

# Learning Languages

The Journal of the National Network for Early Language Learning

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*Learning Languages: The Journal of the National Network for Early Language Learning* is the official publication of NNELL. It serves the profession by providing a medium for the sharing of information, ideas, and concerns among teachers, administrators, researchers, and others interested in the early learning of languages. The journal reflects NNELL's commitment to promoting opportunities for all children to develop a high level of competence in at least one language and culture in addition to their own. See the inside of the back cover for more information on NNELL.

In an effort to address the interests of the profession, both practical and scholarly articles are published. Practical articles describe innovative approaches to teaching and to the administration of effective language programs for children. Scholarly articles report on original research and cite both current research and theory as a basis for making recommendations for practice. Scholarly articles are refereed, i.e., reviewed anonymously by at least three readers. Readers include members of the NNELL executive board, the editorial advisory board, and invited guest reviewers who have expertise in the area. Refereed articles are identified as such in the journal. Write to the editor at the address below to request a copy of author guidelines for preparing articles.

**Submissions:** Deadlines for information are: fall issue—May 1; winter issue—Nov. 1; spring issue—Feb. 1. Articles, classroom activities, and materials offered for review may be submitted to the appropriate contributing editor (see below). Send announcements, conference information, and original children's work (such as line drawings, short stories, and poems) to the editor. Children's work needs to be accompanied by written permission from the child's parents or guardians and must include the child's name, age, school, and the teacher's name, address, and telephone (add fax and e-mail address, if available).

Submit a favorite classroom activity for the "Activities for Your Classroom" section by sending a description of the activity that includes title, objective, materials, and procedure. Include pictures or drawings as illustration, if available. Send with your name, address, and phone number to the Classroom Activities editor listed below.

*Editor*

Marcia H. Rosenbusch  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
N157 Lagomarcino Hall  
Iowa State University  
Ames, IA 50011  
mrosenbu@iastate.edu

*Editorial Assistant*

Sue Ryan Weiss

*Cover Design*

Gary Blum

## Contributing Editors

*International news*

Helena Curtain  
University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee  
10523 W. Hampton Ave.  
Milwaukee, WI 53225  
hcurtain@csd.uwm.edu

*Classroom activities*

Diane Fagin Adler  
North Carolina State University  
Dept. of Foreign Languages and Lit.  
Box 8106  
Raleigh, NC 27695-8106  
adlerd@social.chass.ncsu.edu

*French resources*

Myriam Chapman  
Bank Street School for Children  
610 W. 112th St.  
New York, NY 10025

*Research*

Elsa Statzner  
National - Louis University  
1209-A Central St.  
Evanston, IL 60201  
mruggero@nwu.edu

*Teaching methods*

Gilda Oran  
Bloomsburg University  
of Pennsylvania  
3540 Green St.  
Harrisburg, PA 17110  
oran@planetx.bloomu.edu

*Spanish resources*

Lori Langer de Ramirez  
166 Nichols Ave.  
Brooklyn, NY 11208  
Lor1Langer@aol.com

*German resources*

Gertie Kessler  
Orange Hunt Elementary School  
6820 Sydenstricker Rd.  
Springfield, VA 22152  
kesslerj@csa.delta1.org

*Teaching with Technology*

Jean W. LeLoup  
Visiting Professor  
HQ USAFA/DFF  
2354 Fairchild Dr., Suite 6H63  
USAF Academy, CO 80840-6244  
LeLoupJW%DFF%USAFA  
@dfmail.usafa.af.mil

*Assessment*

Peggy Boyles  
Foreign Language Coordinator  
Putnam City Schools  
5401 NW 40th St.  
Oklahoma City, OK 73122  
pboyles@ionet.net

*Funding info./New legislation*

Joint National Comm. for Languages  
1118 22nd St. NW  
Washington, DC 20037  
76306.535@compuserve.com

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## Notes from the President

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*We ask you to share with us examples of your work in the classroom that relate to foreign language standards, your students' work, or events of note in your district or state.*

The arrival of spring brings renewed energy and growth all around us. We hope that as you read *Learning Languages*, you will find articles and information that renew your energy and spark interest for continued professional growth.

This issue celebrates an historic event—the completion of the Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century. NNELL was an early supporter of the standards movement and provided valuable input into the standards development process.

We would like to thank Dr. Benjamin O. Canada, Superintendent of Schools, Atlanta, Georgia, for allowing us to share his inspiring remarks at ACTFL on the significance of foreign language standards. Dr. Canada is a member of NNELL and we warmly welcome his support for early language learning. Be sure to read his remarks and share them with administrators in your district.

You will find Gwinnett County (Georgia) Public Schools' experience as a pilot site for the standards project of great interest as you explore how the standards interface with your school district's curricular framework.

In the area of growth, NNELL welcomes Kay Hewitt as Chair of the Political Action and Advocacy Committee, and Evelyne Armstrong as Chair of the Public Relations Committee. Kay has been hard at work with First Vice President Mary Lynn Redmond to gather information and strategies for political action. Evelyne is formulating an action plan to help us reach out to

community members, colleagues, administrators, and the business community. Please contact Kay or Evelyne to become involved in their important work.

If you have been to a NNELL Networking session in the last month, you have received your NNELL Button that shares this message—"Learning Languages begins with NNELL." Many thanks to Mari Haas, Past President, who worked very hard to make sure that these buttons appeared on our lapels so quickly.

Congratulations to the Education Office, Embassy of Spain on the inaugural meeting of *Círculo de Amigos de la Lengua Española* (CALE). This is an exciting initiative to continue the growth in knowledge and understanding about the Spanish language and cultures.

In this issue we are delighted to share the success of Hudson (New York) Middle School's Italian and Spanish program. NNELL's membership is growing and our collective wealth of professional knowledge and experience is invaluable and should be shared with the profession.

As we enter into the last few months of the school year, I hope that this is a successful and rewarding time for you.

*Eileen B. Lorenz*

**Eileen B. Lorenz**

Academic Programs

Montgomery County Public Schools

850 Hungerford Drive

Rockville, MD 20850

e-mail: elorenz@umd5.umd.edu

# NNELL Endorses National Standards

NNELL, along with 41 other organizations, has officially endorsed the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century*.

The standards represent an unprecedented consensus on the part of educators, leaders of government, business and industry, and the public at large regarding the rationale and role of foreign language instruction in the American educational system.

By endorsing the standards, NNELL sends a strong message to policymakers from the statehouse to the school board that foreign language education is an important part of every child's education, and that students can meet these standards if given the appropriate instructional time to achieve them.

NNELL provided input to the members of the standards task force early in the process, urging that the standards be developed for students in all grades—kindergarten through twelfth.

NNELL's statement, which was also published in *FLES News*, then the newsletter of NNELL, is reprinted below.

## *NNELL Statement to the Student Standards K-12 Task Force*

The National Network for Early Language Learning believes that student standards for foreign languages will significantly impact foreign language education well into the 21st century. It is imperative that these standards speak not only to the foreign language programs in existence today, but that they also define a framework for the future. To establish standards only at eighth and twelfth

grades, but not at fourth grade, would be to limit the future of the profession to current practices.

The foreign language profession has declared that a high level of proficiency is an important goal for foreign language education. It is clear that to achieve more than a novice or intermediate level of proficiency requires many years of study in long, articulated sequences of intensive quality instruction. Forward-looking schools across the nation have successfully articulated K-12 sequences of instruction. To ignore the invaluable contribution these schools have made to the profession, and the enhanced level of proficiency attained by continuous quality foreign language education K-12, would be to ignore the future. Standards must be developed for programs that provide continuous education in foreign languages from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

The National Network for Early Language Learning urges the Student Standards K-12 Task Force to contemplate the historic significance of the standards they are defining. The ability of our nation's most valuable resource, our children, to participate fully and effectively as world citizens in the 21st century is clearly at stake.

*Reprinted from FLES News Volume 7, Number 2, Winter 1993-1994, p. 7*

*By endorsing the standards, NNELL sends a strong message . . . that foreign language education is an important part of every child's education.*

# Standards for Foreign Language Learning

## Communication

*Communicate in Languages Other Than English*

**Standard 1.1:** Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

**Standard 1.2:** Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

**Standard 1.3:** Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

## Cultures

*Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures*

**Standard 2.1:** Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

**Standard 2.2:** Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

*Reprinted with permission from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). To receive a copy of the standards (cost \$20), write to:*

ACTFL  
6 Executive Plaza  
Yonkers, NY 10701-6801  
Phone: 914-963-8830

## Connections

*Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information*

**Standard 3.1:** Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

**Standard 3.2:** Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.

## Comparisons

*Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture*

**Standard 4.1:** Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.

**Standard 4.2:** Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

## Communities

*Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home and Around the World*

**Standard 5.1:** Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.

**Standard 5.2:** Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

# Atlanta Superintendent Strongly Supports National Standards

Dr. Benjamin O. Canada  
Superintendent  
Atlanta Public Schools, Georgia

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**Note:** To celebrate the unveiling of the Standards for Foreign Language Learning, Dr. Benjamin O. Canada, Superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools, shared his support and enthusiasm for foreign language learning programs. His remarks are included here so that members of NNELL who were not present at the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Conference in Anaheim, California, November, 1995, might learn of his inspiring thoughts.

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I would like to say that I am particularly proud and pleased to be in the midst of so many outstanding educators who share the belief of a saying we use frequently in Atlanta: "If it's good for children, then make it so." So, I welcome you to a part of the Make-It-So Team for all of America's children.

I would like to share a couple of thoughts with you as we reflect on the standards for foreign language learning and assessments in the foreign language area. What do standards mean to us as superintendents? More importantly, what do they mean to the children of America?

First, I need to ask, how many of you remember the little nursery rhyme that we sang in kindergarten about the eensy weensy spider? All right! I would like you to stand, so we can join together to recite the *Eensy Weensy Spider* poem and think about what this spider did. Here we go (with accompanying gestures):

*The eensy weensy spider  
went up the water spout.  
Down came the rain  
and washed the spider out.  
Out came the sun  
and dried up all the rain,  
And the eensy weensy spider  
went up the spout again.*

If you think about the words of the poem, they describe a very tiny, little spider. The poem does not talk about a daddy long legs or a tarantula; it describes a tiny, little spider. And what did this little spider do? It went up a water spout. I would like you to visualize with me a water spout—long, dark, and narrow. Imagine that you are looking up a water spout and at the very top you will see light, but you do not know where it is coming from.

This little spider decided that it was going to go up the water spout, not knowing what it would encounter on the way. There could have been other spiders waiting to gobble it up. That spider had no idea of what to expect, but he knew he wanted to climb up to that light. Suddenly, it started to rain, and what did the water spout do? It did what all good water spouts are supposed to do. The water spout collected the rain and washed the spider back down and out. And I can imagine that, as the water came rushing down the spout, it went bang, bang, bang, and the spider got beat up. But what does the song say the spider did? After the rain came, the spider warmed up and dried out, up it went, back up the spout towards the light one more time.

*What do standards mean to us as superintendents? More importantly, what do they mean to the children of America?*

*You as teachers, and we as administrators and superintendents, have a big role in making sure that they are wrong. We must be willing to stand firm with our beliefs.*

When it comes to the standards for foreign language learning and the assessments, our ability to get America to buy into them is going to require each and every one of us to have the tenacity and the spirit of the tiny, little spider. We may get beat up. Some will say that we do not have the people to carry out the standards and assessments; others will say that we do not have the resources to follow through. And probably there will be some that will say that not all children can appreciate and learn languages.

All children can learn, and they can learn multiple languages, but we need to start language learning early in the elementary grades rather than waiting until the middle or high school years.

As we go through the strategic planning process of empowering our communities and engaging them in the decision-making process, we must also remember that community members may need to be educated about the fact that the ability to speak a second language is not something extra. It is a part of a quality basic education.

Today in Atlanta, we have more than 50 percent of our elementary schools offering language study beginning in kindergarten. Within three years, we intend to have language study in all of them.

How do we go about making sure that our communities know about the importance of language learning? We all need to set a plan, and keep thinking about that tiny little spider. We cannot give up, but must become more resolved to say, "I am going to the top and I am going to take my students and all of the other students who could be forgotten with me." And know that there are some of us who would stay with you, protect you, and promote you. I am awfully proud and pleased to ask you to join with me in congratulating the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Task Force for having the vision to come up with truly world class standards.

I leave you with a final thought. Always ask yourselves the question: "Is it good for children?" If the answer is yes, then go with the speed and tenacity of the spider to make it so.

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## Spanish Embassy Organizes CALE

The first *Círculo de Amigos de la Lengua Española* (CALE) in the United States was founded in Washington, DC in March 1996. The event, hosted by the Education Office of the Embassy of Spain, gathered over a hundred people of various nationalities and professional backgrounds.

The aim of this new association is to promote the use of Spanish as well as to stimulate interest in all of the cultures sharing it as a common language.

An interim board of directors, which is in charge of organizing and

consolidating the association, was elected from among the 32 people who volunteered. Another 28 people offered to be part of various committees. A series of CALE chapters will be founded soon all across the country.

If you would like further information or you would like to organize your own CALE chapter in your area, you may contact: CALE, Embassy of Spain Education Office, 2375 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20037; 202-728-2335; Fax: 202-728-2313; E-mail: [rosa@spainembedu.org](mailto:rosa@spainembedu.org).



# Standards for Foreign Language Learning: One District's Experience

*Elizabeth Rieken*

*Instruction Coordinator, Foreign Language/ESOL*

*Gwinnett County Public Schools*

*Lawrenceville, Georgia*

**T**he summer of 1994 has little to distinguish it in most people's memories here in our part of the country . . .

just another long, hot one outside of Atlanta. Yet for a group of foreign language educators in Gwinnett County, Georgia, that summer will always be recalled as the beginning of our involvement in the development of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning*.

We are fortunate to work in a school system where shared decision-making is the norm, and teachers have a leading role in shaping the direction of our instructional programs in every subject area. A standing committee of 10 foreign language teachers from grades K-12 serves as an advisory council, assisting me (the program coordinator) in constantly assessing the program and planning improvements.

In the summer of 1994, we were hard at work on a comprehensive improvement plan for the next five years when the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages announced the need for school systems to become pilot sites for the next phase of standards development. All of the council members agreed that we should apply. The council had reviewed previous drafts of the standards and had sent input to the 11-member task force charged with developing the standards, so the opportunity to become a pilot site seemed a natural next step. In addition,

we knew we could gain an extraordinary amount of information that would help us in our efforts to improve our own program.

Summer was fading quickly, and preparation for the new school year occupied everyone's minds. Shortly after students returned to classes, the news came—we were chosen as one of six pilot sites. The task force chose the pilot sites to represent school districts that varied in size, geographic location, and program type. We represented a large, changing, urban-suburban county district in the southeast.

Our 70 schools serve 84,000 students, with more than 4,000 new students and 500 new teachers joining us each year. A growing number of students participate in language study each year (41,500 in 1995-96), in a variety of programs: both sequential FLES and FLEX at the elementary level, both FLEX and sequential study at the middle schools, and sequences of two to five years (plus some advanced placement [AP] classes) in French, German, Latin, Spanish, and Japanese at the high school level.

Although this sounds like an impressive number of students engaged in language study with an equally impressive variety of offerings, the numbers do not show the fragmented nature of the offerings. Through the process of site-based management in our district, schools have wide latitude in making curricular decisions, and local schools determine

*Shortly after students returned to classes, the news came—we were chosen as one of six pilot sites.*

*One of our greatest hopes for the pilot study process was that it would help us discover some ways to bring unity to the many foreign language efforts going on in the district.*

which languages to offer at which grade levels as well as which program model to use. One of our greatest hopes for the pilot study process was that it would help us discover some ways to bring unity to the many foreign language efforts going on in the district.

Through conversations with the two task force members assigned to our pilot site (Genelle Morain of the University of Georgia, Athens, and Denise Mesa of Sabal Palm Elementary School in North Miami Beach, Florida), we planned the specific activities the group would undertake to gather the information needed by the task force. We would respond to such questions as:

- Is there anything missing from the standards document that we think should be included in a comprehensive, exemplary language program?
- How do the goals of the standards interface with our state and local frameworks?
- What are we doing now that supports the standards?
- What would we need to change to more fully implement the standards? What resources would we need?
- How do the standards look in the classroom?

The improvement council was not large enough to represent a true cross-section of the foreign language teachers in the district, so we invited other teachers to participate. Twenty-eight teachers served on the pilot study group, representing all school levels, all languages, and all program models in the district.

All 28 teachers probably had similar thoughts as they made their way one early morning in November to the first meeting in a remote and

relatively unpopulated area of the county; perhaps something like, "I know it's hard to find meeting space, but this is really ridiculous!" "What are the standards, anyway, and why did I agree to do this?" "They'll probably tell us we have to throw out everything we're doing and start over. . .again!" "Standards . . . I know just where I'll put them—on the top shelf of my storage closet, next to the other dusty curriculum guides."

Doubts intensified as the teachers arrived at the site only to find that the worst had happened—the coffee was not ready! But any doubts and fears were soon alleviated as we listened to Genelle Morain's fascinating account of the task force's process that had brought the standards to this point. We soon came to understand that the standards are not a required curriculum nor a particular method. Rather, the standards represent the thinking of thousands of foreign language professionals across the country, defining what students should know and be able to do at various levels of study.

Over the next several months, the pilot study group, guided by our task force facilitators, addressed the first four questions through careful reading of the standards document and much discussion among the group members. Teachers have little time to talk with others at their school level; it is even more unusual for elementary, middle, and high school teachers to have time to discuss issues of common concern across all levels. The time set aside for the pilot study allowed this all-too-rare communication to occur.

We examined the application of the standards to the classroom through the keeping of "teaching logs." (Figure 1 shows the format we used for this task, which was a revision of a format developed by the Springfield, Massachusetts, pilot site.) The logs encouraged us to reflect on our prac-

tice and to analyze our units and lessons in light of the standards. Some of the activities described in the teaching logs became learning scenarios in the final standards document. One of the elementary scenarios appears at the end of this article.

By the end of the pilot study process, the group had come to these conclusions:

- The standards are a very thorough picture of what is desirable in foreign language education.
- Each school level (elementary, middle, and high) has a unique and important contribution to make towards implementation of the standards. In the typical two-year sequence of high school language study, students are not likely to

*The standards are for the present, but they are also a guide for the future, suggesting programs of greater breadth and depth than exist in most schools today.*

### Teaching Log

Teacher _____	School _____
Language _____	Level _____
Grade _____	Date _____
Program Type (FLEX, Sequential FLES, Sequential FL in MS or HS) _____	
Number of Students in Class _____	
Goal Addressed by the Activity: _____	Standard Addressed by the Activity: _____

Description of Activity	
Procedure	Materials
How Students Were Assessed	
Reaction - How I Thought It Went	
Reaction - What Students Thought	
What I Learned (What might be changed next time.)	
This activity did/did not support the standard identified.  Why?	

Figure 1. Gwinnett County Public Schools, National Standards in Foreign Language Education Pilot Study Teaching Log.

*We learned more about the "state of the art" in foreign language learning, discovering that the standards both validated our work and challenged us to do more.*

attain all of the standards. However, students can achieve more of the standards in all five goal areas if instruction begins in the early grades and continues through the high school years.

- Our state and local curricula currently include some of the standards but not all. Goals 1 and 2 (Communication and Culture) are clearly addressed in our frameworks. Although many teachers address goals 3 (Connections), 4 (Comparisons), and 5 (Communities) in their classrooms, our official curricula do not address these explicitly.
- Many classroom practices, as described in the "teaching logs" the pilot teachers kept, do support the standards. In many cases, teachers can build on what they are currently doing. Teaching logs tended to describe activities that fit under goals 1 and 2, with some evidence of goal 3. Goals 4 and 5 appear to be the most challenging to address in our present programs given the time teachers have for instruction.
- Implementing the standards will require a different view of the role of the text book as it exists today; "the text as script" will not work! Elementary teachers have long known this, but middle and high school programs have sometimes been tied to texts to a greater degree than is beneficial. As the standards are implemented, we will need multiple resources; technology is one way we acquire some of those resources.
- In order to move toward implementation of the standards, communication is imperative: among teachers, among school levels, and among university and public school personnel. Articula-

tion is a major challenge we must address, and articulation can only happen when all levels understand and appreciate the role each level has to play. The standards provide a basis upon which the various stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, administrators, and university personnel) can begin the communication that is critical to building an articulated program.

By participating in the Standards for Foreign Language Learning Pilot Study, we experienced a process that we can use in the future as we approach our foreign language program review in the district. The pilot study experience was especially valuable to us because it gave teachers from kindergarten through grade 12 a chance to talk. The communication was so positive that we plan to create other opportunities for this interaction to occur.

We found that the standards can help us establish a common vocabulary with various audiences, as well as a "common yardstick" with which we can measure the quality of a program. This is especially important in a site-based management system such as ours.

In all, we feel that the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century* (1996) can be a practical tool for school districts that want to make their language program the best it can possibly be. We think our participation in the pilot study will help us move in that direction.

## References

National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. (1996). *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century*. Lawrence, KS: Allen Press.

**Note:** This classroom scenario was developed by Gwinnett County elementary school foreign language teachers as an example of lessons that address the themes of the standards. It is included here with permission from ACTFL.

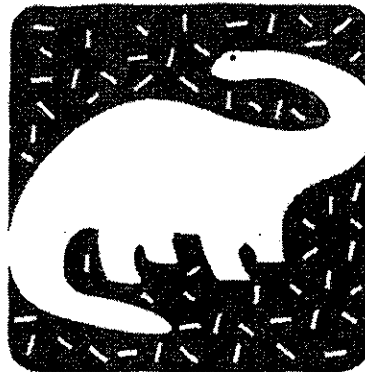
## Classroom Scenario

### Targeted Standards

- 1.2 Interpretive Communication
- 1.3 Presentational Communication
- 2.2 Products of Culture
- 3.1 Making Connections
- 5.1 School and Community

### Dinosaurs

Kindergartners at Rockbridge Elementary School are learning about dinosaurs with the typical fascination that this subject holds for young students. To complement their study of this topic, their teacher, Señora Matos, develops an activity for their FLES Spanish class with the cooperation of the art teacher. The students use construction paper to create a "Jurassic Mountain" in the classroom. In Spanish, they learn the words for tree, mountain, and other elements of their newly created environment.



However, the teacher and students realize that something is missing: the dinosaurs. Students are asked to bring dinosaurs to school, and on the next day their "Jurassic Mountain" and two other tables are covered with dinosaurs. After learning the vocabulary in Spanish, the students identify and describe the dinosaurs and classify them by size, color, and other characteristics (gentle, fierce, etc.). Students then make brightly colored papier-mâché dinosaurs as well as dioramas reflecting the appropriate habitat for their dinosaurs. At the end of the week, Señora Matos has 21 diverse dinosaur dioramas to be shared with the school community.

### Reflection

- 1.2 Students understand the presentations of their classmates.
- 1.3 Students present information about their dinosaurs to fellow students.
- 2.2 Students use art media and colors that reflect Hispanic culture.
- 3.1 Students reinforce and further their knowledge of prehistoric life.
- 5.1 Students use the language within the school setting.

This scenario could occur in any language with beginners at any grade level. The content would depend on the setting. The scenario might be played out using such topics as mythical figures, medieval artisan shops, or signs of the Chinese calendar in cooperation with teachers from various disciplines. The curricular weave is highlighted in the classification aspect of the activity in which students use critical thinking skills to organize and classify the dinosaurs. By encouraging students to ask and answer questions of each other, a focus on Standard 1.1, Interpersonal Communication, could be added to this activity (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996, p. 75).

# CAL Conducts National Foreign Language Survey

*The results of the survey will provide a picture of how K-12 foreign language education has changed since the 1987 survey.*

Are you in need of up-to-date information on what is going on nationally with foreign language instruction? The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) can help. It is conducting a national foreign language survey that will provide current, much needed information about foreign language programs and instruction in elementary, middle/junior high, and high schools in the United States. The study, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, will replicate the landmark survey of foreign languages conducted by CAL in 1987.

The two major goals of the study are to provide a comprehensive, scientifically-accurate national portrait of foreign language education at the elementary and secondary levels and to produce information on foreign language education on a state-by-state basis.

The survey will address current patterns and shifts in enrollment, teacher training and qualifications, language and program offerings at various levels, foreign language curricula and instructional materials, assessment, sequencing, funding, successful program characteristics, foreign language educational reform, and major issues facing the field.

In October 1996, the survey will be sent to a randomly-selected sample of principals at approximately five percent of all public and private elementary, middle/junior high, and high schools in the U.S. The results of the survey will provide a picture of how K-12 foreign language education has changed since the 1987 survey. With foreign languages now a part of the core curriculum in the Goals 2000: Educate America Act legislation, it will be especially interesting to look at current levels of foreign language enrollment.

The survey results will also inform states as they implement versions of the new national standards in foreign language education in their schools, and provide information about how schools are addressing this kind of educational reform. Detailed case studies of six elementary and middle school program models and a directory of K-8 sample language programs by state will also be compiled as part of the project. To be included in the directory, watch for the mini-questionnaire in the fall 1996 issue of *Learning Languages*.

The survey results will be available from CAL in 1997. For more information on the project, or to sign up to receive the survey results when available, please contact Nancy Rhodes ([nancy@cal.org](mailto:nancy@cal.org)) or Lucinda Branaman ([lucinda@cal.org](mailto:lucinda@cal.org)) at CAL, 1118 22nd St. NW, Washington DC 20037 (202-429-9292).

## Job Openings

The Little Earth School in Santa Fe is looking for a full-time Spanish teacher for its program which incorporates Spanish into the regular curriculum for four- through eight-year-olds. To apply, contact: Ellen Souberman, 321 W. Zia Road, Santa Fe, NM 87505; 505-988-1968.

Because it has received support to increase the length of the Spanish class period at each grade level, Pilgrim School is seeking applicants for a full-time elementary school Spanish teacher position. To apply, send a resume to: Kathy Lee, Pilgrim School, 540 South Commonwealth Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90020; E-mail: [Kpasalee@aol.com](mailto:Kpasalee@aol.com).

# Activities for Your Classroom

## Puppet Meteorologists

Linda Kenoyer  
Lighthouse Point, Florida

### Objective:

Students will demonstrate their knowledge of weather expressions by dressing a puppet in clothing appropriate to the weather and by stating the weather orally.

### Materials:

- puppets
- hat
- scarf
- sunglasses
- umbrella

### Procedure:

At the start of each class, three "meteorologists" (weather predictors) are selected to do the weather check. They choose puppets and articles of clothing and go outside to check the weather conditions. They then dress the puppets accordingly.

Upon their return, students take turns asking each puppet: *¿Qué tiempo hace?* (What is the weather?) The meteorologist students respond for their puppet according to the daily weather conditions. Possible responses are:

<i>Hace sol.</i>	(It is sunny.)
<i>Hace frío.</i>	(It is cold.)
<i>Hace calor.</i>	(It is hot.)
<i>Está lloviendo.</i>	(It is raining.)



# Proficiency-Oriented Testing: Reality Therapy

Peggy Boyles  
Putnam City Schools  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

*...grammatical accuracy is of no value if it cannot be used to carry out real-life tasks as an inherent and natural activity.*

In a recent cartoon in the Sunday newspaper, a couple stares incredulously as the waiter serves them a roller skate and a cuckoo clock as their main entree. The attractive woman remarks to her mortified dinner date, "Well... so much for your two semesters of French!" The young man obviously came from a foreign language experience in which real-life experiences were not the focus of instruction.

Because instruction has been traditionally broken up into small units, there has been a tendency to focus on only one aspect of language production at a time, such as isolated vocabulary lists or grammar. In this situation it was very easy to forget that the vocabulary words and points of structure were not ends in themselves, but rather parts of a larger picture of language use.

In designing new proficiency-oriented testing formats, teachers are reminded that grammatical accuracy is of no value if it cannot be used to carry out real-life tasks as an inherent and natural activity.

More and more, both instruction and assessment are based on encouraging students to go beyond the structure and context of classroom instruction. Students are now assessed on how well they can perform in the language in real-life situations. In creating proficiency-oriented tests for classroom use, certain characteristics should predominate.

When designing test items, the teacher should try to design items that:

- are not isolated, but in a context
- encourage personalized answers
- reflect synthesized, composite knowledge
- focus on what the student knows, rather than on what the student does not know
- recycle language from previous units or chapters
- allow divergent responses
- are interaction based
- reflect real life tasks.

One example of this type of test might be in the format of a student leaving a message for a friend on an answering machine. This context is authentic in many cultures and can, therefore, be perceived as a natural task a student might encounter in the target culture. For the "Leave A Message Test," each student receives a set of message cards. To begin, the student hears the recorded message on the "answering machine."

For example, a message in French might be "*Vous entendez de la musique de Coolio.....et aussi le son de ma voix. Veuillez laisser votre message après le bip sonore. Merci!*"

In Spanish, the students might hear, "*En este momento no puedo contestar el teléfono. Por favor, deja tu recado a la señal.*" In German, students will respond to "*Hör mal! Ich bin für zwei Wochen im Urlaub. Ich rufe wieder an, nachdem ich zurückkomme.*" At the end of the



message, there is the familiar beep sound, which signals the student to begin talking.

Students respond on tape and design their message according to the written instructions on one of the message cards in their set. So that students will receive no vocabulary clues, instructions are written in English. For example, one choice for a response might be:

1. Greet the person.
2. Give your name.
3. Describe yourself physically.
4. Tell the person who your teacher is at school.
5. Ask the person a question about school.

In designing test items, it is important that students have options in choosing their response. In this example, there is a wide range of acceptable answers, and the student's choice of vocabulary and grammar are tied directly to a language function.

The administration of oral tests in a large group setting is often the discouraging factor that causes teachers to forgo consistent and regular speaking assessments in their classrooms. Individually testing each student in the class, even though it might be a very small speaking sample, is often time consuming. However, even with the inherent difficulties of oral testing, teachers want there to be a match between learning activities and testing activities.

Random grading is one option. With a set of 3 x 5 cards, the teacher can arbitrarily select students to evaluate while the answering machine tape is playing. All students could participate in the test, but only some of the students would actually be graded that day.

Additionally, if students are

accustomed to working in cooperative learning groups, one student in the group could tape record the responses of other students in the group for the teacher to evaluate later.

Modern language labs can allow a teacher to divide the class into groups and record one group of student speaking samples, while another group completes a listening comprehension assessment.

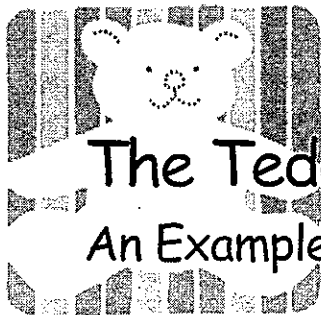
The issue of scoring speaking tests can cause concern for both teachers and students. In an academic world where students have always been assessed on their mastery of course materials, it is perceived as "unfair" to use questions or situations not specifically taught since the last test.

Certainly there is an element of subjectivity in evaluating a student's speaking ability, but that should not cause teachers to turn away from this type of testing. Several different areas might be evaluated within a speaking sample.

For example, coverage of an assigned topic and comprehensibility from the evaluator's standpoint might be scored on a basis of 0-5. Even enthusiasm and effort can be evaluated if the teacher models this behavior for the students. The range and appropriateness of vocabulary could be assessed, as well as pronunciation. Some areas of scoring might even be double weighted, such as student effort. It is completely up to the teacher to decide what and how to value the components in any given assessment.

Encouraging children to use language in purposeful, meaningful ways in both classroom activities and assessments will produce students 10 years from now who can eat exactly what they order in a restaurant!

*In designing test items, it is important that students have options in choosing their response.*



## The Teddy Bear Test: An Example of a Proficiency-Oriented Test

**T**he universal appeal of teddy bears engages students of all ages in communicative activities designed to practice language skills in an imaginative way. Whether in elementary or middle school, students easily relate to the thematic concept of teddy bears. The issues of ethnicity, gender bias, and age appropriateness disappear as students work together to explore their creative side.

Remembering that good activities make good assessments, and good assessments make good activities, the *Teddy Bear Test* has evolved from a repertoire of successful classroom activities to its present assessment format. By participating in a world of "bear talk" throughout the school year, students can easily imagine themselves in similar, real-life situations. After all, how different is it to think about humans or bears on rainy afternoons with nothing to do, or about their conversations around a campfire?

While moving away from simple memorization of isolated words and high-frequency phrases, students start to understand and

are able to answer direct questions in which cognates are included and are supported by visuals. As students begin to recycle what they have learned, albeit with virtually no variation from the way it was initially learned, they can start to respond to direct questions in a more creative and personalized way.

### Sample Speaking Format

Oral descriptions of visuals comprise probably the most appropriate conversation stimulus at the novice level, not only because they provide a psychological prop, but because they facilitate conversational tasks for students. In the speaking section of the *Teddy Bear Test*, students see several different pictures of bears engaged in various "real-life" activities. Accompanying the illustra-



Figure 1. "Cher Bear".

tions, such as those shown in Figures 1 and 2, are three questions for each picture. The first two questions are specific, objective questions about the picture. The third question attempts to personalize the situation for the student. Students attempt to answer each question in an oral interview in the time provided by the teacher.

For example, in Figure 1, students might be asked a forced-choice question such as: "Are the bears singing in a band or listening to a concert?" When the questions are laced with cognates in the target language, students can readily select the correct answer from the choices given. On a more personal level, students could be asked to discuss their favorite kind of music and music group.

Clearly, there are no right or wrong answers to the more open-ended type of questions. If encouraged to do so in classroom activities, students can use circumlocution for legitimate responses to questions concerning the location or actions of the bear. For example, in Figure 2, students might be asked to describe what the bear does for his profession. If the student wants to say that he is a senator, but is unable to produce the word, he or she might talk about the bear working in an office in Washington, DC.

### Sample Listening Format

In the listening section of the test, students employ the strategies learned in classroom activities to selectively listen for clues to help them discern the central focus of a conversation. Students are given a composite of nine bear pictures, and must listen to a tape recording of several short "bear" conversations. Students match each conversation to

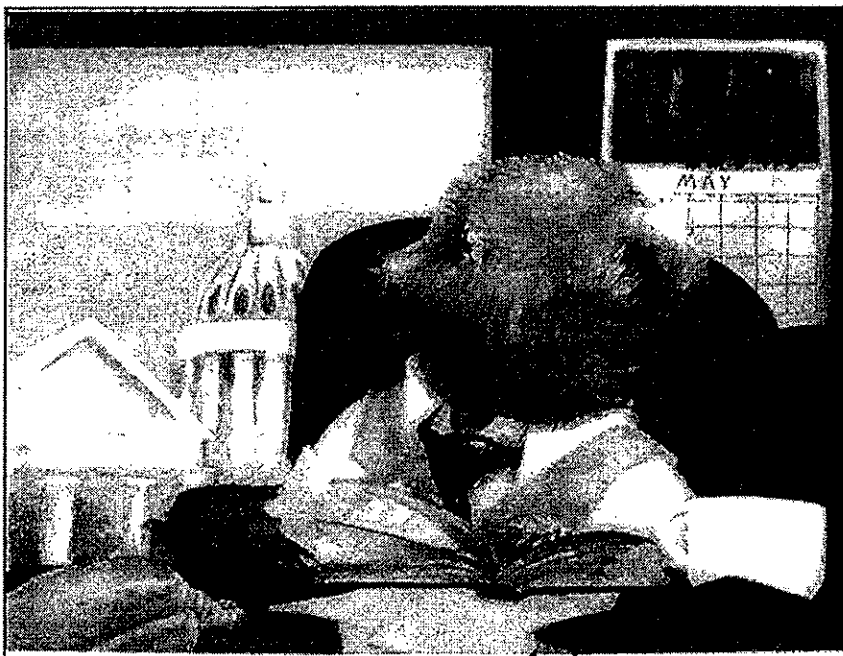


Figure 2. "Senate Bill Bear".

its corresponding picture. For example, which bear would be saying, "I don't like to read all day. I prefer to walk outside" (Figure 1 or Figure 2?).

The purpose of the *Teddy Bear Test* is to provide a thematic context for synthesizing novice-level vocabulary in a proficiency-oriented test and to provide an opportunity for students to personalize answers in a testing format. If the teacher frequently uses teddy bear visuals in his or her class to have students talking about generic topics such as clothing, weather, emotions, likes and dislikes, etc., then students will be prepared to respond to similar pictures on the assessments.

A direct, positive benefit to both teachers and students in a proficiency-oriented testing environment is that students are rewarded for what they do know, and are not penalized for what they do not know.

**Note:** *The original Teddy Bear Test was written and piloted by Peggy Boyles, Foreign Language Coordinator for the Putnam City Schools in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. In a revised format, it is currently used as part of the fifth grade exit assessment.*

# Children's Classroom Creations

La météo

Nicole



Laura Trettel (Nicole)  
Grade 5  
Clear Springs Elementary School  
Minnetonka, MN  
Kay Triden, French Teacher

Voici Colorado

C'est aujourd'hui lundi, le 10  
avril

Il fait froid.

Il neige.

Il fait  $-10^{\circ}$  centigrade.

# NNELL Initiates Plans for Political Action and Advocacy Committee

The National Network for Early Language Learning has initiated plans for the Political Action and Advocacy Committee under the leadership of Mary Lynn Redmond, First Vice-President, and Kay Hewitt, Committee Chair. At the 1995 NNELL annual business meeting held November 15 at the ACTFL Conference in Anaheim, California, the executive board formalized the goals of the committee.

The committee's tasks will be to unify efforts on the national level to promote foreign language study in kindergarten through grade twelve and to serve as a liaison with NNELL state foreign language political action committees. The committee will also offer assistance in the promotion of language study at the state and local levels and support for programs that may be in jeopardy of elimination or reduction.

The goals of the NNELL Political Action and Advocacy Committee are three-fold: 1) to keep abreast of policies and changes brought about through federal government action that may impact foreign language study and to keep state foreign language political action committee leaders informed of these decisions; 2) to promote the study of foreign languages K-12 through ongoing advocacy projects, e.g., contact with local, state, and national policy- and decision-makers to inform them of the importance of foreign language study, participation as speakers at Parent Teacher Association functions, school board meetings, and other community activities; and 3) to assist the state political action and advocacy committee chairs in their efforts to promote foreign language study and to encourage support at the local and state levels, e.g., letter-writing campaigns to

urge support for programs facing potential crisis and coordination of advocacy sessions at state conferences and at local meetings.

NNELL is working with state level political action committees and is in the process of implementing committees in states where there is currently no political action group in place. An information packet that includes advocacy tips and sample letters for presenting concerns to state and national legislators may be obtained from Kay Hewitt (address below).

NNELL invites members who wish to participate in political action and advocacy at the state or national level, as a member of the NNELL Political Action and Advocacy Committee, to contact Kay Hewitt, Committee Chair, or Mary Lynn Redmond, NNELL First Vice-President.

## ***NNELL Political Action and Advocacy Committee***

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Kay Hewitt, Chair  
Lexington Elementary School  
116 Azalea Drive  
Lexington, SC 29072  
803-359-4123  
[les@scsn.net](mailto:les@scsn.net)

Mary Lynn Redmond  
First Vice-President  
Wake Forest University  
Department of Education  
Box 7266, Reynolda Station  
Winston-Salem, NC 27109  
910-759-5347  
[redmond@wfu.edu](mailto:redmond@wfu.edu)

Jane G. Graveen  
60 Applewood Lane  
Glastonbury, CT 06033  
860-633-6233

Lauren Schaffer  
Ashland High School  
201 South Mountain Avenue  
Ashland, OR 97520  
541-482-8771

Gilda Oran  
Bloomsburg University  
of Pennsylvania  
3540 Green St.  
Harrisburg, PA 17110  
717-389-4236  
[oran@planetx.bloomu.edu](mailto:oran@planetx.bloomu.edu)

# NNELL Welcomes Two New Chairs

Evelyne Armstrong—Public Relations

Kay Hewitt—Political Action/Advocacy Committee

NNELL is pleased to announce that Evelyn Armstrong, French teacher at Charles Wright Academy in Tacoma, Washington, has been appointed Chair of Public Relations; and Kay Hewitt, French teacher at Lexington Elementary School in Lexington, South Carolina, has been appointed Chair of the Political Action and Advocacy Committee.

Ms. Hewitt received a B.A. in French from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and a Master's in Education from the University of South Carolina. She has taught French at the elementary and secondary levels for 13 years and was a pioneer in the implementation of the foreign language program in the elementary grades in the Burlington (NC) Public Schools.

Ms. Hewitt brings her expertise to the well-established elementary foreign language program at Lexington School District One in Lexington, South Carolina. Her enthusiasm for teaching was honored by her election as the school's "1995-96 Teacher of the Year." She is also one of two "honor roll" teachers in the district for her outstanding achievements and contributions to the field of teaching.

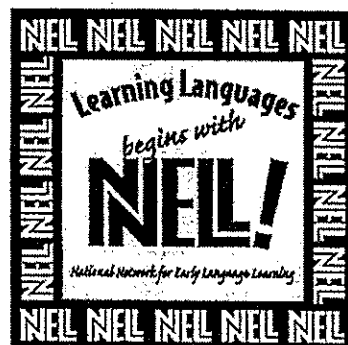
Dr. Armstrong received her doctorate in education/second language curriculum and instruction from Union Institute. She has taught French at the elementary and middle school levels for eleven years and language methodology for two.

Dr. Armstrong is an administrator and visionary as well as an educator. At Charles Wright Academy she developed the Odyssey of the Mind program and trained coaches for it, in

addition to establishing and coordinating exchange programs. For the summer program at the school, Dr. Armstrong developed, directs, and coordinates the French Immersion Day Camp as well as directs and coordinates its counterpart in France—the American Immersion Day Camp. In addition, she has published teaching materials and workbooks for the interactive teaching of language in context. In honor of her work with the French and American Day Camps, Dr. Armstrong has received a grant from the French Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports.

NNELL warmly welcomes Dr. Armstrong and Ms. Hewitt, two highly qualified and influential women in their field, to their new committee appointments.

## Members!



*This colorful button is available at NNELL networking sessions at no cost to you. Wear your button and let others know that you are a member of NNELL.*

## **Elementary School Foreign Language Teacher Preparation Needed**

Foreign language teacher preparation for the elementary school level must be addressed if the language profession is to play a role in ongoing educational reform, according to a report on the results of a 1995 national survey conducted by the Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL) and the National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages (NCSSFL). Three questions on the survey were designed to gather data on teacher shortages, teacher education, and specifically, on elementary level teacher education programs.

Most of the 30 state foreign language supervisors who responded noted that in their state there was a need for more teacher training, especially for the elementary school level.

Only four states reported specific plans for training elementary school foreign language teachers: Delaware, Missouri, Texas, and Wisconsin.

Indiana, Massachusetts, and Maine reported that they are in the process of planning how to address this need. Louisiana and Virginia clarified that individual institutions of higher education develop their own teacher preparation courses.

For more information about this survey, contact:

JNCL-NCLIS  
1118 22 St. NW  
Washington, DC 20037  
Phone: 202-466-2666  
Fax: 202-466-2892  
E-mail: 76306.535@compuserve.com.

A NNELL brochure is now available which includes a brief overview of the benefits members receive as well as a membership form.

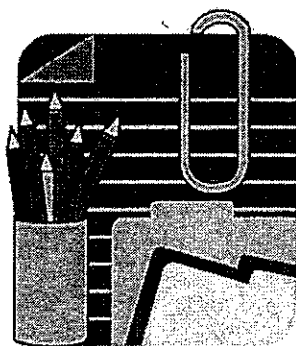
## **National Network for Early Language Learning**

# **NNELL**

NNELL is  
a national organization  
dedicated to the advocacy  
of foreign language instruction  
for all students,  
kindergarten through 8th grade,  
and to the support of the educators  
who teach those students.

If you would like to receive copies of the NNELL brochure to distribute to potential members in your school district, community, or state, write to:

National Network for Early Language  
Learning  
Nancy Rhodes, Executive Secretary  
Center for Applied Linguistics  
1118 22nd St. NW  
Washington, DC 20037



# Classroom Resources

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## German

Hill, E. (1983). *Flecki und die Uhr*. Esslinger im ÖBV, Esslingen: Schreiberverlag. \$4.50.

Spirin, G. (Illust.), Esterl, A. (Trans.), & Martin, C. (1992). *Jon & der gläserne Berg*. Esslinger im ÖBV, Esslingen: Schreiberverlag. \$23.50

*Both books are available through Klett Edition Deutsch, Christiane Fredrickson, 7327 Woodrow Drive, Oakland, CA 94611; Tel and Fax: 510-339-2721.*

In the first book, *Flecki und die Uhr*, the main character is Spot, a very popular little dog, whose German name is "Flecki." Books about this little dog's adventures have been favorites of children for years. Eric Hill, the author, was born in London in 1927 and first published this book in 1983. It was translated to German in 1984.

In this book Flecki learns how to tell time. The book follows Flecki through the day, from the time he wakes up until he goes to bed, as he does different things every hour. The words are simple and easy to read and the illustrations match the printed word. *Flecki und die Uhr* is a reading and coloring book. Other Flecki reading and coloring books are available about counting, the alphabet, and the year. In addition to reading and coloring books, regular Flecki reading and picture books are available in German about a variety of topics. The Flecki books are a terrific resource for students in first or second grade

immersion classes as well as for students in other types of elementary school foreign language programs.

The second book, *Jon & der gläserne Berg*, is based on the American fairy tale, *Boots and the Glass Mountain*, by Claire Martin. It is retold by Arnica Esterl and illustrated by Gennadij Spirin. Spirin's illustrations are a work of wonder. He paints pictures with a very fine brush, making them full of details and precision. Looking at the pictures one can see and feel the magic of this fairy tale.

*Jon & der gläserne Berg* is about a poor, but smart and courageous young man who wins the hand and heart of the lovely princess. This is a great story with superb illustrations. It appeals to all ages of students, from elementary to high school.

## Spanish

Simons, M., & Maley, P. (1993). *Motivando la lectura, actividades de razonamiento en torno a la literatura: Grados 1-3 y Grados 4-6*. Eugene, OR: Spring Street Press.

*Distributed by Edumate, 2231 Morena Blvd., San Diego, CA 92110; 619-275-7117; Fax: 619-275-7120.*

For any teacher who has wanted to incorporate children's literature into the foreign language classroom, but has worried about what activities to use after reading a story, this set of books offers an exciting answer.



*Motivando la lectura* is a collection of black-line masters of graphic organizers that can be copied and used with any story or book. Because the graphic organizers help to arrange the information from a story into a visual format, these activities will appeal to the variety of learning styles that are encountered in the classroom. Based on the whole language and literature-based reading programs, these motivational activities help the teacher monitor the student's understanding of the reading in a fun and non-threatening way.

The books are separated into two levels, grades 1-3 and 4-6, but this division may not be appropriate for every foreign language situation. It seems advisable to equate the label "grade" with level of language study, e.g., grade one is equal to beginning level Spanish. The graphics may seem too immature for students in junior high and high school, but they quickly begin to enjoy the activity and work to organize what they are reading.

These books provide a sound structure on which to build good reading skills in any language. Because students enjoy stories that offer language and culture in context, the graphic organizers are an excellent way to extend your language teaching and take advantage of the wealth of children's literature that is becoming available in many languages.

3476, Fax: 516-434-3217. Cost is \$18.95 for hard cover and \$12.95 for paperback.

*Enfin*, an important resource for elementary French teachers, is a book and a tape of traditional rhymes, games, and counting songs for children. The rhymes are organized around various themes and are sung by an adult and French children. There are songs for going to the market and for the farmyard, animal rhymes, and rhymes for inside the house, in the fields, and at the cafe.

The songs and rhymes are illustrated with delightful drawings of children and animals and all the key elements are labeled so that children can identify them. Each song or rhyme is repeated and a graceful version of *Nous n'irons plus au bois* is used as a theme to carry the listener from one page to the other.

As usual in traditional material, teachers may find that the version of a song they have varies slightly from the one in the book. The fact that there are many variations of the rhymes that have evolved through time only confirms their authenticity.

A guide at the end of the book explains how to play the games and what the rhymes mean. This book and tape should be in the collection of every elementary teacher who wants to transmit the special culture of French children in the classroom.

## French

Dunn O. Aggs, P. (illus.) (1995). *Un, Deux, Trois, My First French Rhymes*. Hauppauge, NY: Barrons Educational Series.

Available from Barrons Educational Series, 250 Wireless Blvd., Hauppauge, NY 11788; 800-645-

# Bilingualism in Early Childhood Education

## What Do We Know? What Do We Do?

*Refereed Article*

Laurie Makin  
Institute of Early Childhood  
Macquarie University  
Sydney, Australia

### Introduction

Over the last 50 years, changes in patterns of immigration to English-speaking countries such as Australia, the United States, Canada, and England have resulted in huge demographic changes. Lo Bianco (1994, p. 19) states:

In 1975 there were 4.2 million displaced people in the world—that is people in the phase of transition from one physical location of citizenship to another. In 1984 the figure had increased to 24 million people and the rate of increase was itself increasing dramatically.

In Australia, census figures stated that 25 percent of school children speak a language other than English at home. In the U.S., 2.3 million children are categorized as limited English proficient (LEP) (Fitzgerald 1995).

These changes in the school-age population necessitate a re-examination of education in these countries, starting with early childhood education, i.e., programs designed for children from birth to eight years of age.

This article is based on the language education situation in Australia. However, the issues are similar to those in other parts of the world and much of the research impacting upon educational programs has international recognition. It is hoped that this

article will stimulate increased dialogue between early childhood educators in the U.S. and Australia.

### What Do We Know?

Since the 1920s and 30s, when bilingualism was thought to be an aspect of children's development which negatively affected their academic prowess and their social competence (Makin, Campbell, & Jones Diaz, 1995), evidence has grown that, on the contrary, bilingualism can enhance cognitive development and give children access to social experiences closed to monolingual children.

Many children have the potential to become bilingual during their education. However, this potential is often not realized. As far back as 1953, a UNESCO report stated:

It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium (cited in Djite, 1994, p. 16).

For native English speakers in

*...bilingualism  
can enhance  
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children.*

these countries, mother tongue or home language education in the early years is a commonplace pattern. If a new language is met in the context of education, it is most commonly introduced at a later stage (for example, in the upper primary or secondary school years) and is not the primary medium of teaching. But what of the early education undertaken by children whose home language is a language other than English? There are many areas in which what research suggests, and what practices exist, are at odds.

Research never proves anything definitively. However, as evidence from carefully designed and replicated studies builds gradually, we begin to get indications of what is the best knowledge available at the current time. This best knowledge is what we have available to us to guide our thought so that research is translated into action. So, what is our "best knowledge" at the moment?

First, we recognize the central importance to language learning of social interaction (Halliday 1975, Bruner 1983, Vygotsky 1987, Rogoff 1990). No one chooses to learn a new language in order to be able to use the subjunctive mood or the past perfect tense. People choose to learn languages for reasons such as interacting with others, furthering their career prospects, or widening their experiences. To emphasize the importance of the sociocultural context in the process of language learning is not to deny the constructivist view of development, but to complement it. Snow (1992) argues that a sociocultural orientation is particularly critical in bilingual education.

Second, we recognize the interconnectedness of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Such knowledge is reflected in approaches to literacy development as different as the Language Experience Approach

(Ashton-Warner 1980), Whole Language (Brown & Mathie 1990), and the Genre Approach (Derewianka 1990). Children are most ready to learn to read in the language which they speak most fluently. Australia's language policy for the 1990s, *Australia's Language*, states clearly (Dawkins, 1991, p. 79): "International and Australian evidence suggests that, where possible, literacy should be established first in the child's first language."

Third, we know that language learning is inextricably interwoven with other factors such as language status, group membership, socioeconomic advantage, and political power. Thus, young children from low status minority language backgrounds who are also socio-economically disadvantaged are at risk (Cummins 1989, Bialystok & Cummins 1991, Moll 1992).

Fourth, we know that operating in two language systems can help children's metacognitive and metalinguistic development, cognitive flexibility, and divergent thinking (Hakuta 1986). However, this is not an inevitable function of bilingual development (Bowel 1988). Much research suggests that benefits accruing from bilingualism are greater when children are fluent in both languages (Janssen & Pauwels 1993).

Fifth, we know that it takes a long time—between 4 and 7 years—to become fluent in a new language, and that the time needed increases in relation to the difference between the two languages, e.g., Asian and European languages.

Sixth, we know the importance of home-school partnerships if children are to be given optimal chances for academic and social success. Parents are generally experts when it comes to their own children. Teachers are expert educators. A "we" orientation on both sides is critical if children are to be given their best chance.

*No one chooses to learn a new language in order to be able to use the subjunctive mood or the past perfect tense.*

## What Are Our Current Practices?

What are we currently doing in early childhood education programs for children between the ages of birth and eight years? With some notable exceptions, we do the following.

We run English-only programs, ignoring the languages and experiences which children bring to school. There may be ESL (English as a Second Language) support, but it is usually minimal, leaving children struggling as learning becomes less contextualized. There may be foreign language programs, but they too are often minimal and may not differentiate between the needs of native speakers and of new learners. Children may therefore be left with limited fluency in any language at levels beyond the survival stage.

We teach children whose home languages are languages other than English to read and write first of all in English, even though both the language and the experiences reflected in texts may be unfamiliar to the children.

We assess in English. "Without bilingual skills, teachers are trying to find the best high-jumper by seeing who's best at running" (Mills in Mills & Mills 1993, p. 10).

We often act as if speaking a language other than English at home is a problem to be remedied rather than a resource to be developed. Children may be categorized as "non-English speaking background" or LEP, terms which, as Diaz Soto (1991) reminds us, identify limitations, not strengths.

In our teacher training programs we largely ignore the languages which pre-service teachers bring to tertiary teacher education programs (Makin 1992). Thus we lose the opportunity to assist these students in using their languages and experiences in the early childhood field for the benefit of children and their families.

We, often unwittingly rather than uncaringly, replace children's home languages with English so that their potential bilingualism is lost or at best under-developed. At the same time, we introduce language learning programs that are only designed for monolingual English speakers and that do not capitalize on the bilingual skills some children already have.

We treat our young native English speakers differentially and preferentially by building upon their existing bases of knowledge and experience in a way which we do not do for children whose home languages are languages other than English.

## Summary

All of our children need the best that we can do for them, particularly in the first years of their education when the foundations for future success are either established or not established. The central importance of these early years is paid lip service in many government policy documents, e.g., *Australia's Language* (Dawkins 1991, p. 39) reminds us that:

Students who have not made adequate literacy development by the end of the third year of primary school are generally unable to make up the gap later in school.

A number of innovative practices which are supportive of linguistic and cultural diversity have been introduced in recent years, both in the U.S. and in Australia—immersion programs, intergenerational literacy programs, bilingual programs, foreign language programs, and so on. However, we have also seen the rise of backlash movements such as "English Only" in the U.S. and calls for restricted immigration quotas in Australia. Even where innovative practices do exist, the number of children who access them is in the minority. Until the rhetoric is better matched with the

reality, our bilingual children are at risk.

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## NNELL Position Statement on English-Only Movement

*The Executive Board of the National Network for Early Language Learning developed and voted to endorse this statement in March of 1996.*

*Individuals  
who are profi-  
cient in more  
than one lan-  
guage are rich  
human re-  
sources that  
benefit U.S.  
social and  
economic  
development.*

WHEREAS the National Network for Early Language Learning considers that all children should have opportunities to develop a high level of competence in at least one language in addition to their own as a critical component of United States education;

WHEREAS the National Network for Early Language Learning considers movements to promote the exclusive use of English in the United States as counterproductive to the diversity and richness of the many cultures that make up the mosaic of the U.S. society;

WHEREAS the National Network for Early Language Learning recognizes the importance of multilingual/multicultural participants in U.S. society, especially in business and social interactions, and as citizens of the world;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the National Network for Early Language Learning hereby reaffirms its advocacy for the teaching and learning of more than one language for all children in the United States and its belief that the English language is not threatened by the presence of multilingual members of U.S. society. Individuals who are proficient in more than one language are rich human resources that benefit U.S. social and economic development.

## Apply for a 1997 NEH Summer Fellowship

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Fellowship Program for Foreign Language Teachers K-12 invites applications for the 1997 summer fellowship program. Fellowships of \$3,750 will be awarded to teachers for the pursuit of professional development abroad.

Fellowship winners will spend six summer weeks in a foreign country improving their linguistic skills and developing humanities-related projects that will enhance their classroom teaching. The applications for the summer of 1997 are due October 31, 1996; fellowships will be awarded subject to approval of funding.

For information or an application form, contact: Naima Gherbi, Associate Program Director, NEH Fellowship Program for Foreign Language Teacher K-12, Connecticut College, 270 Mohegan Ave., New London, CT 06320-4196; 860-439-2282; Fax: 860-439-5341.

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# Digest

April 1995

## Integrating Foreign Language and Content Instruction in Grades K-8 (EDO-FL-95-07)

Helena Curtain, Milwaukee Public Schools & Mari Haas, Teachers College, Columbia University

Content-based instruction is a method of teaching foreign languages that integrates language instruction with instruction in the content areas. In this approach, the foreign language is used as the medium for teaching subject content, such as mathematics or social studies, from the regular classroom curriculum. The method is receiving increasing attention because it allows schools to combine the goals of the second language curriculum and the regular curriculum, making language learning the vehicle for strengthening general skills and knowledge. "Language is not just a medium of communication but a medium of learning across the curriculum. The goal of integration is both language learning and content learning. Content-based classrooms are not merely places where a student learns a second language; they are places where a student gains an education" (Mohan, 1986, p. 8).

Not only does the content-based language class complement the regular classroom curriculum, it becomes an integral part of the entire school program. The success of language immersion programs (where subjects are taught entirely in the foreign language) has stimulated interest in using content-based learning in other types of elementary and middle school foreign language programs that have traditionally been organized thematically around vocabulary topics. Incorporating subject content in early language programs puts language into a larger, more meaningful context and provides situations that require real language use. Genesee (1994) suggests that traditional methods often disassociate language learning from the rest of the student's day as well as from cognitive, academic, and social development. Content-based instruction is part of an integrated approach that brings these domains together. The benefits of studying language through subject content are evident in students' language and content acquisition.

In content-based instruction, students become proficient in the language because the focus is on the exchange of important messages, and language use is purposeful. The language that students use comes from natural situations, such as a science unit on the solar system or a social studies lesson on the geography of a country.

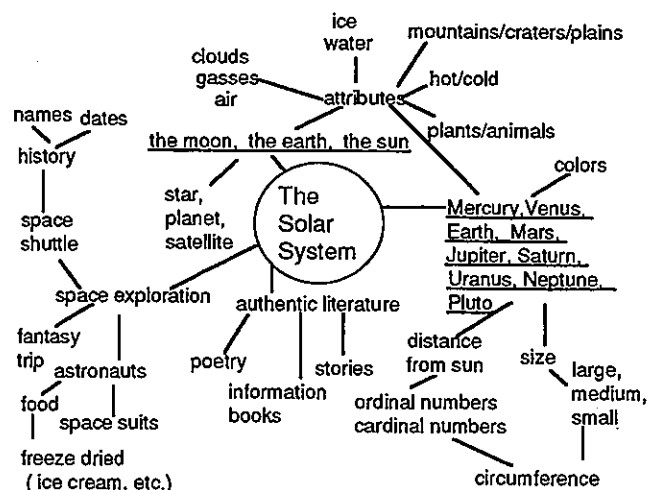
### Planning for Content-Based, Thematic Teaching

In thematic teaching, the curriculum is organized around a thematic center that can originate in the classroom, the school, the environment, or the target culture. Activities that teach language concepts along with the content are interrelated and are planned to fit within the framework of a lesson or thematic unit. Such an integrated, holistic approach is based on the premise that when students are engaged in meaningful activities they acquire language, including writing, as naturally as they learned to walk and talk.

The thematic center may be a curriculum area, such as the Middle Ages; a word like "inside"; a theme such as houses; or a story in the target language. Webs or semantic maps are an ideal way to brainstorm curriculum activities based on these themes. A web graphically shows how the activities and the target language are interrelated. Caine and Caine (1991) indicate that facts and skills presented in isolation need more practice and rehearsal to be stored in the brain than

does information presented in a meaningful context. The web maps out the context in which second language learning is combined with subject content and cultural learning in an integrated language process. Webs can be organized in different ways (e.g., free form, by content discipline, by multiple intelligences). The following web and chart are examples of thematic or content-based planning.

### A Free-Form Web



### Planning a Unit on Puerto Rico Using Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1993)

**Bodily-Kinesthetic.** To introduce vocabulary about Puerto Rico, ask the students to take a picture or item representing something about Puerto Rico out of a magic box. Ask students to point to the item, pass the item, put the item on the table, put it on a part of the body, etc.

**Spatial.** Give students a graphic organizer with a circle in the center that says "Puerto Rico" and spokes coming out from the center. Have the students fill in each spoke with one aspect about Puerto Rico.

**Linguistic.** As students take each item out of the magic box, describe the item to them. "This is a *coquí*. It is a small frog that only lives in Puerto Rico. It sings, '*coquí, coquí, coquí*.'" Write a Language Experience Story about Puerto Rico using the language used to describe the items from the magic box.

**Musical.** Teach the song *El Coquí* to the students.

**Logical-Mathematical.** Have students use a small picture of a *coquí* to measure the distance between places on the map (1 *coquí*=10 miles) and calculate how long and wide Puerto Rico is, how far it is from Ponce to San Juan, etc. \*

**Interpersonal.** Divide the class into pairs with one partner as A and the other as B. Give each pair an A and B pair sheet. Have them "read" their sheets to each other to practice the vocabulary illustrated on the sheet and to decide if their sheets are the same or different.

**Intrapersonal.** After tasting typical foods from Puerto Rico, make a graph of the food students like and dislike.

\* activity by Eileen Lorenz, Montgomery Co. Public Schools (MD)

Pesola (in progress) has developed a curriculum planning framework for the integration of language and content based on the thematic unit. In her model, the dynamic relationships among language, academic content, and culture interact so that all three elements form the core of the language lessons. She describes a comprehensive framework to follow in the planning process, including (1) a thematic center; (2) outcomes for language in use, content, and culture; and (3) activities, assessment strategies, materials, and classroom setting. Making choices in all three areas of language, content, and culture, and maintaining a balance among them is the fundamental basis of this model. Part of Pesola's framework is the Unit Plan Inventory, which is outlined below. It shows the many aspects of planning that must take place for successful language and content integration in a unit on architecture.

### ***Planning for a Content-Based Unit on Architecture Using the Unit Plan Inventory***

**Language in Use.** Describing, giving information, asking for information.

**Subject Content.** Architecture, geography, seasons, weather.

**Culture.** Doors and windows of a target country and students' home town.

**Vocabulary.** Colors, shapes, sizes, materials (wood, stone), architectural details (ironwork, balcony, ornate), geographical terms (snow, rain, sun, clouds).

#### **Grammatical Structures**

• Verbs in command form--open, close, touch, point to.

• Verbs in present tense--to be, to see, to think, to paint.

#### **Essential Materials**

• Photographs from both target and home cultures of doors and windows, geographical landmarks, and seasons.

• Paper, ruler, tape measures, paints, markers.

• Map of target country.

#### **Activities**

• Introduce vocabulary through Total Physical Response (TPR) sequence with photos of classroom doors and windows.

• Sort photos by doors/windows, target country/home town, size, shape, material, color.

• In pairs, estimate then measure doors and windows in classroom.

• Use TPR sequence of map geography, seasons, and weather of target country and home town.

• In small groups, paint the original window with a view in the target country or home town.

• Describe a window in writing or orally.

• Display windows in the classroom, have students choose the window they like the best and write why they like it.

#### **Assessment**

• Observe students' participation, assess for understanding.

• Observe students' participation, assess for accuracy and pronunciation.

• Assess for participation, use of target language, and accuracy.

• Assess for inclusion of all elements, presentation, and participation in group project.

• Evaluate written paragraph for accuracy and meaning.

• Evaluate student writing for coherence, interest, and accuracy.

*Based on and adapted from a unit prepared by Pam Morgan,  
Renbrook School, West Hartford, CT.*

### **Suggestions for Planning Lessons that Integrate Language and Content Instruction**

When planning for the integration of language and content instruction, the distinctive characteristics and needs of young students found at each level of cognitive and educational development must be considered. Who are the students? What is the range of their social and cognitive development? What are they interested in? Second language acquisition research informs us about the value of teaching strategies such as providing comprehensible input, planning many listening activities, and giving the students numerous opportunities to use their language and to negotiate meaning.

The following are suggestions for planning lessons that integrate language and content in early language programs:

1) Become familiar with the regular classroom curriculum by observing your students' regular classrooms, reading the school's curriculum guide, talking with the teachers about their curriculum and to the students about what they are studying.

2) Plan to integrate content that you are interested in and will take time to research. Start on a small scale and select only one or two topics from the regular curriculum. Think in advance about the units you would like to plan so that when you are traveling or attending conferences you can begin to collect resources to enrich your units.

3) Use a web or a curriculum planning format that promotes the integration of language, content, and culture.

4) Design interesting activities for the students that do the following:

- use the students' prior knowledge and personal experience;
- ask students to work in a variety of groupings (whole class, individually, in pairs, and small groups);
- use holistic strategies that integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing and naturally connect language and content;
- challenge the students to think critically; and
- address the students' multiple ways of learning.

### **Conclusion**

Incorporating content-based instruction into elementary and middle school foreign language classrooms is a way of providing a meaningful context for language instruction while at the same time providing a vehicle for reinforcing academic skills. Teaching through content is fun and worthwhile for both the students and the teacher. Although it takes more time to plan and create materials for content-based instruction, the results are well worth the effort.

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### June 16-July 12, 1996

Methods for Teaching Foreign Languages in Elementary and Middle School, Concordia College, Moorhead, MN. Carol Ann Pesola, Concordia College, Moorhead, MN 56562; 218-299-4511; or AATG, 112 Haddontowne Court #104, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034-3668; 609-795-5553; Fax: 609-795-9398; E-mail: 73740.3231@compuserve.com.

### June 24-28, 1996

*Temas Actuales: Libros en Español para Lectores Jóvenes—el Desarrollo Emocional* (in Spanish), California State University, San Marcos, CA. Isabel Schon, Center for the Study of Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents, California State University, San Marcos, CA 92096-0001; 619-750-4070; Fax: 619-750-4073; E-mail: ischon@mailhost1.csusm.edu.

### July 1-13, 1996

Teaching Foreign Languages to Young Students, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY. Mari Haas, Teachers College, Box 201, 525 West 120th St., New York, NY 10027; 212-678-3817; Fax: 212-678-3085; E-mail: mbh14@columbia.edu.

### July 8-12, 1996

Current Issues: Books in Spanish for Young Readers (in English), California State University, San Marcos, CA. Isabel Schon, Center for the Study of Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents, California State University, San Marcos, CA 92096-0001; 619-750-4070; Fax: 619-750-4073; E-mail: ischon@mailhost1.csusm.edu.

### July 8-13, 1996

Teaching Foreign Languages to Young Students 2 (For returning teachers), Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY. Mari Haas, Teachers College, Box 201, 525 West 120th St., New York, NY 10027; 212-678-3817; Fax: 212-678-3085; E-mail: mbh14@columbia.edu.

### July 23-28, 1996

The National FLES\* Institute, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, MD. Gladys Lipton, Modern Languages and Linguistics, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, MD 21228; 301-231-0824; 410-455-2109; Fax: 301-230-2652; E-mail: glipton@mcimail.com or lipton@umbc2.umbc.edu.

### July 23-August 2, 1996

Culture and Children's Literature: France and Mexico, Iowa State University, Ames, IA. Marcia H. Rosenbusch, National K-12 Foreign Language Resource Center, N157 Lagomarcino Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011; 515-294-6699; Fax: 515-294-2776 or 6206; E-mail: nflrc@iastate.edu.

### July 31-August 10, 1996

Seminar on Teaching German at the Elementary and Middle School Level, Plymouth State College, NH. Gisela Estes, Department of Foreign Languages, Plymouth State College, Plymouth, NH 03264; 603-535-2303; or AATG, 112 Haddontowne Court #104, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034-3668; 609-795-5553; Fax: 609-795-9398; E-mail: 73740.3231@compuserve.com.

### August 5-9, 1996

*La Literatura en Español Dirigida a los Lectores Infantiles y Juveniles* (in Spanish), California State University, San Marcos, CA. Isabel Schon, Center for the

Study of Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents, California State University, San Marcos, CA 92096-0001; 619-750-4070; Fax: 619-750-4073; E-mail: [ischon@mailhost1.csusm.edu](mailto:ischon@mailhost1.csusm.edu).

**August 12-16, 1996**

*Temas Actuales: Libros en Español para Lectores Jóvenes ¿Traducción o interpretación?* (in Spanish), California State University, San Marcos, CA. Isabel Schon, Center for the Study of Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents, California State University, San Marcos, CA 92096-0001; 619-750-4070; Fax: 619-750-4073; E-mail: [ischon@mailhost1.csusm.edu](mailto:ischon@mailhost1.csusm.edu).

**August 12-23, 1996**

Immersion in the Global Context: Theory and Practice, Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, Canada. Norma Evans, Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada V5A 1S6; 604-291-3389; Fax: 604-291-3203; E-mail: [nevans@sfu.ca](mailto:nevans@sfu.ca).

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**Fall 1996 Conferences**

**September 25-28, 1996**

Third European Conference on Immersion Programs, Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain. Deadline for submitting papers is April 15, 1996. Institut Europeu de programes d'immersió, Provença, 324, 1r., E-08037 Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain; Phone 011-34-3-4588700; Fax 011-34-3-4588708.

**October 31 - November 2, 1996**

Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers: At the Crossroads of Tomorrow, Winnipeg Convention Centre, Winnipeg, Ontario, Canada. Donald Teel, 960 Wolseley Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3G 1E7, Canada; 204-786-4796; Fax: 204-783-7607; E-mail: [deteel@minet.gov.mb.ca](mailto:deteel@minet.gov.mb.ca).

**November 22-24, 1996**

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Philadelphia, PA. ACTFL, 6 Executive Plaza, Yonkers, NY 10701-6801; 914-963-8830; Fax: 914-963-1275.

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**Submissions Sought for Teaching with Technology**

Readers are encouraged to send submissions for the new *Teaching with Technology* feature of the journal. This section will publish articles written by language teachers who have successfully incorporated technologies into their instruction at the K-8 level, as well as information on communications technologies, reviews of computer programs, and applications used to enhance foreign language education. *Learning Languages* invites teachers to submit informative articles about practical applications of communications technologies in the classroom, as well

as their experiences with, and their perspective on, various technologies as they relate to foreign language learning.

For further information or to submit an article, contact: Jean W. LeLoup, Visiting Professor, HQ USAFA/DFP 2354 Fairchild Drive, Suite 6H51, USAF Academy, CO 80840-6244; E-mail: [LeloupJW%DFP%USAFA@dfmail.usafa.af.mil](mailto:LeloupJW%DFP%USAFA@dfmail.usafa.af.mil)

After June 1, 1996, use the following address: Jean W. LeLoup, ICC Department, SUNY/Cortland, PO Box 2000, Cortland, NY, 13045; E-mail: [LeLoupJ@syncorva.cortland.edu](mailto:LeLoupJ@syncorva.cortland.edu).

NNELL is an organization for educators involved in teaching foreign languages to children. The mission of the organization is to promote opportunities for all children to develop a high level of competence in at least one language in addition to their own; to provide leadership, support, and service to those committed to early language learning; and to coordinate efforts to make language learning in programs of excellence a reality for all children.

NNELL works to accomplish this mission through activities that improve public awareness and support of early language learning; facilitate cooperation among organizations directly concerned with early language learning; facilitate communication among teachers, teacher educators, parents, program administrators, and policymakers; and disseminate information and guidelines to assist in developing programs of excellence.

NNELL holds its annual meeting at the fall conference of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Its officers are elected by members through a mail ballot election held annually in the spring.

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[feytent@typhoon.coedu.usf.edu](mailto:feytent@typhoon.coedu.usf.edu)

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116 Azalea Dr.  
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