



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

Vol. IV, No. 12

December 2013

## FROM OUR PRESIDENT:



### *Fighting for the Underdogs in World Language Education*

In Minnesota, we are pretty good at rooting for the underdog. Just look at our sports' teams. Go Vikings! Go Twins! No matter how bleak our teams' seasons are, we seem to have boundless optimism for the future. I think we can say the same for our outlook on world language education in Minnesota. One could argue that we are comfortable rooting for *our* underdogs: world language programs, teachers, and students. We take pride in the fact that we are loved by the public, yet fail to achieve national and international recognition. Perhaps it is time to stop being complacent in this position. Maybe it is time we start taking action and constructing change to truly advance world language education in Minnesota.

Why, you might ask, are we underdogs, when there is much cause for celebration? There are ever-increasing immersion programs (67 programs pre-K-12<sup>1</sup>--only Utah has more immersion programs than Minnesota<sup>2</sup>), increased enrollment in various language areas (Spanish, Chinese, ASL), and strong organizations like MCTLC with missions to support the teaching of world languages and cultures. The point at issue is actually quite clear.

According to a language study report published by the Minnesota Department of Education in 2011<sup>3</sup>, we offer world languages in fewer elementary, middle and high schools than the national average. Minnesota is also licensing fewer world language

teachers and there is a shortage of world language teachers in the state. Another distressing matter is the inequity that exists in opportunities provided to students for language study between districts and even within districts. How is it that students in one district are only offered the opportunity to study Spanish, while in other districts, students can choose among three to six different languages? Finally, we need to look at the clientele in our classrooms. Are we ensuring that our programs and methods of instruction are reaching all students, or only certain populations?

It is clear the public agrees that world language study is a critical component to produce students who are globally competent and able to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Unfortunately, due to funding, scheduling issues, a shortage of qualified world language teachers, and a lack of vision (or courage) of school leaders, very few districts are expanding their world language programs. What can we do to inspire and advocate for change?

The 2014 MCTLC fall conference is being planned to provide you with the support and tools to confront the inequities we face as world language educators. We hope to tackle some tough questions head on with our theme, "Diversity, Equity, and World Languages: Empowering Teachers for Change." We no longer want to be seen as the underdogs. We prefer to be seen as the fighting champions of equity in education.

We would like to hear from you. Understanding your struggles will help us carefully select workshops and sessions that will benefit you in your professional growth. We've got our boxing gloves on with smiles on our faces, rooting for our world language underdogs.

∞ Marjie Hay

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mnimmersion.org/ImmersioninMN>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cal.org/resources/immersion/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/ms9gk4>



## SKYPE IN THE CLASSROOM

A decade ago, I began a classroom letter exchange with a teacher in Spain using email to transfer student letters between countries. With the emergence of Skype, we have been able to take our email exchanges to the next level. We have used Skype on numerous occasions to allow students the opportunity to practice their speaking skills with native speakers of their own age. Although the topic varies a bit each time, we generally follow the same format and time schedule.

Due to the time difference between Minnesota and Spain, having real time interaction must take place early in the morning here. I have requested that my Spanish III class which participates in the Skype sessions be offered first hour to make this possible. The teacher in Spain, in turn, requests that his students stay after school to talk to mine. Generally most of his class is able to do so.

The actual Skype session is projected on a large screen at the front of my classroom while students speak in pairs using my computer. They talk for about two minutes each. The Spanish students also rotate as the pairs finish talking to each other. Our students still write emails, so we try to pair up the e-pals on the days we Skype so they can see each other face-to-face. During the Skype sessions, I have sometimes required the rest of the class to write some of what they hear or jot down cultural observations about the topics discussed.

Generally, the topics discussed range from personal information- family, friends, school, etc. to cultural differences- free time activities, holidays, traditions and places to visit in each country. The students are required to bring in some type of visual aid and must say at least ten things about their topic. We also encourage them to ask their e-pals a question or two.

Often it is impossible for a class of 25 students in each country to finish in one session, so generally

we plan two. They may be a week apart or maybe just a few days but we try to allow time for every student to speak. Ideally, we try to Skype once each quarter.

We are in the process of moving our exchange to [edmodo.com](http://edmodo.com) so all of our students can read all of the letters and ask questions of the other students in the group. We are hoping this will expand our students' writing opportunities and enhance the email exchange. We still plan to continue to Skype and look forward to new technologies that will provide our students with even more opportunities to learn together.

I am also making plans to use Skype to bring in guest speakers from Spanish-speaking countries to talk to my students about the people and cultures of the Spanish-speaking world as well as the issues that they face. Later this month, my Spanish IV class will be Skyping with a Spanish teacher in Otavalo, Ecuador who attended the MCTLC Fall Conference as an exhibitor. They will be discussing environmental and human rights issues in Ecuador.

Skype provides a wonderful window into life in another country and can be an unforgettable authentic speaking and listening opportunity for students. If you would like more information about making Skype part of your students' classroom experience, you are welcome to contact me at [kedberg@moraschools.org](mailto:kedberg@moraschools.org).

If you are using technology in a unique way in your classroom, we'd love to hear from you. Send your stories to [editor@mctlc.org](mailto:editor@mctlc.org).

Submitted by Kay Edberg

## A Chinese Teachers' Organization for Minnesota

At this year's MCTLC conference, Chinese teachers met and discussed a plan to establish a statewide language association for Chinese teachers similar to the AAT organizations for French, German, Spanish, and Portuguese. It was agreed to follow the lead of the Wisconsin sister organization and remain for the time being an unincorporated association with its own bylaws and EIN for bookkeeping purposes. Currently the association, provisionally titled the Minnesota Association of Chinese Language Teachers (MACLT) has established an e-mail listserve and is engaging in outreach to all Chinese teachers in the state. Relations have been established with the Confucius Institute as well, and plans are in place for a first meeting of MACLT in early 2014. Contact Paul Faust at [paul.faust@fridley.k12.mn.us](mailto:paul.faust@fridley.k12.mn.us) if you are interested in participating in this initiative.

## MN-AATSP Annual Meeting:

### “Cruzando Bilingual/Bicultural Fronteras con Heritage Spanish Learners”

by Dr. Jean R. Aguilar-Valdez

On Saturday, November 9th the MN-AATSP held their annual meeting with Dr. Jean R. Aguilar-Valdez, a noted speaker on heritage speakers in the classroom. This presentation helped explain where heritage speakers with dual cultures are coming from and how to connect with them. Often these students seem to tune one out or are challenging during class!

Dr. Aguilar-Valdez recently came to the St. Olaf College from the University of North Carolina. Having grown up in Miami and taught in Los Angeles, her life and career have spanned the United States. Hearing about her cultural background, speaking Spanish with her grandfather, Spanglish with her parents and friends, and English with her siblings gave language teachers great insight into heritage speakers and how to reach out to them.

Dr. Aguilar-Valdez offered several resources for language educators to critically rethink heritage speakers in the language classroom. A few she shared were *Borderlands/La Frontera* by Gloria Anzaldúa, *Drink Cultura* by José Antonio Burciaga, and a YouTube video created by Univision, “The New American Reality” <http://youtube/pOnhuj11zgi> conveying the importance of appreciating Spanish-speaking cultures in today’s society. Dr. Aguilar-Valdez challenged us all to come up with new ideas. She offered examples of poems and class projects for heritage students and suggestions on how to grade a bilingual paper. The presentation energized and enticed us to reconnect with all the heritage speakers in our classrooms!

Submitted by Lisa Perez

### Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

*Unlock the Gateway to Communication*

March 20 - 22, 2014  
Hilton St. Louis at the Ballpark  
St. Louis, MO

## Why Even Bother with National Exams?

The National Language Examinations are standardized assessment tools for Grades 6-12, given voluntarily by teachers throughout the United States to measure achievement and proficiency of students who are studying a second language. The examinations can be used as a motivational competition for students as well as for assessment purposes. Furthermore, students can experience what placement exams will be like in college. It is always interesting to see how one’s program and students compare to other programs across the country. Finally, there are quality prizes including opportunities to travel abroad on scholarship.



### The National Spanish Examination’s three phases:

#### Phase 1: Test Registration

- ☉ Regular Registration (November 1– January 31)
- ☉ Late Registration (February 15 – 25)

#### Phase 2: Test Administration

- ☉ Test Window (March 1 – April 10)

#### Phase 3: Test Results

- ☉ National Results Sent Out via Email (by May 1)

For more information contact the AATSP office at (248) 960-2180 or online at [www.aatsp.org](http://www.aatsp.org).



### le Grand Concours du français - 2014 National French Written Contest

#### January 2014: Registrations due

<http://www.frenchteachers.org/concours/>

#### February 2014 le Grand Concours

Feb. 14-28, 2014 (Grades 1-6 FLES)

Feb. 23- Mar. 22, 2014 (Grades 7-12 Levels 01-5)

Information: [Grand Concours National webpage](#)

Information: [Mn AATF Grand Concours webpage](#)



### National German Exam

October 1 – February 1 Testing

[www.quia.com/ngeorder](http://www.quia.com/ngeorder)

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**Next Year's Conference!**  
Fall Conference 2014  
**Diversity, Equity, and  
World Languages: Empowering  
Teachers for Change**

Friday, October 24, 2014  
Earle Brown Heritage Center, Brooklyn Center

Post-Conference Workshops to be held on  
Saturday, October 25 at various locations around  
the Twin Cities. Stay tuned for more information!

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