



# M A R Y L A N D TESOL NEWS

MARYLAND TEACHERS OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

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## Beyond Content: Creating a Classroom Environment That Reduces Emotional Barriers

*By Renée Burgos,  
Adjunct Faculty,  
Prince George's  
Community College*

Nicaragua was my first experience of sincere communication in Spanish. As a college sophomore boarding a plane for a semester abroad, I felt linguistically prepared with seven years of classroom Spanish behind me. Unfortunately, along with the 90 degree heat, reality was a smack in the face. The distinct accents of my host parents forced me to listen twice as hard, but my anxiety about having to respond



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## ALPESOL: CCBC's Accelerated Learning Program for Academic ESOL Students

*By Rachele Lawton and Bob Miller, CCBC*

Many community colleges are implementing interventions to accelerate students through non-credit pre-requisite sequences, including ESOL. In an effort to increase retention, student success and ultimately completion, the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) has launched accelerated learning programs (ALP's) in various disciplines. In the spring 2010 semester, CCBC's Academic English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program piloted its own ALP called "ALPESOL" on the Essex campus. Modeled after CCBC's successful English ALP, which accelerates students through the sequence of developmental English courses and has proven to increase success and retention rates, ALPESOL accelerates students who need the highest level of academic ESOL, which is ESOL 052: Academic ESOL Writing. ESOL 052 is combined with English (ENGL) 101: College Composition so that students take them concurrently rather than completing ESOL 052 prior to ENGL 101 (ESOL 052 is typically a pre-

requisite for ENGL 101). As a result, students are able to earn credits while still completing non-credit ESOL pre-requisites.

CCBC's academic ESOL program is



an intensive one that prepares students for college-level work. There are four levels in the sequence, with eleven required courses total. Most students place directly into the highest level of ESOL, which consists of ESOL 052 and ESOL 054: Academic Reading. After taking placement tests, completing writing samples and then receiving their scores and placements, more advanced students are often understandably frustrated to learn that they will have to complete a semester of non-credit ESOL pre-requisite courses before being able to

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# A Message from Your MDTESOL Newsletter Editors

by Sarah Barnhardt and Chester Gates

It is customary to celebrate the new year at the same time each year. This year, most of the world adhered to that custom, except for Samoa. Samoa decided that it would move to the other side of the International Date Line, or move the International Date Line to the other side of Samoa. And it lost December 30, 2011 in the process.

Now, should you find yourself in Pago Pago, American Samoa humming Broadway show tunes from Annie, you'll need to add that tomorrow is not only a day away, but also about 1,950 miles away.

The world is an ever changeable place.

In this issue of you newsletter, we find more evidence of this fact. In Beyond Content: Creating a Classroom

Environment That Reduces Emotional Barriers, we find out how changing from the language learner to the language teacher brought with it some lessons on learning and teaching. Career Paths in TESOL: Repurposing the MA-TESOL Degree for the Best Jobs in the World! provides us with suggestions for careers other than classroom instruction. Assessment- Something to Think About may help to change your mind about the way you assess your students. Change is inevitable in our world. Let the new year begin.

Your Newsletter Editors,  
Sarah Barnhardt, [sbarnhardt@comcast.net](mailto:sbarnhardt@comcast.net)  
Chester Gates, [chester.gates@comcast.net](mailto:chester.gates@comcast.net)

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#### NEWSLETTER

Sarah Barnhardt  
[SBarnhardt@ccbcmd.edu](mailto:SBarnhardt@ccbcmd.edu)  
Chester Gates  
[chester.gates@comcast.net](mailto:chester.gates@comcast.net)

#### ADVOCACY

Erin Sullivan  
[ecsullivan@aacps.org](mailto:ecsullivan@aacps.org)

#### ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Misty Thomson  
[Misty\\_Thompson@hcpss.org](mailto:Misty_Thompson@hcpss.org)

Marianne Zmoda  
[mzmoda1@students.towson.edu](mailto:mzmoda1@students.towson.edu)

#### SECONDARY EDUCATION

Charity Durham  
[Charity\\_Durham@hcpss.org](mailto:Charity_Durham@hcpss.org)

#### HIGHER EDUCATION

Jacqueline Sumner  
[SumnerJR@pgcc.edu](mailto:SumnerJR@pgcc.edu)

#### ADULT EDUCATION

Jacqui Walpole  
[walpoljs@pgcc.edu](mailto:walpoljs@pgcc.edu)  
Charlotte Van Londen  
[cvanlonden@dllr.state.md.us](mailto:cvanlonden@dllr.state.md.us)

#### PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Vacant

#### TEACHER EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Adreon Hubbard  
[hubbardesol@gmail.com](mailto:hubbardesol@gmail.com)  
Kia McDaniel  
[kia.mcdaniel@pgcps.org](mailto:kia.mcdaniel@pgcps.org)

#### WEBMASTER

Sofia Marshak  
[sofia.marshak@gmail.com](mailto:sofia.marshak@gmail.com)

#### GRADUATE STUDIES LIAISON

Yeji Yoon  
[yjy0702@gmail.com](mailto:yjy0702@gmail.com)

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enroll in credit courses. Therefore, ALPESOL offers ESOL students a major incentive: the opportunity to complete ENGL 101 a semester earlier and earn credits while enrolled in non-credit ESOL courses (see figure 1 below).

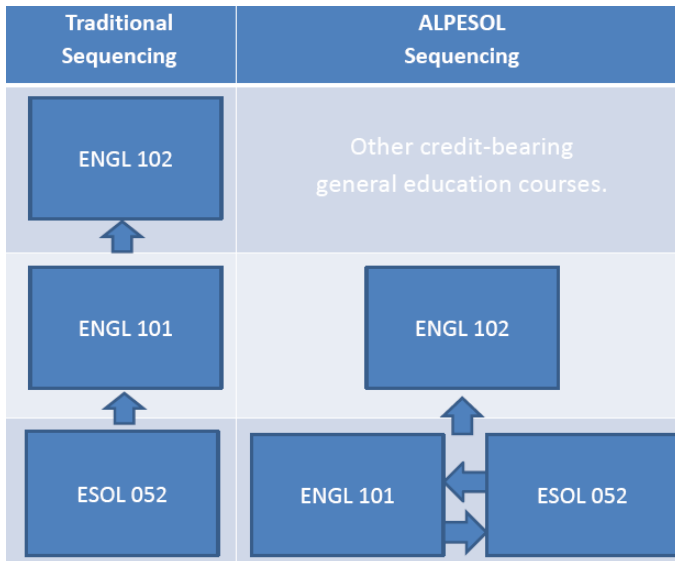


Figure 1: ALPESOL sequencing as compared to traditional ESOL to English sequencing.

ALPESOL is structured similarly to CCBC’s English ALP, in which twelve college-ready students in ENGL 101 are combined with eight developmental students in ENGL 052 to comprise a twenty-student section of ENGL 101. In ALPESOL, twelve ENGL 101 students (who are not international / ESOL students) are combined with eight ESOL students. The eight ESOL students meet with the same instructor in a second class (ESOL 052) immediately after the ENGL 101 course. In the traditional ESOL 052 to ENGL 101 two-semester sequence, there are eighteen to twenty students per course and two different instructors. In ALPESOL, as a one-semester concurrent / accelerated ESOL 052/ENGL 101, eight students take both courses together with the same instructor. In ENGL 101, the eight ESOL students are not identified as such unless they choose to discuss ALPESOL with their classmates.

ESOL 052 in the ALPESOL context functions somewhat differently than a traditional standalone section of ESOL 052. Though the objectives and topics on the ESOL 052 course outline are covered, the content in ENGL

101 is also emphasized. Students may ask questions and discuss challenges related to English 101, and the instructor may focus specifically on areas that he/she thinks will help students with English 101 and other credit courses, including process writing, academic essay structure, grammar, sentence structure and critical thinking. While students work on their essays for ENGL 101 in ESOL 052, they also complete four separate essays, all involving basic research and in-text citations, as well as shorter writings and in-class writings that are also graded. Students benefit from this structure because they are able to apply the skills they learn in ESOL 052 immediately to the work they are required to complete in ENGL 101.

Another benefit of ALPESOL has been the interaction between the American and the ESOL students. Although the ESOL students demonstrate some difficulty in the beginning, they uniformly express that having that first “guided” opportunity to be with native speakers as a strong positive. Perhaps even more surprising, the native speakers also express a strong positive reaction to interacting with international students in ALPESOL since it provides them with the opportunity to learn about different cultures and educational systems in other parts of the world.

The ALPESOL ESOL 052 also integrates and addresses non-cognitive factors, such as time management and personal issues, and students work together as a community. The small class size of only eight students helps to facilitate a community-like atmosphere. We are often asked how CCBC is able to offer a course with only eight students enrolled since most institutions need to enforce a minimum class size. ESOL 052 is six billable hours, and ALPESOL instructors receive five billable hours of pay for the class. Though this is a reduction in the instructor’s load, the small class size has made it worthwhile to those who have taught the ESOL 052 component of ALPESOL and, of course, since there are fewer students, there is less grading. Because of the small number of students and the sense of community that is built, instructors have found ALPESOL to be a very rewarding teaching experience.

When we first began contemplating offering an ESOL version of the English Accelerated Learning Program, we had some reservations. Given that the research

in Second Language Acquisition indicates that a certain amount of time is needed to develop cognitive academic language proficiency, we were worried that students would be shortchanged. We were not convinced that an accelerated model would work for all ESOL students, so we were hesitant about allowing any student with an ESOL 052 placement to enroll in ALPESOL. Therefore, we decided initially that we would restrict enrollment to World English Speakers, or to those students whose placement writing samples showed great promise, as determined by the coordinator. However, some students who did not fit these profiles were still able to enroll in ALPESOL and were highly successful. At the same time, we realized that it would be a challenge to restrict enrollment if we ever wanted to scale up ALPESOL. Therefore, after our initial pilot semester, we adopted the philosophy held by the English department with regard to the English ALP: we will not know which students are able to succeed unless we give all of them the chance to prove themselves. In subsequent semesters, ALPESOL has been comprised of a heterogeneous group of students with a variety of language and educational backgrounds. Some students who have successfully completed ALPESOL had even failed ESOL 052 once before. Though we realize that the traditional sequencing may work better for some students, we are convinced that all students should be given the opportunity to attempt this model if they have the desire to do so.

As with any new program, evaluation is paramount. As of the fall 2011 semester, the number of students who have completed ALPESOL is still small. Since four sections of ALPESOL have been offered thus far in the spring 2010, fall 2010, spring 2011 and fall 2011 semesters, a total of thirty-two students have completed ALPESOL on CCBC's Essex campus. Figure 2 provides an overview of student progress for all four semesters. The reasons for students' failures were diverse, but on the whole we were satisfied with the number of students who passed ALPESOL.

Passed English 101	22
Failed English 101	10
Passed ESOL 052	20
Failed ESOL 052	12

Figure 2: Student progress in ALPESOL from spring 2010 through fall 2011.

In addition, CCBC's Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation conducted a recent study which provided some promising findings. First, ALPESOL students consistently passed ENGL 101 at a 63% rate or higher across all three semesters (see figure 3 below). Of course, the number of ALPESOL students is very small, but it is a promising start. Success is also measured by examining how well students do in ENGL 102: College Composition II, for with ENGL 101 is a pre-requisite. All of the ALPESOL students who enrolled in ENGL 102 succeeded. In addition, the next semester retention rates for students who enrolled in ALPESOL were higher than the typical CCBC retention rate. In the future, we also want to compare the success rates of the ALPESOL students with students who took a standalone section of ESOL 052 and are matched to the ALPESOL student in various ways. We realize that the data will become more meaningful once we are able to examine the success rates of an ALPESOL cohort both in ALPESOL and multiple credit courses with those of a similar cohort who did not take ALPESOL. Therefore, once ALPESOL has been offered for several more semesters, we will be able to analyze longitudinal data.

	ALPESOL Students	All CCBC Students
Spring 2010	63%	60%
Fall 2010	75%	64%
Spring 2011	63%	61%
Fall 2011	75%	Still to be determined

Figure 3: A comparison of success rates in ENGL 101 for ALPESOL students and all CCBC students (success was defined as a grade of A, B or C).

Though ALPESOL has demonstrated promise thus far, as with any pilot of a new program, there have also been challenges with offering ALPESOL. First, even though the success rates were decent, students still found the content of ALPESOL to be challenging. The two biggest content-related challenges for students were grammar and essay organization. Another challenge, surprisingly, was the discrepancies in pass rates between the two courses in ALPESOL; some students saw this as an opportunity to focus on ENGL 101 without putting much effort into ESOL 052. Further, there were challenges with offering a model that involves



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***Spring 2012***

***5th Graduate Student Mini-Conference***

Dear Graduate Students,

A Mini-Conference specifically for Graduate Students studying ESOL is organized annually by Maryland TESOL and UMBC. The 5th Graduate Student Mini-Conference will be held March 3, 2012.

This is a great opportunity for graduate students to gain experience in organizing and presenting at an academic conference. It also allows graduate students to practice on their presentation skills. Graduate students who have previously presented have found this experience to be advantageous when preparing for bigger events such as the annual TESOL International Conference. It is an opportunity to showcase student work in your ESOL Graduate programs.

The deadline for proposal submission is *February 10, 2012*.  
Presentation acceptance notice will be sent *February 20, 2012*.

So, think of projects you've done on your own or with a classmate, or dig up some great work you did that you would like to share!

What: Spring 2012 5<sup>th</sup> Graduate Student Mini-Conference  
When: March 3, 2012  
Where: University of Maryland, Baltimore County

**Please see attached files in this PDF document.**  
**- Presentation**  
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Areas of interest might include, but are not limited to:

Second Language Acquisition	Research Papers	Course Projects
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Please note that there will be a \$5.00 conference registration fee for conference attendees. There will be no registration fee for presenters.

Registration will take place on-site at which time refreshments will be served.

If you plan to attend the Spring 2012 Graduate Student Mini-Conference, please e-mail Yeji Yoon, at [yyoon1@umbc.edu](mailto:yyoon1@umbc.edu).



## What Works Adult Education: My Resource Reflections on the Music of Grammer in the Higher Education Classroom

By Margaret Austin Smith

“Oh, I hate that,” my colleague moaned, leaning on the hay- in “hate” with a weary sigh. The that in question was a grammatical construction I had not encountered in my previous TESOL experiences: from as a noun, linked to a country of origin on the other side of a being verb. My from is...Bolivia, El Salvador, Peru, Guatemala. “I don’t know where they get it from,” my colleague continued. “It’s not like they have ever heard it from a native speaker.” And there our conversation ended. The native speakers had spoken, and they never did say My from is.

I was 24 years old, and I had come from ESOL in higher education to an ESOL adult literacy classroom. White, middle class, and privileged with access to credentials, to a career I loved and identified with, and to a car to get me to and from it all, I stood in front of students, many of whom were decades my senior, many of whom worked multiple jobs, many of whom rode multiple buses to get to those jobs and even more buses to get to our class. Many of them communicated in multiple languages, including English, which they learned by listening to and engaging with people. What they needed from our class was support in, and practice with, the codes of the written English language.

As semesters went on, I cavalierly kept on asking the question that elicited the my from is answer – a question that was all too simple for me: Where are you from? And with the unwitting ease that comes from privilege, I would model the grammatical response: “I am from North Carolina.” But in the rest of my everyday life as a professional, credentialed native speaker, I could be from North Carolina, and all that that entails in terms of accent, word choice, and

rhythm. Many of my students had lived in the vicinity of our DC metro area school far longer than I had. They had families here—children, grandchildren, friends, co-workers, and religious communities. The choice between country of origin and country of residence was a false one. Their “from” was

something multiple and hybrid and complex – too personal to fit into a prepositional phrase. Grammar bends for identity.

I am back in higher education now, where my students’ English may represent years of study of British standards or may represent the experience of teenage

years lived with the label EFL/ELL. Their words and the grammar with which they present them convey something of their experiences, just as the words and grammar of native speakers do. There is beauty in this, and so as much as I can, I try to teach grammar with something beautiful: grammar through music.

Let’s say we’re studying “going to” to express the future. We could start with Michael Jackson’s “Man in the Mirror”:

I’m gonna make a change/For once in my life/It’s gonna feel real good, gonna make a difference/ Gonna make it right.

We’ll listen to the song, and then focus in on the “gonnas”: “Have you heard someone say this before?” I’ll ask, eliciting examples and writing their gonna-statements on the board. We’ll talk about the rhythm of speech and contractions. I’ll ask them to consider what it would sound like if Michael Jackson sang it like the textbook says it. And the students may have a good laugh at the stiltedness of cramming the extra syllables needed for “I’m going to make a change...”



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coordination between ESOL and English, which are two different departments, Advising and Records and Registration, and requires the ESOL and English

program coordinators to find instructors with appropriate experience in both ESOL and college composition. Most significant, however, have been scheduling challenges, which have presented the largest barrier to scaling up ALPESOL thus far since an instructor must dedicate nine hours (6 for ESOL 052 and 3 for ENGL 101) when teaching this model.

In the spring 2012 semester, two sections of ALPESOL will be offered on the Essex campus and one section will be offered on the Catonsville campus, which represents our largest attempt to scale up to date. CCBC's plan is to continue to collect and analyze data in order to determine whether this program helps improve retention and ultimately success for ESOL students. Of course, ALPESOL is only in its pilot phase, so it will be difficult to generalize findings until more students have completed the program so that their progress can be studied longitudinally.

To conclude, though this is a new initiative, it appears already that there are many benefits to ALPESOL. Since students can earn college credit while enrolled in ESOL courses, ALPESOL provides a great deal of motivation. It allows students to move more quickly into credit courses. While many students often begin ALPESOL stating that they don't need the ESOL 052 course, almost 100% have stated upon completion that without the ESOL 052 ALPESOL companion course, they would not have passed the ENGL 101 class. Our hope is that eventually, we will be able to offer more sections of ALPESOL, and that it will have a positive impact on student success, retention and ultimately completion.

into those phrases. And with that awareness, we'll look at the statements on the board and in Jackson's lyrics, and practice editing them as if we were going to put them in a textbook.

We could use the same song to study the present progressive. We'll discuss how "change" that Jackson mentions is a process – the change itself may be in the future, but he's starting to make it now. I'll elicit examples of other processes so that we can construct examples of expressing what's happening now in that process. Other student favorites have included Tracy Chapman's "Change" for conditional clauses, Tina Turner's "Simply the Best" for irregular comparative and superlative adjective forms, and the Dirty Dancing theme, "I've Had the Time of My Life" for present perfect. And while my grammar classroom is not The Muppet Show, often our lessons include laughter and singing.

All speakers (and writers) – "native," multilingual, monolingual, artists, technicians – use grammar to express identity and to express how they see their relationships to those with whom they speak. Where people are coming from shows up in their words and in the ways those words are structured. Students see and hear this in their everyday lives outside the classroom. Music and lyrics are one way of not simply bringing these relationships into the classroom, but bring them into the center of the classroom. And perhaps in doing so developing with students the grammar that expresses where they are coming from.

Margaret Austin Smith teaches at Prince George's Community College and the University of Maryland at College Park. Her email address is [mrmas@umd.edu](mailto:mrmas@umd.edu).

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sent my mind racing. Spanish grammar tumbled and jumbled around in my head, refusing to turn itself right side up. And for the most part, I reacted by saying as little as possibly necessary. I quickly ranked myself as one of the worst Spanish speakers in my cohort of classmates and simply allowed others to speak for me whenever possible.

In every class that I teach, I assume there is at least one student who feels as anxious about delving into the English-speaking world, as I felt in Nicaragua. Studies have documented that emotional barriers can be as limiting to language acquisition as learning disabilities. Therefore, in my classroom, through intentional games, activities and organization, I strive to create an amicable, collaborative environment.

We begin with the first day of class. Along with the usual listing of expectations and review of the syllabus, my goal is that we learn each other's names and find some similarities. Going through names becomes more fun when there is a challenge attached, such as having to remember all of them. So I introduce the idea of a picnic where everyone has to bring something to share – a potluck picnic. Students must bring an item that begins with the same letter as their first name. As we go around the room, participants say their name and item, as well as all the names and items that came before them. As well as being fun, students begin developing camaraderie by helping each other to think of appropriate items and remember the names from before. And of course, by the end, everyone knows classmates names, especially the instructor.

To begin to know something more about each other, as well as use language in a relaxed setting, we play a game such as “A Big Wind Blows.” The class forms a circle with chairs, leaving one participant without a chair. That person stands in the middle and says something that is true for him or herself, such as “A big wind blows for people with brown hair.” Everyone with brown hair must then stand up and find another seat. Meanwhile, the person from the middle grabs a seat and leaves someone else standing. The themes eventually move from the less obvious to the more personal, such as jobs, family make-up,



and likes/dislikes. I try to remember some of the information and draw from it as I teach to reinforce the connections between students.

Throughout the life of a class, I try to develop an environment in which students look to each other for help and in which students are a resource for each other. I ask students to share contact information with each other for this very purpose. As well, I encourage students to meet up outside of class, whether it be physically or virtually, to discuss homework and assignments. In class, I form groups of three or four, each balanced with both stronger and weaker students, which gather to go over completed assignments before we talk about them as a class. While students are in these small groups, I circulate to make myself available and to listen in on what topics draw discussion. Then as a class, we only talk about the items that could not be resolved in the small groups. This system allows for students to take ownership of the learning process, share what they know with their classmates and permits the class to focus on the largest issues or questions.

In Nicaragua, it wasn't a teacher or a classroom that finally untied my tongue. It was a month-long scenario in which Spanish was the only vehicle that would get me from point A to point B and a patient woman who listened without judgment. It is this second element that I hope to recreate for my students.



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## Career Paths in TESOL: Repurposing the MA-TESOL Degree for the Best Jobs in the World!

By Debra Suarez, Ph.D.

A Master's degree in TESOL is a passport to some of the best jobs in the world.

However, many with a background in TESOL do not envision the many opportunities available to them. Part of the reason is that oftentimes MA-TESOL programs do not provide graduates with adequate information about the rich diversity of career paths open to them. Further, the information is widespread over several different fields and career environments, so getting the information can take enormous time, research and effort.

A reduced view of one's career potential can have negative effects, such as limiting long-term professional growth, reducing one's ability to respond to economic pressures, restricting the capacity to dream, not to mention lessening the profession and limiting the good one can do in the world.

This article briefly outlines diverse career paths in the US and abroad. Whether looking for a change from classroom teaching in the US, preparing for semi-retirement, looking for increase in salary, considering alternative ways to positively influence education or hoping to live the life of a jet-setter, TESOL professionals can "repurpose" their MA-TESOL degree, experience and other credentials.

Repurposing is increasing one's vision of the usefulness of one's degree and experience, beyond initial expectations, surface prospects and false limitations. A first step in repurposing the TESOL degree (and/or TESOL experience) is to consider the *nature* of the

TESOL/TEFL field, its overall values, mission and foundational theories. When doing so, it becomes clear that a TESOL professional actually has the education and experience for many career paths in educational institutions – and beyond. For example, the MA TESOL curriculum includes not only methods courses, but also courses dealing with evaluation, assessment, research,

materials writing, curriculum planning, cultural diversity and technology. Understanding the content of one's training and the finer-points of that training helps to illuminate the range of knowledge that one already possesses.

In addition to reconsidering the nature of the TESOL degree and experience,

professionals can also reexamine their *motives* for entering the TESOL field in the first place. For example, we are often led to a career in TESOL by desires to do good for the community and students, to work with persons of different languages and cultures, and to plan, organize and implement positive educational experiences. This motivation can be satisfied in many ways.

Finally, it is important to *reassess* one's experience from different perspectives. For example, teachers, in general, and teachers of ESL, in particular, often develop highly-sought skills in organization, planning, cross-cultural communication, conflict resolution, materials writing, and project management, in addition to continued development of content expertise.

Repurposing the TESOL degree and experience helps to illuminate career paths that are open not only in the world of education, but also in the worlds of business,



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publishing, government work, administration, the private sector, and entrepreneurship – in the United States and around the globe.

A background in TESOL prepares teachers, managers, administrators, business leaders, and entrepreneurs for work environments that are multilingual, multi-literate and multicultural, both in the US and abroad. A background in TESOL grooms workforce leaders to provide leadership for organizations as they respond to urgent challenges, such as the needs for English pedagogy and curriculum, employee language proficiency, and other language and cultural needs that exist in today's business environments and educational contexts, in the US and abroad. A background in TESOL cultivates workforce leaders for international opportunities, and global development contexts. Career paths include teaching, administration, business and marketing, publishing, local, state, and federal government, international governments, development agencies.

There are three key avenues in which these opportunities exist: in the US, in other countries, and in US-systems abroad. In navigating these avenues and revealing the potential opportunities, it is important to consider one's education, from all perspectives and directions – in comparison to the many contexts and situations existing around the world. For example, a TESOL background prepares one to not only teach children or adults within the US, but also to teach in US-systems abroad, such as Binational schools, Department of Defense Schools, International Schools, or any elementary or secondary program abroad that follows the US curriculum and requires the US-established standards and credentials of teacher preparation for employment.

Further, a background in TESOL is an asset if one wishes to work in business in the US and abroad or in global development, as managers or administrators in multicultural and multilingual environments. Global development environments include work supported by the US Department of State, USAID, the United Nations, and private development or business firms.

Entrepreneurship is another less-travelled, but possibly lucrative and satisfying path. TESOL professionals start their own language schools and teacher training

institutes. Others have started their own consulting firms in US and abroad, providing consulting services to schools, universities and ministries of education. Still others are taking advantage of web-based environments and electronic publishing and are creating profitable TESOL/TEFL-focused publications and knowledge-banks.

Career paths in US businesses and private, state and federal organizations include curriculum developer and materials writer with academic publishers, adult ESL teacher in private institutions, manager or administrator in private agencies focused on serving immigrant populations, and manager or administrator in state agencies of education. Positions also include that as manager, administrator, program analyst, training specialist with the US State Department, US Department of Education, Department of Defense, USAID, Peace Corp and other Federal Agencies. Positions also include that as administrator in employee relations, with emphasis in cultural diversity and development manager for meeting needs of linguistically and culturally diverse workforce.

Career paths in adult education include adult ESL teacher in US community colleges, adult ESL teacher in four-year college's Intensive English Language Programs (IELPs), administrative assistant for community college ESL programs, administrative assistant for college's IELPs, as well as MA programs.

Career paths in international education contexts include EFL K-12 teacher abroad, EFL adult teacher abroad, professor of TESOL (MA programs) in international universities, educational specialist for ministries of education abroad, and EFL teacher-trainer abroad.

During the course of repurposing degrees and experience and during the course of exploring the diverse career paths, it is critical *to focus on finding satisfaction within the profession*, rather than focusing on a job title. I've interviewed several TESOL professionals during the course of this research, and they have shared this insight in several ways:

Craig, a teacher in upstate NY shared, *"I like to see the learning process in action. When my students use English more, ask more questions, and start to*





# Elementary Ed: Assessment - Something to Think About

By Misty D. Shappell and Marianne Zmoda-Elementary IS Co-Chairs

As WIDA ACCESS for ELL's (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners) approaches, the topic of assessment quite clearly is front of mind for educators. ACCESS measures growth and progress for English Language Learners (ELLs) and exceeds assessment guidelines previously set by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The multi-purpose criteria of this ELL assessment is clear: to determine whether learning accommodations are needed, to evaluate the effectiveness of ESL/bilingual programs, to identify the English Language Proficiency (ELP) level of the learner as set by WIDA, and to provide information for instruction.

As many passionate teachers profess, one high-stakes test is not the final word on assessment. Given this, have you analyzed the variety of assessments that you're using these days? How can we vary our assessments to ensure we are capturing the maximum amount of data that can lead to effective instruction? Some points to consider include the following:

## What's the big deal with assessment beyond ACCESS?

Educators operate in the time of accountability, and we can choose to fight it or embrace it. In a recent article by Vicky Giouroukakis and Andrea Honigsfeld (2011), the authors describe the challenges of meeting new high-stake assessment standards and the effects of these assessments on ELLs.

Specifically, ELLs will be assessed on texts across content areas. This includes Social Studies, which may be unfamiliar to them if they have only lived in the United States for a short time. In fact, ELLs very often are allowed no determined accommodations (pg. 6). If you can think of assessment in some of the terms below, you might find that your teaching will encompass assessment with open arms. Assessment is an essential tool because:

1. You discover a more thorough profile of your learners
2. You set teaching goals more accurately.

3. You are better informed during collaboration with classroom teachers.
4. You have accurate data with which to base grades, progress reports, and comments.
5. You know what accommodations would be appropriate.
6. You can anticipate vocabulary and grammar needs.
7. You can provide feedback on student learning and can set new priorities and goals.

Sometimes, the hardest part is knowing what is being assessed and why? Let's break down the "Why?" into two simple categories:

1. Assessment for Learning and
2. Assessment of Learning.

## Assessment for Learning

Formative Assessments. These assessments serve a variety of purposes. First, they help to gauge what students already know about a given topic. Second, they allow you to decide on appropriate accommodations and provide you information about student readiness levels. Third, they allow you to measure progress on a given skill by providing baseline data. Finally, they allow you to track student progress throughout a unit.

The WIDA standards themselves are divided into two distinct frameworks: formative and summative. According to the Resource Guide for WIDA English Language Proficiency, formative framework objectives are designed to guide "...student learning and teacher instruction on an ongoing basis. The Formative Framework is intended to capture those aspects of instruction that are less typically measured by a test but are important to teaching and learning. For example, interactive support within the Formative Framework gives students opportunities to work as partners or in small groups, receive immediate feedback from peers or teachers, engage in self-assessment during long-term projects, and integrate technology into their assignments."

*continued on page 13*



### **What do these kinds of assessments look like?**

Anecdotal notes and records, observation, dialogue journals, TPR responses, role plays, thumbs up, thumbs down, exit tickets, dictation, pinch cards, white board responses, and sorting are all examples of formative assessments.

### **Assessment of Learning**

**Summative Assessments.** These assessments are excellent for providing a final analysis regarding a student's mastery of assigned objectives. Summative assessments include all of your county-based assessments, high-stakes tests, and unit exams. These may also include quizzes. Other summative assessments may include presentations and final writing projects. A key criterion here is that students understand the assessment. Do they understand the rubric ahead of time? Students at this level of assessment should be aware that someone is assessing their work/progress.

According to the WIDA Language Proficiency Standards Resource Guide, summative assessments are used to "describe the outcomes of learning...and demonstrate their developing English language proficiency over an extended period of time." The notable difference between the formative and summative indicators is the level of scaffolding available to a student at the time of a task. While a formative assessment may allow for work with a partner, or use of realia; a summative assessment may take some of these scaffolds away to assess the abilities of the student independently.

Don't forget the tried-and-true classroom assessments that are used by all teachers in the building. Spelling tests, benchmark reading assessments, and unit tests all are great options for summative assessments of ELLs. Of course, you may want to make appropriate modifications for language proficiency if you are assessing content. Keep in mind that many of these summative assessments can be formative in nature. For example, a benchmark assessment just as easily can become an informal running record assessment to serve as a diagnostic tool for future instruction. During this casual, two-minute running record, you may realize that a student has difficulty with long vowel sounds. Voila—you have your lesson topic for the next week!

Another note about content vs. language assessments: Don't reinvent the wheel. Many of our language objectives are assessed in the general education classroom. Use those assessments already being given as an opportunity to gain valuable information about student skills. Most often, more than one skill is being tested at once. For example, in kindergarten, students have been learning about comparing numbers using the language of "greater than" and "less than." Students are asked to point to the number that is less than another number. Then, they are asked to tell the teacher about the numbers using the words less or greater. Hence, you have just assessed the mathematical concept, the ability to follow a one step direction, and the ability to describe numbers using appropriate vocabulary in a sentence or short phrase. Simple assessments like these happen all of the time in any classroom—the key is to recognize and plan for these moments.

### **The Role of Portfolios**

As assessment standards begin to change, the role of portfolios becomes even more crucial. Whether the portfolio is a notebook, journal, binder, or folder with written work; the benefits are tremendous. At our Interest Section meeting at MDTESOL in October, participants discussed the benefits of portfolios at length. Students take tremendous pride in seeing their work as a collection. You may choose to give students the authority to choose their own portfolio pieces. Students experience success because the process is easily differentiated. Portfolios serve as an excellent artifact to share with parents and administrators who are curious about a particular student. Students can also use portfolios as a means of self-assessment. Personally, we have seen great success with student goal-setting based on the work contained in ESOL notebooks. The notebooks serve as a constant source of reference to monitor learning and growth.

Portfolios and other benchmarks are not only important assessment tools for students but, soon enough, for teachers as well. The new evaluation systems created by the state of Maryland will use high-stakes as well as instructional assessments to gauge teacher effectiveness.

*combine sentences in both speaking and writing, while understanding more in reading and listening, I know that something good is taking place.”*

Pani, an ESL teacher in India shared, *“Damn, I hate everything of my job but love everything about my profession!”*

And Kari, a college EFL instructor in Turkey shared, *“I love to experience different things in my profession. I learn from my students, colleagues and environment around me. I love to teach with new and innovative ideas... so that my students can learn easily and can remember for whole life.”*

While becoming a classroom teacher may be the reason for initially entering the TESOL field, there are actually many additional rich ways to enjoy being in the profession and to contribute to the field. I hope this brief article has opened-up avenues for further exploration. A professional background in TESOL truly is a passport to the world. I wish you well on your journeys.

Note: This article is based on Dr. Suarez’s presentation given at the 2011 MDTESOL Annual Conference.

Author: Dr. Debra Suarez is Executive Director for the Thorne Institute for Education and International Development. [suarez@debrasuarez.com](mailto:suarez@debrasuarez.com)

## The Role of Grades

What about grades? Summative assessments are more appropriate for giving grades because they measure student progress toward a taught skill. In a standards based assessment environment, the hope is that your report card and progress reports can reflect those standards and the degree to which a student has achieved that standard. Rubrics are extremely helpful for articulating standards. To wit, it may be helpful to begin to consider the criteria used most frequently in the WIDA standards: linguistic complexity, language control, and vocabulary usage.

Assessment is a critical component, but it need not be a point of stress. When we focus on the many avenues for assessment, our eyes are opened to the unique ways we can know our learners. While the high-stakes, large-scale assessments loom over us, we have the ability to understand our students, provide feedback, and guide instruction on a daily basis through alternate modes of assessment. A paper and pencil test is only the tip of the iceberg—now you’re prepared to dive deeper. The key question that remains is: how will you assess your students today?

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## In Memoriam | Dr. Paul K. Taylor, Ph.D.

*By Philip Knighton, Asst. Director of English Language Learning, Anne Arundel Community College*

On November 8, 2011, Dr. Paul K. Taylor Ph.D., a well known ESL administrator and teacher, died suddenly. Paul was born in Newport, RI. He attended St. Joseph's Elementary School, Rogers High School and the University of Rhode Island. He received a M. A. in English from Rhode Island College and a Ph. D in Education and Human Development from Peabody College, Vanderbilt University. He was a Teaching Fellow and received a Masters' degree in TESOL at The American University in Cairo, Egypt from 1985 to 1988.

Paul began working at UMBC in the English Language Center in 1998 as an instructor in an international English teacher training program. He quickly became the academic coordinator for the Egyptian Teacher Leader Program at UMBC which, each semester, welcomed 90 Egyptian teachers of English, math and science for an intense semester of professional development and cultural exchange activities. Having spent years living in Egypt and learning Arabic, Paul was always eager to meet and work with the Egyptian teachers, and they appreciated having an instructor who loved their country and culture. Dr. Taylor went on to become the Academic Director of the English Language Institute, where he continued to teach students from around the world at all levels, and he also taught English composition for the international students at UMBC. Beverly Bickel, the former Director of the English Language Center, recalls, "Paul was a beloved instructor. He was a wonderfully collaborative colleague, a gentle and calm presence at the ELC, and a dedicated advocate for students and teachers learning to live and study in new cultural locations." A long time colleague and friend, Elsa Collins said, "He was a marvelous mentor and inspiration for all of us who worked with him."

Paul was the ESL Curriculum Coordinator at Anne Arundel Community College from 2001



to 2005. He supervised rewriting the curriculum for the English for Academic Purposes program formalizing the competencies, objectives and performance assessment tasks for each course. Paul expanded the ESL adult community-based program offering classes in more locations increasing considerably the number of adults learning English. He was well known for his dry sense of humor. A long meeting was "like watching paint dry" and on leaving the office he would say, "Last one out, turn off the lights and put out the cat."

He leaves a cherished cousin, Adele Bowley, a brother Robert Taylor and his beloved friend, Richard Cerullo. Paul is also survived by an uncle and several cousins. He also leaves his three cats Truman, Mike and Miss Cleo, who are bewildered by his absence. A memorial service was held at the McCully-Polyniak Funeral Home in South Baltimore on November 12th.





# Photo Highlights From MDTESOL Fall Conference 2011



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The Vendor Area at the Conference



Workshop: Listening, the Cinderella Skill Often Neglected



Brock Brady, Plenary Speaker and TESOL International Association's Past President



David Wizer, Chair of Towson University's Department of Educational Technology and Literacy



Dr. John Nelson, 2011 Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient



Gilda Martinez, President of MDTESOL



Workshop: Motivating Your Adult Learners



Mamiko Nakata, MDTESOL Past President



The Vendor Area at the Conference



Laura Hook, MDTESOL Conference Program Chair



Margaret Golibersuch introduces John Nelson



Workshop: Fun with Foldables, Alternative Assessment Ideas for Your Classroom