Dear colleagues,

It has been a busy fall and winter for many school districts throughout the state. I know that the long winter has been a concern for many as they consider testing students for the requirements of the Seal of Biliteracy. There has been a great deal of conversation about the Seal and how to administer the testing for it, and the requirements for awarding it. CT COLT has worked to provide information about this on our website (www.ctcolt.org) under the SEAL OF BILITERACY tab. Many schools have asked about how to order the physical seal, which would be placed on the students’ transcripts. CT COLT is the only place that the CT Seal of Biliteracy is available. Teachers and/or administrators can find all of the forms necessary for purchasing the seal on the website.

With all of the snow days that we have experienced this fall and winter, we have moved our Summer Institute back one day. Unfortunately, Greg Duncan, our presenter is also attending the AATSP conference in Salamanca, Spain, so we cannot move the Summer Institute any further. The Institute will be June 21 and 22 in Stonington, CT. Information about the Summer Institute can also be found on our website.

Our fall conference committee has already begun working on our 50th anniversary conference which will take place on Sunday and Monday, October 21st and 22nd at the Radisson Hotel Cromwell. At this year’s conference, we will offer a special Sunday program which will include cultural arts workshops, awards, dance lessons and a President’s Reception. Registrants for Monday’s conference will receive complimentary admission to all of Sunday’s events. Those who are unable to join us on Monday, may attend Sunday’s workshops and celebratory events at a nominal cost. We hope you will consider joining us for our 50th anniversary celebration! We are also looking for presentations for our Fall Conference. To submit a proposal, please visit the website: http://ctcolt.org/pages/fcworkshopproposalform.asp.

The month of April is a busy month for student events at CT COLT! Essay contest submissions have begun to arrive, along with the Rhyme Celebration which will take place in early April. The Poetry Recitation contest for our middle and high school students will take place at the end of April. If you are interested in judging, please contact John Rook (rookj@ctcolt.org) or Beth Lapman (lapmane@ctcolt.org) for more information about judging this amazing event. In March, students from across the state submitted posters for the Poster Contest. Winners will be announced shortly, check the website to see the winning posters, and they, along with other submissions, will be featured in the CT COLT 2019 calendar, which will be given out at the 2018 Fall Conference in October.

As always, we encourage you to join our organization as a volunteer for a student contest, a presenter at the fall conference, or by joining our board of directors. Please contact any member of our board of directors for more information about these opportunities.

Best wishes for a great close of the school year,

Jimmy

**Spotlight on Teachers**

**Rebecca Aubrey Earns CT COLT and NECTFL Honors**

By Matthew Mangino

Recently, Rebecca Aubrey, was named Connecticut’s Teacher of the Year for Languages. She also earned NECTFL’s top honor for teachers. Rebecca is a Spanish teacher at the Ashford School, in Ashford, CT. She works with grades Pre-K to eight. The Executive Board at CT COLT found Rebecca to be very well-versed
in terms of the latest best practices and core practices that all World Language teachers should demonstrate. Her administrators have glowing praise for her lessons in Ashford. They describe her as an outstanding and creative teacher who meets the needs of all learners in her classes. Ms. Aubrey designs lessons that focus on proficiency goals and provide students with choice in terms of demonstrating their learning. Her administrators state that she develops students’ “social skills, work habits, and cultural competency”. It was clear to the CT COLT’s interview committee that Rebecca is supported by her administration and colleagues and adored by her students and their parents.

In addition to being an outstanding language teacher, Rebecca Aubrey is a leader for teaching and learning in her school. She always takes an active role on school and curriculum improvement committees. She makes positive contributions to new school initiatives. In fact, as part of her school’s positive behavior program, students can earn the privilege of eating lunch with their Maestra. An Ashford School student shared how important this was to her in a letter of support for Ms. Aubrey. Students and parents had glowing appreciation for their school’s Spanish teacher.

Due to these and many other accomplishments, Rebecca was also recently named a semi-finalist as part of the State of Connecticut Teacher of the Year program. She has used this experience to network with other outstanding education professionals to brainstorm solutions to challenges that teachers face in Connecticut.

As part of her role as CT COLT’s Teacher of the Year, Rebecca advocates for the teaching and learning of languages in our state. In fact, she has started publishing a series of blog posts that appear on CTCOLT.org. Please take some time to look for those posts.

Please join us in congratulating Rebecca Aubrey for CT COLT’s Teacher of the Year and NECTFL’s Teacher of the Year. She was selected from among other outstanding Teachers of the Year from the northeast region, which spans from Maine to Virginia and west to Pennsylvania. This means that, for the first time, a Connecticut teacher will be one of five finalists for the National World Language Teacher of the Year, ACTFL’s top teacher award, at their conference in New Orleans this year. Great work, Rebecca!
The first time my son tried 納豆 (natto) (Japanese fermented soybeans), he had just turned one. This probiotic superfood, largely regarded in Japan as a hard-core acquired taste not to be inflicted lightly upon non-native palates (not least of all for its stinky, sticky threads), elicited a blubbering raspberry of a rejection from my trilingual toddler. The next week, partly for the fun of it, I chopped it up into finer pieces and tried serving it again. Surprisingly he swallowed a couple of tentative bites. The third time we put natto in front of him, he made a joyous mess of ingesting the soybean-rice dish, enjoying the gooey, stringy texture with his bare hands. Today it has become one of his favorite breakfast foods. We often recount this story to him as a way of teaching him to try new foods at least once, preferably more, before deciding not to like it – “otherwise you might miss out.”

As a parent trying to raise young children to speak two FSI category V languages (Japanese and Arabic) to which they would otherwise have little daily exposure here in CT, I’ve come to learn how important it is to introduce and re-introduce repeatedly those things that seem initially “unfamiliar” to them, whether it be foods or phonemes. To be honest, it seems at times a formidable, exhausting task. As a native speaker of Japanese who grew up mostly here in the United States (in the Deep South in the 1980s, no less), I had first-hand experience with what worked and what did not in terms of acquiring and maintaining literacy and fluency in that language which seemed so far removed from the everyday lives of my fellow Alabamians. Attending Japanese language schools on Saturdays definitely helped, not so much because of the classroom instruction, but because of 1) the immersive interactions I had in Japanese with peers my age during recess and play-dates; 2) unscripted conversations with adults in the school community, and 3) the daily drills and homework exercises that I, somewhat begrudgingly, slogged through. Hence, we wake up very early on Saturdays to make the one-hour pilgrimage to our closest Saturday language school in Hartford, where I volunteer in various roles in turn as substitute teacher, managing director, etc. Taking the children to Japan on a regular basis is of course wonderful, but not terribly practical or financially feasible. Visiting at least once, including enrollment in a local school, is necessary however, just as immersive study abroad experiences are often key in order for older language-learners to attain fluency. Such sojourns emphasize that the language and culture are not strange at all, but are the matrix and glue underlying everyday life and daily interactions for millions of people. My son marveled at the fact that he could walk himself to school without me, even in the midst of Tokyo at rush-hour, so long as he knew how to ask for directions and help in Japanese in case he lost his way. And he loved the fact that natto appeared on the menu of his school lunches, along with a colorful smorgasbord of healthy, tasty fare. He gained instant friends when fellow classmates saw him eating a very traditional food with such gusto and being able to finish his entire meal (a very useful skill in a culture that frowns upon food waste).

What I came to realize in the process of parenting in three languages is how important it is to acclimate children to the process of learning novel things and confronting new experiences in a way that makes them open to, even hungering to seek out further horizon-expanding fields. One must, in other words, help them acquire a “curiosity habit,” a self-diversification of the mind. By introducing and reintroducing aspects of another culture and language to a child repeatedly in a positive way starting from infancy, the child becomes familiar with not just that language or culture, but with the practice of regularly trying out new, heretofore unfamiliar things. This kind of integrated “looping” is crucial for languages like Chinese and Japanese, for which the child will have to learn and memorize well over 1,000 Chinese characters during elementary and middle school in order to attain literacy – it helps to approach teaching complex characters as lexical “legos” comprised of components of smaller, easier radicals, and each new lessons can serve both as a review for earlier material, and a way to understand foundational content more deeply. And yes, there will be tantrums and whining sessions, and other forms of resistance that you will need to work through (incentives do work: in our house, the children are allowed to watch their favorite animated TV show in the target language if they complete their homework or if they hold a conversation in the language). When the parent or teacher is tenacious on this front, the child or student feels supported knowing that the grown-up will not so easily give up on them, and thereby learns by example, as well as by practicing, how to persevere.

But how does one accomplish this in a practical way? There are several challenges: one must start early (preferably in infancy, but certainly in the early childhood education years), and it is a multi-year, long-term endeavor, whereas educators typically
only stay with the same student for one year or less. For the less commonly-taught languages, the dearth of reinforcement and cultural/linguistic reminders and artifacts outside the classroom compounds the difficulties.

One way to ameliorate the first problem would be for language school and programs to explore outreach to very young learners – the Japanese Language School of Hartford, for example, is currently planning to open song and story-telling sessions for toddlers and pre-school age children in the target language, similar to what many local and municipal libraries offer in English. Japanese programs in schools can encourage students to teach even younger kids by opening up multi-age sessions. The younger kids often look up to the older ones, and if the older students are cognizant of this responsibility, it could motivate both age groups in their language acquisition. Furthermore, it can help boost the older students who are struggling with learning the language when they re-acquaint themselves with the basics and realize they know more than they had assumed.

As for the second difficulty, language programs in schools might consider creative ways to nurture and track students over several years via team-teaching or guest-lecturing in different levels of language classes, integrating language sessions into after-school or after-care programs, and inviting alumni to chat with current students in the target language. Furthermore, more alliances and tie-ins could be built between and across various languages – in Japanese for example, there is a separate phonetic alphabet (katakana カタカナ) which is used for words borrowed from non-Japanese languages. The word form bread is pan パン, which comes from the Portuguese word pão brought by explorers in the 1400s, and of course is related to the Spanish and French words pan and pain respectively. Similar lessons could be creative for Arabic words such as “lemon” and “bazaar” that made their way into English and Japanese via Moorish words found in Spanish and Portuguese. Students are often amazed at how cosmopolitan words can be, and this kind of knowledge opens up their curiosity about languages outside their ken. In an atmosphere of increasing intolerance and hostility toward the “other,” the one thing that has been shown to be a potentially effective antidote to these troubling trends is to stir a person’s sense of curiosity.

Finally, let us consider the third aforementioned challenge: that of the lack of exposure to the majority of the world’s languages here at home in Connecticut. Of course, there are some concrete things parents and teachers can do, such as giving students a label machine or labels and a marker to label everyday objects and rooms in school and at home, going online or to a local ethnic grocery to purchase enticing snacks or toys with packaging in the target languages and opening a show-and-tell session, etc. But what I really wish is for people outside the language-teacher community to take part and get involved. For example, our colleagues in history classes could integrate more of the original languages into their content, and cross-disciplinary collaborations could be forged. The sciences and philosophical disciplines are full of Latin and German words and phrases. Music (particularly via opera and other types of song) is another field in which exposure and acclimation to foreign languages, even the less commonly-taught ones, could delightfully open a child’s sense of wonder and curiosity. Finally, as busy, harried teachers it is easy to lose our own sense openness to learning and to curiosity for the other. Perhaps it is time we encourage and support each other’s horizon-expanding ideas in a more active, daily way. By showing our curiosity more openly to our children and to our students, even if (or especially because) it involves making many mistakes along the way, we encourage them to ask questions like “I wonder how to say ‘You only live once #YOLO’ in Malayalam?”
“How is the Hungarian language related to Finnish?” “How do people in Bangladesh talk about solar eclipses?” We happily live in an age where initial queries to answer such questions are available at our fingertips. Let us continue to remember that deeper answers and questions are available close at hand in our local communities as well and let us not miss out on the richness of what our multi-lingual neighbors can offer us, and what we can offer them in turn, right here at home in Connecticut.

**Personal Perspectives**

**Students Becoming Teachers: How Teaching Spanish Reminded Us Why We Love Learning It.**

By Caroline Morehouse

Student at Stonington High School

The second time around is always easier. That’s the way we all felt the second time teaching Spanish at the elementary schools. Last year, the Stonington High School Spanish Honors Society started a 4-week program where we taught Spanish to fourth-graders in our school system. We developed lesson plans and shared teaching techniques. It was certainly fun, but it was all totally new. This year, my fellow Spanish Honors Society teachers and I went into the classrooms confident and prepared because we had done it all before.

Our Spanish curriculum included names, greetings, numbers, colors, “Me gusta...,” how to say your age, and parts of the body. We brought back some of our favorite games from when we were in Spanish I and II like Loto and Simón Dice. We also incorporated some new ideas including an emoji game to learn emotion words and Pasa El Globo with some of our favorite modern Latin American music. We split off into four groups, one in each class. Each group taught together and designed one lesson plan. This way, everyone was involved in both the teaching and the planning. In the morning of each teaching day, the other members and I met before school to go over the lesson plans and talk with our groups. Just like real co-teachers, we divided up the lesson plans so that one person would take the lead on different parts of the lesson. Even though our favorite part was obviously going to and teaching at the schools, most of our work was behind-the-scenes, getting ready to make the best lesson possible for the kids.

We hope that our lessons have had an impact on the kids. Our purpose, above all else, is to inspire a love for learning languages in the fourth-graders that we teach. What I know for sure is that teaching these kids has had an enormous impact on us. First, it has taught us to think about Spanish in a different way: not how to learn it, but how to teach it to others. Second, seeing the excitement on the children’s’ faces when they learn a new word has reminded us about our excitement for learning a new language. Sometimes, as high school students, we get bogged down in the grammar and vocabulary, and we forget about the excitement and passion. These fourth-graders have managed to light up our enthusiasm for languages again.

As the Education Committee Chair, I am in charge of making this program happen; however, it could not have been possible without the 15 other students who helped with teaching. Here are quotes from three different students whose lives have also been impacted by teaching Spanish. -Caroline Morehouse (11th Grade)

**Not all of us were confident as teachers in the beginning, but the kids’ enthusiasm let us know that they had confidence in us:**

Going into my first teaching lesson, I was extremely nervous about the perils of teaching fourth graders. They all stare at you, attentive ears, listening to every pronunciation and accent you put on each word. The more often we visited the kids and the more we introduced them to Spanish, the more fun it
became. We learned the kid’s names, they opened up to us, and I opened up to them.

An experience like this where we allow young children to experience new cultures outside of their own gives me a new perspective on language learning. The bright, young minds always try to figure out tricks and easy ways to remember words, some of them even helping the “experts” of the language. By the last lesson, the children were able to carry on simple conversations about how they were feeling, their favorite colors, and parts of the body. While I may have discovered that the pressure of teaching young children is not for me as a profession, this experience gave me a different outlook on the beautiful Spanish language. - Max Wojtas (11th Grade)

We hope to influence their language learning in the years to come:

Teaching a large group of fourth-graders, personally, was at first a daunting challenge. However, as soon as I saw the excitement on each of their faces when they mastered simple phrases such as “how are you?” and “what’s your name?” it quickly became a rewarding experience. Each child tenaciously worked through each word, “mastering” their Spanish accents and enthusiastically holding simple conversations with their peers. Whether they realized it or not, their exploration with other languages early on introduces them to a new topic in a fun environment, a topic that they will explore in middle school, high school, and possibly beyond. - Hannah Lamb (11th Grade)

Fourth Graders are smarter than people give them credit:

When I joined this committee I never expected to grow so close to the kids in a timespan of only 4 weeks. During my first day I was nervous that the kids weren’t going to like me or that I was going to completely blank on basic Spanish vocabulary. But, as soon as I walked into that classroom and saw the bright, excited faces of those 4th graders, I knew right away that I was going to enjoy myself, and I stopped worrying so much. I grew especially close with a couple of the kids and by the end of the month I knew all of them by name.

The thing that amazed me most about these 4th graders was how quickly they picked up a new language. Some of them already spoke more than one language at home and already knew a little bit of Spanish, and then there were some that only knew how to say “Hola”. I learned that 4th graders are a lot smarter than people think! This experience made me realize that it takes a very special person to be a teacher. Anybody can teach somebody how to do something, but it takes a patient, compassionate human to dedicate their career to teaching. - Kylie Fullerton (11th Grade)
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6/22 MOVING ALONG THE PROFICIENCY CONTINUUM + MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

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After serving as a high school teacher of Spanish, a high school administrator and then as Coordinator of Foreign Languages and International Education for the Georgia Department of Education, Greg launched a career in 1993 as an independent consultant. His work includes professional development of teachers and administrators, curriculum and assessment design, program development, and evaluation. He has authored and collaborated in the authorship of numerous publications in the field of foreign language education. Greg's responsibilities take him throughout the United States and to numerous other countries. He resides with his family in Atlanta, Georgia.

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instruction assessment proficiency gains
Beginning in Mindfulness - Just Breathe
By Christine Rapp Dombrowski

Mindfulness is on everyone’s mind today, but I think the concept is often only associated with living calmly and peacefully without stress. As I continue on my path to become a qualified mindfulness teacher, I am realizing that mindfulness is about being human, about living a life where you embrace where you are in every moment. Some of these moments are joyful and peaceful but others are stressful and frustrating. Mindfulness is about living your life with more compassion for yourself, about using your body and your emotions as guides to help you realize how you are doing in each moment and responding to those messages. It is about taking care of yourself.

As a practice, mindfulness has been around for millennia but just in the last decade or so is becoming more mainstream and for a good reason. Jon Kabat-Zinn created the UMass Medical School’s Center for Mindfulness in 1979 and it has become the foundation of the mindfulness movement around the world. This is his definition of mindfulness:

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”

One of the best ways to begin practicing being in the present moment is through simply focusing on your breathing. If the word meditation has you squirming in your chair or thinking “I can’t do that” or “I don’t have the time” or “My mind is always at warp speed,” this mini-practice might be your solution.

1. Close your eyes or just look down and find a spot to comfortably focus on.
2. Now, focus on your breath. Just notice each inhale and exhale. You don’t have to change how you are breathing at all. It’s really just about noticing - paying attention to your breath.
3. If you start to wander off in your thoughts, just gently come back to your focus on your breath. Wandering thoughts are natural.
4. Do this for 3-5 minutes. Or 1 minute if that feel more doable.

By making this breath exercise a regular practice, you will be training your brain to calm itself. It is the first step in letting go of that chaotic thought pattern. By noticing it happening during your breath work, you are interrupting it. The interruption allows you to step out of it. If you are like me, you spend a lot of time thinking about what needs to happen in the next 15 minutes, next hour, next day, week, month....Or rehashing what happened before this moment. This is the opposite of being present. Mindfulness is about creating new, healthier thought patterns, which will allow you to be present in this moment. I am finding that my daily stress is reduced when I am not wasting so much time thinking about things or events that might or might not happen in the future or with things that happened in the past and cannot be changed.

It seems like taking a breath is a simple thing, an obvious thing, but it has a great impact on your stress levels and also on your health. There is a reason why the breath is the focus of, not only meditating, but also intense training for professionals which need to manage highly stressful situations, like soldiers or extreme athletes. Recent medical research has shown how taking a few deep breaths through the nose can help reduce physical and emotional stress. A study done by Northwestern Medicine found that deep nasal breathing reduces our stress and calms our emotional centers in the brain. Cognitive functions also are positively affected by breathing exercises. The researchers concluded nasal breathing could help improve memory and focus and aid in the regulation of our emotions. [https://www.mindful.org/breath-brains-remote-control/ ]
Other research studies have shown that breathing exercises have a positive impact on your hormones helping you to lose weight, increasing your stamina and your fitness level, and even impacting and altering your genes, in particular by reducing chronic inflammation, which has been proven to cause cancer, Alzheimers, depression, and heart disease. [https://www.yogajournal.com/yoga-101/4-reasons-breathe-right]. Introducing breathing exercises to your classrooms will help your students self-regulate behavior, reduce anxiety and stress, and improve focus and cognitive function. Just think, all of these benefits from something as simple as breathing!

So, find some time today, or maybe even right now, to pause, take a few breaths and start to allow yourself to slow your racing thoughts, appreciate the moment, and know that you are enough.

Namaste,
Christine Rapp Dombrowski
Uplift Teachers
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5 Things to Consider When Writing a Can-Do Statement
Megan M. Smith
Megan@creativelanguageclass.com

Daily objectives (can-do statements) have made a major impact on my lessons over the years. They force me to narrow in on a purpose for the lesson and help me stay on track as I plan. I’ll be the first to admit that I’ve definitely missed the mark on many of the goals I’ve posted on my whiteboard. I’m grateful for those who questioned some goals and also for those who brainstormed ways to improve them. Here are a few questions that I found helpful when evaluating my daily objectives so that they support proficiency and our World Language Standards (SCs).

Is it communicative?

If you understand proficiency, then you know the goal is communication. Making sure the daily objective matches our big goal of proficiency is really important. Just because you write “I can” in front of something, doesn’t mean it is a communicative task. I like to ask myself... "Would I ever hear two people talking about this in a coffee shop or on the subway?"

Is there a cultural connection?

Culture isn’t meant to be taught on its own; it’s part of a balanced lesson. By including a cultural touch in the daily objective, you’re telling students that both language skills AND cultural knowledge are important. Plus, it gives you a purpose for leading the lesson with authentic resources and a context to compare cultures.

Is it targeting the right proficiency range?

Goals that are too advanced or too simple cause students to check out. Plus, in a class of 30+ students, there is no way they are all at the exact same proficiency sublevel. Some may be challenged to communicate at novice high, where others are already intermediates. However, if you choose your CAN-DO words wisely, you can set a goal that ALL students can accomplish at their own proficiency level.

Is it age-appropriate?

This one seems easy, but sometimes we forget that novices in a high school are practically adults even though their second language skills are limited. They may not be engaged in or motivated by “kid-friendly” materials. Other programs may reach intermediate in middle school but need to keep in mind what is appropriate and interesting to that age group. Do middle school students care enough about food additives or gluten to talk about them in another language? Do high school students want a lesson to learn the ABCs?

Is it measurable by the end of the class?

If our goals are too big, they may need to be “unpacked.” If they are too small, you may need to pair them with another goal. Pretend you’re not a runner. Pretend you’re training to run a marathon this summer. Would either of these goals help you train tomorrow? 1.) Run 20 miles. 2.) Run 20 feet. Probably not! That trainer needs to find out what you can do and push you just beyond that amount to help you improve little by little each day. In the same way, students need bite-size challenges that they can accomplish each day to help them reach a big goal over time.

Take a look at an example of three versions of a can-do statement and evaluate how you think they measure up. Are they communicative? Is there a cultural connection? What proficiency level do they target? Are they age-appropriate? Are
they measurable? Then, when you’re ready, read the pros and cons of each of them below.

Option 1: I can identify 7 places in the city.

Communicative? No. You can’t keep a conversation alive with “park, school, bank...GYM”

Cultural? No. Most students would think about their own city and find the easiest vocab to remember to complete the task. No cultural knowledge or investigation is necessary.

Appropriate Proficiency Level? No. This is aiming for individual words (novice low). Can students do more? Let’s aim to push their proficiency - from words to phrases, or phrases to sentences. Each lesson should allow students to complete the goal at their own proficiency.

Age-Appropriate? Sure, as long as we choose places our students might actually visit.

Measureable? Yes, and I could check learners with an exit slip at the end of the class.

Option 2: I can give my opinion about different places in the city.

Communicative? Yes. You could start a conversation giving your opinion about a place.

Cultural? It could be, but not necessarily. If students knew about target culture places they might talk about them, but it would be probably be limited.

Appropriate Proficiency Level? This task could be completed at the Novice or Intermediate level, so if that is your targeted proficiency - Yes. It would need a bigger challenge to be done at the Advanced level.

Age-Appropriate? Sure, as long as we choose places our students might actually visit.

Measureable? Yes, grab a proficiency rubric to see how they were able to respond to the task.

Option 3: I can give my opinion about popular places to visit in (target culture) city.

Communicative? Yes, there are shows, books, online articles AND conversations based on opinions of different places to visit when traveling to new cities.

Cultural? Yes! You have to know about the target culture and some of its history to understand what places are unique or special to visit. It would take some cultural investigation (in the target language) in order to be able to talk about them!

Appropriate Proficiency Level? This task could also be completed at the Novice or Intermediate level, so if that is your targeted proficiency - Yes. I like how this one even challenges native speakers who know the language, but not all cultures. It would need a bigger challenge to be done at the Advanced level.

Age-Appropriate? Yes, let’s show our students the world and give them a choice and voice to explore what most interests them. It leads in perfectly to a follow up lesson comparing the TL city with their own!

Measureable? Yes, you can see how well students complete the task with a proficiency rubric.

It’s easy to see the better option here, isn’t it? In the same way, if you need help evaluating or improving your daily objectives, invite a colleague or leader in your class and let them help! Your can-do statements may not perfectly align with the suggestions in this post, but they are worth considering as you cover the standards and shift toward proficiency. We all have an area we can improve on. For me, rethinking my can-dos had a big impact on my lesson planning and student success. I hope it does for you, too. Keep learning. Keep improving. You CAN-DO it!

Visit [www.creativelanduageclass.com/can-dos/](http://www.creativelanduageclass.com/can-dos/) for a peek at more can-dos for your classroom.
Spring Fever – What do I do?
By Rebecca Aubrey

We all know the signs. In elementary schools, it’s mud tracked all over your floor after recess. The kids start to take just a little longer to settle into their seats, and get distracted more easily. Your classroom begins to smell differently and the smell lingers long after they leave. Spring fever has hit, and once your students are infected with it, they can be hard to teach. How do you re-hook your students and re-capture their attention, even when the days get longer, the air is warmer, and the birds start to sound different? While the suggestions in this article are based on experiences in a K-8 setting, many of the strategies are also applicable to older students. What follows are three main strategies: Positive Behavior Intervention Systems (PBIS), giving students a real-world mission, and shaking things up by testing new activities and offering students choice.

PBIS

If you don’t already, try using a PBIS approach to classroom management in the target language (TL). Using PBIS helps to develop rapport with students and sets clear expectations for behavior. With novice learners, it is also a great way to reinforce directions and expectations in TL. Reward students who are doing the right thing, and do it often, more than you think you should have to. While the reward can be tangible, one of the best rewards is simply naming the student, identifying the positive behavior, and giving them an energetic thumbs up. Watch how the student glows and sits up taller! For example, if you ask students to get a pencil, as soon as one student does it, compliment her. Others will look to see what she is doing, and follow the example; compliment them, and keep complimenting until everyone has picked up a pencil. It can be used in the same way to acknowledge on-task behavior and indirectly correct off-task behavior. A common critique of PBIS is that some students, i.e. “the good ones”, always receive acknowledgement while others don’t, and this reinforces the self-perception of the others that they are “bad”, so they don’t bother to try. Three things are critical to making PBIS work effectively. First, compliment students making the right choices, but keep complimenting until even those who were making poor choices have fallen into place, and then compliment them. This is essential. Second, look for opportunities to compliment those latter students about something, anything, before anyone else, so they have a chance to shine. Finally, ignore negative behaviors as much as possible, while at the same time acknowledging the positive. If you need to respond because it is disrupting class or someone is in danger, don’t do it publicly; instead confer with the student privately. Preventing someone from getting hurt is one of the few times I use English in my classroom.

During these times when students are off-kilter, I try to shake up my PBIS system in some way. For example, this January I started each class by identifying a captain for each table on the whiteboard. Every time I saw the table on task I gave them a tally, with a verbal reinforcement in the TL. By on task I mean using the materials appropriately, using the TL, helping each other, and cleaning up. Slowly, the students started to realize what I was doing, and the captains began to encourage their peers. At the end of the class, we counted the tallies and identified the winning group. The first couple of days of this I gave that group school PBIS tickets; after a while, the prize didn’t matter, as they were all just shooting to win. I have since stopped doing the table tallies, but the students are still rallying together in their groups to do what is expected.

A Real-World Mission

A second strategy is to establish a real-world mission for student learning. Ideally, there should always be a purpose to what students are doing, and it should be something they can relate to. A real-world purpose that transcends the students’ own needs and world is deeply engaging to them. The students are tired of learning content in all of their classes that they can’t relate to, or see a purpose for. Give them a purpose other than “to get into college” or “to get a good job”. If you are used to teaching from an established curriculum or textbook, this kind of change may be challenging, but it can be done by
reframing the content. Now is a good time to try to take a step in that direction.

My first example is something I can’t take credit for, as the idea came from my students. I once read a story from Guatemala about traditional Mayan weaving to a combined 2nd and 3rd grade class. My students questioned why the girl in the story wasn’t in school. This led them to start a drive for school materials to support the education of Mayan girls in Guatemala. We sorted the materials and did Math with them, like: “If each girl needs 2 pencils to go to school, how many girls can go to school with a box of 12 pencils?” They also collected coin donations, which we counted and totaled, making comparisons to see which classes were collecting the most money. We charted monthly totals and progress towards our goal, and we did all of this in the TL. The students were deeply engaged, because it wasn’t about learning to identify school supplies or how to count in Spanish, but it was about helping Mayan girls go to school.

Another example is our study of monarch butterflies, which I do every Spring with 3rd graders. Through this unit, the students learn that monarchs are endangered, and develop an understanding of how monarchs exemplify the interconnectedness between Mexico and the U.S. They study weather, life cycles, migration, and body parts. They also look at how deforestation and farming practices are contributing to the decline of the butterfly. The students become enamored with monarchs. We have created a large migration mural on a bulletin board, and students have written persuasive letters to the principal to ask the school to stop spraying pesticides on weeds around the school. They excitedly report monarch sightings to me in early June, and in the fall, many of my students come to school carrying armloads of milkweed covered in monarch larvae that they want to save. Again, they are no longer learning Spanish “just because”, but instead because it happens to be the tool they use to help save monarch butterflies.

Shake Things Up

While I am a big believer in having clear and consistent routines for students, now is a good time to shake up the routines to re-engage them. Consistent routines provide a structure and context to support a 90%+ TL classroom. By this point in the year, however, they have the routines down, can follow directions, and know how to engage in a variety of learning activities. While structure builds confidence, it can also start to get boring, and lead to off-task behavior. So, this is a great time to do something completely different or try something completely new with the students. As their energy level increases, try some physical activities to re-engage your students.

At NECTFL 2018 I learned about doing yoga animals as a way to engage students physically. My 3rd graders come to Spanish right after recess and lunch and are hard to settle on a good day, never mind after so many snow days interrupting their routines. When my next 3rd grade class came in, I got their attention, started to do a cat pose, and said “gato”. My students are used to me being a bit weird, but they rarely see
Finally, another way I like to shake things up at this time of the year is to give my students more choices of learning activities and more ownership over what they are learning. This can be choices in a project or centers, or choices in how they are learning content, like through a video, books, or teacher-led, as long as they all have a common theme. If you haven’t yet introduced your students to the ACTFL Can-Do Statements, or don’t fully use them to empower students to self-monitor, there is no better time to try it than now. Ask the students to consider where they started the year, and how far they have come. Invite them to set goals for themselves for what they want to be able to do by the end of the school year. Use this feedback from the students to establish choice learning activities. Again, if you’ve never used the Can-Do Statements before, this is a great way to begin to dabble in them, so that incorporating them into your practices next year doesn’t feel as overwhelming. At the same time, it is a great way to empower students and re-engage them.

So, as we head into the last couple of months of school, seize the opportunity to do something new. Take risks, and test some new activities or techniques; they very well might inform your planning for next year. As the weather warms up, and your students just want to be outside, they need novel experiences to re-engage them. Try giving them a real-world mission to what they are learning or try giving them some choices in their learning experiences. Most importantly, as frustrated as they might make you feel, stay positive. Last year, around this time, I saw signs in the grocery story right in each cashier’s line of vision if they were looking at a customer. The signs said “look up and smile”. I imagine that cashiers deal with a lot – busy lines and short-tempered customers – and they need that reminder to stay positive. At this time of year, I keep a visual reminder of that in my mind, and when my students start to get particularly frustrating, I take a deep breath, look around the room for someone who is on task, someone who is taking risks with the language, or the trouble-maker who is a split second away from making a poor choice, and I smile and shout out in the TL: “Excellent ____! I love how you are being so respectful of your peers!” Try it – you’ll feel better.

“Maestra” Rebecca Aubrey is an elementary Spanish teacher at Ashford School, in Ashford CT. Ms. Aubrey is the 2018 CT COLT and NECTFL Teacher of the Year. For more tips, see her blog at https://MaestraAubrey.wordpress.com and follow her on Twitter @MaestraAubreyCT. Ms. Aubrey welcomes your questions or comments via email to RAubrey@AshfordCT.org.

Adobe Spark: An Engaging Form of Communication for Students and Teachers
By Laura Martino, Clinton Public Schools and Theresa Biagiarelli Crisco, Guilford Public Schools

At the late March’s annual CCSU Conference for Language Teachers, we, Theresa Biagiarelli Crisco (Guilford Public Schools) and Laura Martino (Clinton Public Schools), presented a workshop on the topic of Adobe Spark: An Engaging Form of Communication for Students and Teachers. We had chosen this title because this free online site and app/s truly does engage teachers and students (as well as family).

If you already are hooked on Adobe Spark then you know that it is available through both a free online site (https://spark.adobe.com/sp/login) and free phone apps. Educators can also see https://spark.adobe.com/edu/ for sample works. Students create visuals with layered text, icons, photos, music, videos and, last but not least, voice through three different means: the Spark Post for social media posts, the Spark Page for vertical work and the Spark Video for video pages. All three of these options can be used on the online site; download each option separately to use as an app on cell phones. Our students have used Spark Video for projects, conversations, and to practice writing and speaking about vocabulary or grammar. They love the stylish appearance of their work; it is, well, ‘engaging’!

When sharing the work, for purposes of student privacy we recommend the students turn off the ‘Get Noticed’ feature so that the work will not be featured on the Adobe Spark website. In addition, students’ faces do not have to be featured in the Adobe Spark videos; rather photos and icons can be used.

We hope that you will get started on using Adobe Spark in the classroom. Students who have computers in the classroom will understand how to use it and/or you can use a single
computer/pad to create work with the entire class. Just get started and it will make sense. Let the engagement begin!

**CT COLT News**

**Seal of Biliteracy Update**

Jessica Haxhi
CT COLT Seal of Biliteracy Co-Director
Supervisor of World Languages, New Haven Public Schools

As many of you know, on June 6, 2017, the Governor signed Public Act 17-29, allowing a local or regional board of education to affix the “Connecticut State Seal of Biliteracy” on the diploma of students who have achieved a “high level of proficiency in English and one or more foreign languages.” *Proficiency* refers to the ability to use languages in real-world situations. *Biliteracy*, in this instance, refers to a student’s ability to read, write, speak and listen at an established level of proficiency. CT COLT played a major role in getting this legislation passed and developing the state guidelines. Our current charge is to assist school districts in implementing the award.

We recently sent an informal 1-minute survey to CT COLT members to gauge current trends for implementing the Seal. Of the 26 school districts that responded, 11 are awarding the Seal to seniors this year and 3 are testing juniors in order to award the Seal next year! The districts awarding this year in some capacity, according to the survey, are: Beacon Falls, Darien, East Lyme, Glastonbury, Groton, New Haven, North Stonington, Norwalk, Stamford, Stonington, and Wallingford. Enfield and Farmington have begun testing juniors this year in order to begin awarding next year. Nine districts are investigating options for awarding the Seal in the future and two have not begun their research, but are interested. One district did say that the Seal has not been discussed; that may also be the case in other districts that did not respond to the survey. Overall, there is an exciting movement toward awarding the Seal across the state.

If you are interested in pursuing the Seal for your district, start at CT COLT website, Seal of Biliteracy main page at [http://www.ctcolt.org/pages/sealofbiliteracy.asp](http://www.ctcolt.org/pages/sealofbiliteracy.asp). You may want to begin your research in the order listed below. All of these available on the drop-down menu of the Seal of Biliteracy section of the website:

- Read the **Seal of Biliteracy Guidelines**: These were established by a representative committee of Connecticut world language and ELL educators working with the State DOE. Connecticut’s guidelines aligned with most other states in the nation and with ACTFL recommendations.
- Take a look at the **Frequently Asked Questions** page, which is the second choice on the CT COLT Seal of Biliteracy drop-down menu. It answers your questions about testing timeline, low incidence languages, etc.
- Watch the **Webinars** about Seal implementation and/or download the PDF of the PowerPoint. These are available as the third choice on the drop-down menu.
- Read about how to **Apply and Order Seals** which will be supplied by CT COLT for $1.00 per student with a $2.00 shipping fee. These are the Seals that will be affixed to diplomas. CT COLT is also requiring a report on student testing in order to receive the Seal so that we can collect important data on this initiative.

As we move through this process in my own district, New Haven, I have learned that in larger districts, it helps to start small in order to establish a structure for the implementation of the Seal. We are implementing at only one high school this year. This will allow us to develop informational documents for parents, students, and administrators, consider how payment for testing will happen, establish timelines, experience the actual testing process, work though transcript and diploma questions, and generally get the district used to the concept of the Seal of Biliteracy. Next year, we will have these things in place as we try to bring the Seal “to scale” across the district.

The resources on the website should answer most of your current questions. If after reading the resources over and watching the webinar, you still have questions, please feel free to contact me at Jessica.haxhi@nhboe.net.

**Practitioners’ Corner Reaches Midpoint of PD Schedule**

By Matthew Mangino

The Practitioners’ Corner is a collaboration between CT COLT and the Rhode Island Foreign Language Association (RIFLA). They have conducted an in-depth study of three high-leverage practices for the teaching of languages. This webinar series is based on Eileen W. Glisan and Richard Donato’s book
“Enacting the Work of Language Instruction: High-Leverage Teaching Practices” which is available through ACTFL.org.

The Practitioners’ Corner was the project first conceived at ACTFL’s Leadership Initiative for Language Learning in the summer of 2017. Sarah Steverman of Westerly (RI) Public Schools and Matthew Mangino of Wethersfield (CT) High School designed a series of webinars in which teachers get a detailed explanation of each of six core teaching practices for world languages. Then, teachers have a chance to implement the practice in their teaching and then to reflect on that implementation. The Practitioners’ Corner builds on the outstanding work around the core practices that was begun by Lea Graner-Kennedy and CT-LILL after she attended ACTFL-LILL in 2015. Lea continues and extends teachers’ learning by calling on a national expert to engage with participants, and provide insight and analysis on each of the core practices.

This year, the Practitioners’ Corner has undertaken the first three core practices from Glisan and Donato’s text. First, teachers learned about ways to implement 90% of instruction in the target language. Then, teachers found out about building language discourse communities. And finally, teachers combined the skills learned about 90% target language with a positive discourse community, in order to use authentic resources such as text, audio and video, to have a text-based discussion. As we head into 2018-2019, three different core practices will be discussed. For more information, please contact mmangino@wethersfield.me

MEAD Fellowship: Mentoring and Networking Initiative
By Gina Gallo ginagallo@bristolk12.org & Amanda Robustelli-Price arobustelliprice@enfieldschools.org

What is your support system? How are you developing your own skills as a teacher and leader, including in the language(s) you teach? How can we work, together, to improve our teacher practice and forward the profession?

We are excited to share that we have been awarded a Mead Fellowship, from the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, to create a mentoring and networking initiative. With the growing demand for World Language educators, and the decreasing numbers of students enrolled in teacher prep programs, it is critical that we work to ensure teacher retention within the field of world language education, and also that we work to increase the numbers of pre-service teachers.

Project Description

This project is a multitiereed growth plan, over a few years, that will offer a support system for those interested in World Language teaching, those studying to be World Language teachers, and novice World Language teachers.

General Action Plan

We are working to refine our action plan now, with the help of our own network. Over the next three years, we hope to:

- **Connect with different groups of teachers.** These include more veteran teachers, novice teachers, pre-service teachers, and also high school students. We would also like to connect to a variety of professional organizations for teachers.

- **Create an online platform for collaboration.** We envision this space will be used to provide support and discuss many aspects of teaching, including best practices. Those involved in this space will be able to be active or passive participants.

- **Provide networking opportunities for participants.** We will create a calendar of events and provide a framework for the building of community between different groups of teachers. This will include a special event the night before the Fall Conference, where teachers will meet and will also be recognized for their participation in the program.

Want to Learn More, Have Ideas, or Want to Become Involved?

Look for information via CT COLT or you can reach out to: Gina Gallo ginagallo@bristolk12.org, Amanda Robustelli-Price arobustelliprice@enfieldschools.org
5/5/18

EDCAMP CT COLT FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS @CCSU

An “Unconference” for World Language Educators

The event, organized by the Connecticut Council of Language Teachers and the CCSU Modern Language Department, is modeled after "Edcamps," and allows attendees to propose, present, or attend any sessions created that day. After two forty-five minute sessions, attendees will participate in a "smackdown" where all learning is shared. Walk-ins welcomed!

To register:  https://edcampctcolt.eventbrite.com
For more info:  www.ctcolt.org

For More Information, Contact:
Gina Gallo Reinhard, ginagallo@bristolk12.org
Matthew Mangino, mmangino@wethersfield.me
Amanda Robustelli-Price, arobustelliprice@enfieldschools.org
The Hows and Whys of the Fall Conference: Behind the Scenes

By Linda Dalpe and Vincenza Mazzone McNulty

The CT COLT Fall Conference has been a vital part of CT COLT and World Language Professional Development for many years. With no state language consultant we have become the major provider of and resource for professional development for CT WL teachers. Have you ever wondered just how this exciting conference comes to be? In truth, the committee works 10 months of the year to plan this yearly event. This year is a special one as CT COLT celebrates our 50th anniversary!

1. How does the conference committee choose the location?

Our conference has special needs in terms of the number of breakout rooms for workshops, a large room to accommodate all participants to hear our keynote speaker, an exhibit hall and a sit down luncheon dining area. There are only four venues in the state that can accommodate all of our needs. We consider one that is central to the majority of our members with free parking available. The overall rental cost and the price of the food also impacts our selection as we do have a budget to consider in order to provide a cost-effective and quality professional development experience for our colleagues.

2. Why are exhibitors so important to our conference?

Exhibitors help defray the overall conference cost. Over the years as book publishers have merged, there are fewer companies available to come to the conference. Many of the popular realia companies have reverted to online sales exclusively rather than incur the travel and shipping expenses to come from the other side of the country. The most popular (Carlex and Teacher Discovery do not even attend regional or national conferences as in the past.) Thus, we do our best to include a variety of exhibitors and vendors to try to meet the needs of our members and colleagues. We are constantly looking for new exhibitors but the fact remains that in this market and age of online sales, it is becoming harder to obtain a large variety of vendors. In addition, local small shops have limited marketing funds and need enough sales to make the investment worthwhile to participate in our exhibit hall. We have encouraged some local shops to share a booth to help with the expense.

3. Why does the conference have a keynote speaker?

Many people cannot attend regional or national conferences (NECTFL or ACTFL). We bring nationally renowned speakers to our state conference to inspire our teachers with their research and pedagogy. These educators keep us abreast of trends and the national direction of our World Language discipline. They also provide concrete learning experiences that we can bring back to our classroom to share with our students. Several have been so popular that we have asked them to come back to do summer institutes to continue to provide continued meaningful professional development.

4. How does the conference committee select the workshops?

Numerous calls for proposals are sent out on our website, emails as well as through the personal contacts with our colleagues. We depend on our fellow teachers who freely offer their expertise, materials and time to provide meaningful professional development to their World Language colleagues. This generous donation of time and talent is what makes this conference so popular, well attended and a cost effective professional development experience. We invite you to put in a proposal to share something that you have found valuable to your students. Encourage a colleague to share a skill or project that you have admired, or plan a workshop together. Is there a unit that you have done or written that has special meaning to your students? Do you have a cultural activity/activities that your students loved? We have a list of popular themes that might very well spark your mind to say “I would love to share that or know someone who is really good at that”.... Why not put in a proposal today or contact the co chairs to bounce off your idea? The strength and power of our organization comes from the fact that we are all volunteers who love our profession and are willing to share.

5. How do we determine the cost of the conference?

There are numerous fixed expenses regardless of how many participants there are. These include: venue rental, coffee, continental breakfast, sit down luncheon, and afternoon snacks, exhibit hall fixtures (pipe and drape), AV rental, policeman for traffic control, printing and publicity, postage, conference materials and swag, and insurance to name only some of these costs. With the help of our exhibitors we have been able to keep the cost of the conference as low as we possibly can. When someone doesn’t show up, we still have to pay for the meals ordered as well as the hidden expenses...
already mentioned. Planning a conference is similar to planning a wedding with the myriad of details, and efforts to keep the cost as low as possible while providing a meaningful event.

6. How is the conference schedule determined?

We consider several factors in determining the schedule. We have tweaked the schedule over the last several years to provide the best experience and most bang for the professional buck.

Thus, we schedule workshops until 4:00 pm to provide for a rich and varied professional development conference in a day long program. We are aware of the statewide substitute shortage as well as many districts limiting the number of teachers who can attend. While some districts pay entirely for the registration, many teachers have always had to pay for their own registration in order to get professional development that is relevant to their subject area. We also realize that there are some teachers who need to leave at 2:00 when their typical school day is done to meet family responsibilities. However, feedback and attendance at the last hour of workshops has proven that most teachers appreciate the current schedule and their colleagues’ willingness to share their expertise in that time slot.

7. How do I get involved?

Each year we ask for volunteers to join our conference planning committee. We welcome all, even if a fairly new teacher wants to get involved. There is no such thing as being too new to the profession. Everyone is valued and has something to offer: new ideas, time or a particular expertise or talent. Whatever time one has to offer, there is something valuable to do. There are many pieces that must all come together to make our conference a success. Many of our CT COLT members have been working on this committee for years and would appreciate new energy, input and certainly the helping hands. There are still a number of improvements that we would like to make but are limited by the fact that we too only have a limited amount of time available with a large number of tasks already assigned to each of us for the conference. That said, our involvement in this committee has been fun and rewarding to all of us as well as the bonds of friendship that have been made. Without this dedicated group the fall conference would not exist. However, “many hands make light work” and we continue to invite and welcome new members.

8. Why is the conference evaluation important?

Both the on line and paper evaluation provide us much needed information as to what they have enjoyed and what we can do to continue to improve our conference. While there have been some suggestions that we simply can’t make happen, we do our best to continue to provide the best possible professional development to our colleagues. Unfortunately, only a quarter of our attendees bother to take the time to give us this feedback. Some have said that they would like to get involved but don’t leave any contact information. Please take the time to provide us with this valuable feedback on line.

We congratulate and thank all who have ever worked on this conference for a job well done. You have made a difference in the growth and development of our organization and our profession. Mark your calendars! Our fall conference will take place on Sunday October 21 to kick off our 50th anniversary special celebration and Monday Oct. 22 at the Radisson Cromwell. We hope to see you there!
News from CT Schools

Partial French Immersion Program in Connecticut
By Audrey Berthelot

In collaboration with Yale University, the French Embassy and a partnership with the Université de Toulouse — France, King/Robinson Magnet School, an IB STEM School features a unique Partial French Immersion Program. Our school is located in New Haven, CT and our program was launched in the 2011-2012 school year. We are an Interdistrict Magnet school therefore admission to our school is based on a lottery system.

Students in the Partial French Immersion Program spend a portion of their day learning Literacy and Science in French while supporting the IB curriculum — and the rest of their day learning Literacy and Math in English and participating in a variety of other core classes.

The Partial French Immersion program aims to develop communicative and academic proficiency in French and in English, as well as develop understanding and appreciation of other cultures. It intends to help students succeed academically in all subject areas. Indeed, research has shown that learning a second language at an early age improves listening skills and strengthens problem-solving and creative thinking skills.

In pre-K and Kindergarten, all of our students are exposed to both French and Spanish during our FLES classes once or twice weekly. In Grade 1 to 4, we offer an optional French Partial Immersion classes as a daily pull out for approximately one and a half hour. During these years, we follow a curriculum specifically designed for our students to meet their language and academic content needs exclusively taught in French. We focus on Literacy skills (mirroring the Common Core Curriculum while infusing the French curriculum), IB curriculum and NHPS Science curriculum. In Grade 5 to 8, our French classes meet daily for 45 minutes and follow an enhanced NHPS World Language curriculum to respond to the unique needs and skills of our students. Over the six years our program has been into existence, we have had great success and seen a lot of benefits for our students. We tend to see higher results in standardized tests for our students enrolled in our Partial French Immersion Program.

Since 2015, King Robinson also has Chapter of the French Honor Society (Société Honoraire du Français - Jeunes Amis du Français). Students are selected based on their ability to speak, write and read in French as well as their overall academic success in other classes. Students become ambassador of French in our school and our community. We currently have
28 members and are inducting new members every year. It is a great way for us to promote French in our school and in our community!

I started teaching in this program in March 2012 and it has been such an amazingly rewarding experience. This program is so unique that even though it took a lot of time and work to create a strong curriculum, the response and results have been outstanding. If you walk by our French immersion room, you can hear our 2nd grade students answering questions to our science units using the French vocabulary they have acquired. It is heartwarming to watch their faces light up when they figure out the correct answer in French. This year, our 4th graders were not only able to create their own poetry book in French but also typed it on a google slide document practicing their 21st century skills. They were so excited and proud of the results. Last year, some of our Middle School students were able to travel to Quebec to practice their French speaking skills in an authentic way. As our program continues to grow, I am looking forward to watching our French students grow into confident ambassador of French!

“The Latin Amazing Race” at A.I.T.E.

by Anna Koltypin

My name is Mrs. Anna Koltypin and I teach Latin and Russian at the Academy of Information Technology & Engineering in Stamford, CT. My classes recently participated in an unusual and creative educational activity, the first of its kind in Stamford, CT “The Latin Amazing Race”. Below is a small explanation of the various challenges students overcame during the “Latin Amazing Race” There are four photos of students during the challenges.

The “Latin Amazing Race” brings together top minds in Mrs. Koltypin’s Latin Classes at the Academy of Information Technology & Engineering ("AITE")

"Veni, Vidi, Vici" echoed through the hallways AITE in Stamford, CT, from the victorious teams participating in Mrs. Koltypin’s “Latin Amazing Race” which was held on Monday, Oct 24th and Tuesday, Oct 25th. Mrs. Koltypin’s Latin I, II, III, and IV rose up to the challenge and dared to compete against their fellow Latin scholars in completing all seven challenges first.

Amazing Race, although a fun activity, fully engages all students and reinforces Latin Grammar, History, Literature and even Physics! The various challenges directly tie into the curriculum effectively and the teacher is able to assess and inform students of their knowledge level, based on their performance during the game.

The “Amazing Race” is an excellent interdisciplinary exercise which helps students make Latin fun by engaging students in helping them extend their vocabulary level with translations and identification of historical figures while also challenging them to partake in a Roman Feast, a food challenge!! Students are then asked to build a coliseum made out of toothpicks and marshmallows! Students gain a better appreciation for Roman culture, architecture and history through this very creative learning style which engages all types of learners of Mrs. Koltypin’s Latin Class. Whether they are visual, audio or kinesthetic
learners, they are working hard with their team-member and trying to move onto the next challenge.

For any further questions on the “Latin Amazing Race” and the challenges the students experienced throughout this activity, please contact Mrs. Anna Koltypin at akoltypin@aitestamford.org.

Students Enjoy a Latin-Themed Amazing Race Competition

By one of Mrs. Koltypin’s Latin Students

Mrs. Koltypin welcomed her four Latin classes to participate in AITE’s Latin Amazing Race on Friday, February 23rd, where they completed various challenges, seven in all, to be the first to win. The Amazing Race is an enjoyable and thrilling activity but also educational. It allows students to study previously learned material while also having fun. The teacher is also able to assess the knowledge level of students based on their performance during the game.

The Amazing Race is an excellent interdisciplinary exercise involving history, literature, physics and more which helps students make "Latin connections" and enjoy Latin. Students extend their vocabulary by translating and identifying challenges from participating in a food challenge to building Roman coliseums out of marshmallows and toothpicks!

Through this activity, students gain a better appreciation for the culture, history and architecture of the Romans, no matter what type of learners these students are, they are all engaged and working hard with their team members.

Language and Culture Day at Stonington High School

By Trinity Lennon, Student at Stonington High School

On March 15th, all 170 6th graders from both Pawcatuck and Mystic Middle School came to Stonington High School to participate in Language and Culture Day. This event was planned and led by the Spanish and French National Honor Societies at Stonington High School. The purpose of this learning experience was to expose the sixth grades to the languages and cultures from a wide variety of French and Spanish-speaking countries. At the end of sixth grade, the students choose a language to continue studying, and the High School students hope to make an impact and educate the sixth graders about how there is so much more to learn about communities, cultures and languages.

The High School students who ran this event put countless hours into the preparation. Many members met before and after school, while others dedicated time to making colorful and fun posters, and creating fun activities to get the middle schoolers excited to learn about new languages. The sixth graders were given paper passports which they brought around with them as they went to six of the forty countries through various continents. After each country they wrote something they now “can do.”

Language and Culture Day was created with the intent to make sure the sixth graders know enough about French and Spanish, so they could make the best decision on which language to continue studying. Riley Casadei, a senior from Stonington High School comments on the success of Language and Culture Day, “Many students often see French as inferior or less useful in the real world and therefore decide not to take it. Language and Culture Day was definitely successful in truly showing the
students how important French is and how widely spoken it is around the world. By talking to the students, I was delighted to hear a lot of sixth graders interested in now pursuing French, and I think Language and Culture Day can definitely take some credit for it. Overall, it was a wonderful experience for middle and high school students alike.” It is a very positive experience to see that high school students are able to make a cultural impact on the lives of younger students.

Language and Culture Day was a success with smiles on not only the sixth graders faces, but also the high school honor society members, and the teachers that attended the event. The sixth graders had a fun time, full of learning cultural dances, completing arts and crafts specific to each culture, and eating new foods. One group that represented Cuba, taught the middle schoolers the Cuban Salsa. Jason Kilcoyne, a senior at Stonington High School was a member of the Cuba group. Jason comments on how, “It was really cool to see them grasp and understand dancing so quickly. And to see them have such a fun time learning it made it fun for me.” The group that represented Northern Spain made a traditional dish, Pan con Tomate. I was a part of this group and, it was really awesome watching them try a new dish from a new culture and like it. My group gave them all the recipes for the dish and they were all excited to make it at home! Every sixth grader took with them the memories of the day, along with a new passion for the French and Spanish language.

Erin Craig, a senior at Stonington High School reflects on her last two years of volunteering at Language and Culture Day, “Language and Culture day is a great way to introduce younger students to the vast cultures that language can connect them to. It also unifies the older students with the younger ones and gives them a glimpse of what they have to look forward to through language study.” Language and Culture Day has proven to be a great experience for everyone involved.

It has made a positive impact on the whole language community in Stonington.

Language & Culture Day

By Daisy Williams, Stonington HS Junior

Language is an inherent aspect of a culture, and in a country made up of a multitude of cultures and ethnicities, foreign language is celebrated. Through the strong programs upheld at Stonington High School, both French and Spanish are able to flourish. This was demonstrated in the success of Language & Culture Day, which involved two schools worth of middle schoolers traveling to the high school to be taught about a variety of both French and Spanish-speaking countries. Split up by continent, groups of students, according to the language in which they are enrolled, had poster boards illustrating and discussing the language and culture about their particular country. They then prepared an interactive activity to play with the children, while teaching them either French or Spanish phrases that properly related to their activity. This not only broadened these children’s cultural awareness, but also their comprehension of foreign language. Walking amongst the dozens of tables of almost 40 different countries, this activity illustrated the breadth and immensity of foreign language and its investment in other cultures and countries. The ability to talk to middle school students about this topic allowed us to show how far investing time into a language can take. Language & Culture Day showed these student that becoming educated in language and becoming bilingual opens up unimaginable doors. The activities and games that they played whilst at each particular station allowed them to become invested into the country itself and intertwined an enjoyable and interactive aspect into education. According to Justin Paolini, a junior currently taking French, “Language & Culture Day was an amazing experience for both the 6th graders, and me as a teacher. I was able to convey the importance of learning a second language and I felt like I was really able to connect with the kids. They really got involved, we all had a lot of fun!” A learning experience for both the middle schoolers and the high schoolers, Language & Culture Day was a successful educational opportunity for all, making a great impact on those involved.
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April 26, 2018 - Southington High School
Deadline for Registration: February 19, 2018

50th CT COLT Fall Conference
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