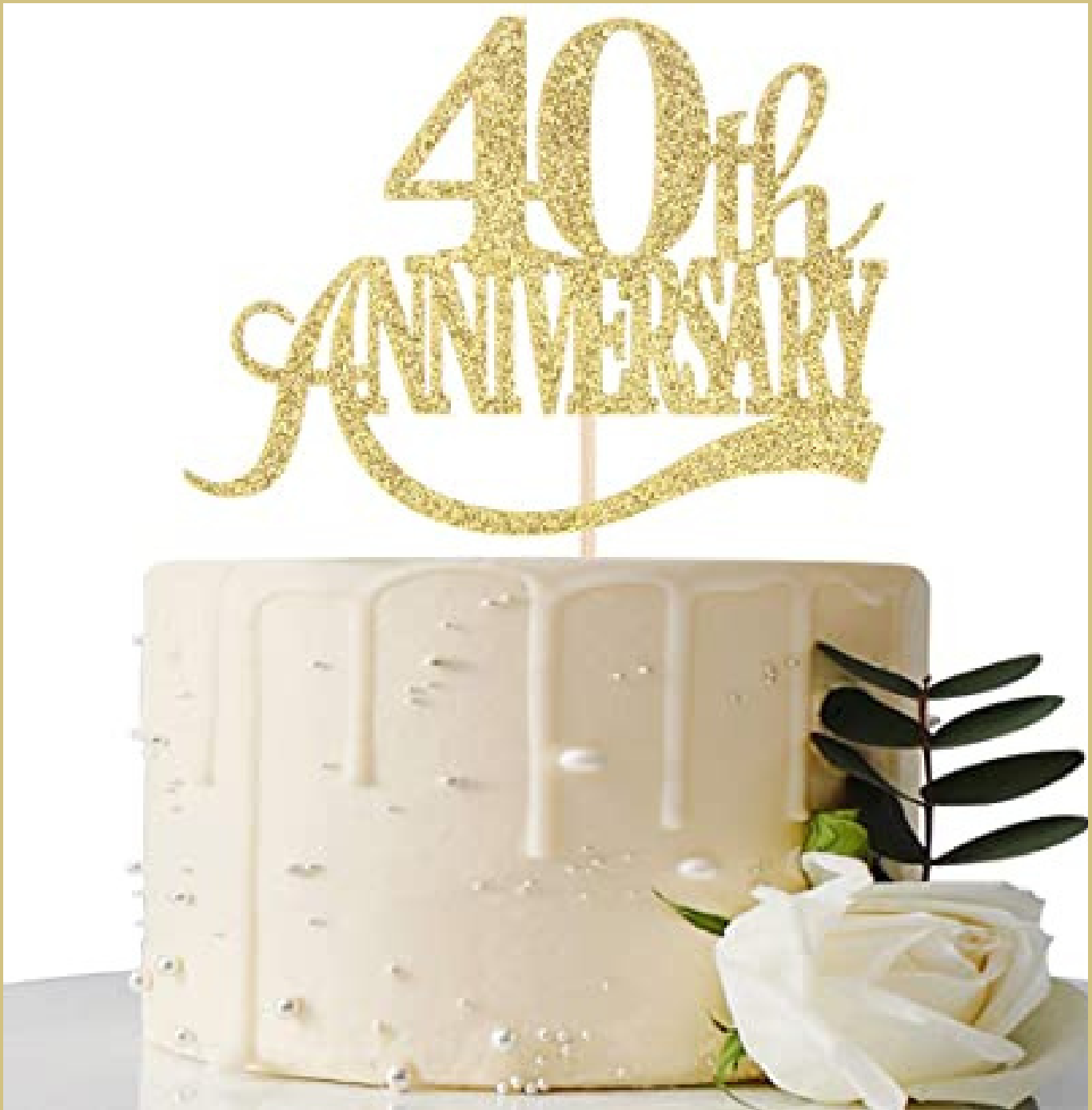




Maryland
TESOL



Spring 2021

The Anniversary Issue

President's Message

Katie Miller

Dear Maryland TESOLers,

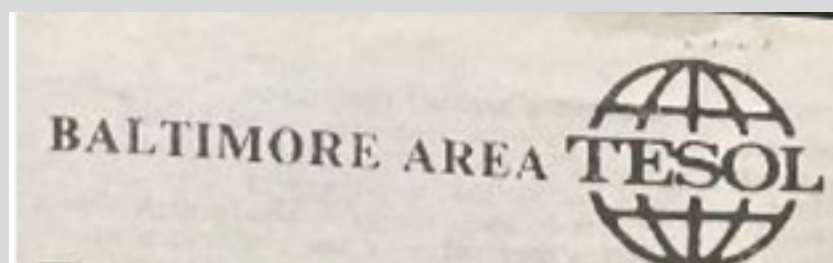
You're reading this newsletter at a very special moment in history. This has been an extraordinarily challenging year. Staying safe in a global pandemic, struggling against isolation during lockdowns, pivoting to teach virtually at a moment's notice, working to engage learners who are stressed and isolated - you name it, we grappled with it this school year.

Teachers are lifelong learners, and we learned this year that when life throws us into difficult situations, we find ways to cope, manage, and keep moving forward. 2020-2021 forced us to navigate incredibly stormy waters. We are hopeful that the increasing number of vaccines in the community will bring the ship about. I hope that what we are witnessing now is the beginning of the end.



Or perhaps it should be the end of the beginning. One major takeaway for this year is that the status quo should not be static. We talk about "going back to normal" next fall, but for many people in our state, "normal" wasn't working before the pandemic. The pandemic has laid bare the inequality and precipice that so many people face daily. We have the opportunity to rebuild a new and improved "normal" by challenging the conventional wisdom and structures that do not serve teachers and students. The system is not working; or perhaps it is working as it was designed to - for the benefit of some, but not all.

Who decided that we experienced "learning loss?" Who declared that not hitting the usual academic targets this year means learning didn't take place? Who said we can't provide internet access and hot meals to our children not just during a pandemic? Who decided that it's not worth it to invest in school facilities with proper ventilation? Who determined that if and when schools fully reopen, students and their families won't still be in survival mode?



Maryland TESOL's first logo when it was called *Baltimore Area TESOL*

There are people who will tell you that it's not possible to change things, that the problems of society will always be there. After seeing the amazing ways in which educators rallied to serve their students, we know that's not true. Where there's a will, there's a way. As we rest and recharge over the summer, what will we look to change come September? What will we say WE'VE decided is no longer acceptable? How will we work to fight injustice and inequality in our communities? How will we continue to advocate for our students, our colleagues, and our futures?

This year also reflects an important accomplishment for Maryland TESOL - our 40th Anniversary. Forty years ago, a group of dedicated educators came together to create an organization to challenge the status quo in our profession and move us forward. Look how far we've come! This is truly a year to celebrate every success, big and small. We held our first fully virtual Fall Conference which was an amazing event. We awarded a professional development grant and celebrated the achievements of standout educators and students at our Annual Meeting on May 20th. We are recognizing forty years of hard work to bring you professional development and networking opportunities, to increase your capability and effectiveness, and provide a forum for you to learn and grow alongside the many talented people we have in our field.

We know that the future stands to be brighter than the past. I am excited to see what the next forty years holds for our profession. Remember that it is your ideas, your energy, and your dedication that make the difference. We make history together. Whether this is your first, or fifth, or fortieth year with us, thank you for being a part of Maryland TESOL!

Cheers!
Katie Miller

Past President's Panel at the 40th Annual Fall Conference

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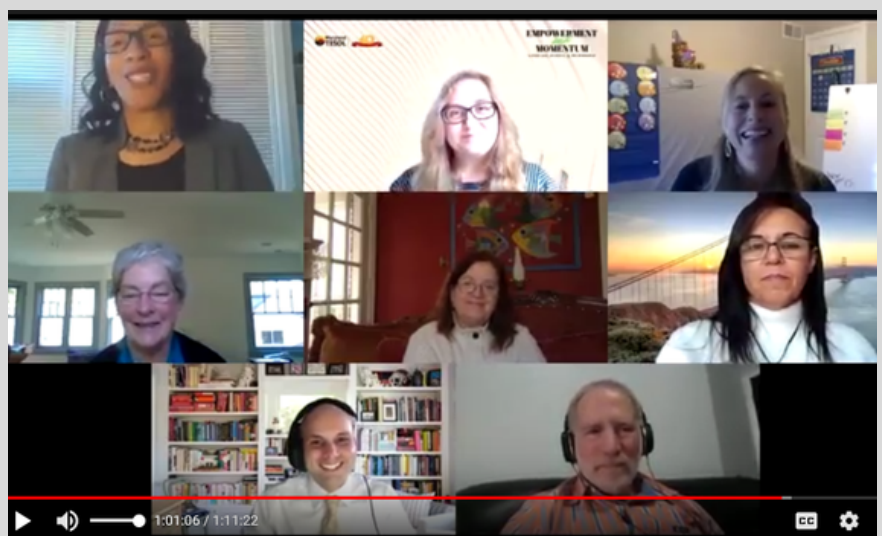
- 37 Sherry Lyons - 2017-2018**
- 40 Katie Miller - 2020-2021**
- 39 Ashley Jenoff - 2019-2020**

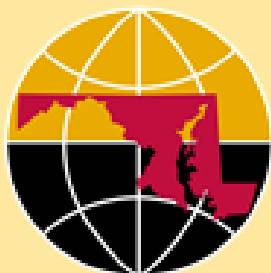
Center from left:

- 3 Elizabeth Cadwalader - 1983-1984**
- 34 Debra Suarez - 2014-2015**
- 33 Doaa Rashed - 2013-2014**

Bottom from left:

- 38 Luis Penton Herrera - 2018-2019**
- 29 Myles Hoenig - 2009-2010**





Maryland TESOL

Executive Board

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Marylandtesol.com

Editor's Letter

Rishan Habte

As our 40th year comes to end, I want to take a moment to reflect on all of the things that Maryland TESOL was able to accomplish in the midst of a global pandemic. We were able to organize so many amazing professional development opportunities, we launched our new website and we were able to publish a TESOL Professional's Handbook, and we're just getting started! In the next year, we have so much more planned and I am excited to announce that our Newsletter will look a little different as well. The Newsletter will be published as a quarterly digital magazine that will be academic focused and there will be a space for advertising. As usual, I invite you to join the conversation by submitting your articles to newsletter@marylandtesol.com. Enjoy this edition!



A screenshot of a presentation slide. On the left is the cover of the 'Maryland TESOL Handbook for Educators of English Learners', edited by Luis Javier Penton Herrera, Ph.D., Diana S. Fagan, Ed.D., and Sherry Lyons, M.A. The cover features a Maryland state map and floral patterns. On the right is a 'Table of Contents' with six items: Introduction, Part 1: English Learners, Part 2: Maryland English Learner Demographics and Programs, Part 3: Becoming an ESOL/ESL Teacher in Maryland, Part 4: Advocating for English Learners in Maryland, Part 5: Community Organizations that Support and Help English Learners and their Families in Maryland, and Part 6: Further Channels for TESOL Professional Development. To the right of the slide is a video call window showing two participants: Luis Javier Penton Herrera and Sherry Lyons.

Maryland TESOL Handbook Co-Authors Sherry Lyons and Luis Javier Penton Herrera talking about the handbook at the spring dinner.

Incoming President's Message

Jamie Harris

Wow, 40 years! Maryland TESOL has quite a legacy and has paved the way for so many Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) toward its vision: "Maryland TESOL envisions a state in which English Learners (ELs) accomplish their dreams through the power of diversity and education." Power is truly found through diversity and education, and it is the honor of TESOL practitioners to empower their learners to discover and leverage that power.



When I think back to the beginning of my journey as a TESOL practitioner, my desire to support ELs was not driven by income or career growth. It was driven by the desire to support and facilitate the success of immigrants. It was driven by an understanding that education was powerful enough to empower diverse individuals to achieve goals for themselves and their families. Fourteen years later, even amidst the division and prejudice we see in the world, I have gotten to see world peace amongst highly diverse groups of people in ESOL classrooms—something I consider a privilege to be a part of—and I am still motivated by the empowerment education brings to ELs.

Thank you to Maryland TESOL for starting the journey of supporting TESOL practitioners 40 years ago. Thank you to TESOL practitioners for joining Maryland TESOL on that journey. It is my hope that we, the members of this incredible organization and future members, continue with the vision and pave the way for 40 more influential and powerful years.



Maryland TESOL's second logo

The Maryland TESOL EdTech Maker Space

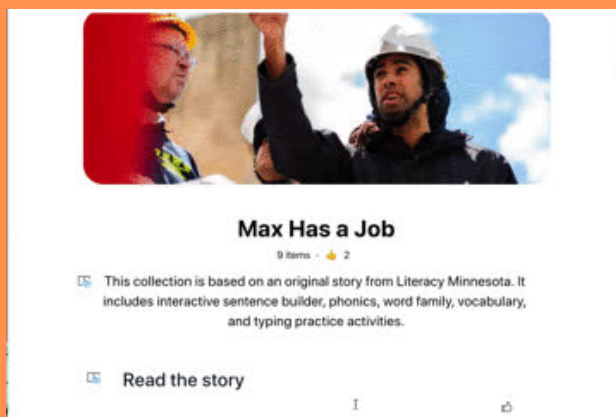
An Innovative Approach to PD with Purpose



Lama Marsi & Rachel Riggs

Each spring, the Western Maryland Interest Section holds a mini-conference for educators in our region. This year, though, after a year that was defined by endless webinars and virtual conferences, we tried something a little different. In early March, thirty participants gathered in a Google Classroom to participate in Maryland TESOL's first EdTech Maker Space. Over the span of a month, the makers attended asynchronous and synchronous trainings on Jamboard, Wakelet, and the Color Vowel Chart. So, what made this event different from other training webinars and conferences? Rather than just being trained with these tools, this group of dedicated professionals put their new knowledge to work, creating open educational resources (OER) in the form of Jamboard activities and Wakelet collections that instructors can use with Literacy Minnesota's ESL Story Banks, designed for pre-beginning adult ESL learners.

The EdTech Maker Space exposed twenty educators to Jamboard, Wakelet, and the Color Vowel Chart and trained them to implement those tools/strategies in their own classrooms. It also resulted in the creation of thirty-six openly licensed Wakelet collections that include pre-beginning ESL stories, interactive Jamboard phonics activities, and typing practice. Maryland TESOL is extremely proud of what these participants were able to accomplish by leveraging this new approach to PD with purpose.



The EdTech Maker Space professional development model was introduced by CrowdEd Learning, during the summer of 2020. The goal of an EdTech Maker Space is to help teachers not only become more familiar and comfortable with technology but to involve them in the process of creating open, reusable learning objects. The EdTech Maker Space is driven by the ideals of lifelong learning and community building. When teachers are brought together in an EdTech Maker Space (ETMS), they learn together and finish with a final product that can be used, reused, and adapted for a variety of contexts and unique learners.

As we developed this ETMS, there were two key considerations that guided our decision making.

1. **Creating, adapting, or curating open content that is reusable.**

What's the problem with Open Educational Resources (OER)? While OER is undeniably beneficial to educators, it can sometimes be difficult to locate and reuse. Thus, in an ETMS, organizers think strategically through how to share content in a way that it can be found and adapted by other teachers. What format is best for sharing? How can we gather these resources in a central location? How do we design the resources in a way that others can adapt them? And, finally, how do we ethically use OER and interpret the licenses attached to them?

In the Maryland TESOL Maker Space, the organizers met with Literacy Minnesota (the owners of the ESL Story Banks) and the creators of the Color Vowel Chart to ask for permission to use and adapt their content. As a part of these preliminary conversations, the final location of the resources was determined as well as other important details. Literacy Minnesota agreed to house the Jamboards and Wakelets on their website with the original ESL Story Bank files. The Color Vowel Chart founders asked that all participants in the project be trained in the use of the Color Vowel Chart strategy, and offered to be sponsors of the Maryland TESOL ETMS by providing that training for free. These are some examples of how the considerations around reusable open content played out in this ETMS, to everyone's benefit.



1. Matching learning goals to edtech tools

Another best practice underlying the design of an ETMS is to let quality learning drive the choice of tools. Instead of designing an ETMS around the acquisition of yet another edtech tool, the planning starts with questions like,

What are the gaps in OER?

What skills do we want the resources to address?

What strategies work best for learning those skills?

Which edtech tools can we leverage to incorporate those strategies?

By following this process from needs to skills to strategies to tools, we ensure that the final product will be a resource designed with purpose and best practices in mind.

Going back to the example of the MD TESOL ETMS, the original idea for the project came from Xavier Munoz, Associate Director of Teaching and Learning at the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia, who realized that it was especially difficult to reach lower-level English language learners in the Emergency Remote Instruction that was brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. While explicit phonics instruction is possible over Zoom, it's difficult to incorporate the guided independent practice needed in order to facilitate learners as they move those foundational skills into long-term memory. Xavier was familiar with the ESL Story Banks and saw the opportunity to adapt those PDF activities into something more interactive using edtech tools. So, the choice of edtech tool was driven first by need, then learning objective, then teaching strategy, and even after that path, there was more to think through! Xavier experimented with several tools on mobile devices, playing "learner" before he decided that Jamboard was the tool that would be most effective for instructors to adapt and for learners to use. This example of how the choice of edtech tool is driven by learning and accessibility demonstrates this second key of ETMS design, "goals before tools".

With those guiding principles in mind, we began the process of running a Maker Space which took place in roughly three phases: organizing, recruiting, and managing. The fourth phase, publicizing the new resources to the broader community of educators, is one that is still underway.

Organize

The Maryland TESOL EdTech Maker Space was the result of a compatible partnership. Western and Graduate Interest Section chairs were excited to do a Maker Space for their spring events. Meanwhile, Xavier Munoz was looking to organize a team to adapt the ESL Story Banks. The collaborative endeavor continued from there with the partnerships established through Literacy Minnesota and the Color Vowel Chart team.

Recruit

Once the concept and management team were in place, the next step was to find participants. Recruitment for the MD TESOL ETMS began in December, when the organizers presented at Maryland Labor's Virtual Training Institute to gather interest. Then, the project was announced in February via MD TESOL social media and spring events webpage. Within a week of that announcement, more than thirty ESOL professionals had expressed their interest in participating in the Maker Space.

Manage

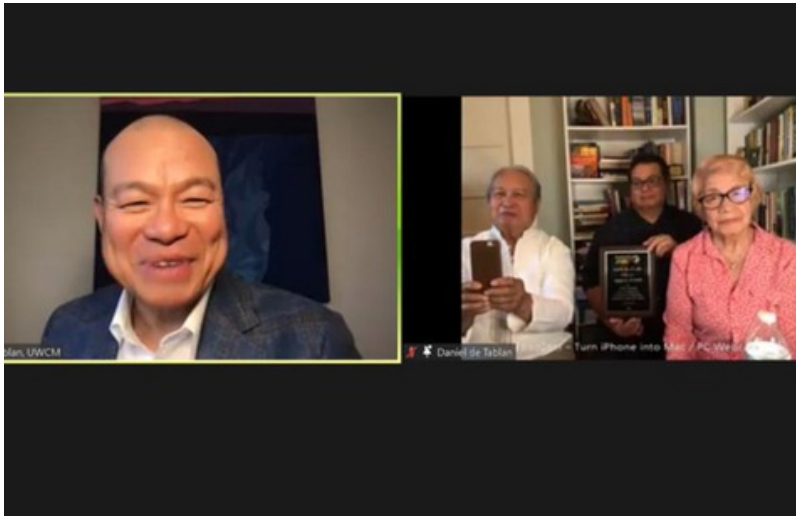
In order to manage the project and participants, a Maker Space Google Classroom was established. The platform allowed for sharing material and resources efficiently (training recordings, resource tracker spreadsheet, deadline information, e.g.). The added benefit of using Google Classroom is that it gave teachers meaningful exposure to this edtech tool and how it can be utilized. In addition to Google Classroom, the Zoom video conferencing platform was used to hold live kick-off and wrap-up meetings, Jamboard and Wakelet training workshops, and open office hours. At that same time, participants were given access to the Color Vowel Chart FAST training. Unlike the other training sessions, this one was asynchronous and on Canvas.

To wrap up the Maker Space, Ludette Agura, one of the participants, reviewed all the created activities and resources to make necessary corrections to any missing work or mistakes, as well as provide formative feedback to the makers. Her assistance helped ensure that the resources are ready to be shared and reused. Finally, the participants gathered for one last meeting in which they were given information on how to "level up" in the various tools and strategies they had learned. We also issued a feedback survey in which we learned that many participants were appreciative of the organization and management of the Maker Space. Several participants showed interest in participating in future Maker Space projects

At this point you might be asking yourself how an ETMS applies to your practice. The ETMS project design process can be used by programs to design PD with purpose. Instructors can implement the same design process as a project based teaching approach. The [EdTech Maker Space Project Design + Facilitation Guide](#) serves as a roadmap for anyone who wants to learn more about planning and organizing an ETMS. It gives a broad overview of what makes ETMS' unique and all of the important details to consider.

Perhaps you're not quite ready to design and facilitate an ETMS, but are interested in participating in this dynamic approach to professional development. The next ETMS is a collaborative curation project that will guide participants as they curate, organize, and tag open resources for digital skill acquisition. It will run from May to June 2021 and will require a roughly ten-hour time commitment, including two three hour Zoom meetings with work groups.

Congratulations to our 2021 Spring Dinner Honorees



Dante de Tablan received the MDTESOL's Ann Beusch Award. Thank you for all that you do to assist and promote the lives of ELs and their families in MD

Mary Margaret was the recipient of MDTESOL's Adult Ed Teacher of the Year.



The recipients to of the Student Success Story were Nicole Guitierres, Olinda Jimenez, and Halah Hussein

The Disappearing Story: An Activity to Encourage Repetition

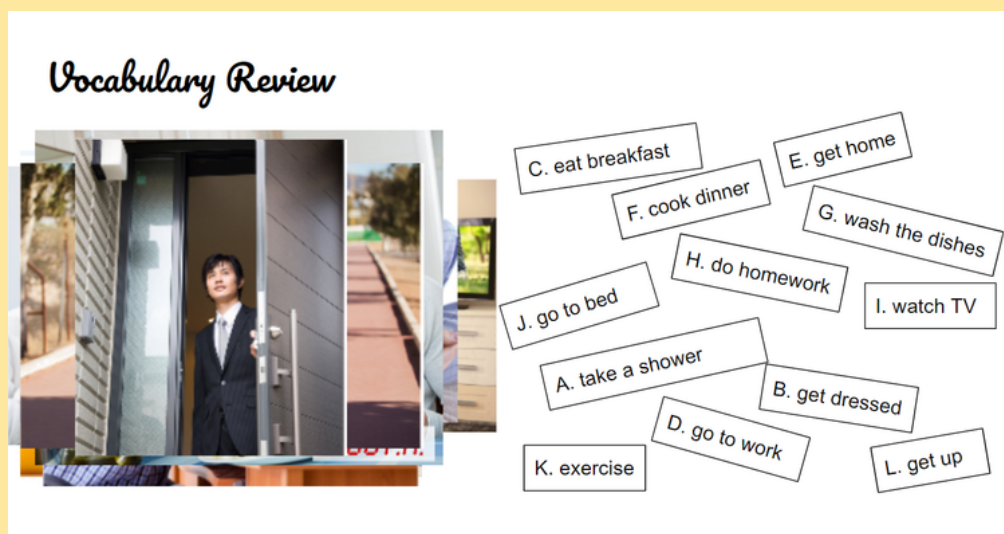
Katie Edwards

We know that to become proficient, students need continued exposure to and practice with target vocabulary and grammar. This is an easy activity to encourage that necessary repetition in the online or traditional classroom.

The disappearing part of the activity comes near the very end but each step is a building block that gets students working with the target vocabulary or grammar. This example focuses on common phrasal verbs like “get up” and “get dressed” and simple present subject verb agreement but it’s adaptable to student level or content. For example, you can make this more of a pronunciation based activity by adding syllable stress into the blanks once you start disappearing the story.

To get started, begin with a basic vocabulary review. Have a set of pictures and a set of vocabulary words, each with a letter or number. Students demonstrate their understanding of the verb phrase by saying the letter of the vocabulary word or, if in person, physically matching the two pieces.. This draws their attention to the spelling of the word and helps them to make a visual-oral connection. You could do this competitively or call on particular students.

After reviewing the vocabulary, it’s time to put it into practice, along with the target grammar structure. Provide students with a model sentence and call attention to the structure - for example, the added -s for the third person singular. To scaffold this activity, you may want to have the vocabulary words on a slide or on a whiteboard. Then, have students provide their own example sentences. Students can either write the sentences themselves or you can write them for them.

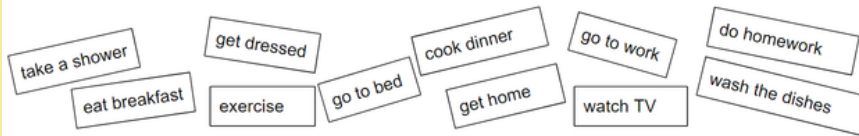


Juana's Day

Juana gets up at 6:00.



**Juana exercises.
She take a shower.
She go to work at 8:00.
She gets home 5:00.
Juana watching TV.**



Once each student has given a sentence, go back and make edits. Read each sentence and see if they can find the errors. Work together to fix the errors. Once we have grammatically correct sentences, you can start working on choral repetition. With the corrected sentences, read through the whole paragraph. Then, read individual sentences. You can call on particular students to read out sentences as well. Tell students that they'll need to know these sentences very well. You could then break students up into groups to practice reading either on their own or in small groups.

While students practice independently or in small groups, you will need to write the corrected sentences down. In person, you can simply use a whiteboard. If you're online, you'll need to do a bit more planning, as you'll need to cover up parts of the sentences. That's easy enough to do by adding shapes in Google Slides or PowerPoint ahead of time and writing in the sentences later.

After bringing the students back from independent practice, it's finally time for the disappearing part of the disappearing story. Chorally repeat the sentences one final time. Then, start to cover up or erase the words in the sentences. Make sure to focus on the vocabulary or grammar you have covered. Continue with choral repetition, with students doing their best to remember the erased phrases. It gets harder and harder until you have covered up most of the content words. At this point, you can then break students into groups and have them work to try to reconstruct the sentences together. If you want to provide scaffolding, you can leave up the vocabulary you're focusing on.

Juana's Day

Juana gets up at 6:00.



**Juana exercises.
She takes a shower.
She goes to work at 8:00.
She gets home at 5:00.
Juana watches TV.**



Then, have students come together to share their recreated sentences. Compare with the actual sentences and do one more round of choral repetition. If there are any mistakes, this could be a good opportunity for more advanced classes to discuss whether the changes affect the meaning or sentences or not. To extend the activity further, you can have the students use the sentences or paragraph as a model for their own writing.

There are lots of ways to modify this activity. I'm confident that you can find ways to use the disappearing story to encourage repetition in your classes.



Author: Katie Edwards, Grant Program Coordinator, Howard Community College's English Language Center

Juana's Day

Juana [] **at** [] .

Juana exercises.

She takes a []

She goes to [] **at 8:00.**

She [] **home** [] .

Juana watches []

“Maryland TESOL provides learning and networking opportunities to advance the English language teaching profession and the success of English Language Learners (ELLs).”



Maryland TESOL (MDTESOL) is now a National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) Affiliate. NDIA combines grassroots community engagement with technical knowledge, research, and coalition building to advocate on behalf of people working in their communities for digital equity. NDIA's four pillars are

- Support on-the-ground digital inclusion practitioners and advocates,
- Advocate for local, state and federal policies to promote digital equity and support local digital inclusion strategies,
- Educate policymakers, the media, and potential partners about the need for digital equity and the work of local digital inclusion programs, and
- Conduct, support and promote data-gathering and research that can inform public understanding, public policy and community strategies related to digital inclusion and equity.

Members of MDTESOL now have access to the NDIA Newsletter and access to the community listservs and community calls. Log into your MDTESOL membership account and look at member resources for more details.

“Maryland TESOL envisions a state in which English Learners (ELs) accomplish their dreams through the power of diversity and education.”

What Works in K-12 during the COVID-19 & Civil Unrest in the USA

By Madelaine Pella Schwartz

The COVID-19 crisis that started in February 2020 has deepened our concern and transformed our lives in unexpected ways. Unexpectedly, and as of December 30, 2020, we are still dealing with new virus variant. For that reason, the impact of this pandemic has crippled some and motivated others. This trend, along with the troubling civil unrest that happened on January 6th, 2021 have not only uncertainty but fear to our English Learners across the spectrum. All educators across the state of Maryland continue to battle as well as co-exist in times of uncertainty while our English Learners in Public School Systems show signs of strain and cannot fully adapt to online learning. For some, it is the lack of digital literacy and for others is food insecurity and lack of appropriate housing. So, then it is crucial for all ESOL educators as well as general educators to continue to grapple with reality of co-existing with not only the gravity of a virus but also with the emotional toll that these events seen in images represent in the minds and hearts of everyone in order to sustain focus on what we can *realistically* do to improve the unprecedented situation.



In times of uncertainty, ESOL educators ought to join forces and demonstrate resiliency and flexibility. For this reason, a socio-emotional learning strategy that continues to work for Els at-risk even during an ongoing COVID 19 pandemic is knowing the learner's profile. In addition, it is crucial to become aware of the signs of trauma or adverse life events (SLEs) that might be impeding the English Learner (EL) to grow in proficiency of English.

Therefore, the role of the ESOL educator is to eliminate all assumptions in order to find the best practices that will likely engage the correct learner profile. As a restorative practice educator with advanced training in Human Counseling as well as a professionally certified Instructional Systems developer, I recommend the following: The **HEAL** strategy.

Hear	Elevate	Acknowledge	Lift
Listen actively to your learner.	Elevate their self-esteem & Content Knowledge	Acknowledge every aspect of their profiles.	Lift them with focus and intention.
Hear their thoughts and use trauma-sensitive strategies by learning their Adverse Life Experiences (ACEs). Advocate and form allegiances with school teams to support all Els. Strengthen the “Be Present” Strategies.	Elevate in ways a community is formed and sense of belonging is enhanced in the use of meaningful educational tools. Design with care and rigor, in <i>all</i> content areas, so all Els can get the opportunity to get a quality education. Provide structure and consistency, surrounded by flexible emotional support.	Acknowledge English Learners (Els) might not have literacy skills. Allow room for literacy growth may they come with interrupted education or limited knowledge of literacy in their own language. SIFE and SLIFE are at-risk and providing regular check-ins. Promote sense of control and relevancy in addressing signs of stigma and biases.	Raise your voice if injustices or misconceptions are evident and advocate on their favor by supporting school-wide teams. Be intentional and purposeful in designing and delivering culturally responsive approaches that affirm and respect their origins. Strengthen self regulation strategies

Another major challenge that dates back from the COVID-19 year of 2020 and continues to exist in 2021 is the so-called ZOOM fatigue. It is real, and it can be defined as the overuse of digital platforms, causing intense, prevalent and challenging effects such as affecting human relationships in the area of social interaction and community building. Also, the “engagement” can become tedious not because of the educator but due to the long hours in front of a screen. So, then, we cannot possibly engage *all* learners in this type of setting conducive to mental fatigue, but we can aim for intentionally designing lessons that pique the Els’ interest such as the use of interactive platforms and their extensions to allow higher participation.

Most importantly, ESOL educators are –in one way or the other –experiencing secondary stress as an occupational hazard as we are working with and caring for children who are currently enduring trauma. Aren't we all while COVID-19? – So, practice and inspire calmness. That being said, to avoid burnout and build resilience; we need to be intentional in protecting our time away from the screen and purposefully design lessons that heal and have relevance with all ELLs. This is the time for co-allisions. This is the time to offer compassion and offer resources as well as sustain meaningful interactions in order to uplift and allow healing to begin.

In conclusion, it is of uttermost importance that we practice self-care in order to protect our physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual and professional lives and break cycles of uncertainty. This way, our ELLs will benefit a great deal in every way as we continue to experience vicarious trauma. Empathy and compassion must prevail in everything we do, as ESOL educators, in the state of Maryland and in the world.

About the writer

Madelaine Pella Schwartz is an ESOL educator leader, originally from Lima, Peru, based in Maryland, USA. Because of her multi-cultural, multi-lingual lense, she brings a multiple -perspective approach to designing instruction for multi-level and multi-lingual student profiles. She holds advanced certification in Leadership, Instructional System Development, and Human Counseling.

Resources

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BEST Tools & Resources for ESOL F2F, Hybrid, or online Instruction

Tools: APPS: CANVA, Jamboard, Book Creator, Flipgrid, Screencastify, CHATTERPIX, EDUEXPLAIN, G-Suite and extensions:

PearDeck and Nearpod.

3

Key Websites

<https://www.colorincolorado.org/distance-learning-ells> <https://www.cal.org/resource-center/freeresources> Website Repository

Corona Virus Common Sense Resources

National Institute of Mental Health - NIH

(PDF) Reaching ELLs at Risk: Instruction for Students With ...

Please Ask Me About My Heritage, Not Where I'm From

Lama Masri

As an immigrant, and someone who has lived more than half her life in this country, I am eternally frustrated when I am asked the question, "Where are you from?" It is a question I have come to expect and dread every time I meet new people whether in social or work settings. I find myself feeling validated when I see others expressing their frustrations on social media. Although the disgruntlement is familiar, I could not really explain why such a common question bothered me, until I was meeting with a fellow Maryland TESOLer, Jamie Harris, recently. She mentioned that she was puzzled by her father's reaction to the "Where are you from?" question when she herself does not really mind it. In that moment, I understood why the father and I shared those same feelings.



You may be surprised to know that my relationship with this question began before I was even an immigrant. . I was born in the coastal city of Tripoli, Lebanon, and lived there during the civil war, after which I moved to the US. In Lebanon, the question was asked a lot, but rather than a country of origin it referred to the religion and political affiliation of a person. During the war, it was a divisive question used to determine whether the person is an enemy or a friend. Thus from the beginning, this question aimed to box me into a certain group with defined beliefs and political inclinations, limiting who I am to preset stereotypes.

When I moved to the US, my knowledge about the country was based solely on books and movies. I had to deconstruct everything I knew and form new opinions based on experience, and through that process I developed a love for this new place that equals my love for my native country. There was one thing I wish I could have left in Lebanon, and you probably guessed it, that infamous question! At first, I understood why people asked me where I was from, I attributed it to my distinct accent. But as time went on, I made a home for myself here, I became a citizen, and I had a family. I earned my place in this country and still the question persisted.



Citadel of Raymond de Saint-Gilles located in the Author's hometown of Tripoli Lebanon

The “where are you from” question sets to highlight the foreignness in me, pushing my shared Americanness to the background. It is a question used to set people like me apart from the “natives”. Take a minute to scroll through your social media, and you'll see Asian, Black, Latin, and people of various ethnicities voicing their frustration at this question. Whether it's the way we look or the way we sound, the reality is that we may be second or third generation Americans. Or, in some cases like my own, we have established our homes, families, careers, and entire lives in this country only for the focus of every new interaction to be that we are outsiders.

When Jamie and I realized that her father and I felt the same about being asked where we're from, she asked me what would be a better question. “What is your heritage?”, I answered. This is a question that will satisfy curiosities, without alienating the other person, especially if they were born and raised in this country. And for someone like me, it acknowledges my background both in Lebanon and the U.S. It recognizes my whole story, instead of just the first part of it. I'm proud of being a Lebanese woman, and I'm also proud of everything I've built since I arrived in the United States. Both of these countries make me who I am today. Both of these countries are part of my heritage.



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