

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



Highlights from #MCTLC19

The MCTLC Conference was off the charts this year! We had the highest attendance ever, top notch speakers and keynote, a fantastic new venue – we were even trending on Twitter at one point. With several nationally-recognized presenters, featured conference strands such as heritage language teaching and elementary language learning, MCTLC is quickly becoming a destination conference. *See page 5* to read more and learn some of the stats behind our impressive 2019 MCTLC conference.

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We asked and you answered. 85% of MCTLC members prefer the digital newsletter. Our goal is to keep you as up-to-date as possible on what is happening locally and nationally in the realm of second language teaching. Using the digital format allows us to communicate with you and update you as quickly and efficiently as we can. Plus with more interviews than ever before featuring guests worth knowing, we are glad that so many of you agree that our new digital newsletter is worth taking up room in your inbox...and hopefully reading!

Congratulations to our 2019 Award Winners!



MN Teacher of the Year, Pang Yang



Pro Lingua Award, accepted on behalf of MNEEP



Emma Birkmaier Award, accepted on behalf of
Cassandra Glynn



Outstanding Student Teacher, Paulino Brener

Congratulations to our 2019 Award Winners!



Department of Excellence, accepted on behalf of Hastings High School



Xperitas Language Matters Award, Pearl Cheng



While they did not win an official award, we are so grateful to all of our student presidents at #MCTLCC19.

Thank you to ALL who helped make #MCTLCC19 an exceptional conference!

An interview with Jennifer Fleener

Jennifer Fleener was MCTLC's big winner! She won not just one of our prizes, but two (both the travel stipend and the CSCTFL scholarship)! Her enthusiasm and positivity are infectious. Keep reading to learn more about this fun-loving Spanish teacher from WI!

Heather Cholat - Editor, MCTLC



Heather Cholat (HC): *Tell us about yourself. How far did you have to travel to attend MCTLC?*

Jennifer Fleener (JF): I live in Cottage Grove, WI (near Madison, WI) and teach in a small rural high school, Cambridge High School. It's my 16th year teaching HS Spanish (mainly Spanish 2-AP). I traveled about 4.5 hours to attend MCTLC.

HC: *Was this your first time at MCTLC? Will you be returning?*

JF: This was my first time attending MCTLC and if I have a chance to attend again I certainly will. I really enjoyed learning more about proficiency assessments in second language acquisition which is something we have not seen a lot of here in Wisconsin. I told my principal about an awesome conference for proficiency-based instruction and he let me attend. I was supposed to attend our multi-district in-service in Wisconsin but I needed something to help me understand the new national standards and wanted to see what other schools in surrounding states were doing with updated ACTFL proficiency standards.

HC: *Have you ever won anything before?*

JF: Nothing big like this! We sometimes do little raffle giveaways at my school during staff meetings and I've maybe only won twice in six years!

HC: *Do you share your infectious enthusiasm with your students, too, or is it just at language conferences?*

JF: I am a very enthusiastic person in all areas. It is just my nature. My AP students say my enthusiasm is contagious and they don't realize they are performing at high levels because of the amount of energy from both myself and the kids. We tell jokes and dance. With my enthusiasm comes a love and passion for learning languages, too.

Did you go out and buy a lottery ticket after your MCTLC winning streak?!

HC: I actually did (!), but struck out. Thank you so much for everything! My heart is very full and my ambition to strive to be a better educator is that much stronger because of professional opportunities such as MCTLC and CSCTFL. I have met some awesome people over the years and it is amazing to continue to grow with them.



THANKYOU

again to our three travel stipend sponsors for #MCLTC19



Highlights from MCTLC19

The MCTLC Conference 2019 raised the bar. With over 430 conference attendees, we achieved our highest attendance rate in over 10 years. With our robust attendance and room needs to host our many speakers, we simply outgrew our former conference space.

The Crowne Plaza in Plymouth met our new needs well and we have gotten some constructive feedback from attendees on how to tweak some aspects of the conference to make MCTLC 2020 even better. Across the board, though, we had very positive, enthusiastic feedback from all of you concerning the facilities, location, keynote, speakers, sessions, food, workshops and overall experience (100% of you rated it acceptable or above).



Standing ovation for MN Teacher of the Year, Pang Yang, in the Regency Room at our new location.



La Maestra Loca enjoyed photo-bombing happy #MCTLC19 attendees



We received especially rave reviews about the snacks provided.

Big thanks to Avant Assessment for sponsoring the networking reception on Friday evening! It was great to catch up with each other and make new acquaintances all while enjoying drinks and appetizers. Let's continue the tradition next year! #language teachers are awesome

Continue to spread the word and invite those in your department to attend #MCTLC20 so that more language professionals get in on the excitement of MCTLC 2020!

An interview with Martina Bex

We caught up with 2019 Keynote speaker, Martine Bex to talk about her experience at MCTLC, her thoughts on story-telling vs story-asking, and how to stay relevant amidst constantly changing student interests.

Heather Cholat - Editor, MCTLC



Heather Cholat **(HC)**: *Tell me about your experience at the MCTLC conference? How did everything go?*

Martina Bex **(MB)**: Wow, where to begin?! I had a wonderful experience at MCTLC. I got to attend the new teacher mentor dinner. I was so impressed with that whole concept of really supporting new teachers and focusing on how to best welcome them and connect them with others in the profession. Anchorage School District's new teacher mentor program made a huge impact on my teaching career, and so I was really glad to see that you are doing this! I also enjoyed meeting and chatting with Maureen Peltier (2018 MN Teacher of the Year, 2019 Central States' Teacher of the Year and one of 5 finalists for the ACTFL teacher of the year). Maureen is amazing. And I just really enjoyed learning more about MCTLC and getting to be part of the fantastic things that are happening with your organization: the redesign of the conference, your clear vision for the future, meaningful awards, and coherency across all aspects of the conference.

HC: *In one of your workshops, you demonstrated a scaffolded story-telling experience about the alligator in the Humboldt Park lake in Chicago. I wonder how you view the idea of story-telling versus story-asking. In the CI community story-asking has gotten a lot of attention. But story-telling, less so.*

MB: I truly think there is a place for both story-telling and story-asking in our language classes. When I first got rid of textbooks in my classes, I really embraced story-asking. It was through co-created stories (TPRS, One Word Images, etc.) that I created my most strong and lasting memories with students. So, story-asking will always have a place in my curriculum. In fact, this December, The Comprehensible Classroom has been running a concentrated campaign to encourage and support teachers to use story-asking. You can find some of the resources we have shared by searching #storiesconnect on Facebook and Instagram. After a few months of doing only story-asking, however, I realized that, for me, something was missing. I wanted to change the rigor and create connections to the real world, too. This is when I began to also use story-telling to talk about current events and cultural products, practices, and perspectives. So for me it's not a question of either or, but striking a balance between story-asking and story-telling and finding the right mix of the two that works for you and your students.

HC: *How do you stay relevant and connected to the high school students of today? How do you know that the stories and materials that you produced five years ago are still connecting with students now?*

MB: I developed what is now the SOMOS Curriculum while I was in the classroom with my students, and so it was focused on what my students were interested in and things that they could make connections to. Now that I am no longer in the classroom, I rely on feedback and requests from teachers using my materials to modify, expand, and differentiate the materials to meet the ever-changing needs of their diverse students and teaching contexts. For example, we designed a whole set of materials about VSCO girls (available on the blog and on Garbanzo) in Spanish. Talking about trends is so powerful because it maximizes the opportunity for true engagement on Schlechy's scale; when students are paying attention because they want to, not because they have to.

HC: *More than anything, what do you hope that those who attended your workshops and listened to your keynote will remember? What's the biggest take away?*

MB:

Changes in instruction begin with mindset shifts. Instead of beginning your lesson planning by thinking about curriculum, think first about connection. How can we connect to our students, connect them with each other, and connect them to the world, their passions, and their purposes? A focus on connection is an equitable approach to planning and instruction because your eyes are always on the students in front of you—ALL the students in front of you. And connection is only possible when students understand what is happening in class, so to connect, you have to make content comprehensible. If we always have connection at the forefront of our minds, we are on the right path. We can sometimes get so focused on getting through the lesson or the unit that we forget the bigger picture of what's really important. Stop and connect more instead of just plowing through the material. Remember that every moment is an opportunity for real connection.

Professional Resources

**We Teach Languages**

Episode 121:
Collaborating to Build a
Content-based
Language Program, Part I

Most of our students start at the third semester level. We're teaching them academic language. We're doing textual analysis, analyzing data, looking at articles...,and we're doing the functions that they're going to be doing in upper levels with other texts, but we're just introducing them.

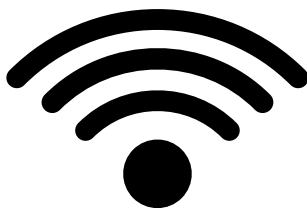
-Dr. Gwen Barnes-Karol




We Teach Languages recently featured two Minnesota language educators - Dr. Gwen Barnes-Karol and Dr. Maggie Broner from St. Olaf College. Click the images to listen to the podcasts about St. Olaf's content-based language program!

 Listen on
Apple Podcasts

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or online

**We Teach Languages**

Episode 122:
Collaborating to Build a
Content-based
Language Program, Part II

You can do it. You can break free from that very narrow focus [that says], "grammar is what we do." There are ways of being able to bring those functions that we teach at the major level down to the language sequence.

-Dr. Maggie Broner



Now Hiring

If you or someone you know is looking for a language teaching position, please consider applying for these positions. **Visit our website** to see most recent job openings in language teaching.



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