



# The RI-TELLER

The Newsletter for Rhode Island Teachers of English Language Learners and ELL Professionals

Spring 2014

Special Interest Articles:

ELL School Success & Total Participation Techniques

ELL Student Interaction Resource List

Using a Mobile Vocab App 9

One Teacher's Journey 11

### Individual Highlights:

Join RITELL 6

Why Get On Twitter 7

Coordinating Council 8

RITELL Updates 10

RITELL Awards 13

Special Interest Group Update 14

Candid Camera At RITELL 17

Call for Submissions 20

Chris Bourret / Doug Norris, Editors

## ELL School Success & Total Participation Techniques

By William J. Himmele & Pésida Himmele

Every nine seconds, we lose a student due to dropping out (Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio, & Thompson, 2004). Although recent indicators point to progress within overall graduation rates, even the encouraging reports still indicate that at least a quarter of our students drop out (Aud et al., 2010; Balfanz, Bridgeland, Moore, & Hornig Fox, 2010). The picture is bleakest for African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, whose dropout percentages are more than twice that of their white peers (Balfanz et al., 2010). The risk of

dropping out may be the greatest for English language learners.

For example, an estimated 24% of 9<sup>th</sup> grade ELLs in New York City were able to graduate four years later (Zehr, M. A., 2009, p.8). While many continued attending high school the four year documented dropout rate for these English language learners was 42%. Because much of our experience is with students in urban schools, we have a very real understanding that effective teaching can have a direct influence on a student's life choices.

For six years we volunteered in California's Chino State Prisons (Bill in the men's, Pésida in the women's). If you don't yet understand the effect that your teaching can have on students, consider volunteering in a prison. The experience will make you an instant believer in the power of your teaching. In prisons, illiteracy is rampant. Dropping out of high school is not the exception, it is the norm. In fact, three-quarters of state prison inmates are dropouts (Martin & Halperin, 2006). And academic self-confidence is close to nonexistent among prisoners. *Continued Page 2*

## Resources for Increasing ELL Student Interaction and Participation in the Classroom



1. *Maximize the Active Participation and Language Learning of ELL Students, Grades K-5*, BER Staff Development.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=voPWNosxltQ>

This informative video contains many helpful ways to engage students during read-alouds. These

strategies include a picture walk, partner sharing, using nonverbal signs, quick draw, and quick write. Using engagement strategies like these give students continual opportunities to engage with subject matter.

2. *Total Participation Techniques*, John Siedman <http://prezi.com/jolxyfl5h7hw/total-participation-techniques/>



Aesthetically pleasing and easy to maneuver, this Prezi is an excellent review of the many positive uses of Total Participation Techniques. It reviews some of the main reasons for using TPT, such as creating a socially socially integrated classroom community, building confidence in students, and improve retention of materials. *Continued Page 4*

As soon as inmates discovered we were teachers, many would freely tell us about their academic inadequacies and failures. Many were quick to place the full extent of the blame on themselves. The reasons for dropping out vary depending on the students, but the number-one reason—cited by the dropouts themselves—is boredom (Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morison, 2006).

Total Participation Techniques (TPTs) can support teachers in combatting boredom. They can serve to engage all students in deeper content learning and provide teachers with ongoing formative evidence of student learning. TPTs are teaching techniques that allow for all students to demonstrate, at the same time, active participation and cognitive engagement in the topic being studied. They can mean the difference between cognitive engagement and tuning out for your students.

For example, a Picture Walk is a TPT that uses your textbook's pictures and images as a scaffold for generating student interest and engagement in the content that they are about to learn. They are especially useful for teaching English language learners because the pictures serve as an accessible bridge to the content reading. They can also be used with literature units. Picture Walks provide a purpose for reading, as well as help generate questions in the students' minds. Four or five pictures are taken directly from the text, or from supplemental resources and posted around the room. In small groups, students are asked to respond to questions and/or to create questions related to the pictures. Students' questions then stimulate their curiosity regarding what the reading is about. Once students have participated in a Picture Walk, they are much more likely to delve meaningfully into the readings (Himmele & Himmele, 2009).

In the attached picture, small groups of students circulate around the room noting three things on their Post-its.

1. What do you think is happening in the picture?
2. Why do you think what is happening in the picture is an important part of our country's history?
3. If you could ask any question to the characters in the picture, what would you ask?

Post-its are then placed around the picture and revisited after the readings. After about 3-4 minutes, the teacher rings a bell to let students know that it is time to move on to the next picture. Several wonderful things emerge from the students' examination of the pictures. 1. The verbal interaction is hard to beat, as students share and justify their opinions with each other in the target language 2. The students are asked to reflect on the relevance of the event as an important part of history. 3. The students become invested in knowing the answers to the questions that they posed.



*Fifth grade students participate in a Civil War Picture Walk  
Photo Credit: Pérsida Himmele, used with permission.*

New technology makes it easy to scan pictures from texts that you have adopted or to find the same image online and use it in a Picture Walk. And, Picture Walks can be effective at any age. Even as adults, when we scan articles we're often drawn to the pictures first. If the pictures raise questions, we're more likely to read the article to find the responses to our questions. We encourage you to try Picture Walks with your teaching of English. They offer a wonderful bridge to student motivation, interaction and reading while providing you with evidence that every student was cognitively engaged in the activity.

*Portions of this text are excerpted from Himmele & Himmele, 2011, and a submission that appeared in the Spring 2011, PRATESOL Gram, Puerto Rico TESOL's newsletter. Dr. William Himmele was the Spring 2014 RITELL Conference Keynote Speaker. Article References and his bio next page.*

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Dr. William Himmele is Associate Professor and Coordinator for the ESL Certificate Program at Millersville University in southeastern Pennsylvania. He has teaching experience as an ESL and speech teacher in K-12 schools. Currently he serves as a professional development specialist and education consultant for various school districts and educational projects in the United States and around the world.

He is coauthor of the 2009 ASCD book *The Language Rich Classroom* and of the bestselling 2011 ASCD text *Total Participation Techniques*. His third publication will be released this summer through ASCD and is titled *Total Literacy Techniques: Tools to Help Students Analyze Literature and Informational Texts*.



3. Extending English Language Learners Classroom Interactions Using the Response Protocol, Kathleen and Eric Mohr. 2007.

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/26871/>

Well-written and information-packed, this article hits major communication issues in the ESL classroom, One highlight of the article are six tables with examples of teacher responses for varying situations to keep ELLs engaged. Also at the end of the article is a helpful list of general communication guidelines for teachers of all grades.



4. Increase Student Interaction with “Think-Pair-Shares” and “Circle Chats”, Kristina Robertson. 2006.

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/13346/>

This engaging article provides steps for using interactive strategies in the classroom such as Think-Pair-Share, and Circle Chat. The article ends with a lengthy list of Hot Links, which are other teacher resources in themselves.

## PEARSON

5. Structures for Active Participation and Learning During Language Arts Instruction, Dr. Kate Kinsella, Dr. Colleen Shea Stump, and Dr. Kevin Feldman

[http://www.phschool.com/eteach/language\\_arts/2001\\_11/essay.html](http://www.phschool.com/eteach/language_arts/2001_11/essay.html)

This interesting article provides different language strategies for active classroom participation, as well as a variety of classroom

participation structures. A few examples of these are Whip-Around, Outcome Statements and Give One and Get One.

## Shutterfly

6. *ELL Resources: Collaborative Group Ideas*, Carolyn J on Shutterfly. 2014.

<https://ellresources.shutterfly.com/collaborationideas>

Full of numerous strategies for optimal student participation, this worthwhile site provides expansive resources for collaborative and group activities. The site outlines why talking is important in a classroom, and how to increase student talking. Some group ideas supplied by the site are Quadrant Partners, Jigsaw, Four Corners and Roundtable. But it doesn't stop there, along the top of the site are additional resources such as *Videos*, *Graphic Organizers*, *Resources by Grade Level*, as well as under the tab “more” an extension of resources such as multicultural books, tips for communicating with parents, and more!



7. *Kagan Structure for English Language Learners*, Dr. Spencer Kagan and Julie High. 2014.

[http://www.kaganonline.com/free\\_articles/dr\\_spencer\\_kagan/279/Kagan-Structures-for-English-Language-Learners](http://www.kaganonline.com/free_articles/dr_spencer_kagan/279/Kagan-Structures-for-English-Language-Learners)

This website tells why it works to use the Kagan Structure in the classroom, as well as the advantages to using it. There are over 150 Kagan structures, and the site provides some of the favorites such as Team Interview and Boss/Secretary.

*Continued Page 5*



# Resources for Increasing ELL Student Interaction and Participation in the Classroom

*continued*



8. Promoting Learner Engagement When Working With Adult English Language Learners, Susan Miller. 2010.

<http://www.cal.org/caelanetwork/resources/learnerengagement.html>

This resource is for teachers of adult English language learners. It gives a brief overview of research on learner engagement and engaging instructional approaches such as task-based learning and problem-based learning.



9. Inviting conversation: meaningful talk about texts for English language learners, Joyce Purdy. 2008.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9345.2008.00479.x/abstract>

A journal article from Wiley Online Library provides excerpts of dialogue between ELL students,

native English-speaking children and their teacher. These excerpts illustrate how conversations around texts during reading activities can shape and extend the construction of meaning, highly benefiting the ELL. Current students at RIC can access this document for free through the Adams Library. Otherwise, small charge applies.



10. Enhancing Classroom Conversation for All Students: Strategies That Foster Discussion among ELL Students Can Help Them Learn Language While Teaching Critical Skills, William Goldsmith. 2013.

<http://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-327587944/enhancing-classroom-conversation-for-all-students>

Written by an ESOL teacher, this easy to read journal article explores the benefits of using engaging strategies such as Think-Pair-Share. Goldsmith also looks at grouping strategies in order to best involve shy and less outspoken students. Note: To read the full text must login, become a member, or can access it by a 1-day free trial. *List Compiled by Ellen Nanni, Graduate Assistant in TESL, RIC*

**RITELL Advocates for teachers of All ELLs. Help us get the word out. Ask your colleagues to join us and attend our engaging Fall and Spring Conferences!**



# Why Join RITELL?

## Six Essential Reasons

RITELL is the only association in Rhode Island that maintains an affiliation with TESOL. Joining RITELL can help you present yourself as a serious professional who is a member of his or her professional association.

### **Highlight your membership on your resume:**

There are few better ways to show your serious commitment to the field and distinguish yourself from others who don't join or participate in their professional associations.

### **Pay special member fees and use RITELL resources:**

At RITELL Conferences in the fall and spring, pay

discounted fees. Designed with our members' needs in mind, visit the RITELL website regularly to stay up to date in your field. [www.ritell.org](http://www.ritell.org).

### **Receive the association's newsletter--The RI-Teller:**

Receive the *RI-Teller* twice a year and stay up to date on issues and developments in the field. Learn of changes in state policies, gain valuable information that can help you teach your students more effectively, and learn of professional conferences of interest to be held in our region.

### **Job Postings:**

Receive job postings through *RIWorks*, our e-bulletin that

will notify RITELL members of ESL and bilingual/dual language positions as they are announced.

### **Networking:**

Network with colleagues who can offer you ideas, strategies, resources and encouragement.

### **Advocacy:**

Benefit from the advocacy efforts of RITELL on behalf of Rhode Island ESL and Bilingual professionals, as well as ELL students and their families.

### **Get involved!**

RITELL members are the backbone of our professional association. If you are looking for a way to contribute, RITELL is a wonderful option for you. Join others and make a difference!



*Don't miss out on the opportunities and benefits RITELL can bring!*

## Contribute to RI-TELLER!

We welcome book reviews, articles, lesson ideas, notices or relevant meetings and any other news of interest to ESL educators in RI.

For more information, contact Doug Norris or Chris Bourret at either

[Dougnorris1489@gmail.com](mailto:Dougnorris1489@gmail.com)

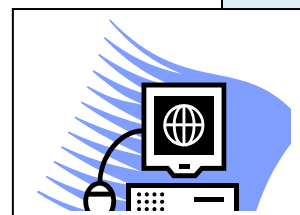
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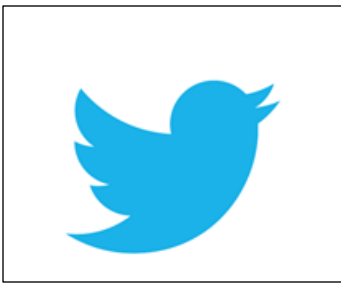
[cbourret@verizon.net](mailto:cbourret@verizon.net)



## Check Us Out Online!

[www.ritell.org](http://www.ritell.org) contains event information, job openings, advocacy positions, educational resources where teachers can post ideas for lessons and other material. And check out Twitter account: [@RITELL\\_ESL](https://twitter.com/RITELL_ESL). It contains great links to all things ESL! See page 7 for more.





## Why Get on Twitter?

By Flavia Molea Baker

A year ago, when I was asked why I didn't have a Twitter account, I answered "I don't need another social media account, with yet another login and password to remember, and I certainly don't need to install more apps or bookmark some webpage that I will just feel obligated to update with personal information and interests—I barely have enough time as it is to keep up-to-date with the rest of my accounts and occasionally post news of my own for my family and friends!" Since then, I have come to realize the value and potential of Twitter as an engaging and fascinating tool—particularly for professional growth and enrichment.

Sometimes, social media can seem like a hassle or a chore. Maybe the technology is too complicated or confusing, or maybe it seems redundant to have so many outlets to share the same information with the same friends and family, or maybe the idea of sharing online (or the feeling of being expected to) just isn't that appealing, or maybe life is just too hectic already. Of course, all of these are valid concerns, but it is worth pointing out that there are also many benefits to be enjoyed, too. Often, when explaining how I use Twitter, I describe it as a "less invasive" form of social media; by which I mean that there is no pressure or obligation to actively contribute on Twitter in order to stay updated. You are free to be a passive observer, somebody who uses Twitter as a means to read specific news and discover relevant resources, or you could choose to be an active participant in a global discussion on any issue or subject of interest to you, by broadcasting your own tweets, exchanging comments and ideas with others, or even retweeting what others have posted. This freedom to determine your own degree of involvement, together with the ability to find and follow specific interests, has helped Twitter become such a powerful and pervasive means of open communication and crowdsourcing -

the widespread exchange of information and ideas—are core to the way Twitter works. And, by no small coincidence, these concepts are also highly relevant to Teaching. As educators, we all draw from each other, sharing our individual knowledge and experience in order to support the learning of our colleagues and, ultimately, of our students as well. This passionate sharing within our profession is an essential means of improving the field of Education itself—of serving our mission and of fostering greater knowledge in our communities. It is primarily for this reason that I have come to conclude that Twitter has such enormous value and potential as a form of social media, especially for educators. As a teacher, Twitter has allowed me access to a wealth of resources on education, and opened the door to a global treasure trove of online information that is constantly growing. With a single click, I am able to discover highly useful information related to education, including lesson plans, extra-curricular activities, research articles, projects, news articles, and updates on events, causes, and advocacy issues. I can become a better teacher—or help others do the same—even while waiting in line at the grocery store!

If you are considering signing up for Twitter (or have an existing account that you never seem to use), perhaps you might try considering the ways in which Twitter might help you teach—and learn! Whether you're interested in contributing to the global Education community, or you'd like to find a few new activities for your next unit, or even if you're just curious to follow along and watch this technological knowledge journey unfold, you might just find—like I did—that there is enormous potential in Twitter!

In addition to using Twitter personally, I recently assumed responsibility for the official Twitter account of our professional, non-profit association, Rhode Island Teachers of English Language Learners (RITELL). Please feel free to reach out to me if you have questions or if there is anything I can do to help you in your Twitter-related efforts! I encourage and invite you to join us in unlocking the power and potential of Twitter by following our Twitter account: @RITELL\_ESL.

*Flavia Molea Baker is a teacher in Central Falls and a RITELL Coordinating Council Member.*

## RITELL Coordinating Council

President: Dina Silvaggio  
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Membership Secretary: Jane George  
Treasurer: Lauren Bentley  
Advocacy Representatives: Suzanne DaSilva;  
Michael Paul  
Editor: Doug Norris  
Social Media: Flavia Molea Baker  
Conference Organizer: Nancy Cloud  
Photographer: Joe Lopes



Among its activities, Coordinating Council members organize and work at RITELL Conferences, manage the [www.ritell.org](http://www.ritell.org) website, advocate & present position statements for Teachers of ELLS, help form and support Special Interest Groups, and actively recruit new RITELL members.

Show your support for RITELL by purchasing a nifty RITELL T-Shirt and other merchandise at our next conference!



And don't forget to buy a ticket for our raffles! Win a chance to win a great prize, like an I-Pad, and support the great work that RITELL does.



**Council Members in Action at the Conference**





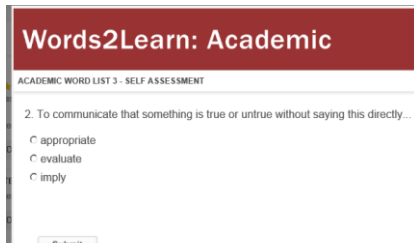
# Using a Mobile Vocabulary App in a Flipped Approach

By Chris Bourret

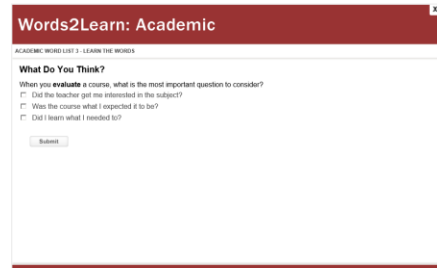
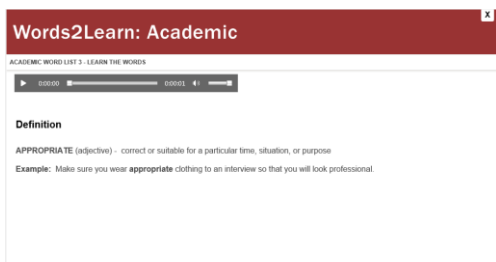
This past year at my university, I piloted World Education’s Words2Learn phone app with ELL students in our Academic Writing class, with the purpose of accelerating their learning of academic and career-related vocabulary as they prepare to enter postsecondary education and technical training.

We used the app in a “Flipped Approach”, where each week students worked on their own outside of class with a 5-item Academic word list and 5-item Health Sciences word list. All work was done on their mobile devices. At the end of the week, the assigned words were covered in class and on the following Monday, an in-class vocabulary quiz and writing assessment was given on the previous week’s words.

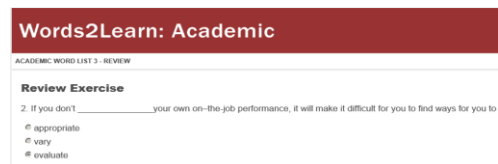
With some training, The Words2Learn app allows the teacher to choose the words and types of activities that students work on.



In terms of procedure, students first complete a self-assessment of the five words as a pre-test. Next, students review quick definitions and examples of the words. Students can listen to a recording of the word for pronunciation.



Students complete questions that use the words in context, providing additional practice and conversation opportunities for in-class discussion later.



Finally, students then do a post-test review of the words. Results from each activity are known to the students upon finishing and results are also sent to the teacher, who can then plan in-class instruction of the words. After students have done this work on their phones, the teacher then uses these same words in various in-class activities and writing exercises in class. Finally there is an in-class test as a final assessment of the vocabulary.

In terms of results, in my class there was a 90% or above class average on in-class vocabulary assessments. The flipped approach meant less time spent in class needed to cover vocabulary and learning takes place anywhere. Students said they worked on the words while waiting at a doctor’s office, in line at the supermarket, at the mall waiting for a spouse who was out shopping, at work on a break, in their dorm rooms, at the cafeteria, etc. Students enjoyed the ease of the app, spending an average of 10-15 minutes outside of class on each 5-word unit. In all, using this app in a flipped model was a very promising approach. I look forward to trying it out again.

*Chris Bourret is a faculty Associate at MCPHS University in Worcester, MA.*

World Education’s Words2Learn Mobile Learning project link:  
<http://collegetransition.org/about.currentprojects.mobilelearningproject.html>

## RITELL Updates

We have added a **Common Core Resources** page under Resources for Teachers on our website! On it are compiled resources from past conferences as well as a few new links. Look forward to new resources available here!

Check out our new addition by clicking on **Common Core Resources** on the [ritell.org](http://ritell.org) website.

### ADVOCACY UPDATE: TEACHERS OF ELLs TAKE ACTION:

A few weeks ago, the RI Senate overwhelmingly approved Senate Bill S-2059 Sub A which will provide a 3-year moratorium on the use of a state assessment (NECAP or PARCC) as a graduation requirement.

In order for this bill to move forward, the Speaker of the House must now allow the bill to be placed on the House floor for a vote.

However, right before the Senate vote, House Speaker Nicholas Mattiello stated that he believed the moratorium was unnecessary as there are a "broad range of waivers available to superintendents." This came as a surprise to parents and students who had been told that waivers will only be used in rare circumstances and will likely not apply to them.

In general, the waiver process has been confusing and uneven. Students who are accepted into a 4-year college may receive a waiver but not a student accepted into a community college or technical college. Nor can students receive a waiver if they have been offered a job - a career ready and waiting for them to graduate.

Nevertheless, if Speaker Mattiello does not believe the bill is necessary, it may not go any further. This is why we must take action.

RITELL asks that you make at least TWO PHONE CALLS

1) one to your state representative (you can find the number [HERE](#):

[http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Email/RepEmailListDistrict.asp?utm\\_source=Re%3A+RI+Senate+approves+graduation+test+moratorium.+What%27s+Next&utm\\_campaign=May+27+What%27s+2nd+update&utm\\_medium=email](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Email/RepEmailListDistrict.asp?utm_source=Re%3A+RI+Senate+approves+graduation+test+moratorium.+What%27s+Next&utm_campaign=May+27+What%27s+2nd+update&utm_medium=email)) and 2) one to Speaker Mattiello's office. The email link for Speaker Mattiello is: [rep-mattiello@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:rep-mattiello@rilin.state.ri.us) The best phone number to call is: 401-222-2466

Let the speaker and your representative know that the NECAP and all standardized tests do not fairly assess our ELL students and may prevent our students from receiving diplomas, unless they get a district waiver.

Thanks for advocating for your ELLs!

RITELL Coordinating Council

# One Teacher's Journey: Q&A with Adult ESL Educator, Barbara Al-Sabek

By Doug Norris

*Barbara Al-Sabek's journey from a Rhode Island classroom to the world and back again is a story of curiosity, passion and service. As the Lead Learning Facilitator at the Genesis Center in Providence, Barbara has seen firsthand how education builds bridges to the realization of dreams for immigrants to the Ocean State. For the past two decades, she has also taught adult ESL in college classrooms throughout Rhode Island, and she continues to instruct adults enrolled in the Intensive ESL Program at Rhode Island College. She received an M.Ed. in TESL from RIC in 1994 and earned a B.A. in History and Political Science, also from RIC, in 1988. In June, she will retire from the Genesis Center after nine years of service (although she will keep teaching at RIC). Barbara credits her family and Rhode Island upbringing for her appreciation of world cultures and determination to work for social justice. We talked about her life and her love for teaching adult ESL earlier this Spring at the Genesis Center, over cups of sweet beans prepared by one of her students there.*

*Tell me how you got into ESL in RI?*

When I was at RIC, I had another teaching assistantship. While I was there, Professor Willis Poole was the head of the ESL program. He was a great guy, because he really started that program and built it up from nothing. So I was in his class as a T.A. one semester and then I just fell into that job after I graduated. That's a part-time job. And I got a job at Roger Williams University immediately after graduating. I loved working there. Their program is now done by one of those English language schools, but at the time I was there, you were a regular faculty member. The kids were great. International students are a completely different breed. They drive up in their Porsches, you know, but they were lonely and away from home. We had a lot of Japanese, Koreans, Saudis. That was the population.

*How long were you at Roger Williams?*

I was there from 1994 to 2001. Teaching ESL. I also taught at New England Tech for several years in the afternoons. I taught at Bryant. So I was picking up college jobs, and loving what I was doing. The big change for me happened on February 14, 2005, when I walked in this door to substitute for a friend one day, and I just never walked out. Because this, I knew was going to be the end of my teaching career, the culmination. I

didn't know how to teach ESL until I started teaching here. I was teaching post-secondary, people who had already made it, doing advanced grammar like conditional sentences and having deep discussions on political topics. To be handed a beginning literacy class? With students who were virtually beginners in speaking and listening? [That] was a whole new world for me. And I really pushed myself to come up to par. Here in this Genesis Center, we're involved with the lives of our students. This is what it comes down to. I couldn't go back overseas to live. I had to find the next best thing. This is it. This place is it.

*What have you learned since you've been working at the Genesis Center?*

How seriously underfunded adult education is. We're just this little block, and we don't get the same financial support that K-12 gets from the federal government or the state or municipalities. Of 200 million adults in this country, about 15 percent have not received a high school diploma or equivalent. This is a huge number of people that cannot contribute to the modern workplace as we want them to. This is a critical mass of people that if that if we don't help them to become better educated and workforce-trained, the country as a whole is behind the eight ball. We can't afford to allow 15 percent of *continued Page 11*

the population not to be able to contribute in the ways that business owners tell us they need to contribute.

*How does the Genesis Center help?*

We have wraparound support systems. We have social workers. We have financial counselors. I think this work is so important. I think if people understood how important this work is there would be more federal, state and local money as well as more donations. Maybe it's the stigma of serving immigrants. I don't know. Genesis Center takes every single level. Many agencies don't begin taking people until they're at intermediate level. That means that they can get them ready for workforce faster. That means they might have better outcomes than us. We take somebody who just arrived in the country yesterday and doesn't speak a word of English. We have an absolute beginner class. And we're basically the only ones in Rhode Island doing that other than Dorcas International, which has a class specifically for refugees. Our mission is to serve the community at every level. This work is so important because you can make a real difference in people's lives. Here, you can see lives really change. It's the immigrant dream. So many of our students, they come to us, they never get the chance to go to school, they may or may not have acquired grammatically correct English, they concentrate on educating their children, and then all of a sudden they're 40 or 50 years old, and they've got a little bit of time when they can go back to school and they come here and they say, "This is the time for me." Or we have very young people who know that they've got another 50 years in the workforce and they don't want to work in the back of that restaurant for the rest of their lives. So you've got people in these classrooms that have motivation. And, as a teacher, you get to know your students and their culture and their goals, their lifestyles, their opinions in a way that you never do in college.

Genesis Center is also part of a consortium with Dorcas International, Progreso Latino, RIFLI, and the Diocese of Providence. We get funded by USCIS to run citizenship classes. We're in our second grant, and we're having enormous success by putting our students in English as well as citizenship. Because what prevents them from becoming citizens is not that they can't memorize 100 history questions. Every sixth-grader can do that. It's that they don't have the English proficiency to pass the interview. Right now I have a huge class of 35 people, two afternoons a week. I had 10 oaths last month.

*As you look back on your time at the Genesis Center, what stands out?*

Refugee stories are always incredible. When the student develops enough language proficiency and enough comfort with the teacher and they begin to confide in you about the conditions. Some of the older Cambodian students, who lived through Pol Pot...I remember I had a young woman, she was only in her early 30s, but she was a child during this time and she remembered being so hungry. The Khmer Rouge had taken all the children from their parents and brainwashed them that they were not allowed to eat barely anything. But one time she and a little friend of hers had stolen a potato, and they were found out. The Khmer Rouge started shooting into the bushes where they were hiding. They shot her little friend to death. And she said that every night for many years she had nightmares and still occasionally she would wake up in a cold sweat because she remembers huddling in that bush with that potato in her hand and her friend being shot. *Continued Page 12*

What people have suffered...and if people only understand what your average undocumented person has been through. I mean, coming over with the coyotes. I had a woman who came over with her mother in a wheelchair and had to push her mother over the low levels of the Rio. The wheelchair got stuck in the mud, and being shot at from both sides. The stories...the resilience of these people. This is what makes America great. That people with that kind of backbone struggle to better themselves. What makes us different from other countries? Our openness to immigrants has always refueled the energy of the country. I think immigration is our greatest gift, and that's why we've stayed powerful. How are we different from other countries? That's it. Not to appreciate the lifeblood, the energy of our immigrant populations, replenishing our society with that drive and desire, I don't get how people don't see what it does for this country.



Barbara Al-Sabek

*The full transcript of this interview, which highlights Barbara's fascinating life, will be posted on the RITELL website, under the Adult Education SIG this summer.*



## RITELL Awards

RITELL is proud to sponsor two yearly awards. To nominate someone you know see [www.ritell.org](http://www.ritell.org) for more details.

### **Nancy A. Carnevale Teacher of the Year Award for Excellence in ELL Teaching (PreK-12)**

The nominee for this award must:

- Be a person whose approach to teaching is that of "teaching from the heart"
- Employ research-based second language acquisition strategies in their teaching of ELLs
- Have genuinely high expectations for all students, that with the right supports, students "can do."



### **Adult Education Practitioner Award (Adult/Higher Education)**

The nominee for this award:

- Demonstrates high levels of commitment and makes significant contributions to the field.
- Demonstrates high levels of professionalism, collegiality and cooperation.
- Goes above and beyond to help ELL students and professionals in the field of Adult Education.



## Special Interest Groups Update: International Voices

By Carolina Bisio, SIG Chair



The goal of International Voices is to create a collaborative community of ESL/EFL professionals who share the same career needs and interests. The creation of this particular SIG is all the more important because of the growing diversity of ELL professionals from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds in Rhode Island in particular, and in the United States at large. Consequently, through continuous collaboration and involvement, International Voices offers a space where members are able to discuss pressing issues related to their work, share best practices, instructional materials, and potential job leads, and learn from one another in the process. In a nutshell, as the name indicates, we want to give a voice to all the members who have the same dedication towards the vibrant population of English language learners we teach and learn from every day.



International Voices hosted its first meeting in March, 2014! The main goal of the meeting was to allow all members to meet all the ELL professionals who come from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds (native and nonnative English speakers) with whom we will be working to address common needs, concerns, and issues related to our work. We want to thank all the members who could attend this first meeting and who shared with us their needs, interests, and concerns! We also want to thank all the other members of the SIG who had other obligations that day and could not attend but have been staying in touch with us!

**Because we have members who work with students of different ages and levels of English proficiency, International Voices first meeting was a very enriching and eye opening event in which we could all learn about other ELL professionals' work settings, experiences, and knowledge. Since our members have different teaching experiences, they have specific needs, interests, and concerns. For this reason, we decided to create a webpage within the RITELL website to provide a space where International Voices members can share news, information, and links of interest to address those particular needs, interests and concerns. You can find the International Voices webpage by visiting the RITELL website ([www.ritell.org](http://www.ritell.org)), clicking on the *Members Only* tab located on the menu on the left, selecting *Special Interest Groups*, and clicking on *International Voices*.**



As a result of the main discussions held during our first meeting, we have posted on our webpage links to find information about job opportunities abroad and links to articles about teaching English abroad. We have also posted the following piece of writing in which one of our members, Joe DeMello, tells us about his personal experience teaching outside of the U.S. International Voices' members want to thank Joe for presenting this information during our meeting and for allowing us to share it with other members through our webpage and through this publication!

### **My Experience Teaching EFL Overseas**

First let me make a technical correction. This is only an educated opinion but I'm sticking to it. When teaching English overseas, we're talking about EFL (English as a foreign language) and not ESL (English as a second language). ESL is for immigrants coming to a new country, where English is necessary to function in the greater society. Here the motivation for learning English is integrative, to fit in. Whereas the motivation for EFL is instrumental (job growth or social status in their native country, for example). When I immigrated to the United States as a young boy I learned English as a second language. Later I learned French as a foreign language in high school and college.

English is my second language but it is my primary language – the one I use every day and through which 95% of my formal education was delivered. I consider myself a native English speaker. After all, I immigrated to the U.S. when I was nine years old – 45 moons ago.

The preceding paragraphs touch upon two issues that the foreign person learning EFL looks for – they want native English speakers for instructors and they want a credential at the end of the program. That said, the following have been my experiences teach EFL.

In 2003 I was sitting at an outdoor café in Seville, Spain. A few tables away there was an older man sitting with a young woman. He was tutoring her. She was a native Spaniard college student, one of her courses was English, and she needed help with it. He was a retired teacher from the U.S. who taught English part time in Spain. I said to myself "I could do this". The seed had been planted. I returned to the States but didn't forget the experience.

Two years later, in 2005, I attended the Boston Language Institute and obtained the TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language) certificate. Most of the other participants in the program were native English speakers and were 15-20 years my juniors. Their motivation was to travel overseas to teach English. So was mine. As a CPA, I would work in the States during the winter and spring and teach summer and fall overseas. Armed with my TEFL certificate I travelled to Portugal in 2007. The plan was to live there six months to see what the EFL teaching job prospects were.

The first thing I did was to look up the various language schools in Lisbon. There are a few, mostly British language schools like the International House and the British Council. Unfortunately, at the time they were offering more permanent positions. I could only teach for six months.

Although I can't prove it, I think the schools have a preference for hiring younger instructors. In fact, I've read that there is an age bias in some countries – an age cut-off at 50 for example. And yes, most of the brochures I see portray young smiling instructors in their 20s and 30s. But if you're a freelance instructor, age should not matter. So I decided to teach English as a freelancer. I quickly placed an ad in the newspaper. And I waited. *Continued Page 16*

The demand was only lukewarm. The first bite was from a businessman. He wanted to learn enough business English to get by. He bought a 12-lesson package, only to quit halfway through. He expected faster results. Unfortunately, a 12-lesson package was not going to provide what he wanted. He was a zero beginner.

Another interested party was a professional woman. But when she found out that I did not provide a classroom environment (we would meet in a public informal setting) she declined. Another call, another obstacle. This last individual wanted a certificate of successful completion. I was not in a position to provide that. After all, I was merely a freelancer.

Yes, I did connect with a couple of university students who needed tutoring. The goal is to deliver the instruction in the target language (English) as much as possible. However, at times the use of the student's native language is appropriate. In my case it was helpful that I spoke fluent Portuguese. The students enjoyed and benefitted from the one-on-one instruction. Overall, though, I concluded that I could not make a living as a freelance English teacher. I needed a teaching position at a language school.

My goal is still to travel overseas to live and teach EFL. In 2008 returned to school and obtained my M.Ed. in TESL. And I'm seriously thinking of going for a Ph.D. in Linguistics. At this point of my life the Ph.D. is more for personal satisfaction than for career advancement. But in five or six years, with Ph.D. in hand, I'll have a much better chance of finding work teaching EFL overseas. Yes, I'll be 60 by then. So what?

Finally, if you're a younger reader who loves languages and travelling, do it now! Travel abroad to teach English. If you're older, unless you're independently wealthy, I think you will have a hard time finding a sustainable job teaching English. If you do, let me know how you did it. Hmm, I wonder how that American retired teacher in Seville is doing.

*- Joseph DeMello*

Soon, we will be posting links and information about grading writing activities and the use of rubrics since many members expressed an interest in learning more about this topic. We will also be sharing best teaching practices and activities for ESL students of different ages and levels of language proficiency.

We want to deeply thank RITELL for allowing us to have this valuable space on their website and we ask our members to check the webpage often as we will be regularly adding new postings and updating information!

**If you are interested in becoming a member or want to know more about this SIG, please contact Carolina Bisio at [carobisio@gmail.com](mailto:carobisio@gmail.com).**





# Candid Camera at RITELL: Fall 2013 & Spring 2014 Conference Photos



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## Call for Submissions

We are always on the lookout for RI-TELLER submissions from our members. If you have a great lesson plan, resource or activity, please share! Other article ideas include student profiles, research you've done relevant to the field, questions, among other ideas. Submitting an article is a great way to get published in the field, and an important step to building up our professional connections with one another in RITELL.

Also, if you have a colleague you would like to nominate for the Nancy Carnevale or Adult Education Practitioner awards, please see the Awards page on RITELL.org.

We on the RITELL Coordinating Council wish everyone a nice summer and look forward to having you with us for our Fall Conference! Check RITELL.org for upcoming details.

