



# Connecticut COLT World Language News Exchange

Read “on the go” Edition

Spring 2021

## President’s Message



Dear Colleagues:

This past year has been one of the most difficult I can remember, with many changes that were an impetus for intense learning and growth. As we have just surpassed one year of teaching in a hybrid or virtual environment, I am reflecting on

my learning and also beginning to look forward to the next school year. I have learned an incredible amount as I have worked to improve my practice in a new learning space and also to navigate the additional considerations brought by the current circumstances, with social change and unrest, the pandemic, and political strife. I am exploring four key questions: ...[Continue Reading](#)

## Social Justice

### Building Community in Our Home Cultures with a Simple Yard Sign

Signe Damdar  
Vernon Center Middle School

A couple of years ago, while driving to an appointment, I first saw the sign “No matter where you are from, we’re glad you’re our neighbor” in Spanish (first), English, and Arabic proudly planted in a yard. I parked my car to inspect the sign--I needed one of those signs! I ended up ordering not one, but five signs at <https://www.welcomeyourneighbors.org/> for my yard, some friends’ yards and the hallway right outside my classroom door. If there’s one message I want my bilingual and bicultural students to understand, especially in this time, it is that we, as educators, welcome them. We embrace and celebrate the rich cultures and languages that each of them brings. I see it as a small step in order to restore dignity to immigrant communities in the United States. After all, ACTFL’s World Readiness Standards Goal for COMMUNITIES is that we “Communicate and interact with cultural competence in order to participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world” (actfl.org). ...[Continue Reading](#)

### Where Language and Inclusion Intersect

Liv Drazen- Senior, William H. Hall High School

Foreign language is ever-present in my life. My mother teaches Mandarin; our home is filled with the trappings of China’s history, culture and language. My travels to the Middle Kingdom elucidate a disturbing truth: we tend to respect what we know. Our cultural competency shifts when faced with foreign concepts like squat toilets, cicadas as a side dish and waltzing in the park. Without exposure to the “other,” we default to viewing different people, practices and paraphernalia as weird or wrong. Western arrogance prevents us from embracing and appreciating diverse ways of living and communicating. ...[Continue Reading](#)

### Socially Just Language for All Gender Identities

Joseph Parodi-Brown, Ed.D., Marianapolis Preparatory School  
@SenorParodi

For many of us who teach gendered languages, the concept of gender can be fraught with many difficulties - difficulty for students to understand what makes an object feminine or masculine - or even neuter, difficulty in helping them get into the habit of making nouns and adjectives agree, and for students who are working to understand their own gender identities, the difficulty of not knowing which adjectives to use to describe themselves. Gender, then, in the language classroom can be challenging to teach and to learn. ...[Continue Reading](#)

### Language and Social Justice in the Spanish Classroom

by Amy Nocton

I never wanted to become a teacher. If you had met me as a student at UConn in the early 1990s and had asked me what I wanted to do after I finished my Master’s in International Studies with a focus on Latin American history and literature, I would have told you that I planned on working for a Non-Government Organization. Had you pressed me and inquired whether or not I had ever considered teaching, I would have given you an absolute, “No.” ...[Continue Reading](#)

## ***Language Teaching and Learning is an Act of Humility as well as a Political Act***

Dr. Yvonne Fariño  
Vernon Center Middle School

Have you noticed that when you watch the news and you hear about another country it is often because of political chaos or tragedy? This portrayal of tragedy and chaos disempowers its citizens because it leaves an impression on the viewers that the inhabitants have no voice. Moreover, it portrays its citizens as having no history aside from those who are constructing their culture, language and country in the lens of tragedy or criminal activity. This misrepresentation type of activity has the potential to (mis)identify the desire of its citizens. The generalized information in portrayed in the news about other countries (probably due to time constraints) do not include the contributions of the inhabitants prior to the aftermath of any sociopolitical disruption. In this sense, the people are identified as “pobrecitos” (i.e. poor little ones), as lacking culture, linguistics, or social capital. My curiosity behind these experiences are what led me to graduate school, where I focused on applied linguistics, critical pedagogy and critical language awareness in the Spanish classroom. ...[Continue Reading](#)

## ***Personal Perspectives***

### ***First Year Teacher Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic***

D’Lanie Pelletier

Throughout my teacher preparation program at UCONN, I always knew that my first year of teaching would be challenging. However, I never could have imagined the challenges that the year 2020-2021 has brought. This year has brought students in masks with shields over their desks, hybrid learning, block schedules, fully online students, and the struggle to keep students engaged despite the uncertainty of their outside world. All of the teaching and classroom management strategies that I learned in my teacher preparation program now seemed distant as all teachers learned how to adapt and teach in this new learning model. ...[Continue Reading](#)

### ***Inspired by Wisconsin FLESFEST... Envisioning OURS***

Marisa Lewis

Elementary World Language Teacher  
Orchard Hill Elementary School, South Windsor, CT  
NNELL State Rep

Here is the story of a lovely elementary world language teacher who was teaching a world language on her own (sing this line to the tune of the Brady Bunch theme song) until she met one lone ranger and then another until the zoom tiles could not fit in the screen anymore (read this line to the tune of the Lone Ranger...minus the gun shots). Who knew there were as many of us early language teachers and that we could gather all in one place!! Just as fun virtually as I imagine in person all the more merry it would be and with as much energy as the elementary students that we teach. The essential elementary Spanish world language teacher trademarks singing, rhyming, and finding fun creative ways to engage students. “No contaban con mi astucia” y “siganme los buenos” as Chapulin Colorado would say as he saved the day. (Please check him out...he is my favorite super hero.) When we find each other, early language teachers, we cannot help but to stick together. On March 8<sup>th</sup> the newly formed CT/MA/RI FLES FEST committee met to discuss the initial steps to create the annual early language event in our area starting in the spring of 2022. ...[Continue Reading](#)

## ***Advocacy***

### ***Advocating for Languages in Connecticut and Nationally: 2021 Language Advocacy Days***

Michele Back  
Advocacy Coordinator, CT COLT

The Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL-NCLIS) sponsors an annual [Language Advocacy Day](#) in which advocates for world language teaching and learning meet with their state’s members of congress to discuss key bills and initiatives related to world languages education. The “Day” is in fact several days of planning, presenting to state representatives and senators, and recapping what took place during the meetings. Due to the pandemic, this year’s Language Advocacy Days (February 3-5) were held virtually instead of in Washington, D.C. Although I was disappointed to not visit one of my favorite cities, the virtual format had its advantages. This year, language advocates participated from all 50 states (a first for the event), and our group from Connecticut was able to connect with several members of

congress and explain how world language learning was so important to the state of Connecticut and to the nation. ...[Continue Reading](#)

## Distance Learning

### ***Zoom with Confidence and Breakout with Assurance***

by Sarab Al Ani, Yale University

It is almost impossible to believe that we have been teaching online for a year now. It was not what we had planned or intended. Nonetheless it was the situation we found ourselves in and made the best out of. During the past year, some of us have been using Zoom to hold class meetings. Whether we had intended to or not, we have by now become self-proclaimed Zoom experts. Zoom has now become part of our lives not only in teaching. *Zoom Class, Zoom Meeting, Zoom Call, Zoom Wedding, Zoom reunion, Zoom Happy Hour and Zoom Birthday* became the new normal. ...[Continue Reading](#)

## CT COLT News

### ***Summer Proficiency Institute 2021***

Greetings to all the CT COLT members!

Summer is right around the corner and better days are ahead with vaccinations in full swing and restrictions being lifted. Dare we say that we made it through one of the strangest years both professionally and personally? As we all prepare for our final units of curriculum, IPAs, final exams and/or graduation ceremonies, we can allow ourselves time to reflect on this unprecedented school year. How has Covid 19 changed our practice? How has distance and hybrid learning altered what we do as educators? CT COLT is dedicated to supporting teachers as learners and we strive to offer high quality, relevant professional development opportunities. This June we will continue that goal with the 2021 Summer Proficiency Institute with Greg Duncan and facilitators. In 2021, the focus will be on creating performance based assessments to support the curriculum. ...[Continue Reading](#)

### ***Announcement of the Winner of the 2021 COLT Essay Contest***

This year CT COLT conducted the seventh (9<sup>th</sup>) annual WORLD LANGUAGE STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST. For 2021, students

explored the following theme: *Celebrating languages and learners with inclusivity and diversity*. In a formal essay-response, students researched and wrote about one or more of the following subtopics related to *inclusivity and diversity*: ...[Continue Reading](#)

### ***An Immense Success for the 2021 Poster Contest!***

Melissa Tubbs  
AATF Organizational Director

The CT COLT 2021 Poster Contest embraced the digital nature of education, making lemonade out of pandemic lemons. Contest chairperson Melissa Tubbs reformatted the event with a digital option, allowing participating teachers to upload their students' submissions online in addition to the option of mailing by post. Due in large part to the increased accessibility and ease of participation, over 150 posters were submitted, all of which were amazing. The theme of the contest "Languages Celebrate our Differences," allowed students to reflect on all the positive aspects of diversity and inclusion in the world language classroom, and the contest winners showcased this brilliantly through their interpretations! ...[Continue Reading](#)

### ***Message from the 2021 CT COLT Poetry Contest Committee***

*Elizabeth Lapman - Hamden Public Schools*  
*John Rook - Glastonbury Public Schools*  
*Paul M. St. Louis - CT COLT Treasurer*  
*Matthew Mangino, Wethersfield Public Schools*

The CT COLT Poetry Contest Committee would like to congratulate all 233 student participants from 25 schools who prepared and recited poems at the 2021 Poetry Contest on Wednesday, April 21, 2021. ...[Continue Reading](#)

## Organizational News

### ***AATF CT News***

By Sangeeta Dhawan and Melissa Tubbs

Spring brings three exciting events to the AATF community: one is a returning favorite, and two are brand-new! Jon Shee, chapter President, Sangeeta Dhawan, member of the Comité

Exécutif, and Melissa Tubbs, AATF Organizational Director for COLT, are each spearheading the events to engage French students and teachers in CT! ...[Continue Reading](#)

## ***Le Grand Concours – Should I give it this year?***

Laura Faga, French teacher, Lewis S. Mills High School, Region 10 (Burlington/Harwinton).

Bonjour! My name is Laura Faga and I am the new Directrice du Grand Concours for Connecticut. Last year was my first year in this position and I was busy planning our awards ceremony when the world stopped.

Today is March 29<sup>th</sup> and I administered the contest to 43 of my students today! Nothing like waiting until the very last minute. Last year, I administered the contest to all of our students on March 12. I had randomly selected that date, on the earlier side of the administration window, so I would be better prepared to answer questions as they arose. Little did I know at the time how lucky I was to have selected that date! I was so fortunate that I did not have to figure out, like many of other French teachers did, how to administer le Grand Concours once schools closed. As schools shut around the country, the AATF was working hard to figure out how to handle this. Their solutions allowed teachers to administer remotely and also allowed for an extended testing period which allowed others to continue to test “hors concours” (meaning they would not be eligible for any national awards), but they could still participate. ...[Continue Reading](#)

## ***News from CT Schools***

### ***AITE’s Sociedad Honoraria Hispanica Launches Tutoring Program***

Clerin John, AITE

During the fall, The Academy of Information Technology and Engineering’s Sociedad Honoraria Hispanica (SHS) launched their first tutoring program, called the SHS Study Buddy Program, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal of this tutoring program is to provide freshman students in Spanish classes with an upperclassman tutor to guide them through high school and to assist them in their education. ...[Continue Reading](#)

## ***The 2021 CT COLT Fall Conference***

For more information about this year’s hybrid Fall Conference, please click [HERE](#).

