Gearing up for the MaFLA 2014 Fall Conference!

Proposals are in and are being reviewed. The excitement is building as we are preparing strands in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Latin, Spanish, Pedagogy and Technology. Our MaFLA members have stepped up to the plate and are ready to share their knowledge and expertise at the Fall Conference. Start planning now to attend.

Wondering what to expect at the MaFLA 2014 Fall Conference? We have some exceptional speakers and workshop presenters lined up to provide high-quality, cutting-edge professional development!

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Rita Oleksak

Director of Foreign Languages/ELL for the Glastonbury Public Schools, Rita is currently president of the National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL) and is a past president of the National Association of District Supervisors of Foreign Languages (NADSFL) and The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). She is also a past president of the Massachusetts Foreign Language Association (MaFLA) and former co-chair of the K-16 Foreign Language Teachers of Western Massachusetts Collaborative. She was recently awarded the NADSFL – Pearson Supervisor of the Year Award 2013.

WORKSHOP PRESENTER: Karin Baumgartner (German)

Karin Baumgartner (PhD, Washington University) is an Associate Professor of German at the University of Utah. Her current research interests include modern Swiss literature, Swiss Studies, 18th- and 19th-century travel literature, and content-based instruction. She teaches courses on German-speaking cultures, post-war German literature and culture, Romanticism, the fairytale, and German business. Karin will be presenting a 3-hour workshop on teaching Switzerland through Heidi.

WORKSHOP PRESENTER: Charlotte Gifford

Charlotte Gifford is Professor of French and Spanish and the Chair of World Languages at Greenfield Community College. She holds a BA in French (Tufts), an MA in Spanish (Middlebury) and the DALF (Université Jean Monnet). Charlotte is a past president of the Massachusetts Foreign Language Association (MaFLA) and a Past Chair of the Northeast Conference on Teaching of Foreign Languages (NECTFL). Charlotte will be presenting a 3-hour workshop on staying 90%+ in the target language.

WORKSHOP PRESENTER: Kathy Turner

Kathleen Turner has been a French teacher at Sharon High School since 1994. Kathy serves on the MaFLA Board and on the AATF – Eastern Massachusetts Chapter Board. She has presented workshops at the MaFLA Conference and at the AATF National Conference. Kathy was named 2013 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year and the 2014 MaFLA Foreign Language Teacher of the Year. Kathy will be presenting a 4-hour workshop on ways to engage your students and foster communication.
The MaFLA Newsletter

The MaFLA Newsletter is the official publication of the Massachusetts Foreign Language Association. It is published four times per year - Winter, Spring, Back To School, and End of Year. Subscription is available through membership in the Massachusetts Foreign Language Association. MaFLA welcomes short articles, anecdotes, brief reviews of books and other teaching materials, and other items of interest to members of the profession. The opinions expressed by the authors of articles published in this newsletter are their own and are not necessarily shared or endorsed by MaFLA or its Board of Directors.

Deadlines are:

- Winter - January 5
- Spring - March 5
- Back to School - August 5
- End of Year - November 5

All submissions should be sent to:
Ronie R. Webster
Email: ronie@mafla.org
41 Glenn Drive
Wilbraham, MA 01095-1439
Tel: 413-596-9284  Fax: 413-596-9513

Notification to Members of Membership Category Changes:

In order to streamline its operation, the Board voted at its September 25, 2013 meeting to eliminate the category of two-year membership. Two-year memberships will be honored through their expiration dates but are no longer an option.

The member categories 1 and 3 will remain in effect (see below)

Please notify that membership dues remain the same without an increase; MaFLA has worked diligently and prudently on your behalf to preserve its price structures for your benefit.

Please help us maintain the dues at this rate by honoring your dues renewal notice! Thanks so much!

Madelyn Gonnerman Torchin, Membership Coordinator
Questions: Email Madelyn at membership@mafla.org.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Membership in MaFLA is open to anyone interested in the learning and teaching of languages. The basic membership runs one year from date of inception. There are four categories of membership - Individual, Student, Retired, and First-Year Teachers.

Individual memberships:
- $45.00 for 1 year
- $120.00 for 3 years
- $25.00 for 1 year (new to profession teacher in first year)

Retired memberships: $25.00 per year

Student memberships: $15.00 per year

For more info and/or a membership application packet, contact:
Madelyn Gonnerman Torchin
membership@mafla.org
PO BOX 590193
Newton Centre, MA 02459

HAVE YOU . . .

MOVED?

CHANGED SCHOOLS?

CHANGED YOUR NAME?

Please notify Madelyn Gonnerman Torchin, PO BOX 590193, Newton Centre, MA 02459, Ph. 617.964.6141, (membership@mafla.org), to update your membership information.

OR

You can do it yourself. Just go to mafla.org and click Membership/Update Profile and login to update your profile.

Please help us keep our files updated so you can receive ALL information regarding MaFLA.

Now you can join, renew or update your profile online!
Just visit mafla.org

MaFLA 2014

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Gearing Up

Information on all of our workshop presenters is available on our [WEBSITE](#), with details on my [CONFERENCE BLOG](#). I look forward to reading your session proposals and know that between the excellent workshop presenters and the sessions you will be submitting, we will once again have an excellent MaFLA Fall Conference!

I’m also very excited to announce that we will be selling MaFLA 2014 t-shirts for the first time ever! If you will be at NECTFL, [Diversity Day](#), [Technology Days East or West](#), the [Summer Institute](#), or of course the [Fall Conference](#), you can purchase your own t-shirt for only $8.

More exciting updates on the conference will be posted on my blog as well as in future newsletters. I look forward to connecting with you and to reading your session proposals! Please email me any suggestions at [conference@mafla.org](mailto:conference@mafla.org). See you in October!

*Catherine Ritz*, 2014 Conference Chair

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**Tech Days Are Coming!**

Check out the detailed programs at Mafla.org

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Join your colleagues to learn the latest Web 2.0 applications and technologies and how they fit into the foreign language curriculum!
Kathleen Turner And Guila Clara Kessous Delight Audience

On Monday, March 24, 2014, in a program organized and hosted by Chancellor Professor Mel B. Yoken, director of the Boivin Center for French Language and Culture at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, the Massachusetts Teacher of the Year 2013, spoke to an enthusiastic, attentive audience on the importance of teaching. Using a PowerPoint® presentation and a mobile she created, Ms. Turner discussed the process of how she was chosen for Teacher of the Year in Massachusetts, and also described her year of activities that went along with being awarded this honor.

Ms. Turner knew from a very young age that she would become a teacher, beginning with her childhood lessons to her stuffed animals, continuing with her taking home extra worksheets to assist her classmates in the summer, to having study sessions with her classmates in high school. She spoke of the importance of teaching and reminded us that every single profession exists because there was a teacher who taught that profession and/or skill.

Ms. Turner, a teacher of French at Sharon High School since her graduation from Harvard in 1994, also spoke of the challenges of trying to reach students of varying abilities and of varying personal difficulties. Cognizant of the fact that learning does not exist solely within the walls of a classroom, Kathleen has brought students to Quebec and to France so that they can hear and speak the French language they have learned in the classroom.

Ms. Turner has challenged legislators to get to know their schools better by shadowing a teacher in a high performing school and one in an underperforming school in their district. Only by seeing firsthand the educational process, would legislators be able to appropriately make laws that address education in our schools today. Unfortunately, not one of them took her up on the suggestion.

Kathleen Turner’s parents were in the audience along with her high school French teacher, Ms. Nancy Sweeney, and one of her former students who went on her first school trip to France. Also in the audience were some of her former students who are attending the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth as well as some of her present-day students.

Ms. Turner’s devotion and dedication to the teaching profession clearly demonstrated to the audience why she was chosen for Teacher of the Year.

In the question and answer segment, Ms. Turner provided one of the audience members with valuable information to assist him in getting New Bedford High School to retain their French language classes.

The second part of the program included a surprise guest. Guila Clara Kessous is a remarkable young woman who studied seven years with Nobel prize winner Elie Wiesel working on a PhD. while interpreting the Holocaust through performing art, uniting ethics and aesthetics. A UNESCO “Artist for Peace” award recipient, she spoke of her work in disseminating information about the journal of Hélène Berr, a Sorbonne graduate and Holocaust victim.

Dr. Kessous spoke of the belief that Hélène held right to the very end that the Nazis would not have acted as they did if they knew better. Hélène could not comprehend how man could be so cruel to man. In recording the journal of Hélène Berr, Dr. Kessous merely spoke the words of the author. She was not performing but expressing the journal’s observations and sentiments. To do anything else, according to Dr. Kessous, would lessen the value of Hélène’s testimony.

In remembering the Holocaust, Dr. Kessous emphasizes that it is not revenge that is being sought. Instead, it is the understanding of how humanity can go so wrong, how genocide can continue to exist in a civilized society. The audience was greatly moved by Dr. Kessous’ words.

All those present would agree that this program was highly successful in touching the hearts and minds of the audience in many special ways.

Submitted by Maria Sanguinetti

German Immersion Day Huge Success

The fourth annual German Immersion Day was held on March 8, 2014, at Billerica High School and hosted by Britta Roper. Approximately 70-75 students of German attended from all over the state, each taking a morning and an afternoon workshop and getting lunch in-between. Workshop topics included Werken, Handball, Kochen, Backen, Kreativ mit Müll, Theater, Achterbahn and a digital scavenger hunt called Schnitzeljagd whereby kids used their cell phones to scan a code and retrieve hints for the next hidden item. There was also a Wanderstunde for kids who just needed to get out in the fresh air and move in the warm temperatures.

It was a bit of a surprise to see the huge number of middle school and first year high school learners – really little kids – at this year’s German Immersion Day. There were larger numbers of participants in each workshop than in the past but it all seemed to work amazingly well. Presenters did a great job of including them, and the kids...
Latin News

It was no surprise to see Dr. Edward Zarrow and his Latin students featured in the Boston Globe newspaper shortly after Christmas (December 26) this past year. Dr. Zarrow, a Latin teacher at Westwood High School, motivates his 144 Latin students to enthusiastically participate in the language with innovative projects and activities which "enable students to engage with the ancient world and draw conclusions about their own" (Globe). Zarrow is quoted as saying that "his goal is to teach students so that they keep what they learn forever. "Students may say in German, ein großer Erfolg!

Submitted by Doug Guy with Cherie Baggs

Where were YOU?

Where were you on March 28 and 29? I hope you were in Boston for the 61st Annual Northeast Conference, held this year at the Copley Plaza Hotel. Yes, I am a true lover of professional development and never miss an opportunity to network with colleagues, attend sessions and workshops, see new products and just spend time with other professionals who share my passions. You can probably guess where I was on March 28 and 29 . . . at the Northeast Conference! I always make professional growth a key part of my life.

The MaFLA Advocacy booth was a busy place.

This year I had the opportunity to not only attend but also to be part of the local committee. Since my local committee duties did not begin until Friday, I decided to arrive early in order to attend one of the Pre-conference workshops on Thursday, March 27. I spent all day Thursday completely engaged and intellectually challenged by Laura Terrill at the ACTFL Workshop: Planning for Student Learning: Effective Curriculum, Unit, and Lesson Design.

Laura discussed the guiding principles for designing standards-based curriculum, units and lessons. She began by talking about curriculum as a living document, a document that we continually revisit and review. Laura also recommended that we provide students with an integrated experience in their language learning and highlighted the importance of students setting their own learning goals. She spoke about “How do we teach students so that they keep what is taught and can use it?” She reminded us that those unsuccessful students may very well become the future parents, the future school board member, or even the future principal who says "I took two years of that language and cannot do anything.”

LET MaFLA HONOR YOU!

Do you have 25 years of service as a foreign language teacher? Are you retiring this year? Let MaFLA honor you! Check out the Professional Awards link on the website. We have a new online submission form which makes it easier than ever. Deadline is September 15 – but you can submit at any time. Go to www.mafla.org for more information!
Laura believes that we must ascertain that our curriculum creates an open-minded thinker . . . a problem solver. She asked us if we allow our students to work on problems, if we allow them to collaborate with others, and if we expect them to reflect on their learning, utilizing the CAN-DO statements. She further queried if we are teaching them real-world applications and insisted that students want to talk about the same topics that the adolescents in Buenos Aires or in Paris are discussing and that they probably are not asking each other . . . would you prefer to wash the dishes or mow the lawn?” She was pretty sure that very few adolescents discussed in real life these exciting chores.

Learning Chinook with gestures and body movements - great fun!

Laura also reminded us of the value of integrating culture so that our students come to understand other perspectives and cultures. She emphasized that COMMUNICATION . . . knowing how, when and what to say to whom is the centerpiece of our discipline. As for authentic resources, Laura suggested that we incorporate authentic texts, videos, graphics, etc. insisting that any textbook-based resource just cannot capture the attention of the student as well as a well-chosen authentic resource.

As we worked through the development of strong curricular planning, Laura discussed numerous other key topics relevant to curriculum planning such as essential questions, formative assessments, integrated performance assessments, and proficiency levels. I have pages and pages of notes from this workshop and have only just started to review and digest all of the wonderful tidbits I gleaned from this workshop.

On top of everything else, dance lessons! Could it get any better?

You can imagine how excited I, as a true conference junkie, was when I learned that after this intense workshop there were more activities planned for the evening. So I made sure to attend the “kick-off activities” which included “Speed-date” a new language, sing Happy Birthday to FLTeach, and sing Happy Retirement to a wonderful friend and colleague, Dan Battisti of Holt Rinehart & Winston.

I had the opportunity to “speed date” two new languages. The first language I speed dated was the Dutch language. It was fun but I don’t think I really understood everything so I left that one still single! Then, on the recommendation of my husband, I decided to try a speed date with the Chinook language. I was much more successful at this language as gestures and body movement were part of our learning. I think if I really had been looking for a “date,” I might have been successful here. It certainly made me realize how challenging it is for our students to learn vocabulary and concepts and also brought to light the importance of incorporating movement and gestures to anchor words and phrases.

After the two rounds of speed dating (some of us would have liked another round), the coordinators of this kick-off evening put on some great music for dancing. How could I resist the great beat of “Suavemente.” Yes, I had to get out on the floor and the enthusiasm of the Northeast Conference directors was contagious. Could Friday top this wonderful day, I wondered?

My first session on Friday was Using Drama Techniques to Enhance Proficiency with Margarita Dempsey of Smithfield High School. Within the first five minutes of the session I knew I was in the right place . . . as I found myself up in front of the room re-awakening my inner actor with four other attendees. We were participating in and modeling a quick drama technique which could be used in any language classroom. The session consisted of numerous concrete examples of drama techniques with lots of audience participation. What an energizing start to the day!

Tablets: the indispensable Conference accessory.

Next session was Taking It Personally, with Karolyn Rodriguez, Anne-Linley and Erica Torreullas of the Hamden, CT, public schools. I met Karolyn two years ago at the Northeast Conference in Baltimore when I attended her session on chocolate and we have since become colleagues and friends. This session addressed how to utilize the wealth of personal and cultural experiences that students bring to the classroom. We heard how these individuals have adapted their instruction to take into account the differences and the diversity of students and to think beyond the textbook. I had to question myself . . . Am I utilizing the cultural experiences and the diversity of my students? . . . Could I do more in this area?

*EXCITING NEWS!*

MaFLA has created a MaFLA Foreign Language Teacher of the Year awards program! Stay tuned for the details – we’ll be in touch with you soon letting you know how to apply for this distinguished honor. Deadline is September 15, 2014 for the 2014-15 school year.
My afternoon included a session on Using Gestures to Support Vocabulary (Best of MD), which supported my “speed-dating” activity on the benefits of gestures with language learning, and a session on Differentiation in the World Language Classroom (Best of CT), which reminded of a few instructional activities that I used to incorporate into my classes which have managed to fall by the wayside.

Saturday morning I facilitated a session focusing again on Differentiation in the World Language Classroom which reinforced the great ideas I had heard at the Friday session. Laura Terrill, who presented that amazing pre-conference workshop, was presenting a session on Assessment to Inform Instruction, so this became my priority for the next session. This session really rounded out the workshop with great ideas for developing strong assessments of proficiency and performance.

My interest in social media and its potential in the foreign language classroom was the focus of the rest of my day. I learned a great deal about how colleagues are utilizing social media to connect students to native speakers and how social media is an effective capture tool for facilitating dialogue among students in the target language. These sessions fueled my passion for preparing students for college and career readiness and they provided great information for me to share with my own school leaders as well as my department.

This year, because I live approximately an hour from Boston, I was able to attend a Sunday morning FREE Teaching Lab. Usually I am traveling to the airport at this time to catch a flight, so “learning lizard” here was so excited to have the chance to participate. I chose Technology to Get Students Talking. The two presenters, Holly Forsyth and Jessica Taylor, hailed from the Fox Chapel (PA) Area School District, and were the “Best in Conference” winners from Pennsylvania. This Teaching Lab presented best practices from collaborations across cultures and schools. Participants learned how to incorporate easy to use technologies such as flip cameras, iMovie, Skype, video and paper scrapbooks, Photobooth, YouTube, websites, iPads/podcasts, and virtual learning into our instruction. They had great examples of their own student projects. The students (elementary school students) were so enthusiastic and so excited about their language skills. It was refreshing to see these young children already embracing their language studies and I credit the inclusion of technology enriched curriculum to some of this passion on the part of the students.

So, were you there? If you were, then our paths probably crossed at one point or another. If you missed it, then I invite you to join the “Conference and Professional Development Addicts” group, of which I am definitely a charter member (yes, I am old).

NECTFL provided a great opportunity to grow, but your own organization, MaFLA, offers tons of great PD opportunities. So please join me and the other “PD junkies” at the MaFLA Diversity Day (May 10), at the MaFLA Tech Days, (June 27 and June 30), at the MaFLA Summer Institute (August 8-10) and at the MaFLA Fall Conference (October 23-25, 2014). Oh, and think big . . . there is ACTFL in November in the great city of San Antonio and NECTFL again next spring. I am already psyched about all these opportunities to grow professionally, to strengthen my own practice and to stay in the forefront of foreign language education. I hope all of you other “Conference Addicts” will join me in one or all of these upcoming events. See you there!

Submitted by Ronie Webster
**Why Would We Want a Seal of Biliteracy in Massachusetts?**

by Nicole Sherf, Advocacy Coordinator

There is a national movement afoot to strengthen state K-12 foreign language education in which legislation is created to provide for a Seal on a high school graduate's diploma that attests to their proficiency in English and another language. The Seal of Biliteracy is so interesting because it documents foreign language proficiency by more than just seat time. As we all know, how many years of a language you happened to take does not necessarily translate to functional ability in the language. California, Illinois, Texas, New Mexico, New York, New Jersey and Washington have passed legislation creating a Seal of Biliteracy, and Utah expect to do the same in 2014.

We have a Bill for a Seal of Biliteracy being considered by the Joint Committee on Education in the Massachusetts State House. It is called H533 “An Act to Promote Global Trade and Economic Development through Dual Language and Biliteracy” (you can find it here: [https://malegislature.gov/Bills/188/House/H533](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/188/House/H533)). The Bill calls for the creation of an Office of Dual Language Education Programs within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and an official seal which would be distributed to districts in the Commonwealth who oversee the process. The school district would be charged with determining the measure for which the level of functional language proficiency is documented. The documentation of proficiency could take place through systems that are already in place in most schools such as Advanced Placement (AP) scores, International Baccalaureate scores, SAT II test scores, or proficiency tests such as we have used in our Department. These proficiency tests, called STAMP and AAPPL, determine a candidate’s level of proficiency based on a nationally agreed upon scale.

With a tradition of strong educational programming in the state of Massachusetts, the discipline of foreign languages has been short changed in many ways through lack of funding. For example, there is no one at the DESE that is charged with coordinating foreign language education in the state. And did you know that there is no state foreign language graduation requirement? In addition, and most importantly, there is no state sponsored assessment system to demonstrate that our students are able to do what our state Framework outlines for graduates. H533 is a cost effective and easy approach to this problem.

Membership Coordinator, Madelyn Gonnerman Torchin and I spent my March break at the State House working to get this legislative process started. I truly believe that the Bill would have important implications for our state in the promotion of global trade and economic development. The Seal provides colleges and employers information that would be understood statewide regarding the multilingual ability of their candidates. The Seal would go a long way to resolving our DESE deficiencies by providing a system to document foreign language proficiency attained statewide as well as a way for students to demonstrate their college and career readiness in the area of dual or multi language proficiency. Find more information about the national Seal of Biliteracy movement here: [http://sealofbiliteracy.org/](http://sealofbiliteracy.org/).

On April 4th, MaFLA sent members an email requesting that they contact the Education Committee Chairs to vote favorably on the Bill and to send it to the next step in the legislative process. We hope that you participated and that you will continue to respond to these kinds of requests. Our voices are more powerful when we all act together! I will keep you updated on MaFLAs progress in making this a reality in Massachusetts. In the meantime, please let me know if you have any questions at advocacy@mafla.org.

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**NEW! Foreign Language Week Page on our Website**

We hope you made use of all the information, ideas and tips for celebrating Foreign Language Week in your school/district on our new webpage for Foreign Language Week (hyperlink: [http://mafla.org/advocacy-2/national-foreign-language-week/](http://mafla.org/advocacy-2/national-foreign-language-week/)) under Advocacy. Celebrating Foreign Language Week with style is a fun and creative way to create a buzz from your department and advocate for language study! If you tried something new or have an idea to share, please contact Advocacy Coordinator, Nicole Sherf, at advocacy@mafla.org.
President’s Message

What Has MaFLA Been Up To Lately?

I don’t know about you, but I think that this has been one of the longest, coldest winters that I can remember in New England, and I, for one, am certainly happy to have sprung forward, ready for warmer air, brighter sun, greenery, and spring! That being said, and cold weather aside, your all-volunteer MaFLA Board has been very busy during the past few months!

On January 27, 2014, I had the opportunity to attend a collaborative meeting with the Massachusetts Teachers’ Association along with many other content area association leaders. It was the first time that all of the content area association leaders had the opportunity to get together to talk about what they do. Each state leader was able to discuss what each organization offers its membership, what professional learning events are available, and talk about ways that we might collaborate in the future. It was an enjoyable and informational evening. As I listened to the other state leaders describe their organizations, it made me very proud of all that MaFLA offers its membership. We, as teachers and as a profession, are on top of our game.

If you haven’t done so recently, please take the opportunity to check out www.mafla.org. We have promised you continuous improvement and a move forward with technology. As you know, 2014 is a huge recertification year for Massachusetts foreign language teachers. There is added value in your MaFLA membership as several exciting projects are underway, many of which provide you with those ever-so-important PDPs! And, for those of you who do not need PDPs, we provide professional development events to keep you in the forefront of current pedagogy!

The Professional Development and Technology Committees are hard at work planning for a series of Webinars, Diversity Day in May, Summer Immersion Institute in August and two Technology Days in June. In addition to that, these committees work with the Conference Committee and the Conference Chair and Exibits and Sponsorships Coordinator on all things Conference. Check out Catherine’s Conference Blog for a wealth of information about the upcoming Fall Conference, detailing our multi-talented workshop presenters as well as Keynote Speaker, Rita Oleksak. Like our Facebook Page. Follow us on Twitter and Pinterest, and check the MaFLA website for upcoming details.

The Awards Committee has created online applications for a variety of professional as well as student awards. They are currently posted on the website. The Nominations Committee is looking for a few good volunteers! If you or a colleague have great ideas and want to share them, and would like to become one of the Massachusetts state foreign language leaders, we encourage you to take the opportunity to nominate yourself, a friend or a colleague for MaFLA’s Board of Directors. An online application is available at www.mafla.org.

The Advocacy Committee and NC-SSFL representative are working to promote the Seal of Biliteracy currently in the Massachusetts legislature and have met with key legislative members. This legislation will be a very important step forward for our students as this bill will allow them to demonstrate their advanced second language proficiency in a variety of ways.

Awards available! Deadlines approaching!

Be sure to visit www.mafla.org to learn more about our many awards and scholarships!

For example, our ISE Language Matters Award offers $250 to a foreign language teacher who has achieved outstanding success in getting his/her students to speak the target language through exemplary motivation and creative methods. Don’t delay – the deadline is May 31!

Also available is Helen G. Agbay New Teacher Graduate Study Scholarship, a $500 scholarship to honor the memory of Helen G. Agbay, a founding member of MaFLA who served on the board for many years in numerous capacities. This scholarship has been created to financially assist a current foreign language teacher who is in the process of earning a master’s degree in foreign language education. The deadline is June 1.
Incorporating Multiple Intelligences Into The Teaching Of Foreign Languages

by Marcel LaVergne Ed. D.

Introduction

As a veteran and now retired foreign language teacher, I often look back upon my career and ask myself why so few of our students become proficient in the languages that we teach. Could it be because "we try to teach them all the same way" (1) i.e., we apply a one-size-fits-all system to our lesson planning and curriculum design, whose goal is to prepare our students to pass with success a series of national, state, and local standardized tests which favor those who are verbally and/or mathematically inclined.

Although most of us are familiar with Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI), how many of us actually incorporate them into our L2 teaching and learning strategies so that all students have an equal chance of success? This article will attempt to define Gardner’s notion of intelligence, list the 9 intelligences that he has identified, and give examples that match those intelligences with foreign language classroom activities.

Definition

Contrary to the popular belief that "intelligence is a uniform cognitive capacity people are born with that can be easily measured by short-answer tests," Gardner (2) believes that intelligence is a set of operations or thought processes that enable one to learn and to demonstrate understanding in a variety of ways. He states that intelligence is

1. the ability to create an effective product or offer a service that is valued in a culture;
2. a set of skills that make it possible for a person to solve problems in life;
3. the potential for finding or creating solutions for problems, which involves gathering new knowledge.

He further states that

1. all human beings possess all intelligences in varying amounts;
2. each person has a different intellectual composition;
3. we can improve education by addressing the multiple intelligences of our students.

The challenge presented to teachers therefore is to go beyond the tendency to treat all students as if they possess only or favor verbal and/or mathematical intelligences.

Kinds of Intelligences

Gardner has thus far identified nine kinds of intelligences that humans possess in varying degrees. Not everyone has been created equal in this area but everyone can improve in each of the areas.

Visual/spatial, a.k.a. picture smart: children who learn best visually and organize things spatially.
Preferred activities: pictures, charts, posters, illustrations, patterns, multimedia, puzzle building, fixing, designing objects.

Verbal/linguistic, a.k.a. word smart: children who demonstrate strength in the language arts: speaking, writing, reading, listening.
Preferred activities: lectures, work-sheets, debates, word games, story-telling, journal writing, teaching.

Mathematical/logical, a.k.a. logic smart: children who display an aptitude for numbers, reasoning and problem solving.
Preferred activities: graphic organizers, problem solving, formulas, number sequences, deciphering codes, performing experiments.

Preferred activities: dance, role playing, drama, mime, demonstrations, craft, games, sports, TPR, acting.

Musical/rhythmic, a.k.a. music smart: children who learn well through songs, patterns, rhythms, instruments and musical expression.
Preferred activities: singing, poetry, mood music, rhythm, musical composition, playing music.

Interpersonal, a.k.a. self smart: children who are especially in touch with their own feelings, values and ideas.
Preferred activities: reflection, self-teaching, internet, self-evaluation, working alone.

Intrapersonal, a.k.a. people smart: children who are noticeably people oriented and outgoing, and do their learning cooperatively in groups or with a partner.
Preferred activities: group work, reciprocal teaching, peer tutoring, class projects, cooperative learning, counseling.

Naturalist, a.k.a. nature smart: children who love the outdoors, animals, field trips. These students love to pick up on subtle differences in meaning.
Preferred activities: field trips, plant and animal projects, drawing or photographing a natural setting, applying science to life.

Existential, a.k.a. philosophy smart: children who learn in the context of where humankind stands in the "big picture" of existence. They ask "Why are we here?" and "What is our role in the world?"
Preferred activities: seeing the big picture, exploring the why of things, reflective and deep thinking, designing abstract theories.

Application

The list above shows that those with verbal/linguistic intelligence often tend to become teachers and consequently tend to emphasize activities preferred by those with "word smart" intelligence. The challenge presented to teachers lies in their ability to devise activities and strategies that appeal to those students who favor the other intelligences to learn and to demonstrate understanding. According to Haley, "balanced instructional presentations that encourage addressing the multiple intelligences benefit all learners and expose students to the appropriate means through which they can strengthen their underutilized intelligences." (3)

The following thematic lessons illustrate how to incorporate MI theory to classroom instruction planning. All activities are in English for the purpose of this article.

Kinds of Intelligences

1. all human beings possess all intelligences in varying amounts;
2. each person has a different intellectual composition;
3. we can improve education by addressing the multiple intelligences of our students.
Lesson # 1

The Geography of France

Objective: The students will learn, identify, and locate the boundaries, principal cities, rivers, mountain ranges, and provinces of France. This lesson is intended for beginning classes.

1. Verbal/Linguistic
   a. Identify each of the following by circling the correct answer:
      Le Rhône:    ville montagne province fleuve
      Marseille: ville montagne province fleuve
      La Bretagne: ville montagne province fleuve
   b. Indicate if each of the sentences below is true or false. If false, give the correct answer:
      - The Alps is a province.
      - Avignon is a city.
      - The English Channel is located on the south of France.

2. Visual/Spatial
   a. Using a blank map of France, indicate in writing its boundaries, principal cities, rivers, mountain ranges, and provinces.
   b. The teacher projects an overhead showing a) a river, b) a mountain and c) a city. The teacher then says the following aloud and the students indicate the correct answer by writing the corresponding letters a, b, or c.

3. Logical/Mathematical
   a. Using a map of France, calculate the distance in kilometers between the following French cities and then convert the distances into miles.
      Paris and Marseille
      Lyon and Bordeaux
      Nimes and Strasbourg
   b. Using the internet, find today’s weather in Celsius in the following French cities and then convert the degrees into Fahrenheit.
      Nancy       Paris       Cannes
      Chamonix    Nantes      Bordeaux

4. Bodily/Kinesthetic
   a. After having designated different areas of the room as city, river, mountain, province, and boundary, fill a shoe box with cards each having the name of a city, river, mountain, province, or boundary. Each student will pick out a card and walk to the area of the class under the proper sign.
   b. The students will then leave that area and locate and write the name on their card onto a blank map of France.

5. Musical/Rhythmic
   a. Teach the songs La Seine est aventurée and Sur le pont d’Avignon.
   b. Students will write and illustrate a cinquain poem entitled Paris.

6. Interpersonal
   a. Do a jigsaw activity on the geography of France
      Group 1: boundaries
      Group 2: provinces
      Group 3: major rivers and mountain ranges
      Group 4: principal cities

7. Intrapersonal
   Write a letter/e-mail to a French pen-pal locating and describing which American states and cities you have visited and asking which French provinces and cities s/he has visited. Both you and your pen-pal will include three points of interest for each city mentioned.

8. Naturalist
   Identify the artist.
   He painted a series of water lilies in Giverney.
   He painted sunflowers in Provence.
   He painted cathedrals shrouded in fog.

9. Existential
   Identify the source of the quotations and state the author’s profession or occupation. Then state the city or town the person was born in.
   L’Etat, c’est moi.
   Je pense, donc je suis.
   Il faut cultiver son jardin.
   Vous chantiez, et bien dansez maintenant.

Incorporating Multiple Intelligences

Lesson # 2

Versailles

Objective: Students will learn about the important role that Versailles played during the reigns of Louis XIV, XV, and XVI. This lesson is for intermediate-advanced students of French. The lesson is in English for the purpose of this article.

Using the official French website www.chateaushortailles.fr as the text, the following suggestions are some of the many possibilities of applying Multiple Intelligences to activities that a teacher can present to the students:

1. The buildings: le Château, le Grand Trianon, le Petit Trianon
   a. Verbal/linguistic: the reading of the material followed by question/answers, true/false, multiple choice, discussion, summarizing, etc.
   b. Interpersonal: devising a series of cooperative learning activities for the students to do.
   c. Intraperisonal: Assigning a written research project to each student.
   d. Visual/spatial: Asking each student to create a PowerPoint® presentation of the buildings.

2. The gardens
   a. Mathematical/logical: studying the symmetrical design of the gardens.
   b. Visual/spatial: creating a slide show of the gardens.
   c. Naturalist: describing the varieties of flowers, plants, and trees in the garden.

3. The people of the court
   a. Interpersonal: creating a jigsaw activity consisting of 4 groups each assigned a different king and Marie-Antoinette.
   b. Intraperisonal: assigning each student a different historical person for a show and tell activity.
   c. Bodily/kinesthetic/musical/rhythmic: writing and performing a musical play depicting life at the court.

4. The rationale behind the château
   a. Existential/linguistic/verbal: explaining how the creation of Versailles supported the notion of a “L’Etat, c’est moi” king.
I would love to do the Pulsera Project with my students in which they would sell bracelets made by Nicaraguans to help them make a better life. Also, I would like my students to do community service when we go on trips abroad. I want them to see how gratifying using their Spanish can be.- Christina Toro, Arlington High School

On Thursday, March 27, 2014, 850 students from all over New England met in the Holliston High School auditorium to celebrate La Fete de la Francophonie. Students learned about the culture of Acadia as well as about opportunities for study abroad in Quebec and France. At the elementary level, SKYPE provides our 4th grade immersion students with the opportunity to meet face-to-face with their penpals in La Rochelle, France several times per year.

We don't teach French, we teach LIFE, in French! - Terry Caccavale, Holliston High

Walpole High School offers a student exchange program with schools in Costa Rica and Germany. Students and teachers host and travel with their counterparts in those countries. It provides a great opportunity to connect with cultures, to build language ability, and to provide lasting friendships!- Rich Sturges, Walpole High School

School to school exchange combined with a week in a language school provides an incredible opportunity for total immersion/assimilation. Our students go to Spain for 3 weeks in the spring. Our sister school comes to Enfield for 3 weeks in the fall. There is simply something to be said about seeing it, breathing it, living it...rather than to read about it in a book or see it on a poster. Interacting with students your own age - seeing the many commonalities rather than differences - and finally staying connected via Facebook and other social media over many years. What more can I ask for as a teacher?- Linda Delpe, Enfield High School
We want to hear from you about a variety of topics. It is exciting to share new and interesting ideas and we look forward to hearing from you on upcoming questions. Selected responses will be shared in the newsletter and on the website. It is easy. Check out the MaFLA website for a link to our questions. Don’t be afraid to “Speak Up!”

Incorporating Multiple Intelligences (conc.)

Conclusion

Incorporating the Multiple Intelligences to lesson planning and curriculum design will help all students perform according to their proper interests and abilities. The current notion of a one-size-fits-all philosophy favors the word and math smart students to the detriment of all the others. If we believe that anyone can learn another language, then we need to create activities whose goals are to help all students succeed. By so doing, perhaps more students will be encouraged to stay beyond the mandatory two years set by most graduation requirements.

References

2. www.cortland.edu/andersmd/learning/mi

About the author

Marcel LaVergne Ed.D., retired, was a high school teacher of French, a Director of Foreign Languages, an adjunct professor of Foreign Language Methods, a textbook author, and a consultant on Foreign Language Teaching and Learning. He is currently associated with the National Capital Language Resource Center as the author of the Sound Bites for Better Teaching column.
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