Now that it is almost spring, your MaFLA conference team has sprung into action and is ready to spring forward with even more. We encourage you to submit a session proposal; the submission form will be open until June 1, 2020. The MaFLA 2020 Conference Creating Cross-Cultural Connections is gaining momentum all the time. Perhaps you have seen my Tweets and posts to MaFLA on-line encouraging presenters to send in their proposals via our mafla.org website. If not, consider this your personal invitation to do so!

The information page for submittals is full of helpful information to guide you in the submission process. We are waiting to hear from you. We know you have so much to share. And don’t forget to encourage your colleagues to submit proposals as well.

We have an exciting lineup of national presenters for our six-hour, four-house and three-hours workshops. Be sure to check out the amazing group of presenters who will be here for those workshops. You can view the entire lineup here. There is something for everyone from beginning teachers to veterans, and, as always, it will be difficult to choose which to attend. Interested in exhibits and vendors? Well we are already working on that! Our Sponsorship and Exhibit Hall Prospectus has been sent out to our supporting companies who will want to share information about the world language textbooks, travel opportunities and resources. Make plans to stay at the Sheraton so that you can take advantage of all the events, sessions and workshops over the course of the three days of the conference! Our language-specific and world language pedagogy-related strands are always very strong!

In February, I, along with several other board members, had the opportunity to attend the NECTFL Conference. There, I had the opportunity to connect with numerous national, regional, and state association leaders, and I returned with lots of great ideas to make our MaFLA Fall Conference another outstanding event. The Conference Team and I are attending to all the details to make this another memorable and impactful MaFLA Conference.

This year for the first time we will be holding a National Association of District Supervisors of Foreign Languages (NADSFL) Meeting sponsored by Language Testing International to discuss assessment, the Seal of Biliteracy, authentic resources, the teacher shortage, and recruitment. More details will follow as we determine the time and place.

Once again, I recommend that you send in your session proposal and prepare to join all your talented colleagues on October 22-24, 2020 at the Sheraton Monarch Place in Springfield and be a part of the “We Are the World” MaFLA 2020 Conference Creating Cross-Cultural Connections. It is so exciting to see this come together with everyone’s help and willingness to share expertise and talents. As I close out this preview of our conference, I want to thank my mentors. Believe me, the show would not go on with the support of the MaFLA team. I cannot thank them enough.

Pat DiPillo, 2020 Conference Chair

Now More Than Ever . . .

We need to share ideas, expertise, and knowledge, and support each other. These are difficult times for all. Continue the wonderful outreach which we have seen among world language professionals and keep that spirit going. It is a perfect time to submit a proposal for the #MaFLA20 Conference in October. We are a very diverse, enthusiastic, passionate and kind group that has really risen to the new challenges. Let’s keep that momentum going. Submit your proposal today.

Please, this is important
Submit your proposal Here.
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

New Teacher Memberships (first year in the profession) $25.00

Retired memberships: $25.00 per year
Student memberships: $15.00 per year

For more info and/or a membership application packet, contact:
Debra Heaton
membership@mafla.org

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

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. 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  Back to School - August 5
Spring - March 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
Meet Our New Board Members

The MaFLA Board has two new Board members who have been appointed to fill open positions. The MaFLA team is delighted to welcome Bárbara Barnett and Luluah Mustafa. Below you will be able to learn a bit about them.

A native of Puerto Rico (with some Cuban seasoning), Bárbara Barnett is an avid believer that children can and should learn a foreign language. All children have the right to access high-quality language instruction regardless of learning styles, achievement levels, race/ethnic origin, socioeconomic status, home language, or future academic goals. Bárbara has been teaching and leading professional learning for over twenty years. She has taught and supervised Kindergarten to 12th-grade programs, including immersion and FLES. Bárbara started her career in Jacksonville, FL, where she developed the curriculum for a Magnet Middle School's Spanish Immersion Program. She then moved to Massachusetts and continued her teaching (and learning) journey at Bedford Public Schools. She joined Bedford as a Spanish teacher and then became the Department Head for their 3rd to 12th world language program. In 2015, Bárbara joined Wellesley Public Schools as a FLES Spanish teacher and the K-5 Department Head for World Languages. She started and continues to develop Wellesley's Spanish FLES program. Bárbara is having the time of her life as she thrives on the challenge of inspiring young minds to be lifelong language learners.

Following MaFLA's mission, Bárbara strongly believes that educators at all grade levels, starting in kindergarten, must have access to high-quality professional development. Thus, she has joined the MaFLA Board to represent and advocate for early language education. Additionally, Bárbara has been an active MaFLA member who seeks to motivate other language educators by presenting at MaFLA Fall Conferences. She is also an active advocate for NNELL (The National Network for Early Language Learning). Bárbara will be leading two sessions this summer at NNELL's Summer Institute in Chicago.

I am currently the coordinator of the Arabic Language Program at Boston University (BU) and have approximately eighteen years of professional teaching experience. Throughout my career, I have actively helped to promote more effective instruction, encouraged research and experimentation in the learning and teaching of Arabic and other less commonly taught languages, and provided for professional growth. Recently, I developed an advanced content-based course (Arab Society through Hip-Hop and Cartoons), substantially revised the first two years of the Arabic curriculum, developed cutting-edge communicative materials, and created various assessment tools at BU. All of my courses incorporate various technological learning tools. For example, my students are required to complete part of their outside coursework using interactive online learning modules, which then frees up class time for meaningful communication and authentic language practice.

I am a fully certified ACTFL OPI tester and AAPPL rater. I have been an active member in Arabic teacher associations and regularly present at local, regional, and national conferences, such as BU workshops, MaFLA, NECTFL, and ACTFL. I train part-time instructors; and since 2015, I have provided online lectures and tutorials for Arabic language teachers' professional development through the Aldeen Foundation. I was the 2016 recipient of the Merlin Swartz Award for Faculty Excellence, which is given by the Institute for the Study of Muslim Societies and Civilizations at BU. My main areas of interest include the integration of technology at all language proficiency levels, the creation of student-centered classrooms, helping students to become global citizens, and strengthening K-16 language programs for less commonly taught languages.

After presenting at NERALLT in 2018, I was excited to have found an organization that shares the same dream of developing learning technologies in the classroom. I was elected to join the NERALLT board and since then, I have been serving as the organization coordinator.
When I started putting together this issue of the newsletter at the beginning of March, I could never have anticipated what we are seeing today. We first had to cancel our Core Practices as our venue shut down due to COVID 19. This was followed quickly by our M/OPI workshops due to school closings and the uncertainty of the times. As time went on, our Proficiency Academy and Summer Institute fell victim as we could not count on availability of sites, presenters and, let’s face it, participants.

Schools closed for a couple of weeks, then a month, then, in many cases, the balance of the school year. Teachers are enduring, supporting, leading and working together to provide the best possible world language education that they can for their students. Suddenly, and often with no prior training, teachers have been asked to provide their services virtually. I have thought frequently where I would be if I had not retired last June and I have decided that I would be out there giving it my all to meet the needs of my students as best I could. I am proud to see that is exactly what so many of my colleagues are doing. We are truly a profession that cares.

As this has been happening, I have tried to follow as many social media posts as possible to support my colleagues and share on social media. Yes, the MaFLA Facebook Page has been busy but I have also posted all of the resources that I have found on the mafla.org website. Here is a link to the Teacher Resources I have found to date, Additional resources will be added as I find them. Feel free to send suggestions for this page to Ronie@mafla.org.

I also have worked with the board on the Zoom into Distance Learning Webinars and the Core Virtual Practices webinars. These are additional outstanding resources, all of which have been/are being archived on the MaFLA website. Also included are the links to the presentations for each of the sessions. Please use these to support your work.

Last year when we chose the theme for this issue I never expected it to be so relevant. Level Up: Enduring, Supporting and Leading. How could I have ever predicted how much supporting we would be seeing and how many are leading during these difficult times. Language educators are truly enduring and I do believe we are stronger than ever.

As I close, I want to remind each of you to take care of yourself. Be kind to yourself, rest when you need to, and stay connected. There are so many supports out there.

Wishing you all the best as you continue to Level UP. A big thank you to all for everything you do and a big thank you for inspiring me, for sharing your ideas and your passions, and for being great friends and colleagues.

Ronie

The theme for the Back to School issue of the Newsletter is Teaching Culture.

Send your article to – ronie@mafla.org

#StaySafe

#StayStrong

#MaFLA20
Bobby Sullivan, a teacher at Westborough High School, is a regular at MaFLA PD events, MaFLA Conferences and MaFLA social media. I have had the opportunity to see his dedication, his enthusiasm, his insights and expertise, and his passion to learn and grow. When I thought of a perfect candidate for the Educator in the Spotlight, Bobby was the first individual I considered. I am proud to be his MaFLA colleague. Ronie R. Webster

Growing up in New Orleans, Louisiana, I remember being fascinated by the French heritage that surrounded me. At a young age my parents bought me a French picture book as well as a French cookbook for children; I simply couldn’t get enough! In secondary school French I was lucky enough to have a teacher who used the communicative approach. My teacher’s joie de vivre and enthusiasm were infectious. My love for the French language and its culture was further solidified upon spending the summer after my junior year in high school with a host family in Annecy, France. I then went on to major in French at the University of New Orleans. My junior year abroad program in Paris with MICEFA helped me to further my proficiency by moving beyond academic French. After graduating with a BA in French from the University of New Orleans, I lived in Metz, France for two years and taught English to elementary school students through the Teaching Assistant Program in France (TAPIF). Finally, I moved to Boston to enroll in the Master of Arts in Teaching program at Simmons College.

I’m now in my thirteenth year of teaching French in Massachusetts public schools. I taught French for nine years at Shrewsbury High School and am in my third year at Westborough High School where I teach French and serve as the World Language Department Chair. Like so many of my MaFLA peers I love my job and am so pleased with the direction in which our field is heading.

MaFLA: Tell us a little about yourself.

MAFLA: What do you like best about being a teacher and helping students every day?

My favorite thing about being a teacher is the personal connection I’m able to foster with students. I believe that the proficiency model lends itself well to developing this type of relationship. I remember being worried about this when I first made the decision to embark on the path to proficiency. I was nervous that an increase in the percent of target language used in the classroom (by myself and the students) to 90+ would prevent me from getting to know my students as well as I did in my legacy classroom. I was very pleased to find out that this shift had quite the opposite effect. By focusing more on communication than accuracy, students feel more empowered to take risks to create with language in order to negotiate and express their own meaning. Making the input students get from me comprehensible is another key to fostering this type of relationship. With there being so many opportunities for interpersonal speaking each and every day, students get to know each other and me very well. These personal connections are without a doubt my favorite thing about being a world language teacher.

MaFLA: Since the proficiency movement is so new, how do you think language teaching will evolve over the next few decades?

I think world language educators are already paving the way for what’s yet to come. I think the AP and IB global themes will continue to drive the content of our thematic units. As your readers will already know, a team of world language educators is currently working hard on updating our state curriculum frameworks by adapting the ACTFL World Readiness Standards. The new frameworks will include more so-
MaFLA’s Educator In The Spotlight

An Interview With Bobby Sullivan, High School French Teacher

It’s clear that this hard work will help shape the future of our profession. I also think this shift will open more doors for world language teachers and their classrooms to be able to connect with classrooms and communities from the target culture.

I’d love to follow the lead of those who’ve already paved the way by helping their students make these types of connections. For example, I’m looking forward to trying to include sites like ePals or Peace Corps Global Connections that bring students from around the world together to share and learn. The sky’s the limit when it comes to local and international opportunities for our students to participate in field studies to not only further their proficiency but also deepen their understanding of the target culture and its people.

MaFLA: So then what would be your advice to another teacher making the transition to proficiency-based teaching?

It is important to take it one step at a time. The first step I would recommend is going to the Proficiency Academy. The introductory level with Greg Duncan is the perfect way for a teacher to learn more about what the proficiency levels are and what proficiency-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment should look like. After attending the Proficiency Academy, it’s important to experiment with making more communicative tasks and assessments in the three modes of communication.

In the first few years you might have a hybrid model where you start to incorporate more authentic resources and de-emphasize the textbook. Find your people. If you’re going to make this terrifying yet exciting leap, it’s important to remember you can do it and that others are here to help. There are plenty of people here to help at the local, state, and national levels. Attend conferences, join professional learning communities, and follow proficiency-minded world language educators on social media. Give yourself time. This process is a long and rewarding one. Work with your team to draft a multi-year plan with measurable action steps to make the transition. You’ve got this!

MaFLA: What are some of the fun things you like to do in class? How have they affected your teaching and students’ learning?

One of my favorite fun things to plan for is the first five to ten minutes of class. First of all, I live stream a web radio from NRJ or CherieFM to set the mood for the transition to French as the students enter my room. Next, I try to choose an input-rich, highly engaging current events topic to hook students into the lesson. A text example would be an article from the website Trendy by L’Etudiant. This website, intended for college students in France, has lots of rich content that is very applicable to our high school students. Topics include preparing for exams, how to keep your stress down, and procrastination. Students enjoy the articles because they are short and include GIFs and boldface type to highlight key words and phrases. From a second language acquisition viewpoint it’s great because these features serve as input enhancement and help the students better understand what they’re reading. An audiovisual example would be the online children’s news broadcast from Belgium called Les Niouzz. Their daily videos are perfect for my intermediate learners. Each video is about six minutes long and presents several key local and international news stories to a young audience. From a cultural perspective the videos are great because in each episode the news broadcasters interview local middle school children about one of the day’s news stories.

With both the text and the audiovisual example I mentioned above I have the same routine with my students. First the students have two to three minutes to read or view the input individually. Then, students have an additional two to three minutes to discuss the authentic resource in small groups. Students may discuss what they understand, what their personal opinion of the topic is, and in which ways they are similar or different from the college students in France or the middle school students in Belgium. Finally, the whole class comes together to debrief. During this time I use personalized questions and answers (see response to question below for more information) to drive the discussion and further engage the students.

MaFLA: What do you do to motivate students?

I use personalized questions and answers (PQA) to help motivate students. Personalisation PQA is a CI strategy and is something that many world language teachers do without even realizing they’re doing it. Whenever you involve your students, their
personal lives outside of the classroom, their likes and dislikes, and their opinions in the lesson, that is PQA. When you’re talking to students about their personal lives and interests it’s automatically engaging. If learning how to choose authentic resources that are relevant and real-world is half the battle, learning how to execute PQA is the other half. Pictures and videos help make the input you’re using as a springboard for PQA more comprehensible. For example, if my French 1 students are watching a video about school lunch in France I might have a few pictures ready of some of our school’s typical hot lunches as well as a picture of a lunch box. The personalized interaction between students and teachers that follows will happen organically. Once you get the hang of PQA you can let the students steer the conversation all the way while providing comprehensible input and focusing on any form or function you may be targeting in that lesson. It’s my favorite way to motivate (even novice) students to get engaged and volunteer information about their own lives and their opinions.

MaFLA: Is there anything else you would like to share?

I’d like to stress the importance of collaboration to be successful in implementing a proficiency curriculum. As a French teacher I can tell you I would never have been able to go it alone. Our department in Westborough decided to adopt language-neutral thematic units. This move allows us to have same-year planning meetings with teachers of other languages. During these meetings we use backwards-design to design thematic units, check in with each other about pacing, and most importantly share ideas for how to best introduce something new or assess student learning. If you’re interested in starting something similar in your school or district, I highly recommend episode 101 of the podcast We Teach Languages about One Department’s Approach to Collaborative Planning. The planning meetings described in this episode are very much like those that have brought us success in Westborough Public Schools.

MaFLA: You have been an active member of MaFLA. How has your membership inspired your teaching?

Being an active member of MaFLA has inspired my teaching in so many ways. I’ve received some of the best professional development of my professional career with MaFLA. Attending the MaFLA Proficiency Academy is the training that stands out the most as being the most impactful on what I do. I was lucky enough to go to year one of the Proficiency Academy and have since been fortunate enough to go back two more times. Another professional opportunity I would be remiss not to mention is the MOPI training workshop. If it had not been for these two professional learning experiences, I would not have the necessary understanding of the ACTFL proficiency levels to successfully plan for curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the proficiency classroom. In addition, I’d like to add that these invaluable professional development opportunities have inspired me and my peers in Westborough to present at the annual fall conference. We’ve enjoyed sharing our own thematic units as well as other tips and tricks we’ve learned along the way with fellow conference goers. The MaFLA annual conference continues to impress me with its high quality workshops and sessions. I truly believe world language teachers are the most collaborative and willing-to-share educators in our profession.

Do you know someone who would be perfect for our Educator in the Spotlight feature?

We are not looking for superheroes. We want to feature those professionals who are out there in our Massachusetts classrooms each and every day making a difference.

We are looking for enthusiastic and passionate world language educators who share with their students the love they have of teaching and world languages. They instill curiosity and excitement in their students!

Any MaFLA member can nominate or suggest a colleague. We need to highlight the good things that are happening in the classrooms in Massachusetts and the good people who are making world language education happen.

Submit your suggestions/nomination to ronie@mafla.org
First, let’s address the elephant in the room. If you are reading this article (or any part of this newsletter for that matter), it is likely between bouts of online or asynchronous instruction as a result of the COVID-19, reading alarming emails from your district, stress eating, or in my case, a combination of all three! In all honesty, half of me feels disingenuous writing an article about the landscape of language legislation at the national and regional levels when many teachers in the Commonwealth are more concerned with how their students are going to get a good meal during a protracted school closure. Indeed, these are unprecedented times that are challenging us in unexpected ways. Please know that everyone on the MaFLA board has your back. Please know that the empathy, tolerance, and patience that you share with your students every day will be a blessing to them and the communities in which they live in the coming weeks and months. Please know that we will get through this. And as I’ve expressed many times to early-career teachers when they ask for sound advice – flexibility is one of our greatest strengths. That will certainly now be put to the test.

As I wrote in the Winter 2020 MaFLA newsletter (pp. 26-27), languages have a lot of momentum in terms of legislation that supports both teaching and learning at the national level. In November of 2019, David Price (D-NC) and Don Young (R-AK) established America’s Languages Caucus, the first of its kind. Esther Martinez Native American Languages Program has been reauthorized by Congress, and the World Language Advancement and Readiness Act is now law. When bills become law in Congress, they exist in an as yet unfunded state. As a result, when I was afforded the opportunity by MaFLA to travel to Washington, D.C. this past February for Language Advocacy Day hosted by JNCL-NCLIS (the Joint National Committee for Languages & the National Council for Languages and International Studies), we visited a number of Congressional offices to advocate for appropriations and funding.

Some highlights included the visit of our full Massachusetts contingent to the offices of Senator Markey and Senator Warren where we discussed the BEST Act (Biliteracy Education Seal & Teaching) with a multilingual staffer. This legislation, if passed, would provide grants to State agencies who in turn could support existing state Seal programs. In turn, these discussions became robust ones about equity and access to world languages as part of a world class education and how the BEST Act would provide an opportunity to test more students (both world language students and ELLs) in urban districts.

Another highlight was my visit to Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley’s office where again the theme of the discussion was equity and access to world languages. We focused our discussion on the SYLLABLE Act of 2020 (Supporting Young Language Learners’ Access to Bilingual Education). We in Massachusetts commonly think of ourselves as pioneers and in many ways are incredibly progressive. And while I would argue (humbly) that we have many of the best world language and EL teachers in the nation working in the Commonwealth, Massachusetts lags behind many other states in terms of how many K-12 students study languages in the first place at only 26%. Moreover, while the dual-language immersion programs that we have are exceptional in many ways, there are comparatively few when compared to other states. These dual-language immersion programs are the ones that truly allow our students to achieve high levels of proficiency and to become not only bilingual but multi-lingual contributors in an ever-changing global theater. Low income communities have even less access to these types of programs, and the SYLLABLE Act would provide financial support for districts to develop strategies for planning and implementing dual-language immersion programs which serve students from low-income families as well as English learners. This was our first visit to the Congresswoman’s office, and I’m so excited to continue to build this relationship!

A final highlight was getting to catch up and bond with two of my favorite...
The reflection is from a student of mine, Christian Herlihy. Christian was a college prep level French student interested in studying the language, but not dedicated to pursuing it fully. Until he applied for the French Exchange program at Lexington High School. After Christian’s experience in France, where he realized that he could communicate with others – especially his adorable host family – he decided to pursue his dream of studying in France at ESSEC. Sometimes we think that it’s only our high-flying students who will study in a francophone country for a semester and Christian proves that anyone can do it for the entirety of college. His business degree is so much more valuable as he learns the knowledge and skills surrounded by people with different perspectives, backgrounds, and languages. Submitted by Beckie Rankin.

“If it is to be believed, I would not be where I am today if it were not for HS French! It was what made me fall in love with the language and culture and gave me that urge to continue to study and live it beyond my high school career.

Languages On The Rise

Because of HS French, I had the courage to go study at a French university called ESSEC and, although many students speak English at the university, having the ability to go into Paris on the weekends and converse with the locals has opened up myriad avenues with local establishments and people that I otherwise wouldn’t have had if I had only known English.

Going abroad, I expected the university to have an international feeling, but still feel like it was a school. However, what I came to realize was that this school truly is an international melting pot - and Europe as a whole is the same way. Of course, I have my core classes that teach me x, y and z, but we also learn more about cultures and, I think, have more of an appreciation for them.

Despite the school’s small size, there were over 80+ nationalities represented and I had the opportunity to meet these people on a daily basis and have a true understanding about what their cultures, beliefs, and outlooks are on the world – it is definitely something I didn’t think I would get at a university in the US. It has truly been a great experience.”

MaFLA Webinars

To support our members in their efforts to “work from home,” MaFLA is offering a variety of webinars with presentations by outstanding educators with tips, strategies and best practices for virtual teaching and learning. Did you miss them? Did you see one or more and want to review? These webinars have been recorded and have been made available for you on the mafla.org website. To help you find them, we have a new tab called PD Online under the heading of Resources. Along with each of the recordings we have links to the presentations in the recording. Here is a quick link.
Now that Massachusetts is in its second year of officially awarding the Seal of Biliteracy, it is wonderful to see more districts jumping on board. Thanks to the work of many organizations and school districts coming together to make this bill happen, language programs are not only benefiting from this prestigious recognition, but are also prepared to set students up for success to receive it. But there is one struggle that districts continue to face. With standardized tests being the measure to receive the Seal of Biliteracy and the Seal of Biliteracy with Distinction, what about the languages that are not available in the ‘MA Approved World Language Assessment Instruments’ that can be found on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (DESE) website? A student whose home language is Armenian and shows high proficiency levels in both English and Armenian should have an equal pathway to the Seal of Biliteracy. Many districts have gone to great lengths to find assessors, generate different portfolio pieces, and find ways to evaluate students who are proficient in languages not offered by standardized tests such as the AAPPL or the STAMP. No school district or student should be prevented from accessing the Seal because of a partner language that is not readily available in mainstream assessments. As we strive to elevate the value of biliteracy across our state and emphasize the importance of dual language acquisition, a need that must be met is the opportunity to showcase all languages in a given community. While specific portfolio assessments have yet to make it on the DESE approved list, there are companies such as Idioma Education and Consulting who are aware of this need and are developing comprehensive, online, easy to access Language Portfolio Assessments. By following the Portfolio-Based Alternative Evidence Method for World Language Assessments, Idioma has developed a practical solution for districts looking to assess the less common languages. Idioma Education and Consulting is a local company founded by a world language educator who cares about seeing all students and educators advance on their pathway to proficiency. Idioma offers online high school, undergraduate, graduate and professional development courses in world languages, ESL, and with a focus on World Language Methodology & Pedagogy. In addition, they are now offering Language Portfolio Assessments as a result of the need in the state. Their OPI Language Proficiency trained team of instructors has been working diligently on this platform to create an option that can be completed by students during the school day in a similar number of hours that the AAPPL or AP tests require. Students are able to submit portfolio pieces in the four language domains via the Idioma Learning Management System. Reading and listening selections are provided in the target language, as well as writing and speaking prompts. A student simply creates an account and then the district chooses when the testing window will be open. The student is able to access all elements of the portfolio assessment through the account and upload responses and recordings. From there, portfolio assessors log in to evaluate the student submissions according to the ACTFL proficiency guidelines. All portfolio assessors/raters will be trained to discern the difference between Intermediate High and Advanced Low to support districts in awarding the Seal of Biliteracy and the Seal of Biliteracy with Distinction. To find out more about the program and how to receive district discounts for graduate and professional development courses, please contact portfolio@idiomac.com or visit idiomac.com/pages/sobl-portfolio.

Nominations are open to join the MaFLA Board of Directors!

☐ Have you been looking to expand your sphere of influence?
☐ Are you interested in supporting and representing teachers at a state level?
☐ Would you like to work with other educators who prioritize proficiency?

If you answered yes to any or all of the above (or know someone who would) nominate yourself (or a colleague) to be a director for the MaFLA Board. We seek a diverse group of educators to join us (in particular this year: elementary, university, less commonly taught languages, Central Mass). Board members are responsible to come to each of our five board meetings, help at various professional development events including the conference, and participate in our conversations between meetings. All board members volunteer for their roles, reaping benefits in connections, experience, and fulfillment. Nominations for four-year terms close May 31; take time to consider if this is the right time for you to step up.
Congratulations Rebecca Blouwolff
ACTFL 2020 Teacher Of The Year!

MaFLA’s interview of ACTFL Teacher of the Year Rebecca Blouwolff was conducted by Nicole Sherf.

MaFLA is so proud that our 2019 MaFLA TOY Rebecca Blouwolff (say ‘blue wolf’) was selected as the 2019 NECTFL TOY and then as the 2020 ACTFL TOY!

Many of us have been following Rebecca Blouwolff’s process of embracing the proficiency movement and shift to a proficiency-oriented curriculum. Now she is representing our profession through the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) as their Teacher of the Year (TOY). She is widely known on Twitter (@MmeBlouwolff), her blog (www.mmeblouwolff.weebly.com), through various articles in ACTFL’s The Language Educator (TLE) as well as various posts on the Path2Proficiency website. She generously shares her curriculum, resources, rubrics and classroom ideas on these platforms.

We are so pleased that Rebecca has agreed to share some of her journey with us in this interview.

MaFLA: In your TLE article “Focusing on Performance: Reinvigorating Teaching Toward a Student-Centered Classroom,” you outline your shift to teaching for proficiency. What are some of the most exciting benefits for you, for your department and for your students in embracing this shift?

Rebecca Blouwolff: I’m going to start with my students, because they come first. Today, my students show what they can do with the language via performance-based assessments. These assessments by mode allow many more to experience success in French, because students may be skilled interpreters of YouTube videos, fearless question-askers during interpersonal speaking tasks, or detailed writers able to create with language and communicate in strings of sentences. Previously, my grammar-driven assessments penalized students for taking risks and thereby rendered these talents invisible.

My department members share pride in what we’ve accomplished, and feel energized by how far we’ve come in the past years. We know that we have a lot of ideas and effective practices to share with our building colleagues in other disciplines, as well as world language teachers outside our district. Now that our department has written a language-neutral Grade 6 curriculum, we can compare notes day-by-day and share our lesson ideas across languages. This allows us to expand our repertoire of teaching techniques and collaborate deeply.

Moving to proficiency has given me a new lease on my teaching life. I never imagined that I would have the opportunity to share my developing expertise with colleagues outside my district, and I have discovered that I love providing professional development to adults. These days I view my classroom as my test kitchen: I can test out new ideas, tinker with my recipes, and then share them with other teachers near and far.

MaFLA: What advice do you have for the teacher and/or department starting out on the shift to proficiency?

Rebecca Blouwolff: Stay humble and curious! Never be afraid to say that you don’t know, don’t understand yet, or need more help. Teachers are helpers, so seek out folks who are a bit ahead of you on the path to proficiency. In most cases, they’ll be thrilled to pay it forward by telling you their battle stories and sharing resources. Unlike Hollywood celebrities, ACTFL rock stars like Laura Terrill and Greg Duncan answer their own emails and may even be willing to point you in the right direction if you are feeling stuck. Once you start to get the hang of things, keep asking for feedback on your teaching materials and lessons so that you can refine your practice further and continue to grow.

MaFLA: The language teacher shortage is well documented and we are now only beginning to make recruitment and retention of high quality teachers a fundamental part of our leadership practice. What advice would you have for teacher leaders to help address these issues? And what advice would you have for teachers who are new to the profession?

Rebecca Blouwolff: I’d love to see a pathway for more multilinguals to enter our schools, particularly as world language teachers. This can increase teacher supply, expose more young people to multilingualism, and deepen the cultural competency of our school communities. Everywhere I go around Boston, I run into native French speakers such as a Cameroonian asylum-seeker who taught math for several years in her home country but is now working at Target, a member of the Paris Jewish community who survived anti-Semitic attacks there before deciding to move the whole family here, a Haitian cab driver who was a French teacher in his home country. How might we provide a fast track program for these people to join our profession? Expecting native speaker adults born abroad to redo their entire undergraduate education and eventually earn a master degree here is not realistic. They don’t need five or six years of study in order to be ready to do this work.

If every school could find the language teachers it needs, then there’d be more programs in more schools - not just those that can woo teachers with better conditions and salaries. This is critical equity work for all students.

Spring
For new teachers, I’ll quote Jennifer Gonzalez from Cult of Pedagogy and say, find your marigolds – those people who nurture your practice and your educator soul. Take any help you can get. Borrow liberally from others’ ideas. Fake it until you make it. Be selfish about your self-care so that you can nurture yourself for the long term. Teaching is a marathon, not a sprint, and you can’t be a good teacher for your students if you’re overtired, under-exercised, and missing out on fun with friends and family.

MaFLA: So much of the TOY program is about advocating for languages. You’ll have the opportunity to talk with language leaders and professionals across the country as well as legislators. What is your advocacy message?

Rebecca Blouwolff: In America, every person should be free to express themselves in the language of their choice, where they wish. Those of us who make language learning our life’s work must stand up for multilinguals in our own communities. We can do this by not allowing prejudiced remarks to go unchallenged, by consciously fighting bias against non-native speakers of English, and by changing our schools’ hiring practices to bring more multilingual teachers into our classrooms.

As I’ve said before, it is not the job of multilingual people to make monolinguals feel comfortable in their ignorance. Rather, it is the job of Americans to break through our monolingual mindset and join the rest of the world by learning other languages. What our world needs now is humble, curious people who seek friendship with others through mutual understanding. Multilinguals are uniquely positioned to show us how. Our future requires that we work together to accept non-native English speakers without prejudice, and broaden our idea of who is qualified to teach in our schools.

MaFLA: What are some recommendations that you have for people who want to begin to become advocates within their classes, departments and communities?

Rebecca Blouwolff: Too often teachers’ work is invisible. It’s time to show off, people! Instead of worrying that you’ll come off as boasting about your great work, think about the pride your students will feel when you showcase their achievements to a larger audience. Parents, non-language teachers, and administrators in our communities are often very curious about proficiency-based instruction, because they did not benefit from this type of world language program when they were young. Show what you do – in person, in the press, via social media – and explain why it will help your students and our nation’s future.

MaFLA: What are you most excited about your TOY responsibilities in the upcoming year?

Rebecca Blouwolff: To pick the brains of language teacher nerds across the U.S. as I attend regional conferences, and expand the depth of my own practice as both a classroom teacher and presenter.

“Investing in yourself as a teacher (librarian, principal, etc.) also means cultivating friendships with other educators who you want to see succeed and who, in turn, won’t let you fail. We rise by lifting others.”

—TEACHER JENNIFER LAGARDE

#T2T
All teachers are busy, but it only takes a few seconds to say “good morning” and see how someone is doing. A little kindness goes a long way!

What is your co-worker’s favorite pick-me-up drink? Iced Tea with lemon, Chai latte, McD’s Coke with extra ice… It will only cost a buck or two, but it will make their day!

It’s so much easier to plan BEFORE we’re sick, exhausted, or in some other emergency. If you’re organized and prepared for this – sharing one of them could be the kindest thing you can do!

We’re used to every student noticing if we have something wrong with our hair or if we wear the same shirt too often… it’s a real treat for someone to notice when we look nice!
Enough said. We have ALL had days like this. (Weeks for some of us.)

Going to a conference can be a great team building experience. You don’t have to spend every minute together, but you can all come back refreshed and loaded up with new ideas to inspire students.

Even nice teachers can become hoarders when supplies get scarce. It’s good to remember that markers don’t last forever, tech can be shared, and books/magazines can be read by multiple classes. If you have something you’re not using, you may want to mention when it is available for others to borrow. It might just make their day. Bonus: They may even return the favor down the road.

A quick text or call only takes a second! Just knowing someone cares might be the best medicine of all.

Are you a teacher who knows everybody? Then start the introductions! Teachers are happier when they have friends and connections at their school or district.

We all know wars are started over copy machines. If you can fix the jam for the next teacher, you are truly the teacher’s lounge angel.

20 Little Ways
It’s good to get your mind off grades, challenging classes, and/or the million things you want to do in the classroom. A good book can do that, so tell a teacher friend if you have a good one you’d recommend!

See an amazing historical documentary on Netflix? A funny joke about Chemistry? Share it with that teacher down the hall. It shows you care about them and their class, too!

Mr. White was one teacher at my last school that always stepped up to help others when they were in a jam. It wasn’t for recognition, bonus cash, or fun... he was just a great guy who wanted to help others. Step up and help out – it won’t be forgotten!

Every teacher has unique skills and can add something special to whatever you are planning. We’re better together – let’s prove that.

Create a circle of support in your department or school. Did a teacher apply for a grant? Tell her you hope she gets it! Did a teacher win an award? Celebrate it at lunch with 3 cheers (or a cake)! Is the teacher next door trying for her National Board Certification? Tell her you’re proud!

You can be serious about learning AND still have fun, you know! Hats off to those teachers who lift our spirits, make us laugh on the toughest days, joke with students and staff. I’ll never forget working with some jokesters... they dressed up, laughed a lot, loved the occasional prank and made work FUN!
We are different. We all have a unique area of expertise. Listen and consider others’ perspectives and ideas. It may be a work in progress, but so are most great things.

Did you sign up for free resources? TODAY IS THE LAST DAY! I’m so grateful for teachers who send a quick email reminder or pop by my room to see if I turned in something that was due. Lifesavers!

How’s it going with your goal to < walk during your plan, take less work home, use _____ strategy > ? Just checking in on your co-workers can help them feel more motivated to tackle their goals.

This only takes a minute, but it means so much. Thank your mentor teacher, your principal, your custodians, volunteer parents! Plus, it’s a great reminder for you to see how lucky you are to have great people around!

Continue to be a good professional friend to the teachers around you!

YOU make a difference!

Used with permission from The Creative Language Classroom. Thanks for allowing us to share this. http://www.creativelanguageclass.com/professional-friends-forever/
Have you joined the proficiency movement and are you and your program on the path to proficiency? Who are the World Language teacher leaders who inspire you? Where do you go when you need inspiration or want ideas for authentic resources, lessons or unit plans, project or rubric ideas? The proficiency movement is supported so strongly on a variety of technological platforms available to us all to find answers, become inspired, network and become leader ourselves!

I recently had the absolute pleasure of interviewing Rebecca Blouwolff, the 2020 ACTFL Teacher of the Year for the MAF- LA Website Advocacy News page (see also pages 11-12 of this issue). I am inspired by how generously she shares her curriculum, resources, rubrics and classroom ideas on a variety of online platforms. She is widely known on Twitter (@MmeBlouwolff), through her blog (www.mmeblewolff. weebly.com) and through various articles in ACTFL The Language Educator (TLE).

It is the current trend of WL Teacher leaders to share, disseminate ideas and materials over the various platforms online. The question these days is not how to find great information and resources but rather how to narrow the focus and organize with all the amazing possibilities. I am going to over view in this article a few of my favorite places to find information, answers and resources.

Trying to understand a specific perspective on a topic? There are tons of teachers who have been blogging or podcasting about their process and sharing their resources. 2020 MFLA Teacher of the Year Ashley Uyaguari has a Podcast called Inspired Proficiency on which interviews expand on specific topics related to the shift. Kara Jacobs, the queen of authentic resources, has a website called Comprehensifying and Extending Authentic Resources. Former MFLA Board member and frequent presenter Joshua Cabral blogs and shares resources on WLClassroom. The motherload of WL proficiency blogsite is called Path2Proficiency. Organized by author and by topic it is an amazing free resource to get answers, to give you ideas to help you to support your students in the shift to proficiency-oriented teaching and to help your students be successful in the Seal of Biliteracy.

Looking for curriculum? Martina Bex of Comprehensible Classroom, and Kara Parker and Megan Smith of Adiós Textbook blog and sell proficiency aligned curriculum that is authentic resources rich and context organized. Comprehensible Classroom has the “Somos” curriculum for Spanish and “Adiós Textbook” offers curriculum for Spanish, French, German and English language teaching.

Looking for examples of teachers and districts across the country? ACTFL’s The Language Educator is published four times a year. Each issue organized around a specific theme. As a member, I get the printed journal by mail, but ACTFL selects a sample article from every issue and posts it on their website. The most recent sample article, in an issue about Differentiation in Support of Diversity, written by Rebecca Blouwolff is called Gotta Catch ’Em All... Reach Every Learner with High Yield Strategies. The sample articles go back to 2010. I am proud to say that a few of my articles have been selected for the sample article. For other examples, if you’re on Twitter (or even if you’re not yet!) do a search for #langchat to see an ongoing discussion about specific topics related to proficiency as well as Thursday night discussions over Twitter about topics or readings. I love finding resources shared there by teachers and departments that illustrate their innovation or collaboration on topics related to proficiency development.

Looking for guidance to begin the Seal of Biliteracy in your district? The Language Opportunity Coalition (LOC) is a collaboration of WL (MaFLA), EL (MATSOL) and DL (MABENE) leaders that advocated for the Seal of Biliteracy legislation and oversaw the Pilot during the three years before the legislation was passed. Using that experience, the LOC Seal Guidance Website was created as was the Timeline and Guiding Questions Booklet to support district implementation. We also have a Google Group with more than 250 members and a long list of prior posts on a variety of topics as well as quarterly online Gotomeetings during which longtime Seal Workgroup participants share their processes and successes with newly joined Seal districts. After joining the Google Group, you’ll have access to our Google Drive where you can check out our meeting minutes and other resources and exemplars.

This article could have been a list so long as to fill the entire Newsletter. There are so many world language teacher leaders providing direction and resources to support the proficiency shift. However, I think it is an important lesson to limit the number of blogs, sites and platforms that you follow. So, who are your WL PD heroes? And what are your favorite platforms to find information and interact about this amazing journey on the path to proficiency? This partial list is only a brief starting point for those of you who are looking for a place to begin.
Have You Been To NECTFL? If Not, GO!

by Mike Travers

Could you imagine being surrounded by a thousand other language teachers all wanting to learn and improve their instruction? What about being surrounded by nationally recognized presenters like Leslie Grahn, Laura Terrill, Thomas Sauer, Greta Lundgaard, Manuela Wagner and more? This place exists. It’s called the NECTFL Conference (Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages).

This year I was thrilled to receive funding to attend this conference in New York City where their conference theme was Languages for All: Envisioning Language Learning Opportunities for Every Learner. The sessions varied in topics from intercultural citizenship to improving student learning. The sessions explored research and classroom applications of interculturality. I’ll admit that I was stuck in a long time thinking that I was teaching for interculturality but in reality all I was doing was teaching culture as knowledge. I rediscovered culture’s role in my classes and now have students not just learning about the culture but engaging with it through resources, conversations and most importantly reflections.

1. Intercultural Citizenship needs to be at the heart of our planning. I attended a pre-conference workshop with Manuela Wagner, Dorie Conlon Perugini and Michelle Back where we explored research and classroom applications of interculturality. I’ll admit that I was stuck for a long time thinking that I was teaching for interculturality but in reality all I was doing was teaching culture as knowledge. I rediscovered culture’s role in my classes and now have students not just learning about the culture but engaging with it through resources, conversations and most importantly reflections.

2. Visual Imagery - Laura Terrill, per usual, blew me away with her approach to using photos and videos in the classroom. Her strategies for using photos to bring in current events, culture and language were all manageable and had me lesson planning in my head throughout the session. She asked some questions that got me thinking about how I use images in my classroom. Before, I would use a clipart picture to represent a word but in reality I could find a culturally relevant picture to do that same job. So instead of an animated picture of a school I could use a picture of a real school in the Dominican Republic to actually engage my students.

3. Sharing is caring - We are all working so hard in our classes and every one of us brings something unique that other teachers want to hear about. I was thankful to be chosen as Best of MaFLA and had the chance to present on grammar to a room filled with teachers all wanting to know if they’re “doing it right”. In all reality, if we’re promoting communication we’re doing it “right”. All teachers have something unique they bring to the field and I would highly suggest showcasing that at a local, regional or national conference to actually engage my students.

New And Fun Initiatives: World Language Festival

by Vilma Bibeau

This year, the Medford World Language Department organized their first annual World Language Festival, an evening of world language celebration to take place on Friday, March 6, 2020. The main goal of this festival was to share our languages and cultures through our students’ skills and knowledge. Our language students were going to be engaged, challenged, and have the most memorable time of their lives! The celebration was going to include a wide range of activities, such as plays, songs, international foods demonstrations, contests, and games. The entire community had been invited, together with the superintendent, all administrators, staff and faculty, the mayor, and school committee members.

Unfortunately, the outbreak of COVID-19 forced us to come to the decision to postpone the festival, hopefully to a later date. The World Language Department and students worked tirelessly for months to organize this event. Very special attention was given to the preparation for the festival amongst teachers and students as everyone was eager to showcase their multicultural and multilingual talents. The community was eager to attend, and local businesses offered to make donations to the fundraising for our World Language scholarships. The entire event had created a buzz of excitement around the town of Medford, something that they never had before, as this was something that was going to display not only the World Language Department, but all languages and cultures represented in the district.

This unprecedented situation has challenged all of us with fear and uneasiness; however, it will never stop us from continuing to do what we love the most: supporting our students, programs, and community through the amazing realm of world languages. We will have other opportunities to celebrate our languages, as well as share our passion, knowledge and enthusiasm with our communities. Be well and stay safe!
Teacher Field Trips ~ Why Should Our Students Have All The Fun?

by Jeanne O’Hearn

I still remember many years ago when colleagues from my department and I went to see the film Amores Perros in Cambridge. It was memorable because the film was so intense, but also because my colleagues and I got together on our own time to do something fun yet intellectual that was just for us. It was great to be able to get together outside of school. It would be even better to get together with teachers from other districts! This leads me to announce the start of a new initiative at MaFLA. We already offer a variety of PD opportunities throughout the year to our members. This year I would love to see us move beyond PD and start to encourage social gatherings. As language teachers who are lifelong learners and who have an unending curiosity about the world around us, it would be great to be able to attend cultural events together from time to time, just for the fun of it! There are so many amazing events in our area where we can come together to enjoy the Arts, enjoy each other’s company while we do some networking and socializing, and maybe learn something new about the languages and cultures we teach.

Stay tuned for more details about dates and times for MaFLA Field Trips in the late spring and over the summer. We will post details of get-togethers on our Facebook page and on Twitter. Know of any interesting events coming up in your area? Please contact me (jeannemafla@gmail.com) and we will spread the word or feel free to add a post to Facebook or Twitter. Thanks and Happy Spring!

Below is a list that is just a sampling of opportunities at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, the Villa Victoria Community Center in the South End of Boston, the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, The Springfield Museums in Springfield, and the Whitney Museum of Art in New York City.

Museum of Fine Arts in Boston

Monet and Boston: Lasting Impression
April 18 – August 23

Latinx Heritage Night
September 16, 4:00-10:00 Free!

Here is the MFA's description: Join us for an evening celebrating Latinx heritage and culture! Stop by for live music and dance performances. Tour the galleries exploring works of art from North, Central, and South America and network with friends and family, all in celebration of Latinx Heritage Month!
https://www.mfa.org/event/community-celebrations/latinx-heritage-night?event=46911

Peabody Essex Museum, Salem

Carlos Garaicoa: Partitura
March 8 – January 2021

Cuban artist, Carlos Garaicoa, celebrates the performances of street musicians recorded in Madrid and Bilbao, Spain.
https://www.pem.org/exhibitions/carlos-garaicoa-partitura

From Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción, South End, Boston

Festival Betances
July, 2020

New England’s longest-running Latino Cultural Celebration
https://www.ibaboston.org/events/festival-betances

Tito Puente Latin Music Series
Summer, 2020

Free six-concert series with a heavy salsa influence featuring world-renowned musicians from Berklee and beyond.
https://www.ibaboston.org/events/tito-puente-latin-music-series

Clark Art Institute, Williamstown
www.clarkart.edu

Velo Revelo
February 26 – January 3, 2021
Artist: Pia Camil

Lines from Life
March 21 – August 21
French Drawings from the Diamond Collection

Nature Transformed
May 9 – November 1
Artist: Claude & Francois-Xavier Lalanne

Visions of Norway
June 13 – September 13
Artist: Nikolai Astrup

The Springfield Museums, D’Amour Museum of Fine Arts:

Fantastic Ruins: Etchings by Giovanni Battista Piranesi
March 17 – July 19
springfieldmuseums.org/exhibitions/fantastic-ruins-etchings-giovanni-battista-piranesi/

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City

Vida Americana – Mexican Muralists
February 17 – May 17
whitney.org/exhibitions/vida-americana

Editor’s Note: This article was written prior to the current COVID 19 crisis. MaFLA hopes that life will return to normal soon and we can resume social activities.
Level UP: Enduring
Supporting, Networking And Leading

Be Mindful
by Mike Farkas

Recently, I have been making time to read the book *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* by Bell Hooks. Each time I read, I continue to flip back to a quote by the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh in which he states that "the practice of a healer, therapist, teacher or any helping professional should be directed towards his or herself first, because if the helper is unhappy, he or she cannot help many people (p. 15)." As an educator, I believe that I am most effective when I am mindful: being conscious and aware of myself, my colleagues, and my students sitting in front of me. When I am fully present, I find that my classes "go well." I am more genuine, patient, vulnerable, and flexible. Also, I am more attentive of my learners’ needs as I better notice and acknowledge them, as well as their overt or subtle actions. For me, being fully present while at work is a challenging yet essential responsibility that I must fulfill for the sake of my learners, my colleagues, and my learners. Given the high demands placed on the shoulders of educators, how do we ensure that we are our most mindful selves each day?

One way to stay well and be mindful is to not establish barriers between work and personal lives, but rather boundaries. The main difference between a "barrier" and a "boundary" is their purpose: while a "barrier" creates a break between two entities, a "boundary" allows for a healthy relationship between them through transparency of one's needs. Creating "boundaries" allows me to focus on doing what I need to recharge or "refill the well" for another day of school, while acknowledging the fact that ungraded student work sits on my desk and thoughts of school linger in my mind. While physically away from school, I dedicate time to do small activities or tasks that bring me pleasure: going for a walk or a bike ride, preparing and enjoying dinner with my partner, going to a museum with friends, getting a good night's sleep, and enjoying a cup of coffee in the morning. While doing these activities, do thoughts of school arise in my mind? Yes, they do. Do I reflect on how terribly my lesson in one class went? Yes, totally. Do I begin to feel worried about the seemingly hundreds of things I need to do at school that week? Yes, without a doubt. I acknowledge those thoughts and speak compassionately to myself. I remind myself that I will prioritize time the following day to tackling the work that needs to be done at school. Then, I redirect myself to the present moment to fully notice and appreciate "the now."

Another way to support our health and welfare is to be kind to ourselves. We must remember that our daily work as educators is spiritually, intellectually, and physically demanding. We push ourselves each day to give more and more to our learners, our colleagues, and our school because we are passionate and find meaning in our work. At times, we feel negative emotions when we do not meet our own expectations each day: an observation did not go well, a conversation with a parent caused frustration, or students outwardly hated an activity that you were excited about sharing. We sometimes wish we had more time to prepare our lessons, or to give more precise feedback on student work. When these or other feelings arise, kindly and honestly speak to yourself by saying: "you are doing the best you can." Acknowledge constraints, such as a lack of time or resources, and say to yourself: "given the little time you have, you are doing the best you can." While it is crucial that we fulfill our responsibilities as professionals, it is also important to take time to be compassionate to yourself. Similar practices could be used when interacting with colleagues when they need us most. Make some time to be present by genuinely listening to your colleagues and validating their feelings. Remind them that they are doing the best they can. If possible, offer up some advice or ideas to help them move forward.

Ultimately, taking care of one’s needs improves the well-being of the classroom and departmental communities. As educators, we strive each day to meet the social and emotional needs of our learners to ensure that they have access to a meaningful, enriching educational experience in a safe classroom environment. To do so, we refer back to many principles and practices, including Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow structures the pyramid of needs so that the ultimate attainment be “self-actualization,” which is becoming the most that one can be. In our classrooms, we create an equitable environment and instructional materials that support our learners in attaining self-actualization.

I challenge my colleagues to truthfully reflect on their own professional and private selves to determine if they are taking the steps needed to ensure their own self-actualization. In order to cultivate self-actualization in our students, we as educators must fully utilize self-compassion in our professional and personal lives to be our own best selves. Are we meeting our own human needs to be the best that we can be for, firstly ourselves, then our families, loved ones, friends, and learners? If not, what steps do we take to better satisfy our own needs? If we are, how can we support our colleagues in attaining their own self-actualization?

Need Help With Your Virtual Classroom?

MaFLA has been collecting resources for you on our website. Under the *Teaching Ideas* tab click on *Teacher Resources*. Be sure to check out the many resources provided by Leslie Grahn, other state associations such as CTCOLT, the Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association and Colorado. We also have some resources from ACTFL and from a variety or publishers and World Language educators. Here is a quick link to the many resources collected.

Both of these collections will continue to grow so we hope you take full advantage of them.
Mentoring Magic
by Ronie Webster

This past February I had the opportunity for the third time to mentor two young teachers at the NECTFL Conference in New York City. The benefits of mentoring are tremendous and manifold.

One of my mentees was Mary d’Orvilliers, a teacher who I mentored last year. We began our journey as colleagues at the 2019 NECTFL Conference and connected frequently throughout the year, sharing ideas, challenges and our common interests and passions. Mary’s career seemed to mirror mine in that she was hired just a few days before the start of the school year and as a first year teacher within days of being hired she found herself in front of adolescents trying to teach them Spanish. As first year teachers we both were often mistaken as students because we seemed to look so much like our students. We both spent that first year trying to figure out this “teaching thing” but really loved what we were doing and wanted to share our language enthusiasm and passion with our students.

As Mary’s mentor, I was fortunate to have many years of experience and when Mary asked for help throughout the year I was able to support her with materials, connections and ideas. As we worked together at the 2020 NECTFL Conference, I immediately perceived the increased confidence and direction that Mary had after a year of experience in the classroom. She had a very clear idea of her strengths and areas of concerns and even prior to the actual conference she had plotted out a conference schedule that met her needs.

As we talked I could see the growth that she had made and we had some great conversations about her next areas of focus. Her excitement and enthusiasm really made me proud and I saw that her attitude to be a life-long learner would support her continued growth and her great success as a world language educator.

Her desire to continue learning is commendable and, although I am retired, I still have that passion to learn and desire to become better. I see us both continuing learning together for many years to come.

Mary and I have both benefitted greatly from this mentor/mentee relationship and I feel that I have contributed something back to a profession that has been a very important part of my life.

My second mentee, Facely Acosta, is a delightful young teacher from NYC. Facely, who is in her third year of teaching in a school in the Bronx, was attending her first world language conference. Her teaching experience was quite different from mine but I could immediately feel her desire to be the best teacher for her students.

Our first connections showed me that we both cared deeply for our students, taking an interest in the backgrounds, the talents and the great variety they bring into our classes and our lives. As we discussed Facely’s teaching assignment I perceived her frustration at trying to meet the needs of heritage language learners in her class along with true beginners in learning the language. She was very interested in learning how to meet the needs of all her students and wanted to begin to make connections with those who had developed and courses for heritage language learners.

As we perused the program and looked for perfect sessions to meet her needs, I realized that I had lots of connections to experienced teachers who were either presenting or attending the conference. I decided to introduce Facely to those individuals so she could made connections that would support her interests.

I enjoyed the stories of her classroom experiences as I have never had any heritage language learners in the years of my career. Her anecdotes enriched me and made me realize that although our struggles were very different as teachers we shared that passion for the language and we wanted our students to grow and love the language as much as we do.

Often we consider the benefit to the mentee when talking about mentoring but I found being a mentor to be a great experience which helped ME to grow. It is like going on the student trip for the tenth time and going to exact same historic sites but each time you get to experience it through the eyes of another person.

I strongly recommend mentoring a new teacher. It doesn’t even have to be an official title. Just be there to help them navigate through, to listen when they just need to talk, to provide them with ideas and connections and to simply be a good colleague and a friend. Oh, and something else you can do. Get them a membership in their state language association. I have gifted several new teachers a membership and this has supported them on their paths to becoming leaders in the field.

I would like to extend a big THANK YOU to Vista Higher Learning and to NYS Language RBERN (Regional Bilingual Educational Resource Network) at NYU for sponsoring this outstanding program.

Addendum: Mentorships bring with them a newfound passion and enthusiasm to the “seasoned veteran” and a lifelong collegiality and friendship. Just after having completed this article I saw a video pass by on my Facebook feed that was made by the Chinese teacher who was my first NECTFL mentee. We have stayed in touch over the years, through her teaching in New Jersey and her marriage and finally to her new home in California. In her video Ting along with her husband performed a choreographed dance routine encouraging students and people in general to wash their hands. Although we are now miles apart just seeing her with that same passion and excitement I perceived years ago made me proud and happy.

It is my hope that I have helped these three professionals on their paths to becoming leaders in the profession. I anticipate that each of them, one day, will be a mentor herself.
A few years ago, while visiting a French AP class, I was asked what my favorite book written in French was. I had really not thought about it and was not able to reply. Later that day, I happened to spot Le Petit Prince on my bookshelf and knew that that was it. Quickly glancing through the pages, so many happy memories came flooding back to me and I remembered the joy that I had in teaching this charming and yet so profound tale to my French III students. And so I reread the book and rediscovered its many lessons for us as le petit prince recounted his journey of discovery among the many asteroids and planets of the universe. It then occurred to me that Le Petit Prince was the perfect vehicle to show how to apply the Connections Strand to a literary work. I had been affiliated with the now defunct National Capital Language Resource Center’s Culture Club and I wrote three articles on that subject. This article is a reworking of those original articles.

Of the 5 Strands of the Foreign Language National Standards, it seems that the Connections Strand is the most difficult for teachers to integrate into the curriculum and into the lesson plans of L2 teachers. It is often misinterpreted as interdisciplinary which would involve working in tandem with teachers of other disciplines or as requiring teachers to teach math, history, geography, etc., in L2 in a sort of total immersion atmosphere. Although there is merit in those approaches, the Connections Strand would be less intimidating if L2 teachers were trained to recognize the existence of other disciplines in the materials that they use regularly in their classes and to adopt the attitude that there are times when one is teaching art related L2 vocabulary and others when one is teaching art history in L2.

Suggested Activities

The following list of activities is meant to provide some concrete examples of the Connections approach to the reading of literature and to engage the students in learning far more than the facts of the story and the acquisition of vocabulary. It’s an effective way to develop the communication skill by teaching language in context.

1. Connections to Art

Dessine-moi un mouton. (chapter II)

Students with artistic talent will decorate the classroom walls or windows with reproductions of the art that is in the text.

Les grandes personnes ne comprennent jamais rien toutes seules, et c’est fatigant, pour les enfants, de toujours et toujours leur donner des explications: Ce n’est pas un chapeau, c’est un serpent boa qui avale un éléphant. (chapter I)

Working in small groups, students will reproduce the story in comic strip form.

Students will select important quotations from the story and will draw scenes to represent them.

2. Connections to Geography

J’ai volé un peu partout dans le monde. Et la géographie, c’est exact, m’a beaucoup servi. (chapter I)

How important is the study of geography? What can one do with geography?

The pilot met le petit prince in the Sahara desert. Where is it? How large is it? What countries border it? Are there any deserts in the United States? In France? What is the largest desert in the world and where is it located?

3. Connections to Astronomy

Je savais bien qu’en dehors des grosses planètes comme la Terre, Jupiter, Mars, Vénus, auxquelles on a donné des noms, il y en a des centaines d’autres qui sont quelquefois si petites qu’on a beaucoup de mal à les apercevoir au télescope. (chapter IV)

Students will create a model of the universe as a mobile to hang from the classroom ceiling with posters containing relevant information about each planet, i.e., size, distance from the earth, characteristics, etc.

Students will define the words sun, planet, moon, asteroid, universe, Milky Way, galaxy.

4. Connections to Biology and the existence of life in outer space

Tu viens donc d’une autre planète? (chapter III)

The students will debate if there is life on other planets, if they believe in flying saucers. If they believe that there is life in outer space, do they believe that it is human life?

5. Connections to Geology, Earth Science, History

Au matin du départ il mit sa planète bien en ordre. Il ramona soigneusement ses volcans en activité. Il possédait deux volcans en activité…Il ramona donc également le volcan éteint. (chapter IX)

What is a volcano? Are there any in the United States? In France? If so, are they active or dormant? When did the last volcanic eruption occur in the United States and where?

Students will name and locate 5 important volcanic eruptions that occurred throughout history and indicate their consequences.

6. Connections to Environmental Studies

Or il y avait des graines terribles sur la planète du petit prince…c’étaient les graines de baobabs. Le sol en était infesté. Or un ba-
obab, si l'on s'y prend trop tard, on ne peut plus s'en débarrasser. Il encombe toute la planète. Il la perfore de ses racines. Et si la planète est trop petite, et si les baobabs sont trop nombreux, ils la font éclater…. C'est une question de discipline, me disait plus tard le petit prince. Quand on a terminé sa toilette du matin, il faut faire soigneusement la toilette de la planète. (chapter V)

What environmental problems are threatening the Earth? What can be done to protect our air, our land, and our water?

Is recycling important? Does your school or town have a recycling policy? If yes, what does it consist of? If not, can you get one started?

What can be done to prevent the spread of pollutants in the air? How many automobiles does your family own? What gas mileage do they have?

8. Connections to Language Arts, Life Experience
Il faut que je supporte deux ou trois chenilles si je veux connaître les papillons. (chapter IX)

Does the proverb « Behind every cloud, there is a silver lining » have a French equivalent?

Students will give 5 examples of how one must suffer the bad before knowing the good.

9. Connections to History, Political Science, Government
Il ne savait pas que, pour les rois, le monde est très simplifié. Tous les hommes sont des sujets. …Car le roi tenait essentiellement à ce que son autorité fut respectée. Il ne tolérait pas la désobéissance. C'était un monarque absolu. (chapter X)

Students will debate the pros and cons of an absolute monarchy, of a constitutional monarchy, of a democracy.

Students will research how the excesses and abuses of the monarchy led to the French Revolution.

Students will research how today’s form of government in France differs from that of the United States.

Students will determine how many countries today have a monarchy.

10. Connections to Morality, Ethics, Criminal Justice
Tu pourras juger ce vieux rat. Tu le condamneras à mort de temps en temps. (chapter X)

Students will conduct a survey in the class and at home to determine the ratio between those who support a death penalty and those who do not.

Students will conduct a debate about the pros and cons of the death penalty.

11. Connections to Government and Foreign Service
Je te fais mon ambassadeur. (chapter X)

Students will discover the names of the American ambassador to France, the French ambassador to the United States.

Students will research the function of an embassy.

Students will state the differences between an embassy and a consulate.

12. Connections to Geography, History
Tiens! Voilà un explorateur! (chapter XV)

Students will explore the role of the French explorers in North America. Who were they? What did they discover?

Looking at a map of the United States, students will list as many states, cities, and rivers with French names as they can.

13. Connections to Geography and the International Time Zone
Quand il est midi aux États-Unis, le soleil, tout le monde le sait, se couche sur la France. (Chapitre VI)


If the sun sets at 6:30 p.m. in Boston, what time is it in Beijing, in Moscow, in Dakar, in Paris, in Rio de Janeiro, in Seattle?

Are there any countries in which the sun never rises in the winter to create a 24-hour night?

14. Connections to Mathematics
Si les deux milliards d’habitants qui peuplent la terre se tenaient debout et un peu serrés,… ils se logeraient aisément sur une place publique de vingt milles de long sur vingt milles de large. (chapter XVII)

Students will recalculate the size of the space needed to support the current population of the earth if everyone stood by side next to one another.

Students will recalculate the size of the space needed to support the current population of the United States if everyone stood side by side next to one another.

15. Connections to Morality and Ethics
Quand on veut faire de l’esprit, il arrive que
**Suggested Discussions**

The following observations by Le Petit Prince can stimulate some vibrant discussions about human behavior:

1. Discrimination: No one believed the Turkish astronomer because of his strange costume until L’astronome refit sa démonstration en 1920, dans un habit très élégant (à l’Européenne). Et cette fois-ci tout le monde fut de son avis. (chapter IV)

2. The danger of judging others for the wrong reasons: His rose caused him difficulties because jaurais d la juger sur les actes et non sur les mots. (chapter VIII)

3. Nothing comes easy: Il faut que je supporte deux ou trois chenilles si je veux connaître les papillons. (chapter X)

4. Having realistic expectations of others: Il faut exiger de chacun ce que chacun peut donner. (chapter X)

5. Loneliness and isolation: On est seul aussi chez les homes. (chapter XVII)

6. Life and death: When the geographer tells him that his flower is éphémère, le petit prince asks him what that means. Ça signifie ‘qui est menacé de disparition prochaine’. (chapter XV) And the snake informs him that Celui que je touche, je le rends à la terre dont il est sorti. (chapter XVII)

7. The grass is greener on the other side: On n’est jamais content là où l’on est. (chapter XXIH)

8. Personal responsibility: Tu deviens responsable pour toujours de ce que l’on apprivoise. (chapter XXI)

9. Reason vs. emotions: On ne voit bien qu’avec le coeur. L’essentiel est invisible pour les yeux. (chapter XXI)

10. Deep vs. shallow knowledge: On ne connaît que les choses que l’on apprivoise. (chapter XXI)

11. The value of work: Celui-là, se dit le petit prince,…celui-là serait méprisé par tous les autres, par le roi, par le vaniteux, par le buveur, par le business-

**Conclusion**

The Connections Strand of the Foreign Language Frameworks encourages L2 teachers to broaden the scope of their curriculum and to recognize that the materials they use contain more than vocabulary and verbs. This article illustrated how Le Petit Prince, a literary text, can be looked upon as a tie-in to various disciplines. The activities suggested can enliven the classroom discussions and promote L2 learning in context.

**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 was associated with the National Capital Language Resource Center as the author of the Sound Bites for Better Teaching column and is a frequent contributor to the MaFLA Newsletter.
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Teacher: Being a streamer or youtuber isn't a real job

Teachers now:

Self-Care for Educators

Connect with uplifting colleagues
Do physical activities you enjoy
Take a break when you need one
Use positive self-talk
Go for a walk or spend time outside
Read a good book (just for you)
Plan an activity to look forward to
Spend time with friends and family
Leave work at school for the night or weekend
Spend less time on social media
Bring healthy snacks and meals
Be comfortable saying “no” to more obligations

Treat yourself when you need it
Remember to start fresh every day

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