



MCTLC Newsletter



*Our Mission is to Advance the Teaching of
World Languages and Cultures in Minnesota*

Vol. III, No. 2

February 2012



From the president's desk. . . .

February is Discover Languages Month! Discover Languages...Discover the World! is a national campaign developed by ACTFL to raise awareness about the academic, social, cultural and economic benefits that

language learning provides. In addition to advocating for language learning year-round we are encouraged to focus on promoting our profession in our schools and communities during the month of February. Ideas for classroom activities and community involvement to celebrate the power of language learning can be accessed on www.actfl.org. There is also a photography contest with a due date of June 15! Go for it and share with us what you have done in terms of poster contests, international coffee parties, press conferences and more. We belong to a national movement!

This year I have had the privilege of collaborating with the Southwest State University of Minnesota (SMSU) College Now Spanish program which provides high school students the opportunity to follow a collegiate level curriculum and earn college credit. I have travelled across the state visiting Spanish teachers and their students. There is something so invigorating about entering a language classroom, isn't there? Our classrooms are more worldly, colorful and more interdisciplinary in décor. I have also been awestruck by the critical learning and creativity I have witnessed. I observed high school students debate immigration issues, present original soap operas, discuss the indigenous history of Central America and research Art History on the Internet in Spanish. I have met teachers who created and nurtured their own expanding programs, teachers who send their high school students to elementary classrooms to teach Spanish, and teachers who travel with their students to build schools in Latin America. The language teacher truly is the greatest resource. We spend our lives dedicated to our craft and our students benefit from our commitment on so many different levels. Yet, I am struck by how distance isolates so many teachers whose closest colleagues may be thirty miles away.

The opportunity to meet and network with each other is one of the great perks that belonging to MCTLC offers. We may only gather once a year, but you know you have colleagues across the state throughout the academic year. We are gearing up for this year's fall conference so reserve Thursday, October 18 for pre-conference workshops and Friday, October 19 for a full day of sessions. We are pleased to announce the presenters from last year's conference who are invited to return with "Encore Performances".

Chosen by their peers, they will continue to deliver the level of excellence you have learned to expect from our fall conference. They are: Viann Castañeda Pederson and Gay Rawson, "Adding to Your Cultural Toolkit," Matt Schneider, "Interactive Global Activities," Andrea Schueler, "Get Them Talking with Art and Music," Lorna Sopcak, "Kunst auf Deutsch," and the Teatro del Pueblo's puppet show, "*The Adventures of Juan*." Perhaps you will choose to present this year. Go to www.mctlc.org for the details of how to submit a proposal. We want to see you there!

Sincerely,
Mary Thron

Jan Holter Kittok Retires from the Board

At the November meeting of the Board of Directors, we regretfully thanked Jan for the tremendous work she has done for our organization in the last eight years. I say regretfully because we all wonder how we will get along without her. She served as membership chair, president elect, president, and past president. She oversaw the adoption of our new website, online membership and registration forms, four conferences, and several successful regional workshops.

The board benefitted greatly from the insight she brought as a language teacher, the World Languages Specialist at the MDE, and her work as a trainer for Educator In Service. She has provided training for language teachers through the United States and in China. We wish Jan much success in her new position as Content Leader for World Languages for Minneapolis Public Schools. We thank her for her past contributions to MCTLC and look forward to her continuing contributions.

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From the editor's desk. . .

As our regular newsletter editor has requested a six month leave of absence due to an overwhelming number of professional duties, I am filling in as guest editor for this month. The last time I wrote I wrote about what I had learned about teaching languages from observing my daughter's Suzuki piano classes. I thank the people who responded with favorable comments. So I've decided to continue with the theme by making some observations about what I've learned about language teaching by taking dance lessons.

Throughout the past twenty years or so I have repeatedly taken dance classes as time and money allowed. Since I often was without one or the other, I've made little progress. I've taken ballroom, Latin, swing, Cajun and Zydeco dance classes. According to research, learning to dance and learning a language are two activities that can help to prevent memory loss among seniors, although my students and family members might attest to the contrary in my case.

As I take the lessons and practice the steps, I am also constantly observing the teachers to see how they teach. Since I have had many different teachers, I have been able to see what makes for effective teaching. So here's what I learned about teaching languages by watching dance teachers.

- Patience is required. Some students do not learn as quickly as others. Humiliation is not helpful. It is the teacher's responsibility to make everyone look good and feel successful. And although some students may never dance with the stars, that does not mean the time spent was wasted. Although I have never reached a high level of proficiency in my dancing, I have gotten physical and mental exercise, I have enjoyed myself, and I've had many memorable experiences that have enriched my life.
- Everyone can learn to dance just as everyone can learn to speak another language. If you can walk, you can learn to dance. If you can speak your own language, you can learn to speak another and another and another. The task of the teacher is to break the instruction down into small enough steps so that everyone can master it.
- Repetition is necessary. Dance instructors refer to something called "body memory." If your mind tells your body to do something often enough, the body will eventually do it automatically, without "thinking about it." We do this all the time when we speak our native tongue. If dancers are to become proficient, they must practice the basic steps often enough so they become automatic. In my language classroom, I achieve this repetition by singing, by choral repetition, and by asking the same questions over and over again in a slightly different context so students do not become bored with the repetition.
- Having a partner is very helpful. Almost all of the dancing I have done is partner dancing. This is what I find most rewarding and enjoyable. Much research has shown that having students work in pairs is the best use of time in a language classroom. I assign students a buddy a month at a time. It has been a long time since I have had a student who was not successful in my classroom, whether they were special education students or otherwise disadvantaged students. I give the credit to the buddy system.

Sincerely yours, Betty Lotterman

MCTLC Thanks Its Donors

We wish to give a special thanks to the following individuals who have made contributions to MCTLC throughout 2011.

Carol Klee
Anita Ratwik
Kathy Olson-Studler
Betty Lotterman
Marjie Hay
Robert and Helen Cartford
Barbara Cartford
Dolores Stoeffel
Anonymous givers

If you or anyone you know would like to make a contribution to enduring global peace and understanding, you can do so by clicking on the donation button at www.mctlc.org. When someone asks you what you want for a birthday or anniversary present, consider asking for a contribution to MCTLC or a gift membership for someone you know. Gift memberships can be arranged through our membership chair, Kay Edberg.

This space is intentionally left blank to remind you that we need your contributions to the newsletter. Consider sending in a teaching strategy for the Practitioner's corner or news about your program, travels, or successes.

News Tidbits. . .

Newly Revised ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines Available for Download

The "ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines" were first published in 1986 as an adaptation for the academic community of the U.S. Government's Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) Skill Level Descriptions. New for the 2012 edition are the addition of the major level of "distinguished" to the speaking and writing guidelines; the division of the "advanced" level into the three sublevels of "high," "mid," and "low" for the listening and reading guidelines; and the addition of a general level description at the "advanced," "intermediate" and "novice" levels for all skills. You can download the document at <http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=5305>

Ojibwe Immersion School Finds Itself in the Spotlight

The Niigaane Ojibwemowin Immersion School on the Leech Lake Reservation in Minnesota recently enjoyed a visit from an Emmy award. The school was one of several profiled in the Emmy winning documentary about the preservation of the Ojibwe language, spoken fluently by fewer than 1,000 people. The school tries to promote a family atmosphere, with community service and Ojibwe education for parents as well. "We want to legitimize the language," said Leslie Harper, director of the program. Taken from the Duluth News Tribune, January 16, 2012.

Writer Encourages Young Professionals to Have "Global Mind-set"

Stacie Berdan, author of "Get Ahead by Going Abroad," has been on the leading edge of encouraging people to prepare themselves for a worldwide workforce. She believes people are starting to realize the need for international experience on their resumes. However, she says, American schools are not doing enough to prepare students for this environment, especially in light of Congress' recent cuts to the Foreign Language Assistance Program.

Summer Opportunities. . .

"The Imperial Cities of Morocco"

Highlights include:

- You will discover the art, history and culture of Morocco
- Experience authentic Moroccan life through a two-day family stay immersion in Fes
- Visit artisan co-operatives for demonstrations: tanneries, ceramics, carpets, women's argan oil co-ops
- Cook with a Moroccan chef
- Spend a day in a Berber village
- Speak French with locals and your peers

Graduate credits from Hamline University are available. Find out more at <http://www.isemn.org>.

Witness for Peace Delegation to Cuba July 2-July 12.

This "People to People" delegation will leave from Miami and will be designed for Spanish teachers. During the morning we will explore different aspects of Cuban culture and history. During the afternoon we will work on using what we have learned to design curriculum that will be published online so Spanish teachers will have access to accurate and up to date materials to use in teaching about Cuba. For more information contact bettylotterman@hotmail.com.

CARLA Summer Institute 2012

The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota has sponsored a summer institute program for second language teachers since 1996. This internationally known program reflects CARLA's commitment to link research and theory with practical applications for the classroom. Each institute is highly interactive and includes discussion, theory-building, hands-on activities, and plenty of networking opportunities.

CARLA summer institute participants—more than 3,700 to date—have come from all over the world. They have included foreign language and ESL teachers at all levels of instruction, as well as program administrators, curriculum specialists, and language teacher educators.

Online registration is now open for the CARLA summer institutes for immersion teachers and for language teachers. Find out more at www.carla.umn.edu/institutes.

Check out more opportunities for world language teachers at www.mctlc.org. In order to help us share information I have created a **topic** in the **forum** under the **General** heading.



At the *Place de Vosges, Paris*

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Mark your calendars: MCTLC Fall Conference, October 18 & 19, 2012


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FLAP Funding Eliminated

Funding for the Foreign Language Assistance Act was cut to zero in the latest budget. Even programs that were funded in previously approved programs will not receive funding. This means for example that Minneapolis Public Schools will need to find funding for the Arabic and Chinese programs that were previously funded by FLAP

The Foreign Languages and International Studies in Higher Education program suffered a \$1.55 million reduction in addition to the 40% decrease in funding in the budget for FY 2011.

We can see that we need to be very active in advocating for world language education in this difficult political climate. If you would like to find out more about support for language programs on the national level you can contact Lisa Rough at info@languagepolicy.org

2015 Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
March 12 - 14, 2015
Hilton Minneapolis
Minneapolis, MN