MaFLA 2021 Conference Planning

Greetings, MaFLA members and World Language Community! Planning for MaFLA 2021 in the Fall is well underway! The conference planning committee has been meeting on a regular basis since December to plan, and provide a format for our conference. I am happy to say that the format is virtual and we have our schedule outlined! We are virtual for the first time ever!

I think you will find this to be an exciting display of talented effort on the part of the committee. Most notably to the efforts of Catherine Ritz, MaFLA’s Program Coordinator, and architect of the Classroom Collaborative and the Winter Webinars. We owe the growth in membership to her efforts to provide outstanding virtual professional development to you, our members. Ronie and Larry Webster are responsible for the content you see on the website. Please visit it and watch my promotional video to learn some specifics about the theme of the conference and about the principal keynotes, David and Sheila Bong from Avant Assessment.

I am currently in the process of reaching out to the main workshop presenters as well as the session presenters in order to firm up our program. There are deep dives as well as 15 minute slots for quick hits of pedagogy. And, there are also other elements such as round tables, and interesting cultural aspects sprinkled in for extra added interest, enjoyment and relaxation. I will also make a lot more visual appearances introducing the keynotes and being visible. And you will also see lots of Board members as facilitators.

All in all, it’s a great line up of talented presenters, engaging Board members, and exciting ways to experience this conference and all its creative components. I encourage you to go to the website, view my promotional video, and then consider submitting a session proposal. Everyone has 15 minutes of something valuable to share, I’m sure. I’m looking forward to keeping you informed and up to date on the “We Are the World” conference, “Creating Cross-Cultural connections”!

Let’s go MaFLA 2021!

Pat DiPillo, 2021 Conference Chair

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News Flash!

MaFLA’s 2021 Fall Conference will now be our first-ever VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

All sessions will be submitted as pre-recorded presentations. We are accepting session proposals for the following formats:

* Bite Size: 15-minute pre-recorded sessions highlighting a specific teaching practice.
* Deep Dive: 60-minute pre-recorded sessions that go more in depth into one of the focus strands.
* Simu-Live: We will select Deep Dive sessions to feature as Simu-Live presentations. Sessions will be pre-recorded and aired at a specific time during which the presenter will be available for questions and clarifications using our chat feature.

Submit a Session Proposal HERE! Deadline: April 26
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### 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

**MaFLA Membership Special!**

Due to the unprecedented events of the last few months, MaFLA is offering a special rate for new and renewing members who want to extend their membership. Now you can get 3 years for the price of 2! A regular 3-year membership (Member 3) is $120. From June 1, 2020 to May 31, 2021, it is only $90. This means you can have all the member benefits - registrations, newsletters, and 2021 Conference without having to renew your membership. It also covers the 2022 ACTFL Convention in Boston. MaFLA members can go without signing up for ACTFL membership!

So, when you renew your membership, choose Member 3 and you will get this special renew rate! Don't worry if you have recently renewed since this rate goes for a year, you can simply take advantage of it the next time you renew!

Click [here](#) to renew.  
Click [here](#) to join.
WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT AT MaFLA’s FIRST-EVER VIRTUAL CONFERENCE?

While there remains much planning to do, here are some of the exciting features of our first-ever virtual Fall Conference:

Sessions:
* Sessions will be pre-recorded in either bite-size (15 minute) or deep dive (60 minute) formats.
* You can access pre-recorded presentations whenever it is convenient for you!
* All sessions will be recorded and available for viewing after the conference.
* Certain sessions will also be available to view in a Simu-Live format, meaning that the session presenter will be available to address questions asked using our chat feature.

Workshops:
* Featured workshops will be presented live during the conference, with over ten workshops to choose from.
* Live-workshops will be presented using ZOOM in 2-hour or 3-hour formats.
* Stay tuned for a list of workshops and high-quality presenters!

Social:
* Throughout the conference, you’ll be able to meet virtually with colleagues in informal social gatherings.
* Our virtual event platform will also allow you to connect with your colleagues through messaging and chat features.

Conference registration will open in June!
Mark your calendars, and stay tuned for more details on this first-ever virtual MaFLA Fall Conference!

Editor’s Message

Social Emotional Learning is the focus of this issue of the MaFLA Newsletter and educators are finding that it is more important now than ever. It has now been over a year of teaching in the pandemic and this has created barriers that have impacted both students and teachers. Many professionals felt quite adept at supporting students in the physical classroom but not having the opportunity to interact with their students has created challenges. Teachers have had to find new ways to support their students and integrate SEL into the daily experience. Always looking for new ideas and tips, professionals are continually seeking new tools and ideas to build relationships with their students. We invite you to delve into the various articles we have in this issue to continue your learning on this topic.

Our Educator in the Spotlight this issue highlights Regina Symonds, a French teacher at Triton Regional High School. She is a great advocate for world languages and an enthusiast for French and she has shared some great tips and ideas for us all.

We also have an update from our DESE World Language Specialist Andy McDonie. Find out what is happening with our new world language framework and the Seal of Biliteracy.

As we are planning for our fall conference, we hope that you will include this PD in your plans. There will be something offered for everyone and we need to re-establish the MaFLA collegiality that has always been a part of our Annual Conference. In the upcoming months, we will be sharing more about MaFLA’s first-ever virtual conference so be sure to watch for eblasts, facebook posts, and tweets to stay informed. Also check the MaFLA.org website for updates.

As we are winding down the academic year, we wish you the best for the end of the school year and a restful and relaxing summer. Remember that we want to hear from you. Send in your thoughts, your reflections and your ideas and experiences for publication in our newsletter. The theme of the Back to School edition is Building Community and Relationships.

Stay in touch and we hope to see you at one of our upcoming PD events.

Ronie R. Webster
Regina Symonds is the Foreign Language Department Chair and a French Teacher at Triton High School. She serves as Secretary of the AATF Eastern Mass Chapter and a member of their Executive Board. Recently elected National President of the AATF Société Honoraire de Français (SHF), a huge honor, Regina presents workshops often at AATF and at MaFLA on student exchanges and proficiency-based classroom activities. She is passionate about anything connected to creative approaches to teaching French and Francophone culture and certainly deserves to be MaFLA’s Educator in the Spotlight.

MAFLA: Tell us a little about yourself.

Regina: The travel bug struck me at the age of three when my family moved to England for a few years. My three older sisters, my older brother, my parents and I boarded the S.S. Rotterdam for a cruise across the Atlantic in 1967. There, I took a kindergarten ballet class in French! Once we returned to the States, French would not be on my agenda until high school. Madame Buckley, Monsieur Guisti, Madame Darson, Madame Post, and Dr. Bratman paved my high school journey to French proficiency; each teacher offered their own expertise and shared their love of the French language and culture along the way. Focusing my aspirations on the experiences with those wonderful teachers, I went on to spend two weeks at a summer French Immersion camp at SUNY New Paltz and then studied French at Syracuse University with Madame Gorvich, Professeur Babuts, and Professeur Archambault. During my junior year, I travelled with Syracuse University Abroad, led by Professor and Madame Archambault, and spent a year living with my wonderful French family, the Saladin family, and studying at the University of Strasbourg.

Since then, I earned a Bachelor of Arts in French/Education from Syracuse University, a Master of Science in Teaching from SUNY Cortland, and a CAGS in Educational Leadership from Salem State University. I have spent many summers studying French and pedagogy at the Université de Neuchâtel Switzerland and the Université Laval in Québec, Canada, and at our annual AATF conventions. My career spans over thirty years, in immersion and non-immersion schools, in grades six through twelve. It was my experience with The Fulbright Teacher Exchange in France in 2000-2001 that was a turning point in my career. That year, I was teaching English at the Collège Jean-Philippe Rameau in Versailles, France, while my five year old daughter attended kindergarten at the Maternelle Fessart in Boulogne-Billancourt, France. This was a full teacher exchange; so, my partner Martine Lainé taught my French courses at Rockport High School, while her daughter attended seventh grade at Rockport Middle School.

From 2003-2007, I had the honor of serving on the MaFLA Board, and I was the recipient of the 2005 AATF/Québec Ministry of International Relations award. The year 2016 brought many recognitions: Triton High School Teacher of the Year, 2016 AATF Eastern Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, and the 2016 MaFLA French Teacher of the Year. In the Fall of 2019, I was elected AATF Eastern Massachusetts Secretary. Serving as Secretary of the AATF Eastern Massachusetts affords me the privilege of working alongside Past President Brian Thompson, President Beckie Rankin, past Vice President Carole Lapointe, Vice President Kathy Turner, our beloved Treasurer Joyce Beckwith, Press and Social Media Expert Kristen Purdy Russett, and Nancy Aykanian. Noah Ouellette, educational and cultural services attaché with the French Consulate in Boston, and Ma-
MaFLA’s Educator In The Spotlight
An Interview With Regina Symonds, Teacher of French, Triton High School

in the role as Triton High School World Language Program Coordinator. Triton has a very young team of talented World Language Teachers, and I am so proud to have the opportunity to work with them every day. 2021 marks the second year that Triton High School will be testing for the Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy. Triton educators look forward to continuing to be a part of shaping the future of interculturally competent young citizens, and to helping students prepare to work and live in a more just world.

MaFLA: You’ve taught a wide range of students and levels. What teaching skills do you find work with all the grades that you teach?

Regina: First and foremost, relationship building, trust building, and ensuring the social-emotional well being of all learners are at the forefront of any successful World Language learning. Teaching happy learners who are comfortable with their teachers and peers is essential to the success of a language classroom. Once classroom routines, expectations, and norms have been established, building upon this foundation becomes much easier.

Focusing on both the cognitive and the metacognitive processes of language acqui-
sition has become increasingly important in today’s world language classroom, be it remote, hybrid, or in person. Teaching students how to journey along their path to proficiency, teaching about the ACTFL proficiency benchmarks and can-do statements are essential to the learning process. Helping students to create proficiency goals fosters the independent learning skills we wish to see in the young global citizens we wish to mold.

Professional organizations, such as MaFLA, AATF, AATSP, AATTI, the American Classical League, CLASS, NECTFL, and ACTFL provide World Language Teachers with research-based practices essential to the success of our World Language learners. The ACTFL Core Practices lay the foundation for language acquisition:

- Facilitate Target Language Comprehensibility.
- Design Oral Interpersonal Communication tasks.
- Plan with the backward design model.
- Provide appropriate oral feedback.

Following this, providing students with daily routines, such as a question of the day or song of the day which leads into interpretive discussion, interpersonal communication, and finally presentational communication give students the scaffolding that is needed for them to feel secure in using the target language and in comparing their own cultures to the cultures of the target language that they are studying.

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

Regina: The answer to this question is easy: the kids, of course! I love dancing and singing in the target language with students, celebrating francophone holidays, guiding conversations about pertinent social justice issues, and helping students discover a world that expands far beyond our classroom walls. I love guiding students along their path to proficiency, from novice mid through intermediate high, and sometimes, with any luck to advanced low proficiency. I love travelling with students and watching them grow and develop into young adults ready to pursue their studies at the college level. I love writing college recommendations for students, and following up with alumni to see where their study of World Languages has taken them.

Having the privilege of working with our nation’s youth is truly a gift, and one that I value immensely. Being aware that every day, one small lesson, or one small act of kindness can change a student’s outlook on life is a driving force behind ensuring that language input is both meaningful and comprehensible to all in my French classroom. I have always found joy in learning: there is nothing more rewarding than seeing that spark in a student’s eye when they understand something that is important or challenging to them. Happiness is contagious; spreading a certain je ne sais quoi or joie de vivre in the lives of students helps support the spirit of learning that we hope will permeate in our classrooms and throughout our schools.

I am very excited about the newly revised Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Framework, and I look forward to learning more about the new standards in the coming year.

MaFLA: Where do you see yourself in making the transition to teaching for proficiency?

Regina: At Triton High School, we are currently in the process of transitioning our more traditional world language curriculum to aim for proficiency. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to attend the MaFLA Proficiency Academy last summer.

After reviewing Timothy Eagan and Nicole Sherf’s MaFLA 2019 workshop, “The Departmental Mindset shift: teach-

Spring
MaFLA’s Educator In The Spotlight
An Interview With Regina Symonds, Teacher of French, Triton High School

In March of 2021, Triton looks forward to celebrating Francophone holidays through studying and replicating the products, practices and perspectives of the culture being studied is always a hit! In Triton, we love our annual bûche de Noël contest, reading inspirational notes while revelling in the tradition of papillotes, finding the fève in a galette des rois and becoming king for a day, warming up with raclette or fondue in the winter, and involving families in the tradition of flipping crêpes for the Chandelier. Of course, the list goes on with Valentine’s Day, mardi gras, poisson d’avril, Pâques, and other holidays throughout the year. These are the authentic learning experiences that make language learning fun and accessible for all.

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

Regina: Students love games! Fortunately, there are so many wonderful educational learning platforms that provide our students with opportunities to play with language, such as Kahoot, Gimkit, Blooket, and Quizlet Live. These games are easy to use, and they provide ten- to fifteen-min-
ute snippets of fun vocabulary, language chunks, structural, and intercultural review to reinforce learning.

Students are wild about commercials and music! Every holiday season, Dustin Williamson comes out with a Noël Commercial madness that is dense in material for student discussion. Then of course in March, my students and I have come to look forward to the Carbonneau/Fournier Manie Musicale du Mois de Mars that is making a splash across the nation, and in ten different countries this year!

Celebrating Francophone holidays by studying and replicating the products, practices and perspectives of the culture being studied is always a hit! In Triton, we love our annual bûche de Noël contest, reading inspirational notes while revelling in the tradition of papillotes, finding the fève in a galette des rois and becoming king for a day, warming up with raclette or fondue in the winter, and involving families in the tradition of flipping crêpes for the Chandelier. Of course, the list goes on with Valentine’s Day, mardi gras, poisson d’avril, and music! Every holiday season, Dustin Williamson comes out with a Noël Com-

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

Regina: Anchor your move toward proficiency in the world language community, in the World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, and in the newly revised Massachusetts World Language Curriculum Framework. Surround yourself with the experts in our field, and read, read, read. Rely heavily on the world language professional organizations that specialize in supporting teachers by providing workshops, webinars, and fall webinars that have been offered to help us make this shift. Like anything, making the transition takes thoughtful planning and reflection, and it certainly does not happen overnight.

MaFLA: What do you do to motivate students?

National French Week and National Foreign Language Week are week long events that students look forward to every year. During these weeks, we have school wide events such as cultural trivia, teacher bingo, trivial kahoot, a French waiter’s race on the HS track, escargot hopscotch games, pagne races, pétanque, and more. In March of 2021, Triton looks forward to administering the AATF Grand Concours, the AATSP National Spanish exams, and to participating in the MaFLA digital art, essay, poster, and video contests. “We Got This!” MaFLA! Every Spring, after receiving the results from various contests, Triton High School World Languages likes to involve families and communities by inviting them to celebrate student success at an awards evening. The 2021 event will most likely be virtual. In the past, the event has been held in our school’s library with refreshments, a program, and time to socialize after the presentation of awards.

Triton High School offers Charters of the AATF Société Honoraire de Français and the AATSP Sociedad Honorable Hispánica. Each year, we have a beautiful induction ceremony, to which we invite students, parents, and administrators. These societies offer students leadership, scholarship and publication opportunities, service opportunities, the ability to tutor younger students in the target language that they study, and the opportunity to graduate wearing the colors of the French and Spanish Flag.

Travel opportunities are essential to the success of our world language programs, providing students with authentic opportunities to use the language skills they work so hard to acquire. Once travel becomes safe again, post-COVID-19 pandemic, Triton will return to a robust travel abroad to Costa-Rica and France routine. Many students who have participated in our travel programs in the past have pursued the study of world languages in their university studies and beyond. We like to follow up with our students by inviting them to speak at world language events, to visit classes during their college breaks, or to share a video telling about their experiences.

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

What can MaFLA members do to encourage more students to pursue a career in world language education? We are currently experiencing a world language teacher shortage which could worsen without action.
MaFLA’s Educator In The Spotlight

An Interview With Regina Symonds, Teacher of French, Triton High School

How can Massachusetts teachers work with students and mold the ACTFL Educators Rising platform to recruit world language teachers in Massachusetts?

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

From the time I joined MaFLA in 1991 to this day, 30 years later, MaFLA educators such as Dan Battisti, Joyce Beckwith, Elizabeth Blood, Terry Caccavale, Phyllis Dragonas, Tim Eagan, Charlotte Gifford, Melissa Hayes-Albert, Nancy Kassabian, Carole Lapointe, Claire Melville, Richard Ladd, Rita Oleksak, Janel Lafond Paquin, Kristen Purdy-Russett, Beckie Bray Rankin, Nicole Sherf, Brian Thompson, Madelyn Gonnerman Torchin, Kathleen Turner, Ronie Webster, and more have inspired me, supported me, and guided me on my own path to proficiency as a world language educator. For these people, and for this organization, I am eternally grateful. One of the best messages that MaFLA relays and exemplifies is that together, we rise. By sharing our best practices and focusing on true world language acquisition, all world language educators in Massachusetts are united by our common goals. Thank you, MaFLA!

MaFLA: Last March, teachers found themselves all of a sudden teaching virtually. What techniques or strategies worked well for you in the virtual classroom?

Once again, MaFLA, ACTFL, and AATF came to my rescue with the many workshops and webinars that they offered to train teachers to teach in these new virtual and hybrid modes. Andy McDonie’s March monthly newsblast invited all world language educators to attend a training session which also helped tremendously.

MaFLA: Do you have an idea or strategy that you feel would be helpful to share with other teachers? What resources have you used to aid in teaching remotely? What does proficiency based teaching and learning look like in a virtual classroom for you?

Some of my favorite resources:

- Leslie Grahn [https://www.grahnforlang.com/]
- Lisa Shepherd’s IPAs offered through her blog Madame’s Musings [http://madameshepard.com/]
- Sarah Mogthader’s blog Proficiency Based Instruction in the World Language Classroom.
- Joshua Cabral’s World Language Classroom: [https://wlclassroom.com/]

Call For Directors

MaFLA seeks to represent our state’s language educators in several ways, including via a broad range of backgrounds and contexts. To increase diversity and inclusion, our members nominate themselves or a colleague in the profession to be considered by the nominating committee to be added as a director on our board. In particular this year, we are looking to add to our board: directors of color, directors representing elementary education, and directors representing less commonly taught languages (such as Japanese). The nominees are reviewed by the Nominating Committee, who brings a slate to our board and membership for approval each fall.

Persons elected to the Board of Directors of MaFLA serve a 4-year volunteer term (without compensation), beginning in January. Participation at board meetings (6 per year) and the conference in October is a core part of a director’s service, as well as actively engaging in committee work and volunteering at our other professional development opportunities. Serving on the board brings a plethora of opportunities for professional and personal growth from leadership skills to networking with inspirational and dedicated colleagues.

If you have any questions please contact Nominating Chair, Beckie Bray Rankin (bray.rebekah@gmail.com)
Whether you are aware of it or not, you are teaching social-emotional learning (SEL). Your students are watching and learning from everything you do and say. They are learning how to deal with stress and conflict, how to relate to others, how to organize their tasks and time, and so much more. According to the Collaborative for Academic and Social-Emotional Learning (CASEL), there are five SEL competencies: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills and social awareness. As an educator, you have a choice whether or not to teach these competencies and skills intentionally.

Teaching SEL in the 21st-century classroom means examining both content and practice in order to find ways to integrate SEL into the daily experience. Are we using relevant and engaging content for Morning Meeting or Advisory Period? As students read the assigned texts in ELA and Social Studies, are life lessons being highlighted and connected to SEL? Are cooperative learning opportunities that give place for student voice, such as class discussions and project-based learning, being utilized? Are we using a punitive or restorative approach to discipline? The bottom line is to build relationships and connect with kids.

Why SEL is an essential part of a strong classroom culture

In order for students to develop and succeed academically and social-emotionally, they need to know that they are seen, known, and valued. At the core of SEL is relationships – relationships between teachers and their colleagues, teachers and their students, and students and their peers. It means putting people first – above tasks and data. We need to slow down long enough to connect with what is going on in our own minds and hearts and to connect with those around us.

Culture is what we do; climate is how it feels. We can incorporate SEL with intention into the culture through direct SEL instruction as well as teachable moments throughout the day. We can build positive relationships. When we do that, the school feels safe – everyone knows they belong. In order for students to develop and succeed academically and social-emotionally, they need to know that they are seen, known, and valued. At the core of SEL is relationships – relationships between teachers and their colleagues, teachers and their students, and students and their peers. It means putting people first – above tasks and data. We need to slow down long enough to connect with what is going on in our own minds and hearts and to connect with those around us.

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Getting Classroom Culture Right With Practical SEL

By Tamara Fyke

August 26, 2018

Kids are smart. They can tell whether an adult is being authentic or fake. Therefore, it is essential that before we teach SEL, we live SEL. Let’s face it: teaching is difficult, and it’s easy to become discouraged by the system and lose the passion and joy of being with kids. It behooves us as leaders of young lives to take inventory of what is going on in our own minds and hearts so that we can deal with the issues that we face. I tell educators all the time, “Get ready! As you dig into SEL, you will have things bubble up that you need to deal with. Embrace the process!” Some suggestions for working through your own stuff are to journal each day, paint your emotions, see a counselor, join a book club, set a regular phone appointment with your best friend, or take meditative walks. These tips will help you get in touch with you so that you can keep your heart alive and open to your students.

Being intentional about SEL does not mean we have to announce to our students, “It’s SEL time!” Instead, we can use relevant
and engaging materials to foster meaningful conversations and offer interdisciplinary activities. The most important thing to keep in mind is establishing a common language across the school community so that everyone in the building is clear on definitions and expectations. In addition, we must clearly communicate these norms on a regular basis in order to minimize misunderstandings.

**Overcoming two SEL obstacles**

In my conversations with teachers over the years, I’ve learned that the biggest challenge for SEL implementation occurs when there is a lack of administrative support. Although many teachers commit to SEL implementation in their own classrooms, their efforts can be undermined if the whole school community does not buy in. SEL must be the common language of everyone in the building, including administration, office staff, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, janitorial staff, parents and classroom teachers. This means the principal must clearly communicate a mission and vision that incorporates SEL to the entire school community.

Secondly, classroom teachers need to know that they have time for SEL in their schedule. According to Dr. Maurice Elias, the recommended dosage for direct SEL instruction is a minimum of 30-45 minutes per week, so a good goal is to reach 10 minutes per day. Many schools find that setting aside 10-20 minutes for Morning Meeting or Advisory Period is both manageable and beneficial. The time spent on SEL is regained later because less time is spent dealing with behavior.

5 **strategies for strengthening the classroom’s SEL culture**

1. **Establish a common language** – Define and communicate your SEL vocabulary. It is not enough to say, “Be responsible!” or “Be kind!” What does responsibility mean? Responsibility is owning what you do and say. What does kindness mean? Kindness is treating others the way you want to be treated.

2. **Institute classroom norms** – Be sure to use positive and motivating language along with your SEL vocabulary, such as “I can be respectful – value myself and others. I will listen when someone is talking because I may learn something.”

3. **Schedule conversations** – Whether part of Morning Meeting, Advisory Period, ELA, or social studies, take time to hear what students are thinking and feeling. Let them know that their thoughts and experiences matter.

4. **Incorporate interdisciplinary activities** – Give students an opportunity to work in groups and create – a book, a comic, a website, a game, a poster, a service project, a song…you name it! They are more inclined to engage and work diligently when given a clear deliverable.

5. **Focus on relationships** – You have heard the old saying, “People won’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” Let your students know that you care about them as human beings, not just data points. Get to know their likes and dislikes. Be intentional about downtime in the classroom, such as game time once a month or lunch with the teacher once a week.

SEL is helping kids identify what is going on in their heads and in their hearts so they can use their hands to build up and not tear down. As one of my heroes, Mister Rogers, said, “Knowing that we can be loved exactly as we are gives us all the best opportunity for growing into the healthiest of people.”

Tamara Fyke is the creator, author, and brand manager for Love In A Big World, and is editor of Building People: Social & Emotional Learning for Kids, Schools & Communities, a book that brings 12 wide-ranging perspectives on SEL to educators, parents, and leaders. Follow her on Twitter: @entrprenurgirl

What I Have Learned From My Students During The Pandemic
How SEL Has Kept Me Connected to Kids When It Mattered Most

J.J. Kelleher

This “new normal” of Hybrid teaching and learning has made me reflect on how I communicate with my students and with their families. I have thought a lot about the words “SHOULD” and “CAN” since I entered this new world of ZOOM and ROOM teaching. Thinking back on those first few weeks of school, I was terrified of making mistakes. How am I going to do this? How am I going to teach the kids in front of me and somehow simultaneously manage a zoom? How am I going to make sure these kids are getting the 90/10 TL experience? Just like all of you, I worried (and still worry) about everything I SHOULD be doing and everything my students SHOULD be doing.

They should come to class and know where to find the zoom link. They SHOULD know where I posted the extra help times and the homework. They SHOULD know they have a quiz on their in-person day. I SHOULD be speaking Spanish 90% of the time. My students SHOULD be able to somehow turn and talk with their masks on in the TL.

The more I worried about everything I SHOULD be doing and they SHOULD be doing, the more anxious I became and less effective. I quickly learned if I was going to walk into the classroom and into the zoom and truly be present for these kids, I needed to get rid of the word SHOULD.

I started having a conversation with my students about what we can do for them and what they can do for themselves. As crazy as this might sound, this small shift in how I viewed myself as their teacher and they as my students was like a brick had been lifted off of my back.

When I think of everything we are asking these kids to do in our new hybrid world, I think of myself at 12 or 13 years old. How can we expect them to manage all of this when many of us as teachers are still forgetting to unmute? We are still struggling with where to post things? Our own internet is crashing here and there.

So what can we do? We can be honest with our students about what we can do and what they can do. I can spend hours and hours trying to create the perfect lesson with all of the modes of proficiency but none of that matters if I am not there with compassion for my students.

I have learned the little things matter more. I write quick notes to them on Google Classroom to let them know I see their work and value the time they put into it. I write letters to their families once a term, telling them what I have learned about their kids when we take our walks during class (masks breaks because our blocks are 80 minutes long). I find the time to write to a few kids each week just to tell them something I noticed about them in class, on zoom, or in extra help.

When they suggest playing a fun game outside that has nothing to do with Spanish, we play it. Why? Because these kids are learning and we are teaching in a whole new world. These kids are teaching me about what we SHOULD be doing. And yes, I am worried that my students are not where I want them to be. But I also can celebrate that I know these kids in a way I have never known any other students in 26 years of teaching. I know they want to learn, they appreciate the little things like a quick game of Gimkit or a walk outside, and they are resilient.

The more we can share with our students that we know how hard this is and that we are there for them, the more we will get out of them.

This Thanksgiving, I thought about all of the years I asked my students what they are grateful for. I thought about how that is the last thing I am going to ask kids to share. Many are not grateful right now. They feel they have lost so much. So I took the time to write to these kids and their families to share with them how grateful I am for what they are doing every day. I did not think it was a big deal. It was just a note to say thank you. That note opened the door to many conversations with kids and parents who were/are struggling. I may not have kids asking as many questions as I would like in the TL now but I do have a relationship with these kids where now I feel we can push one another to a higher level because there is trust, honesty, and compassion.

I hope no matter if you are teaching in the classroom in person everyday or on ZOOM or a little bit of both, that you can take away the word SHOULD. Instead, think about what you can do. What can you do to make this new job manageable? What can you do so you have the energy to support your students? Maybe what you can do this week is different than a month from now? I know your students will appreciate knowing you understand. You know this is hard but you are doing the best you can for them. They need to know we are all human and we are in it with them. I truly believe we will all be ok and, in the end, perhaps we will have more compassion for one another.

J.J. Kelleher
Wellesley Middle School
Spanish Teacher Grades 7+8

Service Awards
Are you completing 25 years of service or are you retiring? We would like to honor you at our MaFLA Annual Awards and Business meeting. Submit your information here.

For more information contact Joyce Beckwith.
Cultural differences can lead to students being punished, The Education Trust’s researchers say.

Students of color will need social-emotional learning supports that affirm Black and brown identities as schools reopen during COVID pandemic and the anti-racism movement, says a new report from The Education Trust. Social-emotional learning programs that focus solely on changing student behavior by teaching them to regulate their emotions are insufficient, says the report, “Social, Emotional and Academic Development Through an Equity Lens.”

When adult biases and discriminatory policies are not addressed, cultural differences can lead to students being punished, Education Trust researchers say. For example, a white student might be praised for self-advocacy when speaking out about an unfair situation or policy while a Black student taking the same action is reprimanded for being “defiant” or “talking back,” the report says.

“School and district leaders must examine their own learning environments to see if they are equitable, listen to and learn from the experiences of families and students of color, and make communities and students of color full partners in decision-making,” said Nancy Duchesneau, lead author and P-12 research associate at Ed Trust.

The report encourages teachers and administrators to make the following changes to support Black and brown students equitably:

1. **Shifting the focus from “fixing kids.”** Educators should set high expectations for students of color while taking a broader SEL approach that recognizes the assets students bring to the classroom and their potential.

2. **Addressing bias in adult perceptions.** Educators must identify their own explicit and implicit biases and actively work to dismantle systemic racism based on race, language, gender, immigration status, and other factors.

3. **Move on from a one-size-fits-all mindset.** Educators must recognize “cultural and contextual influences” to value differences in students and accept that what works for one child may not work for all.

The report also offers six policy recommendations for creating equity in social-emotional and academic development:

- Provide meaningful professional development
- Diversify the leadership and teaching workforce
- Ensure equitable access to and supports for success in rigorous and culturally sustaining coursework
- Ensure inclusive discipline and dress code policies
- Ensure access to integrated wraparound services and supports
- Engage students, parents, families and communities as full partners

“When instruction starts again for students—in whatever form that may take—school and district leaders must meaningfully center students’ identities and well-being,” said John B. King Jr., Ed Trust president and CEO and former U.S. secretary of education, “by prioritizing access to: outstanding, diverse and caring educators and leaders; safe, supportive school climates; school counselors and mental health services; and rigorous, culturally relevant curricula.”

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Important Work Ahead: The Developing Teenage Brain

Teresa Benedetti

Distracted, unorganized, prone to impulsivity, and highly susceptible to emotional outbursts and moodiness are some descriptions adults use to depict the teenagers in their lives. If this is how they are described during conventional teaching contexts, the current situation certainly has parents and teachers even more concerned about their teens’ behavior and learning. Forever, it seems, we’ve asked teenagers do what they do, behave the way they behave and react in certain ways.

A recent reading of the book The Teenage Brain: A Neuroscientist’s Survival Guide to Raising Adolescents and Young Adults, by Frances Jensen, MD with Amy Ellis Nutt, shed great light on the many questions adults have articulated about their teenagers’ behaviors and their reactions to the world around them. The answers Dr. Jensen provides in this book focus on the development of the brain and where teenagers are in the process toward adulthood, brain-wise, that is. Anyone who has wondered about, been intrigued or confused by teen behavior would do well to read this book. Since reading it, I can now call upon the explanations Dr. Jensen provides to inform my curiosities related to the unique behaviors and habits of the adolescents in my life, which in turn is making my pandemic teaching a bit less challenging.

What follows is by no means a book review but rather a set of takeaways about brain development that I have gleaned from this first reading of Dr. Jensen’s book. The developmental approach to her explanations supported by brain and MRI research have helped me understand the topic more completely, dispensing some of the commonly held beliefs that I had.

One of the first points made in the book is that much more research exists on the infant/child brain and degenerative diseases of the brain studied in the elderly. The brain research on adolescent development is much more recent. What has been found in the research is that the adolescent brain functions differently and reacts differently to the world and biology provides the explanations.

The Developing Adolescent Brain:

- The adolescent brain has been thought to be an adult brain with less accumulated experience. Dr. Jensen explains that the adolescent brain is only 80% on its way to developing into adulthood.
- Adults are much more able to plan, organize, self-monitor, and regulate their responses to achieve the goals they’ve set. The frontal lobe is the part of the brain responsible for all of these higher-level executive functions.
- The frontal lobe, the most complex part of the brain, is the last part of the brain to develop fully. We have to wait for this frontal lobe to mature until adolescents are in their 20s, even well into their 20s for many.
- Because the brain develops its connectivity from the back to front, this 20% of brain development will occur after a lot of hard work by the adolescent brain, where the amount of gray matter in the brain is greater than the amount of white matter.
- Teens have a great supply of neurons, the brain’s building blocks, the cells responsible for thoughts, perceptions and bodily functions (gray matter). Neurons need to connect to other neurons and they do so through the white matter of the brain.
- While adolescents have an abundance of gray matter, they have less white matter at this stage of development. White matter is what is responsible for the flow of information so that each part of the brain communicates effectively with other parts of the brain. The work that the adolescent and young adult brain is doing during these critical years of development is building the connectivity from one part of the brain to the others. Development of these connective possibilities keeps the brain busy and hard at work during adolescence through the twenties.
- Although teens may seem like they are multitasking, Dr. Jensen tells us that this is a dangerous myth. Research studies show that adolescent and young adult students perform poorly while multitasking. The parietal lobes, located just behind the frontal lobe, are central to the ability to switch between different tasks. Like the frontal lobe, these also mature late in adolescence.
- Until these connections are made from one part of the brain to the other, Dr. Jensen advises adults to act as the frontal lobe for the teenagers in their lives.

Brain Growth and Gender

Studies on brain and neural anatomy have provided insight to the differences between genders and how this may affect our work with students.

- By age 13, girls are further along the developmental sequence in the areas of language and speech processing. This is due to their more fully developed parietal temporal area and frontal lobe by this age. Boys will develop these areas more fully later.
- Organizational skills do not solely result from intelligence but from brain connectivity. Adolescence is the time in which there are greater differences and inequalities in brain connectivity and integration between girls and boys.
- MRI research has shown that adult females have greater connectivity between the hemispheres of the brain while males have greater connectivity within hemispheres.
- The tissue that connects the two hemispheres (corpus callosum) has been linked to verbal ability on IQ tests in females but not in males.
- The size of the corpus callosum, this tissue linking both hemispheres, is larger in girls than in boys, resulting in greater communication between the hemispheres of the brain. One possible result is that adolescent girls may have more ability to switch between tasks than adolescent boys.

Stress

Stressed out teens are a commonality in schools, especially now. School, home, work, technology, media, and peers require so much from adolescents. Thus, they are particularly vulnerable to stress. Adults and teens have different responses to stress and...
this is also biological in nature. Dr. Jensen reminds us that a typical high school curriculum expects a great deal of our adolescents.

- The hormone THP (tetrahydrocannabinol), released in response to stress, helps adults regulate their stress. However, this same hormone has an opposite effect in teens, raising their anxiety level rather than lessening the effects of stress.
- Whereas adults can usually experience a calming of their anxiety as the THP hormone is released, anxiety will bring about more anxiety in teens. The next time you are in the presence of a stressed-out teen, which may in fact stress you out, take a deep breath knowing that your own THP will kick in within the half hour, but realize that what you may perceive as overly dramatic reactions in teens are most likely due to biological reasons they cannot control.
- The effect of the THP hormone coupled with the fact that there is much less activity in the frontal lobe provide the developmental reasons for understanding teen-age stress.
- When faced with a stressful situation, learning and memory are affected negatively. The hippocampus, critical for memory and learning, can basically become frozen from the release of adrenaline and cortisol in response to stress. Learning can stop and the effects can last for a long time if the stressful event is serious in nature.
- Adults have a quicker recovery time from stressful events. It takes adolescents significantly longer to bounce back and recover from the stressful events in their lives. This is a very serious matter for those adolescents who experience stress due to trauma in their lives.

Sleep

There is more going on during the hours we sleep than just the rest that we want and need. The brain is very active during sleeping hours and this time is essential for the learning process. It’s unfortunate that most school day schedules do not respect the teen’s biological need for sleep by organizing the school day around this important cycle. Why is sleep such a busy time for the brain?

- Since the brain only has a set amount of space, it uses sleep time to prune away the synapses we no longer require, prioritizing and consolidating them. This strengthens memory and primes us for learning, especially later in the sleep cycle during REM sleep.
- Melatonin, the hormone that is critical for encouraging sleep, releases two hours later in the teenage brain than in adults. Additionally, it stays in the teenage system longer making it harder for teens to rise for school in the morning.
- Sleep patterns are regulated by maturity: The well-known fact that teens have a different sleep pattern than adults or young children is due to a complex network of hormones and the signals from the brain. Teens require more sleep than the adults and younger siblings in their lives.

What is happening in the brain during sleep is directly related to learning and memory, physiological health and emotional health:

- Cognitively, the right amount of sleep for a teen will make them more able to learn, more creative, increase memory and improve their problem-solving skills. Research has shown that sleep deprivation in teens leads to problems in each of these areas.
- Emotional effects of the lack of sleep in teens leads to aggressive, impatient, impulsive behavior as well as low self-esteem and mood swings.
- Physical results of the lack of sleep in teens can result in sports related injuries, higher blood pressure, greater susceptibility to illness, poor eating habits and skin conditions.

Schools districts that have adjusted their schedules in response to research on teen sleep needs and patterns have seen greater gains in attendance, academic performance, standardized testing, athletic performances and fewer health-related issues and sports related injuries.

As the title states, Dr. Jensen’s book is a survival guide for those responsible for raising adolescents and young adults. She intertwines the scientific research along with anecdotes from years of experience as a practitioner making its content accessible to the non-scientist reader. From what I have learned, a bit of which is included in the takeaways listed above, there is one line that will guide me as a teacher: We have to act as the frontal lobe for the teenagers in our lives. This was a powerful statement for me, especially now while teaching in such challenging conditions. We are asking a great deal of our students digitally and organizationally. Dr. Jensen encourages us to increase our patience as we work with an age group that hasn’t yet fully developed their organizational capacities. Our guidance and patience are needed more than ever. Our obligation to reduce chaos, confusion and stress has become increasingly more important. I know I will consult Dr. Jensen’s book periodically to remind myself of these lessons she has explained so very well. I recommend this book to parents and anyone who teaches teens and young adults.
Personal Check-in: an in-class activity

In my attempts to provide my students with the best learning experience during COV-ID-19 crisis, I read an article titled Caring for Teacher Candidates During the Covid-19 Crisis by Bracho (2020). Integrating an activity for cultivating emotional awareness was the first major change that Bracho (2020) introduced to her classes after it was moved to be taught remotely in March of 2020. She talks about adding this activity in an article that she dedicated to addressing self-care in these unprecedented conditions (Bracho, 2020). In this article, she clarifies that the pandemic and the way it affected our lives in many different aspects added to her role as an educator and made it essential for her to attend to her students’ emotional being. “The COVID crisis” she states, “made me realize that, as with any other educational skill or practice, my Teacher Candidate students needed to experience mindfulness so that they could see its value in their own classroom” (Bracho, 2020, p.17).

To this end she reports doing “personal check-ins” at the beginning of her synchronous sessions using graphics and emotional charts to help her students identify their emotions with more nuanced language. And she examined their emotional trajectories as the crises evolved and deepened” (Bracho, 2020, p.17). “Healing during CODID-19” was one of the graphics she used with her class. This graphic was developed by the Genesis Healing Institute with the hopes that it help those who might want to use it to connect with one another on an emotional empathetic level specifically during COVID crisis (Genesis Healing Institute). Introducing this activity, she hoped, would enable her students to connect with their “inner selves and with each other in a non-judgmental way” (Bracho, 2020, p.17).

I realized that changes needed to be made and adaptations would be necessary. I knew that my students would benefit from the emotional awareness aspect, but what about the language learning objectives? I started to backward-design the activity beginning with the question “What are the goals for this activity, from the language performance perspective?” I decided that an optimal approach would be to make this an Interpersonal Communication activity that could be introduced at the beginning of class (as was the case in Bracho’s class). To help start the conversation and as a substitute for the Healing graphic that she used, I created a Jam board slide which had twelve smiley faces, each face expressing different emotion. Students were already familiar with expressing and comprehending all of these emotions. On the left side of the Jam board slide there were several draggable green checkmarks. The pre-task was to drag a green checkmark to the face that best resembled how they were feeling. The pre-task, as you can imagine, did not require a long time, but it gave everyone an opportunity to prepare cognitively and emotionally for what they were about to share in the target language. As an Interpersonal Communication activity, students were encouraged to treat this as an ongoing conversation rather than a presentation where they would be able to ask questions, make comments, offer their input, agree, disagree etc. Other considerations in recreating Bracho’s activity, were not to shy away from selecting images that represented uncomfortable emotions (sad, tired, sick, and angry). Some emotions (anger and sickness) were represented in different degrees. These are, after all, challenging times. And if the purpose was truly emotional awareness then we needed to face them head on.

Emotional Reflections: The Hesitation Stage

As I was reading Bracho’s article, I could not help but recognize the benefits that the Personal Check-in activity brought to class especially as classes moved remotely in these dire circumstances that we are all going through. That being said, Bracho’s students are teachers-to-be. They are adult grad students, and the class is not a foreign language class. This made me stop and wonder: Can I do this in my Intermediate Arabic class of young adults in the target language? How can I recreate this activity?
in my class. As educators we often find ourselves providing our students with emotional support at times when they needed it. Social and emotional learning is, whether we care to admit it or not, a fundamental aspect of teaching and learning and growing both as an educator and as a learner. However, teaching during a global pandemic was as big a challenge as we have ever faced. My intentions were, in addition to creating a relevant, authentic, and spontaneous language learning context, for everyone to experience (myself included) the advantages of emotional awareness. Nonetheless, I was conscious of the fact that this was a particular activity which required students to be at least minimally emotionally vulnerable in a context where they already were (i.e., using a non-native language). This was a big ask!

Emotional Reflections: Lead by Example

As with any new tech tool, activity, or strategy that educators consider introducing, risks versus benefits must be carefully deliberated. Ignoring the big COVID elephant in the room was obviously not an emotionally healthy option, particularly because it had forced change to every aspect of our lives, one of which was the way we were conducting the academic process. The decision was thus made to pilot the activity in class despite a risk of increasing students’ vulnerability. That risk, though, should not go unnoticed. Leading by example seemed like the best way to face that risk. It was a head-on confrontation during which I was first to talk about how tired I was (I picked the tired face). My fatigue, I carried on, was not due to lack of sleep but due to how everything I do, my life and the life of those around me (my family, my students and work colleagues) had changed quickly, unexpectedly, drastically, and startlingly.

It was the students turn next. They took a few seconds to move the green arrow to the face that expressed their emotions and then one by one they started sharing how they were feeling. To my complete and utter surprise, they were quite relieved to share with the group that they were “busy”, “tired”, “not happy”, “sad”, “had to share room with siblings”, “tired of the house”, “tired of Zoom”, “missed their friends”, “anxious”, “worried about grandma” to mention a few. In part it felt like students were eager to express a range of emotions that were bottling up inside them. More importantly, they were eager to listen and support one another.

Linguistic Reflections: Spontaneous Interaction.

The fact that students were so eager to share, listen and support one another, as I just mentioned above, made this a perfect activity for spontaneous interaction. Some students were unmuting their mics to briefly comment, or agree, or express a similar feeling/ experience. Some even used the Zoom pre-provided emoji expressions (the thumbs up and smile face) to participate in the conversation.

The goal of this activity from a language learning perspective was to provide them with an opportunity for Interpersonal Communication. Consequently, faced with their desire to engage, I tried to keep the flame of the conversation burning by asking follow up questions to the person who was sharing their perspective as well as the person who was commenting on it. It was a very delicate tightrope walk since I had to contribute just the right amount; too little was not going to push them to say more, while too much might intimidate them. As general advice, if you find yourself in such a situation, remember that less is more. It proved quite effective to let the students do most of the interaction leaving the minimum amount to me.

Linguistic Reflections: Circumlocution

ACTFL defines circumlocution as “the use of language that one does know in order to explain a specific word that one does not know” (ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, 2012). In the ACTFL Speaking Proficiency Guidelines we see Circumlocution mentioned in the Advanced Low Level as speakers use communicative strategies to overcome the need for specific vocabulary (ACTFL Speaking Proficiency Guidelines, 2012). You can probably imagine my excitement as I was witnessing my students’ first attempts at keeping the conversation going. They had such a strong desire to express their feelings but their relatively limited context-specific vocabulary in that context was a dilemma. Circumlocution was thus the perfect solution to this dilemma. In order to try and get the most of the experience, I did sometimes nudge the conversation along by providing some vocab or key words especially if it happened to be a vocabulary
In order for students to develop and succeed academically and social-emotionally, they need to know that they are seen, known, and valued.

Tamara Fyke

The more we can share with our students that we know how hard this is and that we are there for them, the more we will get out of them.

J.J. Keller

SEL is helping kids identify what is going on in their heads and in their hearts so they can use their hands to build up and not tear down.

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Educators must recognize “cultural and contextual influences” to value differences in students and accept that what works for one child may not work for all.

Matt Zalaznick
LAD21 was entirely virtual. Nevertheless, this year, due to the ongoing pandemic, the event takes place in Washington D.C., alliances and networks. While every year mentoring and an opportunity to grow through frightening moment; it turned out to be a genuinely significant professional development and an opportunity to grow through alliances and networks. While every year the event takes place in Washington D.C., this year, due to the ongoing pandemic, LAD21 was entirely virtual. Nevertheless, it was a highly successful and seamless event.

I would encourage JNCL-NCLIS to keep this event virtual in the future to avoid the cost of traveling and thus facilitate people’s attendance. Educators and administrators also didn’t need to request additional professional days from their schools. Therefore, attendees were empowered by their presence; they could express their voices and be present at every event.

This year’s LAD21 key talking points were on the World Language Advancement and Readiness Act (WLARA) and its importance to continue to fund WL Advancement and Readiness Grants. Also, we advocate for the Biliteracy Education and Seal Testing Act (BEST) Seal of Biliteracy for access to funding across districts and to benefit underserved and underfunded communities. The Native American Languages Resource Center (NALRC) Act protects Native American languages and makes native languages a national priority. Finally, to make these discussions possible, we encourage a continued collaboration to raise awareness about language education through America’s Languages Caucus Caucus Sign On Letter.

LAD21 also offered breakout sessions with exciting presentations on policy in practice. One of my choices from these sessions and one of the conference highlights was the presentation on “The Path to the Seal of Biliteracy begins in the Elementary School” by the National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL). The NNELL advocacy’ team represented by Karen Sassy Hughes (NNELL Advocacy Chair), Barbara Barnett (NNELL Northeastern Representative), and Kathleen Priceman (NNELL Past President) did a fantastic job portraying the message of early language learning and its continuity toward proficiency, thus, toward the attainment of the Seal of Biliteracy.

To join me in representing Massachusetts were: Rita Oleksak, Catherine Ritz, Beckie Bray Rankin, Karen Sassy Hughes, Barbara Barnett, Tim Eagan, Dan McGlathery, Edward Zarrow, and Rebecca Blouwolff. The team was collaborative and worked very well together. We felt that our voices were heard and that the policy ad...
visors were fully engaged and interested in our advocacies. Here's what some representatives from Massachusetts had to say about JNCL-NCLIS's LAD21:

Rebecca Blouwolff, Wellesley MS, middle school French teacher:

I found it challenging but rewarding to phrase our “asks” in layman’s terms that would appeal to Congressional staffers. Too seldom do we leave our bubble of World Language enthusiasts to tell the general public why our work matters. It was a lot of fun to spend the day in our “green room” with the MaFLA team. I've missed the camaraderie of in-person conferences this year, and this event did the best job so far of recreating that atmosphere. While my first year at LAD in 2020 was pretty nerve-wracking as I was tongue-tied trying to summarize legislation, I found it much easier to participate a second time.

Karen Saksy Hughes, FLES Spanish Teacher Lincoln Public Schools and Hanscom AFB, Advocacy Chair for the National Network of Early Language Learning (NNELL):

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third year, this Act had successfully passed and was funded by the Senate and House of Representatives, and now I am asking them to sustain the level of funding for the next fiscal year. Looking back at these three years, I could see the success of my lobbying actions. It is a very powerful reminder that our voices are heard and that we all can make an impact and a difference.

Tim Eagan, Department Head, Wellesley Public Schools, MaFLA Board of Directors, NADSFL Executive Board:

We went into the meeting with Rep. Pressley’s staffer already knowing their deep commitment to human rights, justice, and equity. That background information helped us to illustrate how access to long and robust language programs can be a predictor of future academic success. Being ready to point out that children of color, children from economically disadvan-

taged backgrounds, and English Language Learners make the greatest proportionate achievement gains from language study gave some gravitas to legislation that might not otherwise be on the congresswoman's priority list. For me, painting a picture of the potential for language teaching and learning to be a vehicle for social justice and equity is my WHY in participating in JNCL's Language Advocacy Day. Showing the connection between language policy and the work that is already central to a
taged backgrounds, and English Language Learners make the greatest proportionate achievement gains from language study gave some gravitas to legislation that might not otherwise be on the congresswoman's priority list. For me, painting a picture of the potential for language teaching and learning to be a vehicle for social justice and equity is my WHY in participating in JNCL's Language Advocacy Day. Showing the connection between language policy and the work that is already central to a
Three MaFLA Members Honored By The French Academic Palms

Catherine Ritz, former MaFA President and now MaFLA Coordinator of Professional Development, Kathleen Turner, former MASS Teacher of the Year, MaFLA President and now MaFLA Clerk, and Rebecca Blowouff, MaFLA, NECTL and ACTFL Teacher of the Year, have all received the distinction of Chevalier dans l’Ordre des Palmes Académiques (Knight in the order of the French Academic Palms) bestowed upon them by the French Ministry of Education in Paris, France for their efforts to promote the French language and francophone culture in the US. Ms. Ritz teaches at Boston University, Ms. Turner teaches at Sharon High School and Ms. Blouwouff teaches at Wellesley Middle School. Other former MaFLA Presidents who have received this distinction are Helen Cummings (Commander), Jean-Pierre Berwald (Chevalier), Joyce Beckwith (Commander) and Janel Lafond-Paquin (Officer). Congratulations to all! Well deserved!

Submitted by Joyce Beckwith

Edward Zarrow (formerly the MaFLA Advocacy Coordinator, now Member of the JNCL Board of Directors, and Advocacy Chair of the National Committee for Latin and Greek):

This was my sixth time attending the event, and despite not being able to make face-to-face connections with the congressional offices this year, I can state unequivocally that this year marks the greatest collective success of the Massachusetts team. Whereas in the past, we often visited four or maybe five offices in total, two separate teams from the Commonwealth were able to visit with legislative aides from nine different offices. We began each visit by sharing our vision that a world language study should never be viewed as an elective and that a language education starting at the elementary level is essential for the success of every student every day. As we worked to promote the World Language Advancement and Readiness Act (WLARA) through which schools with JROTC programs can now apply for funding to build or begin K-8 language programs, we argued that to address the achievement and opportunity gaps in education, we need more languages taught in schools. Indeed, if bilingualism and multilingualism were the norms (and not the exception), American democracy itself would be stronger. We also sought to find co-sponsors for the Biliteracy Education and Seal Testing Act (BEST), allowing districts to receive federal funds to ensure that all students who would qualify for the Seal of Biliteracy can afford the cost of testing. We also advocated for creating a Native American Languages Resource Center (NALRC), which would serve as a means to protect, revitalize, and teach indigenous languages and make them part of a traditional world language curriculum. Our hopes are high to maintain positive and productive relationships with the congressional offices that we were fortunate to visit and to rebuild our relationship with the Department of Education on the National Level under Dr. Miguel Cardona and the Biden/Harris administration.

Beckie Bray Rankin, President-Elect of MaFLA, NECTFL Board Member.

I think we should link our beautiful video! (OK, HERE it is - ed.) As MaFLA continues to foster strong bonds with our state representatives, I found this year’s meetings to be exciting and timely. What a joy to work with fellow educators in our “green room” to share our own stories, pack a powerful punch, and understand how our goals align with those of our congress’s representatives. From sharing about inequities (which could be resolved with the BEST Act) to recounting times when bilingualism helped us all (which could be continued through WLARA), it was a pleasure to discuss how we can support each other in our hopes and dreams for this year.

Share your expertise and experience.
Submit a proposal for our MaFLA 2021 Virtual Conference.

MaFLA 2021 Fall Conference
October 21-23, 2021
Submit HERE
DESE Update

Greetings colleagues,

The Advanced level of proficiency requires students to navigate situations that have an unanticipated complication. I think after this year, we are all knocking at the door for advanced proficiency in life. In the past twelve months, teachers and districts have Zoomed up, masked up, and stepped up to do what is best for students in unprecedented times. They did all this — you did all this — in the face of your own fears, loss, loneliness, and stress, in many cases while you were also managing the new home-based realities of all your other family members, roommates, and neighbors. If life came with a proficiency score, you would all be rated Superior. Thank you for applying your skill and your passion in the service of your students.

In my family, we have tried to have in-home movie nights most weekends, and since new movies are hard to come by these days, my 6- and 8-year-olds have been discovering “old” movies. Last week’s was Annie, a movie that I hadn’t seen in years. Annie’s message is one worth repeating. The sun’ll come up tomorrow, so you gotta hang on till tomorrow. I know it has been a hard year for so many of us, but I’m starting to see the first signs of a sunny tomorrow — for everyone with the promise of vaccines, and for world language educators in particular.

So many huge developments in world language education in Massachusetts are just beyond the horizon! As I write this in early March, we are busily putting on the final touches of the 2021 World Languages Curriculum Framework. Nearly 200 individuals attended informational sessions about the Framework during its public comment period. 65 individuals completed public comment surveys, 41 more submitted partial responses, and several others contributed comments at informational sessions and by phone or email. To all of you who contributed to public comment, thank you. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, but there were a lot of excellent suggestions that contributed to a more rigorous and more inclusive framework. I can’t wait to share the details with you after Board adoption, which we believe will take place in April.

We at the Department are also developing plans to support this framework. We have been working with the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) for about a year to provide support in high-interest areas and/or traditionally underserved World Language fields. We are happy to announce that we now have 8 Quick Reference Guides (QRG) for assessment, social and emotional learning, students with disabilities, heritage learners in world language courses, classical languages, languages with diverse written representations, American Sign Language, and elementary programs. We are also developing our implementation plans which we hope to unveil shortly after Board adoption of the Framework. CAL will be our guests at the March meeting of the World Languages Leadership Network to present the work that they have done with these QRGs. We are also planning the professional development experiences and supporting materials that so many respondents to public comment requested.

The Department is also working with various partners to ensure that the Seal of Biliteracy remains equitably accessible to all students during a year in which MCAS access has been interrupted. Although we do not yet have any updates, we are working with the Executive Office of Education to devise solutions for our students who unexpectedly found difficulty accessing the required assessments. We are also working with our legal team to update the Seal of Biliteracy guidance and to streamline the portfolio process. We hope to have updates regarding guidance in the coming months.

The field of world languages is on the cusp of some really positive advancements. This year has been difficult, but better days are on the horizon. In the words of Annie, you gotta hang on till tomorrow. Sunny days ahead!

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Teacher Wellbeing Task #66:

Resolve to say “no” if you have no more room on your plate.
Blueprint for Effective L2 Teaching
Marcel LaVergne Ed.D.

I became a French teacher purely by accident. I was at the right place at the right time. Hired to teach beginning French at the junior high level, I was welcomed by my principal who gave me a copy of the textbook and told me to teach it cover to cover. In essence, because I did not have any practice teaching experience, I was thrown into the middle of the ocean and had to learn how to swim. Admittedly, my first year was a disaster, but I did manage to survive for 41 wonderful years during which time I did learn how to teach. Some say that teaching is an art and others say that it is a skill. In my opinion, it is a combination of both: the art is natural and the skill is acquired through hard work.

In 1958, when I started, the grammar-translation method was being replaced by the audio-lingual method, which was then replaced by the cognitive-code approach, to be followed by the natural approach, and finally by the communicative approach. Consequently, although my philosophy of teaching L2 was transformed throughout the years, my goal remained constant: to be an effective French teacher whose students actually learned some French. I was never an adherent to any one method. I favored the eclectic approach that kept the best and discarded the rest.

Whatever approach one chooses, it is important to note that the L2 teacher needs a structure that goes beyond knowing the subject matter, or the latest philosophy of L2 teaching and learning. This article will propose a three-step blueprint for effective L2 teaching: planning, delivering, and, assessing.

Planning: What do I teach?

Effective planning concerns the content of the lesson, the time spent on the content, the language skills being developed, the standards being addressed, the learning styles involved, and the language functions targeted. Using the theme of “The Family,” the lesson plan would look like this:

1. Lesson Content. This step identifies the vocabulary and the grammar.
   a. my family: grandparents, grand-father, grandmother, parents, father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, cousin, wife, husband, in-law, step, half
   b. the cardinal numbers 0 to 100 to communicate age, e.g., I am ___ years old.
   c. the ordinal numbers first to thirty-first, e.g., The fourth month is ________.
   d. the months to communicate birthdays, e.g., My birthday is April ________.
   e. comparative, superlative: older than, the oldest, as old as, younger than, the youngest, as young as.

2. Time on content: three days, one week, etc.


4. Standards: interpretive, presentational, interpersonal communication, culture, comparisons, connections, communities.

5. Learning Styles: visual, auditory, social, tactile.

6. Language Functions: describing, giving information, seeking information, accepting, refusing, narrating, questioning, praising, insulting, comparing, etc.

Delivering: How do I teach and practice the content?

This step outlines the activities planned to teach and to practice the content. The achievement-type activities will answer the question “What do the students need to know?” The performance-type activities will help students practice using what they know to communicate.

1. Achievement-type activities using a family tree to teach the family vocabulary:
   a. Teacher conducts a true/false activity e.g., pointing to John (father) and Diane (daughter) and says John is Diane’s brother (false); Diane is John’s wife (false); John is Diane’s father (true). This activity addresses the listening skill and the visual and auditory learning styles.
   b. Teacher conducts a question/answer activity e.g., Who is John’s brother? father? daughter? The student answers with the person’s name. This activity addresses the listening skill and the giving information function.
   c. Student indicates the relationship between the two people pointed to on the family tree, e.g., John the father and Diane the daughter. Student answers “John is Diane’s father and Diane is John’s daughter.” This addresses the listening and speaking skills, the visual learning style, and the giving information function.

2. Performance-type activities to practice using the family vocabulary:
   c. Students complete their family tree in class. This addresses the writing skill, the visual and tactile learning styles.
   d. Students share their family tree in small groups. This addresses the speaking and listening skills, the visual and social styles, the presentational and interpretive communication standards and the giving information function.
   e. Students present a classmate’s family tree to the class. This addresses the speaking and listening skills, the visual and social styles, the presentational and interpretive communication standards, and the giving information function.

3. Achievement-type activities to teach numbers from 1 to 31:
   a. Students write the numbers that they hear. This addresses the listening skill, the interpretive communication standard, and the auditory learning style.
   b. Students say the numbers that they see. This addresses the speaking skill and the visual learning style.
   c. Teacher conducts a true/false activity, e.g., pointing to the written number 27 and saying “27” which is true or 41 and saying “31” which is false, etc. This addresses the listening skill, the visual learning style, and the seeking information language function.
4. Performance-type activities to practice numbers from 1 to 31 and age related vocabulary:
   a. Students tell their age and ask other students to tell their age, e.g., “I am ___ years old” and “How old are you?” This addresses the speaking and listening skills, the interpersonal and the interpretive communication standards, the auditory learning style, and the giving/sketching information functions.
   b. In small groups, students indicate the ages of their family tree members. This addresses the listening and speaking skills, the interpretive and presentational communication standard, the social learning style, and the giving information function.

5. Achievement-type activities to teach the ordinal numbers and the months of the year:
   a. Teacher conducts a true/false activity, e.g., “The 10th month is April; the 12th month is January; the 2nd month is February” etc. This addresses the listening skill, the interpretive communication standard, the auditory learning style, and the giving/sketching information function.
   b. In small groups, students indicate the ages of their family tree members. This addresses the listening and speaking skills, the interpretive and presentational communication standard, the social learning style, and the giving information function.

6. Performance-type activities to practice the months of the year.
   a. In small groups, students indicate their birthday and that of their family tree members, e.g., “My birthday is April 1st and my mother’s birthday is August 16th.” This addresses the speaking and listening skills, the presentational communication standard, the auditory and social learning styles, and the giving information language function.
   b. Teacher asks, “How many members of your family tree were born in January? in February? in March? etc., and tallies the results on the board. This addresses the listening skill, the auditory and visual leaning styles, and the seeking information language function.
   c. In a follow-up activity, students indicate which members of their family were born in each month. This addresses the speaking skill, the presentational communication standard, and the giving information language function.

7. Achievement-type activities to teach the comparative and the superlative of the adjectives old and young.
   a. Teacher uses the family tree to teach the concepts older/younger, oldest/youngest, and as old/young as, e.g., “My brother is 29 years old, my sister is 32 and I am 26 years old. My brother is younger than my sister and older than I. My sister is the oldest and I am the youngest.” In small groups, students replicate the activity using 6 members of their family tree including themselves. This addresses the speaking and listening skills, the interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication standard, the auditory and social learning styles, and the giving information language function.

2. Performance-type activities to teach the comparative and the superlative of the adjectives old and young.
   a. In small groups
      i. students indicate the age and birthdays of the oldest and the youngest members of each family tree.
         ii. students indicate the age and the birthdays of the oldest and the youngest members all the combined family trees.
   b. As a class
      i. students indicate the age and the birthdays of the oldest male and female and the youngest male and female of all the family trees.
      ii. students indicate which month has the most birthdays and which has the fewest birthdays. Those activities address the listening and speaking skills, the interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication strand, the visual, auditory, and social learning styles, and the seeking/giving information and the comparing language functions.

Assessing: How do I evaluate what students can do with what they know?

This step involves assessing both achievement, i.e., what students know and performance, i.e., what students can do with what they know. The first type should be done during the skill-getting section of the lesson and includes lower-level thinking activities such as true/false, multiple choice, complete the sentence, answer the question type quizzes designed to determine how well they know what they have learned.

According to the backward design model, the performance assessment should be the final and the most important determinant of how successful the students are in giving the age, the birthdays, and the young/old relationships of their family tree members and of those of their classmates. Such skill-using activities would include activities such as: a) using your family tree, tell your partner about your mother’s side of the family; b) using your partner’s family tree, tell the class what you learned about your partner’s family.

This assessment addresses the listening and speaking skills, the interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication standard, the visual, auditory, and social learning styles, and the receiving information, giving information, paraphrasing, and narrating language functions.

It is important to notice that the final assessment of the student’s performance does not include reading or writing because they were not included in the planning of the unit. In the same vein, this family unit lesson plan focuses only on the communication standard.

Conclusion

The blueprint for effective L2 teaching includes planning the content of the lesson to be delivered in a timely manner and assessed appropriately. The planning must also specify the language skills being developed, the standards being addressed, the learning styles involved, and the language functions targeted. This comprehensive approach is necessary if the goal is to prepare students to take a first step towards becoming bilingual.
Save the Dates:

Classroom Collaborative 2021
August 2 – August 14
One Goal: Many Paths

While we thought that 2021 would come in to save the world from 2020, there are still falling pieces to pick up as we put the puzzle of “new normal” back together. What high leverage differentiation strategies will serve us best as we get back into our rooms and our routines in the Fall? Join national presenters and local teachers as we collaborate on classroom practices.

Our theme for the Back-to-School Issue is
BUILDING COMMUNITY
AND RELATIONSHIPS

Send YOUR contribution to the next issue to:
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Deadline for the Back to School Issue is August 5