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Next VATESOL conference:
October 3, 2009
in Virginia Beach!

Deadline for presentation proposals is June 1, 2009!
Please see

<http://vatesol.cloverpad.org/> for the form.

Message from the President

Greetings!

This is the time of year when I start feeling like time is stuck somewhere in the middle of going too fast and too slow. I can see the end of the school year on the horizon, but yet it is still dangling out there.

Since the last edition, VATESOL has been working hard to put together the next fall conference—it will be here before you know it. The conference will have a change of venue to Virginia Beach's Tidewater Community College. I



hope to see each of you on October 3rd. Jennifer Kuchno, our conference chair, has diligently been working to put together a wonderful program. Judie Haynes will be our keynote speaker and will deliver a keynote address entitled "Strategies for Helping Mainstream Teachers of ELLs." It proves to be an enriching experience, one that you don't want to miss.
(cont. p. 6 – President's)

VATESOL embraces electronic age: update on online membership

By Jennifer Kuchno, 1st VP

Congratulations, VATESOL, for stepping up to embrace technological change! We have been up and running with the online membership services for approximately six months now. During this time, all 126 members who joined or renewed did so online. We can report that there have been very few problems with the Wild Apricot service and with transferring money from our online Pay Pal account to our checking account with BB&T.

One problem we have had with our online service is with the "Pay by Check" option. We have offered people the option of becoming a member or registering for the conference online, and then sending the payment directly to the Treasurer. Although we would like to remain flexible in terms of payment, this system is not working out well. Unfortunately, many people have registered either for membership, the
(cont. p. 6 – Vice Pres)

2008 –2009 Officers

President & Liaison to TESOL

Tanya Gray

1st Vice President

Jennifer Kuchno

2nd Vice President

Lily Mir-Jahangiri

Treasurer

Heather Gaddis

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Judy Snoko

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Adult Ed SIG

William Chambers

Higher Ed SIG

Laura Ray

Secondary Ed SIG

Margaret Overton

Elementary Ed SIG

Margaret Whitt

Teacher Ed/Program

Admin SIG/VESA

Liaison

Jo Tyler

Central Contact

Seonhee Cho/

Lily Mir-Jahangiri

Eastern Contact

Joya Hricko

Western Contact

Susan Neu

Legislative Liaison

Denise Ricks

Parliamentarian

Liz Bowles

Welcome, new Board Members!

VATESOL has three new Board members: Laura Ray, new Higher Ed SIG chair, Joya Hricko, new Eastern Rep, and Natasha McKellar, new Membership Chair! All three new board members come from the eastern side of the Commonwealth. We welcome our new Board members and appreciate them taking on the important work of VATESOL. Please read on for their personal introductions:

From Laura Ray, new Higher Ed SIG Chair: Since graduating in December 2008 from Old Dominion University with my M.A. in Applied Linguistics, with a concentration in both TESOL and Sociolinguistics, I have been teaching as an adjunct instructor at the Old Dominion University English Language Center and at Tidewater Community College in Virginia Beach. I became interested in teaching English as a second language while working at a refugee resettlement program in Syracuse, NY (InterFaith Works of CNY Center for New Americans). My job was to handle donations and furnish apartments

for refugee and immigrant families, but my interactions with our clients, who often spoke not a single word of English and faced immense struggles as a result, inspired me to become an ESL teacher.

Some of my other interests and activities include music (I play the violin/fiddle in a local band), being involved with several local and regional environmental campaigns here in the Tidewater/Hampton Roads area, and working with a local Native American tribe to help start a language preservation and maintenance project.

I am thoroughly enjoying my experience so far as a new ESL teacher and am excited to become more involved with VATESOL as the new Higher Ed SIG leader.

-Laura Ray

We thank **Liz Bowles**, outgoing Higher Ed SIG Chair, for all of her hard work for the last x years. We are grateful that Liz is staying on the Board as **Parliamentarian**.

From Joya Hricko, new Eastern Rep. Contact I'm very excited to join the board of VATESOL and thank you for such a warm

welcome! I have been working on my M.Ed. and initial teacher licensure in ESOL at the University of Mary Washington since spring 2007. I will be graduating this May. Before my journey back into the classroom I raised a family, volunteered with K-12 school activities, and worked in business. My undergraduate degree is in Fine Art. How did I become interested in ESOL you may be asking? I was a volunteer for Literacy of Fauquier County (my community) and was asked if I would be willing to start an adult ESL class in the evenings for our residents. I said sure, what's ESL? I discovered I enjoyed teaching ESL and went back to school to learn how to become a better teacher.

Today I am going to my 4th day of a middle school practicum. I am having a great experience! I think I would like to focus on middle school; they're a wonderful group of students. Well, that's me in a nutshell except to add that I have a very supportive husband to share this adventure with. I look forward to meeting all of you. - Joya Hricko



Dr. Shelley Wong, President of TESOL introduces plenary speaker, Jack Richards, who spoke on the changing face of TESOL.



The TESOL convention was pleased to host the father and mother of TESOL, Jim and Penny Alatis.



Pre-assembly entertainment by African drummers.



Denver's popular 16th Street district

Special Interest Group (SIG) updates

Higher Education: vt Language and Culture Institute opens second center

The Virginia Tech Language and Culture Institute (LCI) is pleased to announce the March opening of its second English Language Program at the Northern Virginia Center in Falls Church, Virginia.

This new location in the National Capital Region is part of the LCI's expanded mission to offer its English training

program for international students at other Virginia Tech locations throughout the Commonwealth. The primary role of the English Language Program is to prepare internationals for Virginia Tech admission. The program increases diversity in the university's student population and enables outstanding candidates to meet English language admission requirements. In the past two years, LCI students have matriculated into more than 20 graduate and undergraduate degree programs at Virginia Tech. Over the

same period, other students have achieved admission to more than 20 other U.S. colleges and universities.

In addition to intensive English, the LCI will provide several other programs in the National Capital Region. In partnership with the Virginia Tech Graduate School, the LCI will provide a non-credit course in academic and professional writing for admitted graduate students and international researchers beginning fall semester, 2009. The LCI has conducted this course on the Virginia Tech main campus with great success for more than 10 years. In cooperation with the Virginia Tech Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, the Institute will also provide foreign language training on a contract, non-degree basis to government and businesses in the Washington D.C. area.

Qualified LCI students may combine English language studies with graduate-level coursework. In the National Capital Region, Virginia Tech offers more than 45 graduate degree and certificate programs. A complete listing is available at www.ncr.vt.edu/Programs.

The LCI office will open on March 2, 2009. Classes will begin on March 16. Additional information is available on the program's Web page at www.eli.vt.edu or by contacting Director Donald Back at (540) 231-6963. eli-info@vt.edu

Adult Education SIG update

By William Chambers



The most important thing an ESOL teacher can do is build the community of class. Everything else flows from there. I am a believer in the effectiveness of music to build the class community. In my classes, we often sing songs together, and I

accompany them on keyboard. Additionally, teachers can find other avenues to use music to develop class camaraderie. For example, in my High Advanced classes, the book has a music unit. One of the suggested exercises for the unit was to have the students bring in their favorite CD of music from their country. When I asked them to do that, they told me that instead of them bringing their music, they preferred to have me play different styles of music

on my keyboard. As a result, the "Name That Style of Music" game I prepared for the students took on a new and deeper meaning in terms of the bond that existed both among students and between students and teacher.

All this, and more, was achieved with a class that, with one exception, was not musically inclined. But, let me tell you about that one exception. You can read her thoughts in an essay she wrote which was published in the Fairfax County Adult Continuing Education ESOL newsletter. I knew that she had sung in a band in her country (Hungary) when she was in her early twenties – she was 45 at the time she was in my class- and I also knew from talking to her that her signature song with her band had been the Louis Armstrong song, "What a Wonderful World". A great way for you to learn valuable nuggets of information like this from your students is to either answer some prepared (by you) questions and have them hand the answers in to you or
(cont. Adult Ed SIG p. 6)

Teacher Education/Program Administration SIG

Tea for TESOL: Providing Professional Development on a Budget

By Jo Tyler



In today's economy, as school divisions slash budgets for professional development and as universities struggle to contain costs, teachers are losing out. An innovative program at the University of Mary Washington fights these trends by providing professional development for ESOL teachers on an economical budget. Known as Tea for TESOL, this program can be a model for other universities looking for economical ways to serve ESOL teachers in their regions and potentially attracting new candidates to degree programs.

Tea for TESOL is an example of a successful outreach innovation that began at UMW in 2004. Twice a year since then, UMW has invited a speaker to address an issue in ESOL at the Tea for TESOL. The events are usually presented on a Saturday morning on the University campus, refreshments are served, and attendance is free of charge. The cost of the Tea for TESOL has been minimal. Invitations are sent by email to current and former UMW students and area ESOL teachers. The speakers are not major national figures in the TESOL profession, but local experts who receive a small honorarium. The only other cost is refreshments. At first we

paid for only the coffee and tea through the university's catering service, and volunteers brought the other refreshments. Later we received support from the University's Alumni Association to cover all costs, and now the catering service sets up a small buffet of tea sandwiches, cookies, muffins or scones, coffee, tea, and water. For an average audience of about 40 people, the entire cost of the Tea for TESOL amounts to less than \$550 per event.

A university's alumni organization is often an overlooked source for funding, but it can be the easiest and most reliable source to tap. Because a university's alumni organization gets its money through donations rather than through state funding, it would not usually require a lengthy or competitive grant application process. Instead, a simple budget estimate and schedule might be all that's needed. More importantly, alumni associations are eager to support any programs that bring former students back to campus. For these reasons, the Tea for TESOL was a natural fit with UMW's Alumni Association. The most obvious benefit of the Tea for TESOL is the professional development opportunities it offers ESOL teachers. Although we do not hire big-name national speakers, we have had success in bringing regional experts to talk about issues of concern, new policies, and innovative instructional techniques. Officials from the Virginia Department of Education are always willing to

present the latest information about policy changes, statewide assessments, demographic analyses, and other important topics. Professors from other university departments, such as Sociology and History, can give informative and fascinating presentations about trends and issues relating to such topics as immigration, and background about the countries and cultures our ESOL students come from. Another excellent idea is to invite a speaker who has given a good presentation at a recent VESA or VATESOL conference.

The most important benefit of the Tea for TESOL, besides the professional development provided by the speaker, is the networking opportunity it provides for the attendees. ESOL teachers typically work in an environment isolated from other ESOL teachers, unable to commiserate about difficulties or to share their successes with a colleague in their field. This kind of communication between ESOL teachers is essential for their effectiveness as teachers. Since the email list for the Tea for TESOL includes all the graduates of the UMW TESOL program, when attendees arrive, they see familiar faces from their previous UMW courses in a familiar setting. Each Tea for TESOL includes ample time for attendees to network among themselves while enjoying the refreshments.

(cont. next page – Tea for TESOL)

(cont. from previous page – Tea for TESOL) The Tea for TESOL also provides an opportunity to forge links with among professional organizations. We begin each event with announcements about upcoming VATESOL events, as well as any other conferences or programs of interest to the audience. Occasionally, too, the Tea for TESOL piggybacks with another professional meeting. For example, UMW recently offered to host the regional VESA meeting. After each Tea for TESOL, the ESL supervisors of the Region III counties meet to discuss VESA issues. It is convenient for the supervisors to be able to attend both events at once, and it is another “feather in the cap” of UMW to provide a service to a professional organization like VESA.

Another benefit of the Tea for TESOL is that it could provide a forum for public awareness. Although we do not send a press release about the Tea for TESOL events at UMW, that might be an appropriate course of action from time to time. Universities typically have a public relations office with specific procedures to follow when dealing with the press, but they can provide valuable assistance as well. Favorable press for the university stemming from an event like Tea for TESOL can be a tool not only for advertising your teacher education programs to potential students, but also for spreading the word about

ESOL in your community.

Even without press coverage, the Tea for TESOL has benefits for UMW. It is an excellent forum for announcements about other programs that the University offers and gives us the chance to keep our former students informed about and connected to their alma mater. Because the Tea for TESOL audience includes ESOL teachers who are not UMW alumni, it is a place where those teachers can learn about the professional development opportunities we offer. Many teachers sign up for additional courses or apply for our advanced degree programs after first hearing about them at the Tea for TESOL.

Another benefit to UMW of the Tea for TESOL gatherings is that we hear directly from teachers about the emerging issues in the field. That enables university faculty to make courses more relevant to the realities our students will face when they have classrooms of their own. And for a university faculty member, there is nothing more gratifying than to visit with your former students, now experienced teachers, and see how your work has filtered through them to the ultimate benefit of English language learners.

A university does not have to go to great expense and faculty do not have to spend countless hours that would be required to host a big professional development conference. A small scale event like the Tea for TESOL is an economical and easily manageable alternative that enables a university to serve the community, publicize its course offerings, keep up to

date about changes in the field, and maintain connections with alumni. In these difficult economic times, universities can address the professional development needs of ESOL teachers in their area by creating programs like the Tea for TESOL that build on their alumni base, offer relevant presentations by regionally recognized speakers, and provide networking opportunities for teachers in a welcoming atmosphere.



Dr. Jo Tyler is chair of the Program Administration/Teacher Education Interest Group of VATESOL and serves as VATESOL’s liaison to VESA. She is an associate professor and coordinator of the graduate TESOL program at the University of Mary Washington.

**Upcoming Events
Mark your calendar!**

**TESOL Calendar
of Events: 2009**

May 28-30. National Capital Language Resource Center, "Preparing Language Teachers for the 21st Century: Sixth International Language Teacher Educator Conference," The George Washington University Washington, D.C. E-mail LTE@nclrc.org. <http://nclrc.org/lte2009/>

September 17-19. Southeast TESOL Conference, "A Passion for Language and Teaching," Hilton Atlanta Hotel, Atlanta, Georgia, USA. E-mail rarb4@msn.com. Proposal Deadline: May-31-2009. <http://www.gatesol.org>

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.vatesol.cloverpad.org/

**President's
message cont.
from p. 1**

Perhaps your mainstream colleagues would enjoy attending as well.

In other news, the VATESOL board has decided to offer this newsletter four times a year. We hope that by doing so, you will have more opportunities to contribute information and that you will be able to receive more timely updates. Take a look at some of the new features to this season's edition. Also, think about getting an article together for our next edition. I know there are a lot of great ideas and teacher success stories that would be of benefit to our membership.

I wish you all the best in the upcoming months!

Tanya Gray
VATESOL President

**Vice President's
message cont.
from p. 1**

conference, or both - and not paid. There will be more discussion about the "Pay by Check" option at the next VATESOL Board meeting. The online system is still new so we hope to work out some of the problems we've experienced and do better next time!

Finally, we would like to recognize Ross Retterer, our VATESOL Website Manager, for single-handedly taking on and learning this new online membership management system! Although he is not the Membership Chair, much of our online success can be directly attributed to him. Thank you, Ross!

**Adult Ed SIG
article cont. from
p. 3**

prepare and collect a "Find Someone Who" which asks these questions.

Even if no one knew about her singing in a band, it was obvious from the very first song we did that she sang beautifully. It was equally obvious that the more we sang in class, the more she thrived during our songs. Her classmates remarked about how well she sang, how happy and proud for her they were, and they encouraged her to sing at every opportunity. On more than one occasion, at the request of the class, I would do an additional song in class (at the end of the class, as a reward to them for their good work during class, is a good time to do this), feature her as the lead singer, and the rest of the class happily sang along. The result can be found in the student's own end of term essay.

As an ESOL teacher, I know of no greater satisfaction than for a student to have succeeded, to realize why the ESOL class was a positive experience with tangible results. Zita represents one of my success stories. I would be delighted to learn about yours. Please feel free to contact me at wlc19@earthlink.net.

VATESOL Treasury Report:

Balance 9/08/2008: 5,710.04

Membership/Conference Dues and Vendor fees paid since 9/08/2008.....6,267.31

Conference Expenditures:

Breakfast:.....328.40

Lunch:1287.14

Speakers:.....610.99

Tech Support:.....184.64

Supplies:.....125.53

Gift Certificate:27.28

Conference Expenses:2563.98

Bank fees (Returned Items & Service Fees)-...18.00

Miscellaneous-12.50

VATESOL Pens Purchased-.....290.16

Balance as of 1/31/09:9092.31

Snapshot from VESA

Description of an outstanding VESA Workshop:

“Hispanic Adolescents and Acculturation” presented by Patricia Sanguinetti and Christina LaRaia

Reported by Christine Hoppe

At this year’s VESA Conference in February there was a remarkable workshop presented by a Latino counselor, Patricia Sanguinetti, and an ESL assessment educator, Christina LaRaia of the Prince William County Public Schools. Ms. Sanguinetti explained that the two visit many schools to try to educate both counselors (who rarely speak Spanish) and classroom teachers about the problems of immigrant children. Too often, she said, teachers report that their Latino students “do not participate” in class, or they may seem listless or depressed. Because Ms. Sanguinetti listens to the personal issues of so many young Latino adolescents in her capacity as a counselor, she understands what they are going through. But classroom teachers and even ESL teachers often do not realize some of the hurdles that the Latino students encounter in daily life. For this reason, Ms. Sanguinetti and Ms. LaRaia are trying to familiarize teachers “with experiences of loss and separation suffered by the Hispanic adolescents and their families.” First, Ms. Sanguinetti defined *acculturation* as a “process in which members of

one cultural group adopt the beliefs and behaviors of another group” (particularly a dominant group). Very often the Latino teenagers suffer from the problems of immigration as they travel to the States. She told us that the main research about the migratory process is that of Sluzki (1979).

Some Latino teenagers, for example, don’t come by plane but spend long hours in the bus or car; some

walk for hours across the desert without food. One student even had to swim across a river and someone mugged him.

Sometimes the children have to stay temporarily in another country before finally arriving here and that takes adjustment too.

Also, when the teenager finally arrives, he or she is often put in a school right away in a classroom with rich “gringos” or American students for the first time, and may suffer from culture shock. The Latino families often feel very isolated too and stick together with other Latino relatives or friends or cannot speak English well and thus cannot communicate with the teachers. Often they do not understand customs like “sleepovers” where their children can stay at the home of an American child. Grandparents do not always understand the children either and there can be intercultural and intergenerational conflicts.

Ms. Sanguinetti and Ms. LaRaia also indicated that about “85% of immigrant children experience a separation from one or both parents during the migratory period” and “children from Central America experienced separation from families 96% of

the time, 80% of the time from both parents.” Sometimes the mother or both parents stay in their native country, and the child is homesick and misses them deeply.

Sometimes there is a long wait before the child ever sees his parent again - 10 or more years - so that they are like strangers to one another and the reunification process proves difficult; they may even no longer recognize each other. Children may also feel abandoned because their parents remain in the country due to civil war, unemployment, or poverty.

Some of the symptoms of culture shock and the sense of non-belonging that Ms. Sanguinetti and Ms. LaRaia discussed include sadness, insomnia, depression, anger, irritability, loss of identity, lack of confidence, and feelings of inadequacy or of being lost. When teenagers were asked what was most difficult about leaving their country, they often said they missed their mom or grandma. Sometimes the hardest part of adjusting to their new lives was the “language” or the American “step parents”.

“children from Central America experienced separation from families 96% of the time, 80% of the time from both parents”

Student Corner

We also listened to a detailed recording of a young student from El Salvador who recounted (cont. next page)

in broken English how much he had suffered just to get to the States and the difficult migration process. He described the hurdles he had to overcome later when his American stepmother disliked him and left his father and him. His account was so moving that many of us had tears in our eyes.

Ms. Sanguinetti encouraged teachers to be positive, sympathetic and open minded, and to encourage the American students to help the new students. She stressed the importance of working with translators. Teachers often become like parents to the lonely Hispanic children too. Several ESL educators who were present at the workshop confessed that sometimes their classes are like support groups, where they discuss personal problems of their students and share ideas. Indeed, very often it is the ESL teacher who becomes the only friend of the lonely Hispanic student. We ESL educators need to be aware of what all our students go through- this special knowledge could make or break the new student's academic experience which he or she so desperately needs to succeed in this country.

Ms. Hope works at the Multicultural Alliance of Virginia.
VESA is Virginia ESL Supervisor's Association.

Editors' Note: In the *Student Corner*, we tell our students' stories, share their work, and listen to their comments. Welcome to our students!

My Story **By Zita Antal**

Hello! My name is Zita Antal. I was born and raised in Miskolc, Hungary, the second largest city in Hungary. In my profession, I worked as a kindergarten teacher for 23 years.

I arrived in the USA three years ago. The first and second years of my stay were very difficult because I had no prior English studies. By the second year, I was able to secure a position as an assistant teacher in a private preschool in Alexandria. I was very lucky to get this job because I did not even know the meaning of the word "hired." After three months, I was appointed to teach art and music for three different age groups.

My husband decided to move to McLean, so after a year I left my position at the preschool in Alexandria. I was able to find a job in the Reston Town Center again in a private kindergarten.

By now, I'm not afraid to speak English, but feel that I need to keep working on my grammar and pronunciation so that one

day I may feel that I speak proper English. To further my knowledge, I joined the ESL school at Pimmit Hills. I was thinking that the more interaction in a group environment would help me progress more quickly. I was happy to join a high medium level class. I enjoy my group sessions very much. We learn proper grammar, enriched vocabulary and sentence structure.

I thank the teacher for being enthusiastic and building our confidence in each class. Our teacher enjoys singing and playing the piano. When he brings his synthesizer, we have a lot of fun, and we sing songs together. I love to sing songs with the children I teach every day.

My teacher invited me to sing with him at Stacy's in Falls Church. We sang together a few songs, and I really enjoyed it. I feel very comfortable and happy when I sing. I thank my teacher for rebuilding my confidence.

I'm looking forward to returning to Stacy's and singing Louis Armstrong's "It's a Wonderful World."

Thank you for sharing, Zita!

Teaching ESL Beyond the Phonemes and Morphemes: A Sociocultural Approach to Teacher Preparation

By G. Tilley-Lubbs

With the changing face of the immigrant and refugee population in Virginia, teacher education programs need to critically examine the preparation of teachers for ESL programs. As students enter the Commonwealth from African refugee camps and from war torn nations in the Middle East, teachers seek ways to understand the strengths these children bring to the classroom as well as the challenges that shape their lives (cf. Nieto & Bode, 2008). The resultant need is for teacher education programs that prepare teachers to work effectively in culturally diverse settings, particularly when the socioeconomic, ethnic, and linguistic circumstances differ from their own situations.

In this article, I would like to share with you about the Second Language Education (SLED) program at Virginia Tech (www.soe.vt.edu/secondlanguage), emphasizing the elements of the program that provide experiences that foster an understanding of immigrant and refugee families. Teacher education programs have changed over the last twenty-five

years, and our program reflects current theory regarding the goal of preparing prospective and practicing teachers with the desire to enhance educational opportunities for all students through opportunities to understand diverse cultures, both in theory and practice (Banks, et. al, 2005; Cochran-Smith, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Smylie, et al., 1999). In keeping with the TESOL Standards for PK-12 Teacher Education Programs, this new paradigm underscores promoting concern for social justice, knowledge of subject area, and development of critical thinking skills.

SLED at Virginia Tech

The SLED program offers the MAED with a concentration in teaching ESL or foreign language. The degree provides preservice teachers with certification or can provide practicing teachers with additional endorsement. The program also offers an add-on endorsement for Adult ESL. At the doctoral level, students can pursue the Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with a concentration in ESL. At all levels, there is a strong emphasis on the sociocultural aspects of teaching ESL. Based on the philosophy that teachers must understand the students and families with whom they work, the program has developed organically, reflecting the needs of the immigrant and refugee community alongside those of preservice and practicing teachers, whether at the master's or doctoral level. As a teacher education program at a Land

Grant institution, the goal is to provide a quality education for all residents of the Commonwealth, whether students in our program or in public schools. However, students from other states and countries also bring vibrancy to the program as well. Our work with beginning and experienced English language teachers is based on the standards for teacher education programs developed by TESOL (www.tesol.org). We are also accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) programs (www.ncate.org). The program aligns with the standards set by both organizations.

The unique characteristics of our ESL concentration can best be described by our courses that promote involvement in the local community. Students take a course called Topics in Diversity and Multicultural Education, followed by a sequence course, Research in Multicultural Education. Both courses are grounded in academic readings, with a service-learning component in the local refugee and immigrant communities. Through classroom discussion and projects, coupled with weekly reading responses, students develop an understanding of the students and families whom they will teach and with whom they will interact as English language teachers. This approach demonstrates the belief that community service-learning must be inextricably

interwoven with the academy and reflection.

Community-Based Teacher Preparation

The integration of students with the community creates an environment for critical inquiry based on the idea that participation in our program, whether from the community or the university, serves as text for teaching and learning activities. We all learn from and teach each other. Service-learning incorporates Dewey's (1938, in Flinders, 1999) theory that learning is not limited to academic teaching within the four walls of the classroom. The community becomes the classroom, as stated eloquently by Karen¹, a preservice teacher who presents a case for involving university students in school-based service-learning experiences. She states that she has "grown to recognize that the impact a teacher has should not be bounded by the walls of the classroom but rather extends into the outside world." Community members become teachers and learners, as do university students. Readings provide academic knowledge about the community, underlining societal issues that confront non-dominant groups as they interface with institutions such as schools. Through critical examination and reflection, students are encouraged to develop multifaceted understandings of the prevalent challenges that affect the community as well as the issues that will affect them as ESL teachers.

For both courses, students visit partner families every other week, primarily in the Mexican and Honduran community. With the home experience, students serve as teachers, tutors, cultural navigators, and friends as they spend time tutoring, teaching ESL, making phone calls, and just hanging out getting to know the families. In research conducted on these experiences, I have learned that students/teachers develop a deep sense of the struggles that immigrant families face with sociocultural issues, but at the same time, and more importantly, they move from having a deficit notion about their students and their families to an appreciation of the diversity and struggles the families live and represent, underlined by great courage, tenacity, and determination (Tilley-Lubbs, 2009). Students develop a respect for the strengths that shape families who are working hard against many odds.

The program has recently incorporated a partnership with a program developed by the Service-Learning Center at Virginia Tech. The Pilot Street Project provides students with the opportunity of working with African refugee students and families, primarily Somali Bantu. By working in afterschool programs, tutoring sessions, or home placements with these families, students develop an understanding of family dynamics and expectations that would not be possible through

public school classroom experiences. In both instances, students develop relationships with people they might never have known in their daily lives. By working in communities and families who are outside their realm of acquaintanceship, students have the opportunity to leave the environments that have framed most of their lives.

With the research class, students continue with these two experiences, designing a research project that investigates some aspect of their work with the Pilot Street Project or their family partnership in the Mexican and Honduran community. They develop projects that range from examining how students from Africa make sense of school to investigating the ways that immigrant families from Mexico and Honduras define and perform school involvement. Once again, the result of these experiences helps prepare students to work with students and families who inhabit different worlds from their own.

Voices from the Research

I have conducted research (Tilley-Lubbs, 2003, 2008) that investigates how preservice and practicing teachers who participate in these courses comment on the experiences they have in relation to their preparation as ESL teachers or as teacher educators. Just to provide a taste of their perceptions about their experiences, I am including a few quotes from students' weekly journals and final transformation papers. Betsy

said, “I am already learning much about their unity, sacrifice, and celebration. . . .” She continues, “What I am beginning to see is where these people have come from, how strong and rich in culture they are, and the destinies they are moving toward.” Liz commented on her time with a family by saying, “We have different types of jobs, live in different parts of town, and travel in different social circles. I am glad that I have had the opportunity to interact with her through service-learning.” Karen stated, “These students and I formed a relationship in which I was their teacher of English, and they were my teachers of Spanish—we were learners together discovering about one another’s language and culture.”

As the students formed relationships with families, they began to realize their commonalities, including their interests in families, friends, sports, etc. They learned that even with different heritages, the thread of human kindness wove them together. They gained an understanding of immigrant life from the perspective of the community members. Students began to question the hierarchical structure of power and privilege, and by spending time in partner families’ homes, they saw the world from “the other side of the story” (cf. Apple, 1997; McLaren, 1998). No longer would they regard students in the classroom without thinking about the circumstances of their family life (Tilley-Lubbs, 2009).

To conclude, in her transformation paper, Betsy sums up her perceptions of herself as an ESL teacher:

“ . . . I did not foresee the personal impact that working with these families would have upon my vision for teaching and my attitude towards community responsibility. Service-learning was overwhelmingly beneficial to my education in that it plucked me out of the microcosm of academia and brought me to the faces, the stories, and the needs of those I aspire to prepare.

However, I can emphatically state that before knowing this remarkable woman [Marisol], my opinion regarding teacher-student relationships was that teachers served only to relate an academic topic of information to his/her students. Now, I see that teachers constantly discover social, cultural, and academic values from their students and that learning happens when both parties know that each have much to learn. . . . My time within this Service-Learning course has solidified my vision and passion to become an advocate through education and service for individuals like those I have come to know through this course. Learning is an infinite journey, so also should be human caring and service towards one another.”

Final Words

In other words, the program offered at Virginia Tech provides numerous opportunities for students to gain a personal understanding of the communities shared by the refugee and immigrant families who have

brought such richness to the Commonwealth, whether from the point of view of the practicing or preservice teacher or the expert teacher pursuing a doctorate for the purpose of becoming a teacher educator or a professional whose expertise lies in English language education. Students are encouraged to develop their own interests as they engage in critical inquiry. Our program is multifaceted, providing opportunities for the students to develop an appreciation for and understanding of the diverse communities they plan to serve as educators.

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