President’s Message

I sincerely hope that this letter finds you and your family in good health as we continue social distancing and distance learning. Hopefully, our eyes, bodies and souls will hold up with the countless hours of screen time we face through June. The spring has been a time of challenge to all students, teachers and our communities as we face the largest disruption to education in a century. One hope is that we consider this crisis as a time for reflection and an opportunity to improve our educational practice. Through the bounty of resources that have been shared amongst language teachers (and newly required technology proficiency,) we have all expanded our repertoire for engaging students in new ways.

In light of the fact that World Language teachers are grappling with ways to deliver blended learning for their students, CT COLT has curated resources to aid in the transition. Our challenge is to continue to offer authentic resources, within meaningful contexts, so students can communicate and progress toward proficiency targets. Within the resource bank there are resources with rich authentic content for students as well as opportunities to learn practical skills when bouncing between synchronous and asynchronous teaching. There are also three new panel webinars highlighting strategies for distance learning, each with a panel of teachers from around our state for each level. Over the upcoming months, we will continue to build our providing free PD and resources to launch the school year.

The CT COLT Summer Proficiency Institute will continue in its 4th year with an online program led by Greg Duncan: A Focus on the Lesson Plan: For Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning. This 3-day experience will devote itself entirely to developing the most effective—and interesting—lesson plans that deliver results of useful language proficiency and intercultural competence.

Space is limited for this event. More information and a registration link can be found here.

We would like to thank Meiching Chang for her service and advocacy work this year as the CT COLT Teacher of the Year. She has shared her engaging teaching practices at our conference, webinars and represented our state at NECTFL. The Teacher of the Year initiative continues to grow in its 4th year with increasing numbers of teachers being nominated. By way of celebrations, we would also like to congratulate our board member Jessica Haxhi as she started her tenure as President-Elect of ACTFL. We are fortunate to benefit from her leadership at the state and national levels.

The CT COLT Poster Contest was led by Judith Ojeda this year and she received so many beautiful posters from each of the grade levels, with the Grand Prize Winner’s artwork from Greenwich High School is shown here. Finally, to all of the teachers who are retiring with the Class of 2020, we applaud your years of service to the profession and wish you a wonderful new chapter filled with health and happiness. We hope to see many of you virtually at the Summer Proficiency Institute in June or at the CT COLT Conference in the fall.

Sending a virtual hug to all of the educators who inspire us EVERYDAY, Lea Graner Kennedy
Organizational Update

By Amanda Robustelli-Price
President-Elect of CT COLT
robustellipricea@ctcolt.org

First, as I write this, I hope that you and those important to you are well, especially during these unprecedented times. The past few weeks, I have felt so grateful for the generosity of the community of world language teachers, who are sharing, connecting, and supporting each other. Here are some updates with helpful resources specific to CT COLT and that also support distance learning. I hope to connect with you soon, perhaps at an upcoming virtual event or online via Twitter https://twitter.com/ct_colt, Instagram https://www.instagram.com/ct_colt/ or Facebook https://www.facebook.com/CTCOLT/.

Distance learning resources.

- **Curated resources.** Check out the carefully selected and organized distance learning resources on our website: https://ctcolt.org/resources/distance-learning/
- **CT COLT Videocasts!** Our CT COLT Board collaborated to make three videocasts, which are pre-recorded thirty-minute webinars with featured presenters. Check out the webinars on our distance learning web page or simply click the below images to access each resource.
- **Virtual unconference.** The organizing committee for Edcamp is facilitating virtual unconferences. Visit https://ctcolt.org/events/edcamp-ct-colt/ for information about these upcoming and free webinars.
- **Fall Conference.** Your Fall Conference Committee is continuing to plan our Fall Conference, at a new venue: The Omni New Haven Hotel at Yale! For information about the conference and to reserve your hotel room, please visit: https://ctcolt.org/events/fall-conference/
- **CT COLT Student Awards for Excellence.** This year, in lieu of sending paper awards, we are offering a PDF and PNG template to our teachers, to share with students. To download this document, please visit: https://ctcolt.org/awards-contests/student-awards/
- **Seal of Biliteracy.** Order your seals today: https://ctcolt.org/seal-of-biliteracy/. On this site, we also have information about testing during this time of distance learning.
Canceled events. At this time, the following upcoming events have been canceled:

Edcamp CT COLT @ CCSU, scheduled for 5/9/20. The Edcamp committee has been working to facilitate virtual “unconferences” in its place. Check out https://ctcolt.org/events/edcamp-ct-colt/ for more details.

- Be sure to check out https://www.ctcolt.org regularly to get updates about upcoming events.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to CT COLT to let us know how we can help to support you. Thank you for all you are doing to support your communities and your students.

Teacher Spotlight

Marisa Lewis

Elementary Spanish Teacher

South Windsor Public Schools

Who are you? What and where do you teach?

I am Marisa Lewis and I have the privilege and joy of teaching Spanish in the Elementary World Language program in South Windsor CT.

How long have you been teaching? What inspired you to be a part of this profession?

This is my fourth year teaching Spanish upon becoming certified through the ARC (Alternate Route to Certification) program. While growing up in Peru I had a passion for learning English. Learning a new language broadened my horizons and gave me a new perspective. That passion translated into working with ELL students in Connecticut. When my own children were born, like many other bilingual families, they learned oral language at home. I organized a group of Hispanic parents who like me, desired for our children to be literate in the Spanish language. Together we operated a Spanish Literacy Club for eight years, teaching kids to read and write in Spanish and experience our rich culture and heritage at a deeper level. In both of these settings, I was able to utilize my creative artistic ability to bring the gift of language to children. I hold a Bachelor’s degree in Fine Arts. I find that my passion for art and languages are a perfect combination when it comes to teaching Spanish to elementary students.

What is a belief about teaching languages that you hold near and dear?

I believe to teach Spanish to my elementary students is to open a whole new world of the beautiful culture connected to speaking Spanish. When my students experience and participate in singing songs and playing games that children their own age engage in in various Spanish speaking countries, they fully connect with the language and culture. When they see how a tamale is made or how a “ceviche” is “cooked” their curiosity is sparked. From the moment I roll in with my cart into their classrooms to the moment I leave my students are fully immersed in the language and culture. Many of my students believe I do not speak English! One day, outside of school, a father greeted me. His daughter was one of my 2nd grade students, and proceeded to tell him that I would not understand his greeting. She was convinced I did not know English because she had only heard me speak Spanish!

What is your favorite place you’ve ever traveled and why?

Even though I was born and raised in Lima, Peru, I have now lived in the USA longer than I have lived in Peru. I have to say my favorite place to travel is Peru; there is so much to see that I have not seen yet! In 2013, my husband and three kids, who at the time were ages 8-11, went to Peru for six months and lived in the beautiful Andean city of Arequipa, which is south of Lima. We had a wonderful and exciting new experience going to school, teaching and just everyday life there - not to mention the amazing food!!

What is your favorite cultural food or tradition and why?

All of Peruvian food is delicious! It is difficult to pick one dish. Ceviche is one of my favorites and most popular in Peru. Ceviche dates back to pre-Columbian time and is celebrated on June 28th with its very own holiday, “Dia Nacional del Ceviche”.

What do you like to do when you’re not teaching or preparing for teaching?

I enjoy spending time with my family and friends eating together, playing games, and enjoying the outdoors.
Advocacy

Recruiting Teachers in the Target Language: Developing and Implementing Open Educational Resources for Language Teacher Recruitment

Michele Back and Joseph Dean
Neag School of Education
University of Connecticut, Storrs

There remains a serious world language teacher shortage across the nation, and language teachers are the ideal people to try and shore up the ranks: we are passionate about language and culture, know the profession, and have direct access to motivated students who are learning the language and are beginning to figure out what they want to do in the workforce. However, world language teachers also already have plenty on their plates with teaching alone. This year one of the authors of this article (Michele) was chosen as one of NECTFL’s Mead Leadership Fellows. Our project for 2020-2021 will entail designing online, open educational resources for world language teacher recruitment. These resources will be in several target languages (still to be determined, but most likely Spanish, French, and one other language) so that language teachers can integrate them into their courses. By providing recruitment materials in target languages, we can allow teachers to seamlessly incorporate them into units on careers, schools, or other related themes, simultaneously providing new open access target language resources and advocating for the profession without adding an undue additional burden on teachers.

Our interest in this project stemmed from a pilot study that we conducted with two of Neag’s partnership schools, in which we implemented a Spanish-language adaptation of ACTFL’s Educators Rising recruitment program. For those of you who are unfamiliar with this program, Educators Rising is a series of online modules that introduce students to the importance of world language education and how to take steps towards becoming future world language teachers. The current iteration of the program can be found here. Our goals in doing so were to see what current high schoolers think about world language teaching and to assess the effectiveness of the recruitment materials.

Although ACTFL suggests implementing these modules as part of an after-school or lunchtime club, doing so can be challenging, considering the responsibilities world language teachers may have after school and how busy students, particularly high school students, are with activities such as sports, other clubs, jobs, or just catching up on homework. In order to make these modules more accessible to students and teachers, we adapted a previous version of the modules into the target language so that our Spanish teachers could use them as part of their courses. We then held focus group meetings with the students in order to get their take on the modules’ effectiveness, as well as reasons they may (or may not) be considering teaching. Our findings from this pilot study will be published in the Summer 2020 issue of Foreign Language Annals. Through the process of conducting the study, we saw areas where the students had concerns, but also reaffirmed our belief that target-language versions of the recruitment materials could be useful.

With the support of NECTFL and the Mead Leadership Fellows Program, we are well-positioned to take this project to the next level. We have distributed a survey (found here) to world language teachers around the country to discover what they are currently doing in their own classrooms to recruit future world language teachers, as well as to gauge their familiarity with ACTFL’s Educators Rising program. To date, 120 people...
have responded to this survey. Results so far indicate that although 65% of respondents do talk with their students about becoming world language teachers, only 5.5% incorporate these discussions into their formal curriculum. Of particular interest is the fact that 77% of respondents have never heard of Educators Rising; moreover, of the 23% who have heard of it, only 1% has used it in their classes. This suggests that world language teachers, if they know about the program at all, are not finding it to be something they can incorporate into their teaching; it is therefore not reaching potential teacher candidates. We believe that adapting these modules into the target language so that they might be more readily used in language classes could be an effective solution. And so, we turn to you for help.

Our next step for this project is to put together a task force of world language teachers who are interested in assisting us with adapting the modules. Fifty percent of our survey respondents have indicated interest in participating in this initiative; our hope is to begin this work over the summer. The more people we have on board, the easier it will be to divide the work of translating the modules and adding target-language resources, with the goal of having online, open educational resources for recruitment ready to pilot in the fall.

Whether or not you are able to participate in this initiative, the project will benefit all world language teachers and the profession by offering accessible, online teacher recruitment materials in the target language that can be easily incorporated into relevant units. Given the critical shortage of language teachers in Connecticut, the Northeast region, and the country, we hope that you will consider participating.

JNCL-NCLIS News

WASHINGTON, DC., May 1, 2020 — The Joint National Committee for Languages – National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL-NCLIS), the premier advocacy organization for America’s Language Enterprise—from language learning and preservation to professional language services—today announced leadership reorganization. Dr. William Rivers, who has served as the Executive Director of JNCL-NCLIS for the past eight years, will step down from his role in order to pursue other activities, effective immediately.

The Board of Directors has outlined a transition plan to manage the organization’s day-to-day operations until a new chief executive is appointed. This will follow a comprehensive strategic review that the Board has initiated to position JNCL-NCLIS for future growth.

Dr. Rivers reflects: “As I look forward to the next phase of my journey in the Language Enterprise, I reflect with gratitude and pride in the accomplishments of the Joint National Committee of Languages and the National Council on Languages and International Studies. Working together, the members, volunteer directors and officers, and staff of JNCL-NCLIS have collectively changed the conversation about America’s Languages in Washington, DC and in the nation. From the inception of the Commission on Language Learning of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2014, to the passage of the World Language Advancement and Readiness program and the establishment of the Congressional Caucus on America’s Languages last year, among many other concrete accomplishments, we have advocated and advanced a vision of America as a bilingual, biliterate nation. I have been...
honored to serve for these eight years, and I look forward to the continued growth and success of JNCL-NCLIS."

Rita A. Oleksak, President of the Board of Directors of JNCL-NCLIS, notes: "We thank Dr. Rivers for his transformative service to the organization and look forward to the opportunity that this leadership change provides us. We will continue to build on past successes, expanding our advocacy efforts to include even more facets of the language enterprise and to extend our influence to the state as well as the federal level.”

About JNCL-NCLIS

Established in 1972, the Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL) and the National Council for Languages and International Studies (NCLIS) represent the Language Enterprise to the US government and business community. Our membership includes over 130 organizations, which employ more than 300,000 language professionals globally. Together, we form an all-inclusive network and encompass all areas of the language field: exchanges, research, technology, translation, interpretation, localization, testing and more.

Contact: info@languagepolicy.org

Personal Perspectives

Life is Full of Surprises

Meiching Chang
Glastonbury Public Schools
CT COLT Teacher of the Year for 2020

“Life is full of surprises” - a well-worn cliché that, like many things, has taken on an entirely new meaning in the last two months.

I remember this past February - it was the week of Valentine’s Day and I was getting ready to go to New York for the NECTFL conference. NECTFL has always been one of my favorite conferences to go to and an added bonus is that it is close to home. My attendance at the conference this year had a special significance to me because I was representing CT as the Teacher of the Year.

At that time, sporadic reports of what was to become the COVID-19 pandemic began to appear in the NY news. I wondered if the conference would go on as scheduled and in fact, it did. There were only a few cases in New York City at that time and none were confirmed by testing. Everyone was calm and relaxed, no one was wearing any protective gear, and if you had said the phrase “social distancing”, people would have looked at you strangely and had no idea what you meant.

For me, the highlight of the conference was meeting the other 11 outstanding professionals nominated for the Northeast region teacher of the year. In retrospect, I think I treasure my interactions with them so much because they were everything that the current times are not: enthusiastic teachers gathering together in person, sharing our experiences, aspirations, successes, and even failures – supporting each other and feeding off each other’s energy as one can only do in a face-to-face context.

At that time, no one imagined that less than a month later schools would be closed indefinitely due to the fast spread of COVID-19. Without training or preparation, teachers were suddenly put on the front lines of e-learning. I am lucky to work in a school district in which all students are assigned an iPad, but many districts (particularly those serving our most needy and vulnerable students) struggled with the basic task of even getting the technological tools of e-learning into the hands of their students.

On Friday, March 13th 2020, I walked into school as an experienced teacher, well-versed in all the aspects of classroom interpersonal interactions that constitute the art of teaching. I had a formidable bank of lessons, activities, and materials to draw upon in teaching my students. I left school that day knowing that the following Monday, I would still be teaching all my students, but there would be no physical classroom, interactions would be by computer, and that many of my lessons and activities were either now impossible or required retrofitting to this new teaching medium.

My goal was to immerse myself in the technological solutions required for this new style of teaching, adapt my lessons accordingly, and continue the same quality of teaching and learning as before. However, I was quickly overwhelmed by all the available apps, websites, and programs. I felt that I SHOULD know all those fancy or fun programs to be more productive in teaching. I spent hours each day reading and practicing new apps or programs, but I couldn’t keep up. I bookmarked so many posts that I could not even finish watching them, let alone practicing them.

However, by the end of the first week, I realized that working through basic obstacles to access was a more important focus. Students were being blocked from accessing certain websites, uploaded sound/image recordings were not playing, and miscommunications were occurring because I was not fluent in relation to all the new online learning options. However,
more, as they say, is not always better. It began to dawn on me that my students (whom, as a middle-age adult, I tend to regard at the technological experts) were also overwhelmed by the task of learning the content of all their classes at the same time they were learning these new technologies and applications. To top it all off, unlike me, they have very little control or choice in this process.

Therefore, I realized I had to change. I went back to basics, taking out a piece of paper and brainstorming activities that I usually do in class for all four aspects of language learning – with a focus on which ones would work well with e-learning. This led me to rethink the purpose of my teaching and learning activities. With no face-to-face interaction and instant feedback from students, I would need to be more efficient in time and practices. I redesigned the projects of each lesson to help students absorb smaller portions each day to lead them to a final product.

The lack of in-person communication poses a big challenge for teaching, especially for language teachers. Every day, I record a video lesson to review and to teach new lessons. Students can hear me speaking Chinese, but I cannot hear them. I have to interact with each other, and both teach and learn from one another. Despite all the reasons to be pessimistic, I’m actually confident that we will individually find small pieces of the solution to this puzzle. But that will not be the end of it.

There is no doubt that our days are filled with uncertainty and our world has been changed irrevocably in the past two months. Our experiences, alone and isolated may be different, but our commonality is our longing for human contact and our need to interact with each other, and both teach and learn from one another. While it does not replace the interpersonal speaking activities, it gets them talking, and it is a start. I’ve also learned that quick feedback to students is essential since there is no longer that daily face-to-face contact, and feedback on any given lesson can quickly get lost in the daily pile-up of google classroom assignments across teachers and academic subjects.

In introducing new programs/apps I am now much more conservative. I have started with Google Classroom, since that is the current educational platform that all students in our district are now familiar with. Each week, I try to find one relevant app from out district app package to add and incorporate into my lessons. Since reading and writing are easy to do by oneself, I have tried to select apps that facilitate on speaking and listening, and student-to-student or student-to-teacher communication.

I’ve also learned that now, more than ever, we have to watch out for our students’ social-emotional well-being. In addition to the daily stress and isolation of e-learning and social distancing, many families have lost jobs, sources of income, housing, food security, or even a loved one. Of course, this job is even harder because as teachers, we depend on those daily face-to-face interactions with our students to understand how they are feeling. We learn the verbal and non-verbal cues of each student through daily contact and can quickly assess if a student is struggling emotionally. We now must develop new tools and techniques to do the same in e-learning, while not being overly-prying and maintaining empathy, respect, and confidentiality. Whether a student is struggling personally or academically, I have adopted the general strategy of “be available but give them time to process.”

There is no doubt that our days are filled with uncertainty and our world has been changed irrevocably in the past two months. Our experiences, alone and isolated may be different, but our commonality is our longing for human contact and our need to interact with each other, and both teach and learn from one another. Despite all the reasons to be pessimistic, I’m actually confident that we will individually find small pieces of the solution to this puzzle. But that will not be the end of it.

Because we are teachers, we are viral in the best sense possible – when we find a solution or good idea, we spread it to colleagues, students, supervisors, parents, anyone who will listen or wants to learn. That is what will allow us to connect all the pieces to this puzzle, and ultimately connect to one another.

Reflections from a First-Time Attendee of NECTFL 2020

Carly Bernheimer, West Hartford Public Schools

As a second year teacher, I am always looking for strategies to engage and motivate my students. While a plethora of professional learning and collaboration exists online that I can access at any hour of the day (my screen time on Twitter and Facebook usually occurs at an hour when I should be asleep), so much can be gained from meeting world language colleagues in person, having important conversations face to face, and taking back what I have learned to my classroom. Something lacking from late night browsing is the tangible and communal excitement for world language teaching. At NECTFL, I was able to experience this sentiment among fellow teachers from people just starting out to seasoned professionals.

As a recipient of the 2020 Mentor/Mentee NECTFL Conference Scholarship, I am so grateful to the donors and committee leaders for pairing me with Rebecca Aubrey, who I had the pleasure of meeting and observing in her classroom a few years back while completing my undergraduate degree at UConn. Rebecca met me the night before travelling to NYC for the conference to help me sort through the extensive list of workshops and choose ones that would best suit my needs. Throughout the conference, we went to many workshops
together, and exchanged ideas afterwards on those that we did not both attend. Now, Rebecca is not only a world language teaching celebrity, but also a colleague with whom I feel comfortable collaborating.

The theme of this year’s conference, “Languages for All: Envisioning Language Learning Opportunities for Every Learner,” inspired me to select workshops that would answer some of my most immediate inquiries and create access and opportunity for all learners. Upon reflecting on my first major conference experience, I feel reassured because many of the theories and ideas presented align with things I am already doing in my classroom and energized me to continue learning and strengthening my teaching practice. Some of the topics of workshops that I attended included how to create a positive classroom environment, strategies for utilizing authentic resources, using technology to reach all learners, approaches to reading comprehension, and activities to keep all learners participating and engaged. Here are just some of the techniques I plan on utilizing:

- Create a tangible representation for students to visualize how much language they produce. Oftentimes, in lower level language courses, a “turn and talk” or group discussion leads to collaboration, but that collaboration oftentimes occurs in students’ first language. By offering students a physical tool that represents the language they produce, students can see how much they can do. When discussing an image or video clip, or even answering an open-ended question, students can individually add marbles to a jar, or build a tower with blocks each time they produce in the target language. (Throw Away the Highlighter: Reading Strategies for Everyone by Donna Baker and Julie French)

- Compare and contrast authentic resources using a “double-bubble” map. Rather than using a Venn diagram where the space to note similarities is typically small, a double bubble map will outline how many comparisons students should make. In her presentation, Rebecca Blouwolf shows an example of comparing and contrasting physical descriptions of two dogs from pet shelters in France using a double-bubble map. This framework is a powerful tool for structuring language production. (Empowering Diverse Learners: Research-Based Strategies for Success by Rebecca Blouwolff)

- Have students design an infographic in the target language so that it mirrors an authentic one. In Deborah Espitia’s workshop on what to do before, during, and after working with an authentic resource, she showed us a relevant infographic that depicted a variety of the distractions one could encounter while driving in France. As a post-viewing activity, students could create their own infographic in the target language illustrating what distractions they as adolescents face in their lives. (Accessing Authentic Resources: 18 Strategies that Go Beyond Questioning by Deborah Espitia)

- Prior to viewing a video, project images captured from the video on the board and have students make predictions about what happened before, during, and after. This exercise not only recycles various time frames, but also allows students to get creative with language. Students can also predict the order of events if shown screenshots captured throughout the video. (Developing Literacy with Visual Texts by Laura Terril)

- Type a specific language structure into Twitter and copy all relevant and appropriate tweets for an
authentic reading comprehension activity. Students will see real people communicating with the same language they are working with in class. (Using Authentic Resources to Teach Grammar in Context by Leslie Grahn)

I feel extremely fortunate to have attended the NECTFL conference so early on in my teaching career. I am certain that I will draw upon both the techniques and the connections gained from this experience, and plan to continue participating and contributing to the world language teaching community.

**Memo to Self: Corona Reflections for when things return to normal**

Rebecca Aubrey
2019 ACTFL Teacher of the Year
Advocacy Coordinator, CT COLT
Spanish Teacher, South Windsor CT

This past March, many of us watched with increasing nervousness the rapid spread of COVID-19 as it moved from other parts of the globe to our shores on the west coast, cruise ships, and then soon to New York. By the time it was announced that my school would close for two weeks, I felt somewhat relieved. It was a good idea to give the schools time to disinfect and let the virus pass. Two weeks, and then things could start to get back to normal. Or so I thought.

It quickly became apparent that schools would likely be closed for more than just a couple of weeks, and now possibly for the rest of the year. Teachers across the country are adapting to a variety of distance learning scenarios, including differences in access to technology, rules about whether to continue with the curriculum, grading policies, and virtual meetings with students. No matter what your circumstances are, we have all had to modify and adapt to new and unfamiliar conditions for teaching. As I settle into emergency distance learning for the long haul, I have begun to think less about how to “make it through” and more about what I am learning from it, and how I hope that this will influence me as an educator, even when things return to normal.

**Continue to prioritize feedback over grading.** Giving students descriptive feedback to support their journey towards proficiency has always been a cornerstone of my teaching. At the same time, however, I have to figure out how to put a grade on work and keep grades up to date in PowerSchool. My district’s decision to not grade students during this crisis has been liberating. Traditional grades are mostly about compliance - whether the student followed directions, studied, and did the task on time. Traditional grades don’t tell us much about language proficiency, just whether or not they hit the mark we were looking for. They don’t tell us where the student is at, celebrate growth, or provide direction for how to keep growing. By focusing only on feedback, I can examine student work, acknowledge what they can do, and provide them with suggestions for how to continue to develop their proficiency. Even when I do need to go back to providing traditional grades, feedback will continue to be my first priority.

**Focus on language learning as a social endeavor.** It is ironic that we are trying to find ways to teach students to communicate with someone in another language during a time of social isolation. As we have to modify what and how we teach, it is hard to hold on to essential pieces like communicative tasks, which has made them only more valuable to me. My normal teaching “schedule” is reduced, and I am limited to how much time I can ask students to spend on my class each week. I struggle with ways to provide them with real-world input in the target language, demonstrate their understanding, and practice authentic speaking. This has driven home to me just how essential this is when we are back in the classroom. The fundamental purpose of learning another language is to empower students to interact with a person from another culture in another language. My takeaway from this is to sharpen my scrutiny of what I ask my students to do and ask myself: “Is this going to help them learn to communicate with another person? Are they being fully immersed in the target language and target culture?”. I can’t answer yes to these questions, then I really need to re-think what I am asking them to do to ensure that I maximize precious instructional time to more authentically empower them to socialize with others in the target language.

**Schools aren’t just about academics.** I miss my students. I love that they often want to hang out in my room before the day starts, stop by for an “hola” in between classes, and ask to come for extra help during lunch. I know those connections fill essential needs they have. Now we have become hypervigilant about the well-being of our students and reaching out to families no one has heard from. It is easy to enter a 0 when a student doesn’t turn something in. It is a lot more meaningful, however, to respond with empathy by calling and asking if they are ok and if they need any help. More times than not, a student’s failure to turn something in is due to something else going on in their life. While we are being extra understanding under the present circumstances, we need to remember that our students will continue to need our empathy, support, and acceptance, even when this present crisis subsides.
Be more purposeful about balance. Like many of you, I am currently juggling full time teaching duties with running my household and overseeing my children's learning from home. I am one of those teachers who always, guiltily, takes work home. Never though, have the lines between my work world and my home world been more blurred. My daughter and I sit, side-by-side, for hours each day while she works on her work and I do mine. My Zoom meetings are interrupted by her questions about algebraic expressions, and as I re-read an article about World War II with her, we are interrupted by emails from students asking for help. My back and eyes hurt from the strain of staring at a computer all day. I am not good about taking time for self care under normal circumstances, and this has only exacerbated it. I have forced myself to schedule time for short outdoor walks in between Zoom meetings, crafts with my daughter, and breaks from the screen to enjoy a book. Finding this balance has been essential during this time but is also good for me overall.

So, whenever things “return to normal”, don’t let me slip back into my old patterns. If you see me circling numbers on piles of rubrics, mindlessly entering 0s into PowerSchool, photocopying worksheets, or getting dark circles under my eyes, thrust a copy of this “memo” in my hands and send me out for a walk!

Methods and Resources

Distance & Blended Learning Resources

In light of the fact that World Language teachers are grappling with ways to deliver blended learning for their students, CT COLT has curated some resources to aid in the transition. Our challenge it to continue to offer authentic resources, within meaningful contexts, so students can communicate and progress toward proficiency targets. Within the links included, there are resources with rich authentic content for students as well as opportunities to learn about making the shift to synchronous and asynchronous teaching. Over the upcoming months, we will continue to build upon this resource bank.

As we are in the 3rd year of awarding the Seal of Biliteracy in Connecticut, we will be able to continue the efforts to teach for and assess for proficiency through remote testing. With that in mind, it is important to have opportunities for students to work together in the interpersonal mode of communication. See the resources explaining how to videoconference through Zoom to facilitate break out rooms for pair work.

CT COLT created panel webinars to help teachers make the pedagogical shifts needed at this time. Please check out our newest for elementary, middle and high school resources:

- **Distance Learning in Elementary School**: With Dorie Conlon-Perugini and Kazumi Yamashita-Iverson, facilitated by Jessica Haxhi and Rebecca Aubrey
- **Distance Learning in Middle School**: With Trudy Anderson and Rebecca Aubrey, facilitated by Jimmy Wildman and Jessica Haxhi
- **Distance Learning in High School**: With Meiching Chang and Lea Graner Kennedy, facilitated by Amanda Robustelli-Price and Jimmy Wildman

Seal of Biliteracy Remote Testing: Both LTI Testing and Avant offer testing for the Seal from home.

- **LTI Testing**: AAPPL & ALIRA Test
- **Avant**: STAMP Test

Sources for Authentic Resources:

- **COERL**: The Center for Open Educational Resources for Language Learning (All Languages)
- **CARLA**: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition
- **CASLS**: Center for Applied Second Language Studies: research-based materials
- **Pinterest** (See Leslie Grahn or Laura Terrill)
- **United Nations**: in Spanish, in French, in Chinese, in Arabic, in Russian
- **Huffington Post**: in Spanish, in French
- **Newsela**: for Spanish or EL Free Access for remainder of school year
- **Language Choice Board**: Leslie Grahn
- **Extempore**: Teachers create interpersonal prompts and students are partnered to record conversations. Free for this school year.
Activity Ideas:

- **Distance Learning Matrix** - Jessica Haxhi: Comprehensive Matrix of low-tech to high-tech distance learning activities across the 5Cs.
- **Continuum of Support Framework**: Ideas from Leslie Grahn for how to support language learning from low to high levels of on-line learning.
- **Choice Boards for Young Language Learners**: Ideas from Leslie Grahn, any language, includes tech and non-tech strategies.
- **Google Forms**: These can be used for Do Nows, exit tickets, and homework assignments. For homework assignments, they can be used as quizzes. These forms can be designed with an answer key so that, when students click "submit", they get immediate feedback. There is a drawback: There is no support for accented characters.
- **Pear Deck**: It is very similar to NearPod. Users can design vocabulary assessments as well as incorporate interactive slides into Google Slides. Not every district will support this add-on, but there are ways to work around it.
- **EdPuzzle**: A way to add questions to videos. This is a great way to engage students with authentic resources.
- **Screencastify**: It is an extension on Google Chrome that can be used to narrate presentations of vocabulary, and to present grammar concepts via the PACE model.
- **Screencast-o-matic**: Similar to Screencastify, allows you to capture your screen and add voice narration.
- **Language Choice Practice Board**: Check out this example of a practice board that you could share with students.
- **Audio Lingua**: Authentic recordings in 13 available languages. Can be filtered according to proficiency level (attention: These are European proficiency levels, such as A1, B1, C1, etc. A = novice; B = intermediate; C = advanced).
- **Flipgrid**: Students share what they learned in a short timed video.
- **Seesaw**: Assign activities to students that can include videos, presentational writing, labeling and describing photos, etc. Great students of all ages and easy to set up and access.
- **QTALK Story Maker**: Create customizable story boards.
- **National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL)**: Resources for educators, including access to stories and videos for students of all ages in a variety of languages.
- **CITA Distance Learning**: Resources can be used as a model for any language, but designed for Italian.

Video Resources:

- **Salsa**: Great for early language learners, developed by PBS. Traditional folktales retold with puppets, not from the target culture, but all in Spanish.
- **Pachas en Peru**: Over 100 free videos about Peru, with interviews in Spanish, and some linked activities.
- **FluentKey**: Videos with embedded comprehension questions, in a variety of languages, by proficiency level Some videos are authentic resources.

PD for Teachers:

- **ACTFL**: Free access to a variety of resources, including webinars, Virtual Learning Modules, and books.
- **CLASS Webinars**: Class has provided several webinars for Chinese teachers on strategies for distance learning: Teaching Chinese in COVID-19; Canvas; and Gimkit.
- **Yale’s Article**: Teachable Opportunities: what students CAN DO
- **Columbia Language Resource Center**: Video: teaching with Zoom

New to Remote Learning?

- **"How to Move Online in a Hurry"**: ACTFL Webinar to help get you going
- **Zoom**: How to teach with Zoom (Columbia Language Resource Center)
- **Webinars from Vista/Santillana**: Transitioning to remote teaching webinars free to ALL by Vista/Santillana
- **Webinars**: Variety of upcoming and recorded webinars by ACTFL

Free and Discounted Resources:

- **Zoom.us**: Free to Educators for remainder of school year. Watch a 4-minute tutorial about how to get started for free. Break out rooms are a wonderful way to allow students to move to output (interpersonal mode) to make meaning and have conversations about the authentic resources that
they are reading and listening to in the interpretive mode. Assign students to a group (name of a city for example) and they have conversations in small groups after the teacher launches in full group.

- **NADSFL:** COVID-19 guidance, including a variety of online resources.
- **Scholastic Learning at Home (ESL)**
- **Vista Higher Learning:** variety of webinars and learning resources

Feel free to reach out to us if you have suggestions or questions:

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## Seal of Biliteracy Testing in a Time of Distance Learning

Jessica Haxhi, Supervisor of World Languages, New Haven Public Schools

CT COLT, Seal of Biliteracy Coordinator

With the move to a distance learning in mid-March, some school districts may not have had time to test their seniors for the Seal of Biliteracy. Students had certainly been looking forward to the chance to receive this award for their proficiency in English and one or more other languages. With students at home, however, we have been challenged to ensure that every student who wants this opportunity has the technology, time, and a quiet space to have their language abilities assessed reliably and securely. Equitable access to this award is crucial for our students and for the integrity of the award within your school, the state, and the country. This year is taking a little extra planning, creativity, flexibility, and resourcefulness. Luckily, world language teachers excel at all of those!

By the time of publication, most districts have probably already created and begun implementing their new modified plans for testing or portfolio collection and scoring. If you are still working on that planning, check out the CT COLT Seal of Biliteracy Spring 2020 Implementation Suggestions document available [here](#) and on the CT COLT Seal of Biliteracy page. It includes information about at-home testing options as well as a suggested implementation plan.

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has issued detailed *Connecticut Seal of Biliteracy COVID-19 Guidance*, emphasizing that “it is important to note that one of the most foundational principles guiding our state’s adoption of the Seal is the adherence to equity in its implementation.” They encourage districts to utilize an at-home proctored testing option (parent/computer/remote); however, portfolio assessment is also an option if lack of technology or other factors affect equitable access to testing. They note that “it is still critical to make every attempt to assess all domains that characterize typical communication in that language, which are typically speaking, listening, reading, and writing.” Please read over the entire guidance document and check the [CSDE COVID-19 Guidance Page](#) for updates.

At this stage, you are probably working on the best ways to communicate results to students and record their accomplishments. Student individual score reports and certificates should be emailed as PDF documents or mailed one-by-one to protect student privacy. Teachers can work with Guidance departments to ensure that the physical Seals can be put on students’ diplomas and on their transcripts; this often needs to be done well-ahead of the last day of school.

Finally, it’s time to celebrate our students’ accomplishments! This can be done via an online celebration, recognition at graduation and in the graduation program (even online), and/or the mailing of fancy paper certificates. Other creative ideas include asking awardees to post on a [Flipgrid](#) board saying a few words in the target language, receiving a special phone call from the Principal or a famous native speaker, being honored on Twitter, submitting video clips to a district-wide SoBL celebrations video, being featured in a local news report, etc.

The Seal of Biliteracy brings pride, recognition, and opportunities to our students and our programs. While this year’s implementation might take a different type of effort and a learning curve for all of us, the benefits to our students certainly outweigh the challenges. This year’s graduates especially deserve this chance to celebrate their multilingual accomplishments – and smile!

CT COLT will continue to post updates on our [Seal of Biliteracy Page](#).
It’s Not Your Father’s Word Document
Sarab Al Ani / Yale University
https://campuspress.yale.edu/sarabalani/

Link to the demo video:
https://campuspress.yale.edu/sarabalani/2020/02/28/1192/

If I had one hour to talk to language educators about using technology on the language classroom, what would I say? It is such a vast and deep area that I am not sure what to include and what to exclude!

Every summer right before the start of the Fall Semester, the Center for Language Study at Yale offers training workshops to new language instructors, language teaching fellows and graduate students. These training workshops usually take place over the period of about a week and cover numerous aspects of language learning, teaching and testing. For the past years I have had the fortune to take part in these workshops where I get to talk to the participants about using technology on the language classroom. I always have one hour. And I have found myself faced with the question I mentioned above every single time.

Needless to say, I do my best in these trainings. And whether I hit the mark or miss it, there is one advice that I do give the participants year after year. This advice is to “never forget your old friends.” Perhaps I need to explain. In the world of using technology in the language classroom, educators often find themselves overwhelmed with new tools, app, programs and systems that pops out at them every so often from every direction it sometimes seems. Each new tool promises to do this or that or the other. Frustration can easily set as one ponders these endless options thinking: “am I not doing this as best as I can?”, and “do I have to learn one more tool?!”. Therefore, I always tell these new educators that it is great to learn new tools, but “never forget your old friends.”

Never forget the tools that you know, have used, relied on and those that have been very helpful to you over the years. Especially that most, if not all, of these tools feature updates that increase their abilities and add to their performance. One of these tools is the software Word in Microsoft Office. Everyone uses it, everyone is familiar with it, educator and student alike. And in this short article I will go through three relatively new features in Word-Office365 that can help us language educators and can spare us resorting to learning a whole new tech tool. I have also created a video demo for these features that you can watch on my website (link to the site above)

Feature # 1: Oral Dictation
In the Home ribbon in Word-Office365, and in the very far right corner, you can now find a new button called Dictate (see image below). When you click on it, you see that it includes 11 languages and several variations of the same language. You can ask your students to practice their pronunciation using this new feature. First, they must select the target language, and then they can practice dictating to Word. If the program produces the correct spelling, then it is a pretty good indication that the utterances are being pronounced pretty accurately! With a projector (and a computer of course) this can easily be transformed into an inside-the-class game or contest.

Dictate allows students to practice pronunciation

Feature # 2: Online Video
Right next to the Home tool ribbon, you find the Insert tool ribbon. We are all familiar with it no doubt. The new button that has been added to this ribbon is that of Insert online video. Once you click on the option (see image below) you are prompted to either search for/ pick a video from YouTube or pasting the embed code of a video that you have (a video that you have created for example). Needing an embed code in the second option does necessitate that the video exists online somewhere (as opposed to on you personal device). After having made you selection of a video, the video itself will appear directly in the Word Doc and can be played just by clicking it (see video). Moreover, you can format the video just the way you might have previously formatted an image in Word. Format your video, add your task and you have just managed to make your listening task come to life, not to mention making it compact since it includes both the video and the task. This way you can create a variety of tasks pertaining to the same video (for differential instruction for example) with minimum effort and less confusion. You can even create several tasks for the same of a variety of videos on the same document.

Feature #3: Draw Tools Ribbon

Moving along to the Draw tool ribbon. Right next to the Insert tools ribbon, there is a relatively new tool ribbon called Draw (see picture below). When selecting this ribbon, you will see that you have 6 choices of pens, pencils and even highlighters. Once you write something using one of these pencils in the Draw ribbon, you can use the Ink Replay button (in the same tool ribbon) to play the writing time after time. Moreover, the writing can be played using the same button but is a slow manner where one stroke is played with each click (see the video for clearer demonstration of this feature). This feature is particularly helpful for languages that do not have a Latin script and where students must spend quite a portion of their time just to learn how to write the alphabets (like Arabic; the language that I personally teach).

When I do give the advice of keeping loyal to old friends, and when I do start to talk about Word as an example of an old friend, I have one more than one occasion witnessed the rolling eye reaction which translates to: "is she serious?!" I never had a true opportunity to reply to these rolling eyes in the past. With this article (and video), I hope to be able to answer: “Yes! As serious as they come because this is not your Father's Word Document!”
CT COLT News

CT COLT Poster Contest 2020

Judith Ojeda, Poster Contest Chair

The CT COLT Poster Contest is an annual event where K-12 students submit their own artistic interpretations of a language- or proficiency-based theme. This is open to all Connecticut students whose teachers are members of CT COLT. The poster contest is a great way for students to show how learning a language has influenced them personally, as well as to help advocate for language instruction in Connecticut.

This year’s Poster Contest was well received, with a total of 51 entries. There was participation from Fairfield, Hartford, New London, and Tolland counties, including 7 towns and 11 schools. The Poster Contest Committee was impressed with the hard work of the teachers, as well as the time and effort that the students put into their artwork. The posters are quite amazing - the artists are creative, imaginative, and truly talented. The poster contest winners will be celebrated in our yearly organizational calendar, which is distributed to attendees at the CT COLT Fall Conference. The Poster Contest Committee would like to encourage teachers in more districts to participate in next year’s contest. Please stay tuned for the 2021 Poster Contest announcement and check the CT COLT website for more details about the contest. The deadline for submissions is typically in early March.

The 2020 CT COLT Fall Conference!

by Carla DeStefanis

Welcome back CT COLT colleagues. This year has certainly brought with it a lot of change. As we are navigating these challenging times, we have seen the true collaborative nature of our profession and our teachers.

We at CT COLT have been working diligently this winter to secure and improve our Fall Conference for 2020. This year, we are excited to bring the Fall Conference to New Haven where we will be hosted at the Omni Hotel. New Haven is a vibrant city which boasts many stores and restaurants. Yale offers a perfect backdrop as it embraces the diversity and culture that we teach about in our classroom. With this new

Winners of the 2020 Poster Contest

Grand Prize Winner:
Nick O'Brien ($100)
Greenwich High School
Teacher: Elizabeth Fancher

High School Winner:
Hanna Hong ($50)
Stonington High School
Teacher: Lea Graner Kennedy

Grades 6-8 Winner:
Sneh Detroja ($50)
Timothy Edwards Middle School
Teacher: Judith Ojeda

Grades 3-5 Winner:
Riyan Pravasi ($50)
Noah Wallace School
Teacher: Kristen Tagg

Grades K-2 Winner:
Logan Kelleher ($50)
East Farm School
Teacher: Kristen Tagg

To view the winning posters please visit:
We will be joined this year by our keynote speaker Jessica Haxhi, who will share her experiences in World Languages in the State of Connecticut. Jessica is a dynamic and animated teacher who is passionate about the teaching of World Languages, and she has worked tirelessly throughout the years to develop curriculum that is immersed in standards-based learning. Jessica has dedicated her career to advocating the study of World Languages through her work with NECTFL and various teacher organizations. Jessica works as the Supervisor of World Languages for New Haven Public Schools in New Haven, CT, and will serve as President of ACTFL in 2021.

Our conference will take place on Sunday, October 18 and Monday, October 19. Sunday we will offer a series of workshops, a meet-up of the CT COLT Networking Initiative for Teachers, a networking group for new teachers and first-time attendees, and the President’s Reception. On Monday, our conference will follow a similar format to last year, where we will dine at that same time with a plated lunch, followed by our keynote presentation by Jessica Haxhi.

This year’s Fall Conference theme is **Proficiency: Continuing the Journey**. This past year has proven to be a journey. In the face of an ever-changing teaching climate, we as teachers are tasked with the job of re-tooling ourselves and educating the leaders of tomorrow. Join us on October 18 and 19, 2020 to further this collaborative spirit as it is sure to be a wonderful opportunity. As always, if you are interested in becoming involved in the COLT organization, please reach out for information and details about membership and collaboration.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Your CT COLT Family

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**Organizational News**

**ACTR 38th Annual Russian Essay Contest**

John Rook, Co-chair – National Russian Essay Contest

The ACTR National Russian Essay Contest (NREC) provides high school and middle school students the opportunity to demonstrate their writing proficiency in Russian in a meaningful context. This year, 1,333 traditional learners, heritage learners, and native speakers, who represent 49 schools and 55 teachers in 19 states and the District of Columbia, were registered to write essays in a two hour period during the week of November 18-22, 2019.

New participating schools in the contest this year included schools from Arizona, Kentucky, Maryland, Georgia and the Russian School of Woodbridge, CT.

The topic this year was: «Работa, профессия и карьера в моей жизни». (“Work, profession and career in my life”)

The more detailed topic prompt was:

Work is an essential part of everyone’s life, starting as a student and continuing into adulthood. The very concept and nature of work have changed and been transformed over centuries, currently exacerbated by globalization and technological innovation in the 21st century. As pertains to school, a curricular shift towards STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) has created a new sense of urgency in particular disciplines. As students, you are already starting to think about a potential career or an ideal profession. In writing your essay on the theme of work, you may want to consider the following:

- How is school preparing you for work?
- What are your work habits as they relate to school and other activities?
- Which professions are the most desirable in today’s world?
- What do you want to work as when you finish your schooling?
- Where and why do you want to work in this profession?
- What will you be doing in this job? How much of your life do you plan to work, whether full-time or part-time?
- Do you plan to work from home or outside the home, digitally or in person?
- Which subjects will you need to study in order to achieve your career goals? Have your parents and family influenced your thinking about a career?
In selecting a profession, which factors will you consider as you decide on a career for you to be happy in this career?

Does your study of Russian language and culture play a role in your future career plans, either domestically or abroad?

You may use the suggestions given above, or any other information that you consider relevant to the topic, but you must write in Russian and stay on the topic of: WORK.

Judges for the first round of the NREC this year were:

- Annalisa Czeczulin, Goucher College, MD
- Olga Gotta, Whitby School, CT
- Jill Lederman, Berkshire Country Day School, MA
- Lisa Steffen, State University of New York at Brockport, NY
- Mara Sukholutskaya, East Central Oklahoma University, OK
- Marina Sweany, Rochester Institute of Technology, NY
- Bozena Szulc, Linden Hills High School, NJ
- Dawn Stuart Weinraub, Emma Willard School (emerita), NY
- Evgenia Wilkins, University of Texas at Austin, TX
- Judith CB Wobst, Amherst Regional High School (emerita), MA

Judges each received 120 coded essays at the end of December, read, and assessed them according to communicative guidelines. Judges were instructed to look first at whether the students were able to communicate their thoughts to a tolerant native speaker, and then to judge the content, effort, style, and grammar presented in the essays. First-round NREC results were provided in February. Essays awarded gold medals at the Native Speaker, Advanced Heritage, and Advanced levels in the first round have been forwarded to the A.S. Pushkin Institute in Moscow for the second round of judging. First and second-round results will be reported in the Spring/Summer 2020 issue of the ACTR Letter and online via the following website: https://www.actr.org/actr-newsletter.html

Last summer, 12 students from AITE (the Academy of Information Technology and Engineering) high school in Stamford, CT went to study abroad with CIEE. CIEE, the Council on International Educational Exchange, is a nonprofit study abroad and intercultural exchange organization that sponsors a wide variety of opportunities to travel abroad in programs relating to: language and culture, service and leadership, and global discovery. CIEE offered AITE a scholarship grant that allowed these students to go to their desired programs for little to no cost. A few of these students went on the Language and Culture programs that they offer, which allows students to be immersed into the culture of a country to be able to improve their language skills of that country. Some students who took this trip went to improve their Spanish speaking skills in Seville, Spain and Merida, Mexico. Thea Johnson, a Junior from AITE, went on the Spanish Language and Culture program in Seville, Spain. With her program, she took Spanish classes and had daily immersion tasks to ask the locals questions and try new things. She had lots of positive things to say about her experience on the program. She said that her favorite part of her experience was “learning to adapt to the culture and forming an identity and home away from home.” With her program, she was able to stay with a host family, which gave her even more language and culture immersion that she could have hoped for. She also says that she enjoyed being with the people in her program as they come from all walks of life from different states and they were all trying something new and scary, but exciting. Another Junior from AITE, Alec Frohn, went on a language and culture program, but he attended the Japanese Language and Pop Culture program. He learned about Japanese language and culture and met many amazing people along the way. He even said that “The month I had in Japan with CIEE was the best month of my life.” I also had the opportunity to travel abroad with CIEE, but I went on a service and leadership program. I took part in the Advancing Children’s Health program in Merida, Mexico where I
I volunteered at an organization called Hogar de Angeles that provides temporary shelter for children and adolescents and their families staying in Merida for cancer treatment. I had the opportunity to play with these strong kids and comfort the families going through this tough time. I was there to make sure that they were all happy, healthy, and comfortable. Even though my primary purpose of being in Merida was to volunteer, I also got to learn about the culture of Merida, Mexico. My program peers and I went to museums and cultural sites to learn about the cultures of Merida and Yucatan. I even had a few dance, art, and music classes! Since it was a volunteer-based program in a Spanish-speaking country, I also had Spanish classes. There were Spanish language learners of all levels but the Spanish teacher made sure to address all of our Spanish speaking needs. The CIEE study abroad experience truly is an amazing experience that high schoolers should take advantage of, especially with their generous scholarships. The study abroad programs are not only available to high school students though, they are also available to college students. More students from AITE have been accepted into study abroad programs for the upcoming summer. If students are interested in applying for a program for the summer of 2021, they should go to ciee.org for more details.
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DATED MATERIALS: PLEASE RUSH

The 2020 CT COLT Fall Conference
October 18 and 19
The Omni Hotel in New Haven, CT
Theme: Proficiency: Continuing the Journey
Keynote: Jessica Haxhi,
Supervisor of World Languages (New Haven) and President-Elect (ACTFL)

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Newsletter Submissions
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