



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



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What's new at #MCTLC19?

The MCTLC Conference is for teachers from all over Minnesota and the surrounding areas. Yet for some educators and school districts, finding the funds to cover costs to attend this unique professional development opportunity is a barrier. This is why we are so grateful to the 3 organizations who are sponsoring three (3) \$250 stipends for **conference attendees who travel 100 miles or more to attend our 2019 conference**. Let's give it up for The Pulsera Project, Teatro del Pueblo and Pearson for widening the access and attainability to attend MCTLC.

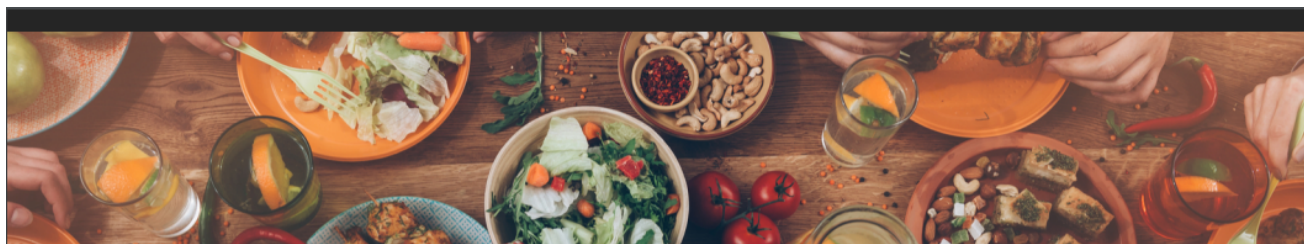
Winners will be chosen by a random drawing of names. Click [here](#) to enter the drawing. Read more about our travel stipend sponsors on page 5.



NEW this year - MCTLC Networking Reception on **Friday, Oct. 25 from 4-6pm** sponsored by **Avant Assessment** After your full day of learning, come kick back and enjoy a complimentary drink with fellow attendees and exhibitors! It will be a great time to process all of the great new ideas, compare notes and learn more about how the exhibitors' services and goods may complement your inspired teaching plans. Cheers to a fantastic school year!



MCTLC and Xperitas Invite You:



MCTLC
International Council on the Teaching of Languages and Cultures

&

Xperitas
Living. Global. Learning.

PRESENT

.....

Early Career Teacher Dinner

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Join us for complimentary dinner, mentor connection, and short program

THURSDAY October 24 | 6:30 pm

Plymouth Crowne Plaza | Copenhagen Room

3131 Campus Drive, Plymouth

RSVP AT mctlc.org/Conference_19 or scan here ----->



SCAN ME

An interview with Valerie Shull

Valerie Shull is an elementary/middle school Spanish teacher dynamo. We are thrilled that she will be joining us at our upcoming MCTLC conference. Valerie is a national presenter and her workshop sessions on Friday morning and afternoon as well as breakout session on Saturday morning are not to be missed.



Heather Cholat - Editor, MCTLC

Heather Cholat (HC): *I've read online that over your twenty years at Rogers Park Montessori, you have taught ages 6-14. What age do you currently teach?*

Valerie Shull (VS): I currently teach grades 4-8, after finally splitting our program a few years ago from one person to two person team.

HC: *What methodology do you use?*

VS: I feel strongly that not one size fits all. I work in a Montessori school, so independence, choice, respecting the age of the child strongly guide my work. I utilize lots of forms of comprehensible input: songs, stories, free and voluntary reading, movie talk as well as techniques like See, Think, Wonder and content driven thematic units.

HC: *How has your teaching practice evolved over the years?*

VS: The switch to proficiency driven learning was the game changer. When I first started, I taught mostly the way I was taught in school--memorization, explicit instruction, lots of long vocabulary lists. But, once I got my head around how the children could acquire and develop language proficiency for use, the fun really began. Now we talk, talk and talk some more--about anything and everything and the focus is 100% on what the children can do with the language, over correcting mistakes.

HC: *You have a busy presenting schedule. How do you juggle presenting with your teaching and school responsibilities?*

VS: It really is a balancing act. This year for example, I am only coming to MCTLC--and like I do with the children--just focus on what I can do. I teach 7 classes per day, everyday--it's a rigorous schedule--like so many elementary teachers have, so I have to be intentional about where and how I'm spending time. I try to focus what I present on so I can bring together what I'm working on in my classroom to professional learning. One of the best activities I've done is be a part of the #earlylang chat team---you can't do better than PD in your pajamas--either moderating or participating!

HC: *How often do your students take language class?*

VS: Our program has evolved over the years and we try to balance minimizing classroom disruption and the need for language contact time over a child's journey at our school. So...kindergarten has class once a week for 30 minutes. Grades 1-3 have two 25 minute classes plus a community meeting a la Responsive Classroom at the start of their day, in their homeroom once per week. Grades 4-6 have class three times per week for 30 minutes and middle school has class for forty five minutes per day, four days per week.

HC: *How many students do you have in any given group?*

VS: This is really determined heavily by enrollment, but we try very hard to stay between 15-18 children in a class to maximize our time together.

HC: *Would you share a couple of successful activities?*

VS: Any time there's high interest, it's successful. So, I try to get to know my students. But, the low-no prep activities that work at multiple levels: persona especial (a la Bryce Hedstrom), picture slide shows where partners list or describe, maybe ask a question, or invent a story about the picture--it puts most of the work on the children, which is what I think it should be. I've put several children's books into a Power Point slide show, and use it for input, for discussions, for asking questions. Those have worked for multiple age levels.

HC: *What is your experience with students that have language differences? Dyslexia?*

VS: I have many students with learning differences, including Dyslexia. What I've found is that by using approaches like universal design and building in as much differentiation as possible (lots of visual support, offering both written and oral directions, high repetition, more processing time) my regular classroom practices meet most of the accommodations and recommendations by the specialists that work with my students. For activities like FVR--My students who have Dyslexia have options--they can read the books, magazines, they can use audio versions of books (including read aloud versions on Youtube) and accessing tools like Bookshare--which has a pretty decent Spanish language collection--although I would love to get more TPRS novels on there for them.

HC: *How do you incorporate students with mobility challenges in activities that require movement?*

VS: For movement, I make sure children can comfortably be a part of the circle and that when it comes time to partner up, there is always a mechanism for kids to come to them, so they are included in class activities. Also, I think being mindful of who's in the room is important for planning---I try to plan class experiences where everyone can feel a sense of belonging and participate.

HC: *What is one of your all-time favorite songs? Favorite poems? Favorite stories?*

VS: That's so hard to answer! Almost all of my age groups (including kinder) really love *El mismo sol* by Alvaro Soler, and my older kids cannot get enough of Gente de Zona's *La Gozadera*. I love using *Robo en la noche* to get ready for our trip to Costa Rica with the 8th graders and the children's books *Malala- una niña valiente*, *El Biblioburro* and *Wangari y los árboles de paz* are great stories and allow me to bring in multiple perspectives for younger students.

HC: *What is your target percentage ratio of Spanish/English in the classroom? What are your strategies for achieving it?*

VS: I always aim for 90% or more target language. A few things I do to get there: provide explicitly the language the children will need to use the TL in the class--I've listened and observed to when they break down and use English, taken note, and compiled a transactional word/phrase list that's posted in the room. I also just directly ask the children what they think they need to know to navigate the classroom using the TL and I teach it to them (things like question words/phrases, rejoinders and high frequency language chunks). I also try to remember to frame tasks and questions for responses that I know the children are able to give so that they can stay in the TL. I think it's also important to remember in elementary that 90%+ is aspirational with some groups. Some groups of children might require us to build up to that level, whereas others take to it very quickly. 90% target language doesn't always means it's only me or the children talking. It's also the materials in the room. And so, I've tried to build a language rich environment.

HC: *Tell us more about your school's annual travel/homestay program to Costa Rica. Do you work with an in-country provider? How did you go about setting it up originally? What percentage of 8th graders participate?*

VS: Our 8th grade Costa trip is a wonderful opportunity for the kids to experience real world use Spanish in a more sustained way and have a rich cultural experience--the kids stay with Costa Rican families and we host middle schoolers from a school in San Jose at our school in Chicago, so the kids all get to see each other for a reunion of sorts while we're there. It all started when I and our head of school were looking for a travel experience that would bring together language, culture and a culmination of the students' Montessori studies of the natural world--Costa Rica was a perfect choice for us. I've developed a wonderful relationship with our Costa Rican partners that has grown into a deeper friendship and collaboration which benefits the kids, too. Since 2010, the vast majority of our students have participated in the trip, and it's open to all of them.

HC: *Since you have been in the field of elementary language teaching, how has it changed over the years? What is the trend and what does the future look like for 2nd language learning in the US for young learners?*

VS: I think there are a lot more professional development opportunities for teachers of elementary aged children now. When I started, I felt like so many conference sessions were geared toward high school age learners, and I would just adapt for the ages I taught. The advent of online forums like #earlylang chat, Facebook groups, and other social media have made it so much easier for teachers to connect and learn from one another, too. I think (and hope) we'll continue to see more programs for children--especially dual language. In Chicago, we only have one dual language school and it is a hot ticket, with parents from all over trying to get their kids in to it.

Thanks so much for your time and valuable insights, Valerie. We can't wait to learn more when we see you next week in Minnesota!

THANKYOU to our three travel stipend sponsors for #MCLTC19



The Pulsera Project: through the sale of colorful hand-woven bracelets "pulseras," this non profit organization educated, empowers and connects Central American artists with U.S. students



Teatro del Pueblo: this performing arts theatre in St. Paul promotes Latinx culture through the creation and presentation of performing arts



Pearson: education publishing and assessment company

MCTLC INVITES TEACHER LEADER VOLUNTEERS

JOIN OUR TEAM!

Our mission is to "advance the teaching of languages and cultures in Minnesota." Most importantly, we are a fun organization with which to network. Please consider sharing your time and talents in one of the following roles as a teacher leader:

OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- Vice President & Awards Chair
The first year of a 4-year leadership term that evolves into President-elect, President, and Past President, attends board meetings
- St. Paul Regional Representative
- Southwest Metro Regional Rep
- Southeast Metro Regional Rep
Represents language teachers from their area, attends board meetings, serves on special tasks force(s)
- Exhibits Chair
- Historian