



### Vision:

NMTESOL envisions bringing together and supporting English language educators throughout New Mexico, strengthening instruction for all English language learners at all levels, and providing leadership and advocacy for both.

### Mission:

The mission of NMTESOL is to:

- promote networking and collaboration among NMTESOL members and colleagues
- provide professional development opportunities for English language teachers, tutors, and administrators
- represent our teaching and learning community to policy makers and the general public

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### Contributions Welcome

If you or somebody you know would like to contribute an article to the newsletter, you can contact the editor at the following address.

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### What is your background in TESOL?

I actually got into the field by total chance. As an aspiring pianist, I developed tendinitis in my forearms while playing in a Salsa band and had to quit temporarily. With the time I was using to practice freed up, I quickly became antsy. Luckily, a good friend of mine mentioned *Casa de las Comunidades*, a Mexican community center in the SE heights of Albuquerque, where I could possibly volunteer. I went to see if I could help out and, the next thing I knew, I had become the ESL coordinator and main teacher for the organization. I have now been volunteering there for two and a half years developing a multi-level curriculum for ESL and literacy.

### If you were having the “perfect” ESL lesson and we walked into your classroom, what would we see?

You would see my students having fun rehearsing their English through a variety of activities that address real problems they face outside the classroom.

### I understand that you have studied other languages. How do you think learning other languages makes you a better teacher?

Language learning has been central to my formation as a teacher. As a Spanish and Portuguese student, I am constantly finding ways to solve my own linguistic problems. By doing this, my students can see me as a role model for their own language learning experience.

It is also my goal to become certified as an English-Spanish court interpreter. Court interpreting seems like the ultimate cognitive-linguistic performance and I feel that if I can attain the skills involved in this line of work, I can become an excellent language teacher, among other things.

### Why NMTESOL?

I love learning and getting better at what I do. Surrounding myself with talented hardworking professionals in my field seems to be a great way to do this. Moreover, as the NMTESOL Newsletter Editor, my job is to listen to and report the best ideas in our TESOL community. Being in this position has already done great things for me, and I am excited for what's to come.

**Cruise on down to Cruces** for the November 4-5, 2011 NMTESOL-NMAEA Conference collaboration at the Doña Ana Community College for some cool conversations about being creative in the classroom! The registration fee will be \$75 including membership to one of the two organizations. Presenters will have a discounted registration fee of \$25. If you would like to present, you can go to <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/56C3N5G> to submit your proposal. Go to [www.nmaea.net](http://www.nmaea.net) for further information.

We hope to see you there!



# Active and Autonomous Learning: Opening a Dialog Within the NMTESOL Community

Looking back to all the excellent lessons I've had in my life, one piece of advice stands out above all others as central to my general success. "In college and in life," a family friend once told me, "you have to be your own best teacher." This has proven to be true time and again, to the point that autonomous learning has become a personal passion and skill that I am constantly trying to perfect. But when giving my own lessons as an ESL teacher, I often feel that my students lack the passion and training for autonomous learning that has become so engrained in my world view. Upon sharing this feeling with fellow NMTESOL board members and teachers, it has become clear to me that I am not alone.

A healthy student teacher relationship can be broken down to a balanced process of scaffolding and active learning. The process can manifest itself in many different learning contexts (classroom learning, private lessons, peer learning, autonomous learning, etc.). In the case of the autonomous learner, the scaffolder and the active learner are the same person involved in a multi-step process (i.e. the student organizes the material they wish to learn, and then applies a learning strategy chosen to address the problems presented by the material). In a classroom context with a teacher and students, the roles of scaffolder and active learner are distributed.

In this edition of the newsletter, we would like to open a dialog with our newsletter readers specifically about the processes of active and autonomous learning and how we as teachers can help our students become very competent in both.

To start the dialog, I ask our NMTESOL members "*what specific activities do you do in your class to help your students become competent in these two processes?*" I am not looking for theoretical answers, but rather things that you have put repeatedly into practice and found to be very helpful. Answers submitted that pertain to this topic will be published in following editions of the newsletter under the heading, *Making Active and Autonomous Learners: How we help our students help themselves*.

We hope that this topic generates a conversation that can help all of us in NMTESOL to have more productive relationships with our students. It should envision the very dreams we have for our students' success in all of their future learning. But above all, the topic should address the reality that good teachers need good students, and by helping our students become better learners, maybe they can help us become better teachers.

Please send in your thoughts.

