

# Learning Languages

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**Learning Languages:** *The Journal of the National Network for Early Language Learning* is published in the Spring, Fall and Winter as 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 promote 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 back cover for more information on NNELL.

**Articles Published:** Both practical and scholarly articles are published. Practical articles describe innovative approaches to teaching and 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 to request a copy of author guidelines for preparing articles, or retrieve them from NNELL's Web site ([www.educ.iastate.edu/nnell](http://www.educ.iastate.edu/nnell)).

**Submissions:** Deadlines are: Fall issue—May 1; Winter issue—Nov. 1; Spring issue—Feb. 1. Articles, classroom activities, and materials may be submitted to the appropriate Contributing Editor. 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 parent or guardian 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, context, objectives, targeted standards, materials, procedure, and assessment. Include pictures or drawings as illustration, if available. Send with your name, address, and phone number to the Classroom Activities Editor.

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## Notes from the President



"English + 1 + 2 gets it done." This was the message that Dr. L. Jay Oliva shared with attendees at the 2001 Northeast Conference during his keynote address. Dr. Oliva is the president of New York University and is the first New York University faculty member to become president. A fluent speaker of French, Dr. Oliva is very involved in the life of the institution and its students. He teaches Russian history to undergraduates in addition to his presidential responsibilities.

In an engaging manner Dr. Oliva challenged a number of false assumptions such as English as the language of convenience for ordinary business. Dr. Oliva clarified the "everyone speaks English" argument by distinguishing between talking about lost luggage and understanding the soul of a people. English may be the current international language of convenience and lost luggage, but English will not gain entry to the society and soul of a non-English-speaking culture. For real understanding we must have the language of the soul, the language of the people.

Dr. Oliva's words inspire us to challenge current U.S. statistics on second-language proficiency. How many American students today become proficient in a second language beyond the level of convenience and reach true understanding? The answer is quite sobering indeed. In their 1998 study Rhodes and Branaman report that while more elementary schools now offer foreign language programs, less than one-third of our students attend an elementary school where languages are offered during the school day. We know that long and

strong foreign language sequences are the keys to proficiency and cultural understanding.

In reality, when it comes to elementary school foreign language learning, most American children are being left behind. Future efforts to provide support for improving the teaching of foreign languages at the elementary school level are at risk because of executive and legislative action and inaction in Washington, D.C., on the Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP). In recent years FLAP has provided much-needed federal funding for elementary school foreign language programs. If these funds become part of block grants to states, without specific requirement for the use of funds for elementary foreign language programs, this important source of funding will disappear.

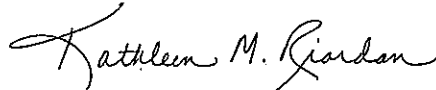
Thanks to all of you who have written letters of support for FLAP. And special thanks to Lori de Langer Ramirez, NNELL Secretary, who organized the mailing of 40, yes *forty*, letters from her school in support of FLAP. Many thanks also to the Joint National Committee on Languages (JNCL), of which NNELL is a member, which organized a national letter-writing campaign through its Web site ([www.languagepolicy.org](http://www.languagepolicy.org)), at conference sessions, and at the JNCL meeting. At the latter JNCL focused the efforts of its members on lobbying for FLAP during their face-to-face visits with members of Congress.

Now, are you interested in supporting and involving parents in children's foreign language learning? Of course, we all are! If you are

looking for some additional ideas and strategies, log on to the New Jersey project Web site ([www.fdu.edu](http://www.fdu.edu) or [www.globalteachinglearning.com](http://www.globalteachinglearning.com)) for information about the GAINS (Gaining Achievement in New Standards) Project. GAINS is a joint effort of the Foreign Language Office at New Jersey's Department of Education and Fairleigh Dickinson University. Hats off to Janis Jensen, New Jersey's Foreign Language Consultant and NNELL member, for her role in this fine work.

We are in times of great challenge and great opportunity. We must take inspiration from our colleagues doing excellent work in foreign language classrooms around the country. Our collective good work should motivate us to organize to protect and even

expand our current programs as we work to assure that no child is left behind when it comes to quality early language learning programs. We believe that all American children have the right to learn at least one language in addition to English at the level of "a language of the soul." Working together we will make English + 1 + 2 a reality!



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## Teachers Needed!

### New York

East Rockaway Public Schools, East Rockaway, New York has a full-time foreign language teaching position available for the 2001-2002 school year. The candidate should have, or be eligible for, NYS certification in Spanish and/or Italian, 7-12 and/or elementary K-6. An elementary program is in place for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades. Contact Dr. Elvira Morse, East Rockaway Junior-Senior High School, 443 Ocean Ave., East Rockaway, NY 11518 or call 516-887-8300 Ext. 100 for more information.

### Illinois

Northbrook, Illinois, District 28 has an open 5<sup>th</sup> grade French position for the 2001-2002 school year. Contact Jessica Mann, 1475 Maple Ave., Northbrook, IL 60062 or call 847-498-7900 for more information.

### Washington, D.C.

Loudoun County Public Schools, 25 miles northwest of Washington, D.C., is seeking teachers for K-1 Spanish. Applicants must be fluent in Spanish, with an endorsement in elementary education or foreign language K-12. Visit the Web site at [www.loudoun.k12.va.us](http://www.loudoun.k12.va.us) or call 703-771-6424 for more information.

# Learning through Dialogue Journal Writing: A Cultural Thematic Unit

Refereed Article

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**I**magine this elementary foreign language program scenario: Spanish classes that meet every three days for 15 minutes. The program's teacher travels from class to class and from school to school, teaching in as many as 17 classrooms in one day. In addition, since the program's goal is to provide all children, grades one through five, an exposure to two foreign languages, the students spend one half of the school year learning Spanish and the other half of the year learning French.

In the United States this scenario is not uncommon. Rhodes and Branaman (1998) report that Foreign Language Exploratory (FLEX) programs are the most common type of American elementary school foreign language programs. FLEX programs expose children to one or more new languages but do not allow elementary students to gain proficiency in the language.

After having taught Spanish in a FLEX program for several years, this teacher-researcher was asked by a second grade classroom teacher what her students were gaining educationally from such a limited amount of instructional time in Spanish. At that time, the teacher-researcher was unable to provide an immediate or definitive answer because assessment was not an integral component of the curriculum she had designed and so carefully perfected many times over.

How could she take time to formally assess when it was so important to use every minute to teach language and culture?

Frustrated by the lack of time to plan for assessment, the teacher-researcher began to search for a way to answer this classroom teacher's important question. This search resulted in valuable documentation of student learning through an ongoing dialogue between the students and the teacher-researcher (who was the Spanish teacher) through dialogue journals.

Thus began a four-year teacher action research project focused on the following question: *Can student dialogue journals provide documentation of student learning from a cultural unit taught in Spanish?* In 1995 the teacher-researcher received a grant from the Fundación Cultural de Yucatán for three weeks of travel and study in Yucatán, Mexico. The purposes of the visit were to learn more about Yucatán's cultural celebrations and, upon returning home, to develop a curriculum unit. The resulting unit, *Fiestas de Yucatán* (Borich, 1997), as outlined in Appendix A, was intended to provide students with real-life cultural experiences while learning Spanish.

## Unit Background

In 1996 the National Standards in Foreign Language Education project

Can student  
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tation of student  
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cultural unit taught  
in Spanish?

defined five goals for foreign language education—Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996). The standards were used to refine the *Fiestas de Yucatán* unit.

While this thematic unit provides experiences for children in all five goals of the national student standards, two of the goals are emphasized—Cultures and Connections. In the unit, as students learn to communicate in Spanish (Communication), they make connections between the subject areas of math, science, geography, social studies, and the arts (Connections). Because students “travel” to Yucatán, and hear and speak Spanish throughout the simulated trip, their awareness of similarities and differences between their own state and Yucatán become evident (Comparisons). As students make these comparisons, they discover that in many ways the two states share many commonalities. Finally, having participated in celebrations “in Yucatán” and learned songs and language typical of the Yucatán area (Cultures), the students share their experiences with their families (Communities). Through the integration possible within a thematic unit, an interweaving of these five goals occurs.

In order to gain experience in the development and implementation of student assessments for the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum unit, the teacher-researcher attended the Performance Assessment Institute of the National K–12 Foreign Language Resource Center (NFLRC) at Iowa State University (ISU) in the summers of 1997 and 1998. These institutes enhanced the teacher-researcher’s awareness of, and interest in, all types of assessments, particularly alternative assessments. Self-assessment, journals, and portfolios were particularly interesting to the teacher-researcher. The use of dialogue journals was the teacher-researcher’s

first formal attempt to assess students’ learning of the Yucatán curriculum unit.

### ***Fiestas de Yucatán* Unit Design**

The design of this unit brings together culture, language, and content around the thematic center of “celebrations.” The choice of the theme of celebrations is especially appropriate to lower elementary students because of their natural interest in, and enthusiasm for, celebrations in their own communities. This unit also addresses geography, weather, and the ancient culture of the Maya.

Thematic instruction, as used in the *Fiestas de Yucatán* unit, is an effective curriculum-planning tool for the elementary school foreign language classroom. As an integrated approach to teaching, it can complement the existing school curricula, including such subjects as math, science, reading, and language arts (Curtain & Pesola, 1994). Thematic planning also can be a “point of departure for the implementation of national and state standards” (Rosenbusch, 1997, p. 15).

The unit focuses on two celebrations—a child’s birthday party and the *Posadas* (nine Mexican religious celebrations held the nine days before Christmas). In this unit students participate in cultural activities that help them connect ideas and information through the theme. This way of teaching contrasts with teaching language and concepts in isolation, as often occurs in social studies and foreign language classes.

### **Assessment in Elementary School Foreign Language Programs**

At the elementary level, many foreign language teachers use instructional strategies that are communicative in nature; however, very little information is available on how teachers assess students at this level (Thompson, 1997). Furthermore,

In this unit students participate in cultural activities that help them connect ideas and information through the theme.

because the issue of assessing the language of young learners is new, Shohamy (1998) advises the profession that research is "urgently needed" given the many different types of elementary school foreign language programs now in existence (p. 185).

Most elementary school foreign language educators agree that assessment must be an integral part of program evaluation (Curtain & Pesola, 1994; Donato, 1998; and Rosenbusch, 1991). Without ongoing assessment, elementary school foreign language programs run the risk of being considered of marginal importance. Donato (1998) and Curtain and Pesola (1994) caution that the lack of assessment procedures for foreign language programs in the early grades implies that foreign language is a subject area of minimal importance. When foreign language is regarded as an "extra," neither students nor parents regard it as being of "equal status with the rest of the curriculum" (Curtain & Pesola, 1994, p. 221).

### **Implications for Assessing the Young Language Learner**

Because foreign language instruction varies greatly from school to school, assessment has to be "grounded in the classroom and instruction" (Hamayan, 1998, p. 178). Hamayan proposes that the planning process include consideration of two basic questions. First, what is the purpose of the assessment? Second, who will use the results of assessment? After these questions have been answered, the teacher can begin planning what to assess, when to assess, and how to record information.

These three considerations for planning assessment apply to learners of all ages, however, Shohamy (1998) explains that there are additional, unique considerations for the young language learner. First, assessment planning should match the assessment procedure to the cognitive development and maturity of the test taker. Second, the child's level of

literacy in his or her first language should be considered when testing literacy in the second language. Finally, some consideration of the young learner's cultural background should be made. The socio-psychological factors, such as attitude toward test taking, also should be considered since young children have not yet been "socialized in taking tests" (p.188).

### **The Dialogue Journal as an Alternative Assessment**

The dialogue journal is a whole language activity in the form of a notebook in which students communicate individually with the teacher (Peyton & Reed, 1990). As Patzelt (1995) explains, whole language is an approach to teaching language that views language as a "whole entity." Thus, the skills of writing, speaking, reading, and listening should be integrated. According to Hall (1994), interactive writing can facilitate children's writing skills. Hall notes that this type of writing gives the child a reason to be an "author" and aids in the transition from oral to written communication.

The research with dialogue journals Peyton and Reed (1990) have conducted with ESL students indicates that keeping a journal, which allows assessment to occur on a formative, daily basis, is an appropriate strategy to use with young learners. With journals, students are continually providing feedback about what they understand in class as they progress in their language abilities, which can lead the teacher to improve instruction for each student.

Peyton and Reed (1990) found that the logistics of reading and responding to dialogue journals may discourage busy classroom teachers' use of this activity. Yet teachers who have found ways to manage the process report that the information they gain about students' interests and problems, as well as the feedback they receive about classroom activi-



ties, pays off in facilitating the instructional planning process.

Shohamy (1998) advocates the use of dialogue journals because they provide the teacher with information about young learner's perspectives on language learning as well as involve them in the learning process. Moffet (as cited in Jensen, 1993) states the importance of giving children a reason to write. Learning to write occurs best "in the same mixture with other activities" and when children have a "reason to write, an intended audience and control of subject matter and form" (p. 293). Because of these factors, many teachers and researchers now recognize that the learning of writing is a social process. To provide children writing experiences that focus only on correct spelling, punctuation, usage, diction, paragraph structure, and organization (adult standards) denies them the opportunity to see themselves as writers.

### Action Research Plan

To explore the research question, the teacher-researcher used qualitative research methods, specifically, action research, which is a genre of qualitative inquiry. Unlike quantitative inquiry with its "pre-specified intent," this research was evolutionary (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 6).

Once the problem (lack of assessment for the *Fiestas de Yucatán* unit) came into focus, the teacher-researcher sought how best to proceed in assessing second grade students, given the constraints of short instructional time periods. The students themselves also contributed (inadvertently) to the design process by virtue of their creative responses to three simple questions the teacher-researcher posed four years ago: "During our imaginary trip to Yucatán, a) what did you learn, b) what did you like about our trip, and c) what would you have changed?" The insightful responses of second graders to those questions revealed that they are capable of sharing in written form what

they learn. The combination of information gained at the Performance Assessment Institutes, the students' initial responses, and input on assessment sought from the students' classroom teachers, all contributed to the plan to use dialogue journals as a form of assessment.

The teacher-researcher began with a pilot study using dialogue journals in response to open-ended writing tasks. As the pilot study proceeded, ways to improve the assessment procedure evolved: a) giving students topics to write about after each Spanish lesson to help them get started writing; b) placing a written topic header on each page in the student journal to help students stay focused; c) writing Spanish vocabulary words on the board to encourage students to use Spanish in their journals. In addition, the idea of getting written feedback from parents about the child's journal developed during the pilot study. Lastly, the pilot study used a focus group of participating teachers to reflect on the value of the experience.

### Participants in Study

For the formal study in the fall of 1999, two classes of second graders were selected by the teacher-researcher for student journal and parent questionnaire analysis (the journal students). The other second grade students received the same instruction but did not journal about the Spanish class (the non-journal students). The two journal-student classes were chosen because of their classroom teachers' interest in learning more about the foreign language learning of their students and their willingness to have their students write in their journals during regular class time about their Spanish classes. The classrooms, located in different buildings within the school district, included students of both genders and varying abilities.

## Data Collection Instruments

The dialogue journal format was essentially an unstructured questionnaire soliciting open-ended responses. Students were asked to respond in their journals to more than 20 questions. After preliminary data analysis, 9 of these questions (see Appendix B) were selected for further analysis because they best addressed the learning related to the Cultures and Connections goals of the national standards (National Standards in Foreign Language Project, 1996).

The parent questionnaire, which solicited open-ended responses, was designed to be completed after the parent/s and child had read and discussed the journal entries together. A parental permission form, which included information about the student journals and introduced the idea of integrating Spanish objectives and assessment through this writing project, had been sent home with students at the beginning of this study.

## Research Procedures

*Data Sources.* The primary source of data in this study is the student journals. However, two additional sources of data were used to corroborate what had been observed in reading, interpreting, and summarizing the data of the student journals. First, two separate focus groups of second grade teachers who were familiar with the curriculum were conducted. During these focus groups, the teachers were asked questions that allowed them to contribute their observations and perspectives on student learning of the target culture and making connections between the Spanish curriculum and other content areas. Second, parent questionnaires sought parental input and feedback about student learning after students shared their journals at home. Third, during the time the teacher-researcher responded to students in their journals, she kept her own journal noting her interpretations of their entries.

## *Student Journal Procedures.*

Students were given at least 15 minutes in their regular classrooms to write and draw in their journals. Teachers indicated in the focus group that they encouraged students to write first and draw later. Thus, the amount of time students had to draw varied, and the quality of the drawings varied considerably from student to student.

Although the drawings were visually descriptive of the taught lessons, not all drawings were descriptive of the lesson content and, therefore, did not exemplify the student's understanding of content. For example, sometimes students would draw a picture of themselves or a classmate participating in a classroom activity. Sometimes students had time to add color to their drawing, but other drawings appeared unfinished. In any case, in data analysis, one point was given for evidence of learning through written response, drawing, or both. In some cases, a child's drawing was the only indication of his or her learning; in other cases a child's drawing supplemented his or her written evidence of learning.

The three figures included here illustrate the students' imaginary trip to Yucatán. Figure 1 shows a student's recollection of the class arriving at the airport, where the palm trees and a hot sun welcomed everyone. In Figure 2 the student's drawing shows the differences between a house in the small town of Tinum (*right*) and in the city of Mérida (*left*). In Figure 3, a student remembers a countryside scene with a palm-leaf house, a windmill, and a farm animal. Each drawing reflects some aspect unique to Yucatán.

*Focus Groups.* At the conclusion of teaching the unit, an outside moderator conducted two focus groups with second grade teachers. The focus groups provided the classroom teachers' perspective regarding student learning. The researcher was not present at the focus group meeting to

The three figures included here illustrate the students' imaginary trip to Yucatán.

Figure 1. Arrival in Yucatán

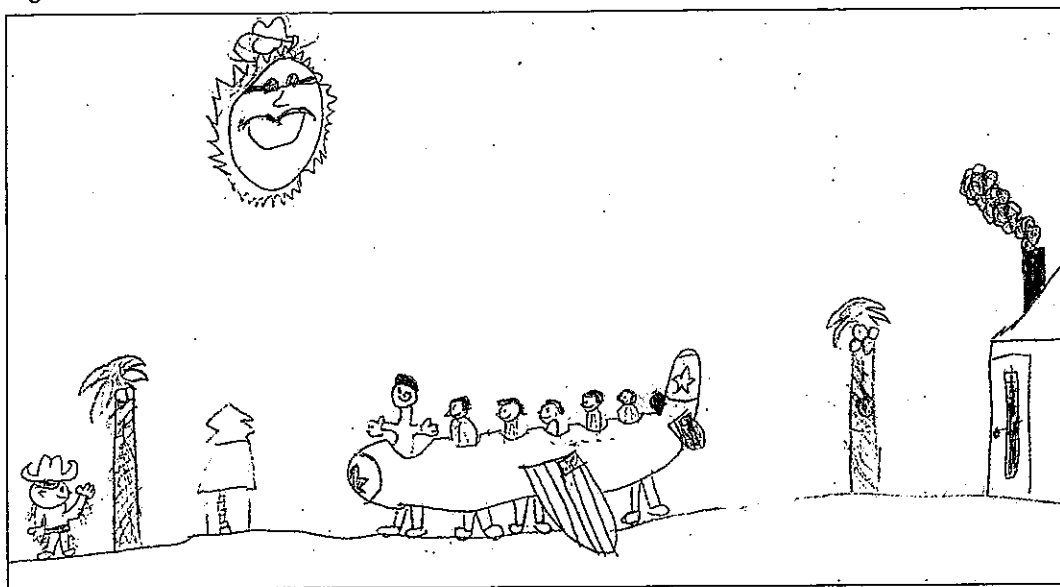


Figure 2. Houses of Tinum and Mérida

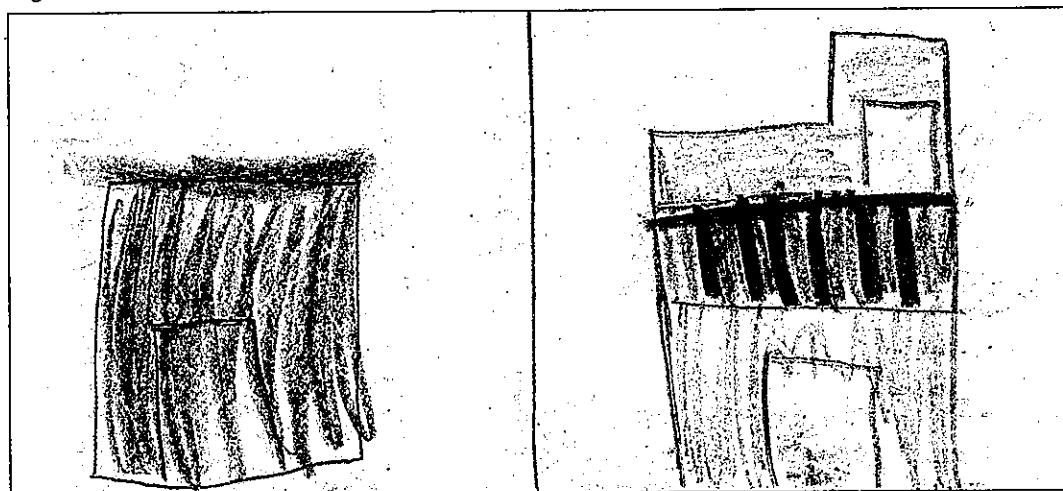
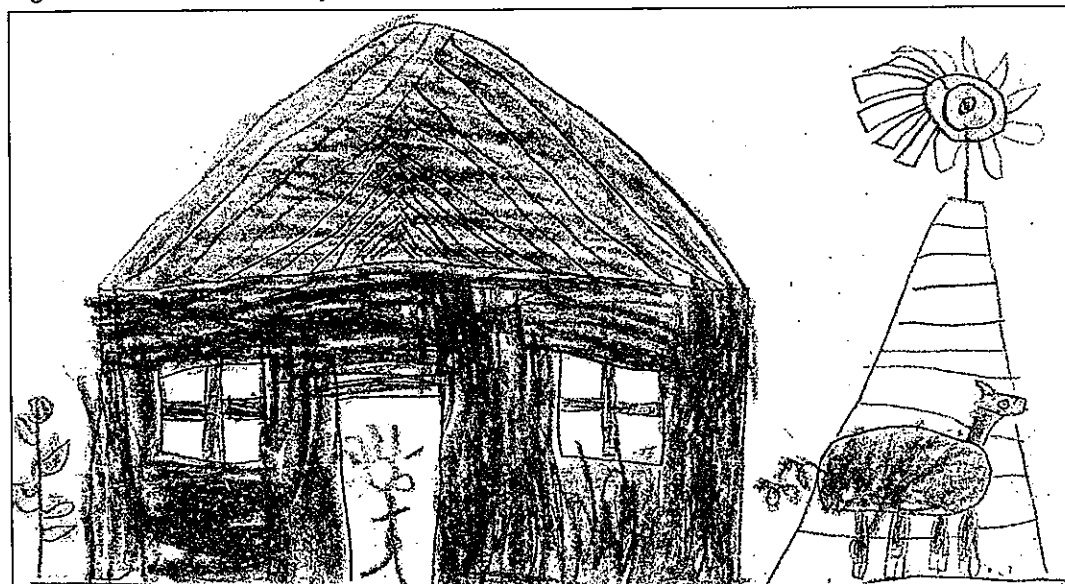


Figure 3. Yucatán's countryside



avoid bias that might affect discussions and inhibit the classroom teacher from participating fully in the discussions. The questions addressed in the group discussions were: a) How much culture have the children learned from their imaginary trip? and b) How many connections have they made to the classroom curriculum?

*Teacher-Researcher Journal.* After responding to the students' entries in their journals, the teacher-researcher wrote in her journal. The goal of this journal was to record "in the field" reflections that might otherwise be lost. Exemplary student entries or student entries that revealed mistaken perceptions were collected, noted, and reflected upon in this journal. The teacher-researcher journal also guided the selection of the nine questions for content analysis.

*Data Analysis.* The initial stages of data analysis of the student journals began with transcribing the journals by typing the entries in a computer and grouping them by class and student, then making copies of the student illustrations that accompanied the journal text. The teacher-researcher then reviewed and categorized the student journal entries and illustrations. These categories were finalized with a review of the categories identified in the teacher-researcher's journal. Finally, the journal entries were coded and entered on a matrix.

Next, the teacher-researcher reviewed the transcripts of the focus groups several times to categorize, code, and compare the observations made by the students' classroom teachers. Last, the parent questionnaires were categorized and frequencies were calculated on the categories. The categories across all sources of data were analyzed.

### **Student Responses**

Analysis of the student journal responses, the centerpiece of this research, gave ample evidence of

learning related to the two goals of Cultures and Connections. A key goal of this thematic unit was for students to gain knowledge of other cultures. Student responses showed evidence of students having learned about similarities and differences between Iowa and Yucatán birthday celebrations, as well as information about a Christmas celebration unique to Yucatán. Students also were able to identify several products and practices of Yucatán's culture—tortilla, piñata, palm-leaf house, Chichen Itzá, and the Posada celebration.

An additional goal of the unit was to help students make connections with other disciplines and acquire information while learning Spanish. The student journals revealed that students were able to identify locations on the map of Yucatán, Mexico, make comparisons between the weather of Yucatán and their home state, and demonstrated an understanding of ancient counting system of the Maya from zero to twenty.

As an alternative assessment tool, the dialogue journal is obviously very useful for obtaining direct information from the student. The evidence gained from review and analysis, however, also points to the value of the dialogue journal as an alternative assessment in another way. For example, students could write about and give evidence of their learning of Mayan counting in a variety of ways. This finding provides evidence that the dialogue journal gave students an opportunity to use higher-order thinking skills and provided direct evidence of their learning and their own unique perspective on what was taught.

### **Teacher Focus Group Analysis**

The teacher-researcher set up a matrix different from that used in the analysis of the student journals for analysis of the teacher focus groups. This new matrix was created because the comments of the teachers were less detailed and less focused on the Yucatán unit content than the student

Analysis of the student journal responses . . . gave ample evidence of learning related to the two goals of Cultures and Connections.

journals and contained less detail about student learning. To analyze the focus group transcripts, it was helpful to use a combination of ethnographic summary and content analysis.

The standards goals that were most evident in the teacher focus group discussions were those of Cultures and Connections, as was found in the analysis of student journals. In addition, the matrix for the teacher focus groups reveals remarkably similar observations by teachers of both the journal and non-journal students. There was one exception, however. One teacher of journal students knew more details about the Yucatán curriculum than any of the other teachers. According to her comments, her understanding is due to her involvement with the student journals; she read each journal looking for transfer of grade-appropriate writing skills.

### **Making Connections and Awareness of Cultures in the *Fiestas de Yucatán* Unit**

Comments from teachers participating in the two focus groups were designated by a number (1 was used for the focus group of teachers of journal students, and 2 for the focus group of teachers of non-journal students) and an identifying letter (identifying the teacher). The teachers agreed that the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum fosters a) cultural awareness of practices, products, and perspectives different from students' own, and b) awareness of the existence of languages other than English:

1J: They wanted to do it [journal writing] in Spanish. They had a better concept of what a different language is. They would come up to me and say [for their journal writing] "How do you say such and such in Spanish?" Students became more aware that we just don't speak English in the world.

1N: It's good that the kids have been exposed to a different culture.

2J: I think symbols of the country, like the flag, they were able to recognize. . . . And knowing that tortilla is something that is kind of a staple food of Mexico. I mean when she made those in class I think that was really good for them to get to taste the tortillas and really experience that first hand.

Teachers also mentioned this cultural awareness as they discussed evidence of their students applying their learning in Spanish class to the literature class:

2U: It [the story] was about a birthday. They [students and teacher in the Spanish class] talked about celebrations so we compared that to other celebrations the Mexicans had versus our culture and how we celebrate birthdays.

2S: Last week we read the story of Roberto and there were a lot of Spanish words . . . they did a nice job of being able to repeat the words in Spanish. . . . And they knew that this was not an English word, that it was a Spanish word.

Teachers from both groups agreed that they also have observed their students make valuable connections to the curricular areas of science, math, and social studies because of what they have learned in Spanish class. The following comments address observations of students making connections in the content area of social studies in general and then in the specific area of map skills:

2K: Well, I noticed an understanding through my kids when I was teaching about Mexico . . . they were able to make the connection that Jeanette had taught in the time that she was with my students and . . . [they connected that with] what I had been teaching them about Mexican culture.

2C: I would agree with 2K. When I taught Mexico in social studies, if I would put up a map of Mexico they would say, "There is the Yucatán!" or "There is where Chichen

Teachers . . . observed their students make valuable connections to the curricular areas of science, math, and social studies. . . .

Itzá is," which is exciting to see. . . . I think the kids really enjoy seeing real photographs of Jeanette in these places in Yucatán and then comparing. . . . She [Jeanette] would say in Spanish, "Students, look at the picture here." And they can see her making the tortillas and then talk about what we do in the United States.

The following two teachers discussed how their students made connections in science through comparisons of weather in Iowa and Mexico.

2J: I think they have a good understanding of the climate in Mexico [Yucatán]. She did something with the weather. . . . I think they got a real good feel for what the temperature is like there.

2C: They were able to do it . . . [by] comparing and contrasting the chart during the different months between here and there. And they were able to do that pretty much on their own.

### **Consensus and Dissonance from the Participating Journal Teachers**

The teachers who had participated in the journal writing revealed a divergence of opinions on two issues. First, the teachers disagreed on the value of taking time out of the school day for students to write in their Spanish journals. Second, journal teachers disagreed on whether the integration of Spanish with the grade level curriculum is a worthwhile endeavor.

1M: Classroom teachers don't know the language so how can we support each other [in integrating content from other disciplines].

1J: If they're just getting it in English (math concepts, for example) it would be too hard for them to transfer it into Spanish.

1D: She's real good about maps. My kids didn't even know where Yucatán was. She showed them where the cities were, like Mérida and Chichen Itzá . . . and where the sea was. That

really helps when we're introducing them to maps that they've had those skills ahead of time. Now 2K is doing maps and it seems to be easier. . . . You can [also] incorporate [English writing skills] into their journal writing.

1M: We don't have enough time to teach what we're supposed to, what we're required to teach in many ways. So to add this [Spanish] curriculum in, then we're taking away from something else. It's a trade-off. Because we don't have enough time to do what we're supposed to do. We seem to add and add and add. And we never take anything out.

1D: So you just have to focus on what you think is important, and go from there, right?

1M: But if we think about the world that these kids are going to live in, it's a necessity. They've got to understand more about other languages and cultures.

There was consensus among the teachers on the use of the dialogue journal as an alternative assessment for second grade students. Teachers' comments indicate that journal writing is an activity they can tailor to all students' learning levels:

1L: I adapted that [letting students express themselves in drawings] to the kids who I knew couldn't write sentences. I said, "Just draw a picture for her. . . ." And then [when] I knew my kids were more capable, then [I said], "Yes, you write sentences."

1D: And it depended on the child, too. Like, if it was a special ed child, a picture is fine. But if it was a regular child, I expected two sentences. And if it was one of my top students, I expected a page full. So it just depends, you know, on what your expectations were for the child.

### **Parent Questionnaire Analysis**

The same categories used with the student journals were used with the parent questionnaires so the data from the two sources could be directly

. . . journal writing is an activity they can tailor to all students' learning levels. . . .

compared. In analyzing parent responses, it is evident that for some parents this was their first opportunity to discover how foreign language can be taught in a thematic unit that addresses varied topics.

B45: I was impressed by the variety of topics that J— learned about. Also, that J— could still recall a lot of details and information after so many months.

A 27: I'm impressed with the number of words of Spanish C— has been exposed to and understands. I feel the journal idea is a good one.

B50: You really covered a lot of material. A— got to know Yucatán well.

B52: I was impressed with the variety of activities that were included on the pretend trip. They provided an enormous opportunity for learning. What a great avenue for learning! Thank you!

The parent matrix revealed that they have a less-detailed or a less content-focused view of the curriculum than do the students. This occurred in large part because parents reflected on and wrote about all of their child's entries as a whole rather than on the nine selected questions used for the content analysis of student journals. Thus, the frequencies of their responses on the categories on the student journal matrix are not as noteworthy.

The teacher-researcher reconfigured the categories for parent comments into broader themes. The reconfigured themes are as follows: a) making connections to science, b) making connections to social studies, c) a greater awareness of cultural diversity, and d) learning to communicate in Spanish.

Making connections to the elementary curriculum through science was observed primarily in parents' observation about the teaching of weather. A total of 85% of the parents indicated they were impressed that their child had learned so much about the weather in Iowa and Yucatán. A total of 74% of the parents made comments related to

social studies concepts they heard about from their child in their journal discussion.

Next in order of significance to parents is the theme of journal writing. Journal comments related to the following aspects of the Spanish class: the interaction between the Spanish teacher and their child, the art work in the journal, and student writing skills in English used to discuss learning in the Spanish class. A total of 62% of the parents commented in their questionnaires on one of these three aspects of their child's learning.

Parent questionnaires also revealed that 54% of the parents were impressed that their child had learned so much Spanish during their imaginary trip to Yucatán. A third of the parents indicated that they did not realize their child could learn about so many different topics while at the same time learn Spanish (33%). Parent comments about culture centered around three themes: celebrations of Yucatán (50%), making comparisons between cultures (46%), and learning about foods different from those typically eaten in Iowa (49%).

According to the interpretations of parents after reading and discussing the journals with their children, the national standards of Communications, Cultures, and Connections are evident in the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum unit. The evidence from teachers through their observations, although different from those available through the parent responses to the student journals, also indicates that the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum does address these three goals of the national standards. In addition, the act of parents reading the student journals is valuable in itself. This reading allows for important communication to occur between school and home that is often lost in the busy lives of families today. This communication is evidence of an additional goal of the national student standards—the Communities goal—being met through the teaching of this unit.

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By teaching culture in Spanish this program is intensified.

## Discussion

*Assessment of the Standards in a FLEX Program Setting.* The plethora of recently created elementary school foreign language programs and the dissemination of the standards for foreign language learning have fomented discussion of assessment in two important areas. A review of literature indicates that there is an urgent need for evaluation of elementary foreign language programs as to the effect that these programs have on young learners. There is also a need for research that investigates developmentally appropriate techniques for assessing student progress.

The majority of elementary foreign language programs in existence continue to be of the exploratory type (FLEX), a program design that precludes extensive assessment because of time limitations. FLEX programs typically comprise 1%–5% of the school day (Curtain & Pesola, 1994). An important question about FLEX programs is what teachers, parents, and administrators can expect from an exploratory program's limited instructional time.

The program on which this study was based is a case in point with regard to limited instructional time and a lack of assessment. Large numbers of students (the teacher-researcher instructs 17 classes per day with approximately 25 students in each class) with minimum instructional time (15 minutes per class) provide little opportunity to assess student progress or program effectiveness.

Teaching beginning learners in the target language uses effectively the limited instructional time that is a characteristic of FLEX programs. The depth of learning is significant in the analysis of student journals, teacher comments, and parent questionnaires throughout the relatively short time period of this unit (a total of 24 lessons of 15 minutes each or six hours total of instruction). In light of this evidence, the delivery of the curriculum (the instructional strategies used) within an

exploratory program setting must not be overlooked when considering the findings of this study.

Furthermore, a common misconception is that culture, in order to be comprehensible to the student, must be taught in English. As Met and Rhodes (1990) explain, "the intensity of a program is defined not only by the amount of time dedicated to it, but also by the use of language for communication and time on task" (p. 8). By teaching culture in Spanish this program is intensified.

Finally, when generalizing results of this study to other research settings, several cautions must be considered. First, duplication of the research setting would be difficult. Second, while the author's teacher-researcher role makes the qualitative nature of this study appropriate, it is impossible not to discount her bias in interpreting results. Lastly, some consideration must be given to the potential bias of the teacher focus group members in their contributions to the data. All of the teacher participants have been, and continue to be, strong supporters of elementary school foreign language education.

*Dialogue Journal as an Assessment Tool.* Student journal evidence from this study becomes more powerful when the limited amount of time available for the foreign language classes is considered. The evidence from the journals reveals that it is possible to surpass the minimum goals of learning "about" language and "exploration" of culture considered normal in an exploratory elementary foreign language program. The student journals illustrate that effective use of foreign language instructional strategies appropriate for young learners allows students to experience culture and make curricular connections. Teachers commented on these instructional strategies, and parents observed the results of these strategies through communication with their child about the Spanish journal.



A related goal of the national foreign language standards is Communities. While parents of the non-journal-writing students may have had the opportunity to share in their child's Spanish class learning, the parents of the journal-writing students had a unique advantage. The journal group had the visual and written documentation of student's self-reflection. Rogers (1989) would call the dialogue journal proof of the "experienced" curriculum. The experienced curriculum can be very different from the planned curriculum or the taught curriculum because each child brings to the classroom his or her unique perspective.

The benefits of the dialogue journal home-school communication are not limited to parents and children. The teacher-researcher benefits as well. In addition to being able to provide evidence of students' learning, the effectiveness of the teacher-researcher as a curriculum planner is improved through the feedback provided by dialogue journals. Reading and responding to student journals provides an opportunity to reflect upon and improve the planned and the taught curricula.

As an assessment tool, the dialogue journal is an effective alternative assessment. It serves as a direct measure of what the students are learning as it encourages them to use higher-order thinking skills. While the journal is used to assess the learner, it also instructs the learner through dialogue with the teacher-researcher, who clarifies or affirms student comments about learning. For classroom teachers who recognize in this project a potential transfer of English language writing skills, the dialogue journal has the potential for integration with the language arts curriculum.

For this exploratory program, a major disadvantage of the dialogue journal is the time it takes to read and respond to the student journals. If the teacher-researcher were to respond to students in all of her 17 second-grade classes, the task would be overwhelm-

ing. The logistics of making sure even one extra minute was available after class to discuss with students their next journal writing assignment proved to be quite a challenge at times. Occasionally it was also difficult to find time to read before leaving for the next class even one student's entry in response to the question related to the previous class period. However, given the lack of any other assessment, this project will provide invaluable evidence of this program's value in terms of student learning.

As an assessment tool for second grade students, the dialogue journal has proven to be developmentally appropriate. Finding a suitable assessment tool for both teacher and student in a program of limited instructional time is difficult. Since the goal of the foreign language program is not proficiency, the dialogue journal written in English is especially appropriate as a formative assessment.

### Conclusions and Implications of Findings

Three strands of data that analyze the perspectives of students, parents, and teachers show how the goals of the national standards for foreign language learning are being met through the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum unit. The limitations of the setting for this study, a program wherein students purportedly only learn "about" language and "explore" culture, and the evidence of three perspectives about this thematic unit, intensify the value of this study. This study provides evidence on how a meaningful curriculum, taught in limited instructional time, can surpass the minimum goals expected of an exploratory foreign language program in an elementary school and can reinforce the standard course of study, social studies in particular. Parents, teachers, administrators, and students should expect that in a FLEX program students will learn social studies content taught in the foreign language.

The *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum

This study provides evidence on how a meaningful curriculum, taught in limited instructional time, can surpass the minimum goals expected of an exploratory foreign language program in an elementary school. . . .

unit as taught in a FLEX program setting does have value when measured according to the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1996). Gaining evidence of learning in the goal areas of Cultures and Connections is possible through a thematic unit design that incorporates effective instructional strategies despite the limitations of an exploratory foreign language program.

These findings enhance the paucity of research in the profession in the following ways. First, researchers such as Donato (1998) and Shohamy (1998) discuss the importance of multiple methods of assessing the young language learner. This research serves as a model for an alternative assessment that is developmentally appropriate for young second language learners. Second, this research serves as a method of assessing each child at his or her developmentally appropriate level. Third, while analyzing home-school communications was not part of the research question, this research demonstrates how effective home-school communication can take place through the student sharing of a dialogue journal with parents and family. Fourth, this research provides a model for addressing the goals of Cultures and Connections to the grade level curriculum through instructional delivery of a thematic unit taught in Spanish. The data suggest that student dialogue journals provide documentation of student learning from a cultural unit taught in Spanish.

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## Appendix A: *Fiestas de Yucatán* Curriculum Unit

In September the teacher begins Lesson One of the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum unit with a review of previously learned vocabulary and expressions related to colors, weather, and commands. These expressions, and new ones taught in the unit, are periodically recycled.

In lesson four, the teacher discusses with students the importance of using their imagination in the next Spanish class when they will “travel” to Yucatán. In preparation, students locate Yucatán and their home state of Iowa on a map. In doing so, they make the first of many comparisons in the unit—comparisons of size and location.

In lesson five, students board a “real” airplane made out of a large sheet of laminated bulletin board paper marked with “real” numbered

seats. The teacher-researcher, wearing a pilot's hat, gives instructions for boarding the plane, eating and sleeping on the plane, and disembarking. Throughout the “flight,” students watch the hours go by on a clock manipulative. Upon their safe “arrival” in Yucatán, students deplane and discover how hot it is in September in Yucatán. Singing a weather song learned in first grade helps students compare the weather in Yucatán and their own community. As a preview of the four locations in Yucatán they will “visit,” students view and discuss photographs, gaining an awareness of additional similarities and differences between Yucatán and their own community.

In lesson seven, students view houses in Mérida (the capital city of Yucatán) and Tinum (a Mayan village). In general, the houses in Mérida look different from the houses in Tinum because in Tinum the roofs are made of palm leaves. Students also look at photographs of the great pyramid at Chichen Itzá (Mayan ruins) and briefly, in English, discuss what the word *ancient* means. In lesson eight the teacher-researcher introduces students to the ancient numerals of the Maya. After observing the pattern of numbers from one to six, students predict how the Maya might have written numbers seven through thirteen.

The teacher retells the first-grade story, *The Rainbow and the Birds* (lessons nine and ten) to recycle and spiral key vocabulary for the unit. Students attach meaning to key words and phrases as they act out the words. For example, a bird is indicated by thumbs intertwined and fingers moving as a bird would fly.

In lesson thirteen each student receives a weather comparison chart. Using the weather chart the teacher has completed on a transparency each day in class, students copy key expressions for the weather of their home state and Yucatán during September and October. The teacher then presents spring temperatures in their

home state and Yucatán. Because the temperatures for Yucatán are extremely warm for the months of March, April, and May, students discover that the concept of spring for them is different from what they might experience in Yucatán. At this point, the teacher reads the story *De Colores*, using the big book as students perform actions for familiar vocabulary.

In lesson fifteen students take a brief "side trip" to the countryside. During this trip they view slides of locations previously learned, review the weather for springtime and the current month of November, and see how tortillas are made in the village. (Note: See Learning Languages 3(1), p. 15 for a photograph of tortilla making taken by the author while in Yucatán.) Lessons sixteen and seventeen address the topic of tortillas and corn with a story about Quetzalcoatl, a figure of ancient Mexico's mythology, and a demonstration lesson on tortilla making.

During the month of November students learn about their first celebration in the Yucatán, a Mexican birthday as seen through the eyes of María in the big book, *Mi Cumpleaños* (My Birthday). Lessons sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen help children sequence a series of events related to María's birthday, beginning with her family singing *Las Mañanitas* to the breaking of a piñata.

The focus on celebrations continues through December with *las Posadas* (nine celebrations occurring before December 25). As students watch a mini-drama of people (Fischer-Price figures) playing the part of Yucatecans knocking on the doors of houses (made from small milk cartons), they experience the sense of community engendered by this pre-Christmas celebration. Throughout the demonstration, the teacher reminds students that this is a celebration unique to Yucatán. She emphasizes the sense of community these celebrations foster and de-emphasizes the religious aspects (as required by the

school district).

Before actually role-playing a Posada procession during class, students "view" the Posada celebration—first through a book reading of *Nine Days to Christmas* and second through a transparency activity that simulates the Posada procession. In lesson twenty-one students participate in a "real" Yucatecan Posada. Three large tagboard, palm-leaf house fronts provide doors behind which two student volunteers stand. As the class proceeds from one house to the next they discover that only at the last house (the one with the piñata) are they welcomed in to celebrate. Paper lanterns and singing create a feeling of procession, while hot chocolate and buñuelos create the sense of celebration in the last house.

After the winter break only a few classes remain before the return "flight" to the students' home communities. Students discuss January's weather by using the comparative weather chart and review the songs, stories, and activities of the unit. Students experience the "trip" home by again boarding the paper airplane. Upon "returning home," students compare the weather of Yucatán on the day they left with their community's current temperature.

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## Appendix B. Student Journal Questions Selected for Analysis

7. Mérida is a large city and Tinum is a small town in Yucatán. What did you notice about the houses in those places?
8. Today you saw some pictures of Yucatán. Here is a list of the names of places we will be visiting. Can you tell something about each place?
11. What did you notice about the countryside in Yucatán?
15. Today we pretended to visit the countryside. What do you notice about the countryside in Yucatán? Is it the same or different from the countryside in (home state)?
16. Tell how María celebrated her birthday in Yucatán.
19. Describe in English or in Spanish how to write an ancient Mayan number from Chichen Itzá. Here
- are some words you will need:  
Spanish: *rectángulo, círculo, uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis, siete, ocho, nueve, diez, once, doce, trece, catorce, quince* (rectangle, circle, one, two, three. . . fifteen).
22. Tell about our Posada celebration today. What was it like? What did we do?
25. Our pretend trip to Yucatán is almost over. When you really visit Yucatán, what would be your favorite month to visit? Tell why. It might help to look at your weather chart.
28. You are ready to tell your friends about your trip to Yucatán. What was the best part of your trip? Would you ever like to go back? Tell why.

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## NNELL Members Receive Palmes Academiques Award

NNELL members TERRY CACCAVALE and RICHARD LADD received the prestigious Palmes Academiques Award from the French government this spring. Terry is the Massachusetts NNELL representative and is also the foreign language coordinator in Holliston, MA, where she began the French Immersion program and was its first teacher. Richard is a high school French teacher at Ipswich High School in Ipswich, MA. The award, which was presented at a ceremony in Holliston, was attended by current and previous French immersion students and parents. *Congratulations Terry and Richard!*



# Activities for Your Classroom

## WWW Activity for Early Language Learners

Alisha Dawn Samples  
South Carolina Department of Education  
Curriculum and Staff Development in  
Instructional Television

### **Level: French, Grades 1–2**

### **Targeted Standards:**

#### A. National Student Standards Foreign Languages

##### *Communication*

- 1.1 Students ask and answer questions about each other's pictures.
- 1.2 Students listen and interpret the teacher's instructions.

##### *Cultures*

- 2.2 Students use an authentic educational tool produced by the target culture.

##### *Connections*

- 3.1 Students reinforce math and science concepts taught in the regular classroom.
- 3.2 Students ask each other questions to find out what the other's picture looks like.

#### B. National Student Standards Foreign Languages (cnets.iste.org)

1. Basic Operations and Concepts:  
Students will learn to manipulate the mouse.
2. Technology Productivity Tools:  
Students will produce a finished product that will be printed.

### **Web Site Needed:**

URL: [www.lescale.net/album.htm](http://www.lescale.net/album.htm)

Site Name: l'escale

This site is a Québécois site used for French-speaking children ages

4–12. For this activity, students will focus on the section *Images à colorier*.

### **Procedure:**

*Previewing Activities:* Before beginning the lesson, review parts of the body and colors with students. Explain that the students will be participating in a listening activity using the computer and later, a speaking activity with a partner.

#### *Viewing Activities:*

1. Lead students to the Web site step-by-step as they get accustomed to clicking on the mouse and navigating the Internet.
2. Once all students have arrived at [www.lescale.net/album.htm](http://www.lescale.net/album.htm), explain that they are going to color electronically today. Students will choose a picture to color from the 3 choices. Note: Pictures are changed periodically so check the site to see what changes may have to be made to the lesson.
3. Explain that as you call out a color, students are to click on that color and apply it to their paintbrush. Then specify a part of the picture to be colored, for example, color the head blue; color the left hand red, etc. Keep a tally of which color is used for which part to later assess students' language comprehension. Monitor students' activity by walking around and viewing what they are doing.
4. After specifying several colors orally, allow students to complete their picture independently as they wish.
5. Once students are finished coloring

their pictures, have them print them out, write their name on theirs, and prepare for the follow-up activity (to be done in the next class session). Print out a blank version of each of the pictures the students might have colored and put them on display in the front of the room.

6. Students may return to this site during free time to explore and play games that relate to the curriculum being taught.

### **Follow-up and Extension Activity:**

The following activity will allow students to listen and respond to each other as they ask and answer questions describing their pictures. Display the two questions and a list of body parts and colors students may refer to as they answer.

1. Model questions from the student handout (Fig. 1) by asking individual students the following questions:
  - a) *De quelle couleur est son nez?*  
(What color is the nose?)

- b) *Quelle partie du corps est rouge?* (What body part is red?)

2. Model how to complete the handout by writing a student's one-word answer on an overhead transparency of the form.
3. Have students practice asking questions of other students in the large group.
4. Assign partners and have students take turns asking questions of their partner. Have students write down their partner's answer on the handout.
5. When students have completed the handouts, or when time is up, have students turn in the handouts with the pictures they colored.

### **Assessment:**

Monitor the activity to encourage students to use the target language. Collect students' work and evaluate it based on the language skill students demonstrated and their participation in the activity.

Figure 1. Handout

<b>Interrogez votre partenaire!</b> Complétez le tableau selon le dessin de <i>votre partenaire</i> .		
Nom: <i>nom de celui qui interroge</i>	Image de: <i>nom de l'élève</i>	Classe de: <i>nom de la maîtresse de la classe</i>
<b>De quelle couleur. . .</b>		
... est son nez?		
... sont ses pattes?		
... sont ses yeux?		
... est son ventre?		
... est sa corne?		
<b>Quelle partie du corps est. . .</b>		
... rouge?		
... vert?		
... bleu?		
... marron?		
... jaune?		
... noir?		
... rose?		
... violet?		

# *Japanese Distance Learning: A Kansas Summer Program for Children*

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**M**aking foreign language available to all children in Kansas is a challenge due to the insulation and isolation in the Midwest. Children and adults alike have little exposure to any foreign culture and still less to Asian languages and cultures. Finding foreign language teachers for small isolated rural areas is in itself almost impossible, not to mention the fact that school districts have difficulty funding these programs. With only a few school districts offering elementary school foreign language programs, it is difficult to expose children to the most commonly taught foreign language in the state, Spanish, much less to one of the less commonly taught languages such as Japanese. The Southeast Kansas Interactive Distance Learning Network, a program under the umbrella of Greenbush, the Southeast Kansas Education Service Center, therefore, plays an important role by making foreign language accessible to an increasing number of children.

Greenbush, which was established in 1976, offers more than 180 cooperative educational programs and services to school districts, students, families, and communities. The Southeast Kansas Interactive Distance Learning Network is one of the programs under the division of Education

Support Services. All programs at Greenbush are designed around the needs of school districts and provide services that otherwise would be unavailable or unaffordable.

## **Program Design**

The program here described represents a successful attempt to make Japanese and the culture of Japan available to Kansas children. It began during the summer of 1999. Summer Japanese and Spanish programs have been taught every year since 1994, thanks to two Foreign Language Assistance Program grants; in addition, Chinese and Russian were each offered one summer. In each case, the instructor developed the curriculum. The instructor in 1999 had taught using the existing curriculum, first written in 1994, during the summers of 1997 and 1998. A new curriculum was designed during a methods course in elementary school foreign language offered by the Foreign Language Department at Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, Kansas. The new curriculum was designed to include many interactive, communicative activities and to integrate aspects of the language and culture into the course. The main purpose of this curriculum was to introduce children ages 9 to 12 to the language and culture of Japan. The



program model, an auxiliary FLEX Program, which is described by Curtain and Pesola (1994), was chosen for this project based on the amount of student contact time available, which was two hours daily for two weeks in a one-time experience. The class was taught through interactive distance learning. The participants in this program were groups of 12 children in each of four schools. Each of the classrooms had a facilitator who did not speak the target language. The instructor physically visited each group of students approximately once each week. On other days, the students saw the instructor only on television screens. The distance learning network is based on fiber optic technology and provides broadcast-quality real-time audio and video signals. The classrooms are approximately 35 miles distant one from another. Each classroom has four television screens so that each group could see and hear themselves and the other three schools. Because this was a summer program, participation was voluntary and no grades were given.

Two main ideas guided the decisions defining the characteristics of this program: 1) make the children believe that they can be connected in some way to an Asian culture, and 2) make them understand that they can be successful in communicating what they are learning in Japanese. Keeping this in mind, and as a result of a class discussion on characteristics and strategies of immersion programs based on the discussion of the topic in Curtain and Pesola (1994), the instructor developed the following guidelines for the program:

- The target language was used naturally for communication as much as possible; therefore, it was a class in the target language rather than a class about the language.
- Children were encouraged to use the language within the limits of their capabilities, with a minimum of error correction, which was limited to errors of meaning.

- There was no direct grammar instruction; instead the grammar presented was dictated by circumstance not sequence.

In addition, a distinctive attribute of this program was the usage of the target language clearly separated from the usage of native language by means of a two-sided sign the instructor wore. One side said "English being spoken here" and the other side said "*Nihongo wo hanashite imasu*" (Japanese being spoken here). Paramount to this program was the use of non-verbal responses, Total Physical Response (TPR) activities (Asher, 1993), group responses leading to individual responses, and the integration of language related activities and cultural activities that were hands-on.

A typical day in the program begins with the students changing their outside shoes for inside slippers they have brought from home. In Japan, shoes that are worn outside are never worn inside. Students enjoy symbolically defining their Japanese classroom with this small physical act. Once in the classroom, the instructor and a student volunteer at each site bow formally and greet the class in Japanese.

The class starts with a review of previously taught vocabulary by using TPR and/or physical prompts such as flashcards, or by the instructor touching classroom items to elicit student responses. New vocabulary is introduced utilizing a mix of TPR, physical hints, and dramatization sometimes involving a hand puppet that speaks only Japanese. Students are encouraged to first recognize new words and respond to them nonverbally, then to begin producing the words as they feel comfortable. For example, when colors and shapes are being taught the instructor might say "*sankaku*" (triangle) and the students could hold up one of their construction paper cutouts to show they have understood. After some practice the teacher would hold up a shape and ask "*Maru desu*

A typical day in the program begins with the students changing their outside shoes for inside slippers they have brought from home.

*ka? Sankaku desu ka?*" (Is it a circle? Is it a triangle?) and the students would respond with the correct word. Then the instructor turns her two-sided sign to "English being spoken here" and invites the students to watch a short video, in English, about Japanese children of similar age (Collins & Reichart, 1998). A question/answer session in English follows, during which the students are encouraged to discuss both similarities and differences between their lives and the lives of the children in the video.

During a break time of 15 minutes midway through the day, students fold an *origami* cup to get a drink of water and eat, with chopsticks, a small Japanese snack prepared by the on-site facilitator. The making of the *origami* cup was taught on the first day of class just before the break. The class then resumes with the students participating in a culturally based craft activity related to the day's lesson. Examples include making a cherry blossom tree for spring, making tissue paper carp for Children's Day, or folding *origami*. Students are motivated to use Japanese words and phrases whenever possible while participating in the activity, for example, telling the colors on their carp or the name of the *origami* model.

Finally the class closes with the teacher and the student volunteers again leading the class in a formal bow and greeting.

### **Culmination of the Program**

During the second week of the program students have a little time each day to organize and practice for the Parents Pageant, which is held on the last day. On-site facilitators and the teacher help each individual or small group identify one of the class activities that they particularly liked in order to create a short presentation about it. Students are encouraged to take an active role in the organizing process and to take ownership for individual roles in the activity. On the last day, the first hour is a demonstration by a

local karate organization. The karate instructor explains the traditional place of karate and other types of self-defense in Japanese society and why people might study a martial art.

The second hour of the last day is the Parents Pageant. Students invite parents, siblings, grandparents, and neighbors to come visit, resulting in small classrooms being packed to capacity. Each student or group of students takes turns showcasing one of the things they have learned, while the guests at all four sites watch. For a finale, the students at all four sites form a chorus and sing the songs they have learned in Japanese. The on-site facilitator then presents the students with bilingual certificates of completion and students say good-bye and take their classroom materials home.

### **Conclusion**

At the end of the two-week program students, parents, and facilitators were asked to respond to surveys evaluating the program. The response was overwhelmingly positive. Parents stated that their children shared the language and other skills learned in class with the whole family. When asked how the class could be improved, one parent responded, *"I don't think there is anything you could improve upon. Sam has enjoyed this class and hates to see it come to an end. You have brought another country and their (sic) customs to these students and made them real, instead of fairy tale land. Sam enjoyed this class so much last year he wanted to take it again this year and would take it again next year if allowed. He has hopes of going to Japan someday and seeing the land, people, and culture firsthand."*

More than 70% of the students stated that they wished the class were longer and, when asked what they liked least about the class, many answered in this vein, *"I had no dislikes in this class at all whatsoever. That means I liked everything."* Craft projects from Japan were very popular

He has hopes of going to Japan someday and seeing the land, people, and culture firsthand.

with nearly all students. Two comments seem particularly appropriate. "I liked origami because you can make cool stuff from a simple piece of paper." "I liked origami because it taught a few people, like myself, patience." One student said, "If I work somewhere (in the future) like an amusement park or something, I might need to know that particular language and that would help the other person."

In sum, the students were enthusiastic about all activities and expressed gratifying eagerness to show off their accomplishments at the Parents Pageant that concluded the program. It became clear to the instructor that by encouraging each child to take linguistic risks and by offering a consistent model of correct, natural language usage the teacher can help all students have a memorable and valuable language learning experience.

The instructor allowed herself to be guided to some extent by the interests and ideas of the students and by serendipity. A chance discussion with a student after watching a video led to the idea of students bringing slippers to class so that they would have "inside shoes" and "outside shoes," as is the custom in Japan. Some parents reported that it was the first time their children had ever, voluntarily, worn slippers.

The results of this program have been more than rewarding: students greet the instructor in Japanese when they meet while shopping or in other casual encounters. More important, several students have come back as class helpers, and others have further developed their skills in *origami*, and the Japanese game of "Go."

These results show that the two big hurdles of making the children

believe that they could ever be somehow connected to the Japanese language and its culture, and making them think they could be successful in that attempt were successfully overcome. This program contributed in a creative and delightful way to break down the barriers of the isolation and the insulation of the Midwest for the children, their families, and their friends, and involved the community in initiating the children into a more global perspective so much advocated among the foreign language profession and the teaching community. Greenbush hopes to continue the summer language programs as long as children express an interest in attending.

## References

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- Collins, K., & Reichart, P. (1998). *Passport to Japan*. KCPT Public Television.
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# Featured News

## Eighth Grader Wins National Contest for Advocacy Letter

**CONGRATULATIONS** to Fiona Gispen, an eighth-grade student from Oxford, Mississippi, who won a national contest for her letter to her U.S. Representative advocating the importance of early language learning. The contest involved seventh- and eighth-grade students writing a letter to their congressional representatives on an issue of interest or concern. These letters were then entered into a contest in which one winner from each state was chosen to attend the RespecTeen National Youth Forum in Washington, D.C. Below is Fiona's winning letter. Her message comes across strong and clear. Maybe she should send this letter to all members of Congress!



Dear Congressman Wicker:

What do we call someone who speaks two languages? Bilingual. What is someone who speaks three languages? Trilingual. And what is someone who speaks just one language? American! Foreign language education in the United States must improve if our country is to remain competitive. As the world of business gets bigger and bigger, the real world seems to get smaller and smaller. More than one quarter of U.S. GDP now comes from exports. Countries are ever more closely intertwined in business relations. Therefore, it is exceedingly important that Americans understand foreign cultures. The first step is learning a foreign language.

In Europe, foreign language education often begins in elementary school. In most schools in America, it begins in high school! Younger students learn a second language much more easily than older ones. If they could begin earlier, students would have greater fluency in their chosen language by their senior year. Today, many students can't speak a word of a foreign language even after four years of studying one! Many students choose not to participate in a foreign language program because of peer pressure or lack of interest. Currently, quite a few schools don't even teach foreign languages. Studying a foreign language should be mandatory.

Foreign language teachers should be encouraged to become fluent in both the written and spoken forms of the language they teach. As it is now, many teachers just learn a little ahead of the students, out of the same book. They should also be tested on their ability to speak, write, and teach their foreign language. The conversational form of the language should be emphasized.

In hopes of making my dreams come true, I would like to start a club for the promotion of foreign languages. I wish that in years to come second languages in public schools would become as important as English and math classes are today. I hope that you agree and will work in support of foreign languages in our schools. Not only will you be changing that joke; you'll be saving America.

Sincerely,

*Fiona Gispen*

**Editor's Note:** As a means of encouraging teens to understand and participate in the legislative issues that affect their lives, the Lutheran Brotherhood, a nonprofit financial services organization, provides a curriculum called RespecTeen Speak for Yourself to seventh- and eighth-grade students throughout the nation. This contest was part of that curriculum. For more information, visit [www.RespecTeen.org](http://www.RespecTeen.org).

# Featured News

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## WHAT A SMALL WORLD!

*Dear Mrs. Semmer,*

*My name is Andrea Dubenezic, and I am currently working for Nancy Rhodes at the Center for Applied Linguistics. I am helping Nancy out as the membership secretary for NNELL. I came across your name and immediately recognized it! You were my Spanish teacher when I lived in Colorado (I have a twin sister and a brother who also took Spanish classes from you—we attended high school around 1992–1994). Anyway, I just wanted to let you know that I really appreciate the interest in Spanish that you gave me. I majored in Spanish in college and remember all of the wonderful classes that I had with you at Summit High School. I hope that all is well in Colorado!*

*Sincerely,  
Andrea Dubenezic*

Note: Martie Semmer is NNELL's second vice president.

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## Highlights of National Board Certification for Foreign Language Teachers

Martie Semmer, Facilitator, WLOE National Board Certification Project

*Sponsored by*

American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese  
National K–12 Foreign Language Resource Center, Iowa State University

### Basics You Need to Know about National Board Certification

- December 3, 2001, marks the first date ever for foreign language teachers to become candidates and begin the National Board Certification (NBC) process. The two certification areas for which foreign language teachers are eligible for NBC are 1) Early and Middle Childhood/World Languages Other than English, and 2) Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood/World Languages Other than English. Certification in French, German, and Spanish will be offered in 2001–2002; additional languages will be added in subsequent years.
- The standards document for both certificate areas is *World Languages Other than English (WLOE) Standards for Teachers of Students Ages 3–18+*. It is highly recommended that teachers become very familiar with these standards for accomplished teachers before becoming a candidate. Current NBC Teachers often state that prior in-depth knowledge of the standards is the important foundation to successful completion of the NBC process. To purchase the WLOE document call 1-800-

22TEACH. It is featured on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) Web site ([www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org)), where other information and free materials relating to NBC are also located.

- Teachers who decide to become NBC Teacher Candidates for the 2001–02 school year should order the free application guide entitled *Guide to National Board Certification* by calling 1-800-22TEACH. Teachers are required to complete and submit the application before they can receive “the box” with instructions for the certification process. The application and fee should be sent during the summer or fall of 2001.
- The K–12 foreign language student standards, *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in The 21st Century*, figure prominently in the WLOE document, as do teaching examples for Chinese, Classical Languages, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and other languages. Teachers will want to have focused their teaching on the student standards before pursuing WLOE certification. To purchase a copy of the student standards, call 1-800-627-0629.
- More and more school districts are providing support for NBC pre-candidates, candidates, and teachers. Teachers should look into their respective district’s incentives and opportunities. Ongoing peer contact is helpful during the intense and demanding assessment process. For this reason, it is a good idea to be a part of a cohort group, even if the other NBC candidates in the group are not foreign language teachers.

## Opportunities to Learn More

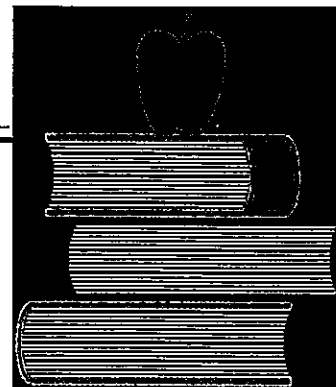
- A half-day workshop on “National Board Certification for Foreign Language Teachers” will be offered at the annual conference of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) in November 2001 in Washington, D.C. This session will be offered by Martie Semmer, who has received NBPTS training to become a facilitator/mentor of NBC candidates and who is a member of the NBPTS Foreign Language Committee, and Marcia Rosenbusch, who is the director of the National K–12 Foreign Language Resource Center at Iowa State University and vice-chair of the NBPTS Foreign Language Committee.
- Summer sessions on “National Board Certification for Foreign Language Teachers” will be offered by Martie Semmer at the meetings of the American Association of Teachers of French in Denver, the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese in San Francisco, and the National Network for Early Language Learning in Santa Barbara.
- Another opportunity to become familiar with the NBC process is available for teachers who have state certification in another content or certification area for which NBC is available. These teachers could become NBC assessors of portfolio entries during the summer at sites across the country for an honorarium of \$125 a day. For more information call 1-800-532-1813 or access [www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org) and click on “Candidate Resources.”

## NNELL’s Involvement in Development of Standards

NNELL members who served on the NBPTS Foreign Language Committee that developed the WLOE standards include Christine Brown ([cbrownglas@aol.com](mailto:cbrownglas@aol.com)), Carine Feyten ([feyten@typhoon.coedu.usf.edu](mailto:feyten@typhoon.coedu.usf.edu)), Marcia Rosenbusch ([mrosenbu@iastate.edu](mailto:mrosenbu@iastate.edu)), and Martie Semmer ([semmer@colorado.net](mailto:semmer@colorado.net)).

# Classroom Resources

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## German

The following three books are available from Buch-Bruecke, 96 Sweet Road, Ballston Lake, NY 12019; 518-399-6516; Fax: 518-384-2538. Or order from the Web site at [www.buch-bruecke.com](http://www.buch-bruecke.com).

- Röhrig, Vokmar, & Müller, Hildegard. (1995). *Hugo Hase*. Arena: Edition Bucherbar. ISBN: 3-401-07409-1. Cost is \$10.60.

Hugo Hase is the youngest member of his rabbit family. Easter is a very busy time for Hugo's family because they have to color Easter eggs and hide them for the children. Hugo always wants to help with the household chores, but unfortunately there are times when he gets into mischief and upsets his parents. When it comes time to hide the Easter eggs, however, Hugo comes up with the best ideas. This colorful book is ideal for beginning readers in the elementary school. It is perfect for practicing word recognition, and the accompanying pictures clarify the meaning of more than fifty words. This book also contains a game, which can be played with many variations.

- Delafosse, Claude. (1999). *Am Himmel und im Weltall*. Mannheim: Bibliographisches Institut. Part of the *Licht an . . .*

series. ISBN: 3-411-09311-0. Cost is \$10.50.

This book will introduce elementary students (grades 4, 5, 6) to the wonders of the sky and the universe. Several pages of the book are made out of dark transparency material. This, and all books of the series *Licht an . . .*, come with a "flashlight" made out of cardboard that glows when held under the transparency page. By moving the flashlight students get a close view of objects and natural wonders that can be found in the sky and universe. Every German classroom should be equipped with the information-packed series *Licht an . . .*

- Cohat, Elisabeth. (1998). *Am Strand*. Mannheim: Bibliographisches Institut. Part of the *Licht an . . .* series. ISBN: 3-411-09811-2. Cost is \$10.50.

*Am Strand* provides a fascinating insight into the life at the beach. It focuses on common animals, such as shellfish, snails, and birds and also teaches about high and low tides. This book shows the ingenious methods animals use to find food and how they survive. As with the other books from the series *Licht an . . .*, this book comes with a flashlight (see previous review).

# ANNOUNCING . . .

## New Publications from CREDE

### Research Report 9

The Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE) has published Research Report 9 (2001), *Sociocultural Factors in Social Relationships: Examining Latino Teachers' and Paraeducators' Interactions with Latino Students*, by Lilia D. Monzó and Robert S. Rueda, University of Southern California. This report explores the impact of sociocultural factors on the relationships and interactions between Latino students and 32 Latino teachers and paraeducators. Findings suggest that teachers' and paraeducators' knowledge of students' cultures, communities, primary languages, and familiar interactional styles can facilitate meeting students' academic needs. This report extends research from Research Report 8, *Apprenticeship for Teaching: Professional Development Issues Surrounding the Collaborative Relationship Between Teachers and Paraeducators*.

**AVAILABILITY:** To order, send a \$5 check, money order, or purchase order payable to the Center for Applied Linguistics, 4646 40th Street NW, Washington, DC 20016. Signed purchase orders may be faxed to 202-362-3740. If ordering by MasterCard or VISA, include name on card, card number, expiration date, signature, billing address, and telephone number; or call 202-362-0700. On domestic orders, include 10% shipping/handling (international orders 20%). For more ordering information, contact [credepubs@cal.org](mailto:credepubs@cal.org). Direct inquiries about the report to CREDE at 202-362-0700 or [crede@cal.org](mailto:crede@cal.org).

### CREDE-NCISLA Newsletter

The latest *Talking Leaves* is a special joint issue by CREDE and NCISLA (National Center for Improving Student Learning and Achievement in Mathematics and Science). Entitled

"Diverse Students Learning Mathematics and Science: Issues and Possibilities," it features the Children's Ways with Words conference, which drew researchers from across the nation to discuss how children's languages and cultures influence their learning of mathematics and science.

**AVAILABILITY:** This issue, Winter 2001 (Vol.5 No.1), is on-line at [www.cal.org/crede/pubs](http://www.cal.org/crede/pubs). It includes an online insert of Educator Resources to strengthen teachers' understanding of diverse students' ideas, available at [www.cal.org/crede/pubs](http://www.cal.org/crede/pubs). To get a free print copy, e-mail [crede@cal.org](mailto:crede@cal.org) or call 202-362-0700.

### Practitioner Brief on Two-Way Immersion Programs

CREDE has published Practitioner Brief #2, *Development and Maintenance of Two-Way Immersion Programs: Advice from Practitioners* (March 2001), by Julie Sugarman and Elizabeth R. Howard, Center for Applied Linguistics. Based on responses from principals, bilingual coordinators, and teachers in two-way immersion (TWI) programs, this brief provides advice to those practitioners implementing new TWI programs. Designing curricula, planning for assessment, training teachers, involving parents, garnering district support, and fostering long-term growth are among the issues addressed.

**AVAILABILITY:** View on-line at [www.cal.org/crede/pubs/PracBrief2.htm](http://www.cal.org/crede/pubs/PracBrief2.htm).

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**Note:** A complete list of CREDE publication is available at [www.cal.org/crede/pubs/](http://www.cal.org/crede/pubs/)

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## Calendar     Summer 2001 Conferences

### **July 27–29, 2001**

National Network for Early Language Learning and the California Foreign Language Project Summer Seminar, Santa Barbara, CA. Mari Haas, NNELL Conference Chair. E-mail: haasmarib@aol.com.

## Fall 2001 Conferences

### **November 16–18, 2001**

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Annual Convention, Washington, DC. ACTFL Headquarters, 6 Executive Plaza, Yonkers, NY 10701-6801; 914-963-8830; Fax: 914-963-1275.

## Spring 2002 Conferences

### **March 7–9, 2002**

Southwest Conference on Language Teaching, Oklahoma City, OK. Audrey Cournia, Executive Director, 1348 Coachman Dr., Sparks, NV 89434; 775-358-6943; Fax: 775-358-1605; E-mail: CourniaAudrey@cs.com; [www.learnalanguage.org/swcolt](http://www.learnalanguage.org/swcolt)

### **March 14–16, 2002**

Southern Conference on Language Teaching, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Lynne McClendon, SCOLT Executive Director, 165 Lazy Laurel Chase, Roswell, GA 30076; 770-992-1256; Fax: 770-992-3464; E-mail: lynnemcc@mindspring.com.

### **March 21–23, 2002**

Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Kansas City, MO. Diane Ging, Executive Director, CSC, P.O. Box 21531, Columbus, OH 43221-0531; 614-529-0109; Fax: 614-529-0321; E-mail: dging@iwayne.net.

### **May 2–5 2002**

Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, New York, NY. Rebecca Kline, Northeast Conference at Dickinson College, P.O. Box 1773, Carlisle, PA 17013-28996; E-mail: nectfl@dickinson.edu.

# NNELL

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. NNELL provides leadership, support, and service to those committed to early language learning and coordinates efforts to make language learning in programs of excellence a reality for all children.

# NNELL

An organization for educators involved in teaching foreign languages to children.

**MISSION:** Promote opportunities for all children to develop a high level of competence in at least one language in addition to their own. This is accomplished through activities that improve public awareness and support of early language learning.

**ACTIVITIES:** 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.

**ANNUAL MEETING:** Held at the fall conference of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

**OFFICERS:** Elected by members through a mail ballot election held annually in the spring.

**MEMBER OF:** JNCL-NCLIS (Joint National Committee for Languages-National Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages and International Studies).

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** Visit the NNELL Web site at: [www.educ.iastate.edu/nnell](http://www.educ.iastate.edu/nnell) or E-mail [nnell@cal.org](mailto:nnell@cal.org)

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### **Mary Lynn Redmond — Political Action & Advocacy**

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## NNELL Membership Form

YES! I want to become a member of (or renew my membership to) NNELL. Please enter my subscription to *Learning Languages* (3 issues for the 2000-01 academic year). Rate is \$25.00. Overseas rate is \$30.00.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_

Check whether this address is \_\_\_\_\_ home \_\_\_\_\_ school

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Check if this is a renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Is this an address change from last year \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

Home Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

### **MAIL WITH PAYMENT TO:**

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Center for Applied Linguistics  
Attn: Nancy Rhodes, Exec. Secretary  
4646 40th St. N.W.  
Washington, DC 20016-1859

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