



# Maryland TESOL

*The MDTESOL Newsletter*



*Photo Credit: María Eligio*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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### **MDTESOL GOES TO PUERTO RICO**

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### **THE CIRCUITOUS PATH ESOL SUCCESS STORY**

---

### **RETREAT TO STAND OUT THE FALL CONVENTION**

---

### **EL RINCON BILINGUE INTEREST SECTIONS**

## **President's Message**

*by Ashley Jenoff, MDTESOL President 2019-2020*

Dear MDTESOL Members and Friends,

I hope all of you are well underway for the fall semester with all its challenges, new opportunities and new "friends". This is a good time in the year to stop and reflect about what professional areas you, as a teacher, will need to focus on this year. This is where Maryland TESOL may come into play. We offer many PD opportunities throughout the year to help teachers grow.

As I write these words, we just had our 39th annual Fall Conference on November 9th at Prince George's Community College. There were so many fantastic presentations with the overall theme: Learner Agency. This spring there will be several Interest Section events and our 2nd mini-spring conference at Frederick Community College. Please read and follow the Maryland TESOL Facebook and Twitter pages as well as the newly designed website for upcoming events. We look forward to seeing you at our spring events!



**Billie Muñoz, Editor**



**Ivette Cruz, Coeditor**

## Letter from the Editors

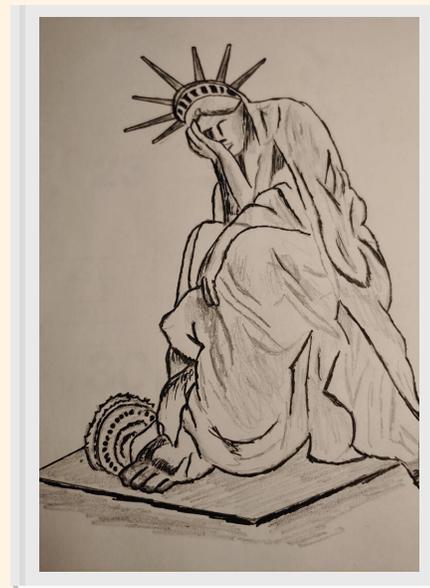
by *Billie Munoz, Editor and Ivette Cruz, Coeditor*

What's the difference between an advocate and a teacher? These days, not a lot! If you are a public school ESOL teacher in the state of Maryland and if you attended the 2019 NEA Representative Assembly in Houston, Texas, you discovered teachers debating new business items that sounded like they belonged more at the United Nations than in a public-school setting.

Should we make a statement that we deplore the way Palestinians are being treated in the state of Israel? Should we declare our abhorrence of the way Armenians were treated by the Turks during the so-called Armenian Genocide? How about the situation unfolding right before our eyes just a few miles down the road from the Houston Convention Center at the Mexico-US border? Will we speak for the children who are torn from their parents' arms?

And even closer to home, issues of racial, gender, religious, linguistic and differently abled students are near and dear to the advocate's equity-minded heart. Don't forget that TESOL was a very early border to the advocacy train. Any summer you can travel to the Washington D.C. area and take advocacy training with experts such as Roger Rosenthal Executive Director of the non-profit Migrant Legal Action Program.

TESOLers from all over the United States gather to learn how to be better advocates and then practice these skills on their own local senators and congressional representatives on Capitol Hill. As TESOLers we are already members of a "choir" that the rest of our teacher colleagues are now joining. As we begin this new school year, it is a good idea to practice the motto of "Think Globally, Act Locally." Let's advocate first for the students we see every day, then broaden our reach to our state, our country, our hemisphere and our world!



**Drawing by Luis Muñoz**

**"Sometimes it falls upon a generation to be great. You can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom" - Nelson Mandela**

# MDTESOL RETREATS TO STAND OUT!

*Located just outside Baltimore and Washington, D.C., the Pearlstone Retreat Center offered its outdoor facilities to the MDTESOL Board members to explore and strengthen their team building skills as they participated of activities that challenged their minds.*

On a lovely Saturday in August, when the temperatures finally made being outdoors enjoyable, MDTESOL board members headed to the countryside near Reisterstown for a day of team building and finding their inner courageous selves. The Pearlstone Center is a non-profit? Retreat center where organizations such as ours turn a group of individuals who scarcely know each other into a community with common goals. We realized that, in order to advocate for others, we had to first get some courage and a sprinkling of feistiness. Mission accomplished!



**Location of the MDTESOL Board's Retreat**

*"It was so intriguing to see our group step out of our comfort zone. We needed to work together to come up with a plan on the spot. Everyone used their strengths and teaching styles to go about facing the challenge at hand. Some people were better at giving clear directions to the group as a whole, while others were actually the muscle behind the task, and several others were supporting people as we walked across beams of wood. It was fascinating to see how it all came together in the end. We were shaking our heads with confusion, laughing, clapping, and cheering each other on as we worked together to complete the tasks together as a united group".*

- President Ashley Jenhoff

*"As a new board member, the retreat was a wonderful opportunity to engage with new colleagues and friends. We had a great time working through the different team building activities together - brainstorming different approaches, communicating throughout each step, and celebrating our team's success!"*

- Dr. Lauren Jones,  
U Maryland College Park



**MDTESOL Board members participating of team building activities.**

**TEACHER EDUCATION INTEREST SECTION**

**EDUCATING ALL TEACHERS WORKING WITH ENGLISH LEARNERS: CONSIDERATIONS FROM A SCHOOL DISTRICT-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP**

**Drew S. Fagan**

*2019-2020 Chair of the Teacher Education Interest Section*

Since 2010, the Maryland school system has seen extensive changes in terms of student population and policy. According to the MSDE 2019 Report Card, the number of English Learner (ELs) for the 2018-19 school year was 84,392 representing 10% of the entire student population across the state, an increase of 2.5% in only 4 years. Simultaneously, with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) signed in December 2015 and the Maryland State ESSA Plan finalized in September 2018, administrators have honed in on ELs as a focused student population in terms of school district accountability.

Current Maryland legislation now states that, in addition to ELs receiving ESOL if they qualify, they must also be monitored upon exiting those services monitored for two years to ensure they “continue to make progress in meeting the challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards” (MSDE, 2019). In doing this, the MSDE ESSA State Plan outlines school districts’ accountability for ELs for both acquiring English proficiency and meeting academic achievement on state standards as demonstrated on state assessments.

With the first point, ELs are expected to achieve English proficiency within 6 years of entering the school system as demonstrated on the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium ACCESS for ELLs® Assessment. With the second point, ELs are to obtain academic achievement in both English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. Tables 1 and 2, modified from the MSDE ESSA State Plan, compare baseline state assessment data from the 2016-17 academic year with anticipated projections under ESSA for the 2029-30 academic year showing percentages for EL English proficiency and academic achievement.

Table 1: English Learner English Proficiency		
	% Proficient within 6 years	
2016-17 Baseline	48%	
2029-30 Projection	74%	

Table 2: English Learner Academic Achievement		
	ELA % Proficient	Mathematics % Proficient
2016-17 Baseline	14.29%	16.03%
2029-30 Projection	57.15%	58.01%

**Table 1: English Learner English Proficiency**

"Adult Ed" continued from page 4

In light of these factors, school districts are realizing the importance of having all teachers understand the academic, linguistic, and cultural needs of these students across the curriculum. One way that school districts are approaching this is through partnering with Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) to develop teacher education opportunities for these teachers who are experts in their disciplines but novices when it comes to ELs.

Here, I present one such program currently taking place between Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) and the University of Maryland, College Park (UMD), as an exemplar for beginning to address these shifts in the EL Maryland landscape, as well as the practical components of the program that have made it successful.

Currently in its third year, this one-year, 12-credit Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Program prepares cohorts of non-ESOL teachers and administrators for meeting the needs of varied EL populations at all grade levels in all disciplines throughout the county. Upon completion, teachers earn a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate from the university, move towards getting their add-on endorsement in ESOL, and develop their own portfolio of EL teaching and assessment accomplishments. This partnership prepares these teachers to not only work with ELs in their disciplines, but also to provide them with tools to conduct professional development workshops with colleagues in their schools and to potentially become ESOL specialists if they so choose. Central to the success of such partnership programs is practicality.

This partnership is based on the notion that both university and school district design a program to address the district's short- and long-term goals by looking at current university offerings and considering how to utilize or adapt those offerings to provide the practical foundations for research-informed pedagogy needed to reach those district-specific goals. Put simply, the foundation of the partnership is true bidirectionality in program inception, development, and implementation.

The partnership's Advisory Board, consisting of representatives from both PGCPS's ESOL Office and the UMD's TESOL faculty, accomplishes just that by meeting regularly to address any updates or adaptations needed for the program's continued success and to jointly handle the admissions process for the program. Also connected to practicality is offering a program for full-time, in-service teacher availability. This program runs for one year, July-July, with the first course (Second Language Acquisition) meeting intensively in the second half of summer in-person in a workshop-style format (i.e., interactive activities as opposed to solid lecture).

The in-person format allows cohort members to meet one another and truly establish themselves as a cohort who will be working together over the course of a year. The second (Methods of ESOL) and third (Foundations of Literacy and Biliteracy Development) courses meet in the fall and spring respectively 100% online asynchronously, thus not making the teachers go to a class after a long day at work or taking up their weekends. The fourth course (Assessment), taking place

"Adult Ed" continued from page 5

immediately after the school year ends, is in-person following the same format as Course 1, though this time it is also used to bring the entire program together. All course work is adapted from the current on-campus TESOL program to include resources and demographic information from the school district itself, thus making assignments directly applicable to the teachers' day-to-day interactions with ELs. Programs such as this set out to address changes in student population and education policy that we have been seeing in Maryland; what is essential to remember, though, is that with those external changes come needed changes within teacher education.

This is namely connected with the teacher population needing to be educated about working with ELs. As opposed to more traditionally conceived teacher education programs that prepare pre-service ESOL teachers, programs geared towards in-service teachers need to account for practicalities such as full-time work, career knowledge, and ultimate goals of the teacher participants in taking the program.

### **References**

Maryland State Department of Education (2018). Maryland Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan. Retrieved from <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/ESSA/ESSAMDSubmissionConsolidatedStatePlan091718.pdf>.

Maryland State Department of Education (2019). English learners: Eligibility, guidance, and laws. Retrieved from <http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Pages/English-Learners/Eligibility-Guidance-Laws.aspx>

### **Announcement...**



  
 Take the next step...  
**Professional Learning Opportunities**  
 Maryland TESOL Interest Sections host professional learning events to support specific needs of each interest section. The interest sections are as follows. Visit [mdtesol.org](http://mdtesol.org) for updates and registrations in 2020!  
 Adult Education  
 Advocacy  
 Elementary Education  
 Graduate Student  
 Higher Education  
 Secondary Education  
 Teacher Education  
 Western Maryland

## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

### MDTESOL PRESENTS IN PUERTO RICO

*"The convention was celebrated in Costa Bahía Hotel & Convention Center, in Guayanilla, on the western side of the island. In addition to beautiful beaches, this convention center was also surrounded by beautiful vegetation."*

#### Dr. Luis Javier Pentón Herrera

*Past President*

In November of 2019, Maryland TESOL's Past President (2019-2020) Luis Javier Pentón Herrera and Maryland TESOL's Newsletter previous co-editor Erica Rivera Vega, joined Puerto Rico TESOL to celebrate their 50th anniversary. Puerto Rico TESOL's 2019 Convention was titled "PRTESOL 5.0: Vision, voice, and vehicle of a vibrant vocation" and hosted many distinguished keynote speakers, including Mr. José Viana, Assistant Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, Prof. Evelyn De Jesus, American Federation of Teachers (AFT)'s VicePresident, and Dr. Mercedes Torres Almodóvar from Pontífica Universidad Católica de Puerto Rico, to name a few.

*During their stay, Erica and Luis had the opportunity to strengthen ties with the leadership of our sister association and spent time talking to the new Puerto Rico President Larissa López Hallman.*



**A view of Puerto Rico's landscape  
Photo courtesy of Luis J. Penton**



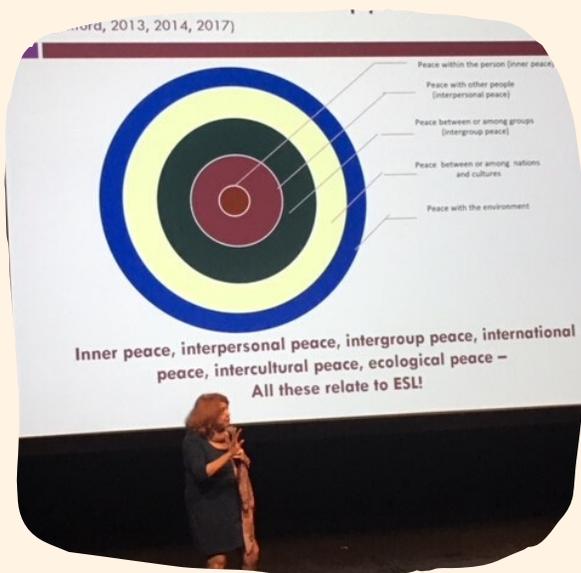
**Luis and Erica with new PTESOL  
President**



**Luis and Erica holding their presentation  
certificates next to their facilitator next to  
the facilitator. and Northern Virginia.**

# MARYLAND TESOL FALL CONVENTION 2019

November 9, 2019  
Prince George Community College



*Dr. Oxford shares her theory of integration of Peace in the curriculum*



*New friendships were forged: Rebecca Oxford and our Editor, Billie Muñoz.*



*BOD relaxes after an afternoon of pre-conference prep.*



*Katie Miller, Lauren Reyes, and Drew Fagan distribute badges. The sign behind them says it all.*

# MARYLAND TESOL FALL CONVENTION 2019

November 9, 2019  
Prince George Community College



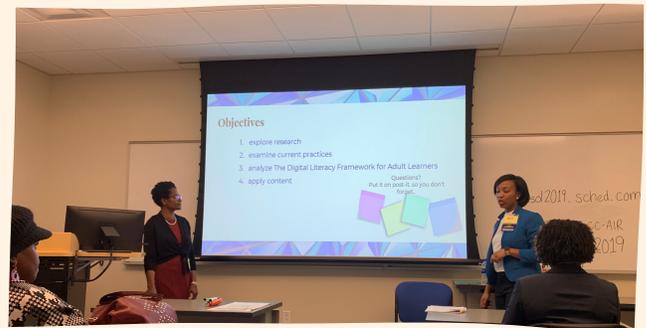
*Katie Miller, Lauren Reyes, and Drew Fagan distribute badges. The sign behind them says it all.*



*Lunch provides networking opportunities and a chance to reconnect with former colleagues.*



*Jamie Harris, Farhana Shah and Hazar Biddle hand out badges.*



*Jamie Harris of UMBC and BOD presenting.*



*Leia Brutton and Betsy Ljubic presenting about the topic of cultural responsive teaching and ELs empowerment.*



*Ashley Jenoff, Hazar Biddle, Katie Miller and Rosie Verrette welcome attendees..*

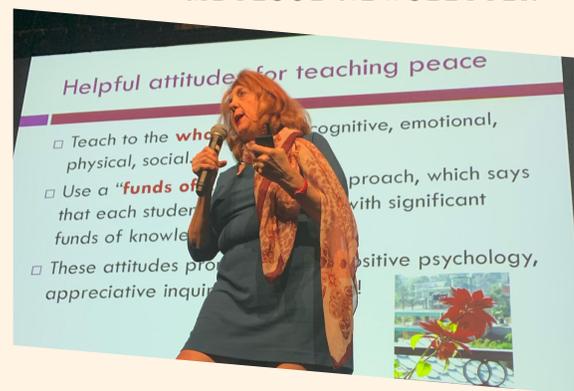
## KEYNOTE SPEAKER FEATURING ARTICLE REBECCA OXFORD- TESOL SCHOLAR AND PROPONENT OF PEACE

By Billie Muñoz

This November, Dr. Rebecca Oxford gave the keynote speech at the MDTESOL Fall Conference. The topic was Integrating Peace Building into Second Language Education. To a packed auditorium, Dr. Oxford explained her feeling that all the great religions of the world have a belief that peace must start inside of each individual person and then extend out to one's country and from there to the entire human experience. This same message also comes from many native American tribes and from the great peacebuilders such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Albert Einstein, Nelson Mandela and Helen Keller.

The story of how Dr. Oxford came to link the teaching of English with the teaching of Peace is interesting in and of itself. She describes how in the following statement:

"I always wanted to teach a language, so I majored in Russian with a few courses in German and a minor in English. This was because my roots are in Germany, France and the British Isles. When I graduated from college, I returned to my hometown (Jacksonville, Florida) and was able to get a job immediately with this background. I initiated a program in Russian. My students were wonderful. This was back in 1968 and I still remember them as if it were yesterday.



I moved to Boston and, after a year, I decided to get my master's in foreign Language Education specializing in Russian. The administrators shifted me to a whole other program – educational psychology. This is all about motivation, attitudes, beliefs, classroom climate and how to handle school failures. Basically, it is about creating self-esteem. Whenever I could I would teach languages but then I got into TESOL. People assumed I knew all about TESOL but that was not true.

I eventually became the director of two programs in Alabama – Teacher Preparation for ELLs in the College of Arts and Sciences and the other was the same thing but in the College of Education. I was the link between these two programs. I got these colleagues speaking together for the first time. They had been essentially doing the same work but in different ways. One of my big things in life is to get people to coordinate, to get past political barriers (and universities are highly political organizations). They are realms unto themselves. My colleagues and I managed to do that through personal contacts. I felt really good about that."

Judging by the ovation Dr. Oxford got at the MDTESOL Fall Conference, the audience felt really good about that, too.

## SECONDARY EDUCATION INTEREST SECTION

### THE INSPIRATION OF READING INTO THE NATURE OF THE MULTILINGUAL MIND

#### Hazar Biddle

*Hazar is a former ESOL teacher and current Title 1 Specialist from Prince George's County. She comes from the seaside town of Latakia, Syria. This article reflects her unique perspective.*

From the time we are born, we use our senses to see, hear, smell, taste and touch to make sense of things around us. We observe the outside world to meet the expectations of parents and the pressure of our competitive world because we believe that we will have more money - buy a house, a bigger house; a car, a more expensive car; clothes to show off the latest fashions; cell phones, and the latest and greatest gadgets and technologies - to make us happy. It is a human impulse to be happy. Through the words, stories, realizations and understandings of the ancient sages from Greece and Syria with whom I am most familiar, it is my hope that readers will gain insight into the nature of mind and the importance of self-awareness. For the sake of simplicity, and to make the language more inclusive, I have made some editorial changes to the original texts. A great passage for this article is a line containing the insights attributed to famed Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu and Mahatma Gandhi (who promoted the Indian concept of "ahimsa" - non-violence).

- Pay attention to thoughts, because [our] thoughts become words,
- Pay attention to words, because our words become actions,
- Pay attention to actions, because [our] actions become habits,



- Pay attention to habits, because [our] habits define [our] character,
- Pay attention to [our] character, because our character defines who we are and the way we choose to live.

The NRC (National Research Council) Committee identified and summarized research literature relevant to the critical skills, environments, and early developmental interactions that are instrumental in the acquisition of beginning reading skills.

The NRC Committee did not specifically address "how" critical reading skills are most effectively taught and what instructional methods, materials, and approaches are most beneficial for students of varying abilities. Types of Research Evidence and Breadth of Research Methods Considered Different types of research (e.g., descriptive-interpretive, correlational, experimental) lay claim to particular warrants, and these warrants differ markedly.

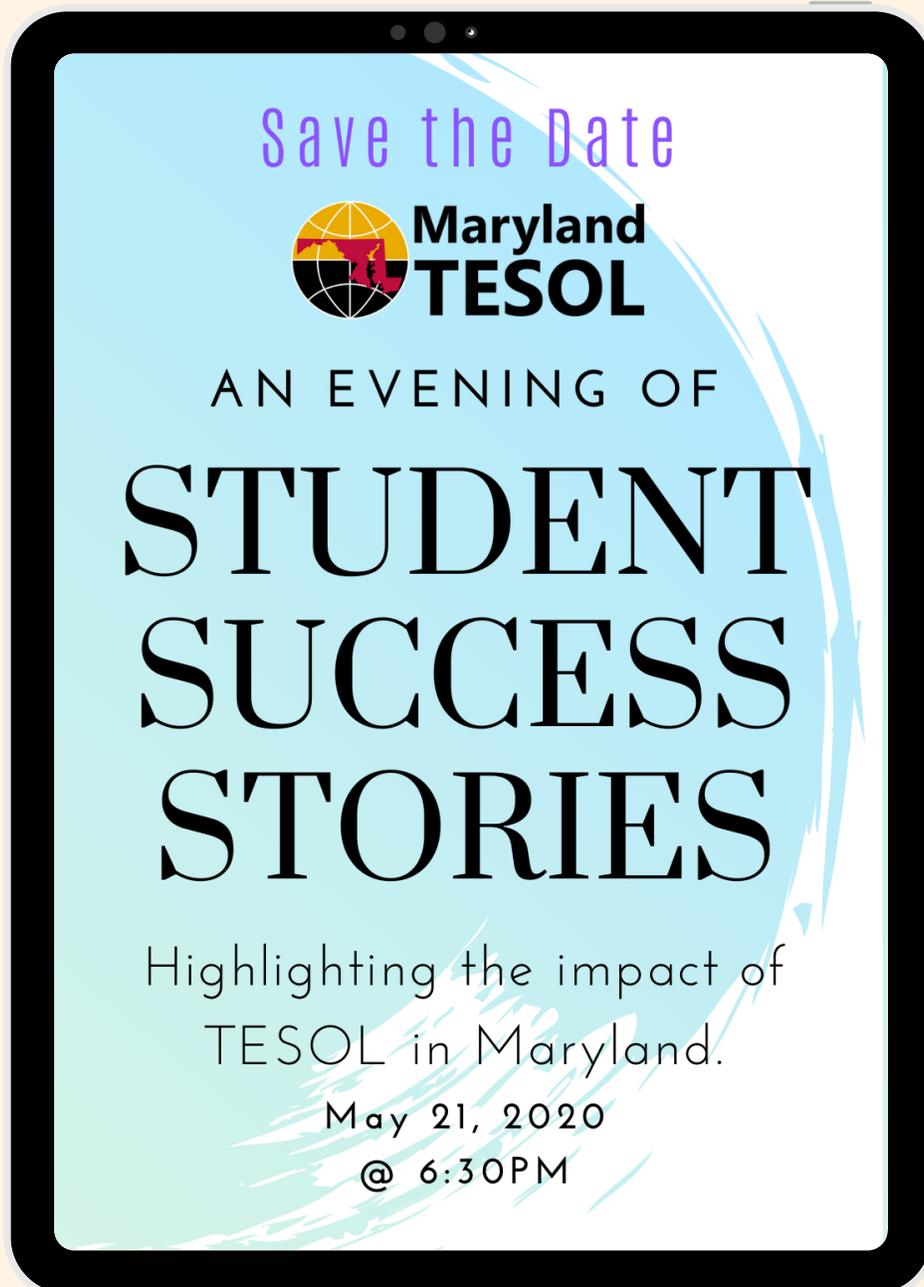
The Panel felt that it was important to use a wide range of research but that that research be used in accordance with the purposes and limitations of the various research types. To make a determination that any instructional practice could be or should be adopted widely to improve reading achievement requires that the belief, assumption, or claim supporting the practice be causally linked to a particular outcome.

*continued from page 11*

The highest standard of evidence for such a claim is the experimental study, in which it is shown that treatment can make such changes and effect such outcomes. Sometimes when it is not feasible to do a randomized experiment, a quasi-experimental study is conducted. This type of study provides a standard of evidence that, while not as high, is acceptable, depending on the study design.

Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

### **Announcement...**



from the editor

## EL RINCÓN BILINGÜE - THE BILINGUAL CORNER

*The following is the latest in a series of articles written in Spanish and English. This month features an ESOL teacher who once built a water pumping system in Paraguay, bringing water and electricity to a village that never had these "luxuries" before.*

Karen Winchester Del Rio is an ESOL teacher at Riverview Elementary School in Baltimore County. To look at this twinkle-eyed lady, village heroine in Latin America would not immediately pop into mind. She was born in America's Heartland and began learning a little Spanish in high school. Later in college, University of Illinois at Chicago, Karen had "lots of Spanish-speaking friends." After a whole lot of volunteer work as a "preacher's kid," she decided that the Peace Corps would be her path. Karen had worked a few jobs after graduation, but nothing too exciting. The Peace Corps only selects one in four applicants but that "help others" mentality her father had instilled paid off. She was accepted and chose Latin America but the Peace Corps selected her exact destination. She would go to the small village of Colonial Goiburú, about two hours by car from the capital of Asunción. She was then 25 years old.

Karen's host family spoke no English. They did speak Guaraní, an indigenous language, besides Spanish. They had two teen-aged girls. Host mom was a teacher and her host father was a policeman. The mom called Karen "Panqueque" or "Pancake," making a play on words of her initials (K K). At first, the village was disappointed that Karen was a female. They couldn't see how a young woman could possibly help establish the running water project they had asked for. They didn't know Panqueque! She had "zero qualifications" in engineering but, as Karen says, "I am a farm girl with a can-do attitude!"

The first step towards bringing water to the village would be to find a counterpart to help her. None of the male leaders were interested, but a lady named Raquel who taught catechism agreed to fill this role. Reaching out to community leaders, a Water Commission was established. Karen sought funding through UNICEF. Later, a local Baptist church heard about her father and bought a water tank. The price tag for all this was \$500, "a big deal over there."

*continued from page 13*

The project would take Karen's whole stay of almost three years to complete. Karen and her friends had to chop down trees to put in the electric lines that would make it work. A guard had to be hired to keep the building materials from being stolen. The artesian well with the water tower and tank are still there, still pumping the clean drinking water that keeps Giardia (a condition that comes from drinking water that cattle have also imbibed) and other parasites at bay. The system was blessed in a water ceremony. Poems were written and songs were sung to mark the occasion. Karen was told she would "forever be a daughter of the village." The local school enjoys electricity and clean water thanks to this ESOL teacher from Nebraska. And Karen? She still owns a 10X12 piece of land she had to purchase so that "no one could come along and say that it was theirs." The Peace Corps paid for her to get a Masters in Bilingual Education at George Mason University. She married a Puerto Rican native, taught ESOL for many years in Montgomery County and now serves the growing ELL population of Baltimore County Public Schools. Few know that they are working with a heroine from Paraguay.

*Este mes destaca una maestra de ESOL que, una vez, construyó un sistema de cisterna en Paraguay, trayendo el agua y la electricidad a un pueblo que jamás los había tenido antes. Karen Winchester Del Río es maestra de ESOL en la escuela de Riverview en el Condado de Baltimore. Al mirar a esta dama con los ojos brillando un sentido de humor, las palabras "heroína de un pueblo latinoamericano" no saltan a la mente inmediatamente. Nació en el llamado "corazón" de los EEUU y empezó a aprender español en el colegio. Más tarde, en la Universidad de Illinois en Chicago, Karen tenía "muchos amigos de habla-hispana."*

Después de bastante trabajo como voluntaria como "hija del pastor," decidió que el Cuerpo de Paz sería su sendero. Karen había trabajado unos trabajitos después de graduarse pero nada muy excitante. El Cuerpo de Paz escoge a solamente uno en cuatro solicitantes pero la actitud de "ayudar a los demás" instilado por su papá le resultó. Fue aceptada y escogió la América Latina pero el Cuerpo escogió su destino preciso. Iría al pueblo de Aregua, como a dos horas por coche de la ciudad capital de Asunción. En aquel entonces, tenía unos veinticinco años. La familia anfitriona de Karen no hablaba inglés. Hablaba guaraní, un idioma indígena, además de español. Tenían dos jóvenes, hembras. La mamá era maestra y el papá era policía. La madre le llamaba a Karen por el apodo Panqueque, basado en sus iniciales (K K).

Al principio, el pueblo se desilusionaba porque era mujer. No podían ver como una joven pudiera ayudar a establecer el proyecto de agua que habían pedido. ¡No conocían a Panqueque! No tenía calificación ninguna en la ingeniería pero, como ella dijo, "Yo era chica de la granja con una actitud bien positiva." El sistema fue bendida en una ceremonia. Unas canciones fueron cantadas y poemas recitados. Le dijeron a Karen que "Siempre va a ser hija del pueblo."

*continued from page 14*

El primer paso hacia traer el agua a Aregua sería encontrar un compañero para ayudarlo. Ninguno de los varones del liderazco se interesaron pero una mujer llamada Raquel que enseñaba el catecismo se puso de acuerdo en jugar el papel. Una comisión se estableció. Karen creó fondos con la ayuda de UNICEF. Luego, una iglesia Bautista cercana contribuyó un tanque de agua. Costó \$500, "una gran cosa por ahí." El proyecto tomaría casi tres años en llevarse al cabo. Tenían que cortar árboles para instalar el sistema de electricidad. Emplearon a una guardia para proteger las materias de los ladrones.

Está todo ahí todavía, funcionando y ayudando a eliminar problemas como Giardia (una condición que viene de tomar el mismo agua que toma el Ganado) y parásitos. El sistema fue bendida en una ceremonia. Unas canciones fueron cantadas y poemas recitados. Le dijeron a Karen que "Siempre va a ser hija del pueblo." Y, ¿Karen? Todavía es dueña de un pedazo de tierra para que "nadie pudiera venir proclamando que era el suyo." El Cuerpo de Paz le pagó una maestría en la educación bilingüe en La Universidad de George Mason en Virginia. Se casó con un puertorriqueño y enseñó ESOL por muchos años en el Condado de Montgomery. Ahora sirve a una población de EL's que está creciendo en el Condado de Baltimore que no se da cuenta que está trabajando con la heroína de un pueblo en Paraguay.



***Karen today (left) and at the water ceremony (right) Photos courtesy of Karen Winchester Del Rio***

# CONFIDENCE FOR THE CONFERENCE

By Lama Masri and Rachel Riggs

We all have it. It's that one thing that works so well in your classroom. The thing you created as a solution to some aspect of your teaching. Or maybe it's the compelling research that changed the way you teach. The findings you can't wait to share with colleagues. And yet, when the "Call for Proposals" email starts circulating, why is it so difficult to take that step? How do we build confidence for the conference? We're hoping our first experience presenting at a conference will help other teachers take the leap!

So, who are we anyway? Just two ESL instructors with different backgrounds but the same amount of passion!

**L:** *Hi! I am Lama Masri, I was a first time presenter at Maryland TESOL's 2019 fall conference. I am currently an ESL Instructor at FCC, and I am teaching an advanced writing class and a Bridges to Careers class. I have an MA in TESOL from American University, and I have been an adjunct at FCC since fall 2018. My experience at this fall's conference has been very positive, and I would encourage any fellow teachers who'd want to share their work for the first time, to go ahead and take the jump. The Maryland TESOL community was very welcoming to this first time presenter.*

**R:** Hi! I'm Rachel Riggs. I presented at a conference for the first time at the MDTESOL mini-conference at Frederick Community College last spring. The experience was so energizing that I decided to present twice at the fall conference! I teach Family Literacy for Frederick Community College along with Academic Grammar and Writing II. I earned my MA in TESOL in May 2017 and started working for FCC right away. When I did my first presentation, I only had one year of professional experience in TESOL! I hope my story draws new teachers out and helps them realize that you don't have to be an expert or have years of research to share your ideas at a conference.

Let's start at the source. What ignited your inspiration for TESOL?

**L:** *My favorite music growing up in war-torn Lebanon was American and British pop. I listened, for hours, to the radio, and I saved up my allowance to buy British pop magazines that published song lyrics. This passion fueled my drive to get better in English, which was taught as a third language at my school. It became my favorite subject, so I always read ahead in the textbook and supplemented my reading with magazines and books. Eventually, I graduated with a BA in English Literature and a Teaching Diploma in EFL. I never thought at the time that I'd be moving to the U.S. and continuing in this career path, but I am currently teaching a language I fell in love with because of 80's pop, and working hard to help my students improve their skills so they can pursue their own passions.*

*Continued from page 16*

**R:** It started years ago when a lady with a huge wart on her face pinched my cheeks so hard I thought they might bruise! I was a young girl visiting my grandparents in Albania and we had just arrived to their home when we met one of the housekeepers (cheek-pincher) at their bed and breakfast in Tirana. She was speaking what, to me, sounded like gibberish. Her language was quick and passionate. I didn't understand the words but I understood her excitement. She was so unlike anyone I had seen or heard and as I traveled with my grandparents during that trip, I saw droves of people who were so different from what I had encountered at this point. What truly impacted me, though, weren't the differences. The similarities shocked me. When I learned that smiles, warmth, and acceptance were common to humanity on a global scale, I knew that I wanted to spend my life connecting with people from all backgrounds. The English piece came in later when I was volunteering in Honduras and saw firsthand how empowering it can be for people to be multilingual. I quickly absorbed and cherished every Spanish word I collected and now I feel very lucky to spend my days joining others as they experience that same joy. Ok ok enough fluff! Love for TESOL isn't enough... how did your actual ideas for the presentation come to you?

**L:** *As all ESL teachers do, I am always on the look-out for resources I can use to supplement my work, and it's always a treat to find a good resource. In spring 2019, I co-managed an ESL conversation club at FCC. The club was part of a test-run for an ESL language lab that offered students access to computers, tutoring and testing. I started searching for and collecting activities that would motivate learners to participate in meaningful conversations. The same students kept showing up week after week and that spurred me to continuously look for more material. When the conversation club ended, I had a good number of activities to be used so I created the "Conversation and Speaking Activities" presentation, which I could share with other teachers.*

**R:** Soon after getting hired at FCC, I was informed that I needed to incorporate digital literacy. I was disappointed that, after so much time spent on my new degree, I felt underprepared for this curveball. I started taking students to the computer lab and I noticed that some students didn't even know how to navigate their own personal mobile devices. This is what inspired my first presentation entitled, "Using Smartphones for Authentic Language Learning" in which I presented simple ways to get students acquainted with their phones while engaging in language learning. Later, I became puzzled about what to do with students who were more advanced in the computer lab. Thus, my presentation entitled "Digital Literacy Action Plans" was born. Greater agency for students!

Continued from page 17

**L:** *I've always believed ESL teachers should not only help students on their learning journey, but also share knowledge with other teachers because through collaboration we would improve. Nevertheless, I wasn't sure what to expect at the conference, as I haven't presented in public before. I was motivated to share my experience and resources, but I was anxious that my presentation was not "serious" enough.*

I always viewed presenting at conferences as something only researchers would do, and I have not done any research. I am only using my personal experience as a voucher that the activities worked. During my presentation, however, I was pleasantly surprised by the number of attendees, and the positive feedback. This made my experience memorable and empowering; something I am looking forward to in the future.

**Announcements..**



**Takeaway? Submit a proposal for the April mini-conference at Frederick Community College**

# SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL

FIVE EASY STEPS

**Brainstorm presentation ideas.**

Think about what creative ideas you have implemented in your classroom. You'll be surprised by how many teachers would love to hear from you.

**Submit your proposal.**

Write an abstract that can give attendees an idea about what you'll be presenting. Make sure to submit before the deadline.

**Start preparing your presentation.**

Gather what information you have and start organizing your presentation.

**Be patient!**

Don't feel anxious! MD TESOL will get back to you as the date for the conference draws nearer.

**Share with your peers! (Tweet, Post & Snap!)**

Let everyone know you're presenting by sharing on social media and telling your colleagues.

Western MD TESOL Mini-Conference  
Spring 2020  
[tinyurl.com/ydo9cemn](http://tinyurl.com/ydo9cemn)

# TEACHING WRITING TO EMERGENT AND AT RISK BILINGUAL STUDENTS

**Milagros M. Schwartz**

*Approaches to Writing Instruction  
Baltimore City Public Schools*

As an ESOL educator at Benjamin Franklin High School of Masonville Cove, a Community School located in Brooklyn, Maryland, I can define my teaching non-native speakers writing approach as "eclectic." This approach to L2 writing instruction is typically a combination of methods, approaches and techniques tailored to fully engage Emergent Bilinguals (EBs) with the purpose of both acquiring and learning a Second Language (SL).

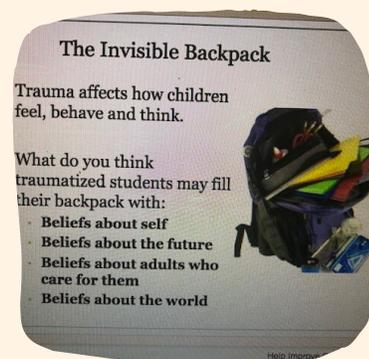
According to research, eclecticism is said to be a combination of approaches. In this case, the methods and procedures to explicitly teach writing, depending on the specific profiles of the EBs- this approach will serve a variety of profiles whose proficiency levels range from 1-3 (WIDA Levels of Proficiency) and whose backgrounds come from trauma-stricken environments that resulted in emotional, psychological and physical scars.

The entire staff at Franklin is committed to serving this population by "customizing education so that students are fully engaged behaviorally, socially and cognitively" as Principal Christopher Battaglia emphasizes. In addition, we have the support of the United Way of Central Maryland in the area of mental health, physical abuse and teen pregnancy.

The center is called Ben Center. For this reason, it is a moral imperative to design restorative practices that have a writing component in which all EBs can fully participate and succeed. Such practices include: interactive dialogues that engage them in inquiry, the comprehending of why it is essential to scan for patterns via the training of the genre approach that helps them learn how rhetorical patterns are typically written, the use of contextualized, thematic units in which they are to produce quick writes, self edits as well as peer editing to lead to a final product after completing the process of writing with a plan- by not only seeing models but also explicit instruction via mini-lessons of key skills needed to improve their product.



*Photo courtesy of Milagros Schwartz*



*continued from page 19*

As an ESOL educator, I am constantly conducting informal assessments that are the basis to my scaffolding of writing skills needed to become effective. In fact, all my EBs have a plan and can justify topics and cite evidence from the text. This meets them where they are and builds self-esteem. Background knowledge is built and critical thinking is cultivated. Common Core Standards are supported and aligned to the ELA curriculum that requires adolescents to be proficient in three modes of writing; narrative, informational and argumentative. Significant research shows that it is effective to train the EBs using learning strategies such as PLAN (Pay attention to the prompt, List three ideas, Add details and Number the ideas). (De La Paz & Graham 2002) The ESOL methodology and approaches to SL writing include explicit modeling, building background knowledge and offering support by providing language frames.

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## ESOL SUCCESS STUDY: MARÍA ELIGIO PARA-EDUCATOR

*The following is the latest installment in a series of articles about a former ESOL student who has gone on to find success in college, the military or the world of work. Feel free to nominate one of your own students for this series by emailing [newsletter@mdtesol.org](mailto:newsletter@mdtesol.org). You will receive a response.*

I am a first generation American. Both of my parents are Mexican. They both only completed middle school, and had to drop out to work. I was born and raised in southern Texas. My parents moved back and forth from Mexico to America until I was around three years old. My first language was Spanish and I learned English in elementary school. I spent most of my vacations in Mexico. My parents always made sure to keep a strong connection to our culture. I was lucky to live in an area with a population of mostly Mexicans. We had very little diversity in South Texas. Although I am lucky to be Mexican-American, I still was raised by immigrant parents who struggled to make it in America. I witnessed my parents suffering and sacrifices to give us a better future. They left everything they knew behind and moved to a new country so that my siblings and I could have better opportunities than they did.

My biggest motivation is to make my parents sacrifices worth it. I moved to Maryland as an adult to work and continue my education. I am the first in my family to go to college. I was very intimidated by the process of starting college and could not ask my parents for advice because they don't have experience with the process. For example, they found FAFSA very hard to navigate. Moving to Maryland was a challenge because I was forced to experience being a minority for the first time. I had never attended a school where I was different because of the way I look. I was scared, and it was and continues to be challenging to try and fit into this new culture. I feel as if I am constantly trying to fit into two roles.

I went to a community college in Baltimore county. I was a full-time student and full-time employee I received my AA in Secondary Spanish Education. On the day of my graduation my mother was not able to come to Maryland. I decided not to attend my graduation because she would not be by my side. If she wasn't with me, then it would not be worth it. I am currently enrolled in the University of Maryland in Baltimore County. I will hopefully receive my Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Spanish Education, with a TEFL certification and an Intercultural Communications Certification.



*Photo courtesy of María Eligio*

*Continued from page 21*

When I see meet immigrants who move here to better their lives and their children's lives, I think of my parents and their sacrifices. It is an honor to help them and their children reach their American dreams. I chose to be an ESOL paraeducator because our students are not given the opportunities they deserve. They are thrown into the public school system and are expected to graduate high school in four years. This is ridiculous and unreasonable. Our students do not feel represented in their classroom. I feel like I can help bridge the gap that exists between them and the rest of the students.

"Con Ms. Eligio la clase ya no es triste?" It broke my heart when my student said this. Why was he sad before? It was because he was insecure and did not have the adequate support or anyone to help him understand. I asked my students what they thought about their school's culture. One of my student's response was, "What culture? They never include us in anything and nobody understands us." Our students feel as if their culture is not represented and like they are not welcome into the school culture. My goal is not only to help them graduate high school, but to teach them to be proud of their culture while embracing who they are becoming in America.



***Photo courtesy of María Eligio***

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## MDTESOL NEWSLETTER

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## SUGGESTIONS

- Activities you would like to announce
- Job postings
- Articles or contributions related to English language learners

Visit our website and see  
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