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# President's Message

## May 1, 2016

### **By the time you read this letter, I will no longer be your President;**

the baton will have been passed to MATSOL's next President, Vula Roumis. As I finish my term as MATSOL's President, my message for you remains the same as always: Our work may sometimes seem unimportant or unappreciated, but what we do matters, even when that does not appear to be the case. MATSOL continues to take very seriously its mission to provide support and professional development for you, who do so much to support the English language learners of our state.



The MATSOL Board will meet in June for its annual day-long retreat to plan and prepare for another productive year, including our 2017 conference and the celebration of MATSOL's 45 years of existence. Then we will allow ourselves a short summer break, an opportunity to rest and reconnect with family and friends, and to take care of ourselves—something we all need to do. I hope you, too, will do something special this summer. Find a way to nurture yourself and celebrate your successes!

One way I recharge myself is by going to events like the storytelling festival I attended recently at UMass Amherst. At the festival, we heard stories about places near and far, about times long ago and into the present and future. One participant, Jay O'Callahan, told a story about Emily Dickinson, interweaving the details of her life and her poems. As I listened, it occurred to me that I, too, use storytelling in my classroom instruction—stories about how I solved a math problem, about plot and character development in a novel, or about the history of a scientific discovery.

When I teach my students through storytelling, they soon begin to tell me stories of their own—where they have come from; details about their family, their heritage, and their culture; the struggles they have faced and overcome as they adjust to a new community and culture. You never can anticipate what a student will share. Asked about her plans for the future, one young Chinese woman surprised me by answering, "In ten year's time I want be a car model!"

A girl from South Korea told me a story about how hard it had been to help her grandfather without violating the respect she is expected to show to elders in her culture. After trying unsuccessfully to use the in-room coffeemaker at the hotel where they were staying, her grandfather had taken her along to a nearby convenience store, to serve as translator. She dutifully read the package names

and let him make his choice. But instead of heeding his granddaughter's respectful warning, he bought "Coffee Milk," thinking it would be coffee with milk. Unfortunately, it was not coffee at all, but rather milk for coffee!


This issue of *Currents* is packed with stories from all parts of our active and dedicated MATSOL community. Following a section of MATSOL news (the Conference, MATSOL Award winners, and elections to the MATSOL Board), you will find a report on the Language Opportunity (LOOK) Bill, which has now been issued out of committee, and updates on the MATSOL English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC), MA Adult Basic Education, MATSOL's Special Interest Groups (SIGs), and a recent mini-conference on ESOL in independent schools. Then Ilka Kostka & Erik Voss describe their presentation that represented MATSOL in the "Best of TESOL Affiliates" session at the TESOL Conference in April.

***I look forward to exchanging stories with you when I see you next!***

Next comes a section of News from Massachusetts Schools: a campaign for bilingualism in Watertown; a program for newcomers at Lawrence High School; a campaign to promote academic conversation in Framingham; and three after-school study and conversation programs in Lawrence, Holyoke, and Medford.

Our Articles section features articles by Alicia Lopez & Johanna Edelson about the experiences and wishes of ELLs as they adjust to life in this country; by Christi Cartwright Lacerda & Nicoleta Filimon, who describe their success using a technique called "Writing with Colors" with SLIFE students; by Robin Lovrien, who presents some ingenious ideas for using homemade games to teach adults; by Sarah Ottow, who writes about learner-centered formative assessment; by Laura Vawter, who tells about a small experimental study she performed with her students to test the efficacy of corrective feedback; and by Barbara Rappaport, who describes the sheltered English strategies she uses to teach the language of mathematics.

Finally, we have two reviews—one of Amy Chua's new book, *Day of Empire*, and one about the *Words Their Way* series from Pearson Education.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Currents* as you make plans for a productive summer. Keep an eye out for an e-mail in early fall from Vula Roumis, MATSOL's new President. She will be in touch with an invitation to attend our annual Fall Social in November. As for me, I will be continuing on, as Past President, and I look forward to exchanging stories with you when I see you next! 

Respectfully yours,

**KATHY LOBO**

**MATSOL President (at the time of writing this letter)**

klobo@matsol.org

# MATSOL's 2016 Conference

May 4-6

**MATSOL held its 2016 Conference on May 4-6** at the Sheraton Hotel & Conference Center, in Framingham, MA. Activities began on Wednesday, with three pre-Conference Institutes:

- **Dr. Susan O'Hara and Dr. Bob Pritchard**, "Common Core Standards in Diverse Classrooms"
- **Dr. Debbie Zacharian**, "Harness the Power of Partnerships"
- **Dr. Andrea DeCapua and Dr. Helaine Marshall**, "SLIFE Institute II: Developing Academic Language Proficiency and Scaffolding Academic Content"

On Thursday and Friday, Conference attendees were offered their choice of 100 different presentations, including eleven invited speakers. More than 850 participants attended the Conference over the three days, with 600 people each day on Thursday and Friday. Twenty-six exhibitors displayed their wares and generously contributed raffle prizes for our daily raffle. Mini-networking sessions each day after lunch provided opportunities for attendees to meet and share thoughts with others who have similar interests.

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

### DR. SONIA NIETO, "EQUITY, EXCELLENCE, AND CARING: HOW ARE ESL TEACHERS MODELS FOR ALL TEACHERS?"

Our keynote speaker on Thursday was Dr. Sonia Nieto, Faculty Emerita, UMass Amherst, who has devoted her professional life to questions of diversity, equity, and social justice in education. In her address, Dr. Nieto showed how ESL teachers model qualities from which all teachers can learn: a stubborn belief in their students regardless of race, ethnicity, social class, or English language



Thursday's keynote speaker, Dr. Sonia Nieto, argues that ESL teachers can be models for all teachers.

ability; high demands so that students can reach their highest potential; and a deep caring for the lives and futures of their students. Copies of Dr. Nieto's book *Brooklyn Dreams: My Life in Public Education* were on sale after her talk.

### **ANNE SIBLEY O'BRIEN, "OF LONGING AND BELONGING: A BILINGUAL, BICULTURAL JOURNEY"**

Our Friday keynote speaker was Anne Sibley O'Brien, an award-winning author and illustrator of children's books that depict diverse children and cultures. In her address, Anne reflected on the experience of becoming bilingual and bicultural while growing up in South Korea as the daughter of an American missionary doctor. She argued for the importance of books that represent *all* our children, and ended with a hands-on experience for the audience—drawing a Korean dragon. Anne's most recent title, *I'm New Here*, already in its third printing, was on sale after her talk.



Friday's keynote speaker, Anne Sibley O'Brien, enthralled her audience with stories of her childhood growing up in Korea as the child of an American medical missionary.

### **AWARD RECIPIENTS**

The following awards were presented at MATSOL's Social & Awards Ceremony on Thursday, May 5, sponsored by National Geographic Learning/Cengage Learning & Educational Solutions, Inc.:

#### **MATSOL TEACHER OF THE YEAR**

**Evangelgia Diamantopolous**, an ELL coach at Wilson School, Framingham, was named MATSOL's Teacher of the Year. This annual award was established to recognize excellence in the education of English language learners.



### THE ANNE DOW AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE AND CREATIVITY

**Jeffrey Gross**, Director of MIRA's New Americans Integration Institute, received the annual Anne Dow Award for Excellence. This award is given annually to a professional who has made outstanding efforts that reflect enthusiasm and creative, energetic, independent thinking, and who displays the ability to take risks, solve problems, support colleagues, and model ethical behavior. Specific criteria vary from year to year. This year's award was given for outstanding work in addressing the needs of refugee students.



### LINDA SHULMAN INNOVATION GRANTS

The Linda Shulman Innovation Awards program supports projects that promote English language learning and embody the spirit of creativity, sensitivity and community. Grants of \$500 to \$1000 are given to fund pedagogical projects that benefit English language learners by improving their language skills or increasing their understanding of American culture.

**This year's grants were awarded to the following recipients:**

**Jason Drinkwater**, Roberts Elementary School, Medford: "Kindles for Kids"

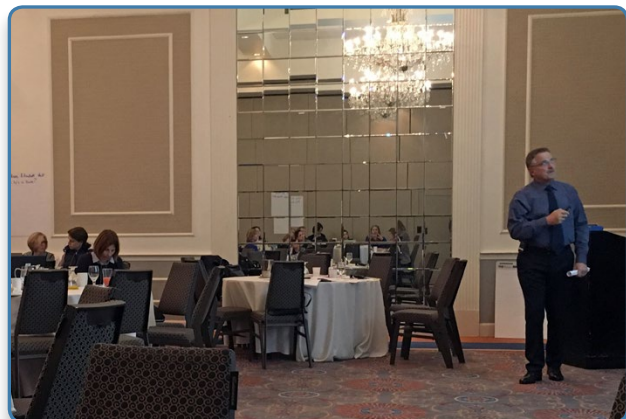
**Kimberly K. Chaput**, Patrick E. Bowe Elementary School, Chicopee: "Grow with Bowe"

**Kevin J. Freely**, Asian American Civic Society, Boston: "Expanding Opportunities for Learning with Tablets"

**Marjorie Nott**, Rebecca Johnson Elementary School, Springfield: "Chick Embryology Project"

**Jennifer Otto**, Seven Hills Charter Public School, Worcester: "Seven Hills Robotics Education Club"

**Cynthia Rosancrans & Laura Wyld**, Lunenburg Public Schools Special Services:



Robert Measel, from DESE's Office of English Language Acquisition & Academic Achievement, delivers the State-of-the-State Address.

“Empowering English Language Learners for Academic Success”

**Mary P. Stormon-Flynn**, Revere High School: “I Helped Craft This Binder”

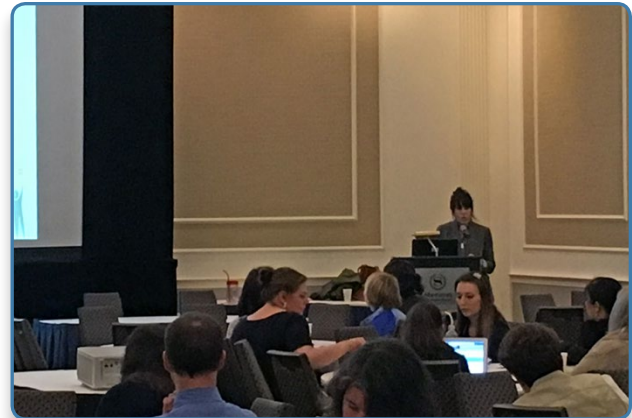
**Svitlana Stepanchenko**, Sheffield Elementary School, Montague: “Kids Post Office”

## JEWELRY FOR ALOTENANGO

Since 2010, MATSOL has been proud to join Jane and Martin Brauer of Educational Solutions in sponsoring the Under the Same Moon jewelry sale, which offers items handmade by a group of Guatemalan artisans, with proceeds going to support the Bendicion de Dios school in Alotenango, Guatemala.




The children of Bendicion de Dios, hold up a big thank-you sign



Invited speaker Fernanda Kray, from DESE’s Office of English Language Acquisition & Academic Achievement (OELAA), describes the ESL Model Curriculum that OELAA is developing in collaboration with an interdisciplinary team of Massachusetts educators.

**Sales at this year’s conference netted over \$7000, of which 100% will be used to support the education of Alotenango’s children.**

Bendicion de Dios is a non-denominational school for very poor children whose families cannot afford uniforms and books, which all Guatemalan families must provide when their children go to “public” school. Under the Same Moon, a 501c3 organization founded and run by Rebecca Center, has pledged to fund grades PreK-3 at Bendicion de Dios.. Every year, MATSOL makes the most significant single contribution to this project. Sales at this year’s conference netted over \$7000, of which 100% will be used to support the education of Alotenango’s children. 

# Elections to the MATSOL Board


**At MATSOL's Annual Meeting on May 5**, we expressed our appreciation to three departing Board members—Luisa Almeida, Kathy Santo, and Al Mogavero—and welcomed two new members—Laura Schall-Leckrone and Robyn Dowling Grant. We also re-elected current Board member Ann Feldman to another three-year term. Here are profiles of our newly elected or re-elected members:

**Robyn Dowling Grant** has been the head of English learner education in the Lexington Public Schools since 2006. She has spent many years helping teachers educate ELLs. She lives in Andover, MA, and has four grown sons. She has spent many years helping teachers educate ELLs, and returns to the board after serving a previous term from 2007-2011.



**Dr. Laura Schall-Leckrone** is an Assistant Professor in the Graduate School of Education at Lesley University in Cambridge, MA, and the Director of their program in TESOL and Bilingual Education. Prior to completing her Ph.D. in Language, Literacy, and Learning at Boston College, Laura worked for sixteen years as a bilingual teacher, Spanish teacher, and K-12 curriculum director in urban and suburban public schools in New York and Massachusetts. Her teaching and research center on the preparation of teachers to teach linguistically diverse youth, and pedagogy that promotes disciplinary and critical literacy.



**Ann Feldman** has had thirteen years' experience as ELL director in Worcester, Milford, and Waltham Public Schools. She is currently working as Instructional Support Specialist and Director of Supplemental Services in the Office of English Language Learners for Boston Public Schools. She also teaches SEI endorsement courses for both teachers and administrators. She has been a very active member of MATSOL's Board, and for the past few years has served as facilitator and organizer of MATSOL's Massachusetts English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC). Previously, until June, 2012, she was the facilitator and organizer of MATSOL's Low Incidence Special Interest Group. She received a special MATSOL leadership award in May, 2012. 





# Join a MATSOL Sub-committee or Task Force

For the latest listing of opportunities, please go to our new “Get Involved” webpage at <http://www.matsol.org/get-involved>.

## Submit to MATSOL Publications

### **MATSOL E-BULLETIN**

The MATSOL E-Bulletin is published monthly. It includes short (one-paragraph) notices relevant to ELL/ESOL education in Massachusetts. Submission deadline: the 25th of each month for publication in the first week of the next month. For more details, see <http://www.matsol.org/matsol-e-bulletins>.

### **MATSOL CURRENTS**

There’s a lot going on in the world of TESOL and ELL education, and we’d like all of it to be reflected in *Currents*! We want reviews of books and materials, reports on meetings and events, and articles on everything of interest to MATSOL members: adult education, PreK-12 education, bilingual and dual-language programs, community outreach, ESL in higher education, educator-preparation programs, professional-development initiatives, Intensive English Institutes, private language schools, teaching ideas, profiles of and interviews with significant figures, and discussion of issues that our members should be aware of. We also love to publish stories from students—about their adjustment to life in New England and their experiences learning English in our English-language programs and elsewhere.

We welcome articles with scholarly content as well as those that share interesting experiences or give practical advice. If you have something to share, don't hesitate to send it to us at [currents@matsol.org](mailto:currents@matsol.org). We will work with you to get your article or report into good shape for publication. For more details and a copy of our submission guidelines, see <http://www.matsol.org/matsol-currents> or write to the editor, Mary Clark, at [MClark@matsol.org](mailto:MClark@matsol.org). 

# MATSOL Advocacy: MA Joint Committee on Education Unanimously Votes Out ELL Bill

**On May 6, 2016**, the Massachusetts Legislature's Joint Committee on Education unanimously voted to report out **S. 262**, *An Act for Language Opportunity for our Kids* (the LOOK Bill). This bill, for which MATSOL has been advocating, would update the existing MGL Chapter 71 statute relative to English language education by giving more flexibility to school districts as they set up programs to meet their students' needs. If passed into law it would replace the current default requirement that schools must use "sheltered English immersion" or English-only programs, though districts could still choose to offer such programs if they wish.

The Joint Committee on Education also reported out An Act to Establish a State Seal of Bilingualism H.422/S.336. The Seal of Bilingualism recognizes graduates who speak, read and write proficiently in another language in addition to English with a seal on their high school diploma. Passage of this bill promises to encourage language study, and will provide evidence to universities and businesses that students have attained these important 21st century skills.

***"S.262 will . . . trust educators to make informed decisions about appropriate tactics for a 6-year-old with some English exposure versus a 12-yr-old coming from a worn-torn country who has received little formal schooling."***

A Seal of Bilingualism pilot project is already underway in Massachusetts. Four school districts—Framingham, Melrose, Arlington and Falmouth—have approved a Seal of Bilingualism award at the district level, and the first awards are being presented to students this spring. More than 20 other schools and school districts are in the process of approving or establishing the award, using guidelines developed by a working group of the Language Opportunity Coalition made up of educators from ELL, one-way immersion, two-way immersion, and world-language programs.

Commenting on the LOOK Bill, **Sonia Chang-Díaz (D – Jamaica Plain)**, the Senate Chair of the committee said, "I'm thrilled to see [the LOOK bill] finally emerge successfully from Committee. The current one-size-fits-all model has proven a failure over the past decade. For the sake of our ELL students, our school budgets, and our workforce, we need to do something different. S.262 will empower parents, hold districts to clear standards for progress, and trust educators to make informed decisions about appropriate tactics for a


6-year-old with some English exposure versus a 12-yr-old coming from a war-torn country who has received little formal schooling. And importantly, the bill recognizes that bilingualism is a strength in the 21st Century economy—not a problem to be cured.”

“I am so pleased that my bill was reported out of the Education Committee favorably with a unanimous vote, as I firmly believe that it will play an important role in closing the achievement gap in Massachusetts,” said **Senator Sal DiDomenico (D – Everett)**, lead sponsor of the bill. “English Language Learners are one of the most at-risk groups, and this legislation will help ensure that they receive a fair chance at educational success by increasing the flexibility of schools to implement new programs and by increasing parental involvement. I will continue to fight hard for its passage in the Senate.”

*“[This bill] recognizes that bilingualism is a strength in the 21st Century economy—not a problem to be cured.”*

“We are very pleased that the Education Committee has advanced legislation (the LOOK bill) that will give school districts the flexibility they need to establish programs that address the educational needs of all their English Language Learners,” said **Helen Solorzano**, Executive Director for Massachusetts Educators of English Language Learners. “This bill makes long overdue reforms to the current way we teach English. We stand ready to work with policy makers to make sure that this bill becomes law this session.”

The two bills have been referred to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means for consideration.

For more information on the two bills and the Seal of Biliteracy pilot project, see [www.LanguageOpportunity.org](http://www.LanguageOpportunity.org). 

# A Report from the MATSOL English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC)

**Ann Feldman**

AFeldman@matsol.org

**The MATSOL English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC)** is a leadership group open to MATSOL members who serve as PreK-12 English Learner Education Program Directors or Coordinators in Massachusetts public schools. MELLC was formed in 2007 in response to a request from our ELL coordinators and directors for assistance and support with programming for their culturally and linguistically diverse students. Membership has now grown to over 100 professionals in the field. MELLC promotes best practices in the classroom and supports ELLs and their families by validating our students' cultures and languages and advocating for an equitable and meaningful education for all students.

MELLC meets four times a year, in Leominster, for full-day professional development and networking sessions.

## **HERE IS A REPORT ON THE MELLC MEETING OF MARCH 4, 2016:**

The meeting began with four very informative presentations: First, David Valade from DESE's Office of English Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement (OELAAA) and Jennifer Lancaster, chairperson of MATSOL's SLIFE Special Interest Group, walked us through the new DESE Guidance Document (MA DESE, 2016) pertaining to Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE).

Melanie Manares, from OELAA's Title III Office, informed us about the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and its implications for Massachusetts school districts. Melanie recommended an article called "Transitioning to the ESSA: Frequently Asked Questions" (U.S. Department of Education, 2016)


Dr. Gigi Luk, from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, described her research on bilingualism in young children. "To embrace bilingualism, rather than simply recognizing this phenomenon, we need to consider both the challenges and strengths of children with diverse language backgrounds," she told us. "We cannot do this by looking only at English proficiency. Other information, such as home language background, will enrich our understanding of bilingual development and learning." Dr. Luk's lecture, entitled "Knowledge and Application: The Curious Case of Bilingualism," is available on You Tube (Luk,

2016).

In a return visit to MELLC, a team from the Watertown schools—Lauren Harrison, an ESL teacher, and MaryAnn MacDougall, a speech and language pathologist—described the ways they have been collaborating to prevent the over-identification of preschoolers for special education services in their district. They shared two very useful resources—a website entitled “Watertown’s ELE Resources” (Watertown ESL Department, 2015) and an article by Mary Ann MacDougall, entitled “Partnering with ESL Teachers to Better Serve Multilingual Children (MacDougall, 2015).

**Our next MELLC meeting, on May 27, will be devoted to the topic of ELL/SPED students.**

We also heard a report from Jody Klein and Allison Levitt, from the Newton Public Schools, who reported on the survey they had sent out to MELLC leaders requesting feedback about the new ACCESS 2.0 for English Learners. Results from the survey indicated that schools had experienced challenges related to technology, scheduling, accommodations for English learners with special needs, and the extended time needed to administer the assessment of the speaking domain. Positives that were mentioned included the easier grading of the on-line administered assessments and helpful support from the Massachusetts Department of Education.

Our next MELLC meeting, on May 27, will be devoted to the topic of ELL/SPED students. Claudia Rinaldi will address the issue of culturally responsive IEPs and fostering parent engagement when we identify students for special education services. Maria Campanario will share information about scaffolding language and learning for ELLs with disabilities. We have invited OELAAA’s new Special Education/ELL liaison, Sara Niño, to inform us about what is happening at the state and federal level regarding students in this demographic. 

## REFERENCES

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- Watertown ESL Department (2015)** Watertown ELE (ESL) resources. Retrieved from <https://sites.google.com/a/watertown.k12.ma.us/ells-in-watertown>

# An Update on Adult Basic Education in Massachusetts

**Stephen Reuys**

reuys@verizon.net

**The Adult Basic Education (ABE) system of Massachusetts**, under the direction of the state's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)/Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS), provides classes in ESOL, basic literacy, high school equivalency preparation, math, college and career readiness, and other areas for adult learners throughout the state. Recent news items include the following:

- Although the FY2016 budget that was passed last summer increased the state's ABE funding (line item 7035-0002) by \$850,000 to \$31,249,000, much of this increase was lost as ABE funding was cut by \$500,000 in the round of "9C" cuts made by the Governor in January of this year.
- Here is where things stand, as of June 13, in the negotiations for our FY2017 budget: The Governor's budget, in January, proposed a figure of \$30,036,00. The House and Senate then proposed \$29,300,000 and \$31,000,000, respectively. The budget is now in the hands of a conference committee consisting of three members from each chamber, who will reconcile the two budgets and return the result to both Houses for their approval. The resulting joint budget will then move on to the Governor for his signature.

**As of mid-April, 2016, we had 13,634 people on waiting lists for ESOL classes and 2,378 on waiting lists for ABE and high school preparation classes.**

The process should be completed by late June or early July. The Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education (MCAE) is coordinating statewide efforts by students, staff and others to advocate for increased funding and a recognition of the importance of ABE services as part of the Commonwealth's systems of education and workforce development.

- Waiting lists for ABE services in Massachusetts remain very

long, especially for ESOL. As of mid-April, 2016, we had 13,634 people on waiting lists for ESOL classes and 2,378 on waiting lists for ABE and high school preparation classes.

- The new federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) has been passed and regulations are expected to come out soon. DESE will issue new open-and-competitive Requests for Proposals for program funding in the fall of 2016.
- Two years ago, Massachusetts adopted the HiSET test as the high school equivalency test offered in the state. DESE expects to put the contract for high school equivalency tests out to bid again later this year. [C](#)

# What's Happening in MATSOL's Special Interest Groups (SIGs)?

## **MATSOL'S SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS) ARE MEMBER-LED GROUPS FORMED AROUND AREAS OF COMMON INTEREST:**

- The Community College ESL Faculty Network
- English Language Educators of the Cape & Islands
- Low Incidence Programs
- Private Language Schools
- Students with Limited/Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)
- Teacher Educators

SIG membership is open to all current MATSOL members, at no charge. In addition to face-to-face and online meetings, most SIGs have e-lists to facilitate communication between members. For instructions about how to join a SIG or a SIG e-list, please go to our website <http://www.matsol.org/member-groups>. Here's what's happening in MATSOL's SIGs:

### **THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE ESL FACULTY NETWORK**

This year's MATSOL Conference included both a community college strand and a higher education strand. We also hosted two Higher Education mini-sessions and a Community College roundtable discussion, where we presented the results of our survey of community college programs and services. We are planning a fall Community College Workshop for Friday, October 21, at Quinsigamond Community College, Worcester, with a focus on intake, assessment, and placement. The title of the workshop is "ESL: Special Issues in Higher Education."

Following is a list of Community College Steering

***We are planning a Fall Community College Workshop for Friday, October 21, at Quinsigamond Community College in Worcester.***



Committee members with the regions they represent and a list of the colleges for which they serve as a contact.

Member	Region	Designated colleges
Darlene Furdock, Middlesex Community College	Northeast	Middlesex Northern Essex North Shore
Eileen Kelley, Holyoke Community College	West	Holyoke Greenfield Berkshire Springfield Tech
Bruce Riley, Cape Cod Community College	Southeast	Cape Cod Bristol
Madhu Sharma, Mt. Wachusett Community College	Central	Mt. Wachusett Quinsigamond Mass Bay
Juanita Brunelle, MATSOL Board		Massasoit Roxbury Bunker Hill

For information about the Community College SIG, please write Juanita Brunelle at [JBrunelle@matsol.org](mailto:JBrunelle@matsol.org).

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATORS OF THE CAPE AND ISLANDS (ELE-CI)

The ELE-CI network continues to explore our essential question for this year: *How will you make ELD curriculum meaningful for you and your students?* Here's a summary of recent meetings:

**December, 2015.** In the morning we reviewed the formulation of Essential Questions and their use in curriculum writing. We then formed into groups to discuss our district's challenges and successes in developing Understanding By Design (UbD) units.

**April, 2016.** Fernanda Kray, ELL Professional Development and Curriculum Coordinator from DESE's Office of English Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement (OELAAA) presented a workshop on the Next-Generation ESL Model Curriculum Unit Project, including the draft

Collaboration Tool: *Linking WIDA, Common Core State Standards, & Goals for ESL Instruction.*

For information about the ELE-CI, please write Patricia Leon-Finan, at [leonfinp@dy-regional.k12.ma.us](mailto:leonfinp@dy-regional.k12.ma.us).

## LOW-INCIDENCE PROGRAMS

The Low-Incidence SIG is a support group for MATSOL members who are working with ELLs working in low-incidence school districts.

Activities include the following:

- sharing resources such as forms, parent manuals, translation resources, and curriculum resources
- exploring topics such as second language acquisition vs. language disability, language assessment testing, getting support from administrators, and CPR compliance issues
- getting updates on DESE initiatives and policy changes. Meetings are held on Mondays from 9:00 - 11:00am in Shrewsbury

For information about the Low-Incidence SIG, please write Rhoda Webb at [RWebb@matsol.org](mailto:RWebb@matsol.org).

## PRIVATE LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

The Private Language Schools SIG provides a forum where teachers and administrators of private language schools can discuss issues relevant to our industry and work on professional development for ourselves and our teams.

We held our inaugural meeting in Boston on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, beginning with a short Powerpoint presentation about MATSOL. Then we discussed our SIG and what we would like it to be, with a special guest appearance by Helen Solórzano, MATSOL's Executive Director. We ended with a poster activity in which attendees answered questions about their professional development needs and wants. It was a good mix of teachers and administrators from a variety of schools. We are very excited to have this group up and running!

***We are planning a PLS/IEP Fall Conference in downtown Boston for the weekend of November 12<sup>th</sup>.***

Our next meeting will be September 14<sup>th</sup>. (We know it's impossible to get PLS

people together in the summer.) We are also planning a Fall Conference in downtown Boston for the weekend of November 12<sup>th</sup>. More details to come!

If you have ideas about activities and events that you would like to have, or topics and issues that you would like to discuss, please write Joy MacFarland at [joymacfarland@gmail.com](mailto:joymacfarland@gmail.com).

## **SLIFE**

During the past few months, the SLIFE SIG has sponsored presentations of DESE's SLIFE Guidance Document (MA DESE, 2015) at MELLC and at MATSOL's Low Incidence SIG. We also offered SLIFE networking opportunities at the MATSOL conference in May. We will be holding regular SIG meetings during the 2016-2017 school year, starting in October.

For information about the SLIFE SIG, please contact Jennifer Lancaster at [JLancaster@matsol.org](mailto:JLancaster@matsol.org).


## **REFERENCE**

MA DESE (2015, December 10) Massachusetts students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE): Definition and Guidance. Retrieved from Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) Content Search: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/SLIFE-Guidance.pdf>

## **TEACHER EDUCATORS**

The Teacher Educator SIG continues to collaborate actively with the Massachusetts Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (MACTE). MACTE members have expressed an interest in MATSOL professional development for faculty.

Members of the Teacher Educator SIG held an informal informational session at MATSOL's annual conference in May. Also at the MATSOL Conference, Paul Abraham, Michaela Colombo, Christine Leider, Janet Chumley, and Nicholas Santavicca presented a forum on current issues in ESL/SEI.

For information about the Teacher Educator SIG, write Michaela Colombo at [Michaela\\_WymanColombo@uml.edu](mailto:Michaela_WymanColombo@uml.edu). 

# A Mini-Conference on ESOL in Independent Schools

**In December 2015**, thirty ESOL teachers from independent boarding and day schools around the country got together for a one-day mini-conference at Applewild School in Fitchburg, MA, that coincided with The Association of Boarding Schools' annual conference in Boston. Our featured speaker

was Peggy Lee, Director of Summer Programs at Cushing Academy, who spoke about her work developing Cushing's ESL Program in its early years. In breakout sessions, we discussed topics such as textbooks and curricula,

program design, student placement, support for students after mainstreaming, collaboration with teachers in other disciplines, and advocating to school administrators for ESOL programs. The mini-conference was organized through a Google group of independent-school ESOL teachers. If you are interested in joining this group, you can find it by going to [groups.google.com](https://groups.google.com) and searching for "Boarding School ESL."

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We are hoping to repeat, and perhaps expand, this mini-conference at other locations across the country, allowing more teachers at independent boarding and day schools the opportunity to talk about issues that are particular to our context. If you'd like more information about our efforts to develop a professional network of ESOL teachers in independent schools, please contact Allison Rainville at [arainville527@gmail.com](mailto:arainville527@gmail.com). 

# MATSOL Presentation Chosen for Best of Affiliates Session at TESOL 2016

*A paper entitled “Flipping the Classroom to Teach English for Academic Purposes,” by Dr. Ilka Kostka & Dr. Erik Voss, was one of eight papers chosen for presentation in the Best of Affiliates session at this year's TESOL Convention in Baltimore. Each year, TESOL International Association selects presentations from its affiliate organizations around the world, in order to raise the profile of the chosen affiliates and spotlight the professional development that their members provide.*

## **DR. KOSTKA AND DR. VOSS FIRST PRESENTED THEIR PAPER LAST YEAR AT THE 2015 MATSOL CONFERENCE IN FRAMINGHAM. THEY WRITE:**

Our presentation was divided into three parts, starting with a basic definition of “flipped learning,” which is that homework is done in class and classwork is done at home. However, as we explained, this approach involves much more than just flipping instruction and homework. For instance, flipping classes lets us flip Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom et al, 1956), as students work on more difficult skills in class with the help of their peers and less difficult tasks outside of class (Brinks Lockwood, 2014). Flipping also allows increased interaction and engagement in class (Bergmann & Sams, 2012; Willis, 2013) and more opportunities for meaningful language production (Brinks Lockwood, 2014; Marshall, 2013). And it lets students become autonomous (Han, 2015; Voss & Kostka, 2015) and learn at their own pace (Kostka & Brinks Lockwood, 2015).


The second section of our presentation addressed frequently asked questions about the flipped approach. For example, “ESL classes are not lecture classes, so what is there to flip?” The answer is that flipping can help reduce the amount of teacher-led activity. For instance, instead of reading a handout about paragraph structure out loud in class, students can watch a video about paragraph structure at home and apply what they have learned to evaluate and write a paragraph in class. Another question is whether teachers have to be experts in technology in order to flip their classes. Fortunately, the Internet is a goldmine of ready-made materials, and teachers can find materials on



**Drs. Kostka & Voss represent MATSOL in TESOL's "Best of Affiliates" session**

YouTube, iTunes, and TED talks, in addition to ancillary materials in textbooks and non-tech materials (e.g., readings).

We concluded our presentation by describing six lessons that we have flipped for our own reading/writing and listening/speaking classes, with illustrative screenshots and samples of student work. We also addressed the notion of accountability and what teachers should do if students do not do their homework.

We were surprised and delighted to see over 80 fellow teachers attend our talk. Their curiosity and enthusiasm reinforced our belief that there is growing interest in the flipped approach among English language teachers. Because we have recognized the many advantages that flipping provides, we hope to see more application of this approach. We think it is more than a fleeting trend. 

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Ilka Kostka**, i.kostka@neu.edu, is an assistant teaching professor in Northeastern University's Global Pathways and American Classroom programs, where she teaches reading and writing to English language learners and contributes to curriculum development.

**Erik Voss**, e.voss@neu.edu, is an associate teaching professor in the Global Pathways and American Classroom programs, where he teaches courses in academic listening and professional speaking. His research focuses on second language assessment and learning through technology.

# Promoting Bilingualism through Watertown's BiG (Bilingualism is a Gift) Campaign

**Lauren Harrison**

lauren.harrison@watertown.k12.ma.us

"You should speak English at home."

"Your child has a disability; a second language will only confuse him."

"We stopped speaking our language because we want our child to be ready for school. He was born in America, after all."

**In the linguistically diverse district of Watertown** and across the nation, parents hear messages like these from teachers, grandparents, friends, pediatricians, psychologists, and early interventionists. Especially when a child has a disability, well-meaning individuals often advise families to stop speaking their home language so as not to "add to the child's confusion."

As ESL teachers, we have a responsibility to provide the research-based information that families need to make wise decisions. Families need to hear about the plethora of current research showing the cognitive, social-emotional, and economic benefits of bilingualism (Zelasko & Antunez, 2000; Kessler & Quinn, 1980; Jessner, 2008; Kovacs & Mehler, 2009; Diaz, 1985; Keysar, Hayakawa & An, 2011; Paez & Rinaldi, 2006; Fradd, 2000). Bilingualism has been shown to be beneficial even for children with disabilities, including autism (Reetzke, Zou, Sheng, & Katsos, 2015; Paradis, 2016; Lowry, 2011)

As we in the Watertown public schools began to learn more about the benefits of bilingualism, a team of us, including our Early Childhood Director, our ESL Coordinator, our preschool evaluation team chair and an ESL teacher, felt an obligation to share this information with our community. Equipped with information, zeal, a spirit of collaboration, and a Watertown designer who donated her professional skills, we set off on a nine-month journey to create a resource to publicize the fact that Bilingualism is a Gift—the "BiG" campaign.

With assistance from ESL teachers, speech and language pathologists, and special educators, we put together a flyer in multiple translated versions, along with a cover letter signed and supported by our Superintendent, Early Childhood Director, and ESL Coordinator. We distributed our flyers throughout the district—first to Watertown Public School staff and then to other community stakeholders, including pediatricians, childcare providers, early interventionists, and religious leaders. School staff received a further message in new-teacher orientation and

in professional development sessions. Families heard brief presentations at open houses. We held individual conversations with dual-language families whose pre-school children were being evaluated for learning disabilities.

Our campaign has received wide support from Watertown staff, administrators and School Committee members. Now our campaign has gone global, through social media and state and national conferences, including a presentation at WIDA's 2015 National Conference. We were especially pleased to receive the endorsement of the Hanen Centre, the Toronto-based speech and language organization that published an important article by Lauren Lowry (2011). The Centre has given us permission to distribute Dr. Lowry's article, and they have been distributing our flyer to their clients.

## RESULTS

Though responses have varied, most dual-language families appreciate the focused attention to bilingualism. Our integrated preschool team has had considerable success in preventing these families from giving up their home languages. Some parents of children with disabilities have told us that our team's advice contradicts what they have been told by outside service providers and medical professionals, particularly if the child has autism. However, one family, having rejected clinical advice to abandon their home language, told us that their son's home language is rapidly reaching parity with his English. Now they have fully embraced their home language and are confident that they have made the right decision for their child.

# Bilingualism is a Gift!

  
**Cognitive benefits**

  
**Social-emotional benefits**

  
**Learning benefits**

  
**Global benefits**

### Commonly asked questions:

	Do we need to speak English at home?	Use the languages most comfortable for you!
	But my child has a language delay...	Children with delays <b>CAN</b> learn more than one language.
	Will my child be confused?	Your child will not be confused! Children's brains are flexible.

### Use your home language everyday in everything you do!

  
**Read**

  
**Play games**

  
**Cook**

  
**Solve problems**

  
**Sing**


  
**Observe nature**

Brought to you by Watertown Public Schools.  
 WATERTOWN'S ELE GOOGLE SITE: <https://sites.google.com/a/watertown.k12.ma.us/ellis-in-watertown/>  
 Sources: HEAD START <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/ta-system/cultural-linguistic/home-language.html>  
 THE HANEN CENTRE <http://www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Articles/Can-children-with-language-impairments-learn-two-l.aspx>



Our BiG Campaign has been so successful that monolingual families have been asking how to give their children the opportunity to learn other languages. Thus this campaign has also served to support the district's new Foreign Language in Elementary Schools (FLES) program.

## MOVING FORWARD

We are now planning how to spread the message further—to sustain this effort and provide more professional development, especially for medical practitioners and early intervention practitioners. We hope you will help us spread the message that “Bilingualism is a Gift.” Please join us in the BiG Campaign! 

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# The ENLACE Program for Newcomer English Language Learners at Lawrence High School

**Allison Balter, ENLACE Program Director**

allison.balter@lawrence.k12.ma.us

**Sarah Ottow, ELL Confianza Coach**


sarah@ELLconfianza.com

**As a city with a deep immigrant history,**

Lawrence, MA, welcomes large numbers of newcomer English Language Learners (ELLs) to its classrooms. A special program for newcomers, ENLACE (Engaging Newcomers in Language and Content Education), was opened in Lawrence High School's 9th Grade Academy this past Fall to serve 9th grade ELLs who have been in the country for less than two years. We also serve students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE).



ENLACE's mission is to provide newcomers with the academic, linguistic, and socio-emotional supports that will allow them to transition successfully and quickly into the mainstream high school environment. To stay on track to enter a college or career of their choice, students take a full load of content classes each day. An ENLACE student's daily schedule includes ESL, World Studies, Algebra, Foundations of Biology, and Theater. Each student also participates in a small-group Advisory block and a daily Academic Lab that provides differentiated support. Teachers receive ongoing professional development, including weekly coaching and observation cycles that prepare them to teach language effectively through content and meet the needs of newcomer ELLs. Language and socio-emotional supports are provided to foster a meaningful, language-rich learning environment. We capitalize on students' strengths by integrating their home languages and cultures into the classroom.

To serve our students successfully, we need a “two-generation approach,” which means that the school must play an active role in supporting students' families—helping them navigate the U.S. educational system, connecting them with valuable community resources, and actively engaging them in their child's education. To that end, ENLACE staff conduct numerous home visits and family meetings during the summer. We have a full-time Student and Family Engagement Specialist who serves as a family liaison and advocate, and classroom teachers conduct advisory groups and make phone calls to families with updates on their child's progress. 

# Transforming Instruction at Brophy Elementary School through Academic Conversations

**Sara Hammerla**

shamerla@framingham.k12.ma.us

**Inspired by the work of Zwiers & Crawford (2009, 2011),**

Brophy Elementary School has been engaged in a school-wide campaign to build our students' skills in academic conversation. Brophy Elementary is a diverse school with a population of just over 500 students and a growing number of low-income students and English language learners (ELLs). Between 2007 and 2012, our percentage of low-income students doubled from 30% to 60%, and our percentage of ELLs grew from 30% to over 40%.



In 2012, in response to disappointing assessment scores, our data team took a close look at student work and found a lack of academic vocabulary and limited ability to express complex ideas. We decided to address these issues by building a culture of academic conversation. We began by purchasing multiple copies of the Zwiers & Crawford (2011) text, which we read and discussed in our data team. The November 2012 Jeff Zwiers workshop “Academic Language Development for ELLs,” sponsored by MATSOL, provided more information about this approach. By December 2012, we were ready to go.

## HOW TO TEACH ACADEMIC CONVERSATION

Zwiers and Crawford list five core skills that are essential to academic conversation: elaborate and clarify, support ideas with examples, build on/or challenge a partner's idea, paraphrase, and synthesize conversation points. Students don't develop these skills automatically; they need explicit instruction, and scaffolding support that includes icons, prompts, and sentence starters.

### PROMPTS FOR “ELABORATE”:

*Can you elaborate on...?  
Can you be more specific?*

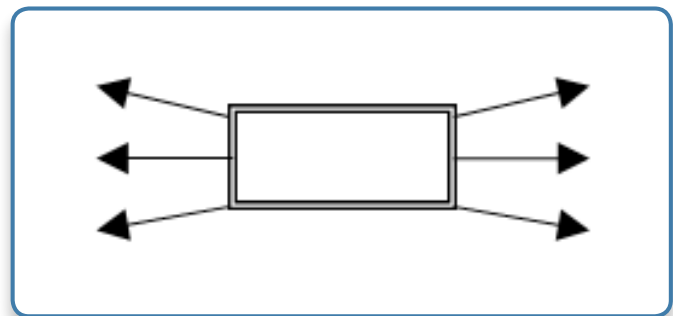


Figure 1. Icon for “Elaborate”

### SENTENCE STARTERS FOR “ELABORATE”:

*It is important because...*

*In other words,...*

(Zwiers & Crawford, 2011, p. 211)

Each skill is actually a double skill: For example, students must not only be able to prompt their partner to elaborate, but, when asked, must be able to elaborate on their own ideas. Teachers should model these skills discretely and provide time for guided practice. Prompts and sentence starters are shared with students by means of index cards, anchor charts on classroom walls, or academic conversation “placemats,” which can be placed on a desk or held and referred to during conversations.

### BUILDING A CONVERSATION CULTURE AT BROPHY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

In December, 2012, we kicked off our campaign with a general staff meeting in which we presented a Powerpoint, “Academic Conversations at Brophy School” (Flynn & Hamerla, 2012), which describes the purposes of academic conversation.

During the first month we focused on the question “What is an academic conversation?” Judy Flynn, second grade teacher and data team member, crafted an anchor chart (Fig. 2) that she shared with the whole school. Then, each month, our team focused on a different skill, which we took back to our grade-level teams.

To build our capacity for working with ELLs, we used a sheltered-English lesson-plan template from Hamerla & Zwiers (in press), with language and content objectives for each lesson. For each of the five skills, we wrote an introductory lesson that teachers could use or adapt in

Academic Conversation	
What it is	What it isn't
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being respectful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being disrespectful</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sitting correctly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slouching or wiggling around</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making eye contact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looking around the room</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening to each other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not listening - day dreaming</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being serious</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acting silly</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staying on topic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking about anything you want</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use appropriate language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using slang or language for recess</li> </ul>

Figure 2. Introduction to Academic Conversations Anchor Chart

their classrooms. We learned gestures and icons for each skill. In addition to the icon for “Elaborate” (Fig. 1), we also learned icons for “Paraphrase,” “Build on or challenge,” and “Support ideas with examples.”

The primary-grade members of our data team suggested that we include several lessons on active listening. Students could not practice elaboration and paraphrasing if they did not first learn how to sit and listen actively to a partner. The initial lessons were short and focused: First, students practiced sitting facing each other and making eye contact; then they practiced smiling and nodding, while continuing to make eye contact. Our ELLs needed practice with responses like “Uh huh,” “I see,” and “Interesting!” that indicate active listening.

By April 2013, we had introduced the notion of academic conversation, practiced active listening, and taught paraphrasing and elaborating. The “What It Is” anchor chart had been laminated and hung throughout the school, and an academic-conversations bulletin board had been hung in the second-floor hallway with a list of questions that students could read and pose to a partner, along with photos of students engaging in conversation. Teachers had created dynamic conversation partnerships. Sometimes second language learners were paired with native English speakers; at other times they were paired with a partner at their own level. Students were learning to trust one another and developing confidence in their own abilities.

## **CHALLENGES**

We have experienced several challenges. The first was finding the time and commitment to introduce the skills. The skills of paraphrasing and elaborating required a lot of practice. At first, students relied heavily on anchor charts with prompts and sentence starters such as “Can you tell me more?” and “Let me give you an example...” However, over time, as they built stamina, their conversations increased in length and complexity. They learned to ask follow-up questions and to seek clarification when they do not understand. These skills are reflected across the curriculum—in special subjects, math, social studies, science, and language arts, where the students are beginning to use new vocabulary and incorporate transitional phrases into their sentences.

Teachers in our transitional bilingual program had a further challenge—translating the terminology, anchor charts, and lesson plans into Spanish. They had to devote extra time and effort in creating materials and implementing the lessons. The ELL Coach (the author) helped with modeling and implementing lessons.


## **IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING**

Now, three years into the initiative, we have taught all five skills—elaborate and clarify, support ideas with examples, build on/or challenge a partner’s idea, paraphrase, and synthesize—and have begun to see a significant impact on student learning. By sharing lessons, anchor charts, and language, we have

been able to make a greater impact on all students than if only a few teachers had adopted this approach.

The results have been dramatic. Teachers report that this approach has improved their instruction, shifting the dynamic from teacher-directed to student-centered classrooms. Video recordings and self-evaluations of students' conversations indicate increased engagement and metalinguistic awareness. Transcripts of student conversations show evidence of language development at all levels: word, sentence, and discourse. And speaking and listening scores on the ACCESS test (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners) are now significantly higher than other district schools with similar populations.

### SPREADING THE APPROACH

The focus on academic conversation is transforming instruction for students throughout the Commonwealth, including English learners. There are several projects underway to support teachers and districts as they begin to implement this approach. A graduate-level course, "Teaching with Academic Conversations," has been developed through MATSOL and pre-qualified by DESE as a SEI extension course. This two-credit course has been taught multiple times in Framingham, as well as other districts. Zwiers & Hamerla are preparing a companion to Zwiers & Crawford's original text—a practical toolkit entitled *Academic conversations in grades K-3: A toolkit for teachers*, which presents ideas for implementing academic conversations in primary grades. 

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Sara Hamerla, Ed.D.**, is an elementary ELL Coach in the Framingham Public Schools, focusing on dual language, sheltered English, and bilingual Spanish programming and instruction. She began her teaching career in Barranquilla, Colombia, and went on to teach in Quito, Ecuador. Recently, she has designed professional development materials in the area of academic conversation and has researched the resulting changes in classroom discourse. She is co-author, with Jeff Zwiers, of *Academic conversations in grades K-3: A toolkit for teachers*, which will be published in February, 2017.

# Three After-School Study and Conversation Programs

**Emely Rijo** LAWRENCE HIGH SCHOOL

**Stephanie Brown** HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Amie Saulnier** MEDFORD HIGH SCHOOL

*This article describes three successful after-school study and conversation programs: a “Building Bridges” program at Lawrence High School, a series of bi-weekly conversation groups at Holyoke Community College, and a “World Café” at Medford High School.*

## **BUILDING BRIDGES AT LAWRENCE HIGH SCHOOL**

**Emely Rijo Guerrero**, *emelyrijo4@gmail.com*, a student at Lawrence High School, describes the Building Bridges program that she and two other students, Oscairy Tavarez and Islandia Cruz, started at LHS. Emely writes:

Lawrence is a city in Essex County, on the Merrimack River, in which 73.8% of the population is Hispanic or Latino (mostly Dominican or Puerto Rican). Our city needs major support for English as Second Language students.

Lawrence High School (LHS) has multiple clubs, programs, and sports that students can join, but there was not any program that supported ELL students. Being an ELL student myself, I know what it is to be one of them; I’ve been through it. Many students have amazing things to give—talents, values, ideas and many other things to support this country—but not all ELLs have the opportunity to achieve their dreams. It is hard for these students to adapt to a new environment, but they need to know that it is not impossible, either.

***Being an ELL student myself, I know what it is to be one of them; I’ve been through it.***

This is why two amazing students, Oscairy Tavarez and Islandia Cruz, and I, Emely Rijo, decided to create a program that offered support for ELL students who wanted to come for extra help after school. This idea came true: we have now opened a **Building Bridges** program that has offered a lot of help to students. During each session after school, Oscairy, Islandia and I would stay to help students with their homework. Many students came to us because they didn’t understand what to do or how to put it in words. We had other people who collaborated with us, including Lasnier Delorbe, a senior at LHS. Mona Savastano, the director of TRIO Upward Bound at Salem State University let us

use rooms at the school. She also gave us a mentor from Merrimack College. That mentor was a big support for us, because she had more experience. The principal and other teachers gave us money to do activities and buy food.

At first it was not easy to get students to stay after school. My friends and I used some strategies to hook them. One of the techniques was to offer snacks. Most of these students love chips, chocolate, candy, pizza, and Hispanic food. Once we said we would offer food they started coming! Another way to motivate students was by creating something entertaining at least once every other week. For instance, we watched movies together, and danced to different types of music. If they didn't know how to dance we would teach them. Some students would come to work out with us for half an hour every other day.

Though the students enjoyed the activities, we also wanted to help them. Our purpose was to help each student improve in school and grow as a person. That is what they learned throughout all these months together. One of the most important things is that they learned to trust us and now they have someone of their age that they can go to in case of an emergency.

### **A BI-WEEKLY CONVERSATION GROUP AT HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**Stephanie Brown**, [snbrown@hcc.edu](mailto:snbrown@hcc.edu), an adjunct professor at Holyoke Community College, writes that, having found it difficult to engage students in conversation during class, she and a colleague started a bi-weekly conversation group:

A colleague and I at Holyoke Community College began offering two conversation groups each week throughout the Spring 2016 semester. Each conversation group ran for an hour and had a different topic or theme, such as party planning, creating community, idioms, culture, and sharing past experience. The groups were open to both ESL and non-ESL students of all English levels, and we were pleased to find that many international students (non-ESL track) participated regularly. Our aim was to provide an inclusive space to improve confidence, fluency, vocabulary, speaking, listening, and pronunciation. There were no tests, no grades, no pressure, and no requirements. Students were able to practice communication in a safe and inviting space.

***At first, the students were unsure what they were getting into, but soon they were talking, laughing, and using the English language***

At the beginning of each session, the instructor greeted each student enthusiastically and provided a conversation topic. She then divided the group into triads and gave each triad a prompt, a set of discussion points, and other materials. At first, the students were unsure what



they were getting into, but soon they were talking, laughing, and using the English language. Students were pushing themselves, motivating others, and building their confidence as a community.

Each conversation group is an adventure. The informal topics and lack of pressure seemed to surprise some students at first, but over time they grew into an amazing teaching and learning community. The composition of the groups continues to change; there are different students, needs, levels, languages, cultures, identities, and numbers, but that challenge is greeted with open arms and open hearts.

Building confidence doesn't happen automatically. It comes from practice, community, and the freedom to make mistakes. Working with a group in class on a graded assignment is not always the best way to build conversational fluency. Our bi-weekly conversation groups are giving students an opportunity to develop their English skills in a safe and inclusive space outside of the classroom. Students come together simply to talk, but they walk away with a sense of community and a lot of self-confidence.

### **A WORLD CAFÉ AT MEDFORD HIGH SCHOOL**

**Amie Saulnier**, [asaulnier@medford.k12.ma](mailto:asaulnier@medford.k12.ma), an ELL teacher and Interact Advisor at Medford High School (MHS), writes about the “World Café” that MHS hosted on April 7, entitled “#SayMore: Real Talk about Class, Race and Religion.” (According to *World Café (2016)*, a World Café is a widely used conversational format in which the results of small-table guided conversations are shared with a larger group in order to create an inclusive environment that encourages authentic dialogue.)

The April 7th session was the fourth World Café that MHS has hosted. According to the author, MHS uses this format to create “a safe place to facilitate round-table discussions about relevant and meaningful topics to better understand the perspectives of teens and adults in the Medford Community.” The following is her description of the April 7th session:

On Thursday, April 7th, Interact, Amnesty International, the Gay Straight Alliance, Arabic Club, Indian Club, MPOWER, Key Club, the Black Student Union and Medford Conversations co-sponsored an afternoon event titled “#SayMore: Real Talk about Class, Race and Religion.” Over one hundred students, faculty, administration, and community members spent two hours engaged in conversation at randomly assigned small tables. Each table was guided by a student facilitator and included a faculty “safe person” or mandated reporter, at

**Over one hundred students, faculty, administration, and community members spent two hours engaged in conversation at randomly assigned small tables.**

least one community member, and multiple student participants. Community members included police officers, ministers, college students and professors, business owners, community organizers, and artists.

To establish a basic approach for our discussion, we began with a Brené Brown video (Brown, 2013) about her concept of “empathy.” Dr. Brown, a research professor at the University of Houston Graduate School of Social Work, argues that real connections between people are made through the sharing of emotion rather than experience. After the video, our group facilitators reviewed the basic guidelines for our discussion—respect, confidentiality, and tolerance. We then began the conversation with an icebreaker activity in which the participants at each table were asked to identify a favorite location in Medford (other than home).

Then the real work began—three rounds of 15-minute conversations on the difficult topics of race, class and religion. We began with race, after which a performance by Afro-D (otherwise known as Pete Shungu, Director of Student Services at UAspire), moved the conversation from race to class. Medford High Junior Georgia Katherine Bowder-Newton, our next artist, used a poem by Scott Abbot, set to music, and Regina Spektor’s song “No one Laughs at God” to change our topic from class to religion.

Our World Café was quite an undertaking and required input from many school and community members. Penny Bruce of Team Medford was the one who first brought the concept of World Cafés to Medford. Melanie Raelin, one of the organizers of the Envision Medford Event that took place last February, provided insight into how to run an effective conversational event. Tim Klein, Medford’s new School and Community Partnerships

Guidance Counselor, gave our World Café a fresh new title, “#SayMore,” giving participants a way to continue the conversation digitally once the café was over. Gary Roberts, of the Medford Arts and Culture Council, helped to make #Saymore comprehensible to the community by proofing event flyers and descriptions. Lead questions for the “Real Talk about Race, Class and Religion” were drafted by twenty-five students from this year’s MHS Cross-Cultural Perspectives class, with guidance from Neil Osborne, president of the Middlesex County chapter of the NAACP, and Dale Bryan, Tufts Professor of Peace and Justice.. Twenty-five faculty volunteers served as “safe people.” And over forty student facilitators went through a World Café student-facilitator training, following a design created by Steve Schnapp of Medford Conversations. The

***Then the real work began—three rounds of 15-minute conversations on the difficult topics of race, class and religion.***

Medford Conversations Initiative (<http://medfordconversations.org>), whose mission is to actively engage a multiplicity of voices in our community, also brought many resources to the project.

Here is a sampling of the many comments that were submitted to #Saymore at the end of the event. They were collected from among the nametags and water bottles—in the form of sticky notes, drawings and writing on the table paper, student snapshots, and faculty e-mails:

*Why don't we talk more to our teachers about these kinds of things?*

*How can we build stronger and more respectful relationships with police officers?*

*Should we be doing something to make our students feel like they belong to our school, our community, our country?*

*Should we be doing something to help our students believe that their hard work in school will be rewarded in the years ahead?*

*At the World Café I talked about race and what happened to me. I saw that there were people who had similar situations to mine. I heard that they felt the same way I did. I felt comfortable to share my story with the people I sat with. At the World Café I tasted awesome.*

*When I was asked to stand up and speak at the World Café I felt like my heart was going to jump out of my chest, but I found the confidence.*

*At the World Café there was a moment when someone said we were doing a good job of talking to each other at my table. I felt like I was doing something important.*

*At the World Café I saw the whole community, and I felt very little until someone gave me motivation. Then I felt like I was a part of something much bigger than myself. ©*

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# The Experience of a Newcomer

**Alica Lopez**

lopeza@arps.org



**Imagine that you are a 14-year-old girl** from a warm, sunny island country with palm trees waving in the wind, friendly people greeting you outside, and familiar foods and sounds all around you. But you have agreed to leave all that you know behind in exchange for better opportunities for your future. You now face many “firsts” in your life: the first time on an airplane, the first time to leave your country, the first experience of snow and cold. You arrive in a small New England town on a freezing day in March. Though you barely know your father, your new home is with him. And although you are reunited with your half-siblings, there is a huge hole in your heart, because your mother is back in your country and not with you.

The building where you now go to school is much bigger than your old one, and there is no patio to sit in during your recess and lunch. You are inside all day and it gets cold and dark very early in the afternoon. The days go by in a confused haze—you get lost, you don’t understand your teachers, the cafeteria food tastes bland, and other students act as if you are not there. They simply don’t see you. In your country, you had many friends, but here you are alone. You are invisible.

A few days after your arrival, you have to take a test in English. You have studied some English, but what you know is not very helpful on this test. You’ve always loved math and have been a great math student, but now the numbers are mixed in with strange words. There are challenges even in your physical education class, where you are told that you must learn to swim. You cannot express your basic needs. But there is some relief in your ELL classes, where you can communicate with your Spanish-speaking teachers, using Portuguese. And you have goals in life, and a burning desire to learn.

This was my student four years ago when she arrived from Cape Verde. She was bilingual in Portuguese and Crioulo, but knew little English. When she went to our after-school program to get help, she was told by a volunteer that he couldn’t help her because he didn’t understand her. Frustrated, she came to my classroom and cried. We sat and cried together for a few minutes and I promised her that things would get better. I knew that she wanted to do well in school, learn English, and perhaps become a flight attendant one day.

My student understood the importance of learning English and studying hard to achieve her goals. She took advantage of every resource she could find. She stayed after school to complete her homework and get assistance from teachers. She advocated for herself, asked questions, and asked for help. As her ELL teachers, my colleague and I did what we could to help her and push her along, holding her to high, but reasonable, expectations. When she had to swim for PE class, I bought her a bathing suit and towel, knowing that her father was working a minimum wage job to support his seven children. The other ELL teacher patiently worked with her for many hours after school.

*In your country,  
you had many  
friends, but here  
you are alone.*

I had this student for four short months, but by the end of that time she was already starting to see the fruits of her work. One day after the dismissal bell I found a note that she had left on the whiteboard. It said, "Dear Ms. Lopez: Thanks for you help me."

When we said good-bye on the last day of school, both of us had tears in our eyes, but I knew she would be okay. She had ended the school year with all A's on her report card, and in the short time she had been here she had learned to swim and had read her first entire books in English. Her ambition, her resilience, and her family's support were awe-inspiring! I promised her that in four years I would be there to see her receive her diploma.

The next year, in high school, she started a Cape Verdean dance group, played soccer and basketball and ran track. Now a Junior in high school, she has moved to the advanced ELL classes, gets A's, is involved in many extracurricular activities, and is a part of her school community. I see her in the halls, smiling, well-adjusted, happy. Now, at last, people see her. She is no longer invisible. And she has come a long way towards reaching her goals. 

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Alicia Lopez** is an ELL teacher and Curriculum Leader at Amherst Regional Middle School in Amherst, MA. Last year, her 20th year of teaching, she was the recipient of the annual Louise Gaskins MTA Human and Civil Rights Award. She is also co-director of the Western Massachusetts Writing Project Summer Institute. Alicia resides in Amherst with her husband and three children.

# What They Wish We Understood

**Johanna Edelson**

edelsonj@doversherborn.org



**In a project-based learning unit for my ELLs**, the ultimate goal was to develop a set of suggestions for school guidance counselors about how to welcome Syrian refugee students into our school. To kick off the project, I asked five students from grades 6-12 the following question:

*What do you wish your teachers and guidance counselors and students had understood about you, your family, and your culture when you first came to school in the US?*

I think *Currents* readers will be interested in their responses:

## **MISPERCEPTIONS AMERICANS HAVE ABOUT LIFE IN MY COUNTRY:**

- They asked me what I thought the first time I had McDonalds or Burger King as if I didn't ever eat those in my country—they assume that those things aren't in my country.

## **QUESTIONS PEOPLE THOUGHT I SHOULD BE ABLE TO ANSWER:**

- I was overwhelmed by students' questions—people always ask where you're from.
- I had never heard of Ebola before last year. When Ebola was in the news, we talked about it in class, and the whole class turned around and looked at me. I didn't know what they were talking about.
- People assume I know everything about my country, but I only lived in one place.
- I didn't know how to respond to students' questions, so I didn't respond at all.

## **WAYS IN WHICH THE CULTURE IS DIFFERENT:**

- When I first started school, I couldn't tell any of the students apart since they were not Asian like me.
- In my culture, being covered up is important. In gym class

in my country we wore uniforms. When I came here I didn't know what people would wear in gym. I had a uniform in my country that kept me covered and I wore it here, but when it got hot, kids asked a lot of questions.

- Here when someone draws a picture or something, your friends go crazy about how amazing it is, but in my country people would just say, "Oh."
- Teachers ask you to talk about good things that you have done and don't understand that in your country you never had to think that way. We never had to talk about things that we were good at or did well. Teachers aren't sympathetic to the fact that it's a brand new way to think. I wish I could at least have extra time.
- In my culture we didn't walk up to people and compliment their clothes. I love when people compliment my clothes, but I don't always know what to say back to them, because I'm not used to it.
- People ask me about my favorite foods in my country and then say "ewww" when I show them pictures of the food.
- I wish Guidance understood that my family doesn't think like Americans. When they tell me to go home and discuss with my family, it makes things more complicated for me, because my family doesn't understand.
- People were mean to each other in my country based on status. People in the US should be thankful that it's not like that here.

***"In my country you don't go to a teacher for extra help but instead you have to pay."***

### **WAYS IN WHICH SCHOOL IS DIFFERENT:**


- We never worked in groups.
- In my country you don't go to a teacher for extra help but instead you have to pay. I didn't know when I first came here that I could stay for extra help for free.
- In my country we don't come to school wearing sneakers; we wear nicer clothes to school. In elementary school we should be allowed to change for gym; that way I wouldn't have to wear sneakers to school. Kids asked me lots of questions about why I didn't have sneakers on.
- In other countries there's no fitness testing. Gym is more fun and more like free time.

### WAYS IN WHICH TEACHERS TREAT YOU DIFFERENTLY:

- I didn't like it when teachers left me out of classroom choices and I didn't get to do what the other students did; I didn't like being forced to do easier things.
- I wish teachers wouldn't pity me and pair me up with someone who does the work faster than me who knows how to do the work when I don't.

### ISSUES WITH LANGUAGE AND BEING BILINGUAL:

- It's awful being made fun of when I mispronounce something. When teachers don't make an effort to understand, I stop participating.
- I speak to my family in my own language: When people come to my house, I switch to my own language to speak with my family. I'm not talking about my guests.
- People in the school office look at you strangely when you call home and speak in your own language.
- People think I'm a dictionary and they ask how to say words in my language, but I can't always translate them directly and people don't understand that.
- People try to say things in your language but it sounds they're making fun of you.

I plan to use these reflections about the students' own experiences as the basis for a research project about Syria and the situation of Syrian refugees. The project will culminate in a report to our school guidance counselors suggesting ways our school could prepare itself for the potential arrival of Syrian refugees in our community. 

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

For the past fifteen years, **Johanna Edelson** has been a middle school and high school educator in both urban and suburban school districts. She began her career teaching high-school Spanish at Classical High School in Lynn, then went on to teach middle-school English at Breed Middle School in Lynn and later Hopkinton Middle School. For the past four years, she has been teaching ELLs in the Dover-Sherborn Regional Schools, comprised of Dover-Sherborn Middle School and Dover-Sherborn High School. She also works at Framingham Adult ESL Plus as an advisor for students working toward their high school equivalency diplomas.



# Writing with Colors: A Strategy for Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)

**Christi Cartwright Lacerda**

Christi.Cartwrightlacerda@lawrence.k12.ma.us



**Nicoleta Filimon**

Nicoleta.Filimon@lawrence.k12.ma.us



**Currents readers may be familiar with the innovative “Writing with Colors”** strategy developed by Patrick Daly and Allison Renna (2013) for approaching the MCAS long-composition and open-response questions. In this method, students use highlighters to color-code the essential parts of an essay, such as topic sentences, evidence from the text, and explanations. After participating in a very informative professional development session conducted by Thomas O’Toole, Humanities Director for Essex Tech (formerly of Waltham Public Schools), we decided to adapt this strategy for use with our SLIFE, including those at the lowest level of English proficiency.

We started by selecting accessible texts, such as those provided by *Keys to Learning* and *Building Bridges* (Pearson Longman). We wanted to reduce the cognitive load associated with complex material and allow our SLIFE to focus, instead, on the analytical steps that make up the Writing with Colors protocol. We then created model open-response essays to questions about the texts, at various proficiency levels. This allowed our students to see the structure of an open-response essay and identify the components that make up a successful response.

***Our first reaction . . . was that this strategy would be too complex for the SLIFE classroom, but when we gave it a try we found that it worked beautifully.***

To analyze our model responses, we employed four basic colors—blue, green, orange, and pink. We used blue for explanations, green for quotations and other evidence from the text, orange for transition words, and pink for the topic (or, as we presented it to our SLIFE, the “introduction”). We introduced the colors one by one: First, pink for the

introduction, which consisted of a re-phrasing of the question, and then blue and green for explanation and evidence. The students quickly grasped these components of a well-developed response. As a last step, we added orange for transition words such as *first of all*, *secondly*, *in addition*, and *finally*. With the addition of these sentence starters, students were able to see the progression of ideas within the text.

Continuing with the same text, we then created a variety of prompts, so that students could practice writing with this new “recipe.” We started with a compare-and-contrast question: *Compare and contrast Pablo’s experience in his school and Liliana’s experience in her school. How are they similar? How are they different? Justify your answer using evidence from text.* The students wrote two paragraphs in response to this prompt: one showing the similarities between the two characters and the other illustrating the differences. They wrote the first paragraph as a class and the second paragraph in pairs. Then they swapped papers with their partners and used their highlighters to identify and illustrate each component: introduction/topic, explanations, evidence from text, and transition words.

After this initial demonstration of the Writing with Colors technique, we continued to employ this strategy in every unit. As students progressed, we exposed them to more complex texts and more complex prompts, such as *Often in works of literature, characters have a mixture of positive and negative traits. Describe the positive and negative*

Anchor 4-Advanced

Compare your new school and Maria’s new school. How are they similar? How are they different? Give specific examples from the text.


My new school and Maria’s new school are very similar. **First**, Maria’s teacher, Mr. Gomez, speaks Spanish and English. **The text says**, “He speaks Spanish and English.” Many of my teachers speak Spanish and English: Mrs. Leon, Mrs. Filimon or Mrs. Mercedes. **Second**, some students speak Spanish. **The text says**, “Maria speaks Spanish.” A lot of the students at my school speak Spanish. **Finally**, some students are siblings. **The text says**, “Mr. Gomez speaks to Bic, Carmen, and her brother Carlos.” Some of the students at my school are also siblings.

My new school and Maria’s new school are also different. **For example**, some of the students in Maria’s class are from Mexico. **The text says**, “Carmen and Carlos are from Mexico.” My classmates are from the Dominican Republic and Guatemala. **Also**, the name of the teacher is Mr. Gomez. **The text says**, “Her teacher is Mr. Gomez.” **The name of my teacher is Mrs. Filimon. Finally**, the name of Maria’s school is Washington School. **The text says**, “She is a new student at Washington School.” **The name of my school is International High School.**

PINK = introduction.  
ORANGE = transition words.  
BLUE = explanation.  
GREEN = evidence from text.

*characteristics of Odysseus. Support your answer with reasons and examples from "The Trojan Horse."*

Following this model, students were able to produce responses ranging from two-paragraph essays (when we first introduced Writing with Colors) to five-paragraph essays, as the semester progressed. The students consistently incorporated textual evidence using quotes and sentence stems such as *According to the text*, *Based on the text*, and *As the author explains*.

Our first reaction when we were presented with Writing with Colors was that this strategy would be too complex for the SLIFE classroom, but when we gave it a try we found that it worked beautifully. For us, this was a delightful experience that proved once again that SLIFE students can exceed even the highest of expectations. 

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Christi Cartwright Lacerda** teaches ESL at the secondary level in Lawrence, MA. She has a Bachelor of Arts in English from Endicott College and a Master of Arts in Environmental Science from the University of New Hampshire. She is currently pursuing a Masters in Education.

**Nicoleta Filimon** teaches ESL at the secondary level in Lawrence, MA, along with graduate courses in ESL teacher education. She has a Law degree from the University of Oradea, Romania, and a Master of Education from the University Of Massachusetts, Boston.

# Using Games to Make ESOL Learning Interactive, Fun, and Effective for Adult Learners

**Robin Lovrien**

robinsadultesl@gmail.com



**When a middle-aged Spanish-speaking ESOL student announces, “I think maybe I finally remember something in English!”** you know you are onto something. When she tells the case worker that this is the first time she has wanted to come back to an English class, you think you've won the lottery prize in teaching!

The secret, I learned, is to use card and board games. Adult language learners need enormous amounts of repetition to retain new language (Birdsong, 2006; Brown, 2009; DeKeyser, 2005; Kuhl, 2006), and frequent opportunities to use the language naturally (Brown, 2009; Condelli, Wrigley, Yoon, Cronen, & Sebum, 2003). These goals can be difficult to achieve under normal class-focused teaching conditions, but they are the whole purpose of games. Huyen & Nga, 2003; Tuan & Doan, 2010; and Vonoukova, 2009, among others, have shown that learners retain material much better when it is learned through gaming, and the pleasure involved in playing games correlates with brain research indicating that pleasure increases learning (Cozolino & Sprokay, 2006). Games help students lose the shyness that so many adult students experience in language class. My Spanish-speaking student above had exceptional difficulty retaining English, but she prospered with the repetition and freedom to make mistakes that Go Fish games provided.

## PREPARING THE MATERIALS

The first step in creating games is to prepare the materials:

### CARDS

Use half-size index cards in several colors, or print a computer-generated grid on cardstock and cut it apart.

## MARKERS

Felt-tip pens (non-erasable) or medium-tip gel pens work well. It is useful to have several different colors.

## PLAYING BOARDS

Make generic boards to be used with any content. (A topic-specific playing board is time consuming to make and has limited use.) Inexpensive professional-quality blank playing boards can be purchased online, and some commercial board games can be repurposed if they are visually undemanding and do not have material that interferes with your purpose. For maximum flexibility, you can draw a playing track on an open manila folder or large piece of tagboard. Decorate your boards with drawings or glued-on pictures and include the usual distractors and gambits such as “Lose a turn,” “Go back three spaces,” or “Spin again.”

*When a middle-aged Spanish-speaking ESOL student announces, “I think maybe I finally remember something in English!” you know you are onto something.*

## MOVERS

These can be anything—bottle caps, miniature items, old Monopoly® pieces.

## SPINNERS OR DICE

You can make a spinner by tracing a circle on a piece of cardboard and dividing the circle into pie sections with numbers or “Lose a turn” or “Spin again” on some of the sections. Use a large paper clip as a spinner; spin it around the tip of a pencil placed in the dead center of the circle. Alternatively, just use dice.

## PROVIDING THE CONTENT

Games and activities are not intended to be time-fillers or entertainment, but are used to teach course content. Here I use the present and past forms of irregular verbs as an example. These verbs are key to everyday language and reading, and there are many of them for students to master.

*Make a deck:* Using one color of cards, write the present (simple) form of the verbs you want to teach. Write each word very clearly, in the middle of the card. Using another color card, write the past tense form of each verb. To use this deck for a variety of activities, you will need 30 or more pairs: *eat/ate; sleep/slept; drink/drank* etc. (For another dimension of learning, have the students prepare the cards themselves; provide them with lists to reference as they make the cards.) Create a list of the pairs so students can check their own work. Research on adult learning shows that adults do best when they can control their own learning (Merriam, 2008), and self-directed learning is a critical element of games and activities

## USE THE DECK TO PLAY GAMES

- *Match the cards:* Two students or a group place the cards face up and pair them. This first step helps students learn some of the pairs and see matches.
- *Play Concentration:* Cards are placed face down in neat rows and lines. A player turns over one card of each color to see if they match. If they do, the player keeps the pair and continues trying to find matches. If they don't, the cards are turned face down again and the turn passes to another player. Players try to remember where cards are placed to make their own matches efficiently. The player with the most matches wins.
- *Play "Instant" Bingo:* Divide one color (past or present form) of the cards evenly among two to four players (e.g., if there are 30 pairs, 3 players would get 10 cards each). Players place their cards face up in rows in front of them. The pile of cards in the other color is placed in the middle of the board. Players take turns picking up a card from the pile and reading it. The player who has the match (*eat/ate*) takes that card and covers the matching card. The first to cover all his or her cards wins.
- *Play a board game:* Because this board game does not involve matching, players should be mostly familiar with the verbs and should be able produce the match orally. Moving around the board becomes a reward for producing a correct answer. One deck (either present or past forms) is placed face down on the board. A player spins or throws a die and then picks up a card and gives the other form of the word (e.g., for the card *see*, the player says *saw*). If the answer is correct, s/he then moves according to the spin or die-throw. To increase the difficulty, the players can pick up the number of cards their spin or toss indicates (e.g., for a spin of 5, the student must give answers for 5 cards). Students monitor each other's answers using the master list.
- *Sentence ordering:* Once the students can produce these important verb forms automatically, they are ready to practice them in sentences. The words of complete sentences at a level the students can manage easily are written on individual cards (*I ate beans for breakfast = 5 cards*). Capitalize the first word and include a period or question mark after the last word. Create sets of 10 or 12 sentences in this way, marking all the cards for one sentence with the same number, so there is no guesswork in choosing the words for a given

**Research on adult learning shows that adults do best when they can control their own learning.**

sentence. The students then work in pairs to put the words in correct order and check their work against a master list. The difficulty of this activity can be varied by shortening or lengthening the sentences or manipulating grammatical complexity. For example, for intermediate students, a sentence might be *I spent a lot of money at the mall last night*, but advanced students can work on *I told him where I put the keys*. Keep sentence cards together using paper clips or rubber bands, and store the sets in labeled plastic freezer bags.

## GO FISH

*Go Fish* games deserve a section of their own. Teach *Go Fish* using a regular set of playing cards. (You will need to teach the words *king*, *queen*, *jack*, and *ace*.) Students benefit by learning to pronounce the numbers very clearly and, once they know the game, you can use it to practice any content that can be logically divided into mutually exclusive groups of four. This game provides invaluable repetition of question forms, in addition to whatever content you provide.

In *Go Fish* language games, two to four players are dealt a five-card hand and then collect sets of four identical or related cards (e.g., four cards with the verb *sat*). The player whose turn it is asks any other player, "Do you have a [sat] card?" If the player has the card, s/he answers "Yes, I do," and hands it over. The player then gets another turn. If the player does not have the card, s/he says, "No, I don't. Go fish!" and the first player takes a card off the deck.

Players need to ask and answer the questions accurately and clearly. For a more advanced version of the game, create sets of cards with sentences that use the same verb: for example, *I sang a song*; *Tom sang the National Anthem*; *We sang a song in music class*; *Ana sang to her baby*. (Write the verb *sing* in the upper left hand corner of each card.) Now when a student asks, "Do you have a *sang* card?" the other player answers, "Yes, I have *Ana sang to her baby*," and hands over the card.


## SOME POSSIBLE PROBLEMS

Students from some other cultures may be unfamiliar with games and will require practice to learn to play them. Very low literate students may have difficulty with the visual aspects of games. (For these students it's important to use photographs rather than drawings.) Some students may take time to understand

**[T]here are many ways to use card and board games to create informal and self-monitoring learning situations where students can learn vocabulary and practice critical grammatical structures.**

that they are, in fact, practicing English. Others may be highly competitive and may need coaching on being inclusive and tactful with others. Proceed with caution. Occasionally a religious student objects to playing card games; I give such a student something else to do.

## CONCLUSION

As I hope you can see by now, there are many ways to use card and board games to create informal and self-monitoring learning situations where students can learn vocabulary and practice critical grammatical structures. The activities described here—Concentration, Bingo, board games, and Go Fish, plus matching and sentence ordering—give you a range of ways to engage students productively. Don't forget to involve your students in *making* these games; that is not only good for the students, but also time- and energy-saving for you. 

## ADDENDUM

Here are some additional content suggestions for *Go Fish* games:

### GRAPHEMES

- *Numbers*: 1-13—or, alternatively, the teens (14-19) plus 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, for students to practice the difficult contrast between *-ty* and *-teen* (*sixty* vs. *sixteen*). Make four cards of each number and use them for *Go Fish*.
- *Letters of the alphabet*: Choose letters whose names your students are having trouble remembering. For low-literate students, the deck can be smaller than usual—8 sets of 4 might be a good number.

### VOCABULARY

- *Pictures of semantically related items* such as fast food items (hamburgers, french fries, salad, various sorts of drinks): Make four cards with each item. (Get pictures from Google. For non-reading students, it's important to use photos, not drawings.) The question is "Do you have a [hamburger] card?" and the answer is "Yes, I do" or "No, I don't." The goal is to collect four cards of each item. Or you can be more specific—e.g., cards with different sorts of burgers (burgers in different sizes, or with and without cheese, pickles, onions, lettuce, etc.).
- *Written words from a particular semantic category, such as jobs*: Each card contains the name of a job (*taxi driver, hotel cleaner, baby sitter, construction worker, cashier, etc.*), along with a sentence about what that person does: *A baby sitter changes the baby's diapers. A taxi driver takes passengers to the airport. Ques-*



tion: "Do you have a taxi driver card?" If the answer is "yes," then there is a follow-up question: "What does a taxi driver do?" The player with a taxi driver card reads the sentence before handing over the card. The goal is to collect four cards for each job.

- *Words taken from course content* such as a citizenship class: Make sets of three or four cards with the names of presidents, states bordering Canada, U.S rivers, original colonies, wars the US has been in, freedoms, amendments to the constitution, etc. Write the category on each card, along with the name of one item from that category. Question: "Do you have a *president* card?" Answer: "Yes, I have George Washington" or "No, I don't."
- *Synonyms*: This was one of my most successful *Go Fish* games for advanced English learners. Each card contains a key word, along with a synonym of that word. For example, for the key word *large* (written on each of four cards), each card will also contain one of four synonyms (*enormous, huge, gigantic, or giant*). Players ask, "Do you have a synonym for *large*?" Answer: "Yes, I have *giant*" or "No, I don't."
- *Word families*: From *study*: *student, study, studious, studiously*; from *collect*: *collection, collect, collective, collectively*. Question: "Do you have a *study* word?" Answer: "Yes, I have *student*," or "No, I don't."

## GRAMMAR

- *Verb forms*: I use four—simple present, past, present participle, past participle (*to eat: eat, ate, eating, eaten*). The cards can contain just the verb forms, or, to make the level more difficult, sentences that use the verb forms.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Robin H. Lovrien, MSpEd, L.D., Ph.D.** is an independent consultant in Adult ESOL. She is a long-time presenter, coach, and trainer in adult ESOL matters, particularly in learning difficulties for adult ELLs. She is the author (under the name R.L. Schwarz) of the adult-learning handbook, *Learning Centers for Adult ESL Classrooms: Getting Them Started, Keeping Them Going*. She currently resides in Downeast Maine, where she tutors adult ELLs and does occasional consulting on ESOL topics.

# Formative Language Assessment for ELLs

**Sarah Ottow**

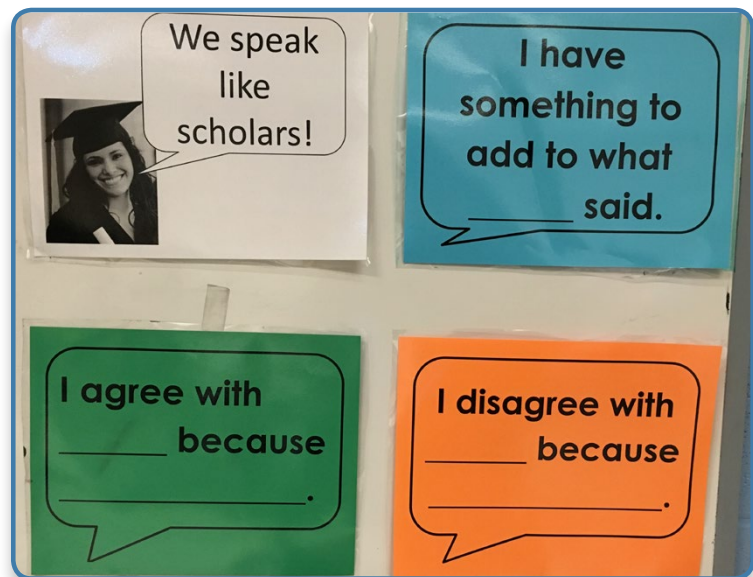
sarah@ELLconfianza.com

**The Latin root word for “assessment” is *assidere* ‘to sit beside’.** A formative assessment approach for ELLs should put the task of assessment into the hands of teachers and students, and recapture the spirit and true meaning of the word “*assess*”



All PK-12 teachers, in every classroom, are teachers of academic language as well as content. English Language Learners (ELLs), especially, benefit from an instructional approach that highlights English language development (ELD), along with a formative language assessment process that makes academic language goals and progress as explicit as possible for both teachers and students.

To identify the language goals for a given lesson or unit, teachers should begin with an analysis of text materials and other pieces of language that the students will need. A chart called “The Features of Academic Language in the WIDA Standards” (WIDA™, n.d.a) outlines what to look for at the word/phrase, sentence, and discourse levels. For example, for a fourth-grade unit on the water cycle, a teacher could set the following language goals: technical vocabulary like *evaporation* and *condensation* at the Word/Phrase level; expository, scientific-sounding sentence patterns and the use of transition words at the Sentence level; and multiple sentences in a logical sequence with supporting details at the Discourse level.



Sentence Stems. Photo courtesy of ENLACE Academy, Lawrence High School

After identifying the language goals for a given unit or lesson, the teacher should determine what language supports his/her ELLs will need to gain control of the content. It is important to consider students' backgrounds, as well as their English proficiency level. Effective language supports include interactive word walls, visuals, sentence stems, use of heritage language (L1), and graphic organizers, among others. With explicit language supports and meaningful, engaging instruction, teachers can create language-rich classrooms that give students access to content without overly simplifying the language.

One key classroom activity teachers can use to promote language development is academic conversations. (See the article by Sara Hammerla, in this issue of *Currents*.) Academic conversations go beyond "turn and talk": students practice active listening and extend their oral discourse using sentence frames and gestures for supports. Academic conversations help to connect oral language to writing; they help to make academic language visible in both speaking and writing tasks.

One tool I recommend to teachers is Academic Conversations (ELLstudents, n.d.a).

### FORMATIVE LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

Formative assessment is a way to consistently observe and document student progress and provide regular feedback to both teacher and student. It allows teachers to keep track of their students' language development between large-scale language assessments such as the ACCESS test (WIDA™, 2014), which is given annually, and the MODEL (WIDA™, 2016b), which is an interim assessment.

One way to assess students' language development is

+ Strengths	Δ Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses transition words</li> <li>• Uses punctuation &amp; capitalization</li> <li>• mechanics</li> <li>• Uses key vocabulary from the lesson.</li> <li>• gives examples</li> <li>• followed prompt</li> <li>• Verbal retelling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Struggled a little bit with sentence structure &amp; spacing between words</li> <li>• run-on sentences</li> <li>• Some sentences are missing a key term ("as water vapor <sup>up</sup> into the atmosphere...")</li> <li>• Some difficulty with spelling (needs a word bank)</li> </ul> <p><i>missing a word to complete sentence</i></p>
<p><b>Next Steps:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-editing strategies (checklist)</li> <li>• Using a top-down web with other writing assignments &amp; being able to create one on his own.</li> <li>• continue with word banks containing transition words &amp; key vocabulary.</li> </ul>	

Analysis of student work. Photo courtesy of Michelle Colameta, Everett Public Schools

by classroom observation; another is by analyzing student work. I recommend a document called the “Language Snapshot Protocol” (ELLstudents, n.d.b), which walks teachers through an analysis of student work based on the WIDA™ (n.d.a) Performance Definitions. By identifying strengths and challenges in the student’s work, the teacher can place the student at a particular level on the continuum of language development, using the Performance Definitions. Then, taking into consideration the word/phrase, sentence, and discourse-level goals for the particular unit or lesson, she can determine the next steps for instruction, and hold a feedback conference with the student or group of students. Many teachers I work with use the Language Snapshot Protocol to co-create language goals with their students. For example, a student might plan to use more vivid words, with the help of a student vocabulary notebook and class anchor charts that exhibit expanded technical vocabulary. To promote student ownership, many teachers employ peer-assessment strategies such as having students read their work to each other while using a peer-editing checklist.



A display of students’ co-created goals. Photo courtesy of ENLACE Academy, Lawrence High School

### **MAKING FORMATIVE LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT SUSTAINABLE**

It is up to you to determine what works with your particular context and available resources. One leader I work with has a simple method in place at his high school: Each content-area team analyzes student work using their own rubric for content, along with the WIDA™ Performance Definitions for Speaking and Writing. After considering the success criteria for each task, and the language levels of their ELL students, the team then uses the Performance Definitions to assess the performance for each student. For example, if a student at Level 1 or 2 has written a biology report using phrases and short sentences, that performance is acceptable, but a higher level of syntactic sophistication would be expected if the student were at Level 3 or 4.

I worked with another leader to develop school-wide rubrics that were content-based on one side (using the Common Core State Standards as our guide) and language-based on the other (using The English Language Development Standards (WIDA™, 2012)), so that teachers would always consider language development when assessing mastery of content standards.

No matter what setting you teach in, I highly recommend that you keep portfolios to show individual ELL student growth over time, and that you make student work the centerpiece in family conferences and school data meetings. Data walls

using multiple measures of language data can augment a more traditional content-based assessment system. Teachers can track growth in productive language domains (speaking and writing) as well as receptive domains (listening and reading), using the levels from the Performance Definitions. In these ways, we can create a “photo album” to show progress over time, celebrating students’ journey of academic language development.

**With explicit language supports and meaningful, engaging instruction, teachers can create language-rich classrooms that give students access to content without overly simplifying the language.**

## CONCLUSION

The take-away here is to incorporate formative language assessment in your own setting so that English language development is “on the radar.” Sometimes teachers ask me, “Aren’t we just supposed to use the once-a-year ACCESS data for our ELLs?” My response is that while the ACCESS test provides useful information for various stakeholders, it is a *summative* assessment. To guide our instruction, to reveal the nuanced process of language development, and to promote student ownership, we need *formative assessment*. As ambassadors for our ELLs in a world of schooling that is not always normed for this population, we have to exercise our own professional judgment to do what is right for our students. ©

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### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Sarah Ottow** is the founder, director, and lead coach of Confianza: Educating for ELL Equity, a Boston-area educational organization that supports schools in their efforts to provide access and opportunity to ELLs. Ms. Ottow is a Certified WIDA Trainer and has over sixteen years experience as a teacher and coach in schools in New England, the Midwest, and Puerto Rico. She has worked with MATSOL and with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) on their ESL Model Curriculum Units (MCUs) for ELL assessment guidance.

# Can Corrective Feedback Have a Positive Impact on Language Acquisition?

**Laura Vawter**

lvawter@wpi.edu



## INTRODUCTION

Corrective feedback is a common feature of language classes. Even when the learner's response is correct, the instructor may still give feedback in the form of verbal or nonverbal communication (a head-nod or a "correct"). The big question, however, is how feedback is received by the learner. Researchers and instructors alike are concerned that corrective feedback may not be helpful and that its continuous use in the classroom may have a detrimental effect by inhibiting learner participation (Mendez & Cruz, 2012, p. 67). However, the study that I will describe here suggests that, if administered with proper consideration of learners' personalities and preferences, corrective feedback can aid language acquisition.

Corrective feedback can be given explicitly, where the learner's error is overtly pointed out, or implicitly, where correction is given indirectly—for example, by means of a "recast" that repeats the learner's utterance, but in correct form. Researchers have differing opinions as to which type of correction is better. Long (1996, 2006) and Spada (2001) argue that recasts are more effective than explicit corrections, since they "encourage noticing or rehearsing in short-term memory" (Ebadi, Rashid, Saad, & Abedalaziz, 2013, p. 11). Schmidt (2001) argues, in contrast, that explicit feedback is the most effective way to help learners "become aware of the gap between inter-language forms and target forms" (Ebadi, Rashid, Saad, & Abedalaziz, 2013, p. 16).

Researchers also differ in their views about the manner in which feedback is administered.

Azizollah Dabaghi (2006, p. 12) found that "immediate error correction and delayed error correction were equally effective in drawing the learners' attention to discrepancies between their interlanguage and target language forms." On the other hand, Mendez & Cruz (2012, p. 67) maintain that learners who receive corrective feedback during a group activity do not acknowledge the error or use correction or repair.

***The big question is how feedback is received by the learner.***



To get some answers for myself, I conducted a small case study to explore the effects of corrective feedback with my own students. The study participants were one female and three male graduate students of Worcester Polytechnic Institute—three from China and one from South Korea. The study was conducted over the course of four weeks.

## INITIAL MEASUREMENTS

As a preliminary to the study, each participant completed a questionnaire that asked about their educational background and what form (implicit or explicit) and manner (group or individual) of corrective feedback they preferred.

From the initial interviews and questionnaires, it was clear that all participants had a positive view of American culture and understood that improvement of their language competence would increase their ability to participate in American culture.

With regard to language competence, students, on average, chose writing as their strongest skill and reading as their weakest. Figure 2.1 displays their responses, with a lower score indicating a stronger skill and a higher score indicating a weaker skill.

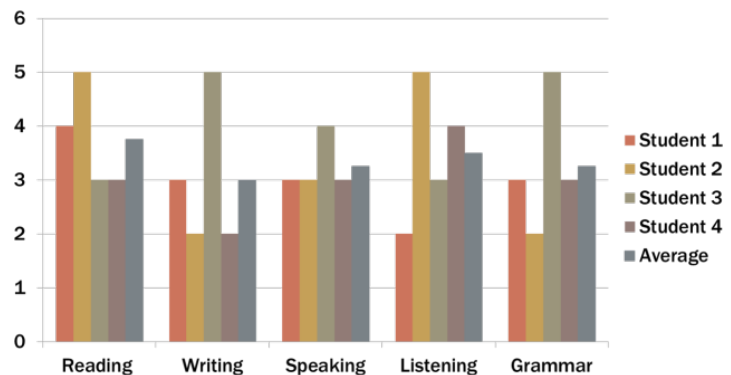


Fig 2.1 Questionnaire 1: Relative Strength/Weakness in the Four Skills

As shown in figure 2.2, the participants prefer teacher correction over peer- or self-corrective feedback in most classroom activities. However, peer correction was seen as most effective in activities such as group discussion and answer-sharing, and self-correction was most effective in impromptu presentations.

In the next step, participants were given examples of implicit and explicit corrective feedback to choose from, as shown in Figure 2.3. They were then asked to indicate which form of corrective feedback they prefer and why. On this part of the questionnaire, two participants indicated a preference for implicit feedback, while the other

	Group discuss.	Class discuss.	Formal prest.	Imprt. prest.	Share answers	Answer teacher quest.	Answer student quest.
Self	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3
	✓ S1	✓ S1	✓ S1	✓ S2	✓ S2	✓ S2	✓ S2
	✓ S2	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3
Teacher	✓ S3	✓ S4	✓ S4	✓ S4	✓ S4	✓ S4	✓ S4
	✓ S1	✓ S1	✓ S1	✓ S2	✓ S2	✓ S2	✓ S2
	✓ S2	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3
Peer	✓ S1	✓ S2	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3
	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3	✓ S3
	✓ S4	✓ S4	✓ S4	✓ S4	✓ S4	✓ S4	✓ S4

Fig 2.2 Questionnaire 2: Preference for Source of Corrective Feedback

two indicated a preference for explicit feedback. Finally, three out of four participants indicated that the most effective time for feedback was during language performance.

To establish a baseline measure of grammatical competence, the participants were given a written test that consisted of 46 short-answer, fill-in-the-blank and multiple-choice questions on prepositions, past & present perfect tense, future perfect & progressive tense, and adjective clauses. They were given 15 minutes to complete as much of the test as possible.

**Student:** *She go to school every day.*

**Implicit Correction:** Request for clarification: *Sorry? What did you say?* Recast: *She goes to school every day.*

**Explicit Correction:** *It's not "she go," but "she goes"; we use "goes" with he/she/it.*

Fig 2.3 Questionnaire 3: Explicit vs. Implicit Feedback

To assess the students' pronunciation and grammatical accuracy in oral presentation, each participant was asked to give two five-minute presentations. I collected audio from these presentations and tallied the number of grammatical and pronunciation errors, where a pronunciation error was defined as an incomprehensible word or phrase. Because the L1s of the participants were Mandarin and Korean, I paid special attention to errors related to consonant clusters and word endings. A grammatical error was defined as the production of an incorrect word form or a sentence with garbled meaning (Brown, 2014, p. 252).

**During each lesson and throughout each class, the participants received peer and teacher corrective feedback both explicitly and implicitly.**

## PROCEDURE

Over the next four weeks, all four subjects participated in four 10-minute grammar activities that targeted infinitives and gerunds, future perfect and perfect progressive, reported speech, and real and unreal conditionals—the four constructions on which they had scored lowest on the test. These lessons were presented during the participants' regular two-hour speaking and listening ESL classes, which met twice a week over the course of the study. Each lesson highlighted one grammatical concept through worksheets and short exercises that the participants completed by themselves or in groups. The participants were then asked to use the target construction in a speaking activity with a partner or in a group. During each lesson and throughout each class, the participants received peer and teacher corrective feedback both explicitly and implicitly (since the preliminary questionnaire failed to indicate a consistent preference for either of the two types of correction).

## RESULTS

To determine the effects of the corrective feedback, I re-administered the written grammar assessment after four weeks and collected audio from a new five-minute presentation. The participants were also given a questionnaire which included questions about their perception of the case study and its effect on their language acquisition and grammatical control while speaking.

	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Total
Infinitives & Gerunds	6/8	4/8	5/8	7/8	69%
Future perfect & progressive	2/3	1/3	2/3	0/3	42%
Reported Speech	0/0	0/0	1/3	0/3	17%
Real & Unreal Conditionals	0/0	0/0	2/6	3/6	42%

Fig 2.4 Pre-Study Assessment

As can be seen in figures 2.4 and 2.5, the written grammar test showed a roughly 7% increase in accuracy, while the number of questions the participants answered increased by 25%. There was a 3% increase in accuracy for gerunds and infinitives, a 16% increase for future perfect and perfect progressive, an almost 50% increase for reported speech, and a 30% increase for real and unreal conditionals.

	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Total
Infinitives & Gerunds	7/8	5/8	5/8	7/8	72%
Future perfect & progressive	3/3	2/3	1/3	1/3	58%
Reported Speech	0/0	3/3	1/3	2/3	66%
Real & Unreal Conditionals	0/0	4/6	4/6	5/6	72%

Fig 2.5 Post-Study Assessment

The speaking samples showed a similar result, with a 36% decrease in pronunciation errors and a 29% decrease in grammatical errors.

With regard to the attitudinal measures, all four participants were glad they had participated in the case study and said they would most likely agree to participate in a similar study in the future. However, only two felt that the study had increased their understanding of the grammatical concepts that were covered in the study. The participants were also unsure if the study had improved their language performance, though they agreed that it had greatly improved their confidence in speaking English.

***This study demonstrates that, under some circumstances, corrective feedback can improve students' pronunciation and grammatical accuracy.***

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that, under some circumstances, corrective feedback can improve students' pronunciation and grammatical accuracy. I found no evidence that corrective feedback decreased the learners' intrinsic motivation and willingness to participate. Of course, this was a very small study, with

a select population of college-age Asian students. Nevertheless, this study does demonstrate that for some students, in some circumstances, corrective feedback is a valuable tool for the language classroom. **C**

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Laura Vawter** comes from Marysville, Washington, and has a Masters degree in Teaching from Webster University. For the past three years, she has been working as an ESL Instructor in IEP institutes at WPI, MCPHS, and Clark University, where she has had the privilege of teaching students from China, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Iran, Greece, and Thailand. She also enjoys spending time in the great outdoors hiking, biking and kayaking.

# Implementing SEI Strategies in Mathematics

**Barbara Rappaport**

brappapo@framingham.k12.ma.us



**In Fall 2014, I enrolled in the RETELL course** offered by MA DESE and began trying to implement the strategies I learned there in the context of math. At Fuller Middle School, where I teach, we have a relatively large ELL population. Of a total enrollment of 449 students, approximately 122 (27%) are LEP (Limited English Proficient) or FLEP (Formerly Limited English Proficient). As the head of the math department, I wanted to learn about Structured English Immersion (SEI) strategies, both for my own teaching and in order to support the other math teachers.

One strategy that I have implemented many times is Calderon's (2011) Seven-Step Process for Pre-teaching Vocabulary:

1. Teacher says the word. Student repeats.
2. Teacher states the word in context from the mentor text.
3. Teacher provides the dictionary definition(s).
4. Teacher explains meaning with student-friendly definitions.
5. Teacher highlights features of the word: polysemy, cognates, tense, prefixes, etc.
6. Teacher engages students in activities to develop word/concept knowledge, such as a one-minute TTYP (Turn to Your Partner), in which students must use the word 5-6 times in complete thoughts or sentences, ping-pong style. Teachers can check in by asking, "Who wants to tell me what your partner said?"
7. Teacher explains to students how the new words will be used in their homework, classwork, and reading summaries, etc.

***One strategy that I have implemented many times is Calderon's (2011) Seven-Step Process for Pre-teaching Vocabulary.***

I found that giving the students the definition, then using the word in context, and finally using it in a "student-friendly" way supported the students in

processing new words. Then I gave them multiple opportunities to practice. For example, with the word *variable*, the students practiced by first making up their own sentences based on a model supplied by me. Then I explained that they would see the word *variable* as we worked through the day's exercises, which asked them to find a rule for an input/output table. Once they figured out the rule for getting from the input to the output, I asked them to replace the word *input* with a variable. For example, if the input was the number of weeks ( $w$ ) and the output was the amount of money earned ( $d$ ), the students would eventually say that  $d$  is equal to the variable  $w$  multiplied by 25 (dollars earned each week).

**All my students—whether FLEP or not—struggle in math, and they were delighted to have this opportunity to express their mathematical knowledge in a creative way.**

Another useful strategy I learned in the RETELL course is sentence frames (Donnelly & Roe, 2010). I use these on a daily basis as part of the students' "exit tickets." The exit ticket usually requires the student to complete one problem independently, demonstrating that he/she has learned the new skill/concept of the day. I then add a sentence frame such as "Why does the number you wrote belong in the circle? I wrote \_\_\_\_\_ in the circle because \_\_\_\_\_." I find that these frames encourage the students to write more precisely and at greater length.

Another writing strategy I particularly like is "Role Audience Format Topic" or "RAFT" (Santa & Havens, 1995). Here is the prompt I gave my students:

*You are a decimal point. Your audience is a confused math student. The student is confused about what to do with you when adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing decimal numbers up to the hundredths place. You are going to write a letter to this student explaining how you (the decimal point) move in a multiplication problem.*

I began by modeling the RAFT strategy for the students. I shared a letter that responded to a similar prompt, but with a different operation. First, we brainstormed content vocabulary words that could be used in the letter: *decimal point, tenths place, hundredths place, factor, product*. Then I asked the students to turn and talk with a partner, to discuss the role they would be taking, the audience, the format of the writing, and the topic. I listened to their conversations to be sure that they understood my expectations. Next we reviewed the parts of a letter, and I left a template on the board for the students to see. The students used computers to draft their letters, after which they

engaged in peer editing and then conferenced with me. We concluded with a final draft, which they shared with each other. All my students—whether FLEP or not—struggle in math, and they were delighted to have this opportunity to express their mathematical knowledge in a creative way.

Since my own FLEP students are at WIDA 6 or higher, I have found that I need to raise the SEI strategies up a notch. At first, in my language objectives, I used terms more commonly associated with the “developing” language functions from Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956), such as *define*, *explain*, and *discuss*. But as I learned more about the level of my students, I raised the bar and used higher-level terms such as *analyze*, *synthesize*, *justify*, *convince*, and *create*. For example, “Students will be able to synthesize the terms *input*, *output*, *rule*, and *variable* in describing a function (an *input/output*) table.” In other words, they will be able to use these words to demonstrate *understanding* of a function table, rather than simply giving definitions of the words.

My colleagues whose students are at WIDA levels 3-5 have found that they need to add additional scaffolding. For example, consider the following objectives:

*Students will be able to orally:*

- Restate the story in their own words.
- Identify the question that needs to be answered.
- Describe the pattern that exists in the story problem.
- Explain the strategy that they used to solve the problem using specific facts from the story problem.

To address this task, students at WIDA levels 3-5 will need a scaffold of sentence frames such as the following:

- A. This story is about (6) people who report that they have seen (Big Foot). Each day the police get (2 times as many) calls as the day before.  
How many days will it take until they get the (300<sup>th</sup>) call?
- B. I need to find out \_\_\_\_\_.
- C. The pattern I notice in the story is that every day \_\_\_\_\_.
- D. The strategy I used to solve this problem is \_\_\_\_\_.

When I discussed the power of these strategies with my colleagues, we found that we had all had similar experiences even though we do not all teach the same content: two teach math, one teaches science, and one is a special

educator. We all found the Seven-Step Process for Pre-teaching Vocabulary strategy to be the easiest to implement, with the greatest impact on students' ability to access new curriculum. This and the sentence frames are the strategies we use most often.

**These strategies can be adapted to provide opportunities for all students to access new content, develop academic language, gain confidence in their academic performance, and “show what they know.”**

In conclusion, I have found that the strategies we learned in the RETELL course can impact the growth and achievement of ELLs in all content areas, including math and science. And it is not only the ELLs who benefit! These strategies can be adapted to provide opportunities for *all* students to access new content, develop academic language, gain confidence in their academic performance, and “show what they know.” **C**

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Barbara Rappaport** is the head of the math department at Fuller Middle School in Framingham, where she has taught for 23 years. Prior to her current role, she was a Title I teacher, 6th grade math teacher, and math specialist. Fuller Middle School has a very diverse population with over 30% ELD students and over 50% whose first language is not English. As math department head, Barbara supports students at all WIDA levels, whether in a TBE program or an SEI classroom. She also has worked with the Waltham Educational Development Center to design professional development courses for teaching mathematics to ELL students.



# Day of Empire: How Hyperpowers Rise To Global Dominance—and Why They Fall

by Amy Chua. Doubleday, New York, 2007. 396 pp. ISBN: 0385512848.

## Reviewed by Eileen R. Feldman

efeldman@bhcc.mass.edu

**Amy Chua states in her Introduction that this book “is a tribute to America’s tolerance,”** which, though imperfect, has attracted great numbers of immigrants and refugees to its shores. Historically, she argues, tolerance of religious and racial minority populations has been an important factor in the rise and continuation of “hyperpowers,” while the loss of tolerance leads to decline. Thus this book serves as both a rallying cry and a warning to all of us to open our hearts and minds to the students who come to our classrooms from all around the world.

Chua bases her thesis on historical evidence from the Persian Empire (559-350BC), the Roman Empire, the Golden Age of China (712-756AD), the Mongol and Mughal Empires, medieval Spain, Holland, the Ottoman Empire, the British Empire, the emerging U.S., the Axis Powers of World War II, and the post-war U.S. She also speculates on the potential future hyperpowers of China, the European Union, and India. Chua warns that the survival of today’s hyperpowers depends on three elements: an intelligent immigration policy, a policy of multinationalism and outsourcing to benefit the people in the host countries, and a solution to global issues such as environmental degradation.

This mini-world history by a non-historian for non-historians provides a user-friendly application of the past as a lens for viewing our own past, present, and future. This is a great read for informing, reinforcing, or challenging one’s global mindset. Individual chapters could be pulled out to supplement class lessons, and thirty-eight pages of bibliographic endnotes at the conclusion provide further sources of information. The later chapters about World Wars I and II and the post-war world that followed them are especially relevant to today’s students.

One criticism: The history of South American and African empires is not included. In fact, those regions receive no attention at all except for having been colonized by outside powers. ELLs and their teachers might be concerned about that omission and work to fill the book’s void. **C**

# The Words Their Way Series, Pearson Education, Inc.

*Words their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling, 6th ed., 2016*

*Words Their Way with English Learners: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling, 2nd ed., 2012 (with online PD Toolkit)*

*Words their Way Word Sorts for Within Word Pattern Spellers, 2nd ed., 2009*

*Words their Way Word Sorts for Letter Name-Alphabetic Spellers, 2nd ed., 2009*

*Words their Way Word Sorts for Syllables and Affixes Spellers, 2015*

*Words their Way Letter and Picture Sorts for Emergent Spellers, 2nd ed., 2019*

*Words their Way Word Sorts for Derivational Relations Spellers, 2009*

## REVIEWED BY ALICIA SERAFIN

aserafin@everett.k12.ma.us

**Words Their Way is a differentiated program** keyed to Tompkins' (2013) five stages of spelling and orthographic development: emergent spelling, letter-name alphabetic spelling, within-word pattern spelling, syllables and affixes spelling, and derivational relations spelling. The program introduces new vocabulary across grades K-8 for students with different learning styles, abilities, and English language proficiency levels, with engaging, kinesthetic word sorts that students can use to categorize words into categories, based on spelling patterns, concepts, or visuals. There are inventories for benchmarking students' knowledge of English spelling patterns, lessons teachers can use to guide students at each of the five stages of development, and recommendations on how to set up routines for differentiated small groups, either within the classroom or with a specialist.


**Over the four months of the program, our students all demonstrated progress in their knowledge of spelling patterns.**

I used the *Words Their Way* series in a Word Consciousness project that I developed at the Whittier School in Everett. Each participating teacher was given a copy of the text *Words their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling, 6th ed., 2016*, to review for our meetings and to use in planning classes, and all the teachers had access to a professional development library that included all the titles in the series.

Over the four months of the program, our students all demonstrated progress

in their knowledge of spelling patterns. In one group, 7 out of 8 students moved up either one level or a whole stage by mid-term. The initial inventory for these students had indicated that work should begin with short vowels, and their mid-term assessments demonstrated that all of them had mastered this concept. (The one student who did not move up was the one whose initial inventory had shown that he already understood this concept.)

**Given the positive results from this year's project, we are planning a larger scale implementation of the Words Their Way program next year.**

We found that the *Words Their Way* materials helped our ELLs to develop their spelling, vocabulary and knowledge of morphology, and facilitated their progress in learning spelling patterns. The *Words Their Way* inventories also provided an important resource for teachers to use in data meetings, intervention meetings, and parent meetings. Given the positive results from this year's project, we are planning a larger scale implementation of the *Words Their Way* program next year, with the hope of benefitting many more students. 

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