



# The RI-TELLER

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

## FALL 2014

### Special Interest Articles:

Cultural Competence

La Vida: Giving Life to Your Stories

Using the ESL Class to Teach a Culture of Compassion 7

Implementing Vocabulary Stations 11

### Individual Highlights:

Cultural Awareness Links 3

Join RITELL 8

Coordinating Council 9

RITELL Updates 10

Adult Practitioner Award 10

Conferences 14

Call for Submissions 15

Chris Bourret / Doug Norris, Editors

## Cultural Competence

By Lindy Fregeolle

The landscape of America's classrooms is rapidly changing. It has been decades since classrooms were dominated by a single race. Instead, classrooms are composed of students from a variety of ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

As educators, we are charged with doing whatever it takes to get students to be academically successful. We constantly learn new strategies, embed research-based instructional practices into our daily routines, and use data to drive our instruction.

However, when we sit back and look at the populations of students we are teaching, we need to have a growth mindset when it comes to the notion of cultural competence. The Education Alliance at Brown University defines cultural competency as, "the skills and awareness related to issues such as culture, language, race and ethnicity." Cultural competence is not a skill that can be mastered in a day, but rather an art that must be practiced over time to help better serve the needs of diverse learners.

As I think about the diverse population that I serve here

at Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy (BVP), the topic of cultural competence is at the forefront of my mind. BVP is an intentionally diverse public charter school that brings together students from four different communities in Rhode Island: Cumberland, Lincoln, Pawtucket and Central Falls. The result - a student population that is socioeconomically, racially and ethnically diverse.

Our mission at BVP is to *prepare every scholar for success in college and the world beyond*. In order to do this successfully, it is essential to think not only about strategies *continued page 2*

## La Vida: Giving Life to Your Stories

By D.H. Figueredo

*Cuban-born author, educator and librarian D.H. Figueredo delivered the keynote address, La Vida: Telling Life Stories and Giving Life to Your Stories, on Nov. 15 at the Fall 2014 RITELL Conference at Rhode Island College in Providence. In the following excerpt, he talks about the writing and publication of his first children's book, When This World Was New, published by Lee & Low Books.*

I began writing *When This World Was New* as a short story for adults. But because of my writing and intellectual limitations – keep in mind that William Somerset Maugham said, "one writes as one can and not as one wishes" - I felt I didn't have enough talent to make my father real and to make his experience palpable.

Since I couldn't give life to my father, I chose to tell the

story from my perspective. I didn't always know how my father felt or what he was thinking but I knew how I felt towards him.

Establishing me as the narrator and writing from the first person singular, I opted to make the incident into a children's story. This was something of a gamble: For the vast majority of children's stories are written in the third person singular. But the story that was alive in my heart demanded I write it using the pronoun "I." *continued page 4*

and data, but also with cultural competency. Regardless of where you teach, diversity among your student population is inherent and we all have the same goals – high academic achievement for ALL students. Applying elements of cultural competency in your schools can help clarify the needs of students and families while supporting student growth and learning.

In her text, Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research and Practice, (Gay, 2000), Geneva Gay defines culturally responsive teaching as using cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning opportunities more relevant to and effective for them.

Culturally responsive teaching is truly the most effective way to reach all students in diverse educational settings. Educators, schools and districts should incorporate these five essential elements for culturally proficient practices

1. *Assessing Cultural Knowledge* - Learning about one's own culture, others' cultures, how the school as a whole reacts to others' cultures, and what you need to do to be effective in cross-cultural situations. Also important is learning about the school and its grade levels and departments as cultural entities.
2. *Valuing Diversity* – Creating informal and formal decision-making groups inclusive of people whose viewpoints and experiences are different from yours – and the school's dominant group – that will enrich conversations, decision making, and problem solving.
3. *Managing the Dynamics of Difference* – Modeling problem solving and conflict resolution strategies as a natural and normal process within the culture of the schools and the cultural contexts

of the communities of your school.

4. *Adapting to Diversity* – Learning about cultural groups different from your own and the ability to use others' cultural experiences and backgrounds in all school settings.

5. *Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge* – Making learning about cultural groups and their experiences and perspectives an integral part of the school's professional development.

SOURCE: Adapted from Raymond D. Terrell and Randall B. Lindsey. (2009). *Culturally Proficient Leadership: The Personal Journey Begins Within*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Here at BVP, we are constantly striving to develop our cultural competencies as individuals and as an organization. We do a great deal of work at the network level to build cultural proficiency in our organization through sharing best practices, professional development, engaging our families, as well as through our Diversity Committee.

One opportunity for our teachers to develop cultural awareness and competency is through the *family meet and greets* prior to the start of the school year. Every BVP scholar and family receives a home meet and greet with their teacher(s) for the upcoming school year. This gives the educators an opportunity to visit scholars and families in their home environment and to learn more about them, their culture and their neighborhoods. Ultimately, it provides us with valuable information that we can use to better enhance teaching and learning at BVP.

We have also engaged our teachers with ongoing professional development on culturally competent practices that highlight diversity as an asset to be utilized in the classroom. Our network's Diversity Committee, comprised of teachers and staff, comes together monthly. The committee works

*continued page 3*

on plans to build the capacity of our organization to meet the diverse cultural needs of our scholars and families.

Our FLC – *family leadership council* offers yet another opportunity for us to engage in conversations about culture and diversity with families in the four communities that we serve. We are able to get together to share ideas, perspectives, and stories that might have implications on teaching and learning. This helps to open up cultural awareness among our faculty and community partners.

As a 21<sup>st</sup> century educator, you are a driver in the vehicle of social change. It is time that we squash these historical inequities that exist and move toward a shared understanding of *No Child Left Behind*. It is our duty to recognize the current educational landscape, incorporate culturally proficient practices and close the equity gaps that exist once and for all.

*Lindy Fregeolle is the ELL Coordinator at Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy*

### Cultural Awareness Links

*These resources can assist educators in engaging students as active learners by providing information on multicultural education. Compiled by Holly Bubier.*

1. <http://www.culturoosity.com/articles/whatisculturaawareness.htm>

Understanding Cultural Awareness, and how to manage, recognize and learn from diversity. Steps to build cultures and change attitudes.

2. <http://www.tolerance.org/culture-classroom>  
Culture in the Classroom - closing the culture gap between students and teachers.

3. <http://www.teachersofcolor.com/2009/04/incorporating-cultural-diversity-in-the-classroom/>  
Overcoming stereotypes, acceptance and having a broader world view.

4. <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/20746/>  
Culturally Responsive Instruction for Holiday and Religious Celebrations. Not to ignore the diversity of religion and culture and to highlight and incorporate the observations in a meaningful way.

5. <http://www.niusileadscape.org/bl/?p=26>  
Honoring Home Language - reminding parents of the rich literary legacy and the benefits of bilingual families.

6. <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/how-choose-best-multicultural-books>  
Online Collection of resources from this publisher looks to help teachers connect the classroom to the “realities of what students know and live.”



Some might wonder why I decided to write a children's story. A friend of mine who is a well-known writer asked me as much. The subtext of the question is that children's literature is not as good or as cerebral as stories written for adults and that, therefore, it is far easier to write a book for children. But those who teach children know the complex beauty in stories that - if successful - make readers out of children, engage their intellect and hook them forever into the pursuit of knowledge and beauty and the arts. And those who work with individuals on their way to mastering the English language know quite well the power of simple and clear prose: the command of that first sentence is the beginning of the possession of another language

But philosophy and pedagogy aside, the answer why my first book was a children's story is that I'm too much of a sentimentalist and a believer in the goodness of life to write a tragic story. As my son said of me at the time, I write sappy stories: sad and happy stories. As a rule, contemporary children's stories tend to have happy endings with clear resolutions - there is no hidden horror as in the Brothers Grimm's tales.

To craft a children's story I had to transition backwards from a teenager to a young child. I had to see this new world through the eyes of a child. I was fourteen years old when the event happened and I was in my forties when I began writing the story. What would it be like to be a young child again?



*The author displaying his work at the RITELL Conference*

Tricks, or strategies, came into place - writers use tricks all the time. I listened to my children as they talked to each other and their friends. I observed them while they watched their favorite TV shows and when my wife and I read to them. I observed the children in my local public library. I read hundreds of children's books. I did much more reading than actual writing. The activity became a mantra that today I pass on to the children in the schools I visit: If you want to write well, I tell them, you must read; read all time: in the bus, in the car, in the subway, in the bathroom.

Writing from a child's perspective and writing a book to be read by children, required the use of the proper diction, the right words to fit the narration. That is one of the most crucial steps you must take when writing. "A story must have some points of contact with the reader to make him feel at home in it. Only then can he accept wonders," wrote John Steinbeck.

My particular wonder was the snow: how to depict it in a way that was fresh, that evoked my father's response, and that captured the excitement children feel when witnessing the first snowfall of winter. Since the child in my picture book is from the Caribbean, his perspective needed to be grounded on the Caribbean. For him, snowflakes bring to mind white rose pedals; fresh snow resembles fine sugar; and walking on a snow bank is not unlike walking on a sand dune. This last imagery, I will confess to you, I copied. I took the concept right out of the novel *Magic Mountain* by Thomas Mann: "Walking in the snow was as toil- some as on the dunes" wrote the great novelist.

Diction and language go hand in hand, of course. For me, it was not just a matter of what type of diction the child-narrator was going to use

*continued page 5*



(juvenile or young adult) but in what language. Thus, here I was narrating in English what was said in Spanish and making it sound genuine and not a translation. A strategy that I used was not to engage the characters in actual conversations but have the child re-tell the dialogues from his perspective. The only time there is a line spoken in English is at the end of the story when Uncle Berto returns to take the boy to school and the father to a factory; at that moment Uncle Berto shouts: "We have to go."

Situating this sentence in English immediately after the encounter with the snow makes the snow symbolic of the process of assimilation for Danilito and his family. In his old home, there were beaches and palm trees. But that was the past. In his new world, there are pine trees and the wonder of snow.

If the conquest of the Americas meant the appropriation of the land by the might and power of the *conquistadores*, the conquest of this America was the appropriation of the snow by the father and the son. The illustration in the book highlights it: the father climbs up the hill with arms open, embracing his new life. Here he was ready to conquer this new world. Here was the boy also ready to conquer the new world. How do we know that they in fact did so? The last illustration you see in the book is that of the child skating!

The acceptance of my book initiated a transformative journey. When my manuscript was given to Enrique O. Sanchez, the would-be illustrator, he said to Phillip Lee: "That's the story of my life." A story about my father and my family's experience had now become someone else's story, so much so that the artist



Figueredo

inserted his family and himself into the story, taking my narrator and painting him in his own image, and taking my parents and rendering them in the image of his parents. What a compliment!

But I will be honest with you. I was not as understanding at first. There was no contact between the artist and myself, as instructed by the editors at Lee and Low Books. This happens with many writers whose works are illustrated by artists they don't know and whose illustrations the writers don't see until they view the finished product. I was at the American Library Association conference when Phillip Lee said: "check out your book." He gave me the galleys and I held it in my hand. I then took a step back and said to myself, and later to my wife. "I don't look that way. My parents don't look that way. That's not us!"

Something had changed. My story had ceased to be my exclusive domain. A total stranger had made something else, and new, of it. My narrative had become his and in the process, the story had grown more universal, more embracing, more engaging. The story about my father in the snow and the story I told my son had evolved into a book that became a story of many who had come to this country, recently or long ago, and not only from the Caribbean but from the world at large. A transformation had occurred: a personal script was now an immigration narrative.

Readers saw it that way, as did all reviewers. They were all kind in their criticism of the book. But there was one critic who said that I had written a story that gave a happy face to immigration and that I had missed the point of how difficult and painful immigration is; essentially that critic accused me of making light of what it means to leave one country for another.

I had not set out to write an immigration story. There were two reasons. One reason is elusive, probably controversial, and certainly debate-provoking. That particular reason explores the differences between exile and immigration. The distinction doesn't do away with the emotional turmoil of the traveler leaving home and

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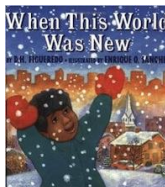
settling in the United States and doesn't belittle one experience over the other.

But the distinction does point out different social and historical frameworks. Supposedly, the immigrant journeys to another country in search of better economic opportunities; what social scientists refer to as the pull of the metropolis. That immigration process suggests the eventual embracing of a new culture, while still maintaining links to the old country.

The exile, on the other hand, is reacting more to the "push" than the pull. Exiles are generally pushed out of their country, without much preparation, and forced to leave all their possessions behind. Often, the impetus for the journey is the desire for freedom and to escape from political oppression. For example, many of the Chilean and Argentine scholars I have met, especially those seeking escape from Pinochet's dictatorship or the Argentine's military junta of the 60s and 70s, think of themselves as exiles and not as immigrants.

The exile longs for a return home, to what he or she left behind, to a past that is no more. In referring to the Cubans who arrived here in the 1960s, poet Gustavo Pérez Firmat has written: "We didn't truly settle since we were planning to return to Cuba to pick up where the island's turbulent history had left us off. We saw ourselves as people passing through...If immigration is a second birth, exile is a refusal to be born again..."

My father saw himself as an exile and not an immigrant. However, unlike his compatriots, he had concluded there was no going back to Cuba, thus he would make of the United States his new, and permanent, home. Because of his disposition, I could not think of our story as a tale of immigration.



But the second and most powerful reason why I wasn't writing an immigration story was that my aim was to write about my father and since he had an optimistic outlook on life, I needed to be true to his spirit. I wanted to celebrate him and my family and the cousins who helped us.

At a conference, I was asked if I was bothered by the particular critic who had dismissed my work. I wasn't and I'm still not bothered. I was thrilled that this reviewer was not only reading my words, but was assigning meaning to my words and then taking issue with me. For him, my story was important enough to upset him so much that it was important for him to say so in print. How cool was that? Negative or not, I had managed to engage that reader. That was a victory.

Am I still victorious as a writer? I don't know. Writing is painful. Lee and Low has published five of my children's books – two picture books and three easy readers. However, I have submitted to Lee and Low another seven stories which they have not liked. Perhaps the stories aren't any good. Perhaps they are good but not what they have in mind or in their publishing agenda. Perhaps they want another writer. Perhaps I'm not that good a writer.

I don't know the answer. What I can tell you is that for me writing is all about being rejected and rejected and rejected and rejected and me lamenting my limited talents, wondering why I want to be a writer, wondering why I have to suffer with my writing and why expose my heart to strangers. Do I like being hurt? All I know is that my father saw a hill whitened with snow and chose to climb that hill and to celebrate the magic of that winter moment.

I can't do any less. Like him, I must climb that hill and celebrate him and my mother and my wife and my children, celebrate through my writing. Not everyone will like what I write. But some will. And maybe one of my stories will engage a young child who might see a reflection of himself, of herself, in what I wrote and then say: I have a story to tell. I can do that. I can become a writer one day.

## Using the ESL Classroom to Teach Children a Culture of Compassion

By Anta Lo

I cannot imagine an ESL teacher who is not inherently compassionate. It simply comes with the territory, doesn't it? I believe compassion is the underpinning of our very motivation for becoming teachers, especially teachers of such diverse population as the ESL Family. It is evident through our teaching approaches and classroom activities that we value diversity and foster a culture of understanding and acceptance. However, sometimes, an incident like the one I am going to share with you makes me wonder whether more needs to be done to help children see, respect, and love each other a little more.

A 7<sup>th</sup> grade girl in a local school came home crying one day and cries to her mother as follows: "I hate my color, I don't want to be so dark anymore! When I grow up, I will bleach my skin to become lighter because nobody likes my dark color!"

Upon questioning, the mother found out that one of her daughter's classmates sneeringly asked the latter whether her "extreme dark skin" was a result of not showering every day.

Hearing this story from the mother made my heart weep for both children because one would normally think what happened here was a victim/bully type dynamic, but I believe both children in this case are victims. Why? Simply because they are children for God's sake! They are supposed to be color blind innocent loving beings, aren't they?

This story made me wonder if we are really paying attention to the messages we passing on to our children concerning the so called "others", meaning people of different backgrounds and cultures. Are we teaching our children love or hate? And by "we", I mean parents, teachers, and society at large.

As Nelson Mandela famously said "No one is born hating another person because of his background, the color of his skin, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than the opposite."

Since, as ESL teachers we are at the forefront of the diversity issue, how about we provide some significant leadership on this by using the ESL class and its beautiful diversity to teach the children a culture of compassion? Let's not just tell them about TOLERANCE and ACCEPTANCE, but even more significantly, let's teach them about LOVE and COMPASSION. Compassion not only in the sense of feeling sorry for others or showing empathy in times of crises, but in the sense of seeing and embracing our common humanity.

*Anta Lo is a Faculty Associate in the English Language Department at MCPHS University in Worcester, Mass.*



# 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, including changes in state policies and valuable information that can help you teach your students more effectively. Also learn about 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:**

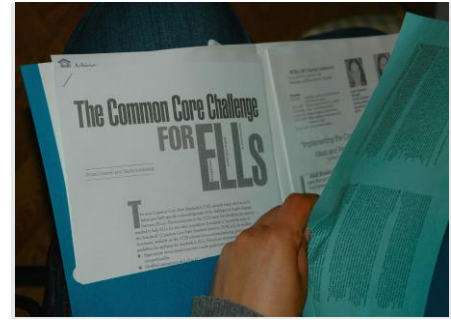
Network with colleagues who can offer you ideas, strategies, resources and encouragement.

### **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)

or

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



## Check Us Out Online!

We have added a **Common Core Resources** page under *Resources for Teachers* on our website! There are compiled resources from past conferences as well as a few new links. We'll keep updating as new resources become available. Check out our new addition by clicking on **Common Core Resources** on the ritell.org website.

Also, check out our great Twitter account: @RITELL\_ESL  
It contains great links to all things ESL!



## RITELL Coordinating Council

President: Dina Silvaggio  
Vice President: Chris Bourret  
Recording Secretary: Jessica Quaranto  
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  
At-Large Member: Holly Bubier



Among its activities, Coordinating Council members organize and work at RITELL Conferences, manage the [www.ritell.org](http://www.ritell.org) website, advocate and 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 for a great prize, like an iPad, and support the great work that RITELL does.



**Council Members in Action at the Conference**



**RITELL: over 230 members and growing!**

## RITELL Updates

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

RITELL Coordinating Council members were active participants this past year on Smith Hill during the discussions at the State Legislature hearings on **NECAP/High School Requirements**. There has been a change in climate regarding high stakes testing – The General Assembly gave final legislative approval placing a three-year moratorium on the use of the NECAP test as a Rhode Island graduation requirement – which ran counter to Education Commissioner Deborah Gist’s proposals. RITELL is satisfied with the recent outcomes regarding high stakes testing at the state level, and proud of our work advocating for ELLs across the state; we feel we were “heard”, along with alliance support from The ACLU’s Steven Brown and his advocacy. RITELL will continue to advocate for ELL learners and the teachers and staff that support them.

### Adult Education Practitioner Award Announced



For the second year in a row, The Adult/Higher Education Special Interest Group (AESIG) has selected and presented its *Adult Practitioner Award*. This year’s winner, voted unanimously by the SIG members, is Barbara Al-Sabek. Barbara has been a dedicated teacher at Genesis Center and Rhode Island College for many years. She has always gone above and beyond to help ELL students and professionals in the field of Adult Education. For many years, Barbara has been a constant contributor to the annual Adult Education Conferences, and a mentor to dozens of teachers in the field, running ESOL shares for her fellow teachers, and training new professionals in the field. Also, she is a beloved teacher who has helped improve the lives of hundreds of adult ELL learners. Barbara, in a move that doesn’t surprise anyone who knows her, donated her \$250 award prize to Genesis Center.

### Save the Date!

RITELL Spring Conference set for Saturday, May 2 at RIC.  
More details to follow on [www.ritell.org](http://www.ritell.org)

# Implementing Vocabulary Stations in a College ESL Setting

By Laura Vawter

Assessment is an integrated part of class-room instruction. As instructors we are constantly evaluating our students to discern their strengths and weaknesses. Some of the primary ways we evaluate our students is through tests and assessments. The most common tests we use are formal standardized tests. These tests pose many challenges for students, in that they may not be contextualized, meaningful or relevant tasks but inauthentic tasks that demands a memorized or rehearsed response.

The common standardized tests I use in my classrooms center on grammar and vocabulary. In the speaking and listening class I teach, the students acquire a lot of vocabulary as well as advance their speaking and listening skills. Throughout this semester we are going through Oxford University Press' *Q: Skills for Success 4 Listening & Speaking* by Robert Freire and Tamara Jones. After we complete a unit in this book, I select around 20 vocabulary terms from that unit and test the students on them. It is a timed standardized test where the students have 30 minutes to match around 20 vocabulary words and phrases to sentences. The dilemma with testing vocabulary and grammar is the students often just memorize the words, definitions or rules. Then, after the students complete the standardized test they forget what they memorized for the test.

To counteract this, I created a speaking and listening assessment that incorporated reading and writing skills to help students learn vocabulary words and use them accurately in communication. This assessment was designed with the goal of assisting the students in acquiring vocabulary knowledge in order to improve their scores on a formal, standardized vocabulary quiz. The objectives of the assessment were as followed:

- The student will be able to aurally recognize the vocabulary words, synonyms and definitions.
- The student will be able to orally produce the vocabulary words, synonyms and definitions.

- The student will be able to visually recognize the vocabulary words, synonyms and definitions.
- The student will be able to orally produce:
  - Definitions for each vocabulary word.
  - Questions using each vocabulary word.
  - Sentences using each vocabulary word.
  - Answers to a question using and regarding each vocabulary word.

The assessment occurred at the end of a unit in the book and before the students took the vocabulary test for that unit. The assessment lasted for 35-40 minutes and involved four stations. Each station involved a speaking or listening activity that utilized vocabulary from the unit. The students were put in groups of 3-4, rotated through each station, and spent 5-6 minutes at each station

I implemented the assessment three times and had it observed by another teacher. This teacher mentored me throughout the process, provided advice on ideas for different stations, and gave feedback on how to improve the assessment. He also assisted the students when needed. During the assessment I walked around and made sure each group understood the directions. I also corrected the students' grammar and pronunciation, and answered questions about definitions and directions for each station.

## Assessment Round 1

The first time I implemented the assessment I organized the chairs in the classroom in groups of four. I put the students in different groups, pre-pairing weaker students with stronger students. I then placed directions and a pile of self-evaluation forms on each station.

*Continued page 12*



I instructed the students to choose a partner in the group. After they selected the partner, I explained that we were going to do a speaking and listening assessment to help the students learn the vocabulary words from the chapter we had just studied, and in preparation for the vocabulary test the next day. I instructed them that one person would be the leader and they would take turns being the leader. I pointed them to the directions and assessments at each statement and explained that they would read the directions, complete the activity and then, after five minutes, I would stop them and they would complete a self-evaluation form. After they had completed these steps they would then rotate to a different station.

### **Station 1**

The first station had a stack of 8-10 vocabulary words from the chapter and instructed the leader to pick a word from the pile, use the word in a question, and then the other student would answer that question.

### **Station 2**

The second station had a stack of 8-10 notecards with vocabulary words on them and 8-10 notecards with the definitions of the vocabulary words on them. The directions instructed the leader to pick a definition, read it aloud, and not show the partner the card. The student was then instructed to listen to the definition and pick the word from the pile that matched that definition.

### **Station 3**

The third station has 8-10 notecards with questions on them related to the topic in the chapter and 8-10 notecards with vocabulary words on them. The directions instructed the leader to read a question and not show their partner. The other student then picks a word from the pile and answered the question using that word.

### **Station 4**

The fourth and final station had 11 pictures and 8-10 notecards with vocabulary words on them. The directions instructed the leader to select a picture and a vocabulary word and say a sentence about the picture using the vocabulary word.



*Memory Game*

The other student then had to repeat the sentence that the leader said. I selected the pictures based on the topic in the chapter. For example, the unit the vocabulary words were from was about leadership and so I selected pictures that were about being a leader. I also made sure that several different sentences could be made about each picture and with several different vocabulary words.

### **Assessment Round 2**

The second and third time I implemented the assessment I added new activities to different stations. I also put the students in different groups of four. Each group had one leader and the group worked together and not with a partner. Each student took turns being the leader. I also had the students complete the self-evaluation after they had finished all of the stations and not after each station. During the assessment I again walked around and made sure each group understood the directions, corrected the students' grammar and pronunciation, and answered any questions.

### **Station 1**

The first station had a pile of 8-10 notecards with vocabulary words and instructed the leader create a question using a word. Each student then had to answer the question.

### **Station 2**

The second station was a matching game. It had 20 notecards with numbers on one side and vocabulary words or definitions on the other. The students were instructed to take turns flipping over the cards and trying to match the definitions and words. The leader began the game.

### **Station 3**

This station had 12 pictures and a pile of 8-10 notecards with vocabulary words on them. The leader was instructed to pick a picture, pick a word, and make a sentence about the picture using that word. Then the student next to the leader had to repeat the sentence. I again selected pictures that had to do with the unit we had studied and made sure that multiple sentences with different

*continued page 13*



vocabulary words could be used for each picture.

### **Station 4**

The fourth station had 14- 16 sets of two notecards taped together. Half of the notecards had synonyms of the vocabulary words (on purple notecards), and half the notecards had vocabulary words on them (on white notecards). The students were instructed to match the vocabulary words with their synonym forming a circle with the cards. The leader matched the first card.

### **Assessment Round 3**

#### **Station 1**

The third time, the first station had a pile of 8-10 notecards with vocabulary words on them. The leader was instructed to pick a word and use synonyms and explanations to help the other students guess the words, without showing the students the word or saying the word aloud.

#### **Station 2**

The second station had 16 notecards with numbers on one side and definitions of words on the other. The students were instructed to take turns flipping over the cards to match the word with the definition. The leader was the first to flip over two cards and try to find a match.

#### **Station 3**

The third station had 12 pictures and a pile of 8-10 notecards with vocabulary words. The leader was instructed to make a sentence about one of the pictures using one vocabulary word. The student next to the leader was instructed to repeat the sentence the leader said. I again ensured that the selected pictures and words had multiple possible pairings.

#### **Station 4**

The fourth station had a stack of 10-12 notecards. Lines drawn on the notecard divided it into 4 squares. One square had the vocabulary word and the other squares had a different question written in them. The questions asked for synonyms, antonyms, definitions or a sentence using the word. Some cards had three different questions, while others repeated the same question in 2 squares. The leader was instructed to take a card, read the word aloud, and then ask each student in the group a different question. The students then answered the questions

in two squares. The leader was also instructed to take a card, read the word aloud, and then ask each student in the group a different question. The students then answered the questions.

Some advantages of this assessment are it is nonintrusive, it allows the students to see their strengths and weaknesses as well as reflect on them, and it encourages the teacher to take on an alternative role of mentor and coach and not simply instructor. This assessment also provides an opportunity for the students to experience the interactive nature of listening and speaking.

One disadvantage of the assessment is it takes time for the students to adjust to the activities and format of the assessment. During the first assessment, I observed that the students were more focused on learning how to do each activity and learning the format of the assessment than they were focused on the vocabulary words. As a result, they did not internalize all of the content of the activities. During the second time that I implemented the activity the students internalized the activities and vocabulary more, since they were familiar with the format. By the third time, a majority of the students were unfazed by the new stations and performed all of the activities with ease.

Overall, the assessment was successful because it was a fun and informal activity that allowed the students to progress in their speaking and listening skills, as well as be better prepared for the vocabulary test. The environment also allows instructors to evaluate their participation as well as their vocabulary knowledge. The teacher's role, to monitor, model and be arbitrator, also allowed the teacher to "call students out" for not studying or knowing the vocabulary, but in a non-threatening way. Overall I think the assessment was a success and I enjoyed the opportunity to create, implement and experiment with an assessment in my classroom. I look forward to continuing to change and adapt the assessment to other classes in the future.

*Laura Vawter is a Faculty Associate in the English Language Academy at MCPHS University in Worcester, Mass.*

## Upcoming Conferences



**TESOL 2015**

**25-28 March 2015**

**[www.tesol.org/convention2015](http://www.tesol.org/convention2015)**



**MATSOL 2014 Conference**

*Refresh - Reflect - Renew*

May 7-9, 2014

Sheraton Framingham Hotel  
& Conference Center

[www.matsol.org/2014-conference](http://www.matsol.org/2014-conference)



**The Annual RI Adult Education Conference will be held in the Fall of 2015.**

**Look for upcoming details at <http://www.riaepdc.org/>**



**RITELL Spring Conference set for Saturday, May 2 at RIC.**

**9am-1pm.**

**More details to follow on**

**[www.ritell.org](http://www.ritell.org)**

Contact information:

See us at:

[www.ritell.org](http://www.ritell.org)

Mailing Address:

RITELL

c/o Nancy Cloud

PO Box 9292

Providence, RI 02940

Phone (401) 456-8789

Fax (401) 456-8284

[ncloud@ric.edu](mailto:ncloud@ric.edu)

**RI-TELLER submissions**

Contact Chris Bourret or

Doug Norris at

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

[dougnorris1489@gmail.com](mailto:dougnorris1489@gmail.com)

## 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 great school year and look forward to having you with us for our next conference! Check RITELL.org for upcoming details.

