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CONGRATS!
To: Elisa Tucker
for winning
VATESOL's "Best
of Affiliates"
presentation
To: Tanya Gray
for her ESL article
in the Virginia
Journal of
Education
See page 17

Publish in your professional newsletter!!!
Contact the newsletter editors at
eslsnoke@vt.edu
llbohonatkin@vcu.edu

Next newsletter deadline is March 1, 2011.

Message from the President

Dear Colleagues,

Please let me introduce myself to new members. My education career began in 1980. I have taught in middle school, high school, adult education and higher education settings. I began as a French teacher in Prince William County, and from there I went on to teach middle school, high school, and adult education in Minnesota and Indiana. I have been back in Virginia teaching ESL since 1992, first in adult education and then at the community college level, where I now serve as the ESL program coordinator at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College. I have been involved in the VATESOL organization for the past five years and am proud to lead us through what promises to be a very exciting year.



We continue to move forward as an organization that is dedicated to representing and serving the needs of its members. Our membership has grown, and our active group of board members hails from educational institutions across the state. We continue to strive to meet the needs of our members by providing conferences that focus on issues of current importance. Additionally, SIG leaders are embarking on new projects. You can find more information about these endeavors in this newsletter on the SIGS page.

(Continued on page 2 – President's message)

In Memory of Bill Chambers



On Tuesday, October 19, dedicated VATESOL board member and ESOL teacher, William Chambers, died of a heart attack. We were all stunned to hear this sad news, and we will miss him dearly. Bill was passionate about his ESL teaching and about the profession and he will long be remembered by those whose lives he touched.

Prior to entering the TESOL profession, Bill served as a Deputy Attorney General for the State of Delaware, where he (*please see Bill Chambers, page 2*)

2009-2010 Officers

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Virginia Clark

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Judy Snoke

Leslie Bohon

(Message from the President – continued from page 1)

The year started off on a very high note. Our annual VATESOL conference, held October 2 at the University of Mary Washington, was a resounding success. See the conference report in this issue for more details. This year will be a very busy one for VATESOL as we prepare for the regional SETESOL conference, to be held October 13-15, 2011, at the Omni Hotel in Richmond. This regional multi-day conference is expected to draw between 800 and 1000 participants. We need ESL professionals from all parts of Virginia to assist with this conference. Please contact SETESOL Conference Chair, Lily Mirjahangiri, if you are interested in volunteering.

In addition to breaking attendance records at our conference this fall, under the expertise of our web master, Ross Retterer, we continued to improve and expand our website and increase online membership and conference registration. Throughout the year, VATESOL will continue to review our administrative organization and the responsibilities of our officers and maintain active communication with TESOL. One of the new features of our newsletter is to include memorable teaching moments. This issue includes a very touching story that our dear colleague and board member, William Chambers, submitted last summer. It is with great sadness that I must share the news of Bill's passing in October. A tribute to Bill can be found in this issue, with information about a conference presenter award that we have established in Bill's memory.

As sponsors of next fall's SETESOL conference, this is a particularly exciting time to be involved in VATESOL as you will have opportunities to meet with regional TESOL teachers. Please add your voice to our organization by approaching your SIG leader or regional contact with your ideas. What a wonderful opportunity to network with other ESL professionals, gain leadership experience, and support our organization.

I look forward to working with you this year.

Laurie Weinberg
VATESOL President

Bill Chambers, cont. from page 1

also was Counsel to the Delaware State Human Relations Commission in Sussex County. Additionally, he worked as an Appeals Examiner for the Virginia Employment Commission. In 1984, he headed the Elections Office in American Samoa and supervised the General Territorial Election. He received his J.D. from George Mason University Law School and was an Adjunct Professor at Widener University and Northern Virginia Law Schools. More recently, Bill turned to ESL teaching and was a Professor of ESL in both the graduate and non degree programs at Midwest University in northern Virginia.

Bill served as the Adult Education SIG leader on the VATESOL board, and he shared his love for his profession through numerous presentations at professional TESOL conferences in New York, Virginia and West Virginia. His sessions on using music to enhance his ESL teaching were always enthusiastically received. While Bill was not a professional musician, Bill was delighted to record a CD of songs that could be used in ESL classrooms, which were distributed to those in attendance at the annual VATESOL conference in Fredericksburg this fall. He said that maybe if attendees realized he could do it that they would realize that they should not be shy about singing or using music in their own classrooms.

Bill enjoyed getting to know others, and in one exchange with one of his Korean graduate students, he learned that she had coached several sports in Korea and had played professional women's soccer. He helped this student use this background to prepare her student teaching practicum and to augment her resume. Perhaps this exchange came about because of Bill's own enthusiasm for sports. Passionate about the Chicago Blackhawks hockey team, Bill and his wife had a collection of Blackhawks player cards going back to the 1930s. Bill found the cards to be a fascinating study in culture since the cards offered interesting insights into life over the years. Another passion of Bill's was encouraging his graduate students to become involved professionally through TESOL conferences. Mentoring seemed to come naturally to Bill, and through his encouragement, several of his

students submitted proposals to conferences. To honor Bill's memory, the board has decided to award a \$150 prize at each year's conference to the best first-time presenter. More information about the *William Chambers First Time Presenter Award* will be posted on the VATESOL website and in upcoming newsletters.

VATESOL 2010 Conference Review

By Laurie Weinberg

On Saturday, October 2, more than 200 people convened for our annual VATESOL conference, hosted by the University of Mary Washington, Stafford Campus. The program kicked off on Friday evening with an optional early-registration. The mood was bright as William Chambers played the keyboard and people enjoyed light refreshments. The pace picked up on Saturday morning, but even as large numbers of attendees arrived at the same time to sign in, the process went quite smoothly as most people had pre-registered.

The theme of the conference, *Rekindling our Joy of Language Teaching*, seemed to strike a chord with most participants,

and the positive energy was felt throughout the day as people packed into the break-out sessions or gathered in the lobby to visit the book vendors or to relax with others over a cup of coffee. Our keynote speaker, **Dr.**

Richard Lederer, filled the room with laughter during his keynote address on language and his presentation ended with a standing ovation. Throughout the day, Dr. Lederer sold his books and chatted with conference participants. One member, who was having her picture taken with Dr. Lederer at the end of the conference, told me that it was reading Dr. Lederer's *Anguished English* series that inspired her (a non-native speaker) to pursue her dream of becoming an English teacher.

The day was tightly packed with presentations and the break-out session evaluations were overwhelmingly positive. The presentations were equally divided among the constituent groups providing many choices for conference attendees



from K-12, Adult Education, Higher Education and IEP programs. This year, we also included several panel presentations, with moderators, to provide different perspectives and approaches on the same topic. It was clear from the session evaluations that many people left with new ideas to implement in their classrooms. Even though we increased the number of presentations, the rooms were overflowing, with standing room only in some sessions.

This year's annual VATESOL conference broke all sorts of records, including the number of workshop proposals submitted, the number of people who pre-registered, the number of vendor requests, and the number of people attending. We are excited by the overall positive response to the conference and will carefully review suggestions for

improvement for next year's SETESOL event.

On behalf of the VATESOL board, I would like to thank everyone who helped make this year's conference such a great success.

A special thank you to the following:

Venue Sponsor: The University of Mary Washington, Stafford Campus and Dr. Jo Tyler

2010 Conference Committee: William Chambers, Ginny Clark, Tanya Gray, Ross Retterer, Jo Tyler and Laurie Weinberg (Chair)

Conference Presenters:

Maria Ammar, Frederick Community College (Maryland)

Carol Arevalo, Virginia Commonwealth University
Nancy Ball, Rappahannock Area Regional Adult Education

Beth Bensen-Barber, J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College

Keith Boswell, Virginia Commonwealth University
Jane Briggs, Marymount University

Virginia Cabasa-Hess, Northern Virginia Community College, Alexandria

William Chambers, Midwest University
Elizabeth Claire, Easy English NEWS
Angelique Clarke, Meadowbrook High School,
 Chesterfield County Public Schools
Ron Corio, Virginia Commonwealth University
Anne Crescini, University of Kitakyushu and Old
 Dominion University
Susan Dudley, Virginia Commonwealth University
Stacy Freeman, VDOE (Due to car trouble en route
 to the conference, she was unable to present. Her
 power point is posted on the VATESOL website.)
Adriane Geronimo, Greensville County Public
 Schools
Anne Geyer, University of Kitakyushu and Old
 Dominion University
Lisse Hildebrandt, Virginia Commonwealth
 University
Carre Hill, ESL Innovations
 Inc.
Christine Hoppe, Old Dominion
 University
Christina Horlick, Jiuhan
 Huang, Regent University
Jiuhan Huang, Regent
 University
Yoonam Huh, Midwest
 University
Chanyoung Jung, Midwest
 University
Dr. Ana Lado, Marymount
 University
Stephen Lambert, James
 Madison University
Ruben Moran, The Benedict
 Schools International, Ecuador
Lucia Parsley, Virginia Commonwealth University



Terri Pendola, Countryside Elementary School,
 Loudoun County Public Schools
Laura Ray, Old Dominion University
Susan Shome, Virginia Tech Language and Culture
 Institute
Audrey Short, Virginia Commonwealth University
Kristen Shrewsbury, James Madison University
Amanda Simon, L.C. Bird High School,
 Chesterfield County Public Schools
Sydney Snyder, Falls Church City Public Schools
Lily Sorensen, Georgetown University
Peggy Stevens, Virginia Commonwealth University
Susan Stubbs, Carver Middle School, Chesterfield
 County Public Schools
Lisa Swain, Franklin County Adult Education
Jim Toepper, Northern Virginia Community
 College, Alexandria
Elisa Tucker, Countryside
 Elementary School, Loudoun
 County Public Schools
Marty Watkin, J. Sargeant Reynolds
 Community College
Nicole Ziegler, Georgetown
 University

Panel Moderators:

**Ginny Clark, Jo Tyler, William
 Ziegler**

Some presenters sent in their power point presentations. These can be found on the VATESOL website under the Conference Reprise tab. We will continue to include any presentations that are submitted.

Conference Session Report on *Reading in the ESL Classroom: Research and Practice* By Nicole Ziegler

Reading instruction is a key component in any successful ESL classroom. Because reading is a multi-faceted and complex skill, it is important for instructors to help students become strategic, motivated, and autonomous readers. By providing ample opportunities for skills development through in-class reading, explicit strategy instruction, fluency and accuracy practice, and the use of graphic organizers, instructors can help students achieve their reading goals. This presentation highlighted different reading exercises grounded in research and

theory for use within the ESL classroom, providing attendees with a variety of practical tips to create positive attitudes, increase motivation, and encourage students' interest in reading.

Beginning with a review of the research, this presentation first defined the construct of reading and examined the lower and higher level processes that take place simultaneously during successful reading. Next, after a brief discussion of implicit and explicit reading tasks and how students learn to read, various exercises and practical tips for improving students' vocabulary, fluency, automaticity, accuracy, and strategic reading abilities were discussed. Tips for fostering vocabulary development included providing vocabulary exposures in multiple contexts, teaching words while working with the reading texts they come from, creating a vocabulary rich environment through the use of word walls, and by raising students' awareness of words, thereby encouraging them to become 'word collectors.' In addition, the integration of sustained silent reading (SSR) or extensive reading into regular lessons is an excellent way to improve students' vocabulary skills and reading fluency, as well as create positive attitudes and increase motivation. Fluency and accuracy can also be improved through recognition practice, timed and paced readings, and by rereading for different purposes, such as searching for information or to critique the text.



Because teaching students to become strategic readers is one of the most important goals of reading instruction, this presentation also addressed pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading strategies and activities. Pre-reading activities included skimming the text for main ideas, exploring key vocabulary needed for the text, and encouraging students to reflect on previously read texts in relation to the new text. During reading activities, such as writing questions that the learner hopes/expects to be answered, can help keep learners engaged while reading. Comprehension checks, true/false worksheets that require students to reread for the needed information, and the use of graphic organizers, which can aid student comprehension by clarifying organizational patterns and the relationships between key concepts, are examples of post-reading activities, which ensure students have understood what they have read and prepare them for later exercises, that were addressed.

Overall, this presentation outlined a variety of exercises adaptable for use in every ESL reading classroom, and provided attendees with a number of options for helping learners improve their vocabulary, fluency, accuracy, automaticity, and strategic reading skills. For additional information, please feel free to email the presenter at nz45@georgetown.edu.

Nicole Ziegler is a doctoral student in the Applied Linguistics program at Georgetown University. She holds a Masters in Teaching English as a Second Language from Northern Arizona University, and is interested in applying research and theory to her pedagogical practice.



Our Hard-working Board (Thank you!):
 (Sitting, from left to right): Bob Faychak, Laura Ray, Laurie Weinberg, Tanya Gray
 (Standing, left to right) Lily Mirjahangiri, Ross Retterer, Melinda Leitner, William Chambers, Angeliqve Clarke, Jo Tyler, Kathleen Cahoon-Newchok, Virginia Clark, Denise Ricks
 Not pictured: Amanda Johnson, Liz Bowles, Natasha McKellar, Ron Corio, Judy Snake, and Leslie Roban

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

Special Interest Group (SIG) News

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



What are some of the issues relating to administration of ESL programs in Virginia? At the VATESOL Conference in October, this was the question addressed in the discussion among members of the Teacher Education/Program Administration SIG.

Group members included teachers and administrators in both university and community college ESL programs. One of the issues raised in the discussion involved some of the similarities and differences in the programs offered in these different types of institutions. At the university level, there are a majority of international students, whereas at the community college level more students are graduates of Virginia high schools.

Another issue of importance in program administration relates to faculty concerns. Most ESL faculty in higher education are part time but they tend to develop close ties with the programs they work in. They are highly devoted to the schools and the students they serve. A 2008 policy statement of our parent organization, TESOL, states in part:

TESOL is opposed to policies that treat ESL/EFL instructors and faculty differently from their counterparts with comparable credentials in other disciplines. TESOL is in favor of commensurate salaries, benefits, working conditions, and workloads across disciplines in order to foster academic and intellectual equity and integrity in academic institutions and in society at large.

This position paper is available at http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/seccss.asp?CID=32&DID=37

Program administration really covers every issue in the TESOL field today, from the day to day management of programs, to the interface with the parent institution, to the broader policy issues on a national and international level.

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

Higher Ed SIG, Paul Phillips, Chair
rpphillips@vcu.edu



VATESOL WRITING CONTEST

The VATESOL Higher Ed Special Interest Group announces a writing contest to recognize outstanding writers on a variety of levels. Contest

winners will receive cash prizes as well as opportunities to publish and present with VATESOL.

Guidelines are as follows:

- Students who are currently enrolled in a Virginia college ESOL class at the time of the submission are eligible to participate.
- Submitted writings must be original works of 200 to 2,000 words.
- Papers must be submitted by teachers in order to minimize the possibility of plagiarism.
- Topic of the paper should be related to “Celebrating Heritage.”*
- All submissions must be in Microsoft Word or Rich Text format and must be sent as an attachment.
- Submissions should be emailed to Audrey Short at aeshort@vcu.edu by March 31, 2011.
- Each submission should include a cover page with the following information:
 - Title of submission
 - Student's first and last name
 - Student's mailing address
 - Student's e-mail address
 - Teacher's first and last name
 - Teacher's school mailing address
 - Teacher's e-mail address
 - Teacher's daytime phone number AND/OR alternate phone number(s)
 - A note explaining the ESL level of the student

Possible writing topics include, but certainly not limited to, the following:

What is one of the strangest cultural traditions you grew up with? Explain it to us and then tell us whether you personally follow this cultural tradition.

If someone offered you a pill that was guaranteed to make you “completely North American” – accent, clothes, way of thinking, appearance, everything – would you swallow this pill? Why/why not?

Is a friend's cultural background important to you? (In your own group of friends, are the majority of them from your native country/ the U.S./a mix of countries?) Do you care? Explain why/why not.

A committee of VATESOL members will review all submissions meeting the above criteria. Winners and their teachers will be notified by April 22, 2011. If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Audrey Short at aeshort@vcu.edu.

Call for donations: The HESIG request donations for cash prizes awarded to winners. If interested in making a contribution to this exciting contest, please contact me at rpphillips@vcu.edu or send donations to the VATESOL mailing address attn: Bob Faychak. Thank you for your consideration and good luck to your students!

* “Celebrating Heritage” is the theme for the Southeast TESOL Conference being held in Richmond, VA October 13-15, 2011.

Paul Phillips has been an instructor in VCU's English Language Program since 2008. Prior experience includes adult ESL/ESOL education, private ESL/ESOL tutoring, and teaching English in public high school.

Secondary Education SIG, Angelique Clarke [Angelique Clarke@ccpsnet.net](mailto:Angelique.Clarke@ccpsnet.net)



At the VATESOL Conference, the main concern was what else can be done to encourage collaboration between conferences and how can we get more instructional support in

the classroom. I am hoping that this will be addressed, in part, by my contributions to the VATESOL newsletter. But, I would love additional input from other SIG members on how this may be accomplished. I am new to this position, and I am

excited about trying out and developing your suggestions. Please email me your thoughts!

Who is VATESOL?

By Angelique Clarke, NBCT

I remember when I attended the Indiana Youth Institute's Summer Leadership Camp in high school vividly. Some bright individual had the bright idea to name the family groups after the planets. Do you care to guess what family group I had the honor of joining? You guessed it...I was a not so proud member of the family group Uranus. What teenager wants to be a part of Uranus? Needless to say, we could spend the week in misery, or we could embrace the uniqueness of our name and the hodgepodge of individuals composing this group. With the guidance of our industrious and motivational "dad", we embraced our name and created a chant to announce our arrival wherever we went. The chant was simple, "I'm Uranus. We're Uranus. Wouldn't you like to be Uranus too?" As I was trying to figure out what to contribute to this quarter's newsletter, I could not shake that chant from my head. As I pondered the significance of this childhood memory, it dawned on me that I am not the typical VATESOL member. I am not, by trade, an ESOL teacher. I am not even considering getting ESOL certification. I am high school Social Studies teacher. Yet, I have had ESOL students since my very first year of teaching, some years more than others. This prompted me to ask the question who is VATESOL?

Any teacher in Virginia can benefit from VATESOL. As school districts across the country mainstream ESOL students, more and more non-ESOL teachers will be ESOL teachers. Should we not pursue them now? As the old saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. If teachers are not taught how to effectively provide instruction to ESOL students, they will simply force ESOL students to sink or swim on their own. They don't do this to be cruel; they do this because they do not understand.

For example, I did not know until I became a member of VEA's ELL Training Cadre (by the way, you can ask for this 3-day training or shorter

modules by visiting the VEA website at: <http://www.veanea.org/classroom/ell-speded.html>) this summer that it takes between 7 and 10 years for students to become academically literate. I assumed if they were out of the ESOL classes, they knew how to do the work without any extra support. Imagine how much more I learned at the VATESOL conference in October. Such knowledge has tremendously impacted my teaching, and I am still developing my skills as an ESOL teacher. Of course, it helps that this year I have a sheltered ESOL class (students who are working to earn verified credits but still in ESOL classes) to try out my new learning.

One of my goals as the Secondary SIG will be to encourage others, particularly non-ESOL teachers, to join VATESOL and promote my organization and its many benefits within my sphere of influence. I will carry my childhood chant with me as I pursue this noble challenge (with a slight twist of course), "I'm VATESOL. We're VATESOL. Wouldn't YOU like to be VATESOL too?"

Another goal is to increase the communication among the Secondary SIG members. I was quite disappointed by the low turn-out for the table discussion at the conference. I would like us to be able to collaborate and help each other improve our craft. In light of this goal, I have a question for you all: do you use videos in your classes? If so, how does it impact the ESOL students learning? I have used videos quite successfully to help ancient history become more alive for students. However, I am finding that my ESOL students do not do well with a video guide sheet or a short quiz at the end of the video. I would love to hear (and include in the next newsletter) YOUR ideas for successfully incorporating content-related videos in core classes.

I'm here to serve you, and I look forward to getting to know you all better. Please send comments, questions, and suggestions to angelique_clarke@ccpsnet.net with the words VATESOL SIG in the subject line.

Elementary Education SIG, Melinda Leitner, Chair
mjleitner@henrico.k12.va.us



Elementary Special Interest Group (SIG) Meeting, October 2, 2010, VATESOL Conference

The Elementary Education SIG group met at the VATESOL Conference October 2, in Fredericksburg. We began

our meeting with an informal question and answer period about ‘creating a strong voice’ for elementary educators within VATESOL. We discussed what we wanted from our professional organization, how we could make our SIG group useful to members and what we believed were current ‘hot topics’ for Elementary ESOL teachers. Here is a summary of the discussion:

Elementary ESOL teachers would like to have more detailed ESOL information from the Virginia Department of Education. It would help us to have VDOE ESOL updates communicated periodically and directly to teachers. These questions arose: “Might VDOE be able to post or link current and updated information onto the VATESOL website?” “Could VDOE make use of the VATESOL list-serve to communicate updates and new developments?” Follow-up on these questions will be forthcoming.

Elementary ESOL Teachers were asked: “What do you think are the current ‘Hot Topics’ in

Elementary ESOL today?”
 The most common responses:

- The new VGLA regulations.
- How to implement the WIDA Standards.
- How to merge WIDA Standards with the SOLs.
- Finding the best websites online for Elementary ESOL.
- Best practices for teaching Elementary ESOL.
- Scaffolding and Guided Reading for ESOL.
- Writing analysis of ESOL students.
- Research opportunities.

Please send us **your** ‘hot topics’!

COMING SOON!!

Please look for the upcoming **Elementary ESOL** link and webpage on the VATESOL website! This will be a place where Elementary ESOL Teachers can share lessons, ideas and resources with each other.

We are just beginning this new endeavor. Would you like to be a part of this effort? Do you have some great advice, ideas or resources you would like to contribute? Are you interested getting involved with the Elementary Education SIG Group?

We want to hear from you! Email: mjleitner@henrico.k12.va.us

Adult Ed SIG, TBA

Treasurer’s Update, Bob Faychak
faychakrm@staffordschools.net

Beginning BB&T Account Balance (9/1/10).....	Cash withdrawal (Conference)	\$ 200.00
\$ 8,955.38	Bank card (Conference purchases)...	\$ 1,705.00
Checks deposited (Conference).....	Bank fees (ATM).....	\$ 2.00
\$ 4,889.00	Check business ledger	\$ 129.31
Transfers from PayPal (Membership & Conference)	USPS postage	\$ 17.60
\$ 7,140.65	Ending BB&T Account Balance (10/25/10)	
Deposit SETESOL seed money	\$19,542.80	
\$ 3,000.00		
Payment (Conference reimb).....		
\$ 988.32		
Payment (Keynote speaker).....		
\$ 1,400.00		

Current balance does not include any outstanding

transactions.

Articles by our members

Members' Memorable Teaching Moments How teachers and students help each other

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

From former Board member Bill Chambers:

My mother died on August 29 of last year. The week after her passing, I had my first class at Midwest University. Some ESL students there are studying for the ministry, a few of whom were in my class. I told them about my mom and asked them to pray for us. Two weeks later, one girl, who was her church pianist, invited me to attend the service and hear her play. I really was not emotionally up to giving up a big part of my Sunday to attend their two hour service, but I finally decided to attend out of respect for her. I got there for the last 30 minutes and heard her play three hymns. After the service, she and two of her classmates came over and greeted me. After talking for fifteen minutes, my students asked me to come into church with them. They said, "We know that you played *Amazing Grace* at your mom's funeral. Would you please play it for us now?" I sat down at the piano and while I played, the three of them sang. At their request, I played four more hymns and they sang. To this day, I tell people that what they did was the first step to my healing.
Bill Chambers

From Board member Laura Ray:

One evening last year, when I was teaching ESL as an adjunct at Tidewater Community College in Virginia Beach, one of my students came to class early to speak with me. She seemed very anxious and sad. I asked her if everything was okay, and she told me that she was considering dropping the class because she was extremely stressed out due to

having been laid-off from her job and dealing with foreclosure on her home; on top of that, her mother was back in Ecuador dying of cancer. As she was explaining her situation, she suddenly burst into tears, so we walked together to the bathroom so she could relax and splash water on her face. After about 10 minutes, I was able to console her, but I wished there was something – anything – that I could do to help. Then, after a few minutes, she told me that really the only thing she had been able to look forward to lately was coming to my class to learn English, have fun, and just take a break from all the “heavy” stuff in life, and that she appreciated me so much because I was always so encouraging and friendly, and I always had a smile on my face. It was just one of the first moments I had as a teacher in which I was able to see that I was already helping her and having a positive impact in her life, in a way I didn't even expect! It was a great inspirational moment for me as a new teacher! By the way, she finished the semester and moved on to the next level to continue pursuing her goals.

Laura E. Ray

Depression among International Students: How to Recognize and Address It By Andrea Todd, Ed.D.

Instructors of international students realize that adolescents and young adults away from home from the first time may experience culture shock and homesickness; even domestic students attending a local college or university face a new academic culture. Students coming from a very different language and culture, studying far away from their family and friends, can easily find themselves mired in depression. As administrators and educators of a young, international student population, it is incumbent upon us to recognize when “normal” disorientation worsens into depression and provide

our students with the means for understanding and overcoming it.

Outward Signs of Depression

Depression in students may manifest in a variety of ways. Common signs of depression are excessive absenteeism and poor grades due to feelings of apathy and deteriorating self-esteem. Detachment from classmates, inattention in class, lapses in personal hygiene, and overly emotional reactions to minor issues are also signposts of depression. Male students may also exhibit excessive anger, aggression, or violence which is more typical than the sadness or tears female students may display. Rather than taking an authoritarian stance with international students, showing concern and asking students to explain their problematic behavior can reveal the extent of distress they are experiencing. Program directors and instructors can be of significant help to students suffering from depression far from home.

Several anecdotes are provided to demonstrate the pervasiveness of depression among international students who may not realize themselves the cause of their feelings of disorientation, isolation, rage, or disinterest in school. Understanding the basis for students' less-than-exemplary achievement or behavior can completely shift the student-teacher dynamic and provide students with the sense that they have an ally in their unfamiliar surroundings.

Case #1

From the first day of class, although she always arrived on time, this young woman sat at her desk with a blank look on her face. She was in the US with her family, so it would seem that she was not as lonely as other students who arrived alone. She usually completed her homework, but her lackluster attitude was hard to ignore; it seemed as though the coursework were of no possible interest or importance. Her teacher became rather irritated by her attitude: was she arrogant or did she think she was superior to the other students or to the teacher? The instructor finally asked to speak to the student in private and inquired kindly if she could help her in any way.

The instructor learned that the woman and her husband had come to the US to seek medical treatment for their dying child that ultimately proved unsuccessful. Around the same time, the student's husband, also concerned about her lack of interest in academics, came to speak to the program director. The husband was baffled by his wife's inability to get over her loss; after all, the child had died a full *three weeks* prior to the start of classes. As one can imagine, the revelation of the student's loss, and the knowledge that the student was not receiving any emotional support from home, stunned the director and the instructor. Afterward, the instructor was able to communicate her sympathy to the student in a non-verbal way. The instructor could not begin to "cure" the woman's depression, but simply understanding the situation changed the atmosphere in the classroom from animosity to compassion. The student was also referred to therapy to provide an outlet for her pain that her spouse could not supply.

Case #2

In a second situation, a young male student became extremely confrontational with an instructor over a disagreement about what items he thought would be covered on a test. He went to the front of the classroom to protest his grade, clenching his fists and thrusting his face inches away from hers. She reported the incident to the program director who immediately asked the student to meet with her. The student, now a bit deflated, admitted he had overreacted. The director explained that such behavior could not be tolerated; the safety of the students and faculty were of utmost importance. However, instead of dismissing him with a warning not to behave in that manner again, she went on to ask about how he was doing. As her obvious concern further reduced the student's antagonistic stance, his eyes filled with tears (a clear indicator of distress in most cases).

The director learned that he was experiencing severe anxiety attacks for the first time in his life and had even entertained thoughts of suicide. He was taking anti-depression medication prescribed by a physician in his home country without regular supervision. The student, whose verbal English was excellent, was so paralyzed by anxiety and

depression that he could not seem to find a local doctor to regulate his medicine. With the student's permission, the director set up an appointment for the student to see a psychiatrist who scheduled regular appointments to monitor him. The student's mood improved, and he was extremely grateful for the unsolicited help from the director. The instructor and the student mended their relationship as she came to understand the effects of his depression and unregulated medication. What had begun as a behavior problem ended with an understanding of the student's precarious situation as a victim of depression.

As educators, we do not have the expertise to deal with depression alone. However, through our awareness and show of compassion, we can elicit information from students to allow us to help them. Simply referring students to available mental health resources may not be sufficient. In some cultures,

psychiatric or psychological resources are not widely available or commonly accepted. Explaining to students that their feelings are normal and that availing themselves of the services of mental health professionals does not mean they are "crazy" or weak-willed can make all the difference. In the two instances described above, speaking with the spouses was critical. Of course, due to privacy laws, one must have the student's permission to do so. The extra measure of effort involved in moving from a disciplinary stance to one of concern can elicit the information needed to help the student and to resolve, or at least improve, the classroom problem that originally brought the student to the attention of the instructor and administrators.

Andrea Todd is Associate Director of the Virginia Tech Language and Culture Institute in the National Capital Region.

Inside the Mind of a Hopeless Educator

by Angelique Clarke, NBCT (14 year veteran social studies teacher Chesterfield, VA)

I admit it. I am a hopeless romantic at heart. I want a happy ending, and I am forever trying to find the silver lining or make the best of a bad situation. I have sometimes tried to be the curmudgeon of education who refuses to take one more disruption. However, I have come to the conclusion that I am a hopeless educator. No matter how frustrating the job gets, or how many more students are shoved into my overcrowded classroom, or how many schedule changes they make in the week before we give exams, or how daunting the task, I will still believe that all children can learn, and I will do my best to ensure that they learn within the constraints of the system in which I work. Some days are more successful than others. Even on my worst day, I still find the courage to say, "I will come back and do this again tomorrow. Tomorrow they will finally see the value in what I am trying to accomplish, or I will find the strategy that unlocks the potential that I know is inside my most difficult student."

Such a passion and drive comes with great reward and frustration. The reward part is easy – the proverbial light that goes off in a student's head. The frustration is a little more difficult. If a student is not learning or a lesson bombs, I cannot stop my mind from working overtime to figure out why. I question everything, even if the lesson was relatively successful! Some of the random questions that have popped in my head recently are: How can I grab student's attention better? What strategy do I use to successfully get kids to understand the Three Estate System in France and why revolution was eminent? How do I combine skills and content into lessons to help ESOL students become better readers, writers, and thinkers AND learn the subject matter well enough to pass the class and the SOL? How can I make the lesson more effective next year?

Perhaps, you are a hopeless educator as well. Or, perhaps, you were just interested by the title of this article. However, you found yourself at this place. I hope that you will walk away from this article (and future installments) with a little motivation to keep fighting the good fight (after all, in this educational climate most of us are Don Quixote's, and we dream the impossible dream everyday) and a strategy to use and share with others.

The first strategy that I am going to share is an image activity that I presented at the conference that many participants seem to enjoy. I recently used this activity to introduce my World 2 students to the French Revolution (a class that I am teaching for the first time).

Building Background Knowledge with Images

The old cliché that “a picture is worth a thousand words” certainly applies to using images in the classroom. Students are naturally drawn to pictures. After all, students learn to read using picture books before they ever use word books. In education jargon, students need schema to make sense of concepts, without such structure, the learning is ineffective at best.

However, to begin teaching with images, you must first select images that will lead students to draw out critical information about the topic (use the standards as a guide). There is a plethora of free images that teachers can use in their classrooms. Once you have a download many documents; then, decide whether students will work alone or in small group settings and whether they will focus on one picture or do a round robin to circulate through all of the pictures. This is important so that you know how many postcards to make.

To analyze pictures more effectively, provide students with a list of prompts to aid the discovery process.

Choose the prompts that best match the images, ages and ability of your students:

- Why is this image significant?
- What story does this picture tell?
- Describe the people or objects in the picture.
- Describe the setting.
- Describe the activity (action) in the picture. What is happening?
- What things in this picture are familiar to you—things you already know about?

Tip of the Month

Use graphics (like the Image Activity) to help students understand the meaning of what you are saying or grasp difficult subject related concepts.

- What things in this picture are unfamiliar to you—things you do not know about or understand?
- What questions do you have about this picture?
- What are two inferences you could make about this picture?
- Why was this photograph taken, picture painted, or print designed?
- What is the point of view of the photographer or artist?
- Why is this image historically (or scientifically or relevant to _____) important?

Instead of, or in addition to prompts, you could use the following strategies (For more strategies, you can use the book *Primary Sources in the Classroom* by Teacher Created Materials):

- Column List - Make a three-column list of the people, objects, and activities in the picture.
- Point of View - Write about the picture from the point of view of one of the people or objects in the picture.
- Caption Writing - Write a detailed caption for the picture.
- Prequel/Sequel Writing - Write what you think happened before or after the picture.
- Dialogue - Write a conversation between two people or objects in the picture.

Record students’ responses on chart paper and reference chart and images throughout the unit/lesson and help students make connections between what they discovered and what they are learning.

There are an infinite number of possibilities that you can do as a follow-up. After I did the Image Activity, I

asked them to write a one-page response that described how the French Revolution got started, what major events took place, and how did it end. I was amazed by my students understanding after just one class period. Needless to say, the test scores were higher on this unit than the other units we have completed this year. I want to be careful not to over use this strategy; but, I do plan on doing this one or two more times this year.

Angelique Clarke is a veteran Social Studies teacher at Meadowbrook High School in Chesterfield, VA and the Secondary SIG Chair for VATESOL.

Steps Towards Student Self-Governance

By Audrey Short, Virginia Commonwealth University

Studies have shown that student self-governance leads to multiple positive effects. From cognitive gains to improved interpersonal communicative abilities to strengthened time-management skills, students have benefited from involvement in leadership positions amongst their peers (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Wanting to provide extracurricular opportunities for individual students to develop as well a forum that would serve the community of international students at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), the English Language Program (ELP) at VCU created the ELP Student Committee (ELPSC) in the summer of 2009. Originally formed by students nominated by teachers and facilitated by a faculty advisor, the ELPSC set out on a mission that was three-fold: to help plan extracurricular social events, to help new students integrate better into the community, and to help give a voice to students in the running of the program. The following account describes the successes and challenges faced by the committee, implications for the future as well as guiding questions for those interested in exploring student self governance in intensive English programs.

SUCSESSES

As successful adjustment to the host culture depends in great part on social ties (Kashima & Loh, 2006), the ELPSC has planned events to bring students together outside of class. Based on a survey given to over 100 students, what English language learners at VCU want most in terms of extracurricular events is not a particular activity but rather comfortable opportunities to socialize, especially with native English speaking students. With this in mind, the ELPSC has helped facilitate a number of events, including Movie Night (self explanatory) and Sports Night (an evening of physical activities including both competitive team sports like soccer and individual challenges like rock climbing in the university gym.) Of greatest success for the leadership of the ELPSC was an international luncheon potluck in the Student Commons in collaboration with VCU Education Abroad. This event drew over 150 people, including the university president, and demonstrated the potential of the committee to the outside community as well as to the members themselves. Following the momentum of this successful gathering, a team of students organized an end of the term party for over 80 people, with games, food, and a video presentation representing all of the nations present during that term. Since then, the committee has been awarded \$1,500 from the Student Government Association financial board. Thus far, the ELPSC has used some of this money to make T-shirts, which they designed themselves, for the committee members and for others who have expressed interest.

Not only does the ELPSC provide social benefits for a large percentage of the student body, it also serves to provide support for its members, some of whom may lack social networks due to their recent arrivals. New students are introduced to the committee during orientation, are encouraged to join the committee by their teachers or current committee members, and are reminded of the social opportunities through Facebook and Blackboard organization announcements. Teachers have reported positive changes, including more engagement and focus, from students who have become active members of the ELPSC. While other factors may be

contributing to the improvements noted in student behavior, the fact that the ELPSC offers new students a welcoming environment in which they can take on leadership roles in larger social events should not be overlooked.

In addition to the social benefits of the ELPSC, the group has also served as a forum to discuss student concerns regarding the educational programming. Issues arising from confusion over evaluation practices and the logistics of course scheduling, for example, have been addressed in ways that bring clarification to the student body. While not all concerns have been resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, the committee has served as a non-threatening entity that is open to all student comments, both good and bad.

CHALLENGES

As with many newly formed groups, the ELPSC has experienced (and/or self-inflicted) its fair share of challenges. For each problem, it has attempted to develop a solution and it continues to look for ways to improve its functioning.

In the area of event planning, the greatest obstacle seems to be with follow-through. Many great ideas are generated at meetings and the enthusiasm seems to be present. However, when it comes to executing certain plans, what has been said will be done and what actually gets done are often incongruous. This leads to last minute stress on the leadership (including on the faculty advisor) who must decide to either step in to cover what has not been done (to the potential detriment of a lost learning opportunity about the natural consequences of not following through) or to let the event fail (with the possible consequence of disappointing non-members who were enthusiastic about participating in the event.)

What has been noted in studies (May, 2009) conforms to what the ELPSC members have reported: that they feel stressed by the extra obligations of the committee. When ELPSC members must choose between their academic pressures and committee responsibilities, the latter takes second priority. While this is understandable, what has been done to show students how to handle both curricular and extracurricular projects is to have them work in small groups when possible to share the workload on tasks. For example, for Sports Night, pairs of students were responsible for gathering participant names for various teams.

Related to the idea of follow through is the challenge of motivating new students to become consistent members and leaders. As intensive language programs may not keep their students for long periods of time, the turnover rate of members may be high. During the year and a half that the ELPSC has existed, there have been four presidents and none of the members from the original group still serve on the committee. These changes in the leaders and members mean that a lot of time is spent on recruitment and discussions of the goals of the group. To help minimize repetition in meetings, the ELPSC has formed a Frequently Asked Questions document that addresses the benefits of becoming a member and the goals of the committee. This document has been posted on the ELPSC bulletin board and has been distributed by current members during an active recruitment drive.

The last challenge to be discussed in this article relates to the goal of including student voices in the educational programming. While student input is indeed desired, venting in mass or over individual cases has not always been the best way to bring about positive systemic changes. At times, meetings have turned unproductive as students have complained about things that can't be changed in a short period of time or about personal cases that seem to be an unfortunate confluence of events but are not representative of the program as a whole. To preempt the negativity, which can linger when complaining is left untethered, students have been encouraged to think of realistic solutions to follow their accounts of discontentment. Discussions over proposed solutions (such as reducing tuition fees, for example), have led to some great exercises in critical thinking as members debate the feasibility of their peers' proposals.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

In its second year, the ELPSC of VCU is considering what steps it should take after the end of the 2010-11 academic year. The committee has partnered with an internationally focused student organization called Global Foundations whose mission complements the mission of the ELPSC. The greatest benefit of merging the two groups would be the collaborative learning and social opportunities that would be available to both international and domestic students on campus. The potential drawback could be the loss of a specific forum dedicated to the needs of English language learners, although the idea of creating an ELP ombudsperson has been discussed.

Regardless of the path that the ELPSC chooses in the end, the process of learning about and benefiting from student governance by English language learners has been meaningful for all involved. The group, through its successes and despite its challenges, has shown that the international students at VCU are very interested in contributing to the enrichment of their own experiences as well as those in their community. The possibilities of positive learning opportunities from a student committee are various so I hope you will explore them and share your ideas and experiences.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

The following questions represent a basic (but not exhaustive) overview of items to consider when organizing a student committee for or by English language learners.

- **Mission and Goals:** What are the mission and goals of the group? Which goals are short-term and which ones are long-term? How will the group reach its goals?
- **Leadership:** Who will lead the organization? If led by a teacher, how much of a student run organization will it be? If led by a student, how will s/he be chosen? What officers will the group have and what will each of their responsibilities be? How will the leadership be held accountable? How long will the officers hold their positions?
- **Membership:** How will membership be encouraged? What will motivate current members (including leadership) to be active participants? Will members be able to stay active even after they finish their English language studies (and are matriculated as regular university students, for example)?
- **Communication:** How will information be communicated amongst the members and with the community? What kind of on-line presence will the group have? (Facebook, Blackboard, Googledocs, Twitter, etc.?) What type(s) of skill(s) will need to be taught to or learned by the committee members who may not have a lot of experience in effectively and politely communicating within university systems (which may be bureaucratic)?
- **Finances:** Will there be any costs and if so, what are they? (T-shirts, advertising, food, entertainment, etc.?) How will the group get money? Is there a Student Government Association on campus that can help fund the group? What kinds of fundraisers could be done?
- **Collaboration:** With whom can the student committee collaborate to hold events or to learn about how committees function? Are there internationally focused student organizations on campus that would welcome the involvement of English language learners? Or might other academic departments such as theater, whose students study accents, make for good matches?

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Audrey Short is an Instructor at Virginia Commonwealth University and the current Faculty Advisor of the English Language Program Student Committee. She welcomes your questions and comments at aeshort@vcu.edu.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We are thrilled to announce that our nominee for TESOL's *Best of Affiliates*, **Elisa Tucker**, was selected to present at the national TESOL convention in New Orleans in March. She was chosen based on the conference evaluations of her workshop last fall, *Welcoming Newcomers to your Classroom and Community*. Elisa teaches at Countryside Elementary School in Loudon County, and we are honored to have her represent our organization at the annual convention. She presented another interesting workshop at this year's conference.

Congratulations to board member, **Tanya Gray**, whose article *Help! He Can't Speak English!* is the cover story in the December issue of the Virginia Journal of Education.

Upcoming conferences



**TESOL Annual
Conference is March
17-19, 2011**

The **VESA** (Virginia ESL Supervisors Association) conference will be held in Richmond on February 4 and 5 at the Holiday Inn Koger Center. Information relating to registration is now posted on the Website (<http://www.vesaorg.net/conference>).

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