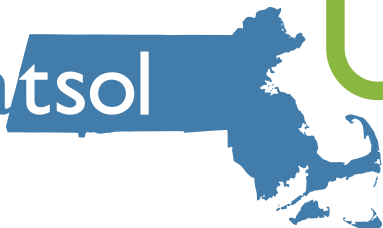

Currents

MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES
Vol. 35, No. 1 Spring/Summer 2012

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MATSOL 40th Anniversary Conference

Almost 900 MATSOL members from K-12, adult and higher education came together on May 2-4 for the MATSOL 40th Anniversary Conference. Taking place at a new conference site in Framingham, the event featured three pre-conference institutes, over 80 workshops and 20 vendor exhibits. MATSOL thanks all the presenters and participants who contributed to the success of the conference.

2012 Award Recipients

MATSOL CONGRATULATES THE 2012 AWARD RECIPIENTS AT THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

The MATSOL Teacher of the Year Award was presented to Mary-Margaret Almonte, an ESL teacher at the Beebe School in Malden, MA. The MATSOL Teacher of the Year Award recognizes excellence in the education of English language learners (ELLs). A teacher selected for the award has demonstrated successful teaching of English language learners, a long-term commitment of the education of ELLs, mentoring and support of new teachers in the field, and strong relationships with the community and parents of ELLs.

The Anne Dow Award for Excellence and Creativity was presented to Christine Tibor, Director at Framingham Adult ESL Plus, in Framingham, MA. The Anne Dow Award for Excellence and Creativity is given to a professional who has made outstanding efforts that reflect enthusiasm and creative, energetic, independent thinking. The 2012 award is for an administrator who has exhibited courageous, inclusive leadership and implemented sound and supportive decisions with regard to the institution's ESOL programs.

The Linda Schulman Innovation Awards program supports projects that promote English language learning and embody the spirit of creativity, sensitivity and community. Grants are giving to fund pedagogical projects to benefit English Language Learners by improving their language skills or increasing their understanding of American culture.

2012 RECIPIENTS OF THE LINDA SCHULMAN INNOVATION AWARD GRANTS ARE:

- **Meryl Beck,** Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experience, for the project "SCALE Theater Arts Program."
- **Francine Johnson,** Greater Lawrence Technical School, for the project "Increasing ELL Parent Involvement through the Discussion of Reading."
- **Jennifer Bellavance,** Revere High School, for the project "A Day in the Life of an ELL Student."
- **Viviana Pagan and Sandra Lozkoz,** Chandler Magnet School, Worcester for the project "Immigration Comes Alive on a Voyage Through History/La Immigración Toma Vida Através de la Historia."
- **Debra Roberts,** Fitchburg High School, for the project "Using Technology to Communicate and Learn in Multiple Languages."

In addition, the MATSOL Low Incidence Programs Special Interest Group and the Massachusetts English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC) presented Ann Feldman, ELL Director at Milford Public Schools, with a special Leadership Award in the field of English Learner Education, "in deep appreciation of her outstanding generosity, support, and dedication."

MATSOL thanks National Geographic Learning/Cengage Learning for sponsoring the awards ceremony and party.

I Am My Language

AN ART INSTALLATION BY GAIL JERAULD BOS AND KATHRINE DOUTHIT

In honor of the 40 years of MATSOL, collaborating artists Gail Jerauld Bos and Kathrine Douthit have created an installation especially for this year's conference. The imagined scene celebrates the ideas of language teachers, theorists, and especially language learners. Inspired by sources as diverse as Gloria Anzaldua's "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" and Jim Cummins's "CUP versus SUP," the work also revolves around the folk tradition of the May Pole. Viewers were invited to respond to questions about language learning and teaching on sticky notes, which were then stuck up on the wall around the display.

Community College Discussion Group

DR. EILEEN KELLEY

At the MATSOL Conference, Dr. Madhu Sharma and Dr. Eileen Kelley led a discussion group that focused on issues that are important to community colleges in Massachusetts. Seventeen participants from all over the state met to discuss past accomplishments and future directions for ESL programs at Massachusetts community colleges.

Eileen Kelley began the meeting with a short history of 'MECCA" (Massachusetts ESL Community College Association), a group that was active in the 1980s and early 1990s. MECCA meetings were usually held twice a year on different college campuses. The participants in MECCA worked together to compile data and write a report on ESL programs at the colleges. MECCA had a rationale and a list of issues to be worked on. As we saw in the discussion, these issues are still relevant today.

MATSOL is working toward supporting a group similar to MECCA, and there is a lot of interest in making this happen. Participants at the meeting agreed that it made sense to revive or reinvent a new group that would continue and expand on the efforts of MECCA. Helen Solorzano, MATSOL Executive Director, expressed on behalf of the Board of Directors that MATSOL supports this initiative and would like to facilitate the development of the group.

Dr. Sharma has distributed a questionnaire similar to the original MECCA survey, and she is currently compiling the results. This will give us a good idea of how big each ESL/ ESOL program is at each college, where the program is housed, whether the program offers academic credit, how many faculty members there are, and who the contact people are at each campus, among other things.

During the discussion in the MATSOL session, participants offered several future directions and issues of importance for the community college group. These include (in no specific order):

- credentialing for ESL across the state
- the relationships between workforce ESL and academic ESL
- being proactive on the college campus

- ABE and ESL
- Overreliance on adjunct faculty
- grants and their effects on our programs
- What is success for a community college ESL student?
- Anti-immigrant backlash
- academic credit for ESL
- writing position papers on important issues

There is a lot of energy and expertise at our Massachusetts community colleges, and it is evident that our ESL/ESOL programs and personnel contribute greatly to the Commonwealth. It is an important time for us to come together and work on issues that are relevant to us, to our programs, and especially, to our students. With the backing of MATSOL, Massachusetts community college ESL/ESOL programs can have a strong support network and have a louder voice on issues of import. It is a great opportunity to work together once again.

MATSOL Board Approves Amended By-Laws

On March 8, 2012, the MATSOL Board of Directors voted unanimously to approve amendment of the MATSOL by-laws, updating the by-laws adopted during MATSOL's incorporation in 2001. The amendments reflect the growth and changes in MATSOL as an organization over the past decade, and make the language of the by-laws clearer and easier to understand. Members may view the by-laws on the website at www.matsol.org/mission-governance.

MATSOL Currents Archive

Curious about MATSOL's history? Past issues of MATSOL Currents from 1972 to the present are available on the MATSOL web site in .pdf format, and are now indexed by author, title and date.

Visit the archive at www.matsol.org/matsol-currents-archive.

We are grateful to Suffolk University Office of Second Language Services for their assistance with the archive project.

MATSOL Celebrates 40 Years: Awards, Music, Dancing, and Cake

A highlight of the 2012 MATSOL conference was the Thursday evening celebration, held on May 3, where MATSOL members came to take part in commemorating the 40th anniversary of the organization's founding in 1972.

The evening began with a ceremony honoring recipients of the 2012 awards, followed by a presentation from Jane and Martin Brauer of a gift to MATSOL of beautiful em-broidered panels from the school in Alolenango, Guatemala, which benefits from the exquisite beaded jewelry sold at the conference.

MATSOL was honored to be joined by many past presidents: Bob Saitz (1972-73), Vivian Zamel (1982-83), Paul Abraham (1985-86), Judy DeFilippo (1986-87), Suzanne Irujo (1988-89), Catherine Sadow (1990-91), Kathryn Riley (1991-92), Marlyn Katz Levenson (1993-94), Margo Friedman (1998-99), Paula Merchant (2000-01), Johan Uvin (2001-02), Kellie Jones (2003-4, 2005-7), Robyn Dowling Grant (2007-8) and Linda Foley-Vinay (2009-2011). Many former members of the Board of Directors joined us as well.

The band Sabór Latino provided music for the party adding to the celebratory theme. Everyone was soon dancing and enjoying the event, highlighted by a resounding singing of "Happy Birthday," and a cutting of the cake by MATSOL's first president Bob Saitz and current president, Katherine Earley (2011-12).

A photo and video crew, made up of students from Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, was on hand to take pictures and record short reminiscences by several past presidents, which we hope to edit and post on the web site this summer.

MATSOL thanks National Geographic/Cengage Learning for their generous sponsorship of the 40th Anniversary Party.

Almost 900 MATSOL members from K-12, adult and higher education came together on May 2-4 for the MATSOL 40th Anniversary Conference. Taking place at a new conference site in Framingham, the event featured three pre-conference institutes, over 80 workshops and 20 vendor exhibits. MATSOL thanks all the presenters and participants who contributed to the success of the conference.

The Founding of MATSOL

ROBERT SAITZ
Founding President of MATSOL

TESOL BACKGROUND

As James Alatis noted, in his "The Early History of TESOL" (Volume XXI, No. 2 of the TESOL NEWSLETTER), the generation of a professional organization for teachers of English to speakers of other languages took place in 1963. He wrote, "At the April 1963 annual conference of the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA), the suggestion was made that Charles A. Ferguson of the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) call a small conference of representatives from various kinds of ESOL programs to determine the advisability of a unique, more inclusive organization for teachers of English to speakers of other languages.

A pilot meeting was held in Washington, D.C. on September 12, 1963 with representatives from NAFSA, CAL, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), Modern Language Association (MLA), and the Speech Association of America (SAA) now the Speech Communication Association, as well as representatives from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the state educational systems of California, Michigan, Florida, Arizona, New Mexico, the city of New York and Canada."

As a result of that meeting, a conference was set up to take place in Tucson, Arizona May 6-9, 1964. Although about 100 people were expected, over 700 showed up. Additional conferences followed in San Diego (1965), and New York City (1966). At the New York conference, the TFSOL organization was formally created and the organization held its first official conference in Miami in 1967. There were about 1,000 members and dues were $6.00. The rationale for the organization, as Alatis noted, centered on three needs: "(1) The need for a professional organization that would be permanently devoted to the problems of teaching English to speakers of other languages, at all levels. (2) The need for a pedagogical journal to serve the entire profession. (3) The need for a register of specialists which might be helpful to foundations, government agencies, and universities with the ever-growing need for qualified personnel in the area of ESOL."

There was an interest in the establishment of affiliates from the very beginning and by 1970 New Mexico, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, Texas, California, Illinois,

Florida, New York, and Washington (D.C. area) had joined. MATSOL joined TESOL officially on Jan. 1, 1973.

MASSACHUSETTS BACKGROUND

In 1647, William Bradford, writing in his **Of Plimoth Plantation**, referred to an American Indian named Samoset, who had been "skulking about" the Puritans. Samoset had come from Maine, from "these eastern parts where some English ships came to fish, with whom he was acquainted and could name sundry of them by their names, amongst whom he had got his language."

Had Samoset acquired English on his own by working with English sailors and traders or had someone in the colony (Maine was not distinct from Massachusetts at the time) taught him, someone who might have been the first local teacher of English as a second language with a recorded success! Or was it Squanto who interpreted for the Pilgrims and Wampanoags? There seems not to have been a seventeenth-century Massachusetts Association of Learners of English as a Second Language (MALESL?). But in any case, the area had a long history of language learning as its coastal location and its hunting and fishing opportunities brought speakers of Spanish, Portuguese, Basque, Pidgin English and English into contact with each other here. From the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, immigration guaranteed the continuity of English teaching, with the huge immigrations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries producing the need for the many immigrant day schools such as the one in the South End of Boston.

However, it was in the 1940s that some of the forces leading to the establishment of TESOL and MATSOL first emerged. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy led to increased interest in Latin America, with support forthcoming for sending U.S. citizens there, bringing Latin Americans here, and training teachers of English and developing materials. One particularly rich result was the establishment of the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan with its extensive teaching programs and material development. After World War II, which itself brought thousands of Americans in contact with speakers of other languages, the United States was significantly less isolationist than it had been. Circumstances led to immediate rehabilitation programs in Asia and Europe, such as the Marshall Plan, and later the Peace Corps program extended an American reach into many countries. Further, an increased awareness of the "one world" idea (at that time some Americans created a world federalist party, giving up their U.S. citizenships to become citizens of the world) led to enthusiasm for programs designed to interchange peoples: e.g., the Fulbright program and the Experiment in International Living. Since at the same time English was

becoming the world language, a number of these programs which were related to or organized through universities included English teaching, teacher training and development of ESL materials. The final impulse toward the expansion of the English teaching world came as a result of the immigration wave of the 1960s which increased significantly the number of domestic residents and citizens who did not speak English as a first language. That shifted the focus to local concern; it was no longer universities with internationals students but elementary and secondary schools now faced with the need of a non-English speaking population.

The challenge to meet the needs of the school-age children was responded to by the teachers and local superintendents, with the support of federal, state and city governments, especially through the federal Title 1 program for elementary and secondary schools, and particularly in the larger cities such as Boston, New Bedford, Fall River, Lowell, Lawrence, Worcester and Springfield. Teachers in the local schools included Martha Shanley, Maria Fleites, Maria Geddes, Carmen Neckeles in Boston; Carmen was a teacher in the John J.Williams School in the South End of Boston (in the district of Superintendent William Cannon) and she recalls that in the sixties she was taken out of her regular classroom and impressed as an ESL pullout teacher. She "pulled out" six or seven non-English speaking children at a time (mostly Hispanic and Chinese) and met with them in the hall, a closet or a corner. There were no materials so she cut pictures out of newspapers. Undergoing similar experiences were John Corcoran in Worcester, John Schumann in Waltham, Mary Shannon in Lawrence, Barbara Lawler in New Bedford, and others throughout the state. In New Bedford, Ed Tavares initiated a summer curriculum workshop administered jointly by the New Bedford School Department and Boston University; the teachers spent the summer translating their basic texts into a simplified English.

At the same time, the Abraham Lincoln School, an adult school in the South End, was continuing its work; the school had a halfday immersion program running in the daytime and evenings and had graduated some 200,000 students by the early 1960s. The variety of teachers included Ed McFadd, a returned Peace Corps volunteer, Madeleine Reilly, the former chairperson of the Boston School Committee and Charlie Kalangis, a graduate of the school. Charlie's classroom was filled with people solving problems; he said he was not teaching language but content, this well before Paolo Freire's **Pedagogy of the Oppressed** (1970) and Virgil Strohmeyer with his "language as a carrier of information" in TESOL publications of the 1970s.

In addition, as noted above, the universities were running foreign-student programs that attracted faculty and made use of faculty they already had on

hand. Francine Stieglitz joined Boston University, Dick Newman added to his duties at Boston State College, Ann Hilferty, another Peace Corps veteran, worked at Northeastern and Wellesley. State and city entities became involved: Erni2 Mazzone and Juan Rodriguez from the State Department of Education; Celia Soriano-Bresnahan and Raffael De Gruttola from the Office of Cultural Affairs in Boston. And Sister Frances Georgia was an institution in herself. Businesses were interested; the John Hancock Life Insurance Company established an ESL program for its employees during working hours. The federal government and foundations were also productive. The Commonwealth Service Corps developed a Migrant Education Project which provided teachers and materials for Spanish-speaking migrants in Massachusetts. The Ford Foundation sponsored a unique program, the BASIS (Boston Area Seminar for International Students) program which was run cooperatively by Harvard, MIT, Boston University, Boston College and Brandeis to give students who would be attending these colleges in the fall a summer of language and culture experience. And in response to all of this activity, a publishing company, Newbury House,devoted itself to the production of ESL-related materials.

Such activities were happening nation-wide and on a much larger scale than Massachusetts in places such as the southwest and Florida with their large Spanish-speaking populations, New York with its substantial Puerto Rican influx and the areas where there were significant numbers of American Indians. The involvement of hundreds of teachers, administrators, state and local officials, the federal government, foundations, etc. led to the idea of a national organization to provide a focus, and TESOL was born, holding its first convention in 1967, in Miami.

Almost immediately after the creation of TESOL, its officers, and Harold Allen in particular, called for the establishment of affiliates. The first to join TESOL was New Mexico in 1969, followed by New Jersey, Puerto Rico and Texas, also in 1969. California, Illinois, Florida, New York State and the Washington, D.C. area joined in 1970. Encouraged by the TESOL president (James Alatis, a native of Massachusetts teaching at Georgetown at the time), a group of people involved in ESL met in 1971 at Boston University. Represented were universities, public and private schools, the state department of education, churches and social agencies.

An organization was formed and a slate of officers elected in 1972:

PRESIDENT

Robert Saitz
Boston University

1ST VICE-PRESIDENT

John Corcoran
Worcester Public Schools

2ND VICE-PRESIDENT

Mary Walsh
Boston State College

SEC.-TREASURER

Barbara Lawler
New Bedford Public Schools

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE:

Maria Geddes
Boston Public Schools

Ann Hilferty
Northeastern, Wellesley

Ernest Mazzone
State Dept. of Education

Juan Rodriguez
State Dept. of Education

John Schumann
Waltham Public Schools

Mary Shannon
Lawrence Public Schools

It should be noted that MATSOL is the only affiliate without an E in its acronym and that was largely due to the insistence of Sister Frances Georgia. Appalled by the large numbers of children she observed on the streets of Boston who were not in school, she launched a campaign to make sure the school system could provide for them. This coincided with the movement toward bilingual education, which embodied the notion of teaching content in the native language while the students were learning English. Concerned with their total education, Sister Frances lobbied successfully for an organization that would retain that idea in its title. Thus in Massachusetts the organization became the Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages. ■

Adult Ed SIG Conference

EILEEN KRAMER
Adult Ed SIG, MATSOL Board

At the Adult Ed Special Session on Friday, Anne Serino (ABE State Director, DESE) and Navjeet Singh (Vice President, Applied Research, Commonwealth Corp.) updated us on ABE initiatives in Massachusetts. The speakers reminded us that ABE encompasses a broad service category, including ESOL teachers, coordinators, and directors in community programs; workplace education providers; and teachers and administrators in GED and other adult basic education programs.

Ms. Serino discussed the increasing diversity of needs among the population served by DESE-funded classes, a stronger focus on academic credentials, and the state's recognition that ABE teachers should (and will) receive a well deserved raise in hourly pay this year. Mr. Singh highlighted the instruction gaps in the current system: although 12% of the state's population needs English language services, only 5% are being served. His recommendations include use of technology to promote self-directed learning, more intensive services that support workplace education and college transition, and improved capacity of teachers.

Our two presenters graciously agreed to stay for the subsequent open adult ed discussion period, which was an interactive comment period. Among the topics initiated by the audience was the possibility of teacher entrepreneurship, including professional development that would support the endeavor. We will continue exploring this idea and others in Adult Ed SIG meetings later in the year. ■

Jewelry builds lives in Guatemala

JANE Z. BRAUER, ED.D
Educational Consultant and Board Member of
"Under the Same Moon"

"I started this project 10 years ago without books. Our tables were stones with wooden boards and our chairs were just the earth." - Julio Garcia of Alotenango, Guatemala. "As a 1st grade public school teacher, I observed many children not going to school. When I visited their families, who live in corrugated metal and mud huts with no flooring and often little to no furniture, I found they didn't have the money to pay for uniforms and books required for attendance to the "public" schools. I was determined to do something about this, so I quit my job teaching in the public schools to start to teach these children who also deserve to see their hopes and dreams fulfilled."

For the poorest children, in a poor village, in one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere … one man's vision is helping children break the cycle of poverty through education, coupled with health initiatives. Julio Garcia has been working tirelessly for the past 10 years to create change. From a one-room shack … to a modern building serving 400 – 500 children daily, he is lovingly helping to change lives – one child at a time. Six years ago, Julio met Framingham teacher and Lesley University trained Spanish literacy expert, Rebecca Center, who had adopted a child from Guatemala. As Rebecca and her son spent a portion of their summers in the beautiful and affordable colonial city of Antigua, near Alotenango, she came, little by little, to begin supporting the educational practices in Julio's school.

Today, thanks to all that Rebecca has put into place, and the willingness to work hard on the part of teachers, students at the school experience a balanced literacy model par excellence in the Kindergarten through 2nd grade unit. Materials have been donated, many from Hampton- Brown and National Geographic. When you walk into a classroom, you see children engaged in learning. Their literacy scores are outstripping those of students in the public schools in Guatemala, and are comparable to those of children in dual language programs in Massachusetts!

Children receive a motivating and carefully thought-out education, as well as oral health care, a very healthy snack, and scholarships to attend other schools when they graduate. As you can imagine, even in a developing country, running costs are considerable. We raise most of our money to support the school by purchasing jewelry from local artisans and reselling it here.   MATSOL has supported our initiative for the past two years at their conference, and we, as well as the children, are so very thankful for this help. All of you who care about these, sometimes marginalized, populations here in the States, have lovingly supported this group by purchasing $5,000.00 worth of jewelry each year and we are eternally grateful!

Second Grade Classroom

The jewelry-makers in Santiago de Atitlan on the roof of a cinder-block home

Our not-for profit organization, "Under the Same Moon" is entirely volunteer run. We have tax exempt status and welcome all size contributions. We also wish to reach out to any of you, our professional community, who wish to come to the school to help teachers make a difference. What are in place now are early childhood practices and emerging reading practices. We are still in need of professionals who want to volunteer to spend time with teachers to improve the curriculum in upper elementary grades. Having done this myself, I will say that it is truly rewarding, and that the teachers and headmaster take guidance to heart and put it into practice.

So please contact us if you wish to contribute your time or your resources towards this very worthy cause and again… thank you MATSOL – you are already the change we seek! ■

Why Can't My ELL Student Read? Is it a Disability or a Language Difference?

MARGARET ADAMS
Director of Language and Literacy for the Malden Public Schools

Juan is currently a Spanish speaking LEP second grader, who recently was referred by the school's Teacher Assisted Team for consideration for a full special education evaluation. The student has been tracked by the school's TAT for over two years because of difficulties in reading since kindergarten.

A review of his educational history showed the student entered kindergarten as a non-English speaker. He struggled in kindergarten to make ground in early literacy skills. The student continued to struggle in first grade with early literacy and was retained.

The student was benchmarked using DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators Benchmark in Early Literacy Skills) and GRADE at the beginning of second grade. His skills are below grade level.

Juan's performance at the end of his second year in first grade indicated a MEPA level of 4 which had increased from a level 3 from the previous year. According to the state's definition, the student has made progress on the MEPA. However, at the end of his second year in first grade, his reading and writing scores were below grade level. His listening and speaking as represented on the MELA-O were both 4s indicating intermediate English language proficiency.

At the end of first grade, Juan had a 100% on the district's end of year math benchmark. In addition, at the end of the first quarter in second grade, he had a 95% on the math benchmark. His performance in math indicates strong reasoning skills and conceptual understanding. We can also likely infer that both short term and long term memory are intact given his ability to retain math skills

and concepts. Here performance in another academic area other than reading pointed to potential areas of strength of the student.

A review of the student's progress monitoring data showed the student was responding to appropriate interventions in reading. At the time of the initial referral, the student was in a Project Read small group which met five times a week for 30 minutes. He also used a computer based reading program, Lexia, to provide repeated practice on phonetic skills. The student received a year of small group Project Read in his second year of first grade which continued into the second grade. His trajectory on DIBELS which was used to progress monitor his growth in phonics and oral reading fluency indicates significant growth over time.

His intervention plan also included access to quality ESL instruction 4 times a week for 45 minutes a day. Instruction focused on developing his reading, writing, listening and speaking skills using a variety of leveled readers around concepts related to those being studied in the mainstream classroom.

The story above can be repeated over and over with a multitude of English language learners across the state of Massachusetts, begging the repeated question of whether the students' difficulties are due to the process of learning a second language or a disability. Given that academic language takes anywhere from 4 to 7 years, the TAT's implementation of a response to intervention model in reading showed over time that likely his sources of difficulty were due to a language difference and not a disability. Juan is still below grade level but his on his way to becoming a reader.

In Massachusetts, the number of English language learners is increasing. From 2009-2010 to 2010-2011, Massachusetts saw an increase from 6.2% to 7.1% in the number of ELL students. From 2001-2002 to 2010-2011, the number of ELLs classified as having a disability also increased, from 9.8% to 14.8% (Serpa 2011).

THE DILEMMA OF ASSESSMENT

Determining the root of ELLs struggling with reading will not be easy. First, most English language assessments that are often part of a special education evaluation will neither be valid nor reliable. Assessment items on the measures likely will be culturally biased.

Second, assessment in the native language may not practical. The likelihood of having a trained psychologist, speech and language pathologist, special edu-

cation teacher who could speak the native language of the student is extremely small. If the person did exist, there are likely no known norm referenced measures that could be used. Even assessments that are considered "non-verbal" are inherently verbal as they require some use of language to give directions. Third, most assessment of ELLs become a measure of the students' lack of English language proficiency and cultural background on American culture. All measures require language in understanding the directions and then responding to items.

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION (RTI) AS A SOLUTION

In a response to intervention model, three tiers of instruction are outlined to provide increasing levels of instructional support based upon assessment information.

At the first level of RTI, students receive strong reading instruction based upon a core reading program. For an ELL student, the reading instruction and curriculum materials must be culturally and linguistically appropriate. All students are benchmarked to determine which students are at level and those in need of additional supports.

English as a second language (ESL) services are a component of the first tier of instruction for all ELL students. Often ESL is seen as an intervention. Instead, good ESL instruction is at the core of appropriate instruction that provides the student access to core curriculum.

A student who has not met grade level benchmarks in reading would then be considered for tier 2 interventions which usually occur within the classroom and can include teacher's small group instruction targeted at specific areas of need. Student is progress monitored at least twice a month to determine progress.

If the student is not making progress at tier 2, the student is moved to tier 3, where the intervention is intensified. Instruction is intensified by reducing the number of students in the group, increasing the time and frequency of the intervention, or considering a different intervention. Frequency of progress monitoring can be as often as once a week to help monitor the effectiveness of the intervention.

TOP TEN ACTION STEPS FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS

Using the example of Juan, the administration of a battery of norm referenced or criterion reference measures by psychologists, speech and language pa-

thologist, and special education personnel will not provide an accurate picture of the potential causes of his difficulties for an ELL student. Any such testing is likely to reflect an inaccurate picture of difficulties with verbal tasks versus performance. A more accurate picture of Juan strengths and needs were better determined by reviewing curriculum based reading assessments.

Thus, a response to intervention model over several weeks or months will provide a wealth of information on whether the difficulties are due to language difference or a disability. In order to implement such a model, the following should be considered:

1. Regular education, reading specialist, and the ESL teacher must carefully work together consulting and combining expertise to determine a full picture of the student.
2. Review carefully student records and history. Determine amount of ESL instruction student received each year. Determine length of time in United States schools.
3. Use diagnostic reading assessments to determine particular areas of strength and need.
4. Administer English language proficiency measures to determine the level of English proficiency across the domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
5. Suspend the urge to diagnose and then describe the students' strengths and then areas of need. Begin with the students' strengths and what the student can do. Doing so, removes us from looking at the student as a deficit.
6. Based on benchmark and diagnostic assessments and English language proficiency results, develop an intervention plan for the student. Are the interventions, materials, instructional strategies culturally and linguistically appropriate? Is the interventionist qualified and knowledgeable of the needs of ELLs?
7. ESL instruction is a component of tier I and not an intervention. Interventions would target specific areas of need in reading such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
8. Progress monitor using appropriate assessment measures frequently to determine growth. Consider any lack of growth in connection with the students' level of English proficiency.
9. Abstain from the use of any norm reference measures that are likely to be culturally and linguistically biased in making eligibility decisions for special education students.

10. Don't underestimate the impact of cultural difference to the learning process. In addition, ELLs are likely under a tremendous amount of stress as they navigate a new culture, grieve their loss of family and friends from their native country, and grapple with the difficulties of not understanding much of their school day.

The number of ELL students will likely continues to increase especially in our urban centers. The question of whether sources of difficulty are due to a language difference or to a language disability will continue as well. Given the lack of appropriate assessment measures and native language assessors, response to intervention models for English language learners in reading are essentially the best alternative in identifying the cause of an ELLs difficulties in reading. ■

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Supporting the Success of Multilingual Learners in Massachusetts Through Improved Policy

KARA MITCHELL, CRISTEN J. RECKER, AND MADHAVI TANDON

Recently, Governor Patrick called himself the "incredibly proud governor of the nation's leading education state" (Patrick, 2011). However, just two months before Governor Patrick's proud comments, an article was published in the Boston Globe detailing several issues the US Justice Department found in many districts and across the state including the lack of training of teachers to effectively work with multilingual learners (Vaznis, 2011). Other research has shown that there are high drop-out rates, low graduation rates and an over-representation of multilingual learners (usually called English Language Learners) in special education classrooms (ELL Subcommittee, 2010; Gáston Institute, 2009; Mitchell, 2010). Yet state law remains largely unchanged despite increasing evidence of extensive problems the current policy is forcing in practice.

This policy brief is the result of a comprehensive state education policy analysis conducted in 2010 that analyzed nine chapters of General Law, twenty-six regulations as voted on by the Board of Education, and eleven policy documents from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE) specifically related to the education of multilingual learners and their teachers (Mitchell, 2010). The following information is an effort to share the results of that comprehensive policy analysis in support of improved policy in Massachusetts. We hope that through this policy brief, Massachusetts citizens will better understand the current issues in Massachusetts state policy and strive to improve education for multilingual learners in the state so that a whole generation of American citizens will not be under-prepared for professional participation in the American and global economy.

INNOVATION AND FLEXIBILITY

THE PROBLEM

Currently, MA law states, "All children in Massachusetts public schools shall be taught English by being taught in English and all children shall be placed in English language classrooms" (M.G.L.c.71A§4). It further declares that, "English learners shall be educated through sheltered English immersion during a temporary transition period not normally intended to exceed one school year" (M.G.L.c.71A§4). This one-size-fits-all approach to curriculum and instruction is limiting the innovation and flexibility of schools across the state in effectively supporting high quality educational experiences for multilingual learners with the exception of the lowest performing schools in the state. In fact, in the Achievement Gap Act of 2010, specific language was included that allows those lowest performing schools to work outside of these restrictive confines. All Massachusetts schools deserve the same opportunity for innovation and flexibility when it comes to supporting multilingual learners and designing programs and policies that can build off of local expertise and support high levels of English as well as academic grade level content development.

One-Size-Does-Not-Fit-All

- In some districts, multilingual learners are being over-identified as special education students apparently due to the lack of effective programming to support their language development needs (ELL Subcommittee, 2010).
- Until recently, the MA DESE defined Sheltered English Instruction as only for multilingual learners at the intermediate level of English proficiency or above (MA DESE, 2008), thus leaving many students without any explicit support in terms of learning grade level academic content.
- Second language acquisition research has long shown that the development of academic English proficiency on average takes between 5 and 7 years (Crawford & Krashen, 2007), yet MA state policy calls for it to only take one year.
- In 2009, the MA DESE reported to the legislature that there was a dearth of teachers prepared to work effectively with multilingual learners in MA as a result of the changes of state policy in 2002. The MA DESE estimated that between 2,150 and 3,150 more teachers needed training to work effectively with multilingual learners (MA DESE, 2009). In 2011, the US Department of Justice investigated MA and found that at least 45,000 teachers in 275 school districts in MA were insufficiently prepared to support high levels of academic achievement by multilingual learners (Vaznis, 2011).

In the case of MA state education policy, this one-size-fits-all approach to

the education of multilingual learners is clearly problematic and needs to be changed to allow for innovation and flexibility across the state, not just in the schools affected by the Achievement Gap Act of 2010.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Instead of focusing on which program model should be used (e.g., SEI vs. bilingual education), we need to focus on developing quality programs that are responsive to local needs and build off of local resources. Brisk (2006) identified the features of quality schools and programs that work with multilingual learners. These aspects of effective practice should be the focus of state policy, not a specific program model.

- Support your state legislators in amending the current one-size-fits-all approach to the education of multilingual learners that is embedded in state law to allow for innovation and flexibility as well as high quality and effective practice.

21ST CENTURY SKILLS

THE PROBLEM

Current MA policy suggests that a quality education for multilingual learners is one that allows for the rapid acquisition of English in order for students to be absorbed into "the district's mainstream educational program" (MA DESE, 2003, p. 10). The descriptions of the purpose of English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction focus on "catching-up" multilingual learners to their native speaking peers (MA DESE, 2008, p.3). While acquiring high levels of academic English is an important goal in the education of multilingual learners, current MA state policy that positions the education of multilingual learners only in terms of the rapid acquisition of English wastes a valuable resource these students bring to the state and national economy. Multilingualism is a 21st Century skill that is being overlooked in MA state policy regarding the education of multilingual learners. By not taking advantage and building upon the multilingual capital in the state, MA state policy is actually working against the development of a globally savvy work force.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Instead of focusing only on the education of multilingual learners in terms of their English language development, schools should develop programs that utilize and support the development of multilingualism as well as multi-literacies across multiple languages. Multilingualism is a 21st century skill that

should become a prominent feature of all MA schools.

- This should also support the development and hiring of multilingual teachers, even those who speak with an accent. There are more non-native speakers of English in the world than there are native speakers of English and it is important for students to be able to communicate with speakers of multiple forms of English. It adds to the cognitive and linguistic flexibility of students to engage with multiple Englishes

STANDARDS

THE PROBLEM

MA law calls for standards to "inculcate respect for the cultural, ethnic and racial diversity of the commonwealth and for the contributions made by diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial groups to the life of the commonwealth" (M.G.L.c.69§1D). The law further states that, "Academic standards shall be designed to avoid perpetuating gender, cultural, ethnic or racial stereotypes. The academic standards shall reflect sensitivity to different learning styles and impediments to learning" (M.G.L.c.69§1D). These aspects of MA state law are important for the education of multilingual learners, yet do not explicitly protect students from standards that do not respect their linguistic diversity. Further, MA state policy holds all students to the same standards, yet does not provide all students with qualified teachers or equal access to the content of those standards. MA state law defines "English learner" as "a child who does not speak English or whose native language is not English, and who is not currently able to perform ordinary classroom work in English" (M.G.L.c.71A§2). Yet the same law requires that student to only be taught in English as well as meet the same high standards native speakers of English meet each year. If we truly want all students to meet high standards, we need to allow for schools and districts to create programs of education that support both high levels of academic English development as well as grade level content knowledge. The current law does not allow for multilingual learners at the lowest levels of English proficiency to have access to high quality grade level content knowledge simply because of their status as an English learner.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- MA policy can be amended to promote respect for linguistic diversity as well.

- MA policy can also be amended to require adequate linguistic and cultural supports for all students to truly have access to grade level content knowl-

edge and skills. Schools can do this by utilizing the language and cultural perspectives students bring to the classroom as a tool for learning. Under current policy, such practice is proactively curtailed.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

THE PROBLEM

Chapter 71A requires that all teaching personnel working with multilingual learners in MA are "fluent and literate in English" (M.G.L.c.71A§2). In this chapter of law entirely dedicated to the education of multilingual learners, no other specific requirements are stated regarding the qualifications of teachers of multilingual learners. Therefore, according to state law, the only required qualification for a teacher working with multilingual learners is his or her own fluency and literacy in English. While on the surface this may seem appropriate, the reality is that the ability to teach English well requires a skill set and knowledge level about how the English language is structured and used across contexts that merely being fluent and literate in English does not ensure. When this law went into effect, many multilingual teachers lost their jobs (and MA lost a skilled sector of the teaching workforce it desperately needs now in this time of teacher under-preparation) due to the arbitrary and loosely defined standards of fluency and literacy. Further, in the State Board of Education regulations, the requirements for ESL licensure are remarkably low and easy to fulfill without a teacher candidates ever having to actually spend time in a classroom with multilingual learners. In comparison to the specialized skills and experiences teachers of students with special learning needs have as determined by the State Board of Education, the requirements for becoming a teacher of multilingual learners are astonishingly low and insufficient in terms of what we know from decades of research regarding effective preparation and practice working with multilingual learners (Lucas, 2011).

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- MA policy can be amended to require important experiences of all teachers of multilingual learners such as working with multilingual learners over time in instructional contexts and learning a great deal about the form and structure of the English language beyond personal fluency and literacy.

- MA policy can be amended to clarify the expectations of teachers in a way that welcomes those with flexible linguistic capacities to help their students develop the same multilingual skills. In this way, MA policy can position teachers with multiple language backgrounds as an asset and of great value

to supporting the high quality educational opportunities of multilingual learners in MA public schools.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

THE PROBLEM

MA policy focused on parental involvement is almost entirely about making school information accessible to parents in a language they understand (e.g., M.G.L.c.71§32A; 603 CMR 14.00; MA DESE, 2003). However, providing school information in a language parents are familiar with is not enough to ensure the various linguistic and cultural barriers parents face can be overcome. There are even provisions in the state law for parents to sue if their child is not learning English, however, there are no supports for parents to navigate the complex legal system to actually be able to participate in a legal suit. Multilingual learners in the state are the fastest growing student population. The research on parental involvement in schooling is incredibly clear about the value of such involvement. However, MA state policy does not require or set up any structures to support the effective involvement of parents of multilingual learners in school.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- MA policy can be amended to require schools to engage with parents beyond simply sharing information through the creation of structures and programs such as parent committees and learning opportunities at the school. This work should ensure that parents from varying linguistic and cultural backgrounds may effectively engage with the education of their students, state policy can do a great deal to support improved educational outcomes for multilingual learners. This will require the state and many schools and districts to think differently about parental involvement and about what it means to actually engage all parents in their students' learning.

ACCOUNTABILITY

THE PROBLEM

MA state law states, "To ensure that the educational progress of all students in learning English together with other academic subjects is properly monitored, a standardized, nationally-normed written test of academic subject matter given in English shall be administered at least once each year to all public schoolchildren in grades 2 and higher who are English learners" (M.G.L.c.71A§7). As previously mentioned, this same law states that "English learners" are children who do "not speak English…and who [are] not currently able to perform ordinary class-

room work in English" (M.G.L.c.71A§2). If a student is not yet able to perform ordinary classroom work in English, how could that student show his or her content knowledge on a standardized test in English? This ineffective approach to accountability is wasting millions of dollars as multilingual learners are forced to annually take tests that they have absolutely no chance of passing. Further, the results of these tests really only provide the unremarkable finding that multilingual learners at lower levels of English proficiency have accurately been identified as students who still need to learn English. Current state policy is not providing a quality accountability mechanism to ensure that multilingual learners are learning both academic English and their grade level content.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- MA policy can be amended to ensure the use of meaningful measures that actually can monitor the academic English development of multilingual learners as well as their grade level content knowledge. This will require flexibility in measurement tools based on varying levels of English proficiency as well as potentially increasing the amount of instruction and assessment in languages other than English. ■

Now I See! Using Video for Student Self-Assessment

A.C. KEMP

I turn off the tiny yellow camera. "That's it, Wei! All done." She looks at me pleadingly. "Do I really have to watch myself?"

Wei is one of eighteen graduate students in my Speaking, Listening and Pronunciation class, and she has just told me an anecdote about a trip to New York over the summer. A half an hour from now, she will watch her video online and write an evaluation that will help guide her work throughout the next fourteen weeks.

I've always used self-assessment as part of the learning process, but in the past, I was limited in using video—recording and sharing could be costly and required technical know-how. In 2008, I learned about simple "shoot and share" video cameras at a MATSOL discussion group at Suffolk University. These inexpensive cameras, such as the Flip Video, Sony Bloggie and Kodak PlayTouch, make it a snap to upload student videos to online courseware.

With this new, accessible technology, I began to use video more and more in my classroom. Initially, I focused on presentation skills. Though I still gave the students detailed feedback, I asked them to assess themselves as well. I knew how helpful self-reflection skills could be from my own early experience of being videotaped as a teacher. Seeing yourself face the board for five minutes has much more impact than a check mark on a rubric saying the same thing.

However, I underestimated the power this tool would have on raising students' awareness. They commented not only on what they saw, but also on what they heard, noticing verb tenses, filler words and question intonation.

Still, something was missing. Students often memorize their speeches, and intonation and stress can suffer as they use all their cognitive skills to remember the words. An alternative assessment, asking students to make recordings of prepared scripts, has its own shortcomings: The ability to correctly produce pronun-

ciation and grammar under "laboratory conditions" does not mean students will consistently use those abilities in real life. Since I wanted them to hear their natural production, I began to video record impromptu speech in the lower-stress environment of my office.

Suddenly, they saw that even skills they had mastered in class sometimes failed them when they spoke spontaneously. "I think I pronounce clearly, but when I watch, there is no sound at the end of my words," noticed one student. Another observed, "I think when I speak, there is no vibration, seems all my tones are the same." As students became more aware of specific issues, they began to correct themselves more and make fewer mistakes.

I now record each student at least five times during the semester, including two individual interviews and three formal presentations. They submit a self-assessment for each video, noting what they have improved and what they would like to work on. The last self-assessment is a review of their overall progress: What did they learn this semester? How has their speech changed?

Although some students are initially uncomfortable with the idea of watching themselves speak English, they soon recognize that they make the most advances in the areas that they themselves have identified as priorities. Self-assessment gives students ownership of their learning and endows them with tools for future work.

As one Korean student told me, "At the beginning, others could not understand my talking. I see this from my first interview. After one semester training, I find my confidence in English study."

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL SELF-ASSESSMENTS

- Tell them how to say it. Students are often so focused on grammar or pronunciation errors that they overlook successes in areas like gesture, volume and vocabulary. Make a list of elements they might include and create models that can serve as guides.
- Keep it positive. Require students to include strengths and improvements, as well as "things to practice for next time." Avoid phrases like "weak points."
- Add your two cents. Students still need (and appreciate) your feedback, including validations of their observations, notes on what they might want to prioritize more, and suggestions for exercises and resources that can help them continue to improve. ■

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Connecting to Culture: More than Authentic Material

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The importance of building background knowledge and creating schema in an ESL classroom cannot be underestimated. From appreciating the students' cultures to previewing the text or lecture, instructors aim to draw on the learners' prior experience and incorporate a variety of strategies to foster stronger reading and listening skills. But is there an additional schema-building strategy worth exploring that will both engage the students and inspire the instructor?

By viewing short, videotaped interviews in the classroom, we are able to introduce a simple, motivating way to build schema on topics for which the students may not have sufficient background knowledge. Consider the concept of being cool. The meaning and significance of coolness ranges from culture to culture. While interacting with peers, learners of English may feel insulted or disrespected by so-called cool behavior, possibly perceiving it as too relaxed or even apathetic. The interviews, along with readings or listening material, may illuminate this topic so that understanding of the target culture improves.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGY IN THE CLASSROOM

After discussing the selected topic and previewing the vocabulary used in the video, students are prepared to watch a compilation of a few short interviews on the corresponding subject matter. Through exposure to the opinions and stories of native speakers, the English learners are taking steps to immerse themselves in the target culture while at the same time learning new relevant vocabulary. At the intermediate level, they watch with use of a transcript or cloze procedure; at the advanced level, they practice taking notes. Later in the lesson, when they tackle a reading or lecture on the subject, their background knowledge is more complete. In fact, when asked anonymously whether it helped to watch an interview before the reading, 100% of the students in the class responded, **yes**.

HOW TO CREATE THE INTERVIEWS

How do we choose topics to investigate through interviews? Noticing gaps in

students' cultural competence and general knowledge while teaching can often lead to positive results. In my college classroom, for instance, I developed the topic, **Representation of Race, Culture and Gender in Children's Literature**. Many of my students come from cultures where minorities are not as well represented in literature as they are in the United States, and exploration of this topic helps build their schema.

Choosing the interviewees may prove more complicated. After conducting both research and field work, I was able to arrive at some general traits that were reported as preferable by my college-aged students. The research was primarily based on the concept of Near Peer Role Modeling (Murphey & Arao, 2001); the field work consisted of questionnaires distributed to both my own students as well as bilingual speakers. The results: the ideal speaker should be intelligent, eloquent, funny, and close in age to my students. Also interesting to note was a slight preference for Americans not of the same ethnicity as my students. It became evident that not just any authentic listening material would do; to maximize the experience, I would need to consider the reported preferred traits.

In terms of filming, these interviews do not require vast experience in technology. I used a flash-based video camera to film and the program iMovie to edit, but a standard digital camera or even iPhone has served the purpose in the past. Inexpensive and simple, a lavalier microphone helped limit background noise.

In short, these interviews, when coupled with movies, readings, experiential learning and interaction with native speakers, can assist in providing the background knowledge and motivation for students to achieve success both academically and socially. For instructors, they serve as a way to take action upon realization of gaps in their students' background knowledge. ■

To view a sample of the interviews, go to:
vimeo.com/43250693 (password: MATSOL12)
vimeo.com/40401745 (password: TESOL12)
vimeo.com/39091974 (password: TESOL12

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Cori Weiner, a Senior Lecturer of ESL at Boston University, created this project with funding from the Linda Schulman Innovation Grant, awarded in 2011.

ELL Community Service Program at Dedham High School

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When the bell rings signaling the end of the day at Dedham High School, students run out of the building, sometimes literally. While some high school ELL students stick around for extra help and, to a much lesser extent, extracurricular activities, the majority of students are gone within 5 minutes of the bell's announcement. Recently, however, an average of 12 students (nearly 50% of the high school's ELL population) have stuck around waiting for the sound of another bell, that of neighboring Avery Elementary School.

What created this change? The ELL program has recently piloted an after school community service program, pairing high school ELLs with elementary ELLs for homework help, reading practice, and, most importantly, friendship. We've been shocked by the excitement this program has created among our students and the many benefits we've noticed for both groups and the ELL program as a whole.

The high school students, who may spend a lot of their academic day feeling inadequate, have found a great sense of accomplishment. The program shows students how smart they really are and that their help matters to others. Students are also engaged in authentic language practice, having to refine and sometimes rephrase their thoughts to ensure their elementary counterparts understand their explanations. These emotional and linguistic benefits are of course in addition to the practical perks of community service in terms of work experience and resume building.

We've also noticed the program's great influence on the elementary students. Elementary students are excited about "big kids" coming to see them at their own school and are eager to show the older students how much they know and how well they can behave. Often the high school tutor speaks the elementary student's first language. This makes a special bond between students and facilitates homework explanation. All of our high school students have provided exemplary role models for their young counterparts.

Our ELL community service program has also benefited us as a department. While ELL teachers in our district are often isolated, community service has created much more col-

laboration and a stronger sense of camaraderie. We can give and receive suggestions for instruction, activities, and parental involvement. Furthermore, we've developed a much deeper sense of appreciation for the challenges of teaching ELL at the varying levels.

How can you create a successful community service program for your ELLs? First, reach out to parents to explain why you'd like the student to stay after school. Mentioning homework help to elementary parents and "looks good on college applications" to high school parents worked wonders for us. Then, choose partnerships wisely. Some of our high school ELLs may not have the language development skills to explain math word problems or a science experiment. We arranged for those students to practice reading or play language building games with students. Finally, make sure high school students know the difference between helping a student to understand a question and simply giving him or her the answer. Model this behavior for students, pair new students up with more experienced tutors for additional modeling, and monitor students' interactions while they're working together.

Our after school tutoring program has been a fantastic surprise, one that we intend on continuing and even expanding in the future. If you'd like to engage high school ELLs in confidence and resume building activities, make elementary ELLs excited about after school homework help, and increase partnerships between ELL colleagues at varying levels, we'd recommend developing a similar program in your district. ■

Donna Jovin has been an ELL teacher in Dedham since 1989 and has taught all levels from k-12. Prior to teaching ESL, she taught high school French and Spanish.

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