



MARYLAND TESOL

Newsletter

Fall 2017

Message from the Editors

by Erica Rivera-Vega & Billie Muñoz

In the 80's film classic about a brother and sister struggling against the elements, a rat-infested tunnel and scam artists to reach the land of dreams; *El Norte*, we see the Dreamers of about three generations ago. The brother, Enrique, tries to comprehend a society that uses border guards, helicopters and dogs to keep immigrants like him out yet provide free education once here. Or, to put it another way, there is the familiar expression "If you think education is expensive – try ignorance."

Ask a Liberal and a Conservative what should be done with DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) in *The Age of Trump* and you will get four opinions. For a random sampling try ...*Knowing no other culture or language, they should be allowed to stay for*

humanitarian reasons. America is for Americans and we can't afford to throw our resources away. They are terrorists and must be sent away for our own protection. They are the hardest working amongst us who pay their taxes and live the American Dream. We ESOL professionals have our own take on the current wave of English Language Learners turning up on our rosters from Kindergarten to University and beyond.

Let's get on with the business of giving them the skills they need to succeed wherever they find themselves and, in so doing, be enriched immeasurably ourselves by their courage, their vitality and their contributions.

ON THIS ISSUE:

MARYLAND TESOL CONFERENCE 2017

Tackling Illiteracy

Meeting the needs of ELs with limited and interrupted education

NOVEMBER 11, 2017, LAUREL HIGH SCHOOL
REGISTER TODAY AT MDTESOL.ORG

MDTESOL Fall 2017 Conference

Date: Saturday, November 11, 2017
Time: 8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Location: Laurel High School, 8000
Cherry Lane, Laurel, MD 20707

More information on page 14

Aid for PRTESOL

Due to the recent passing of hurricane Maria on the island, the MDTESOL board contacted the Puerto Rican board to aid in what we could.



More information on page 19

Message from the President

by Sherry Lyons, MDTESOL President

Just as the fall season traditionally signals the beginning of our work as educators, it also marks the start of an exciting and busy new year for Maryland TESOL. On behalf of the entire organization, it is with pleasure that I invite you – new and returning members – to join us as we move forward on the journey we've charted this year. With our mission in mind, our newly approved strategic plan as our guide, and the 2017 – 2018 Board firmly in place, we not only focus on priorities that span several key areas from continued financial solvency to meeting our evolving technology and communication needs but also stand poised to fulfill the reason we exist – to work together to meet the needs of our members. As the new President, I am honored, excited, and ready to lead and to serve with my fellow board members to continue our commitment to the organization and to the Maryland TESOL membership. I assure you that we are dedicated to meeting your professional development needs and to strengthening and expanding the reach and presence of our organization throughout communities across Maryland.

To meet the goal of serving your needs, one of the priorities is to continue our outreach to the Maryland TESOL membership through the work of the interest sections (ISs). The upcoming Fall Conference (Saturday, November 11), and the



IS events in the spring play a prominent role in bringing relevant and engaging content to each IS throughout the year. I encourage you all to take full advantage of these events, to meet the IS chairs and chairs-elect, to network with fellow IS members, and to lend your voice and ideas to the process of providing professional development matched to your needs. In addition to the Fall Conference and the IS spring events, we have a plan in place to offer local access to TESOL International's ELT Leadership Management workshop in collaboration with the WATESOL and VATESOL affiliates in the spring. Typically, this two-day workshop is only offered face-to-face at the TESOL International Convention and Expo. Additionally, we are working to establish three regional ISs in Southern, Eastern and Western Maryland to expand the organization's reach and presence in these areas of the state.

To help bring these plans and initiatives to life, your contribution, in the form of participation and feedback, is needed, so I urge you to become involved in activities whenever possible. We would like to hear from you and are working on developing ways to offer more targeted communications specific to the needs and interests of each IS. If you haven't yet updated your member profile with your IS preferences, please take a moment to do so today. We look forward to seeing you at the upcoming events throughout the year and thank you for your membership and your continued support of Maryland TESOL.

Wishing you all a great start to the school year and the fall semester!

Take good care!

A Need for Research

by S. Lindsay Conboy, ESOL Teacher, MATESOL Student

When I am presented with a problem, I want to solve it, if I can. Therefore, when a friend of mine, a secondary social studies teacher, told me that he had English language learners (ELLs) in his class, I was perplexed. My friend works at a high school that is not a designated ESOL center, and teaches primarily students with an Individualized Education Plan. My first question was why are the students there; quickly followed by how pervasive is this problem?

We all know, or have heard of, students choosing to exit ESOL. I know several who have dropped out of school to work to help support their families as well as those who were severely bullied and no longer felt safe in school. My own journey to become an ESOL teacher began when I met a young man while I was working with juvenile offenders charged as adults. This particular teenager had been enrolled in a school with ESOL and had left in order to work. When I met him, he was unable to ask the most basic requests, such as requests to go to the bathroom and make a phone call. Unfortunately, he was arrested because he fit the description of the perpetrator: thin, dark hair, dark eyes, Latino. He was innocent, and spent eight months in detention before a judge cleared him of all charges.

My naiveté was exposed that students who still wanted an education were choosing to attend schools that could not support their language learning. Now, nearly a year after the conversation with my friend, I have been given the opportunity to explore the research that is available on this topic. The caveat is that there is not much. I have explored numerous databases to find only mention of this problem. Part of the issue is the lack of consensus of when students should exit ESOL amongst school districts, not only nationally, but within states (Kim & Herman, 2010).



Where is this happening?

Unsure if this is an isolated problem, I wanted to know where this was occurring. One report mentions this phenomenon in Canada (Watt, D. & Roessingh, H., 2001). We would also expect this to be a problem to be contained to school districts with designated ESOL centers. That is, students are exiting ESOL in order to attend their community schools with their friends who do not, or no longer, require ESOL. Through an informal survey of friend in districts with ESOL in all high schools, students are leaving to attend non-ESOL schools in other counties. In addition, some students simply skip the intake center, and enroll at their districted school, without question. Therefore, one can conclude this is an international occurrence, and the type of ESOL school designation (i.e. centers or in all schools) provided is a decisive factor, although it may be an extraneous variable.

Three initial questions

I propose that three initial questions should be examined before we explore possible solutions. First, what are the numbers of students voluntarily exiting ESOL services, but remaining in school to graduate? Second, how are they being educated in schools without ESOL? Third, why are the students, and their families, making this choice for early reclassification? These would lend themselves to mixed methods research.

The first question can be answered with secondary data analysis. That is, looking at the data collected by school districts and state departments of education. Within that data, WIDA scores upon exit is crucial in order to compare how their proficiency is

relative to peers when addressing learning outcomes. Because we need to know how this is effecting their learning, contrasting test scores, such as PARCC, of these students with those who see ESOL programs through could be beneficial. An assessment of the results of the data between ESOL centers and school choice should also be included to see if there is a significant difference in early reclassification between the two. The geographic focus could be county, state, or national; or a comparison of a state with recent ESOL growth and one with a long history of ESOL education.

Looking at question two would be a challenge. A survey of schools, or a sampling of schools, in the geographical region(s) studied on how they educate reclassified ELLs who chose to exit ESOL could pose a problem. If students are being placed in special education classes with or without an IEP or 504 Plan, school administrators may be unwilling to confess. I suggest an anonymous survey, or one that assigns schools a number so as to allow the faculty to provide as much information as possible. This is an important issue that coincides with the data. This could provide explanations for any anomalies of performance on standardized tests, as well as help advocating for services within non-ESOL schools to superintendents and school boards.

The last question is crucial to begin discussion as to how to address future questions as to what should be done to help our students and give them the education they need. Surveying the students with a set of question using a lickert scale and an opportunity to use their own words to summarize why they choose to leave ESOL services. Addressing the affective concerns of our students in such a way will help us gain insight into what their internal struggles with regard to ESOL placement.

A Call for Research

This specific issue has not been studied thoroughly. As an MATESOL student, I can explore the topic and write a formal proposal, and if time permits,

conduct some research. However, it is beyond my purview to do the in-depth analysis required to thoroughly examine the issue, choosing to leave our services, most likely to their academic detriment.

If we explore who is leaving, and why, we can then search for a solution to this problem. Looking to the data of who this effects, then qualitatively analyzing how they are being educated after ESOL and why they make this choice can enlighten our teaching and provide our administrations the evidence based best course of action. We can then encourage change in educational policy with how we can should be providing ESOL services and further conversations on when our students should exit language programs.



If you are interested in pursuing this topic, please do. I would be happy to assist whomever is willing to take on this lofty project.

References

- Kim, J., & Herman, J. L. (2010). *When to exit ELL students: Monitoring success and failure in mainstream classrooms after ELLs' reclassification* (CRESST report 779). Los Angeles: University of California, Los Angeles, National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST).
- Watt, D., & Roessingh, H. (2001). The dynamics of ESL drop-out: Plus ça change. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 58(2), 203-22. DOI: 10.3138/cmlr.58.2.203.



ESOL Student Essay:

Learning English as a Second Language

by Carlos E. Arellano, Nursing Student, Ana G. Mendez University System

The following is the continuation of a series on how young people have found success in the United States through their ESOL studies.

This story reflects the student's journey as a new ESOL student while in High School and how this has helped him now that he is working and attending college. His name is Carlos E. Arellano, and he is a Mexican Dreamer, one out of the approximately 10,000 recipients of DACA that live in our state.

We seek to support and encourage ESOL teachers of all levels to continue their important work transforming lives. Please send us the story of one or more of YOUR students (along with a photo) in the form of an interview, their own stories written by themselves or your observations of their lives to designated MDTESOL newspaper editors, Erica Rivera and Billie Muñoz at newsletter@mdtesol.org. We will send a confirmation.

Ludwig Wittgenstein said, "The limits of my language means, the limits of my World". My

name is Carlos Esteban Arellano. I'm a Dreamer, a DACA recipient, and a senior nursing student at Ana G. Mendez, under Universidad Del Turabo. As a native Spanish speaker brought to the United States as a child, I had the privilege of learning English as my second language. Being able to speak English has opened the doors to opportunities that otherwise were closed shut. Learning English as a second language is a life long journey that starts by having an open mind, amazing teachers, and a deep down desire and love for learning.

Languages are constantly evolving, changing, and expanding. New words are learned, while some others are forgotten. Most importantly, languages revolve around people and experiences. The whole purpose of learning a new language is to be able to communicate with people that you were not able to communicate to before. For that reason, my first step in learning English was to open up my mind to a new culture, uphill challenges and upcoming life changing experiences.

My learning experience started in high school. I remember being completely lost for the first 6 months; while not knowing the official language resulted in some embarrassing, but somehow, amusing

experiences, other times those experiences were very heart breaking as I had to face prejudice for being labeled "with an accent". In the process of learning, I shed many tears. However, being placed on the hot spot, every day, pushed my mind into reaching heights I did not know I was capable of. After 6 months of constant study and pressure, I remember one morning waking up and suddenly, realizing that I started understanding the world around me. It was like someone was removing a blindfold off my eyes; it felt amazing.

TV shows, music, and friends reinforced my daily learning, but having amazing teachers made a turning difference. Thanks to their hard work, encouragement, and passion for teaching, in just a few months I started speaking and creating my first sentences in English together. My ESOL teachers stayed by my side throughout high school, until the day I graduated. Just like a baby that takes his first steps and speaks his first words, my ESOL teachers watched me grow.

Learning a new language is a life long journey; a process in which you never stop learning. As a Dreamer and as a DACA recipient, being able to communicate and express myself in English has given me the opportunity to work 2 jobs in order to cover the costs of my education and peruse my dream career in nursing. Most importantly, by having learned English, I am able to extend and offer my God given potentials, gifts and skills to my community here in the United States.

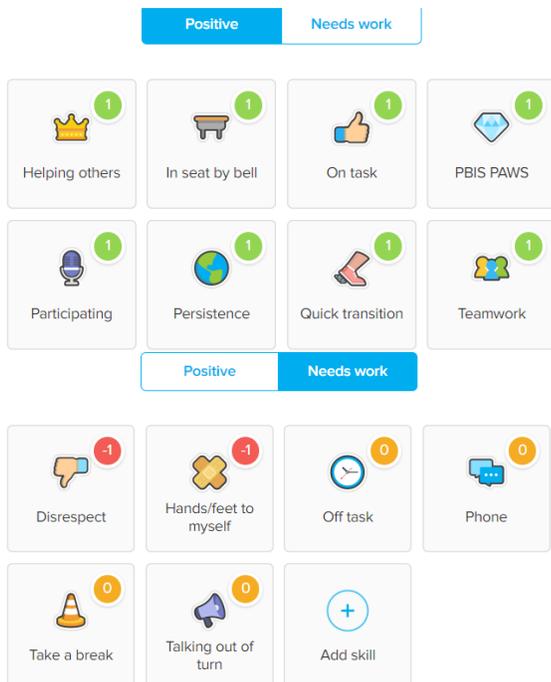
Happier Classrooms with ClassDojo

by Paige Dobbertin, Secondary School Interest Section Chair

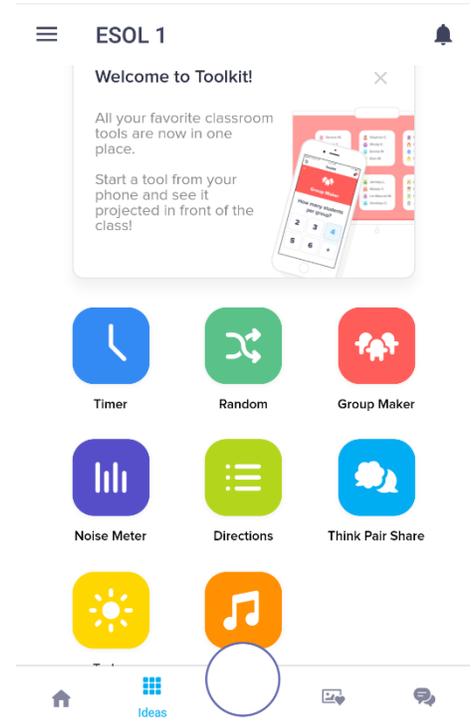
ClassDojo is my #1 classroom tool because you can “do it all” with Dojo! I have used the application successfully for three years in my classroom. Students, parents, colleagues and administrators around the globe all agree that it has the potential to transform any classroom!

Classroom Expectations

ClassDojo helps my newcomer English Learners, many of which are also SLIFE (students with limited/interrupted formal education), quickly learn classroom expectations. Learning a new language in a new school is overwhelming, and translating a list of rules does not ensure that students understand expectations. Each student from the class list receives an avatar, and teachers can award skill points directly to students. This is well aligned with PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Support) because teachers can focus on awarding skills such as “on task” and “participating” instead of just correcting students. Teachers can customize skills and choose point values or have zero point options. This strategy transformed my ESOL 1 classes because my students saw what was expected and followed in turn. For newcomer students and SLIFE this is a very effective way to show them the expectations instead of telling them.



Sample positive and needs work skills from my classroom.



Toolkit

Many ESOL educators are split between classrooms or even buildings. ClassDojo was a lifesaver for me when I floated!

A new feature this year is the toolkit available on the smartphone app and desktop site. From the toolkit teachers can easily set a timer, create groups, give directions, and even play music. There is also an equitable calling function through the “random” button that helps keep students on their toes! I have only used this function for about a month and I could not get through my school day without it.

The toolkit can work in two modes. The first is through the ClassDojo site where you can have it on a computer and project it to the class. The second is when a smartphone acts as a remote when ClassDojo is projected to the class. In the second mode a teacher can use any of the functions through their phone without having to be at the computer. More tools are routinely added to the toolkit as well and the creators of ClassDojo are always seeking feedback from teachers.

Big Ideas

The Big Ideas portion of ClassDojo contains multiple short video series targeting specific skills including growth mindset, perseverance, empathy, gratitude, and mindfulness. Each video is engaging, short, visual, and has captions available in many languages. My students love the growth mindset video “your brain is like a muscle” where it shows contrasting images of a brain working out and a brain lazily eating chips and watching TV. Included with each video there are discussion activities and sample lesson plans teachers can use in their classroom.



Parent Engagement

Connecting family members to ClassDojo is easy! Each student has a unique code, and ready to print invitations with step by step directions in many languages. Once family members are connected they can see posts the teacher makes, their student’s skill report, and items added to their student’s story. Parents can also message the teacher and there is a built in translation function.

Student Stories

Each student in ClassDojo can add to their “student story”, a digital portfolio where they can upload pictures and video of their work in class. Students add to their story by scanning the class QR code on any compatible device with a camera and clicking their name. Students can also add group work to multiple stories. This allows students opportunities to practice English by listening to themselves. Practice with this technology is well aligned to the WIDA ACCESS assessment where students are required to record a speaking sample on the computer. Teachers are also able to easily capture student work and save it for conferences or yearly required portfolios.



Give ClassDojo a try and see how you can use these tools to help make your classroom a happier place!

Declarative statement: All images taken from classdojo.com

Tips for Helping Lower-Level College Students Understand Rhetorical Structures

by Adrienne Betancourt Nicosia, Instructional Associate at Montgomery College Writing, Reading, and Language Center

Narrative, Exemplification, Description, Summary, Response, and Reflection are six popular writing assignments for lower-level college ESOL students. When they have misunderstood these rhetorical structures and need to rewrite, they often head to the Writing Center. This article shares tips for getting students on the right path, from the first draft, as well as insights into why students may be struggling.

First, be purposeful about your writing assignments by keeping short and longer-term college goals in mind. Give assignments in a way that will move students towards more advanced academic writing. Explain to them how a summary and response exercise, at this stage, for example, develops skills related to their future English composition classes which will require research papers with analysis; it also resembles annotated bibliography. Explain that college-level narratives are useful because (while keeping a particular audience in mind) they practice reporting on something that happened, organized thinking, and a linear pattern. Many academic majors and careers demand the ability to write clear reports, and good writers have an edge in the job market. If you suggest asynchronous organization for narrative essays, to emphasize a point or theme, you can explain how the flash-back style resembles an abstract of a research paper which starts out revealing the end results (as does a blue-print thesis statement.) Exemplification and descriptive essays develop logical thinking and specificity and can address problems of redundancy. Explaining how your class leads to future academic success can be motivational.

Second, examine your assumptions in relation to your students. Most ESOL instructors are language lovers, but a few are also literature and creative writing enthusiasts whose assignments reflect this focus. At the Writing Center, we often help ESOL students struggling with assigned literature that would be difficult for native-born high school graduates (with all of their U.S. cultural background knowledge) to comprehend. That can make writing assignments based on such literature impossibly



hard. Some instructors request advanced creative pieces of such complexity that tutors themselves feel they would be at a loss to produce the same. Who are your students and what are their goals? Few of us have ESOL classes of unformed 18 year olds seeking an English language humanities education, with parents covering tuition and living expenses. Perhaps, you think, it is your obligation to introduce ESOL students to the Classics or to develop their artistic potential. Who wouldn't want to read extraordinarily creative essays by our most famous writers as inspiration to do the same? Or, do you rather have students struggling with English in a lousy job where they work extraordinary hours just to pay for college and get ahead while also supporting themselves and, perhaps, family members? Are they anxious to move through the English classes into courses required for their majors? Models of well-written narratives by your former ESOL students may be very helpful. Consider offering readings and also choices within each writing assignment that appeal and are relevant to the technology geeks, the future accountants and healthcare workers, and other fields outside of the humanities.

Third, question how easy it is to write a "story." Many people just can't tell a good joke, and storytelling is an art and a talent. Yes, it can be improved with practice, but most people are not interested in becoming entertaining story-tellers nor do they need to be, especially in a foreign language.

Ask your ESOL students how much and what kinds of writing they did in their home language. You might be surprised how few students are asked to do much writing around the world and in American high-school ESOL classes. Next, try out your own assignment. What complex skills must you call into practice? What if you had to write on the topic in your least proficient foreign language? Are your expectations reasonable in relation to your students' level? Do you provide enough scaffolding? One of the more difficult assignments is the descriptive narrative. American-born high school students moan when English teachers ask them to infuse their writing with the most creative, poetic vocabulary to get their readers to see, smell, hear, taste, and touch elements of their stories. Consider how difficult rich description is for ESOL students and have a clear academic purpose in mind, lists of possible vocabulary, models, and other supports if you think they need to practice description.

Fourth, take care not to assign types of rhetorical structures as separate entities. ESOL students often don't understand that rhetorical structures overlap and may contain each other. They think "Exemplification" essays are separate and different from Narrative or Reflection or Description. Most well-written academic essays have substantial examples and include a variety of rhetorical elements. Lower-level college ESOL students may provide a basic plot without mishap. But what distinguishes college narratives from a list of events ("I get up at 7:00 a.m. and eat my breakfast. Then I take a shower and brush my teeth.") is that they usually require a message and a higher level of value or significance than the simple stories ESOL students might have written before. Instructors call this the "So what?" test. Why should I care about what you have written? Students may need to include examples, reasons, results, or even comparisons, definitions and themes. Students write bare plots for their first drafts and get back papers covered with questions: "How did you feel when this happened? Why? What did the experience propel you to do? How was this different than before? Why do you think So-and-So asked this of you? Can you give an example? What lesson did you learn?" True, any element that goes beyond plot may be incidental to the narrative and not the driving rhetorical structure, but why not be more explicit about these expectations during your preparation of students? Teach how good writers embed all kinds of rhetorical devices into each type of overall, dominant structure.

Fifth, if you are actually asking students to write a two or more part essay, then say so. For

example, "tell about an incident in your life that changed you" is asking for events that took place within a confined time period plus what changes subsequently occurred in students' lives. It is harder for ESOL students to read between the lines. They are less likely to realize that within a "change" essay is a second structure of "cause/effect." This very same "change" narrative also implies a "contrast" between what the student was like before and after the incident. Grades are lower when these significant elements are neglected. A better prompt would be "Tell a story about one particular incident in your life on one particular day that changed you; then write the next half of your essay explaining how and why you changed as compared to before the incident." This more honest prompt no longer looks like such an uncomplicated essay to write, does it? Other seemingly easy popular prompts include "Tell about a time that you were frightened, surprised, etc." or "Describe your favorite person/hero." In the first case, the narrative will need descriptive examples that evoke the fear or surprise and also reasons why the narrator felt afraid. Had the frightened narrator walked into something quite unexpected in light of past experience (i.e. compared to the past?) In the second case, writing about the positive attributes of a hero reveals negative attitudes, as well. A favorite person may be similar to one's own personality or very different. In sum, college-level expectations for the "simple" narrative assignment may contain hidden layers of complexity that confuse many ESOL writers.

Sixth, spend considerable time teaching prewriting strategies that distinguish the general from the specific, such as outlining. This process naturally requires English language vocabulary building and dictionary skills. Most academic essays require main ideas and major and minor supporting details. Examples bring to life and enrich the bare outline of the story's plot. Students may be practicing with transition words like "such as," "for example," "for instance." At a slightly higher challenge level, instructors expect students to create multiple layers of specificity. At the Writing Center, we often see ESOL students who think they have provided examples when they have just touched the surface. Low-level ESOL students may need to better organize their thought processes to intentionally show target readers how they are moving from introduction of general ideas to specifics. Have your students practiced this level of logical thinking, organization of ideas, and writing in their home languages? If so, are they ready to transfer the conceptual skills into English? Or, are they unpracticed in such in L1?

Seventh, stand on your head to help lower-level ESOL students understand the complex concept of “circular reasoning” and its relation to redundancy. Students with vocabulary too low for the assignment and students who are stressed out by course demands are more likely to be redundant and circular. They answer the prompt question with only a rewording of the question or their examples are not really of greater specificity but are rewording of the general point previously expressed. For instance, the prompt, “Tell about how you came to the U.S.” is actually asking for some explanation. At the Writing Center, we sometimes need to show students that what they think answers the question is really only “I came to the U.S. because I came to the U.S.” without clarity of purpose. It can be hard to get this across, but model sentences, at a simpler or more obvious level, may sometimes work. One of my lower-level ESOL tutees, recently, had a string of five redundant sentences in one paragraph: “I teach my children how to behave when I give them things they like. I reward the children when they are good and punish them by taking things away.” It took several minutes to help her see that she lacked a level of detail about the nature of her rewards and punishments and actual behavior by her children that needed discipline. I told her how I rewarded eating healthy foods with dessert at my house and asked her to explain the specifics of her discipline to me. Last, the more you know about the differences between academic writing expectations in U.S. higher education and that of other cultures, the easier you can predict how students will interpret your prompts. Some of your ESOL students were rewarded with high grades in their home countries because, what we here might consider disorganized, flowery, circular, redundancy is highly valued in their academic cultures.



Eighth, explain your personal expectations for Summary and Response/Reflection. Ascertain what type of product you will consider “correct” by trying out the assignment yourself. How many main ideas are in the text you assign to summarize and how long would a reasonable summary be for that text? We sometimes see instructors request a full-page “summary” of a two-page article. Unless the article is incredibly dense with main ideas, students will wonder how they can they fill the page without including all

kinds of details. Lower-level ESOL students’ summaries may include far too much information particular to the reading rather than a focus on main ideas that relate to situations beyond those in the very text itself. For example, recently, I had student after student write how “Jim is a 28-year-old man from Winesboro, Ohio who falls in love with Mary, a high school teacher....” I ask them to look at the forest and not the trees. Overall, what kind of story is this? What kind of people are in the story? What kind of situations are happening that can help us learn, not only about Jim and Mary, but about people in the world and life and love and change...?” I give them a hint by providing more general language: “This is a story about the dangers of love triangles, or about loneliness.” “This is a story about how cruelty can result in years of lasting pain.” There are so many types of “summaries” that instructors need to provide models and detailed explanations. If the goal is to prepare students for annotating dense textbook subject matter, perhaps you are expecting main ideas, major supporting details, and even some examples within the “summaries.” Your students need to know.

Ninth, realize that the words “Response” and “Reflection” mean nothing to students. Many ESOL students come to the Writing Center to totally rewrite responses because they were completely off track. Unclear instructions lead to discouraged students. Some instructors seek opinions including agreement or disagreement with the reading. Some want connections students to see between the reading and their own lives. Others want exploration of philosophical issues. And others want students to critique the text, commenting on what the author has done skillfully and ineptly. Response paragraphs or essays are highly valuable tasks which develop the necessary academic skills of reading outside sources, demonstrating understanding of them, and providing commentary. Interactive reading of textbooks and academic inquiry can be developed through practice of response and reflection. By giving many explicitly different kinds of response or reflection assignments, instructors can expose students to the variety of tasks they will face later in their academic study. “Today I would like you to write a type of response which looks at the validity of the author’s argument.” “Today I would like you to write a new

kind of reflection, one in which you provide examples from your own life that connect to the story.”

Last, but not least, alleviate the discouragement some lower-level ESOL students feel as they struggle with new rhetorical structures. Applaud them at each point they are moving in the right direction. At the Writing Center, we see many crest-fallen students who missed the boat, got lousy grades, and had to start from scratch because they provided the wrong type of structure. There is always something positive to say. “Look how well you identified the main ideas. You really understood the reading. You have to get back on track and change this second part to more of a response, not just other summary.” “The first half of your narrative does,

indeed, provide a brief description of your favorite places, and you even mention fun things to do. Let’s underline specific vocabulary you already have and brainstorm some more.” “I really enjoyed reading about the day that you arrived in the U.S. It was an experience you will never forget. Can you think of some overall lessons you learned from that day? What can readers understand about how it is for immigrants leaving home and starting new lives in a new land?” “I see your disappointment with your grade. You wrote three instead of only two body paragraphs with clear topic sentences. You only need a couple of sentences more for each paragraph. Let’s quickly create an outline to reveal which layer of examples you tend to omit.”

The Circuitous Path: A Change for the Better

by April Wagner, MDTESOL Board Member

Growing up I loved to pretend to be a teacher. Writing on the chalkboard was exhilarating; a tiny piece of chalk held such power. Yet as a child, it was more fun and games than something serious. As time went by, the appeal of playing teacher diminished until eighth grade when I remembered why I loved “teaching”. Lunch time was no picnic at my school. The cafeteria was on the top floor of a 3-story building and there was always trouble during lunch. Often, I would spend my lunch period with my Algebra teacher in her room since she too had her lunch period during this time. A few students received math tutoring during this period and I found myself assisting the teacher with tutoring them. Somehow midway through the year, I was the sole person doing all the tutoring to a class that started off with 1 or 2 students at a time to now being 10 at a time. I didn’t mind giving up my lunch to tutor my classmates; quite the contrary I looked forward to it.

But the defining moment in my life happened when my algebra teacher asked me on a Friday to tutor a girl to help her pass the entrance exam into Baltimore Polytechnic Institute. Apparently, this young lady had no knowledge of algebra and her test was the following Monday. I thought “how in the world can I possibly teach her algebra in a few short hours”. I decided to teach her the basics and hope for the best. She was an eager student and seemed to catch on quickly. I still doubted it would make a difference. Until a couple of weeks later when she ran up to me in the hall way, grabbed me, hugged me and thanked me. She had passed the exam and was now going to the high school of her choice. I will never forget that feeling I had- the one where you know you made a difference in someone’s life, in their future. That was the moment I knew pretending to be a teacher as a child was a precursor to my future career.

Sadly, I had many people sway my decision including my family. It wasn’t that they thought I was incapable, they felt I could do better. My dad wanted me to be a doctor and really my mom was satisfied with me just finishing high school. I was the only one in our family to accomplish this let alone go to college. Many times, I heard from family, friends and co-workers, “teaching isn’t rewarding, there’s no money

in it, it’s dangerous” and I allowed these negative remarks to influence me. So, I pursued my Bachelors in psychology instead and worked in many different fields until I settled on medical secretary positions for more than 15 years. Something was always missing from my life. These were jobs not careers and I was beginning to feel like I was wasting my life. I loved being in the medical field. I learned a lot and much of my family comes to me when they don’t understand things medically related. I don’t regret taking these jobs because of the knowledge I’ve obtained over the years. I’m a strong believer that things happen for a reason and timing is everything.



In 2013, my life started to spiral a bit. My beloved dog died and I was hating my job more and more. Some might say I had a mental break down because I just up and quit my job with no back up plan. I say it was the moment of clarity I needed; it was my enlightenment. I needed to experience such misery

in order to realize I wasn’t fulfilling my calling. I believe teaching is a calling and I kept ignoring that calling. No longer though. In 2015 I found the perfect university, Notre Dame of Maryland University, with the best course options for me to begin answering my calling. I intended to go for Elementary Education until I met with my academic supervisor. She read my college essay and asked me if I had ever heard of ESOL. I had not and after she explained it to me, I knew I was in the right place at the right time. I loved learning about new cultures and languages. I knew I wanted to be a part of something greater.

Working in the medical field I met a lot of people from different backgrounds, many of which brought their children to translate for them during their doctor visits. It broke my heart to see their struggles and even than I wished I could do more to help make the visits easier. My coworkers would often walk away because they couldn’t deal with the difficulties of communicating with others who didn’t speak or understand English. I seemed to be the only person who had the patience, understanding and desire to help them during their visits. To communicate during

registration, I would use hand gestures and body movements to try to explain the paperwork. At home, I would look up translations for common phrases for times I communicated with patients from other countries. ESOL was perfect for me. I would be teaching and incorporating my love of people, cultures and languages. Thus my journey began.

In 2016, I was hired conditionally as an Elementary ESOL teacher with Baltimore County Schools during my internship. I was so afraid I would be horrible at teaching. But that fear quickly faded when I met my students. My first year was like no other. I had three schools and 100 students, many of which were new comers. Perhaps my biggest challenge was working with Syrian refugee students. The first half of the year felt like I was advocating more than teaching. There is a stigma attached to Muslim students and I sadly witnessed much of the prejudices that came with it. Teachers, staff, parents, neighbors and even students made comments about these students not being wanted in the schools. Sometimes the comments and actions were directed towards the students themselves.

I saw teachers shone them, put them in places in the classrooms away from all the other students, give them coloring activities or just let them play on the computers; students would call them names and one girl who proudly wears her hijab, had it tampered with in the bathroom by a non-Muslim student. Teachers

did not know how to work with them or didn't care to, they didn't understand what these children went through nor did they want to understand. A couple of times I walked the students home so I could introduce myself to parents and I would watch residents run into their homes to avoid the students as if they were mini terrorists. I had my own biases to overcome too. I kept viewing them as victims who needed my help to protect them. I had to stop seeing them this way because they were the most resilient and amazing students I had. They were tough and loving and determined to learn.

Together we taught each other important lessons; together we worked to create a more culturally sensitive school environment. We learned how to speak each other's languages, how to respect each other's culture and how to help other's see them as people rather than as enemies. I learned to communicate with staff, teachers and parents in a way that promotes cultural sensitivity and understanding. Rather than telling teachers how to teach and respect their cultural differences, I learned the importance of modeling best practices and strategies for educating ESOL students. I wouldn't change my first year for anything. My students and I made small strides in changing the atmosphere in our school by overcoming some prejudices. What I thought was my biggest challenge turned into my greatest success and the best thing to happen to me.

What's Happening:

Invitation to the 37th Annual Fall Conference

by Luis Penton-Herrera, Vice-President MDTESOL

Dear members,

It is with great pleasure that I write to invite you to our 37th Annual Fall Conference taking place on November 11th at Laurel High School in Laurel, Maryland. This year we have new and exciting opportunities for all! This year's conference theme is "Tackling illiteracy" and we are focusing on the power of literacy in education at all grade, academic and skill levels.

Our Keynote Speaker:



Andrea DeCapua, Ed.D.

Addressing the Needs of Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education Through Culturally Responsive Teaching

Dr. Andrea DeCapua, an educator, researcher, and educational consultant with over thirty years of experience, both in the United States and overseas. She has held academic appointments at various institutions, most recently at New York University and the University of North Florida. Dr. DeCapua specializes in professional development for teachers of language learners and in developing intercultural awareness for classrooms in a global society. She has published numerous articles in a variety of journals including *Principal Leadership*, *NASSP Bulletin*, *Urban Review*, *TESOL Journal*, and *Preventing School Failure*. In addition to her Keynote speech, Dr. DeCapua will have an afternoon breakout session titled "Connecting students with limited/interrupted formal education (SLIFE) to US classrooms".

Invited Speakers:



Diane Staehr Fenner, PhD.

Honing Your Leadership Skills to Advocate for ELs in Challenging Times

Dr. Diane Staehr Fenner is president of SupportEd, LLC, a woman-owned small business based in the Washington, DC area. At SupportEd, Diane serves as project lead for all the team's work providing EL professional development, programmatic support, and research to school districts, states, organizations, and the U.S. Department of Education. Diane is an author of four books, a blogger for the *Colorín Colorado* website, and a frequent keynote presenter on EL education at conferences across North America.



Roger Rosenthal, Esq.

Presentation Title: *The Rights of Immigrant Students and English Learners in the Maryland Public Schools*

Immigrant children and English Learners often face barriers in gaining entry to public schools and participating in school activities. This session will discuss what Maryland public schools can and cannot

require of immigrant children and ELs. Topics to be discussed include Social Security numbers, immigration documents, birth certificates, and immunization records; and access to school lunch and breakfast programs. The session will also cover the rights of English Learners and their parents in the public schools. Additional topics to be covered very briefly to include Special Education and English Learners and Access to Post-Secondary Education for immigrant students.

Opportunity to publish your work:

The journal Literacy Issues & Practices, in collaboration with Maryland TESOL, is excited to announce a call for articles on a special issue addressing the topic “Literacy for all: Meeting the needs of English learners with limited and interrupted education.” The topic of literacy learning among the English Learner (EL) student population has gained considerable attention in recent years. Nonetheless,

ELs with formal and interrupted education continue to experience a disproportional literacy gap in relation to their peers that impacts their academic development, school performance and language learning.

Opportunity to receive a Graduate Credit:

The Dominican University of California, in collaboration with Maryland TESOL, is offering a Graduate Credit for attendees who wish to pursue this opportunity. Find more information about the course’s syllabus

here: http://dominicancaonline.com/syllabus/EDUO8016_TESOLConferenceSyllabus2017.pdf

In addition to the many great highlights shared above, we have many exhibitors, scholars, and educators in the field for a wonderful opportunity to network, learn more about the TESOL field, and how to better help your students.

Don’t miss this wonderful opportunity, we hope to see you there!

CONFERENCE THEME

TACKLING ILLITERACY:

Meeting the needs of English Learners with limited and interrupted education



MARYLAND TESOL CONFERENCE 2017



Andrea DeCapua, Ed.D.
Keynote Speaker

Saturday, November 11, 2017 | 8:00 AM - 3:30 PM
Laurel High School | 8000 Cherry Ln, Laurel, MD 20707
<https://www.mdtesol.org>

MARYLAND TESOL CONFERENCE 2017



MDTESOL Conference Presentation Title

Honing Your Leadership Skills to Advocate for ELs in Challenging Times



Diane Staehr Fenner, Ph.D.
President of SupportEd, LLC

Degree: Ph.D. in Multilingual/
Multicultural Education,
George Mason University



SupportEd
getsupported.net

Abstract: To successfully advocate for ELs, educators must draw from their leadership skills. However, many educators have not had leadership training. In this interactive session, participants will discuss leadership skills in service of ELs, reflect upon their leadership skills, and apply leadership strategies to advocate for ELs in their context.

Bio: Diane Staehr Fenner, Ph.D. is the president of SupportEd, LLC (<http://getsupported.net/>), a woman-owned small business based in the Washington, DC area. At SupportEd, Diane serves as project lead for all the team's work providing EL professional development, programmatic support, and research to school districts, states, organizations, and the U.S. Department of Education. Diane is an author of four books, a blogger for the *Colorín Colorado* website, and a frequent keynote presenter on EL education at conferences across North America. Prior to forming SupportEd, Diane was a research associate at George Washington University's Center for Excellence and Equity in Education and spent a decade as an ESOL teacher, dual language assessment teacher, and ESOL assessment specialist in Fairfax County Public Schools, VA. She also taught English in Veracruz, Mexico and Berlin, Germany.

You can connect with her via email at Diane@GetSupportEd.net or on Twitter at [@DStaehrFenner](https://twitter.com/DStaehrFenner).

Saturday, November 11, 2017 from 8:00 AM to 3:30 PM
Laurel High School, 8000 Cherry Lane, Laurel, MD 20707

REGISTER TODAY!

mdtesol.org

MARYLAND TESOL CONFERENCE 2017

MDTESOL Conference Presentation Title

The Rights of Immigrant Students and English Learners in the Maryland Public Schools



Roger C. Rosenthal, Esq.
Executive Director
Migrant Legal Action Program
Washington, DC

Abstract: Immigrant children and English Learners often face barriers in gaining entry to public schools and participating in school activities. This session will discuss what Maryland public schools can and cannot require of immigrant children and ELs. Topics to be discussed include Social Security numbers, immigration documents, birth certificates, and immunization records; and access to school lunch and breakfast programs. The session will also cover the rights of English Learners and their parents in the public schools. Practical examples will be provided. Additional topics to be covered very briefly to include Special Education and English Learners and Access to Post-Secondary Education for immigrant students.



mlap.org



mdtesol.org

Saturday, November 11, 2017
8:00 AM to 3:30 PM
Laurel High School
8000 Cherry Lane, Laurel, MD 20707

[REGISTER TODAY!](#)

Maryland TESOL Reaching Out: Help Puerto Rico TESOL



Given the current humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico, Maryland TESOL has reached out in solidarity to our sister affiliate, Puerto Rico TESOL to offer our support and assistance in this time of great need. From one TESOL affiliate to another, we would like to provide financial assistance so that Puerto Rico TESOL can purchase needed items that they determine will be most beneficial for schools, families, and communities on the island.

During our upcoming Annual Fall Conference on Saturday, November 11, 2017 at Laurel High School, we will be accepting financial donations of \$5 - \$10 (or any amount that you can spare and feel in your hearts to give to the cause). We can accept cash or donations made by credit card on site. Please be sure to look for the donation station at the check-in desk and around the conference site throughout the day.

On behalf of the entire Maryland TESOL Board, we look forward to seeing you all at the Fall Conference this year and thank you in advance for your generosity and willingness to help Puerto Rico TESOL!

Sincerely,

Sherry Lyons

President, Maryland TESOL

Newsletter

For regular mail, use the following address:

Maryland TESOL
501 Burnt Mills Ave.
Silver Spring, MD
20901



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Have you been receiving emails from MDTESOL? If not, you may need to add website@mdtesol.org to your list of "safe senders" in your email account. That way you can stay informed about all the exciting Interest Section events, advocacy issues, and conferences that MDTESOL offers throughout the year.