"For me to be a professional means always to be ready to learn, to model what we want our students to do". - Martin Smith

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PLCs
Library
School Visits
Workshops

Professional Growth

The strongest principle of growth lies in human choice. - George Eliot
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.

NNELL is a member of the Joint National Committee for Languages (National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL-NCLS)).

For more information, visit the NNELL Web site at www.nnell.org or email NNELL at nnell@wfu.edu.
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Dear NNELL Members,

As this issue of Learning Languages arrives, I will have completed my term as President and will be assuming the role of Past President of our organization. The theme of this journal is Professional Growth, and I would like to thank the entire NNELL Membership for allowing me to expand upon my own journey of professional development over the course of the past two years.

When I first joined the Executive Board, in 2000, one of the biggest questions facing NNELL was whether or not we had the means to continue as an independent organization. Due to the combined efforts of leaders who preceded me, and the board members during my term, this is no longer a question. NNELL's membership and outreach to the greater world language community are growing, and NNELL's presence in the field is marked with greater respect than ever before.

I have had the opportunity to travel to many places around the country to offer professional development workshops to our members. Many of the states I have visited are facing continuing cuts in foreign language programming. In addition to long-standing NNELL support among teachers in our nation's public schools, I have found increased interest in early second language education from teachers in independent schools. We vow to continue developing NNELL's relationships in public and private education.

I have also come to understand that NNELL's strength lies in its individual members, and in their networking activities. "We are only as strong as our weakest link" has long been our mantra, and in recent years, NNELL has provided continued professional development to its state and regional representatives in order to empower them to effectively spread the word about early second language learning. Thanks to Tammy Dann, NNELL's Advocacy Chair, our reps and members now have a brand new power point presentation for use at conferences, presentations, and local school meetings. Thanks to Paris Granville, Tammy Dann and Robin Hawkins, NNELL members and visitors to our website may now download the beautiful new NNELL brochure. Our commercial and institutional supporters have increased, and we are now including individual NNELL members in our summer institute and ongoing professional development workshops around the country.

NNELL is truly a family of educators joining hands, minds, and hearts in an effort to advance early second language learning in the United States and abroad. NNELL membership participate in well-established FLES and Immersion programs as well as FLEX programs. New research in the area of phonological awareness points out the effectiveness of second language learning in preparing our youngest students for reading in their native languages. The key to reaping the benefits of increased phonological awareness is, of course, in starting second language instruction at an early age, when students are developing phonological and phonemic awareness in their native languages. NNELL's mission and vision include the promotion of all of these program types.

I would like to thank the retiring members of our NNELL Executive Board, including outgoing NNELL Web Editor Jacob Larsen, of the NFLRC at Iowa State University, and outgoing Past President Janis Jensen, whose vision and leadership have changed the face of NNELL. NNELL also extends its most sincere thanks to Jean Modig, outgoing National Networking Coordinator, for the yeoman's tasks that she has accomplished during her term. I would like to thank the Holliston, MA Public Schools for supporting me in this leadership capacity.

In an effort to make our mission, vision, and goals more transparent to our membership, we have posted an update on the members-only section of our website. In this report, individual members may review our mission, vision and goals and see the progress we have made toward those goals over the past two years.

As I pass the torch to President Paula Patrick, I know that NNELL will continue to grow and prosper. She will be joined on the board by Jacque Bott-Van Houten as newly-elected Vice-President and Nathan Lutz as newly-appointed National Networking Coordinator.

In closing, I would like to thank the entire NNELL membership for supporting me during my two-year term as President. NNELL is, and always will be, at the core of my own belief system. This has been an amazing journey, and I thank you for sharing in this voyage of personal and professional development with me.

Sincerely,

Therese Caccavale, NNELL President 2006-2008
Holliston Public Schools, MA
NNELL is pleased to offer the following regional professional development workshops in 2009 in an effort to offer professional learning experiences to early language educators. If you are interested in hosting a NNELL Professional Development Workshop in your area, please contact Paula Patrick, NNELL President, at paula.patrick@fcps.edu

Northeast
Saturday, January 31, 2009
Holliston High School, Holliston, MA

A Balanced Approach to the Teaching and Assessment of Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening in a Pre-K-8 Foreign Language Program

Presenter: Dr. Helena Curtain, Co-Author, Languages and Children: Making the Match

Southeast
Saturday, April 25, 2009
Fairfax County Public Schools

Meeting the Needs of ALL Learners in Pre-K – 8 Foreign Language Classrooms

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Marjorie Hall Haley, George Mason University, NNELL Executive Secretary

Registration - $45
You must be a member of NNELL to attend. Not a member of NNELL? Take advantage of a 50% discount on member an attend for a total of $60. See the www.nnell.org for details.

General Information
All workshops are five hours in length and include continental breakfast, lunch and workshop materials, and a Professional Development certificate. Sessions begin at 9:00 a.m. and conclude at 3:00 p.m.

No refunds will be offered. Workshops that are cancelled due to weather will be rescheduled.
In order to help teachers negotiate the changing contexts of foreign language education, the National K-12 Foreign Language Resource Center (NFLRC) at Iowa State University began offering summer institutes in 1994. We were surprised at the intense interest in the institutes focused on technology — there were over 130 applicants for 40 available spots in two technology-focused institutes. At that time, e-mail and Hyper Studio were new to everyone. Since then the NFLRC has offered 36 residential, professional development institutes to over 680 teachers from all 50 states.

In this article, we will share what we have come to understand over the past 14 years about creating effective professional development opportunities. By effective, we mean professional development that (1) equips teachers with new skills, (2) empowers teachers to expand their repertoire of ways to teach and learn a foreign language, (3) encourages teachers to examine teaching and learning through new lenses and perspectives, and (4) creates opportunities for continued communities of practitioners to continue to collaborate beyond the institute.

When NFLRC staff members create professional development opportunities, they keep the following key principles in mind.

**The focus is relevant to the needs of both the profession and the individual teachers who will attend.**

The first step in selecting a topic for professional development is to learn more about the needs and interests of the teachers who will be served by the professional development. Strategies such as surveying teachers directly, monitoring listservs, observing what topics draw large crowds at conferences, and asking organizations for the needs they have observed, can support this process. Discovering the needs of the profession helps to ensure the professional development will be relevant and meaningful to potential participants, thus generating interest in the opportunity.

**Leaders are experts on the topic who fine-tune the content to meet the needs of the particular group of participants.**

When developing a professional development experience, the leaders must clearly be experts on their topic, but must also take into account the participants’ existing expertise (Hall & Loucks, 1978). Wise leaders survey participants prior to the professional development session in order to determine their existing knowledge and understanding of the concepts to be addressed. This allows leaders to build professional development experiences based on that data, crafting and customizing the professional development experience to best meet participant needs. Of course, participant self-reported survey data is not 100% reliable, and the presenters must be willing to be flexible and adapt to participants’ needs during the professional development experience itself. When that occurs, it has the potential to change participants’ responses to the experience: "It was so nice to be treated like a valuable, intelligent individual. That was wonderful."3

**Leaders create a collaborative environment that empowers participants.**

Effective leaders don’t tell participants what to do; effective leaders provide the experiences to help participants arrive at new understandings and experiment with new practices. Leaders honor participants by creating hands-on opportunities to experience and acquire new skills while at the same time modeling how those skills will impact teaching and learning on a practical level (how do we do this in the classroom and what do we need to do this). Leaders also purposefully create time and space for participants to explore how such skills might influence their thinking about teaching and learning on a more philosophical level (why do we do what we do in the classroom) (National Council of State Supervisors for Languages, n.d.). Leaders use strategies such as blogging, professional conversations on wiki discussion boards, role playing followed by debriefing conversations in small groups, graphic organizers or other activities that provide participants with an opportunity to examine and synthesize their own new learning. This is a critical factor in helping teachers see and make space for experimentation in their practice. When leaders design activities that establish a community of learners who place value on inquiry (Borko, 2004), they empower participants by recognizing their potential for growth and by establishing professional networks of support that encourage them to take risks.

Demonstration classes are another strategy that can have a powerful impact on participants. Many of the NFLRC institutes included a demonstration class during which a teacher-leader taught K-12 students who were learning a foreign language for the first time. In one institute, after observing demonstration classes taught to kindergarten and first grade students for one hour a day for one week, all in Spanish, a participant remarked: "...I am..."
convinced that teaching 100% in the language can not only be done—even at (or maybe especially at) the elementary level, but that it is the best way to teach.... This experience has renewed my own personal enthusiasm and commitment to teaching in Spanish with my Level 1 high school classes next year.”

Leaders clarify that they too are growing and learning together with the participants.

Leaders are sensitive to the needs of participants. Effective professional development assists participants in becoming autonomous learners by building enough background knowledge, understanding, and practical skill to enable them to continue learning on their own. High quality professional development also builds participants’ leadership capacity. Leaders can strengthen participants’ professional confidence and personal commitment to sharing what they have learned with others by helping them to recognize the value inherent in their own professional knowledge and skills, encouraging them to develop and strengthen their professional networks, and offering them opportunities to improve their technology skills, particularly if the theme of the entire institute is developing leadership. As they do so, it is important for leaders to stress to participants that it is OK to not know everything. As one participant in an institute noted, “You have empowered me! You have opened your hearts for all of us, and we are better educators because of it!”

Leaders recognize participants’ potential for leadership and develop it.

As a profession we must consciously provide opportunities for our profession’s future leaders. So, it is important to seek participants with a potential for leadership and to foster the development of their leadership skills. Several of the participants in the early technology institutes demonstrated tremendous leadership potential. The NFLRC invited them back another year to work as apprentice leaders and then as assistant leaders. They now currently lead institutes at the national level.

Our responsibility to develop leaders extends beyond the foreign language community to encompass the work of preparing leaders who are capable of serving education as a whole (Lozano, Padilla, Sung, & Silva, 2004). The NFLRC strives to provide educators with the skills to become leaders in their school buildings, districts, and states by engaging participants in discussions about educational leadership and policy, role playing difficult professional conversations, practicing effective mentoring techniques, exploring strategies and tools for advocacy and public relations, strengthening professional networks, and giving them time to develop content-based materials. “[As a result of the institute] my principal and the district technology coordinator view me as a major contributor to integrating technology into my school’s curriculum. They respect my work, use it as models for other curriculum areas, and solicit advice and ideas from me. I am co-chair of the Standards Framework Writing committee for foreign language in my state. This responsibility resulted from my project.”

Accommodations are comfortable, materials are available, and the pace is respectful of participants and leaders.

The location of the classroom and the accommodations for participants and leaders need to be comfortable. If the classroom is too small, too cold, or too bleak, participants’ attention is diverted from the content and processes of the professional development session and the experience is diminished. By using an mp3 player with speakers, web-based Pandora, or iTunes, music can create a calming background to quiet work or serve as an energizer during an activity. The music can also activate participants’ prior knowledge in preparation for a segment of content, refocus participants’ attention after a break, model sound pedagogical uses of music in the classroom, and facilitate professional reflection during closure activities. Having adequate supplies available also facilitates leaders’ ability to adapt activities to participants’ needs. Chart paper, pens, sticky notes, markers, highlighters, scissors, note cards, and blank colored paper are among the supplies that have proven especially invaluable. Consider the flow of activities in the day by scheduling activities that demand greater mental effort in the morning and active, hands-on activities in the afternoon (particularly right after lunch). In multi-day institutes it is important to plan a schedule that provides for rest and renewal for the leaders and participants, particularly when the cognitive load is high. All involved need time to reflect, process, and decompress.

The professional development doesn’t end at the end of the event.

Professional development that is sustained has been found to have greater impact (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001), so plan experiences that continue as long as feasible and find ways to continue the community after the professional development event. Have participants develop an action plan and a follow-up mechanism for that plan. Keep participants in touch with each other by sharing materials through face-to-face reunions at
conferences, or electronically via e-mail, newsletters, blogs, and wikis.

Evaluate the professional development initiative.

Immediately after the professional development initiative, have participants complete an evaluation to help the leaders refine the design and content of the next institute. Include items such as what worked, what didn’t work, what questions the participant still has, and what the participant would like to see in the future. If possible, complete a second evaluation six months to a year later to inquire about any long-term impact. Electronic surveying instruments such as Zoomerang and SurveyMonkey make online evaluations easy to implement and the results easy to examine. Only by asking will we know if an impact is being made: “Thank you for putting together what I think is one of the greatest growth opportunities of my career.”

This article highlights several primary issues that the National K-12 Foreign Language Resource Center considers when planning professional development institutes. While by no means exhaustive, we hope these ideas will stimulate additional professional conversations about how we might learn from one another as we collaborate to strengthen world language education.

References


Cindy Kendall is the Technology Media Coordinator at the Ingham Intermediate School District in Mason, Michigan. She served the Central States Conference as the 2006 Program Chair and is a past president of the Michigan World Language Association (MIWLMA), currently serves the organization as Website Manager, and is a recipient of the MIWLMA Barbara Orr Smith Lifetime Achievement award.

Dr. Marcia Harmon Rosenbusch is the Director of the National K-12 Foreign Language Resource Center (NFLRC) at Iowa State University where she also leads the elementary school foreign language teacher preparation program. She received the Florence Steiner Award for Leadership in Foreign Language Education and the Anthony Papalia Award for Excellence in Teacher Education.

Cherice Montgomery teaches pedagogy courses in the Department of Spanish & Portuguese at Brigham Young University. Her research interests include design-based pedagogies, 21st Century literacies, professional development, and social technologies as pedagogical tools. She has received several awards for excellence in teaching, including the Kansas Foreign Language Teacher of the Year award.
A Gift for Every Teacher in Every Language:  
The Video Library of Classroom Practices

Greg Duncan

“They” say foreign language teachers should...

- Use authentic documents as much as possible;
- Speak the target language the vast majority of the time in the classroom;
- Connect language learning with other content areas;
- Use pair work and small group work extensively in teaching and learning;
- Employ effective lesson “openers and closers;”
- Make sure they meet the specific needs of your heritage speakers;
- Assign homework that connects to real-life language use;
- Use multiple assessments to determine student progress;
- And about a gazillion other things.

For many teachers — recently graduated from higher education and veterans alike — these all seem like legitimate “shoulds.” But many new teachers come into the teaching profession without the benefit of methods courses, where all of these topics might have been addressed, and numerous veteran teachers find that their long-ago methods courses don’t have high transference to today’s language agenda or today’s students.

Wanting to do the right thing — to teach to standards and to appeal to students’ interests in learning languages in the 21st century — what is a teacher to do? Of course, enrolling in higher degree programs could do the trick, but the rewards from that experience, great as they will be, are far from immediate. One could use precious planning periods to observe and learn from other teachers in the school, but what if those teachers who could be observed have many of the same questions to be answered?

With the exertion of just a few keystrokes teachers can be transported to a place that addresses all of the issues posed above — and many more — and in a highly engaging way. *Teaching Foreign Languages K-12: A Library of Classroom Practices* was produced in 2003 by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the Boston Public Television (WGBH) Educational Foundation with support from Annenberg Media. The library contains 28 half-hour and 2 one-hour video programs, a library guide, and Web-based resources at a dedicated site that describes its mission:

*Teaching Foreign Languages K-12 is a video library illustrating effective instruction and assessment strategies for teaching foreign languages. The language classrooms shown in this library include Spanish, French, German, Japanese, Italian, Latin, Russian, and Chinese. All classroom videos are subtitled in English and are appropriate for K-12 teachers of any foreign language. The library includes a 30-minute introduction and 60-minute overviews of ACTFL’s Standards for Foreign Language Learning and new assessment practices, as well as 27 classroom programs. In the half-hour classroom programs, teachers from schools across the country model interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational modes of communication throughout a range of grade and competency levels. Concepts of culture, comparisons, connections to students’ lives, and the importance of community are also integrated into the lessons.*

This abundantly rich resource is available to users through purchase of the videos and print material or completely free through the website where all videos are accessible on demand, and many of the print materials are retrievable through download.

Teachers will find video titles, topics and content of great utility. The listing of video titles, grade levels and language levels illustrates the variety of pertinent topics that is available in the library.

| 1. Introduction to the Library |
| 2. Standards and the Five Cs |
| 3. Assessment Strategies |
| 4. Chicken Pox: French I, Kindergarten |
| 5. Mapping Planet Earth: French I, Grade 2 |
| 6. Family and Home: French I, Grade 5 |
| 7. Holidays and Seasons: German I, Grade 3 |
| 8. Sports Stats: German I, Grade 5 |
| 10. Fruits of the Americas: Spanish I, Grade 4 |
| 11. Communicating About Sports: Chinese I, Grade 6 |

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12. A Cajun Folktale and Zydeco: French I, Grade 8
13. Touring a French City: French I, Grade 8
14. Hearing Authentic Voices: Spanish I, Grade 8
15. Food Facts and Stories: Spanish I, Grade 8
16. Exploring New Directions: Chinese II–IV, Grades 9–12
17. Comparing Communities: French III, Grades 9–12
18. Interpreting La Belle et la Bête: French IV, Grade 11
20. Sports in Action: German I, Grades 9–11
21. U.S. and Italian Homes: Italian II, Grade 9
22. Happy New Year!: Japanese II, Grades 10–12
25. Russian Cities, Russian Stories: Russian I and IV, Grades 9–12
26. Routes to Culture: Spanish II, Grades 9–10
27. Interpreting Picasso’s Guernica: Spanish II, Grade 10
28. Creating Travel Advice: Spanish III, Grade 11
29. Interpreting Literature: Spanish III, Grade 11
30. Politics of Art: Spanish V, Grade 12

While each video segment is contextualized to a particular school setting (elementary, middle or high school), many of the activities and strategies can be adapted to other levels. Likewise, approaches modeled in a video of a Chinese class, for example, still have potential for transference to classrooms of other languages. Consequently, there is something useful in every video for every teacher in every language.

Whether using the website or the print guide, teachers will find valuable guidance at their fingertips as they begin to delve into the library. For example, there is generic guidance about navigating through the videos and accompanying resources as well as specific suggestions regarding the use of each video lesson and its materials. Using video lesson 19, Performing with Confidence, as a model, both the website and the print guide provide the following information about the lesson:

- a video summary
- the specific national standards addressed in the lesson
- definitions of key terms associated with the lesson (e.g., performance level, heritage speaker)
- classroom at a glance (listing of teacher name, language and level, grade levels of students, school name, lesson date of the video, class size and schedule type [block, traditional])

An additional rich piece of background for the video lesson is the inclusion of a class profile in which there is information about the school itself, a discussion of the lesson design, more information about particular elements in the lesson and key teaching strategies illustrated in the video (in video lesson 19 these strategies include acquiring knowledge of current events, expanding oral discourse, and recalling vocabulary by categories). Also included is The Year at a Glance that provides information about other units covered in this particular course.

Perhaps the most helpful bit of guidance available in the library is the section Analyze the Video. The medium of video has enormous power to illustrate and to teach, but just watching a video does not mean that the viewer will fully engage in the messages contained in it. Developers of the video library provide a powerful service to foreign language teachers who use it by carefully and thoughtfully guiding users through viewings, thus maximizing effectiveness of the videos’ intent. Through a four-step process, viewers are asked to...

1. contemplate answers to thought-organizing questions such as, in Lesson 19, “what are some advantages to using language-based games with advanced learners?” or “how can teachers manage appropriate activities for students at different levels within the same class?”
2. watch the video for particular pur-
poses;
3. reflect on the video by responding to guiding questions; and,
4. look more closely at particular segments of the video to zoom in on certain teaching strategies that the teacher employed.

Whether this process takes place individually, with a group, or a Professional Learning Community, the teacher is assured of a thoughtful, idea-generating experience. An additional resource of the library has the potential to stretch the analysis of the video even further. Connecting to Teaching provides questions that cause the teacher to reflect on their own classroom practice; suggests related segments to watch from other videos in the library; and exHORTS teachers to try out specific video lesson strategies in their own classrooms as they plan future instruction.

A study of the library website or the print guide will reveal numerous other valuable resources that teachers can use to supplement existing practice or to change overall direction of their program.

Part of the beauty of Teaching Foreign Languages K-12: A Library of Classroom Practices is that the richness of its resources can be tapped in a variety of ways. Individual teachers can access the videos as they have time and energy. Foreign language departments can use them as the focus of monthly professional development sessions. College and university methods instructors can supplement their courses with these lively video examples of “best practice” or even build their courses around them.

One example that deserves to be shared is an approach made possible through the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE). To serve a huge geographic region that is sparsely populated, education officials in Wyoming have identified and exploited alternative instructional delivery models for a number of years. True distance education is a fact of life in Wyoming, and the WDE has equipped schools around the state with distance education hardware and software that make it possible for Wyoming educators to “meet” as they choose.

Taking advantage of this capability, the WDE created the option of Cohort Study Groups for foreign language educators throughout the state. As members of a cohort study group, teachers meet for a designated number of sessions as they view, analyze and discuss application possibilities of video lessons from the library that they select for deliberation. Following guidelines the WDE suggests, interested teachers can take as many as four different Cohort Study Group “courses”, and they earn professional development credit. This model in Wyoming provides another option for maximizing the potential benefits of the video library and its accompanying resources. Those wishing further information about Cohort Study Groups may contact Cassandra Celaya, WDE World Language Content Specialist; ccelay@educ.state.wy.us.

Inexplicably underutilized, the Library has been available since 2003 offering many opportunities to see inside language classrooms around the country. For foreign language educators wanting to initiate their own program of professional growth, Teaching Foreign Languages K-12: A Library of Classroom Practices is one of the greatest resources available. Using the Library requires an investment of time, but not necessarily of funds, and rewards the independent visitor as well as groups.

NOTE: Complete information regarding Teaching Foreign Languages K-12: A Library of Classroom Practices can be accessed at www.learner.org.

Greg Duncan, from Atlanta, Georgia, has been a foreign language educator for over 30 years. Through a collaboration of his company InterPrep and Georgia Public Broadcasting he produced the series Salsa for elementary Spanish and Inshai for high school Japanese both of which have earned multiple Emmy Awards. Greg also chaired the task force to create the new ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners.
Backpacks are commonplace in American schools. Each day students transport them to and from the classroom as they manage to carve out a little oasis of space to gather their treasures, homework and books. In Fair Lawn’s recently launched Chinese classes, backpacks take on new responsibility, becoming culture bearers that connect middle school children from East and West and provide insight into the lives of new friends on the other side of the globe.

The plan was to broaden the common pattern of a student-to-student pen pal exchange by creating two collective products to exchange in place of letters. My students were just beginning to learn Chinese and their written communication was limited, so I focused on a whole-class project that would emphasize cultural exchange. The backpack would become a culture bearer, providing insight into items of interest to middle school learners. With the objective of getting to know the likes and interests of 12 or 13 year olds in the target culture, we established a bimonthly routine to send two backpacks across the world, one from each grade level, containing products collected and created by participating students. These products included student artwork, class albums, favorite books, magazines, CDs, movies and much more.

Four times per year we would fill and mail backpacks carrying students’ collaborative works corresponding to the designated theme. The theme of the first voyage was the introduction of individual students through a scrapbook, photo album, DVD or other medium. The second voyage communicated school culture with photos, schedules, school materials and sample assignments in each subject area. The third voyage centered on books students read at each grade level with sample editions, student editorials, book reports or summaries and opinion statements. The theme of the fourth and final voyage was past-times including favorite music, school-related activities, and sports through photos, CDs, school supplies, advertisements and newspaper articles.

Here in New Jersey each backpack’s arrival at Thomas Jefferson or Memorial Middle School generated much excitement. Students huddled around to examine the shipping labels, converting their mere arrival into a mini lesson about international shipping protocol. Once opened, the package contents spilled out for my students to examine. Their excited chatter was a testimony to their high level of interest. The backpack’s arrival provided many teachable moments as I interpreted the contents for my students and answered their questions. To reach the wider community, the backpack and its contents became a traveling museum show to be signed out overnight so that every family had an opportunity to examine its contents and to learn from them along with their children.

To study a language is also to study the culture embedded within it. As Fair Lawn embarks upon a new Chinese language initiative, we seek to develop a bridge of understanding between students’ native culture and the target culture and we have seen that the
backpack exchange is an effective vehicle to meet this goal. The sixth, seventh and eighth grade American students studying Chinese are also gaining firsthand experience with the target culture through a backpack project. In return, Chinese children and teachers are enjoying the opportunity to try out their English and to share their culture with their new friends in the United States.

Being involved at the ground level of a new program was both exciting and challenging for me. My mission was to develop a program that would attract new students and maintain high standards and expectations. Interaction with the community afforded me professional growth and a better understanding of my students. First, I established strong ties with the parent community through a welcome tea that was given in my honor. Second, I created a CD highlighting my interactions with fifth grade learners and distributed it to each elementary principal to show to the parents of their school. Administrators helped me attend national and local conferences where I benefitted from special sessions dedicated to the teaching of Chinese and the many new instructional materials that have been created. In addition, time was built into my schedule each week to work with my supervisor on methodology and curricula. She encouraged me to apply for the Foreign Language Educators of New Jersey (FLENJ) mini-grant for... and facilitated the backpack exchange. I am excited and encouraged that our beginning level enrollment is up more than 30% for next year. I look forward to the continued articulation of our program to new grade levels. As the Beijing Olympics have opened China to the world, the backpack project has begun to unlock Chinese culture for the children of Fair Lawn.

Many thanks to Mr. Thomas Swartelé of Bongrain International and his administrative assistant, Ms. Jackie Weisberger, for establishing the connection between Thomas Jefferson Middle School, Memorial Middle School and Tiánjin Nánkāi Zhōng Xué School. Next, a generous grant provided by Foreign Language Educators of New Jersey allowed me to cover the cost of filling the packs. Lastly, teacher Wáng Jin of Tiánjin Nánkāi Zhōng Xué School worked with me to establish exchange dates and to maintain a high level of student interest in the project.

Tracy Hong Syz was the first Chinese teacher hired in Fair Lawn when a new program was launched in 2007 as a result of Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) grant funding. Born and raised in Taiwan, Tracy also taught and lived in Beijing (China), Singapore, and Sydney (Australia). She was a teacher at Beijing Normal University before moving to the United States to become a Ph.D. candidate at Columbia University. Her hobbies are reading and traveling. She can be reached at tracyhong.syz@yahoo.com.
Priscilla Russell, one of our editors, interviewed Martin Smith, the National Association of District Supervisors of Foreign Language (NADSFL) Supervisor of the Year for 2007-2008.

Martin: The best way to frame a discussion of professional growth is to think about it in terms of the individual teacher because, in essence, all true growth is individual and must happen at one's own direction. While leadership can come from the district level, I believe that the strongest professional growth comes when individuals realize that they need to grow professionally. That is, that they need to seek out learning and become engaged in the profession. From my point of view, it's critical that people stay active and engaged professionally all through their career. Without this they don't stay interested in the job that they do and they don't continue to offer the best to students. And of course, that is why we are here ...to try to give students the best possible education we can give them; given the time, the tools and the resources available. This is all to say that I believe the stronger perspective when looking at professional growth is, the perspective of individual teachers and the kinds of steps that they could take as opposed to the direction that a supervisor imposes.

So I see the role of the supervisor then as one of facilitating teacher engagement and encouraging teachers. A supervisor needs
to support teachers in their own professional journeys, i.e. in their individual learning as they move through their careers. Even though each teacher is at a different place in this professional journey there are some journeys we need to take together. For example, the Standards created needs within a department for everyone to reconsider their goals and instructional practices. Also, as we’ve learned more about authentic, performance-based assessments and rubrics, or as we have learned how to use technology to supplement and support our work everyone needs to learn about these developments. However, even though everyone needs to do work on these advancements, each person is at a different level of understanding in these various areas. Teachers have to plan their own course of action for staying engaged in the profession so that they can grow.

**Priscilla:** You’re not necessarily saying that each teacher needs to become expert in every area of the field.

**Martin:** No. I think individual teachers create their own goals for what is personally appropriate and then work independently or in concert with others. There are so many ways to learn and there are so many ways to stay involved. The first way is to go out and see and hear and listen to what is available. Perhaps engagement happens at your own school when people stop by your classroom or office to talk about an issue perplexing them. Excellent professional development opportunities and inservices can occur in casual conversations. Or, professional development can occur at statewide, regional or national conferences. There is a host of opportunities to grow professionally. But we need to remember that many of the richest experiences can happen in ways besides going out to professional venues.

**Priscilla:** So what are some of the other experiences teachers can have if, for instance, there aren’t the funds in their district to send them to meetings?

**Martin:** It’s often the case that there are not funds. Having said that, I think every teacher has the individual responsibility to spend some of the money they are earning, not outrageous sums of money, but each year teachers need to invest money and time in their own professional growth. They also need to carve out time outside of their contractual day for professional activities. It might be one local conference that lasts for just a day and costs very little. Or, if you travel a distance to attend a meeting, there are numerous ways to cut expenses such as sharing a room with colleagues. It’s also important that districts support professional growth but frequently they don’t. Absent funds to attend conferences there are many other sources to explore: for instance, online journals offer a staggering amount of material and research. Two sites, for example, the WGBH Annenberg Series or the Carlla Virtual Assessment Center, present a plethora of material to keep one engaged and up-to-date. Additionally, nowadays more districts are putting their curricula, resources and instructional materials online and with a bit of investigating you can learn a tremendous amount just by seeing what other districts are doing. Ideally, a teacher would be searching through these resources and then engaging in dialogue with others about these investigations. I think the opportunity to articulate and verbalize one’s learning and processing is very important. Of course, we encourage professional learning communities (small learning communities) having formalized times for coming together with colleagues to sit down and talk about those issues that are of mutual interest and, eventually, come to some sort of solutions, ideas and action plans to implement. I think effective professionals do that regardless of what the district provides.

Additionally, there are wikis, blogs, FL-Teach, Nanduti and many other on-line communities. Foreign Language Educators of New Jersey has just started a forum called E-Verse and more and more you are seeing these types of opportunities for foreign language professionals. So even if you are an individual teacher in an individual school, isolated from others, there are ways to connect with other colleagues to engage in dialogue.

**Priscilla:** The Annenberg series and the concept of small learning communities are great examples of cost-free professional growth opportunities. In fact, this issue of the journal has an article about the videos and one about professional learning communities. What about joining a world languages professional association as another low cost avenue for meeting other teachers?

**Martin:** Sure, a teacher can join a regional, a state, and a national organization. Even if you join every single organization that you could potentially join, it probably wouldn’t come to more than $300-$400 within a single year. Also, many organizations have reduced fees for new teachers. When one starts to go to conferences, it gets to be more expensive, there’s no doubt about that. But, again, I see it as a professional responsibility to save some money to attend. I remember when I began my career, I didn’t go every year. I might have gone every two years and maybe at the very beginning, every third year, to the national conference. At first, I didn’t know anyone at the meetings but I would seek out all the best sessions to attend and slowly I got to know others in the field. Think about that as an ongoing commitment, that you are going to stay actively involved. Of course, we know the best learning happens when
you try to teach others so when you get to that point in your career where you've been working for awhile and you have ideas to share with others, it's terrific to start sharing those ideas — starting locally, it might be doing something for fellow teachers, putting together some strategies and techniques and activities that you have been working and sharing them at a state, regional or national level. All of these are incredible opportunities.

**Priscilla:** Many of the organizations, state and regional, are looking for people to take an active role, perhaps as a regional rep or as the treasurer or something like that.

**Martin:** Yes, there are many, many opportunities and one just has to be open and willing to say “yes” and then, be willing to follow through on the professional responsibility. I think this is all about the question, “what does it mean to be a professional?” For me to be a professional means always to be ready to learn, to model what we want our students to do. We want our students to be lifelong learners, so we model that we're continuously learning and one of the ways we do that is staying engaged. Only then, can they bring new ideas to the classroom. One of the things I love is when I talk to teachers around the country and they talk about the excitement of bringing new practices back to the classroom and telling their students “This is something new. Let’s see what works.” I think students appreciate that, because they see that they have a teacher who cares, and who wants to stay on top of the latest strategies and techniques, and do the best they can do for the students. Students work with teachers more willingly when they see that type of commitment on the part of the teacher.

This year marks my 30th year of being on the other side of the student desk. Even so, I've spent a lot of time sitting in the student's chair as a learner and there are still things to learn and still ways to improve. It's never about being at the end of a journey, it's always about being in the process of the journey. That's the greatest part of teaching as a career — it is forever fulfilling, it is forever engaging, it forever challenges you to do better. You can't be complacent, ever. Just earlier today, in a meeting at school, it was interesting to talk about who are the students whom we teach today? Sometimes teachers complain that they're so much worse and there's no discipline; they don't pay attention. I wonder if that's really true. We have the ability to give today's students the keys to open up the world, to feel comfortable interacting with others, to feel comfortable using other languages, and if we don't give them that gift, nobody else will. That’s the special gift of early language learning. Students come ready, willing and able to learn other languages. For those of us who work hard at this, we know that it's not effortless and that we have to think carefully about what we want to do and the types of activities that will engage students. But elementary is absolutely the level at which we have the best opportunity to reach the largest numbers of students and open their minds to the possibility of being a successful lifelong language learner. If we don't stay connected and engage professionally, we can't offer this gift to our students.

**Priscilla:** In this issue of the journal we will offer suggestions for setting up a professional library. What are some titles in your library?

**Martin:** That's a great idea. It is important to build a professional library that is readily available. Two titles are essential: Curtain & Dahlberg's book *Languages and Children* and Shrum & Glisan's *Teacher's Handbook*. I can't imagine being without them. The National Standards and each teacher's State Standards document and frameworks are also critical to have in a professional library. There are so many others also. In my district, we welcome our new teachers with a starter library: *Curtain & Dahlberg: the new Keys to the Classroom* by Paula Patrick from ACTFL, a copy of the National Standards, as well as a copy of the New Jersey Standards, the Integrated Performance Assessment manual from ACTFL since assessment is important to us and, finally, *Understanding by Design* by Wiggins and McTighe. We include *Understanding by Design* because we've been doing so much work with the idea that we teach best when we're clear about our goals and the kind of evidence that we need to collect to support student attainment of those goals. As a reflection of this strong belief the curriculum template we've developed over the past five years is imbued with the ideas of Backward Design. The other book that I really like, if you are just starting to work with standards is *AATSP Professional Development Series Handbook for Teachers K-16 Teaching Spanish* with the 5 Cs' *A Blueprint for Success*. Although specifically for Spanish teachers, it offers much for teachers of any language. The chapters offer clear explanations for understanding how to work with Standards, from a curriculum point of view as well as for instruction and assessment. Personally I see that book as critical to be in my library. From these resources we can see that curriculum, instruction, and assessment, all with an infusion of technology, are all important areas that continually challenge us to grow as we learn more about their role in second language acquisition.

**Priscilla:** Thank you, Martin, for talking with us. By both reflecting on your journey and by reminding teachers that, ultimately, the responsibility to grow professionally is their own you have brought forward our discussion of professional growth.
Announcements

NNELL Web Publications

Tammy Dann, NNELL Advocacy Chair

Since 2006 NNELL has provided the early language learning community with two tools, Home-School Connection and Newsworthy. Both publications are available from the NNELL home page and are free to all visitors.

Home/School Connection

In this publication, NNELL seeks to provide parents with information related to learning other languages both at home and in the classroom. This bimonthly flier compiles information from a variety of publications related to early language learning. It is a tool early language teachers may reproduce and send home in their students' backpacks.

Past issues focused on:
- Communicating in Languages Other than English
- Assessments for Early Second Language Programs
- What Language Should my Child Learn?
- Are Children "Language Sponges"?
- National Standards for Foreign Language Learning
- Common Misunderstandings about Early Second Language Learning
- Effective School Models and Parental Involvement
- Give Your Children a Global Advantage through Language Learning

Newsworthy

This publication is a collection of information and links to websites about early language learning. In past issues you will find information on:
- links to articles on early language learning
- scholarships for studying abroad
- updates on NNFI.L events
- free resources
- assessment tools
- many resources related to teaching/learning another language

Because NNELL wishes to continue to serve its members, we invite you to submit ideas for future Home/School Connections and Newsworthy to NNELL Political Action and Advocacy chair, Tammy Dann: trdann@juno.com

Graphics ©2008 Paris Granville
What happens when teachers accept the challenge to work collaboratively and take charge of their own professional growth? Rather than look to out-of-district experts for professional development, why not tap into the knowledge of colleagues? The elementary and middle school world languages teachers in the West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District spent the 2007-2008 school year involved in forming Professional Learning Communities.

Professional Learning Communities

In an online interview, Giselle Martin-Kniep defines a Professional Learning Community (PLC) as "a forum for continually improving learning," "an organizational lifestyle change" through which all stakeholders hone their skills to promote student achievement. Participants in a PLC become "critical friends" who advise, support, and "cheer on" one another for the benefit of the students and the school. PLC groups analyze student data to unravel obstacles to learning; they engage in action research; they develop common assessments; they tackle building as well as classroom challenges. Their work is ongoing and fluid. Collaboration, coupled with professional inquiry creates a faculty that shares the leadership role and the responsibility for the efficacy of the educational program (Checkley, 2006).

District Expectations Set the Stage for Meaningful Professional Growth

West Windsor-Plainsboro's local professional development committee comprised of teachers and administrators sent a message to the faculty that they have valuable expertise to share with one another. The elementary and middle school teachers embraced the notion of PLCs. The department had recently conducted a review of the program and it was evident that students could reach higher levels of proficiency than they were attaining.

Elementary Spanish Teachers Create an Informal Community

The second and third grade Spanish teachers, frustrated with isolation and lack of opportunities to work together, decided to meet in the café section of a local grocery store once a month. Although they did not formally adopt the procedures of a PLC, they analyzed the district curriculum and identified learning outcomes. In the process, they had rich discussions about theory, methods, and best practices.
with consultants and extended discussions with the implementation team, the process began. Teachers and administrators began to work together at faculty meetings and department meetings in small groups to examine data to uncover areas of improvement and work toward enhancing the learning experience of students.

The process was slow and at times arduous. At the first meeting, groups set norms to govern the work they would engage in together. How would they ensure that everyone had an opportunity to express their views? What procedures would be "non-negotiable?" How would they handle reluctant participants? Once these standards were set, it was time to pin point a goal to improve student achievement.

Data Collection and Analysis Used to Set Goals

All PLC groups set the overarching goal of increasing students' proficiency to meet the targeted levels established by the World Language department. One group of Spanish and French teachers focused on writing skills. They developed a prompt, assessed all students, and then met to examine the evidence. As they studied this initial data, they discovered that low achieving students needed vocabulary work. They often reverted to English to express ideas and used a limited number of expressions in their compositions; the middle level students lacked accuracy, paying little attention to agreement of subjects and verbs as well as adjectives and nouns; while the highest achievers sacrificed quantity and richness of language for accuracy.

Teachers then gave students a survey, asking them to rate their level of comfort and expertise with presentational writing,

Middle School Teachers form a Professional Learning Community

The middle school teachers took part in PLCs as the result of a goal to form and nurture collaborative groups of teachers and administrators to tackle the jobs of improving student achievement and decreasing professional isolation. After numerous meetings

- How might they make early elementary children aware of the "big ideas" of the curriculum?
- Which strategies could they implement successfully to convert a teacher-centered lesson into a learner-active one?
- Who might demonstrate TPRS techniques that guided children toward narration?

Ironically

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cally, the lowest achieving students felt that they wrote very well in the target language, while higher achieving students felt their work lacked accuracy. From the student feedback, teachers developed plans to meet the needs of each group of learners; they consulted the child study team members, special education professionals, their language arts colleagues, and the literature on writing in world language. In the PLC groups, they shared strategies to improve proficiency, implemented those techniques with students, and at subsequent meetings debriefed their successes and failures.

Meeting the Needs of All Learners

Another group of French, Spanish, German, and Chinese teachers approached the issue of proficiency by sharing specific language learning strategies to meet the needs of different types of learners. They collected those techniques in a packet of strategies with explanations for implementation and assessment rubrics:

Pair students and give each one a piece of paper. Announce a sentence starter. Working collaboratively, students generate as many endings as possible. Encourage them to use prior and new knowledge. For each unique sentence, give a point to the group. To challenge students, ask for explanatory phrases to support their responses—for example: “Ella mira la televisión porque le gustan las películas.” (“She watches television because she likes films”)

The writing sample at left illustrates the results of a first-year student who wrote an essay about her ideal bedroom. The student used extender strategies to make the description more interesting.

Evidence of Success from the Professional Learning Communities

In their annual reflections, teachers wrote enthusiastically of the process. They felt energized by the experience of working across buildings with colleagues at their grade level. Administrators saw evidence of the PLC’s impact during formal and informal observations. Teachers had a larger “tool box” of strategies; they were in sync and working toward the same proficiency objectives; students were talking more and teachers less; they used a variety of learner-active strategies such as Inner Circle/Outer Circle, Turn and Talk, pair work, and information gap activities. They focused deliberately on moving learners toward higher levels of proficiency. No longer were the teachers the only ones asking questions; students did so as well; no longer were the teachers the center of the class; rather, children were actively involved in responding and communicating in the target language. Teachers aligned learning tasks with specific outcomes, resulting in intentional teaching and powerful learning.

Of course, the proof lies in student performances. In June, when elementary teachers interviewed pairs of children using a protocol inspired by the Student Oral Proficiency Assessment (SOPA), they found that the majority of third graders were functioning at the Junior Novice-Mid level of proficiency, the target for this grade level. They evaluated listening comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and creatively with the language. They gathered data on the efficacy of the elementary Spanish program and, at the same time, gained insight into the strengths of their instruction and the areas in need of improvement.
One teacher shares her reflection on the impact of the meetings:

They provided the opportunity to build community among peers. They also served as a forum for discussion on best practices and challenges, prompted sharing and distribution of effective techniques or activities. Sometimes, it was like a mini ‘think tank’ in that we could dry run activities among ourselves and evaluate relevance and efficacy in terms of themes and essential questions.

Regarding student achievement, I feel that students benefited in that I was able to tap into the collective expertise of my peers and bring more to my classroom experience. Additionally, students across the district benefited from group consistency while enjoying their teacher’s individual style and personality.

As for the SOPA results, I feel that the majority of students were on target. Further, the SOPA also highlighted a few elements (for example recycling of birthday/family content, general questions) that need to be revisited in the curriculum.

Likewise at the middle school level, the summative assessment was enlightening. The district took part in a state initiative to gather data on the proficiency of 8th graders in reading and speaking by administering the STAMP test. The West Windsor-Plainsboro results showed a significant improvement over scores from the 2005-2006 school year. At that time, the majority of students were functioning at Novice Mid or Level 2 in speaking, well below the expectations set for the program. Teachers and administrators waited anxiously for the 2007-2008 scores and, although most students did not reach the Intermediate Low range for speaking, 75% scored Novice High or higher! Teachers now know that intentional coupling with learner-active strategies bring about increased proficiency.

**Shaping the Future**

The tasks that lie ahead for the world language department include examining the STAMP results for areas of weakness and developing a plan for “pushing” students further along the proficiency continuum.

The elementary and middle school world languages teachers are committed to continuing the PLC format as a tool for improving student achievement. On their annual feedback forms, teachers described the impact of their collaboration and study during the year. The following are excerpts from their responses:

This work has impacted student achievement by forcing me to be more intentional with my approach to instruction. As a result of working more with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) performance guidelines, I have been able to clarify for myself just what that “next level” is, and—more importantly—I have been able to make that more clear to my students.

Reviewing and utilizing the rubrics that stress the three modes of communication and the ACTFL guidelines in addition to exposure and periodic review of the proficiency scales, students have taught students to think about their own individual proficiency so that they can move forward from novice to intermediate levels in speaking, reading and writing. This was apparent when I compared written work and video-taped improvisations from last year to this year.

During interpersonal assessments, students are describing in more detail, expanding discourse, and being more creative in their responses because they are using circumlocution techniques to describe things that they would otherwise not be able to communicate.

The entire department highlighted the positive effect of professional dialog, shared goal setting, personal responsibility for student achievement, and a structure to air questions and concerns about teaching and learning. In chorus, they expressed the desire to continue with PLCs and many had ideas to improve the functioning of the groups. Building on last year’s foundation, they understand that their target for 2008-09 remains increased proficiency. They now have a clear roadmap and look forward to the challenge that lies ahead — improving proficiency across all levels.

**References**


Rosanne Zeppieri supervises K-8 World Languages for the West Windsor-Plainsboro School District. The world language program has been designated a Model Program Resource Center for the state of New Jersey. Rosanne also co-directs a StarTalk Chinese immersion summer camp.
Quick Takes

This feature introduces products that may interest early language educators.

Charming Book about a Mother’s Headscarf

In The Swirling Hijaab, a small girl shares all the reasons she loves her mother’s hijaab. (A hijaab is a shawl that Muslim women wear outside their homes or in the presence of men not closely related to them.) The lush illustrations depict the girl using the hijaab to create a sailing ship, a Bedouin tent, a tea party, and a Masai warrior queen’s cloak. On the final page, the young girl shows that “covering my mum as part of her faith is what the hijaab does best.” This respectful portrayal of a strong Muslim girl engages children with precise simple language.

Strengths

The sweet story described by Anne Faudez of Best Books as “a celebration of the Muslim faith” can introduce non-Muslim children to the concept of a headscarf as a cultural and religious symbol while avoiding melodrama. The book is available in 20 dual language editions. Each page advances the story with one simple sentence. The illustrations will clarify any unfamiliar cultural references. It would be appropriate for children learning French or Arabic. Since each page will have the same sentence in two languages (e.g, Spanish and Filipino or French and Arabic), we suggest that you white out or otherwise cover up one language so that you don’t confuse the children by showing them two competing languages. An audio CD is also available for independent reading. The book could be an exciting center to a thematic unit for upper elementary.

Best Audience

Children in elementary school would probably enjoy reading and creating comic strips, particularly in the higher grades. Since the content is not restricted to one particular proficiency level, these comic strips would be useful in middle and high school classrooms as well.

Information


Early Language Learning Program from the U.K.

Early Start Languages a company based in the U.K. is offering its popular curriculum and DVD units for total beginners of French, German and Spanish. The DVDs and lesson plans help classroom teachers or world language specialists introduce simple language in with immersive videos of authentic children filmed on location. The videos and activities offer a context for simple language that is dripping with culture. Attractive children and graphics combined with simple clear language make the topics engaging and easy to understand. They include greetings, how are you?, colors, numbers, family and calendar. The alphabet section shows environmental text from authentic locations. The multimedia starter pack includes lesson plans, student handouts, cultural notes, teaching techniques, DVD, and an audio CD of songs.

Audience

The series is useful for young beginners. Since the DVD’s are entirely in the target language, there will work with students who do not speak English at home and allow the teacher to keep the instruction in the target language. The topics are too simple for heritage speakers of the target language, but great for those days when a qualified substitute teacher is unavailable.

Information

Order the Early Start French, German or Spanish 1 pack - Manual with DVD costs $139 and CD $10 at www.earlystartlanguages.com. The language packs ship directly from their US store. The DVD will play on a typically configured computer, but not in a region 1 NTSC DVD player.

Azur et Asmar, New Film from Michel Ocelot

From the creator of Kirikou comes the tale of Azur and Asmar, a tale of two boys of different colors and cultures raised by the same loving Moroccan “mother”. The magical tale goes beyond stereotypes with many intriguing characters, including a blind Frenchman in exile, an intelligent princess-child, and the caring nanny/mother. The jewel-like 3-D animation shows the beauty of the Moroccan landscape. The story is part culture clash and part fairy tale.

Audience

The movie is mostly in French. To reflect the bilingual/bicultural nature of the story, some scenes are in Arabic. Before key
Scenes in the film, students will need to work with counterintuitive vocabulary and culture. The video would help French immersion students contrast the cultures of Morocco and France. FLES students could watch short scenes from the video to focus on targeted vocabulary and culture.

Information
Azur et Asmar is available on DVD from World of Reading (www.wor.com) for $30.

Spanish Conversation Activities
Spanish teachers and their students will benefit from fun and engaging activities that promote authentic communication and consolidate grammar structures from Español en pareja. Young learners can use its versatile activities designed for novice, intermediate and advanced students.

Set up as information gap tasks, each activity in this book has two parts, A and B. Both parts have the same communicative situation, but include different information. Titles include "Talking about feelings and emotions", "Narrating sequences", "Talking about soccer", and "Expressing purposes".

The book is divided in six sections: introduction, a topical index of the 60 units with suggestions for using each unit, a glossary of words used in Latin America, and suggested answers.

Information
Español en pareja by Michael Dreke, Wolfgang Lind and Margaret Schubach-Rupings is available through Carlex, Inc. Teaching Aids. You can visit www.carlexoline.com or call to 1-800-526-3768. (ISBN 3-468-49998-1)

Templates for Pair Activities
Talk-A-Tivities is treasure trove of interpersonal tasks for second language learners. Although originally meant for English language learners with all the activities written in English, the multiplicity of tasks lend themselves to many languages and will spark the imagination of any language teacher. There are, for example, three kinds of crossword puzzles that require cooperative pair learning. The author also shows how to differentiate the tasks so that all may participate successfully. In the section called Picture That students describe a black-line drawing to their partners who attempt to recreate the original with clarifying questions. Additionally, there are map tasks and several more categories of activities. All pages are photocopiable.

Written by Richard Yorkey and published by Alta Book Center Publishers, 14 Adrian Court, Burlingame, CA. Also available at BarnesandNoble.com
Action research is...a reflective process... [used by teachers who are searching] for solutions to everyday, real problems experienced in schools, or looking for ways to improve instruction and increase student achievement. Rather than dealing with the theoretical, action research allows practitioners to address those concerns that are closest to them, ones over which they can exhibit some influence and make change. The process of action research assists educators in assessing needs, documenting the steps of inquiry, analyzing data, and making informed decisions that can lead to desired outcomes. (Ferrance, 2000, p. 6)

Reflection for Everyone

Several years ago when teaching in an elementary foreign language exposure (FLEX) program, I completed a research project that documented student learning gained from student dialogue journals. (Borich, 2000) Students wrote in their journal immediately following our 15-minute Spanish classes. Initially the students wrote to me in English about the topic of the class. As their exposure to Spanish increased, so did their use of Spanish increase in their entries. I responded to the students in Spanish or English depending upon what they wrote. Thus, we carried on a dialogue about their learning of Spanish. This action research was the focus of my master's thesis, and it included analysis of student journal entries and artwork, teacher focus groups, parent surveys, and observations from my own journal.

It substantiated and provided evidence of precisely what my students were learning. This was important because skeptics of FLEX programs maintain that FLEX programs do not allow for target language learning. However, documentation from the 2nd grade student journals gave evidence that my students were not only learning the target language but also making connections with other curricular content areas and becoming familiar with the target culture as well.

I learned about that miliska has a powdrid top of ther house. Is a tortilla a tip of tocow in madleda? [I learned about that Merida has a pointed top of their house. Is a tortilla a type of taco in Merida?]
On ech hous looth strong. I liketd the hous that lokt like a hat. (In Spanish—On each house looked strong. I liked the house that looked like a hat.)
I like chichen Itza. It take 90 shaps to got to chichen Itza. [I like Chichen Itza. It takes 90 steps to go up to the top of Chichen Itza.]

How is the weather in Iowa and Yucatán different in November? Do you like the weather in November in Yucatán? Tell why.

In Yucatán it is mucho calor in Noviembre. In Iowa it is cold in November. I like it in Yucatán because it is mucho calor.

I like Yucatán and Iowa. Sometime I weish that I cold go to Yucatán. I like the weather on Yucatan kid also you? I think that Yucatan is warm. Iowa is cold.
Iowa is frio and Yucatan is poco calor it is diferent wether and I like yucatan Because it is sort of hot and sort of cool.

Tell about our Pasada celebration today. What was it like? What did we do?

We what awan to hoes and we not on the hose tan tan hacbas bachas. The first door we what to thay said no the 2nd no the 3nd st. [We went around to houses and we knocked on the house tan tan
This action research initiative taught me the value of being reflective about my teaching practices. My thesis research requirements forced me to carefully collect, analyze and reflect on student journals. In doing so, I learned which teaching strategies made a difference.

Now I teach first-year 8th grade Spanish students who earn extra points for sincere, reflective feedback about their learning experiences. This feedback is motivational for me. It is my reward for my semester-long efforts. Their comments, both positive and negative, never cease to intrigue me.

The feedback that my 8th graders tell me one important message — each 8th grader’s needs and learning styles are unique. Their comments give me insight to how middle school learners with minimal second language learning are similar to, but also sometimes different from those of an elementary FLEX program learner.

My 8th graders have no difficulty in responding to questions such as, “Students, please tell me what does and does not help you learn Spanish.” Their comments reveal that a one-size-fits-all approach to instruction is not the answer to best practice.

What my Students taught me

For example, some 8th graders tell me that directions for homework are sometimes unclear. They suggest that taking more time in class to get started on homework could be valuable. Others admit that they simply forget to do their homework. Many struggle with assignments that require complete sentences. Universally they affirm, however, that homework, whether completed or not, increases and reinforces their learning.

Comments and concerns vary on class activities. My commitment to speak the target language in the classroom raises some, not all, students’ level of concern. They tell me that using pictures along with language input and songs help them remember new vocabulary, but textbook activities do not. Universally, students tell me that their favorite and the most beneficial activities are those that allow them to work in a group or with a partner.

Our extrinsic reward system and our classroom travel experiences consistently elicit positive comments. Students receive fake Euros when they participate. Examples include volunteering to answer questions or helping one another during partner and group work time. Some prefer to deposit their Euros in the bank i.e., as class participation; others prefer to pocket their Euros. Our pretend travel throughout the school year provides opportunities to visualize and experience the cultures of the target language while learning Spanish. In fact, students often suggest that our lessons should incorporate travel opportunities on a daily basis rather than once a month or every two months.

This past semester I approached the end-of-semester feedback opportunity differently. Once again, I asked students to answer “what does and does not help you learn Spanish?”, but I also asked several direct questions. I discovered that these directed questions provide additional information and perspectives on ways to improve instruction, curriculum, and assessment. My students may be surprised that their feedback motivates, rewards, excites, and inspires me to become a better teacher. Just as they are excited for a break from school, I become energized by their feedback. And, there is an added bonus—their feedback provides evidence to me of the positive learning experiences. As I reflect on the in-depth nature of my FLEX action research results and compare them to the 8th grade results, it is clear that a more systematic approach could help me more effectively modify instructional practice to meet the needs of my students.

Counterintuitive Results

Sometimes student feedback reveals surprising results not in accordance with what we would expect. My master’s thesis action research clearly indicated that younger stu-
Students thrive in an environment that uses only the target language as the vehicle of instruction.

Just this past spring, 8th graders whom I had taught 7 years earlier in the FLEX program recalled how much they had enjoyed stories from their 1st and 2nd grade curriculum. Evidently, these stories, taught in the target language, are “burned” in their memories. Yet, feedback from many of these same students about their learning needs now indicates that some of these same students believe that exclusive use of the target language hinders their learning.

Perhaps more important, however, is my heightened awareness of the 8th grade second language learner. Their feedback does consistently reveal two significant considerations that guide my lesson planning. First, offering a variety of the activities during any one class period, helps my students stay positive about their second language learning experience. Second, the middle level student feels most confident as a learner when he or she has the opportunity to work with a partner or in a group. Reeve documented the advantages of providing many opportunities for middle level learners to work, interact, and learn with peers. (Reeve, 1996)

This year I have once again used the dialogue journal to gain daily student feedback. I plan to use these journals in three ways. First, student entries will record student learning from a particular class period. They will write in Spanish — applying their learning — and, when necessary, in English, to describe our class activities. Second, their entries will provide an automatic means of reflecting upon their own learning. I am hoping that they begin to take responsibility for their own learning and become aware of helpful strategies for learning a second language. Third, I will be able to communicate on an individual basis as I respond to student entries. My students know that they will receive credit for all of their entries, but they do not know which entries will be scored or recorded.

Conclusion

All teachers would benefit from reflecting on student feedback to inform instructional practice. In Iowa we now have new Iowa teaching standards and evaluator (administrator) procedures that require new and veteran teachers to reflect about their own professional practice. Learning community leaders could use this evaluation process of reflecting on professional practice based on student feedback to help teachers teach more effectively. In turn, administrators might have greater insights as they plan professional development needs.

In any case, whether initiated by administrators or teachers, learning communities should provide meeting times where teachers share and discuss student feedback. Teachers could then share with colleagues new instructional approaches created from student feedback. We can learn much from our students, who are after all experts on their own learning. Their input can then guide our choices for professional development outside of the classroom.

Reference


Jeanette currently teaches Spanish to 8th and 9th graders at Northview Middle School in Ankeny, Iowa. Jeanette earned a B.A. in Spanish and a minor in French from South Dakota State University. In 2002 she completed an M.S. in curriculum and instruction with an administrative endorsement from Iowa State University. Since 1991 she has taught Spanish and French in the Ankeny Community School District at the elementary and middle school levels. Her curriculum for the elementary level, Fiestas de Yucatán is available from the National K-12 Foreign Language Resource Center at Iowa State University.
As Spanish flourishes in 1st through 12th grades in the West Des Moines school district and the desire to learn other languages is gaining momentum, the world language department faces the challenge of offering fully articulated instruction. Four years into my career as an 8th grade Spanish teacher, I learned about a unique professional development opportunity that sparked my interest. Tired of teaching from the textbook, I had a strong desire to revamp my classroom and to regain enthusiasm for what I was teaching. In the summer of 2004 I attended a language workshop institute at the National Foreign Language Resource Center that offered the opportunity to sit at the feet of the masters of language teaching. It gave me direction to change the vision of my classroom and ultimately, equipped me with valuable knowledge to assist our world language department in creating curriculum that connected in meaningful ways across all grade levels.

My Classroom — Before

A typical unit in my classroom consisted of flipping through pages of the textbook, assigning workbook pages as homework, correcting assignments, administering vocabulary quizzes or generic multiple choice tests, and then repeating the motions the very next unit. I spent much of my time in front of the classroom talking and directing. There were few opportunities for students to speak in the target language. Although I never intended it to be, the primary focus was on writing, reading, and culture. My lessons were centered on what my students needed to know to move to Spanish II and I graded them based on what they could not do.

An Opportunity for Transformation

A colleague and I attended a summer institute in 2004 at the National Foreign Language Resource Center (NFLRC) based at Iowa State University. Led by Helena Curtain and Carol Ann Dahlberg, modern pioneers in early language learning, Rethinking the PK-12 Foreign Language Curriculum was created to enlighten and motivate language teachers from across the nation.

Like other world language departments in many places, the world language program in West Des Moines was experiencing growing pains: articulation across all levels needed improvement. This particular institute focused on giving teachers from the same district time together to examine cohesiveness within their language program and to determine what steps would streamline the curriculum. My colleague Tammy Dann, a FLES teacher, and I had ten days to listen, consult, and brainstorm new ways to create content-related, culturally infused, thematic teaching articulated across all grade levels. We also benefited daily from watching Jessica Haxhi, a teacher from Waterbury, CT, demonstrate 60-minute Japanese lessons taught to early elementary students. This two-week institute was motivating, meaningful, inspiring, and enjoyable and the lessons learned would continue to encourage me for years to come.

My Classroom — After

Participating in this NFLRC institute was like the day I decided to go "green." I realized that I couldn't change everything in my classroom in 24 hours, but Curtain and Dahlberg's "organic" methodology would grow and thrive in my classroom, not to mention, within the district over the next years. When I returned to my classroom, the first thing I did was take control from the textbooks. No longer were they the base of the curriculum, rather, they became one more resource for teaching the curriculum. Then I began to implement the backward design approach more consistently. I created authentic assessments that were communicative-based and learned to create lessons around what I wanted students to be able to do at the end of each unit. When I assessed what my students could do, they took ownership of their learning. I created more "center" type lessons where students worked in groups to accomplish an end product. The focus was on utilizing what has already been taught and applying it to a communicative activity such as an interpretive listening task. Consequently, I used less and less of the mundane workbook for homework, creating instead more meaningful assignments. Four years have now elapsed since that eventful summer, plenty of time for me to implement the skills that I acquired and for the new mindset to have become ingrained in my teaching. Little did I imagine that two weeks could have made such a difference to my professional life.

Heather Southammavong is in her ninth year of teaching Spanish in the West Des Moines Community Schools in Iowa. She teaches 8th grade and 7th grade Spanish. She also has taught FLES. Heather has been at the forefront of revitalizing middle school Spanish curriculum within the West Des Moines district and in creating curriculum for the 7th grade program. Heather presented at the ACTFL 2007 Conference and a number of times at the Iowa World Language Association Conference. Heather is the mother of Nevin, 5, and Anya, 2.
Veteran and novice teachers of foreign languages at the Pre-K-8 level often state that visiting classrooms of accomplished teachers is the best professional development they have ever experienced. It is one thing to read about best practices and quite another to see them in action and then be able to implement them. Having the chance to visit the class of another early language practitioner is something many teachers feel they are missing, especially when they are the only second language teacher working in a particular school or district.

This article is intended to provide readers of Learning Languages with descriptions of several foreign language programs and professional development centers across the U.S.A. that model best practices in the field of early language learning and welcome visitors interested in continuing their own journey of professional development.

Northeast Region

A trip to the Northeast Region of NNELL would reveal the many longstanding FLEX, FLES and Immersion Programs that welcome visitors.

New Jersey

Jean Modig, District Supervisor of World Languages for Fair Lawn, New Jersey Public Schools, offers the following information about her district’s programs, which are content-enriched and provide authentic cultural experiences to students.

A Mandarin Chinese program entitled Qi (well-being) for Children, begins in grade 5 in each of the district’s six elementary schools. The Chinese offering is in addition to the articulated French or Spanish sequence; it does not supplant it. Students study either Chinese and French or Chinese and Spanish. The Chinese program is in its first year. The complete implementation plan involves student engagement in language activities that target proficiency through an articulated sequence beginning at the novice level in fifth grade and ending with AP Chinese.

Following the model that is already in use, the curriculum is content-enriched, forging connections with instruction in other academic areas. The curriculum mapping process uncovered natural connections at each grade level. In addition, an involved parent community provides cultural support and a university partnership offers extensive staff development and training. Instruction is further enhanced through a backpack exchange with sister schools in China. (See the lesson idea in this edition of Learning Languages on page 10)

Students apply for admission to the program by way of a written essay, parental letter of support and a classroom teacher checklist. Students are selected based on interest, potential for success, and parental endorsement. Instruments to measure program effectiveness include the NOELLA (National Online Early Language Learning Assessment) and SODA (Student Oral Proficiency Assessment), as well as an internal pre- and post-test on cultural knowledge. Students also use Linguafolio to provide periodic, reflective entries in their language journal.

Contact Jean Modig borges2@optonline.net to set up a school visit.

Several years ago the state of New Jersey began to designate several programs as World Languages Model Programs that serve as resource centers for teachers and administrators. (www.state.nj.us/education/aps/cccs/wl/resource.htm) World language programs in four districts presently hold the designation:

- West Windsor – Plainsboro Regional Schools for their 2 – 8 programs in Spanish, German, French and Chinese. Contact Rosanne Zeppieri at Rosanne.Zeppieri@ww-p.org
- Princeton Regional Schools for their K – 12 programs in Spanish, French, Italian, Latin, Japanese and Chinese. Contact Priscilla Russel Priscilla_russel@monet.prs.k12.nj.us
New York

Scott Wilkolaski, Middle School teacher from Herricks Public Schools in Albertson, New York, models connections with other content areas in early language learning.

This year, Herricks Middle School in Albertson, New York, has piloted a unique 6th grade program incorporating foreign language and art instruction. This new program allows students and teachers to maintain daily contact in the target language, while fulfilling students’ art requirement. Currently, foreign language teachers teach their classes in the art classroom for one semester.

The Herricks Art Program for 6th grade focuses on multicultural art, which works in tandem with each foreign language class. Herricks offers courses in Chinese, French, Italian and Spanish. How, exactly, does this work? The Italian class art students, for example, have focused on la piazza, or town square, which is central to any Italian village or city. From this idea, students have had an opportunity to focus on art related to il duomo (the cathedral). Their projects have revolved around architecture, including gargoyles, stained glass, one-point perspective drawings of a typical Italian street, masks for Carnevale (carnival), the art of Michelangelo, as well as creating a cartoon based in Italy.

The art classes have enhanced and enriched the students’ language and artistic skills by incorporating art and language in the same lesson, thereby forging a natural connection between these two often-separate disciplines.

To visit the Herricks Public Schools Foreign Language Program, contact District Supervisor Lori Langer de Ramirez at lj17@columbia.edu.

Connecticut

Glastonbury, CT has one of oldest elementary foreign language programs in the United States. In this district all students are included in the foreign language program. This program has been accepting visitors for many years, and has helped shape many a foreign language curriculum committee. For more information regarding Glastonbury, or to schedule a visit to the schools, contact Foreign Language Director Rita Oleksak at the following address: oleksakr@glastonburryus.org

Maryland

Maryland has long been home to some of the oldest language immersion programs in the country. Montgomery County Public and Prince George’s County Schools encourage exclusive use of the target language in the classroom and the negotiation of meaning between teachers and students through the use of visuals and kinesthetic activities. The Montgomery County Public Schools (www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org) has produced a series of videos on early immersion language learning and teaching.

To schedule a visit to Montgomery county, contact Judith Klimpl, Program Supervisor at (301) 279-3911 or judith_i_klimpl@mcps.md.org. To schedule a visit to nearby Prince George’s County, contact District Supervisor Maria Flores at (301) 808-8265.

Massachusetts

In Massachusetts, the Holliston Public Schools have led the way in assisting other districts statewide to develop articulated, long-sequence programs, and regularly accept visitors to their foreign language classrooms. Home to a French Immersion Program, begun in the fall of 1979, this district has succeeded in offering foreign language instruction to all students, Grades 1-12, through participation in either French immersion or the ten-year-old Spanish FLES program. The immersion program consists of total immersion in French in grades K-2, and partial immersion in Grades 3-8, with a follow-up program at the high school. The district-wide Spanish FLES program prides itself on the use of total immersion from the beginning. Students in both programs have inclusive portfolios as evidence of performance on standards-based formative and summative assessments. To schedule a visit, please contact K-12 Foreign Language Specialist Terry Caccavale at caccavalet@holliston.k12.ma.us.
Southern Region
The Southern Region of NNELL is home to some of the most progressive foreign language programs in the United States, and many of the nation’s foreign language leaders.

Florida
Pinellas County, Florida, the 23rd largest district in the United States, offers students many opportunities to enroll in classes in American Sign Language (ASL), English for speakers of other languages, and French, German, Greek, Italian, Latin, or Spanish. The Pinellas County Mission Statement affirms that “[a]ll students of Pinellas County will know more than one language and appreciate other cultures.” They have posted K-5 FLES essential learnings, offer summer immersion programs, and facilitate an International Day in the district. Their content-related programs and dual/partial immersion programs integrally link instruction to assessment. Pinellas County Schools have shared their rubrics with districts around the country. District Supervisor Jan Kucerik can be reached through the school website at www.pcsb.org/Cla/Languages.

North Carolina
Winston-Salem, North Carolina is the home of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, winner of the ACTFL 2007 Melba D. Woodruff Award for Exemplary Elementary Foreign Language Programs.

This district includes long, articulated sequences of foreign language instruction beginning in Grade 3 with the opportunity to continue in the same language to Grade 12 in French, Spanish, Latin, German, Japanese and Mandarin Chinese. The district also boasts an English/Spanish dual language immersion program. Second Language Teachers post their lesson plans on the school website to inform parents and other teachers of what is happening in foreign language classrooms. To schedule a visit to this district, contact Foreign Language Program Specialist Leslie Baldwin at Lwbaldwin@wsfc.k12.nc.us

Virginia
Elementary students in the Fairfax County Public Schools, VA have the opportunity to study one of the following languages: Chinese, French, Spanish, Latin, Arabic, German, Italian, or Japanese. Fairfax County’s foreign language philosophy and goals statement highlights the development of performance skill in the target language:

The essence of human interaction is language and communication. The world that our students will encounter as adults will be vastly different from the one we know today. The rapid development of telecommunications will make the ability to communicate in more than one language a necessity for all future employees. Therefore, it is important to prepare our students for this multilingual environment by ensuring that they are able to function using the foreign language. During the learning process, they will derive the benefits of developing insight into their own language and culture as they learn to communicate with others. With the focus on performance in the language, students in Fairfax County Public Schools will exit our school system equipped with the skills, knowledge, and proficiency necessary to use the language in job, career, and higher education opportunities.

The primary goals of the foreign language program in Fairfax County Public Schools are to ensure that students:

- Communicate in languages other than English
- Gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures
- Connect with other disciplines and acquire information
- Develop insight into the nature of language and culture
- Participate in multicultural communities at home and around the world

These goals include a comprehensive focus for instruction that takes language learners beyond the traditional confines of the classroom. In the foreign language curriculum, students will not only learn to communicate with native speakers of the language, but they will do so with the cultural knowledge necessary to interact in an appropriate way.

For more information on the Fairfax County Public Schools, please check the district website at www.fcps.edu or contact District Supervisor Paula Patrick at paula.patrick@fcps.edu.
Central East Region
The Central East Region has become the standard bearer for authentic assessment in FLES and immersion programs with the implementation of Kentucky's Linguafolio Project.

Kentucky
The Kentucky Linguafolio Project consists of three parts: the Language Biography, the Passport, and the Dossier. Based in part upon the European Language Portfolio, the Linguafolio Kentucky encourages the development of metacognition (thinking about their own learning) on the part of students, and encourages the alignment of instruction with real-life scenarios for authentic assessment. To obtain more information about schools in Kentucky that use the Linguafolio Project, please contact Kentucky State Supervisor Jacqueline Van Houten at Jacqueline.VanHouten@education.ky.gov.

Central-West Region
The Central-West Region of NNELL has long been known for excellence and dedication in early language learning, and is the home of the National Foreign Language Resource Center at Iowa State, one of the nation’s finest venues for professional development.

Minnesota
St. Paul, MN is home to the St. Paul Academy and Summit School, winner of the ACTFL 2006 Melba D. Woodruff Award for Exemplary Elementary Foreign Language Programs. Lower School teacher Spanish teacher Kathy Olson-Studler offers the following synopsis of best practices used there:

- St. Paul Academy integrates cultural perspectives, practices and products throughout the curriculum. Our instruction is content-based, and culturally authentic. We use a variety of thematic units with storytelling at the core. Many of our students participate in an interactive exchange with elementary students from Guadalajara, Mexico. At the end of the K-5 sequence, we assess our students using the ACTFL K-12 Performance Guidelines for Foreign Language Learners (1999). Most of our students perform at the novice-mid to novice-high level. We differentiate instruction in a program containing bilingual students, heritage speakers, novice learners, and immersion students. Often, teachers meet with students on their own time to provide this differentiated instruction. There is ongoing support for new students in our foreign language programs. We collaborate with other core curriculum areas through student participation in the “Hats Off to Arts!” celebration twice a year. We collaborate with other stakeholders in Minnesota by participating in class excursions and three-day weekends at Concordia Language Village. We foster our students’ presentational skills through shared learning experiences at all-school assemblies. We offer mini-courses in Spanish for five weeks at a time, in addition to the regular classroom programs. We have an Artist-in-Residence program where an artist from one of the target cultures comes to our school for a week to work with students. We celebrate our foreign language achievements at our yearly rhyme festival which includes dancing, books, and posters.

Pacific Northwest
The Pacific Northwest is the home to some of the nation’s most creative second language programs and researchers.

Wyoming
A unique program in Wyoming has engendered much discussion about creative ways to incorporate foreign language instruction into the school day. Ann Tolleson, then Foreign Language Content Specialist for the Wyoming Department of Education, began the Wylie Learning Program in 2002 to develop statewide standards for school readiness, including foreign languages. Through use of videos like the SALSA Program and Spanish-speaking instructional aides, Wyoming has begun to offer foreign language instruction for all children, K-12, using Spanish-speaking paraprofessionals to deliver classroom instruction. Recent research on the value of foreign language words in promoting the development of phonological awareness in one’s native language supports the introduction of the sounds of another language at the earliest possible age. For help in scheduling a visit to one of the schools using the Wylie Learning Program, please contact NNELL Pacific Northwest Regional Representative Cassandra Celaya at CelayaCas@aol.com.
Southwest Region

California

Culver City, CA boasts a Spanish Immersion Program in existence for over 30 years, and a Japanese Immersion Program which is nearly 10 years old. The programs publish a monthly newsletter for the greater community and collaborate with stakeholders to form partnerships that enhance the second language learning experience of the children. A recently installed sculpture of a boy and a girl holding a globe reads, “Language Opens the World to Us.”

The collaboration between Culver City administrators and parents in the early 1970’s resulted in the formation of a group called Advocates for Language Learning (ALL). To schedule a visit to the El Marino Language School and their immersion programs in Japanese and Spanish, contact El Marino Language School, 11450 Port Rd., Culver City, CA 90230, (310) 842-4241.

Oklahoma

Tulsa is the home of the Eisenhower International School, winner of the 2007 ACTFL Melba D. Woodruff Award for Exemplary Elementary Foreign Language Programs. Eisenhower houses two full immersion programs, one in French and one in Spanish. This is a magnet school in which all students participate in one of these immersion programs. In this unique school, there is no core English curriculum, so teachers look to the state standards for all curricula. School Principal, Stacy Strow, says that teachers at Eisenhower International are continually striving to keep up with proven techniques and brain-based strategies for teaching all content areas. Since students in an immersion program do not have the same degree of language ability in the target language as they do in their native language, it is essential to make accommodations by simplifying and using content-rich, language input. Eisenhower teachers use multi-modal strategies incorporating visual, auditory and kinesthetic channels of input to simplify content for all types of learners. Students at the Eisenhower International School use technology both in and out of the classroom. A recent fundraiser sponsored by the school’s PTA raised $60,000 to purchase smartboards and projectors for every homeroom in the school. To schedule a visit to this school, please contact Principal Strow at stroust@tulsaschools.org.

Eisenhower International School, 2819 S. New Haven, Tulsa, OK 74114-5937. Telephone (918) 746-9100.

Conclusion

Each region of our country offers opportunities to visit elementary foreign language programs founded upon best practices in early language education. These programs include long sequences of articulated instruction for all learners that is content-related, culturally authentic, multi-modal, differentiated, integrally linked to assessment, technology-based, and delivered in the target language. They often involve all of the stakeholders in the second language educational process in order to promote the ability of students to use the target language beyond the walls of the classroom.

Marty Abbott, Director of Education for ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) offers the following:

It is important to provide examples of high quality elementary programs to serve as models for those who are struggling to implement a program in their own district. Given the challenges of developing an articulated sequence for students with a high quality curriculum, it is critically important that those responsible for beginning programs have a road map that will provide for continuous language development for students. Beginning with the end in mind requires involvement of all the stakeholders (elementary, middle, high schools as well as central office staff) at the outset of the program.

Hats off to the programs and organizations mentioned above, and to the many other districts around the country offering second language programs based on best practices in early language learning. Visiting programs such as these can make a marked difference in the professional lives of our NNELL members, and help them to reach their ongoing professional development goals. When we see great language instruction in action, it inspires us to improve our own instructional practice and helps us to better understand how to make the match between languages and children.

NNELL thanks the NFLRC and its director, Dr. Marcia Rosenbusch, for their continued collaboration with NNELL and hosting of our summer institute. (www.nflrc.iastate.edu)
Learning Languages Spring 2009
Heritage Language Learners
Call for Articles

Looking forward to the spring edition, we invite all NNELL members and interested professionals to submit a proposal for an article on teaching Heritage Language Learners in FLES and K-8 immersion settings. Please send your title and headings by January 25th, 2009 to the co-editors of Learning Languages, Paris Granville (paris@languageshaping.com) and Priscilla Russel (Priscilla_Russel@monet.prs.k12.nj.us). If the topic is appropriate and the headings clear and organized, you will be asked to write an article by February 25th. After you have sent your article, it will be edited. At that point, we will send the edited article back to you with any questions or requests for more information. After we have made final edits to your article, Paris will create the graphic design and illustrations for your article. You will have a last chance to make essential changes to your article.

If you have experience teaching heritage language learners, you may wish to consider submitting an article proposal for one of the topics that we would like to include in the spring journal:

- Classes designed specifically for heritage language learners such as Spanish for Spanish-speakers
- Strategies for teaching heritage language learners in a regular world language classes
- Authentic literature or folktales for heritage language learners
- Motivating heritage language learners
- Curriculum design that differentiates for learning
- Performance assessment and designing rubrics using the ACTFL performance guidelines that measure the gamut of student performance
- Teaching students who are learning a 3rd language who speak a different heritage language at home
- Reading Strategies and phonics for heritage language learners
- Dual/Two-way immersion programs
- Saturday schools for heritage language learners
- Any other appropriate topic

For more information, you can download the author guidelines at www.nnell.org/journal.php. This is a great opportunity for you to share your experience or research with the early language learning community. Imagine seeing your article in print like the author.
Compiling a personal professional library should be a priority for each teacher. We canvassed the Executive Board of NNELL to elicit its members “must haves” among foreign language texts. These publications form a solid core of resources that support professional growth. Some of these you may want to read cover to cover while with others you will want to consult the table of contents or the index when you have specific questions or challenges.

Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century

ACTFL

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) researched and created the national standards for all languages. It contains the standards for less commonly taught languages and the traditional languages. ISBN: 978-0970579812, available at actfl.org
K-12 Performance Guidelines

ACTFL

This short document created by ACTFL describes the performances that we can expect to see in our students. For example, novice learners “rely primarily on memorized phrases and short sentences during highly predictable interactions on very familiar subjects.” Intermediate learners “make false starts and pause frequently to search for words when interacting with others.” This helps teachers design rubrics that reflect appropriate performances for their students. The guidelines help us shift to thinking about student performance in the three modes: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentation. It also contains suggestions for communication strategies that we can directly teach at all levels. The descriptors for three levels of students (novice, intermediate, and pre-advanced) that we see in the public schools, are clear and measurable. Available at actfl.org.

Languages and Children: Making the Match, 3rd edition

Helena Curtain and Carol Ann Dahlberg

When the first edition of Languages and Children: Making the Match appeared in 1988, it soon became the “bible” for elementary foreign language teachers. Each edition integrates current research into the description of best practices. The authors include theoretical underpinnings and practical suggestions for activities and curriculum planning. The descriptors of ACTFL Performance Guidelines are included as a bonus. Each section addresses the potential and the challenge of teaching languages to children. ISBN: 0-205-36675-9 published by Allyn and Bacon in 2004 and available at Pearsonhighered.com.
Teacher to Teacher: Model Lessons for K-8 Foreign Language

Mary Lynn Redmond and Eileen Lorenz, eds.

Teacher to Teacher contains a series of model lessons that target a variety of levels and languages that demonstrate the components of effective lesson planning. Created and developed by teachers for teachers, the model lessons show how to use the National Standards as guiding principles for language, content and culture in the elementary and middle grades. ISBN 0-8442-2850-8, published by NTC.

Teacher's Handbook: Contextualized Language Instruction, 3rd Edition

Judith L. Shrum, Eileen W. Glisan

The reference gives full research-based descriptions of early elementary, middle school and high school second language learners and how they compare and contrast to one another. The book also contains full descriptions of many methods used to teach second languages, from both historical perspective and current practice. An interactive site to accompany the book provides teaching and learning resources. ISBN: 9781413004625, available at Heinle.com

Professional Development Series

Handbook for Teachers K-16, Teaching Spanish with the 5 C's: A Blueprint for Success.

Gail Guntermann, ed.

The American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese specifically this book for Spanish teachers, but it offers much for teachers of any language. The chapters written by various leaders in the field such as Greg Duncan, Mimi Met and Paul Sandrock provide clear explanations for working with the Standards to design curriculum, instruction, and assessment. ISBN 0030775086, available at Heinle.com.
Critical Issues in Early Second Language Learning

Myriam Met, ed.

Published in 1998, this book marked the tenth anniversary of NNELL. Short articles written by leaders in the field address important topics in K-8 foreign language education such as: content based instruction, the use of technology, and the importance of articulation. Each chapter also offers references for further reading. It's a fine introduction to the world of early language education. ISBN: 0673589196, available at amazon.com.

State Standards, Frameworks and Benchmarks

You should be able to obtain these either from your district curriculum office or from your state department of education.

Learning Languages

Each volume of the journal centers on a major theme in second language teaching. As you read each issue you might write down titles of particular interest to you on the cover for easy retrieval at a later date. The articles and their authors can serve as a resource when you have questions about the topics that they explore. Former issues have dealt with culture (spring 2006), best practices (spring 2008) and assessment (fall 2006) among many topics.

Of course, this list is just a beginning and you will find or perhaps already have found more volumes to add to your professional library. The Board wishes you “Good reading!”
Tell your Friends and Colleagues about NNELL

NNELL Membership Includes...

- 2 issues of Learning Languages, published in the fall and spring. Each issue focuses on a particular theme.
- Access to a network of hundreds of early language educators, parents, and decision-makers.
- An invitation to attend NNELL's annual summer institute and regional professional development workshops.
- Access to the members-only section of the website which provides print and electronic resources, announcements, updates, and advocacy tips.
- 3 issues of E-NELL Notes, the electronic newsletter that keeps our members up to date on current news and announcements in our field.
- 3 issues of the NNELL National Networking Newsletter.

NNELL's Core Beliefs

NNELL believes that all elementary school students should have access to high-quality, ongoing, and articulated world language instruction. This belief is based on research that indicates:

- The period of early childhood is an optimal time to begin the study of a second language, as the methods and materials used in early childhood classes are multi-modal and may facilitate second language acquisition and learning (Bialystok, & Hakuta, 1994).
- Children in effective early second language programs show overall gains on standardized tests of basic skills and derive additional cognitive, social, and affective benefits. (Taylor-Ward, 2003)
- The integration of content and language learning and the development of positive attitudes towards people who speak other languages occur more easily when long, articulated sequences of second language instruction begin in early childhood and become an integral part of school learning. (Shrum & Glisan, 2005)
- Early second language learning may result in improved phonological and phonemic awareness, two building blocks of literacy in one's native language (Bialystok, 2001)

NNELL's Mission

The mission of the National Network for Early Language Learning is to provide leadership in support of successful early language learning and teaching. Founded in 1987, NNELL continues to be an invaluable resource for educators, parents and policymakers who advocate for K-8 programs of excellence in second language education.

Download our updated brochure at NNELL.org
Learning Languages

Submission Guidelines

Learning Languages, the journal of the National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL), 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 World languages. Learning Languages embodies 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.

In an effort to address the interests of the profession, Learning Languages publishes both scholarly articles and invited features. Both types of submission must demonstrate the author(s)'s awareness of language learning theories and early-language learning classroom practices.

Scholarly Articles (2,000-5,000 words)

Scholarly articles are evaluated by at least three members of the board of reviewers through a process of blind review. Reviewers evaluate these articles on the basis of content, originality, information accuracy, clarity, and contribution to the field. These articles are clearly identified as Refereed Article in the journal.

Scholarly articles report on original inquiry and cite current and relevant research and theory as a basis for making recommendations for practice. Scholarly articles in the areas listed below will be given equal consideration:

- Advocacy and Leadership (e.g. analysis of national trends or policies, effective leadership and advocacy models, etc.)
- Practical (e.g. exemplary implementation of an early language learning program model, innovative approaches to teaching, etc.)
- Research (e.g. quantitative or qualitative studies that have direct implications to early language learning, etc.)
- Theoretical (e.g. guidelines for practical application anchored in the literature, etc.)

Features (1,000-3,000 words)

Features are evaluated by at least two readers, one of which is a member of the NNELL Executive Board, and the editor. Features address subjects of appeal to early language teachers, administrators, researchers, and others interested in the early learning of World languages. They may include teacher-to-teacher advice on issues affecting the profession, descriptions of successful advocacy initiatives, or selected invited contributions on topics of interest to the profession.

Activities (800 – 1,500 words)

Descriptions of successful language learning activities are expected to provide the following: a) language learning goals; b) applicable standards; c) materials; d) a description of the procedures, and e) assessment plan. Please keep in mind the diversity of languages represented in our readership in your examples and illustrations.

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