



Vol. VI, No. 5

May 2015

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

### LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT:



Dear fellow world language teachers,

I would like to begin my letter this month with an excerpt from my Teacher of the Year statement in which I explain the importance of teaching world languages.

*"In an increasingly globalized world, the benefits of learning another language and culture are obvious. In the classroom, we frequently point out to our students that being bilingual and bicultural is an advantage in the workplace and while traveling abroad. However, we often neglect to mention another important benefit of learning language and culture: it inspires better global citizenship. One cannot simply learn another language and culture without being exposed to its core values and beliefs, its products and practices, and the experiences of the people who speak the language and live within the culture. While learning another language, we are changed by our contact with world views different from our own. We reach a deeper understanding of ourselves and begin to see those who speak another language in a new way. "They" becomes "We" and differences fade as we acknowledge our common humanity."*

This is why teaching Spanish is my passion.

Many of us spend our evenings and weekends developing engaging lessons for our students. Sometimes we lead them on the path towards language proficiency and they eagerly follow. Other times we have to drag them. Whatever we do, we work hard and do our best without the expectation of being recognized for our efforts.

Being chosen as World Language Teacher of the Year has made me consider how important it is to recognize the momentous work we do. Numerous members of the

community congratulated me on the award after it appeared in the local paper. My high school's world language program also benefitted from the positive publicity. It brought recognition to world language education in my community and sent a clear message that it is important and valued.

As the school year winds to a close, think about ways you can recognize your fellow world language teachers for the amazing work they do every day. I hope you will consider nominating an exceptional colleague or two for one of the many awards offered through MCTLC listed on the back page of this newsletter. You may also want to consider honoring an organization or individual that has supported world language education in our state.

Although we never doubt the importance of our work, celebrating our successes with our colleagues and communities benefits our programs and our students. Recognizing those colleagues that are quietly (or noisily) doing amazing things in their classrooms helps to ensure that stakeholders take notice and support world language education. I look forward to honoring the accomplishments of Minnesota world language teachers at MCTLC's Awards Banquet at the Fall Conference in October.

~ Kay Edberg

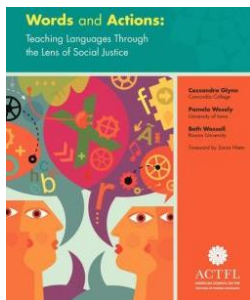
## iFLT 2015

THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON LANGUAGE TEACHING  
July 14-17, 2015 • St. Paul, Minnesota, USA

Don't miss out on the opportunity to learn from outstanding presenters such as Dr. Stephen Krashen, Carol Gaab, Carrie Toth, Diana Noonan, Kristy Placido, Ben Slavic, Katya Paukova, Martina Bex, Bryce Hedstrom, and Cynthia Hitz.

Find details and register online at:

<https://tprstorytelling.com/conference/>



## Teaching Language through Social Justice in Minnesota

*Words and actions: Teaching language through the lens of social justice* by Cassandra Glynn, Pamela Wesely and Beth Wassell was published by ACTFL and presented at the national convention in San Antonio in 2014. I caught up with Cassie Glynn, assistant

professor at Concordia College, Moorhead and MCTLC regional representative for the West Central region, to ask her how the book came about.

She and co-author, Pamela Wesely, assistant professor at the University of Iowa, Ames, attended graduate school together and always kept in touch, meeting up at conferences. Wesely met Beth Wassell, professor at Rowan University, Glassboro, New Jersey, at an ACTFL conference and the three joined forces at the ACTFL conference in Denver. Realizing their common interest in teaching social justice, they started joking about writing a book together. Soon their joke became a reality and with the support of ACTFL they were able to publish their work. They were inspired to write about teaching for social justice because it is often a missing piece in the world language classroom, yet they thought that it should be an integral part of what world language teachers do. It is not included in methods textbooks for pre-service teachers and it is not often a part of professional development for in-service teachers. They wanted to create a companion text for methods textbooks in the field and a how-to guide for both in-service and pre-service teachers.

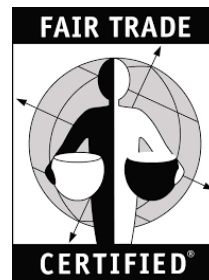
The text provides tips for teachers on how to integrate social justice into their world language classes and provides a step-by-step process for adapting typical topics in traditional world language classes to be taught in a contextualized manner through the lens of social justice. The foreword is written by one of the most foremost scholars in multicultural education, Sonia Nieto. She defines social justice as “a philosophy, an approach and actions that embody treating all people with fairness, respect, dignity, and generosity” (Nieto, 2010, 46). Glynn, Wesely, and Wassell encourage language educators to push themselves beyond teaching language skills as the sole focus of their instruction and to guide the learners to see the importance of learning a language in order to interact in a respectful, responsive manner with members of the target communities. This complies with the ACTFL definition of global competence as “the ability to communicate with respect and cultural understanding in more than one language” (ACTFL, 2014).

The book advocates for teaching language through a social lens by aligning with Nieto’s (2010) four components of social justice education in the following excerpts: First, the world language classroom is uniquely suited to challenge, confront, and disrupt misconceptions, untruths, and stereotypes that lead to structural inequality and discrimination based on social and human differences. Second, the world language classroom has great potential to provide all students with the resources necessary to learn to their full potential, including both material and emotional resources. Third, the world language

classroom regularly draws on the talents and strengths that students bring to their education. Fourth, the world language classroom easily transforms into a learning environment that promotes critical thinking and agency for social change.

The authors urge teachers to allow students to make sense of content in their own way by using critical thinking skills. After teachers have allowed students to delve into topics of social justice, they can challenge them to act. They cite the work of Stephanie Owen-Lyons, former Spanish teacher and doctoral student at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. After presenting the concepts of Fair Trade and sustainability to her students from multiple points of view, she succeeded in helping her students bring Fair Trade coffee to their high school café.

Teachers across the state are teaching to social justice. At the recent Central States Conference, Kay Edberg, Spanish teacher in Mora and MCTLC president, presented “*Enseñando los derechos humanos a través de las películas y la música*”, Teaching Human Rights through Film and Music. She was recognized with the All Star Award and invited to present at Central States in Ohio next spring. In the fall semester at Minnesota State University Moorhead I taught the topic of food to first year students by projecting images from the Peter Menzel and Faith D’Aluisio’s work, *Hungry planet: What the world eats*. They photographed what an average family consumes in a week around the world. The photographs are provocative ways to raise your students’ awareness of how environment and culture affect the diets of the people in different countries. I ended on the photograph of what a family in a refugee camp in Darfur eats in a week. It was a shocking contrast to what the families in Texas, Chicago, Japan, and France eat. I then told them about Heifer International and invited them to contribute anonymously to combat hunger. We were able to raise about \$20, enough to send a family in Latin America a hive of honeybees. After finals were over, I received this e-mail message from one of my students. “I was extremely inspired by our class being able to send honeybees through Heifer International! . . . so I sent a flock of chicks to a family through Heifer’s website! I love that it’s a sustainable way to contribute and wanted to thank you for the inspiration to be a world citizen, it’s contagious!” Competency is another area where Minnesota language educators can lead. You can purchase a copy of *Words and actions: Teaching language through the lens of social justice* at [www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org).



~ Mary Thron

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). (2014). *Reaching global competence*. Retrieved from <http://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/GlobalCompetencePositionStatement0814.pdf>.

Glynn, C., Wesely, P. & Wassell, B. (2014) *Words and actions: Teaching language through the lens of social justice*. Alexandria, Virginia: ACTFL.

Menzel, P. & D’Aluisio, F. (2005). *Hungry planet: What the world eats*. Napa, California: Material World Press.

Nieto, S. (2010). *Language, culture, and teaching: Critical perspectives*. New York: Routledge.



## **MCTLC Pulse Interview Featuring Secretary, Grant Boulanger**



### **What is your favorite hobby?**

I love to make functional pottery. It's a bit more than a hobby, actually, but it's what I do to keep me centered and express myself. I love exploring the convergence of language acquisition and wood-fired ceramic art.

### **If you could learn one language besides the one you teach, which would it be and why?**

Euskara. Basque. My first Spanish speaking friends were from Basque Country and I still maintain dear friendships with many of them. It's a beautiful language and they are a beautiful people. I'm intrigued by their cultural and linguistic history.

### **If you had to select another country to live in, which one would you choose and why?**

I might choose Korea or Japan. I have an interest in both languages. But, more than that, I'm intrigued by the traditions of ceramic art present in both countries. The Japanese concept of *wabi-sabi* and the Korean concept of the peasant potter both appeal to my sense of art and my desire to simplify life.

### **What is one of your talents/skills most people do not know about you?**

People who know me well know that I make, sell and exhibit my pottery. That is my most developed talent or skill, in addition to teaching. I'm also pretty handy and enjoy renovating, repairing, building around the house.

### **How many years have you been studying another language?**

I began learning Spanish at 14. So, I guess that makes it 26 years now. Wow. That's a really long time. I lived in Germany when I was 22 or so, but my German's quite rusty nowadays.

### **What is your favorite music from around the world and why?**

When I'm lesson planning or creating presentations for trainings, I love to shuffle my "World" music genre. It includes music from all over the world that transcends other genres. Silvio Rodríguez, Manu Chao, Ali Farka Toure, Ayub Ogada, Baaba Maal and more. On lazy Sunday mornings it's Folk/Americana. And when I'm making pots in my studio I almost always listen to the Blues.

### **Question of the month**

How do you teach social justice in your world language classes? Share your ideas today in a virtual conversation at the MCTLC Teacher's Café on Facebook!



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## **Reflections on the 2015 Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages**

It is truly difficult to summarize a reflection on the Central States Conference. It was a wonderful, supportive gathering of language and culture educators from around the country. The keynote by Dr. Tove I. Dahl was very inspirational and truly did embody the theme of "*Learn Languages, Explore Cultures, Transform Lives.*" The transformational aspect came through loud and clear in the address and permeated in many of the sessions I was able to attend. Personally, I found it very fruitful in reaffirming tried and true practices along with new and innovative approaches to language and culture instruction. Also, the opportunity to network with fellow educators, both in and outside of the sessions, was noted by many in attendance to be one of the most beneficial that the Conference had to offer, and cannot be underestimated. In addition, there was a plethora of sessions which addressed advocacy and attendees came away with new strategies for advocating for language and culture instruction at all levels.

By all accounts (including the buzz on social media) the Conference was an overwhelming success. As attendees, we parted ways at the end of the three days feeling energized, empowered, and equipped with new tools with which to hone our craft, and new and renewed friendships that will keep us in touch throughout the year as we put into practice what we learned. We looked forward to sharing what we had learned with our colleagues in our home states and left hungry for more! A big thank you to all those who attended, as it is *you* who make and shape the Conference! With that said, we are all looking forward already to next year's Conference entitled "*Fostering Connections, Empowering Communities, Celebrating the World*" to be held in downtown Columbus, Ohio from March 10<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup>.

~ Martin Pflug

### **Upcoming events for language educators**

- ❖ **Confucius Institute : Summer Seminar, June 16<sup>th</sup> – August 20<sup>th</sup>. Summer Camps, July 6<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>, 2015.** For more information about both events go to <http://confucius.umn.edu/>.
- ❖ **MN-AATF : AATF Annual Convention, July 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>, 2015,** in Sagueny, Canada. Find more information at <http://www.frenchteachers.org/convention/>.
- ❖ **AATSP : 97<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Denver, Colorado, July 17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015,** in Denver, Colorado. **June 10<sup>th</sup>** is the deadline for online registration. Find more information and register at <http://www.aatsp.org/>.
- ❖ **MCTLC : Award nominations are due by June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015** for the MCTLC Fall Conference. Requirements are found at [www.mctlc.org/awards](http://www.mctlc.org/awards). Nominate a colleague, student, or organization today! Send recommendations letters and applications to [awards@mctlc.org](mailto:awards@mctlc.org). **Check out page four of the newsletter for the list of award categories!**

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Recognize an amazing world language student, educator, or supporter of world languages on Friday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015, at the MCTLC Fall Conference at Earle Brown Heritage Center in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota

### 2015 MCTLC AWARD CATEGORIES

**Future Language Educator Award** – Recognition of pre-service language teachers who become student members and attend the MCTLC Fall Conference in October at no cost who in return agree to serve as presiders of two to three sessions.

**Outstanding Student Teacher Award** – Acknowledgment of outstanding service and extraordinary potential in providing excellent instruction in the world language classroom by a student teacher of a world language in Minnesota.

**Student Service Award** – Recognition of a significant contribution to others by voluntarily using ESL or second-language skills.

**First-Time Attendee Scholarship** – Five world language teachers will be awarded free conference registration as first-time attendees.

**Early Career Award** – Acknowledgement of outstanding promise in providing excellence in instruction in the world language classroom by a first-year language teacher in Minnesota.

**Minnesota Teacher of the Year** – Represents the first step for the Teacher of the Year Award at the national level as awarded by ACTFL (American Council of Teachers of Languages and Cultures).

**Emma Birkmaier Award for Outstanding Language Educator** – Acknowledgement of outstanding service and support for world languages and cultures by someone within the language teaching profession.

**Pro Lingua Award** – Appreciation of outstanding service to and support of education in world languages and cultures by a person or Minnesota organization/business that is **not** a world language educator.

**Percy Fearing Award for Language Curriculum Development** – Recognition of excellence in the creative development of instructional materials for teaching world languages and cultures by a classroom teacher in Minnesota.

**Professional Service Award** – Acknowledgement of service to students and the profession through provision of a quality language program by a language educator retired from a school in Minnesota.

**Certification of Recognition** – Recognition of a significant contribution to students and/or the profession by a language educator in Minnesota.

**Department of Excellence** – Acknowledgement of one-hundred percent participation of a language department in MCTLC.

**STAR Award** – Credit of professionalism representing continued professional development in learning outside the classroom, striving to excel, and showing leadership in professional organizations in the areas of Study, Travel, Achievement, and Recognition.

**ISE Language Matters Award** – An Intercultural Student Experiences (ISE) sponsored award of a \$250 grant for a high school language teacher.



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For ads, comments, and corrections to the newsletter, contact Lisa Perez at [editor@mctlc.org](mailto:editor@mctlc.org).