/2016/07/brexit-potential-implications-higher-education/)

4. What impacts do you think there will be on post-secondary TESOL/ESL programs given the rumblings of immigration policy changes as we gear up for the US election? (read more at: http://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2016-03-14/two-parties-two-radically-different-visions-on-immigration)

5. Are predatory publishers increasing in number? How cautious do we need to be about submitting our work to language journals? See Beall’s list for 2016 at: https://scholarlyoa.com/2016/01/05/bealls-list-of-predatory-publishers-2016/.

For more issues, check out TESOL Higher Education Interest Section News at http://newsmanager.commpartners.com/tesolheis/issues/2016-06-02/email.html

Upcoming Events:


(continued on next page)
MITESOL News

Post-Secondary SIG Update (cont. from previous page)

- TESOL Calendar of Events: [https://www.tesol.org/attend-and-learn/calendar-of-events](https://www.tesol.org/attend-and-learn/calendar-of-events)

I look forward to seeing you all at the SIG meeting at the MITESOL conference in October where we will discuss issues relating to diversity at post-secondary institutions.

Here's wishing you all the best for an exciting and productive semester ahead.

CALL SIG Update

Austin Kaufmann

As MITESOL’s newly appointed CALL SIG Leader, the first thing I did was dig into the membership database to find out who all was involved with the CALL SIG. I was disheartened to discover that we only had seven people who had CALL as their primary SIG affiliation and 18 with CALL as their secondary affiliation. For a state TESOL affiliation with nearly 400 members, that is pretty meager, to put it mildly. Considering that e-learning now permeates language learning and language instruction in almost every type of setting, the CALL SIG group should be an active, vibrant group.

It is my plan to try to grow the CALL SIG, both in reach and in involvement, and I look forward to collaborating with others who share a love for Computer Assisted Language Learning. Whether you are a member of the CALL SIG or not, I encourage you to take this [very brief online survey](http://www.tesol.org/attend-and-learn/calendar-of-events) which I will share at the CALL SIG Meeting in October, and which will be used to inform decisions about future directions for this SIG.

Contact information: akauf@msu.edu 517.884.4325

Austin Kaufmann is an ESL instructor and an Ed Tech Specialist at MSU’s English Language Center. His interests include pronunciation instruction, materials creation, and the integration of educational technology into the classroom. He also plans the annual National Geographic Learning | Michigan State University Learning Symposium. You may recognize him as a member of the band Gerund and the Infinitives.
Hi Everyone,

I hope you are all having a wonderful summer! Included below are some resources and updates to help you stay connected and informed during the summer break.

**Grant Opportunity**

**MITESOL Adult Education Professionals Conference Grant:** Funding is available through MITESOL to support the conference registration fee for one adult education professional to attend the 2016 MITESOL Conference, *The Changing Faces of Diversity*, October 14-15 at the University of Michigan, Flint. The application deadline is **September 1, 2016**. For more information on how to apply, please visit: [http://www.mitesol.org/page-1856126](http://www.mitesol.org/page-1856126)

**Updates**

**WIOA Final Regulations Made Publicly Available (June 2016):** [https://www.doleta.gov/wioa/Final_Rules_Resources.cfm](https://www.doleta.gov/wioa/Final_Rules_Resources.cfm)

The U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education made five final rules for implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) available to the public. Information on the final rule for Title II of WIOA: Programs and Activities Authorized by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act can be found at [http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/wioa-aefla-final-rule.pdf](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/wioa-aefla-final-rule.pdf).

**Resources**


Explodes the accomplishments of the Immigration Act, including creation of the Temporary Protected Status and diversity visa program as well as its shortcomings since inception in 1990.

**iAmerica Explanation of the U.S. Supreme Court’s DAPA decision (June 2016):** [http://iamerica.org/dapa-decision-explained](http://iamerica.org/dapa-decision-explained)

Helpful summary and infographic regarding the impact of the U.S. Supreme Court’s 4-4 tie over a lawsuit brought by Texas to the Deferred Action for Parents of American Citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) and expanded Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) immigration programs.

**Innovation and Opportunity Network (ION) Community of Practice:** [https://ion.workforcegps.org/](https://ion.workforcegps.org/)

ION is a national, regional, state, and local alliance that makes available the technical assistance, information sharing, and training needed to implement the vision of WIOA. The website includes announcements, blogs, discussion topics, and a resource library.

**National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) WIOA Resources:** [http://www.nawb.org/wioa_resources.asp](http://www.nawb.org/wioa_resources.asp)

A listing of key WIOA documents, intergovernmental organization resources, U.S. Department of Labor guidance, and other helpful links.
MITESOL News

**Adult Education SIG Update (cont. from previous page)**

**Professional Development Opportunities**

**Literacy Center of West Michigan's Community Literacy Summit:** [http://literacycenterwm.org/programs/community-literacy-initiative/summit/](http://literacycenterwm.org/programs/community-literacy-initiative/summit/)

September 16, 2016 at Grand Rapids Community College in Grand Rapids, Michigan from 8:30am – 12pm. General admission is $20.

**National Center for Families Learning Together Summit:** [http://familieslearning.org/our-capabilities/summit.html](http://familieslearning.org/our-capabilities/summit.html)

October 17-19, 2016 at the Renaissance Center in Detroit, Michigan. Registration is $500.

If you have any suggestions or information for the next Adult Education SIG Update, I would love to hear from you! Please contact Casey Thelenwood at thelecas@gvsu.edu.

Thank you.

**K-12 SIG Update**

**Stacy Tanner, K-12 SIG Leader**

**Newcomer Toolkit**

The White House announced “Bright Spots” for welcoming and expanding opportunities for linguistic integration and education at the end of June. The announcement identified a list of resources including the introduction of the **U.S. Department of Education’s Newcomer Toolkit** designed to help schools support immigrants, refugees, and their families with a successful integration process. This toolkit provides information, resources, and examples of effective practices that educators can use to support newcomers in our schools and communities. You can access the full document here: [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/new-comer-toolkit/ncomertoolkit.pdf](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/new-comer-toolkit/ncomertoolkit.pdf)

**Entrance/Exit Protocol**

In May 2016, Michigan’s English Learner Entrance and Exit Protocol was updated to reflect changes in the kindergarten entrance protocol and the use of local assessments for exiting purposes as recommended by the EL Advisory Committee in March 2016. See the complete document here: [www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Entrance_and_Exit_Protocol_updated_May_2016_526457_7.docx](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Entrance_and_Exit_Protocol_updated_May_2016_526457_7.docx)
Awareness into Action: Policy and Advocacy Summit

Sharon Umlor, Advocacy & Policy SIG, and Trisha Dowling, Webmaster

On June 19-21, 2016, MITESOL affiliate representatives Sharon Umlor and Trisha Dowling joined approximately 75 other TESOL educators and members of TESOL International Association in Washington, DC for the 2016 TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit. The program featured two full days of issue briefings and activities around education legislation and advocacy, followed by a day of visits to Congressional offices on Capitol Hill. With representatives from approximately 30 US affiliates in attendance, the goals of the Summit were not only to learn more about federal policy issues impacting TESOL educators and English learners, but also to provide an interactive learning experience for participants on elements of advocacy. By the end of the event, TESOL members had visited the offices of more than 100 representatives and senators.

To fully prepare for the Summit, participants needed to complete several important tasks before arriving in Washington, DC. For example, participants needed to schedule meetings with their congressional representatives. For many, this was a first. To assist with this, the TESOL International Association provided directions, guidance, and a list of specific representatives and senators to contact. MITESOL members Sharon and Trisha found it a surprisingly simple process to request meetings with senators and representatives via emailing formal request letters through the legislators' respective websites. The legislators' staff members were quick to respond and set up appointments to meet either directly with the representative or one of their legislative assistants if they were not available. Phone calls were made to each legislator’s D.C. offices the week before the summit to confirm the meetings.

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

(continued on next page)
Policy and Advocacy Summit (cont. from previous page)

Participants also received background information on key policy issues so that they could begin to familiarize themselves in advance. To help make their congressional meetings more effective, participants were encouraged to share their own experiences as English educators to give the representatives a “snapshot” of what challenges ELs face in their shared communities and state. Both Trisha and Sharon are Adult EL educators, so the topics of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Higher Education Act (HEA), and comprehensive immigration reform were important conversation points with the representatives.

The summit featured a keynote from Dr. Johan Uvin, Acting Assistant Secretary for Career, Technical, and Adult Education at the U.S. Department of Education. In addition, representatives from the Office for Civil Rights and the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) at the U.S. Department of Education, as well as the Student & Exchange Visitor Program at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, each presented updates from their offices. The Summit also included presentations from the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, and author Dr. Diane Staehr Fenner, who presented information from her book Advocating for English Learners: A Guide for Educators.

One especially inspirational part of the WIOA presentation by OCTAE’s Johan Uvin was when he urged attendees to be leaders and take action by getting out of our comfort zones and reaching out to connect with community groups we might not otherwise think could be helpful—such as non-education-based organizations, social organizations, and businesses. This advice was in response to the fact that not only is there the present challenge of accommodating those adult ELs with a spectrum of low and high literacy levels, but also that there is the literacy challenge of the future in which young ELs are not being prepared appropriately for the future. Uvin said, “We have a shared responsibility to create shared accountability.”

Another very informative session from AFT’s Cesar Moreno Perez explained how the President’s executive actions Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) are impacting our immigrant ELs. There are 65,000 undocumented students who graduate from high school each year, but only 5-10% of them go on to higher education. When asked how to convince people that DACA and DAPA are beneficial to the greater good of society, Moreno Perez urged attendees to talk about the positive economic impact this population has in the country: With the DACA recipients, we have already invested time and money in these students; and with the DAPA recipients, they are already contributing to our tax and social security systems.

While the Summit briefings were very helpful toward understanding the effects of policies on ELs, the focus then shifted to preparing attendees for their meetings with members of Congress. There were talking-point resources addressing current legislation handed out, panel conversations of past attendees to give advice on what to expect at the meetings, and even a role play of an actual congressional meeting to highlight appropriate etiquette. One of the most helpful bits of advice was to not be disappointed if you didn’t have the opportunity to speak directly to the legislator. Attendees were urged to take advantage of speaking to the legislator’s staff when available since they have quite a lot of influence on how information is processed in the congressional offices.

After all the preparation, on June 21, participants went to Capitol Hill to have meetings with members of Congress and staff. MITESOL advocacy leaders Sharon Umlor and Trisha Dowling met with staff from the offices of Senator Debbie Stabenow, Senator Gary Peters, Representative Justin Amash (3rd Dist.), and Representative Debbie Dingell (12th Dist.). In all the meetings, Michigan statistics about ELs were shared as well as personal experience as educators in order to give a “day-in-the-life” understanding of success stories and challenges EL students and teachers face. Representatives and their staff were most impacted by the reality that Michigan is one of seven states in the nation in which ELs increased by over 100% from 2004 to 2012.
Policy and Advocacy Summit  (cont. from previous page)

In meetings with Senators Stabenow and Peters, “asks” were made to have them support the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), aid adult education’s WIOA Educational Family Literacy Act (Title II) by supporting the President’s FY2017 budget request of $607 million, and continue to support the Department of Education as it advises on the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). When visiting with the representatives, it was not only important to educate and share with them the issues we were advocating for, but also to encourage a focused effort of legislative action by asking them to promote passage of current bills.

Conversations with Representative’s Amash and Dingell’s legislative assistants centered on the former topics, as well as “asks” to cosponsor three bills currently introduced in the House of Representatives: (1) Strengthen and Unite Communities with Civics Education and English Development (SUCCEED) Act of 2015, (2) Save Teachers of Adults from Paying out of Their Livelihood for Education Resources (STAPLER) Act of 2016, and (3) Families Learning and Understanding English Together (FLUENT) Act of 2016.

Every senator, representative, and staff member we met throughout the day was extremely welcoming, as well as appropriately receptive to the concerns presented. They were interested to learn about the issues affecting ELs, and most were eager to have currently proposed legislation brought to their attention as being crucial to ELs’ needs. One staff member specifically asked us to alert the legislator’s office when desired legislation arises because they need to know what their constituents want.

Overall, the summit was an inspirational experience. It was exciting and eye-opening to realize that since our representatives work for us, they are not untouchable. In fact, they are quite accessible and willing to listen. It is up to us as constituents and EL educators to be aware of what we and our students need, as well as to cultivate our knowledge of the local, state, and national government systems, carrying through on our inclinations to act. Together. As Johan Uvin said, “We have a shared responsibility to create shared accountability.”

Highlights from the 2016 TESOL Advocacy and Policy Summit can be found here.
MITESOL Journal Call for Manuscripts

Deadline Extended!

The MITESOL Journal: An Online Publication of MITESOL is a refereed academic journal that will be published online twice a year. Its mission is to promote excellence in TESOL education and teacher development. Articles in the MITESOL Journal focus on research studies, issues in the field of TESOL, and theoretically grounded discussions of teaching methods and pedagogy. Articles may consider any educational level or context, from kindergarten to university and from adult school and community literacy programs to workplace literacy settings. The co-editors of the MITESOL Journal are Marian Woyciehowicz Gonsior, Kay M. Losey, and Christen M. Pearson.

If you’ve never published before or wish to add a double blind, peer-reviewed journal publication to your CV, the MITESOL Journal is the perfect venue for your work. We regard all members of our readership as potential authors: preschool teachers to college professors, those new to scholarly publication as well as those who have experience publishing their work. While the MITESOL Journal is a refereed journal, it also is a mentoring journal. Editors will work with authors of accepted manuscripts until they are ready for publication. Submission is open to all; authors do not need to be members of the MITESOL organization to submit a manuscript.

We are currently reviewing manuscripts for the inaugural issue of the MITESOL Journal, which we anticipate publishing Fall 2016. We seek manuscripts for the following categories of submissions:

- Research papers,
- Issues in TESOL articles,
- Research-based teaching techniques, and
- Book or material reviews.

Manuscripts based on presentations at the 2015 MITESOL Conference are strongly encouraged.

For detailed descriptions and examples of the differing types of articles we will publish, see the MITESOL Journal information on the MITESOL website: [www.mitesol.org/MITESOL-Journal](http://www.mitesol.org/MITESOL-Journal). Information on how and where to submit your manuscript is also at this location.

If you have additional questions, please contact Dawn Evans, Submissions Editor, MITESOL Journal, evansda@gvsu.edu.
Mi Tiempo en Puebla, Mexico (My Time in Puebla, Mexico)

Jolene Jaquays

Every semester new students arrive to our IEP. Most of them have just flown in days before we expect them to take a placement exam and sit and listen for hours at orientation. Our students are tired, homesick, and experiencing a bit of culture shock. How long has it been since most of us have traveled to another country to live, not just to visit?

I think we take for granted that our students are young adults and can handle whatever faces them. Unfortunately, most of our students come with minimal experience and minimal control of the English language. Many of them are traveling alone for the first time. My experience in Mexico this summer really opened my eyes and will surely have an impact on how I greet and treat students. I discuss the trip in this article, but I’ve also produced a video you can watch by clicking here.

I had the great fortune to be an invited professor at la Universidad Madero (UMAD) in Puebla/Cholula, Mexico. Although I taught high school Spanish for 20 years and had been to Mexico a handful of times before as part of tour groups or on vacation, this was the first time I actually lived on my own in a foreign country.

My trip began with my travel to Mexico. Fortunately, the coordinator at UMAD took care of purchasing my tickets. All I had to do was enter my flight information, and I was off. Unfortunately, I was off to wait as my flight was detained due to weight. As a result, I missed my connecting flight in Houston. “Houston, we have a problem” has new meaning for me now. I was rescheduled to fly stand-by on a flight a few hours later. During that time I grabbed a bite to eat and charged my phone. All the while I was trying to maintain contact with the people who would be meeting me at the airport. After numerous exchanges of messages, I finally had to inform them that an announcement had just been made that all flights (arriving and departing) were canceled due to a storm. At that time, I incurred the added expense of an unanticipated hotel stay. It was that or spend nearly 20 hours guarding my carry-on luggage while trying to catch a few hours of sleep.

I have had students write their “coming to America” stories, and many have included similar situations. I can only imagine the added frustration of going through it with the unfamiliarity of a new place and language.

Food is also typically unfamiliar. Even if many of the products are the same, the name brands are often different. Finding food to please one’s palate can present a challenge. I always used to encourage my international students to try new things to eat—“You’ll like it.” Although I knew I would have to adjust to a very different array of foods (and their preparation), I sought out familiar food: quesadillas, lasagna, hot cakes, omelets, and club sandwiches at Chili’s. And even though the food was similar, the pizza, for example, was not exactly the same. I put on my “big girl pants” and tried some new foods (a big step for this picky eater). Some I liked; others I tolerated or did not like at all.

Directly related to the new foods was my reaction to the foods. Sometimes new foods did not agree with me, and I became ill. It only took me four days in Puebla before I met the infamous Montezuma. For my first day of teaching, I felt miserable. The coordinator of the program immediately took me to the university doctor, who told me that my stomach was inflamed and I had gastritis. She gave me some medicine to take and advised me to return if I felt worse. I felt so fortunate that the coordinator looked out for me. Then, when I returned to my apartment, the man who cares for apartments noticed I was sick and went to the market to buy me bananas and tea. My two fellow intercambio (exchange) teachers stopped by a bit later to check on me and went with me to get more water with electrolytes (Gatorade), an apple, and some bread. Many of our new students do not have someone to reach out to or they do not know where to begin in such a situation. And although we are not “their parents,” we need to be tuned in to their needs so we can offer assistance.

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Mi Tiempo en Puebla, Mexico (My Time in Puebla, Mexico) (cont. from previous page)

When I arrived to my lodgings at nearly midnight, I was pleased to see that there was plenty of storage space and that the beds were already made. We (the other two intercambio teachers and I) were each given a gallon of bottled water, a cup, one set of silverware, a bar of soap, and a washcloth. I was thankful for those immediate necessities. A trip to Walmart for other supplies was a top priority. Coming from the United States, I was familiar with some brands, but not all. I can imagine how confusing it might be to distinguish between unfamiliar brands. Most of our international students have no supplies when they arrive.

At Walmart, the first day I selected towels, hangers and other various purchases to make my stay more pleasant. At the checkout, my card was declined. (I later learned that Walmart often has issues with fraud, so making my first purchase in Mexico there was a bad idea.) I knew for a fact I had money on my card and that I had informed my credit union of my travel; nonetheless, I had to use a large chunk of my recently converted pesos. I worked well with the clearly marked bills, but even till the last day I struggled to tell the various coins apart. I carried with me a small laminated card that had approximate exchange rates to facilitate my monetary conversions. I passed the card on to someone who had just arrived to Mexico in the airport.

In the United States, most of us take for granted having our own personal vehicles to get around. While in Mexico, I used taxis, Uber, subway, and buses. Where I live in Michigan, I never have to use these. I can only imagine how frustrating it would be not to have these readily available.

My fellow intercambio instructors and I wanted to take advantage of our time while not in class to get to know the people and culture better. Some outings were suggested to us and others we initiated. We truly appreciated when the staff of the university accompanied us and provided insight on the sites and culture of the area. Using a different keyboard presented its own challenge. Although the basic alphabet between English and Spanish is the same, not all of the “extras” are in the same place. For example, to type the @ symbol, instead of hitting shift 2, one has to type ctrl, alt, Q and the question mark. I also will no longer tease my students about not knowing their login passwords. It took me quite a while to remember mine even though I used it daily.

In regards to language, I made every effort to speak in Spanish. At meal time it was an amusing challenge for the three of us (one from Spain, one from Brazil, and me) to negotiate menus. I had the advantage of “Mexican” Spanish, the Spaniard had the advantage of L1, and the Brazilian had the advantage of similar foods. Sometimes when people would pass by us, they would either divert their eyes so they would not have to speak to La Guerita (the blonde one) or they would go out of their way to say, “Hello, how are you?” At one meal a gentleman approached and asked each of my colleagues if they spoke Spanish, but he didn’t bother to ask me. My greatest compliment happened when we stayed at a hostel. When checking out, I approached the desk clerk and began immediately in Spanish to facilitate the process. After a few minutes I slipped and said something in English. The clerk said (in Spanish), “Oh my, I thought you were a Latina for a minute there.” *smiles*

Our students come to us from a variety of educational backgrounds and instructional systems. I was surprised when I turned in my first set of midterm grades and my co-teacher was astonished that I had given zeros for assignments that were not completed. She told me that all assignments carried the value of ten and the completed assignment and quiz scores were averaged. I can see how students coming from a similar background would be upset and surprised. For that reason, it is especially important that students are clearly informed of the grading system to which they will be held accountable.

Another incident occurred while I was in Puebla. One day during class, I suddenly heard an alarm slightly in the distance. The students all looked toward the window that I was staring at. “What is it?” I asked. They responded that it was the alarm for an earthquake. At first I thought they were joking because the alarm was going off at the primary school which is part of the complex. I figured they were just having a drill. Then one of the girls looked out into the hallway to see that the other students were leaving their classrooms and lining up against the walls. We filed out and followed suit. A few minutes later we were told to descend the stairs and go outside. As a teacher of over 30 years, I’ve participated in numerous drills: fire, tornado, active shooter, etc. This, however, was my first

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earthquake drill. Soon I found out that it wasn’t a drill at all. Now I mention this incident because one of my intercambio teachers was particularly freaked out about it all. In Brazil they have no such drills and no earthquakes. I can only imagine how scary it must be for our international students to go through a drill with all the alarms and hustle and bustle that accompany it.

All of these amazing experiences helped me to recognize the real struggles our students face on a daily basis. They also helped me to better appreciate students’ perspectives on everything from getting around to finding food that is amenable to their own palates. The friendships and experiences I gained from my six-week “vacation” were amazing and will surely impact my future interactions with international students studying abroad here in the USA.

https://animoto.com/play/jcT9Xr2vdcB4XVN3lru0Kw

EFL-Related Observations in Greece

Chandler Lach

This summer, I travelled to Greece on a vacation. The once-in-a-lifetime opportunity fell into my lap a few months ago and, with some help from my parents, I was able to accompany my roommate and his parents on their trip to Europe. The plans were to stay in Athens for two days, then fly to the island of Corfu for another ten days in the city of Sidari. I boarded my flight in Windsor, Ontario with the expectation that the trip would develop my understanding of the English language and EFL discourse.

It’s no surprise that it did. I believe that my background in linguistics and TESOL allowed me to be more perceptive of language use. These are some of the interesting language-based observations I had during my time in Greece.

- The burden of English: Many of the shopkeepers, waiters, bartenders, spoke English very . . . stubbornly. It is no surprise that a nation dependent on tourism would have many English speakers, but many of the people I spoke to had a sour disposition toward speaking English but then would speak in Greek to a coworker or native Greek speaker and would change entirely. Though this is entirely speculation, I think that many of the shop-owners get tired of tourists (some of whom might be disrespectful, rude, or have the ethnocentric belief that everyone in the world must speak English) and associate the English language with some of their bad experiences. I’m certain that many Greek citizens wish they were not dependent on catering to English tourists, and that may be where some of this disdain comes from. All this being said, I did learn a few Greek phrases and I could tell that they went a long way toward respecting the culture and acknowledging the people I was visiting.

- Phonetics abroad: I did not consider the implications of dialect on language acquisition before I went on the trip. In all of my experiences in ESL environments in Michigan, I never once heard British English dialects. Though in this scenario I was the ethnocentric tourist, I was so surprised when one of our Greek hotel concierges started communicating with me in English with nearly perfect British English phonetics. For some reason, I didn’t consider that her EFL education in Greece very well could have been by a British English speaker and could have caused her second language acquisition to be a variation that I was not familiar with! I thought about how I would approach teaching a student segmentals and suprasegmentals in the event that they had been learning under a dialect other than SAE.

- Prescriptivism and the undercover linguist: This may apply anywhere, but the people I was travelling with to Greece knew that I studied language and ESL. My roommate’s parents both speak Romanian as their L1 and English as their L2. Once they knew I was a TESOL student, they held this expectation that each of our interactions would be ‘graded’ and that I should make recasts or give...
EFL-Related Observations in Greece (cont. from previous page)

- prescriptive feedback during our conversations. Similar things happened when I met people abroad. Some way or another, while talking about occupations, I would bring up TESOL and the native Greek speaker would speak very carefully for the rest of the conversation. I never thought that I would worry about the affective filters of people that I meet in bars! After I noticed this, I tried to avoid bringing up ESL in conversations even though hearing about people's EFL experiences fascinates me. I think that navigating that conversation with my friends and acquaintances will be interesting, especially as a devout descriptivist.

I've noticed that each of these observations boils down to how we use language, who we use it with, and what associations people have with language. Once we acknowledge these factors, it's easier to understand how ESL students approach language education and how we can design our instruction to adhere to their needs.

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Collaboration Among International and American Students in an IEP Setting

Jeannine Lorenger

You've built an atmosphere of mutual trust and cooperative learning in your ESL class, but your students will soon be leaving the IEP fold for the university . . . and they're terrified. Now what? How can you help your students ease into the idea of taking classes with native speakers? I would like to discuss one “stepping stone” that I have been able to use successfully in my classes.

For many years, I have taught mostly high intermediate and advanced level classes in the English Language Program (ELP) at Saginaw Valley State University. My students have been at a high enough level to communicate reasonably well in conversations; in fact, I often teach classes with speaking objectives. Our department has offered conversation corners and outings for international and domestic students with some success over the years. Yet my ardent desire was to have my students experience an American classroom and to participate.

What approaches do not work to fulfill this dream? Helpful colleagues in the Modern Foreign Languages Department have made general announcements to their classes inviting the Americans to meet with international students outside of class. No response. I once found a professor who agreed that my class could visit his class and interview his students (or vice versa), but later he “ran out of time” and cancelled out. Yikes!

Fortunately, other opportunities eventually surfaced in other semesters. The following are the variations that have worked out for this theme.

I. At my request, the advisor for the Geography Club asked the club members if they would like to visit an ESL class and learn about the international students' home countries. A few said yes. My students prepared questions; the U.S. students were free to come with questions or not since this was not a class activity for them. Because there were not enough Americans to meet one-on-one, I arranged my class in small groups, with one American for each group of 3 or 4. I set a timer, so the Americans moved from one group to the next in “speed dating” style. Everyone loved it!

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II. That experience led me to work with the same professor in a following semester when he was teaching “Introduction to World Geography” and his class time overlapped mine. This time he had his class as a whole write questions for my group. He “vetted” the questions with me. Before our groups met, I checked for sensitive topics (e.g., home country government policies), simplified the language, and sent the questions back. I then prepared my group for the vocabulary they might need without revealing the actual questions. The geography class had far more students than mine, so my class went to their classroom, where the Americans were arranged in small groups (3-4 Americans for each international student!), and my students needed to do the speed dating move every 10 minutes. Surprisingly, my group did not complain about this. Once again, both the geography professor and I got very positive feedback. The only complaint from both sides was that the time was too short to fully answer the questions. A couple of my students also said it might be nice if not everyone asked the same questions, but on the other hand, that gave them an opportunity to practice and build their confidence. I repeated this type of class visit the next semester with a different geography professor and with 20-minute speed dates.

III. One semester, there was no intro level geography class that overlapped mine so I approached a linguistics professor. She did not feel she could spend class time on a visit from my class, but she was open to the idea of an extra credit project for those who might be interested, i.e., interviewing international students about how their native languages work. This was tricky to arrange because of the uncertain numbers. How many of her students might actually pursue extra credit? Eventually, we settled on a sign-up sheet for her class. The number of U.S. students was close to the size of my class. We randomly assigned ESL students to her students, and I agreed to have one of my students interview with two of hers if need be (for more points, of course). As it turned out, I wrote the questions for her students to ask, and she vetted them. Despite a few hiccups with meeting times (all outside of class time), things worked out well in the end.

IV. The experience with linguistics students emboldened me to ask another linguistics professor about collaborating. In this case, her students were to use the information gained from mine in group presentations. She also did not want to spend much class time on the collaboration, so my class visited hers only briefly in order to be put into groups. Each group consisted of two of my students from different language backgrounds together with three of hers. To prepare for their two meetings outside of class time, each of the American groups wrote their own questions; my students also wrote their own questions individually. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive from both sides. My only regret was that my students could not participate in or even watch the presentations because I could not afford to give up the scheduled three class days for that!

V. In the works: At a technology training session, I met a child psychology professor who regularly has her students interview people from other cultures about child rearing practices. She was delighted to learn that I want my students to interview and be interviewed. We hope to collaborate this fall.

So what makes for a successful collaboration?

A. First and foremost, do some networking. With the exception of the Geography Club advisor, all of the professors who made this happen were people I already knew. The one who backed out on me was someone I had never met; the arrangement that fell through was set up via e-mail.

B. Second, make it easy on the professor. Try to find someone whose class meets the same time as yours. Be ready to suggest topics or write sample questions and offer ideas on organizational details (how many groups? how many chairs? “speed dating” or set groups? etc.).
Collaboration among International and American Students in an IEP Setting (cont. from previous page)

C. Agree on deadlines in advance, and then politely remind your colleague as needed: Have his/her students decided on their groups and/or topics yet (unless these are determined by the instructor)? Have they begun writing their questions? This helps you to know what vocabulary you should begin to teach your ESL students.

Finally, below are the guidelines I share with both the international and domestic students as well as the other instructor. (I change the wording somewhat for the different audiences, but these are the ideas.)

1. The international students need to record a large part of their conversations with the Americans. The recording is part of the evidence of completing the assignment; the U.S. students should know about this in advance. If they are uncomfortable with the idea, they should discuss it with their instructor ahead of time. (The international students do not need to record every single conversation.)

2. Anyone is free to say, “I don’t feel comfortable talking about that.” In such a case, the speakers will go to the next topic. Often, one uncomfortable topic is politics.

3. All students: If you don’t understand what someone says, you can:
   • Ask him/her to repeat it
   • Ask him/her to speak more slowly
   • Ask him/her to explain (say it a different way)
   • Ask him/her to spell a word or write it down

4. U.S. students:
   • Please don’t speak too fast or use a lot of slang
   • Avoid topics that someone from another country might not know about (U.S. TV shows, U.S. sports heroes, etc.) or be ready to explain them if you really want to talk about them
   • If an international student doesn’t understand, see #3 above for helpful techniques

5. If students meet during class time:
   • Decide in advance how the students will be grouped and make sure there is room for everyone to sit down
   • If students rotate from one group to the next, set in advance how much time they will spend with each group

6. ESL instructor:
   • Ask for a copy of the pre-determined questions (if there are any) or at least the topic(s)
   • Prepare the vocabulary with the ESL students and/or ask if you may simplify the questions
   • Introduce the ESL students to the topic in advance if needed

7. If the students meet outside of class time:
   • Clear goals – What do they need to achieve?
   • Are they expected to meet more than once?

In conclusion, I was previously concerned about whether talking with native speakers in a graded speaking project would prove to be too stressful for my students. Again and again, I have been pleasantly surprised to hear what an enjoyable and educational experience it has been. And because the experience can also be repeated using new topics with a different American class, I feel I have finally found a practical and sustainable “stepping stone” to regular university classes.

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Connecting with ELs' Families

Stacy Tanner

![Building relationships with the families of immigrant students helps those students feel ready to learn. Lydia Breiseth]

Long ago, I had a very wise principal who focused on the whole child and in doing so, put great importance on these three entities: home, child, and school. She represented this relationship with three interlocking rings to demonstrate the importance of them all working together.

Now, many years later as a K-4 ESL teacher, I am constantly searching for ways to help my parents become integrated in the school culture and involve them. Like my students, their parents (especially moms at my particular school) are also struggling to learn English and understand American culture.

So, two years ago, I started an "ESL for Moms" class. Our weekly classes primarily focus on speaking—i.e., vocabulary and sentence structure. However, we also spend time talking about American culture. They come to me seeking explanations as to why we Americans do what we do. For example, one week we discussed the protocol when their child is invited to a birthday party and another week, we discussed the differences among whole, low fat, and nonfat milk.

I also started an electronic sign up to invite the moms to volunteer in my class. A mom approached me one morning and told me she had signed up, but didn’t know if she could volunteer because she didn’t speak English. I reassured her she didn’t need to speak English to help. My moms have become experts at cutting, sorting, and laminating, but, more importantly, they are coming into our school and finding value and acceptance. More often than not, the volunteer hour will turn into two as the mom will eagerly observe my lessons. I offered the task to one mom to create a flyer for our end-of-the-year potluck and writing celebration. The mom did a fantastic job, but what impressed me even more was the delight her daughter took in telling everyone that her mom had made the flyer.

One day I observed two of my moms embrace each other with excitement after they noticed each other in the local public library. I stood back with pride and thought to myself, “This is what it’s all about.”

Recently I read an article in Educational Leadership entitled, “Getting to Know ELLs’ Families.” Written by Lydia Breiseth, a manager of Colorin Colorado, a bilingual website serving educators and families of English Learners (ELs), the author discussed several helpful strategies I’d like to summarize.

First, as educators, we need to be creative in our communication. We must not assume that a weekly classroom newsletter covers our bases. Ask the parents what form of communication they prefer—email, phone, or text. A translator can also be used to translate newsletters and signs, explain activities, or help during a conference or open house. Avoid having students be the translator, as this can cause added stress on the student or miscommunications. Also, get creative in ways to meet family members. One teacher held her parent-teacher conferences at a food court where many of her parents worked and another teacher held her conferences at a community center where many of her families lived.

Also, get to know your families. Teachers can do this by looking for clues about what brought the family here, by getting a sense of the home situation and by inviting the parents to share information about their child. A teacher in Albuquerque asks parents to write her a letter at the beginning of each school year to describe their child. Although the language proficiency of the parents varies, she has never found this to be an obstacle. The letters are always filled with details about their child that helps her to connect with them.
Connecting with ELs’ Families (cont. from previous page)

Getting to know your ELL families will take some creativity and time, but “Giving families a chance to share their stories and support their children in their own way gives them the confidence they need to help their children thrive” (Breiseth, 2016, p. 50).

References
http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb16/vol73/num05/Getting-to-Know-ELLs'-Families.aspx

Building Community and Capacity: Participatory Action Research with Immigrants in Flint

Emily Feuerherm

When I tell people that I am doing research about immigrants in Flint and Genesee County, many are surprised to discover that there are several vibrant diasporic communities here. Although anecdotal, it highlights the invisibility of immigrants in this region. When I moved to Flint two years ago and began asking about community ESL classes and immigrant populations, I was surprised to find only two locations that offered classes 2-3 times per week. Both were seeing drastic increases in the number of students served and indicated to me that there was a need for more.

To get a better sense of the linguistic needs of immigrant communities in Genesee County, my research team and I have been surveying and hosting focus groups with diverse immigrants around the county. We are taking an approach to research called participatory action research (PAR), sometimes also called community-based participatory research (CBPR). This orientation to research works with communities to build capacity and effect change. The research question and purpose are to identify what immigrants’ experiences/needs were when they first arrived in the county and how they compare to their experiences/needs now. Although focus groups are not explicitly focused on language teaching or ESL, I am taking the perspective that language is needed to do things, so all of the participants’ expressed needs also contain a linguistic component. Furthermore, they may not only be in need of ESL services, but also heritage language classes for their children, along with other social, financial, or health services.

This research will be used by partnering organizations and individuals to improve services and advocate on behalf of the immigrants in Flint and Genesee County. The focus groups started in July and we hope to be finished in October. The data will be made available to the community partners (non-profit organizations) and other groups interested in developing services and advocating for immigrants in this area. For more information, please see Robert Gold’s article, “UM-Flint Faculty Research Aims to Improve Life for Immigrants” available here: https://news.umflint.edu/2016/06/17/um-flint-faculty-research-aims-to-improve-life-for-immigrants/ or contact me.

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