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Don't miss an opportunity to publish in your professional newsletter!!!

Contact the newsletter editors at

eslsnoke@vt.edu

llbohonatkin@vcu.edu

Next newsletter deadline is December 1, 2010.

VATESOL's annual conference is October 2, 2010 at Mary Washington University in Fredericksburg

Message from the President

Dear Colleagues,

Since Jen Kuchno has stepped down as VATESOL president and embarked on a new teaching journey in Dubai, UAE, I am wearing the president's hat a bit sooner than I had anticipated. I'm excited to assume my new responsibilities! Please let me introduce myself. I consider myself a career educator, having been in the teaching field since 1980 and having taught middle school, high school, adult education and higher education. I started my teaching career as a middle school French teacher in Prince William County in 1980, and from there went on to teach in Minnesota and Indiana. I have been back in Virginia teaching ESL since 1992, first in adult education and then at the community college level, where I now serve as the ESL program coordinator at J. Sargeant Reynolds. I have been involved in VATESOL for the past five years and have been happy to be part of such a diverse and vibrant organization.

Whether you were able to travel to exotic places this summer or simply stayed close to home enjoying some down time with a good book



or with friends and family, I hope that you've returned to school with your batteries recharged. As we start up the new school year and get ready for our annual fall conference, I have asked members to share their most memorable experiences teaching ESL/ESOL. Please check out some of these memories in this edition. Some will bring smiles to your faces, others tears to your eyes. Regardless of the emotions that are evoked, these memories serve as reminders as to why we love our profession.

We are gearing up for what promises to be a very energizing annual conference. If you have not already done so, I encourage you to register for this one-day conference, which will be held at the University of Mary Washington, Stafford Campus, on Saturday, October 2. Renowned

**continued on page 2 –
President's message)**

2009-2010 Officers

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Leslie Bohon

(Message from the President – continued from page 1)

author of the *Anguished English* series, **Richard Lederer**, will take us on a joy ride through the English language in his keynote address. The day will be packed with a variety of inspiring workshops that fully represent our constituency. Those seeking more knowledge about technology might want to check out *Tried and True Technology* or *Creative Ways to use Discussion Board*. Three groups will form a panel on how to incorporate graphic literacy into reading classes. Another panel will share experiences forming learning communities to bridge students from ESL to academic courses at the college level. *Using Music to Build the Class Community* and *International Cooperative Games* will certainly revitalize teachers of all levels. We even have a presenter coming from Ecuador who will share his expertise on cognates. The complete schedule can be found on the VATESOL website.

There are a couple of changes to the VATESOL board. Melinda Leitner (Henrico County Public Schools) is slated to assume the Elementary Education SIG leader position and Angelique Clarke (Chesterfield County Public Schools) is slated to take on the Secondary Education SIG leader role. I'd like to thank previous elementary SIG, Margaret Whitt, and secondary SIGs, Margaret Overton and Christine Urynowicz, for their service. At the fall conference business meeting, the membership will vote on the slate of officers.

After the fall conference, we will continue our work preparing for the SETESOL regional conference, to be held October 13-15, 2011, in Richmond. Many volunteers will be needed to pull off this event, so if you have any interest in helping out, please contact conference chair, Lily Mir-Jahangiri. Our next newsletter will have more information about this big event.

I look forward to meeting you at the October conference!

Laurie Weinberg
VATESOL President-Elect

Annual VATESOL Fall Conference – Saturday, October 2, 2010

University of Mary Washington
College of Graduate and Professional Studies
Fredericksburg, VA

Theme: "Rekindling Our Joy of Language Teaching"

Our keynote speaker for the Annual Conference: Richard Lederer

Richard Lederer is the author of more than 30 books about language, history, and humor, including his best-selling *Anguished English* series and his current book, *Presidential Trivia*. He has been profiled in magazines as diverse as *The New Yorker*, *People*, and the *National Enquirer* and frequently appears on radio as a commentator on language. Dr. Lederer's syndicated column, "Looking at Language," appears in newspapers and magazines throughout the United States. He has been named International Punster of the Year and Toastmasters International's Golden Gavel winner.

Send information
and concerns to
your SIG Chairs!
Use emails below.

Special Interest Group (SIG) News

Teacher Ed/Program Admin SIG
Message from Jo Tyler, jtyler@umw.edu

A MUST-READ FOR PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS: The Ecology of English Language Programming A Book Review by Jo Tyler

A new book released this summer provides an excellent description of what it takes to manage a successful English language support program in a 4-year university. *Language Program Leadership in a Changing World: An Ecological Model*, by Martha C. Pennington and Barbara J. Hoekje, is a comprehensive treatise on the multifaceted job of running a successful English language program for international students. It is the first volume in a series entitled “Innovation and Leadership in English Language Teaching.”

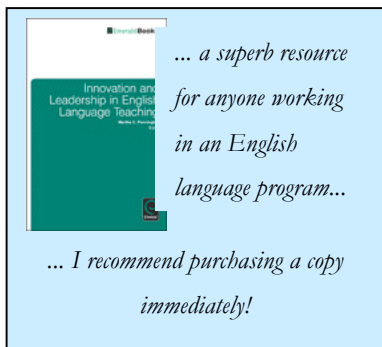
As mentioned in the title, the authors take an ecological approach to their topic. They explain their approach as follows:

“[L]anguage programs and the leadership of those programs are ecological in nature—that is, they consist of a complex, interrelated set of components and areas of performance and decision-making involving tangible and intangible assets—such as faculty, students, revenues, curriculum, mission, and reputation—which interact in multiple ways with each other and with the larger context in which the program is situated. Change over time is the main feature of an ecology. ... The goal is a continuously interacting and unified whole” (p. 15).

The ecology metaphor allows the authors to demonstrate how each element of the program and the educational context in which the program is situated interact. It is a useful model for decision-making in an established English language program (ELP), and a necessary resource for anyone in the position of developing a new program.

This book is divided into three main parts with three chapters in each part. Part I, “The Context,” deals with all of the contexts in which an ELP may be considered: international, academic, institutional, economic, etc. Part II addresses “The People,” students, faculty, and leaders. Part III is entitled “The Potential,” and focuses on how programs are developed initially and evolve over time.

Chapter 1 of the book, “The Language Program in a Changing World,” addresses the international context in which an ELP exists, and sets forth the framework for the rest of the volume. The theme of change introduced here is a major part of the ecological model, since any change in one part of an ecology impacts the development and survival of other parts.



Chapter 2, entitled “The Language Program Ecology,” further develops this ecological theme. Beginning with a discussion of the “organic nature of organizations,” the authors then outline the main components of a language program: People (students, faculty, administration, etc.); Things (records, offices, classrooms, materials, equipment, financial resources, etc.); and Processes (teaching and learning, hiring and training, record-keeping, budgeting, marketing and recruitment, etc.). This chapter includes a valuable discussion of “program intangibles,” such as its mission, vision, and institutional character.

Chapter 3 is entitled “Situating the Language Program.” The authors define the situation in terms of “the larger institutional context and in terms of organizational structure and mission” (p. 63). A major part of this chapter probes the more political situations and advocacy roles that ELP leaders may find themselves in. For example, they begin the chapter by noting that “A language program has a dual nature as both an academic and a business enterprise” (p. 63). The conflicts that arise from this dual function are the focus of the chapter.

Chapter 4 addresses “The Students.” It begins with a section on cultural differences, and then proceeds to discuss issues of practical administrative concern, such as visas, student status, housing, orientation, advising, and counseling. This chapter concludes with a section on how students influence the ecology of the ELP: “These may involve program structure, functioning, and budget, and they may affect the roles and jobs of faculty, staff, and others who articulate with the program” (p. 125).

Chapter 5 is about “The Faculty.” From the opening observation that “Teaching is a complex professional activity that takes place in complex ecosystems and that requires judgment and customization to meet the needs of a constantly changing stream of students in a changing world” (p. 131), the chapter discusses the faculty’s role as affecting and affected by the larger program context. There is an impressive section about professionalism and the development of pedagogical, linguistic, and research skills. Several suggestions are discussed for ways that the program leader can build and maintain motivation of teachers, and the leader’s roles in advocacy for faculty as well as in conducting formative faculty evaluations are also detailed.

Chapter 6, entitled “The Leadership,” provides a review of scholarly literature on organizational management to provide the research base for the entire book. As the authors explain in the chapter’s opening, they “have focused on the role of leadership of people and in specific contexts and the importance of managing for change” (p. 169), rather than on presenting a simple set of traits or skills found in effective leaders. As such, they present a comprehensive and thoughtful discussion of transformational leadership because, as they point out, “leadership is always leading change” (p. 204). One of the intriguing sections of this chapter is a comparison and contrast of the ELP director’s role with the traditional academic department chair’s role. Finally, they emphasize the importance of professional development for program leaders. As programs grow and evolve over time, leaders must be given meaningful opportunities to grow professionally as well.

Chapter 7 is about “Curriculum Development.” It presents curriculum as a process rather than a product—a process which is a constant cycle of innovation, implementation, monitoring, reflection and feedback. The authors emphasize the importance of communication and teamwork in the curriculum development process. Within their ecological model for ELPs, “curricular innovation and contextualization of change are fundamental aspects of the constant negotiation between the changing external environment and the program-internal environment as well as the continual adjustments and fine-tuning of resources and activities within the program itself” (pp. 237-238).

Chapter 8, “Program Development,” covers initial creation of ELPs as well as developmental change in established programs, and focuses on the role of the leader in these processes. It even has a section on downsizing and other issues related to the unpredictability of the global marketplace and the institutional context of the ELP. One comprehensive section of this chapter deals with program evaluation—not only the structured evaluation that

The publisher is planning a second volume in the series entitled Service, Satisfaction and Climate: Perspectives on Management in English Language Teaching due for release later in 2010.

occurs with review by accrediting bodies, but more importantly the ongoing evaluation of the program that is essential to quality and growth. The authors stress the unifying potential of program evaluation—“an impetus for bringing people together physically and philosophically, and for uniting them in their goals, their purposes, and their [behaviors]” (Pennington, 1998, as cited in Pennington & Hoekje, 2010, p. 263).

Chapter 9, “Leading into the Future,” focuses on the role of ELPs and their leaders in a future where English is an international language. The authors point out that in this future, “the varieties, purposes, norms, and contexts for language use” will undergo unforeseen yet inevitable changes (p. 209). They are quick to add, however, that in spite of globalization, there is an increasing “localization” of English, as different communities adapt English to their own language, purposes, and culture. Another area of change expected to impact ELPs and English as an international language is greater use of technology as well as the changes that technology itself will undergo. There is a growing literature in the field of technology and language learning which is well synthesized in this chapter.

On the whole, *Language Program Leadership in a Changing World: An Ecological Model* is a superb resource for anyone working in an ELP. It is full of sound research and convincing arguments to support the needs of ELPs, their students and staff. I recommend purchasing a copy immediately for inclusion in your program’s resource collection or placing an order through your university library. There are only a few minor revisions that I would like to see in this book to make it more inclusive and versatile. First, it has virtually nothing to say about language programs in Community Colleges, yet this is one of the greatest areas of growth of ELPs in the United States. Second, I feel that there should be at least a full chapter about the start-up and initial stages of development of ELPs. Finally, the book lacks an index, so it is not as user-friendly as it might be. Even without the index, the price of the book puts it out of the range of most individuals teaching and working in ELPs. It is published by Emerald Books, a British publisher, so the price listed is £67.95 (which is around \$100 as priced on Amazon.com). For more information visit <http://books.emeraldinsight.com/display.asp?K=9781849507462>

Jo Tyler is professor of linguistics and education at the University of Mary Washington and chair of the Program Administration/Teacher Education SIG of VATESOL.

Higher Ed SIG, Laura Ray, Chair
lray@odu.edu

2010 NAFSA Region VIII Conference

NAFSA will be holding its annual **Region VIII Conference on November 10-13 in Richmond, VA**. Registration is currently open and can be completed at www.nafsa.org. There are a number of sessions that will be of interest to VATESOL Higher Ed SIG members specializing in areas including but not limited to the following: English Language Training and Administration; International Education Leadership; Recruitment, Admissions, Preparation; and Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship.

CAA Global Education Visiting Professionals Program

“The Colonial Academic Alliance (CAA) develops, promotes and facilitates collaborative programs and resource sharing to enhance academic quality and institutional effectiveness throughout [its] member institutions.” There are currently five Virginia universities in the CAA; George Mason University, James Madison University, Old Dominion University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and The College of William and Mary.

This year, the CAA launched a new program called the “Global Education Visiting Professionals Program,” which “aims to improve the effectiveness of its members’ programs by providing opportunities for those involved in international education to learn

from each other and explore further collaboration through a focused, intensive visit to another campus.”

As an employee of the ODU English Language Center, I took advantage of my eligibility to apply for the program. Recently, I was notified that I have been selected to visit the English Language Institute at George Mason University sometime this fall. I am looking forward to this excellent opportunity for professional development, and I will definitely report back to the HESIG to let

you all know the outcome of my participation in this exciting program! (Hopefully, I will see some familiar VATESOL faces up at GMU!)

For more information about the CAA, please visit: www.colonialacademicalliance.org

For questions, comments, suggestions, or concerns about the Higher Ed SIG, please contact Laura Ray at lray@odu.edu or (757) 683-5736.

Secondary Education SIG, Chris Urynowicz and Margaret Overton, Co-Chairs christine.urynowicz@mpark.net

Editor's Note: Angelique Clarke, a High School Social Studies teacher at Meadowbrook High School, was a scholarship winner for a SIOP implementation project. As her implementation project, Angelique organized a hands-on approach to learn history concepts. She had excellent results and shares her experiences and lessons learned in this report:

The purpose of this study was to see if utilizing more hands-on projects in the classroom would increase students understanding of key World I concepts and topics. More specifically, if incorporating art activities, would allow ESL students to be more expressive and demonstrate their knowledge in ways that may not be apparent using traditional standardized testing.

Background

I have many students in a collaborative class. It is a collaborative class because it combines regular education and special education students with two teachers. A few of the ESL students in this class are also identified as special needs students. The class has 28 kids (way to many to effectively teach and learn and receive specialized attention). I was hoping through this project that I would see interest from some of the students who seem unmotivated and uninterested and unconcerned about their academic progress.

Assessing the Learning

Assessing the learning proved somewhat difficult. At first, I simply wanted to do a survey of students to see what they felt about class before and after the project implementation. I quickly learned that this method was ineffective. In talking with students (using questions like what activities help you learn), I found the students to eager to just leave things as they were. I found students saying they liked the notes and the worksheets. This puzzled me because their grades were not reflecting their comments. When asked if they wanted to do art projects, many of them said, “no.” Upon further investigation, I discovered that students had fallen into a routine of passive learning. Although this was not working for them, they did not want to do anything that would cause them to work more or show more effort. I quickly dispatched with the formal survey idea (since I had already obtained the needed information through our conversations). I decided to take a different approach. I told students that I was getting bored and wanted to do something different. They seemed to be a lot more willing to try something new if it helped me out or to be a better teacher. I initially wanted to do a big art project with each lesson. Time, resources, and the vast amount of content that needed to be taught made this impossible. So, I decided to try and incorporate art into class work and homework assignments as well as projects.

Some of the assignments are as follows:

- Athenian Government Drawings – Students had to draw a picture illustrating monarchy, aristocracy, tyranny, and democracy and define it in their own words.
- China Choice Project – Students were given a list of things that they could do (such as write your name in calligraphy, draw or construct a model of the Great Wall as well as written activities write a short biography of Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi).
- Illustrated Timeline of Rome – After reading a short history of Rome, students had to create a timeline showing the rise and fall of Rome. Each date had to incorporate an illustration and a short description.
- Mythology Ads – Students created ad for modern day products using the 12 Olympiad gods. They then had to write a sentence about why they chose that god.

Of course, these do not reflect all of the assignments that we did, or, that I still plan to incorporate. They do show how art is being integrated into the coursework.

Results

I saw students excited about their work. This was evidenced by them coming to talk to me between classes about their work and showing their work to other students/adults. Students were excited about getting their work displayed on our “Whale Done” Board for other students to see. It was nice to see students smiling and interested in class. Recently, because of missed days, we have been plowing through the material. Students actually asked me when we were going to do something fun again. Rather than take this as an insult, I took it as a compliment. Even though students said they did not want to do art projects, they had begun to enjoy, expect, and want them. I think that makes this project a success!

Benefits

I believe the biggest benefit was the learning and development that I underwent as a teacher. With the advent of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), *Annual Yearly Progress* (AYP), and

mandated standardized testing (SOLs), teachers are left in a time crunch to cover material, test material, create review plans, implement said plans, re-test while still teaching new content and on and on and on. We are like hamsters on a wheel in a cage. We are supposed to be going somewhere; but, instead, we are going in circles in the name of progress. Taking part in the implementation project forced me to step outside of the confines of our PLC’s (Professional Learning Communities) and get back to what really matters most – teaching and motivating kids. So much of the education world has become data driven that students are looked at as numbers and not people. This is especially true for our ESL population who hit us the hardest when it comes to making AYP. As ESL students, they count in the total and for sub-categories. The subcategories are what makes us or keeps us from making AYP. So, teachers are pressured to drill the content into the students so that we can make AYP. I think we, as educators, know this is wrong; but, we feel powerless to do anything about it. Believe it or not, this project gave me some of that power back. Please understand: I am not being negative here about state and federal policy. I am speaking from what I have seen in my colleagues and what I was feeling. Teaching had become robotic. We teach this on this day and test on that day. The creativity and the fun were missing. The greatest benefit was getting some of that back.

While I did not see tremendous growths in test scores nor did a majority of the students improve their total academic performance, I did see more students excited about their work and actually completing their work. These small gains, if nurtured, will eventually change the numbers. It was exciting going into the classroom with something fun and interesting to do. Yes, it took time and effort to fit it in; but, it was worth it for no other reason than this: it made ME want to go to class and teach the lesson, it made ME excited about the topic, and that difference in ME changes the students as well. My enthusiasm began to rub off on them. It has encouraged me to try and find more interesting ways to present the material and

test understanding of the material. This has spread to other classes, including my AP World class. For example, we recently learned about World War I. To make sure students understood the role British colonies played in the fighting of the war, I had students write poems for homework. To understand the Treaty of Versailles, I had them act out a skit with the Big Four countries. I am quite sure I would not have done this had I not started changing things for the ESL class.

Changes for next time

Next time, I would ask the students what types of art forms they are interested in learning more about and doing. In addition, I would try and partner with the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Through this partnership, I would like students to learn how art reflects the time period in which it is created and helps us to learn about people from the

past. Perhaps, this could lead up to a field trip and having real artist come in and work with/mentor the students. I would also give students more options and flexibility. Perhaps, students could write a song, create a story, or design graphic organizers to illustrate the same concept if they do not feel artistically gifted. The goal was to reach more students. Yet, some students expressed disdain for the arts and crafts type assignments. Providing students with a choice is a critical developmental need that was overlooked.

“Yes, [the projects] took time and effort to fit it in; but, it was worth it for no other reason than this: it made ME want to go to class and teach the lesson, it made ME excited about the topic, and that difference in ME changes the students as well.”

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YOUTUBE 101-FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

Have you ever used *youtube.com* in your ESL classroom? Would you like to use it more, but are not sure what it has to offer? Do you think of *youtube* as a smaller version of the Internet: a vast ocean containing both junk and treasure, with no guide for effective use? Even if you have never used *youtube* in your life, the examples presented here will give you practical, specific ideas that you can do in your class tomorrow. Every example I mention will be something I have done in class.

Let me begin with a few simple, but extremely important caveats. Know the exact location of the video clip; check shortly before class, because the location of the video you wish to show may change. Do not think a given speech or song is the same, just because it has the same title, or the same person performing-check and make sure. Finally, if you teach somewhere that *youtube* is blocked, go to www.teachertube.com. Teachertube.com does not have nearly as many videos as youtube, but still has many useful videos.

Of course, you can use *youtube.com* to watch interviews on the news shows, watch the news and/or news reports. But there is so much more you can do to use *youtube.com* as a teaching tool.

First, I am a strong believer in using music to build class community. I give entire seminars on this subject, and I have done so at numerous ESL teacher conventions, including the 2009 NYS TESOL conference in White Plains. I cannot think of a better way to help build community at the start of a class than to let them listen to either of two songs.

Many people know about James Taylor's wonderful, classic pop song, "You've Got a Friend". But another marvelous tune in the same vein is a little known John Denver song, "Friends." There are many ways to use them. For example, give them the words and have them sing along after you listen to it once. Then, ask them

what they think. The songs can also be shown in the last class, perhaps as an introduction to the class party. Neil Diamond's, "Coming To America" is another good song to let them listen to/sing along with during the first class.

Youtube can be a great tool for a particular time of year. For example, during a class right at the beginning of fall, I open class by asking them about the fall, and what are some unique features about it in America? After a student mentioned the leaves changing colors, I showed them a clip on *youtube* of the song, "Fall In New England" by Cheryl Wheeler, which contained numerous scenes of fall in New England. Regarding this song, think about what you could do in class with just one line from it, "...leaves are Irish Setter red..."

You can use music to teach specific elements of grammar. For example, to teach your students about comparatives, let them listen to a top 10 hit song from 1960 by Donnie Brooks called, "Mission Bell". I cannot think of a song with more examples of comparatives. When you want to teach contractions, start by listening to the New Seekers hit from the mid 1970's, "You Won't Find Another Fool Like Me". It also is a great song to use if you are teaching a Pronunciation class.

You can also use *youtube* to introduce a new unit in the book. Let me give you an example. Nutrition is a major portion of the Health Unit, and it impacts on many other sections you will cover. So why not begin by letting them hear a mid 1970's gem on *youtube*, a song that in some form or another, sums up the conflicts about eating healthy that we all go through? The song, called, "Junk Food Junkie" by Larry Groce, will make you laugh, and it also will give you some wonderful avenues for class discussion.

"think about what you could do in class with just one line from ["Fall in New England"], "...leaves are Irish Setter red..."

What about using videos other than songs?

You can use *youtube* to discuss certain major holidays.

For example, for Martin Luther King Day, how about having them see and hear Dr. King delivering his 1963 "I have a dream" speech? You could show an excerpt of that speech or of other speeches of Dr. King. *Youtube* has marvelous excerpts of many of Dr. King's speeches.

For Memorial Day, you can show an excerpt of the President's Memorial Day speech, or the Presidential Proclamations that are always issued for holidays.

You can use *youtube* to get students enthused about creative writing. For example, I bring in picture postcards: National Parks, State Parks, famous monuments, historic homes etc. Students each select a scene they like. They then have to do a writing prompt. After 10-12 minutes of writing time, I have the students exchange essays with a partner, and give them time to discuss. You can do a *youtube* version of this. If you have access to a computer lab, put them at computers individually or in pairs. Have them look at things like Niagara Falls, the Grand Canyon, fall scenes, then do the creative writing exercise.

Songs on *youtube* can also stimulate creative writing. For example, students can listen to, then write the ending to a song, such as Dean Martin's "Houston", or George Strait's, "Amarillo By Morning". Both songs tell a story, but you do not know the ending. In "Houston", does he get there? If so, what happens to him? In "Amarillo By Morning", does he get to Amarillo the next morning? If so, does his luck change? Another song is "New York's a Lonely Town" by the Trade Winds. Does he adjust to New York? How? Or, does he go back to California as soon as he can? If so, is he happier there, and why?

You can use *youtube* to teach about art. You will find everything from film footage of Claude Monet, to an interview of Georgia O'Keeffe, to views of the Sistine Chapel, to Judy Baca's murals, including "The World Wall" and "The Great Wall of Los Angeles". You can see paintings of Vincent Van Gogh as you listen to Don McLean sing his famous song, "Vincent."

You can use *youtube* as the launching pad into a lesson about the environment. I have had my students listen to a Number 1 song from 1969, "In The Year 2525", by Zager and Evans. The song discusses the

dehumanizing effects of technology, but there is a classic line in the song that can serve as a bridge into an environmental discussion. Near the end of the song is the line, “In the year 9595, I’m kind of wondering if man is gonna be alive. He’s taken everything this old earth can give, and he ain’t put back nothing.” “Big Yellow Taxi” (by Joni Mitchell, among others) is another good environmental song.

Remember that you can take *youtube* as far as your imagination and teaching creativity will allow. Use that creativity to enhance your students’ enjoyment and learning via this powerful resource.

[This article was published in *Idiom*, the magazine of NYSTESOL earlier this year.]

Treasurer’s Update, Bob Faychak

faychakrm@staffordschools.net

Beginning BB&T Account Balance (7/1/10)	\$ 8,376.80
Checks deposited (Conference)	\$ 395.00
Transfers from PayPal (Membership & Conference)	\$ 1,436.01
Payment (USPS)	\$ 15.63
Payment (SETESOL Liaison)	\$ 1,500.00
Bank card (Conference purchases)	\$ 136.80
Ending BB&T Account Balance (9/1/10)	\$ 8,955.38

Articles by our members

Members’ Memorable Teaching Moments

If you enjoy reading some of our members’ memorable teaching moments below, please send me some of your own to include in future newsletters...Laurie Weinberg

From member Suzanne Rhoades:

“After we had finally settled into the school year, along came a new 1st grade student from Pakistan. It was the middle of September and I was concerned that when Haider got on the bus to go home, he might be confused about where to get off. So I asked him, “Haider, do you know where you live?” Without hesitation, his bright, dark eyes lit up as he broke into a huge smile. “Yes,” he replied, “America!” I think of this every fall and believe it epitomizes my job so well as an ESOL teacher!”

From member Bill Chambers:

“The first ESOL class I ever taught was a high advanced level class in the Fairfax County Adult Ed program. From the start, I had a rapport with that class that teachers dream of. About six weeks in, I found out that an evaluator would come in, observe

the class and evaluate me. I never said anything to my class except to tell them that a guest would be coming. I have no idea how they found out what was going on but one woman student said to me about 30 minutes before the class when the observer was coming, “Don't worry, we will take care of you.” She smiled and I just said thank you. As soon as the observer came in, they started talking before class and that same girl said in a voice just loud enough for the observer to hear, “This is such a happy class.” The other students immediately agreed. That night, they did everything perfectly. The observer later wrote that the rapport between teacher and student was the best she had ever seen”.

From member Laurie Weinberg:

“When I taught advanced level reading classes at the community college, I often used *To Kill a Mockingbird* as the novel. At the end of one semester a few years ago, the class presented me with a party, highlighting their experience reading the novel in the form of a mockingbird cake, which one of the students had designed with symbols from the book. This summer, I was at the dentist where one of my former students works as a dental

assistant. She said she had been cleaning out her room and she came across her notes from her reading class. She said that while didn't remember much from her other ESL classes, she would never forget *To Kill a Mockingbird*."

This last story is much more somber, but it certainly reminds us of the struggles that our students face. It also serves to remind us of how precious our time with students truly is.

From member Janet Bing:

"I was teaching in EFL to junior high boys in Baghlan, Afghanistan in the 1960's. My classroom was a row of desks next to a jewee (a polluted stream) and I had been trying to convince my students not to drink out of the jewee because of a cholera epidemic, to no effect. One day I was in a grumpy mood and complained to my class that Mohammed (one of my more troublesome students) had missed two classes and should not be missing class. His desk mate raised his hand and informed me, 'Sorry, teacher. Mohammed died yesterday.'"



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