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## Spring 2011

## Spotlight on Nancy McKeand: NMTESOL Web Coordinator

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#### **What is your background in TESOL?**

I have an MA in TESOL from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. I have been teaching in the

field basically since 1980 when I went to El Salvador to teach. Since then I have taught in a number of countries as well as in the US. I have worked with pre-schoolers through adults.

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

I hope you would see the students totally engaged in whatever we were doing -- discussing a reading, working on a paper or writing on our blogs. No two days are ever the same in my class!

#### **I understand that you have studied other languages, how do you think learning other languages makes you a better teacher?**

While I have never formally studied Spanish, I can speak, read and write it fluently because I lived for many years in different Spanish-speaking countries. I believe having struggled to learn another language has given me a much better understanding of the challenges my students face. Also, I lived in China for a year and never learned more than a few words of the language. My experiences there really helped me appreciate how difficult it is for my Chinese students to learn English!

#### **Why NMTESOL?**

It is a great opportunity for us to learn from each other and to further develop as professionals. For those of us who do not have a lot of colleagues in our own communities, NMTESOL fills a very important need. I am proud to be part of the organization.

# April 2nd Conference a Success!

The April 2nd NMTESOL conference at CNM was a great success. The diverse array of presentation topics, 36 participants, and enough bagels cream-cheese and coffee for everybody, all combined to make for an energetic and enjoyable discussion on how to do TESOL better. The presentations covered second-language literacy, classroom learning stations, dialogue journals, and a new assessment system from McGraw-Hill.

Elma N. Pineda-Raney started off the conference with a presentation on the TABE Complete Language Assessment System-English (or TABE CLAS-E) from CTB McGraw-Hill. The workshop gave the participants a brief but comprehensive introduction to the new assessment system and the fully planned curriculum that comes with it. After watching a video showing the system in action, Elma walked the participants through a brief tutorial for using the system to teach and test all four core language skills: reading, listening, writing, and speaking.

Designed to address the foremost benchmarks in ESL and skills that will be relevant to the lives of our ESL students, the program is made to be easily administered by any educator with a “general knowledge of measurement principles”. In addition to having clear instructions for its implementation, the program comes with multimedia resources, for example, prerecorded TPR instructions to make teaching the curriculum even easier. For more information on the TABE CLAS-E, go to [www.ctb.com/tabeclas-e](http://www.ctb.com/tabeclas-e).

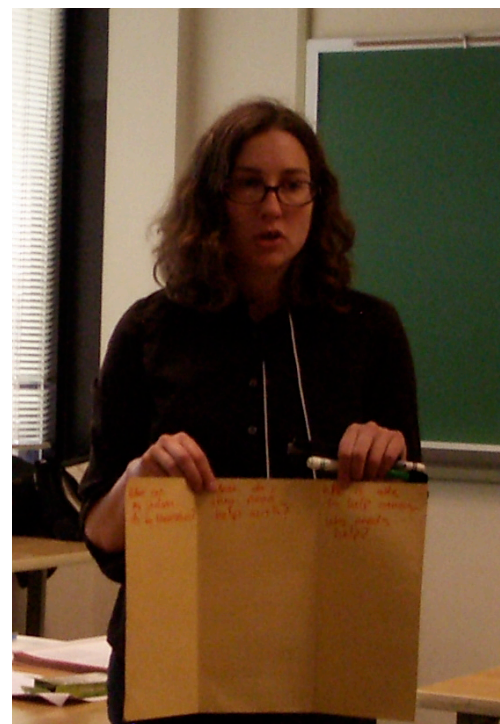
While Elma was presenting her assessment system, Valerie Sartor was in the next room proposing dialog journals as a way for teachers to interact with their students on an

individual and personal level. In this method, the teacher maintains a written and confidential correspondence with each of their students discussing topics chosen by the students. A key concept in the activity is that the students’ fluency increases greatly when they have a vested interest in whatever they are talking about. Most people would probably agree that it is easier to concentrate on and express passionately the things that we love. It is this human quality that makes dialog journals such an easily stimulating activity for both the student and the teacher.

In responding to the journals, the teacher not only gives personal responses to each student, but in the process provides a model for grammatical correctness. By getting to know each student individually, the teacher gets to know the whole class and can better plan class lessons based on the weaknesses the students have in common.

Valerie mentioned that in her classes the dialog journals are so popular that sometimes her students will ask her to read their journals even if they were not assigned for that day. The workshop was also very popular with the conference participants who took part in peer to peer dialog journals and peer-graded spontaneously written academic essays. Felicitas’s received the only A+ in the class for her piece on the Rail Runner. Congratulations Felicitas!

In addition to excellent ideas like Valerie’s on how teachers can better work individually with their students, the conference was also blessed to have Monique Stone’s workshop on class room learning stations. Although Monique works with 6th graders, the learning station activities can be used for all ages. The setup consists of the teacher preparing activity stations around the class room with each one emphasizing a particular language



Monique Stone explains her three important questions for pairing her 6th grade students well:

- Who needs a partner?
- Who wants to work with who?
- Who does each student like and dislike?

context or skill already covered in the class. It is advisable that the teacher chooses themes or skills that have already been covered in the curriculum when preparing each station. This way the students can have fun by improving on something that they have already learned, instead of struggling with new material. Using material already covered also makes the activity much more productive and manageable for the teacher.

Monique modeled the strategy by setting up several learning stations and dividing her participants into groups of two. Each group occupied a station until Monique would call ‘change’.

Monique explained that she doesn’t time

her students at each station. Instead, she uses her “teacher spidey-sense” while she walks between the students and calls for a station-change when she feels that they have progressed at that station.

The workshop included a money exchange station with fake money, a table with a picture dictionary for the students to reinforce and learn vocabulary and a double dictation station. The money section is great for teaching our students the importance of being able to distinguish between numbers like fifteen and fifty, sixteen and sixty, etc. Double dictation consists of one student reading out loud while their partner writes down what is being read. Any activity that can emphasize four different skills at the same time like this one (reading, pronunciation, comprehension, and writing) should be a part of every TESOL teacher’s repertoire.

Using one activity to build multiple skill-sets was also central to Amy C. Hazelrigg’s workshop on developing a metastrategy for learning to read in a second language. Many teachers when confronted with teaching reading in their TESOL classroom, are clueless beyond getting their students to read what they are interested in. The student is faced with many challenges

while learning to read in a second language. They might get stuck on part of a reading but lack the awareness to be able to identify exactly what is causing them problems. Other times, the student is so focused on the oral pronunciation of the words that focusing on the



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Amy C. Hazelrigg, Associate Professor of Reading/Literacy Education, ENMU  
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message of the text never becomes the center of their attention.

Amy’s workshop gave the teachers and their students the following strategies that can be used while tackling a text: visualizing, asking questions, identifying important ideas, inferring, synthesizing and making connections. Some of these skills are inherently harder to acquire than others and knowing when to use which one is also a very important part of the metastrategy. Teaching these reading strategies is accomplished through short text segments specially prepared for applying one of the strategies in isolation. For more information on this topic you can find works written by Amy herself, or by reading the book *Academic Literacy* by Pauline Gibbons.

Between the reading strategies, the student-teacher interaction in the dialog journals, the modern assessment system, and the class room learning stations, the April 2nd conference turned out to be a very well rounded dialog for making TESOL more practical. NMTESOL would like to thank all of the presenters for their time and energy. We would also like to thank our participants and members for making the event possible. We hope to see you again and in greater numbers for any and all of our upcoming events.

## SAVE THESE DATES!!!

On **Friday, November 4 and Saturday, November 5** NMTESOL and NMAEA will be putting on their second joint conference at **The Dona Ana Community College** in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Stay tuned for more information!



# Newspapers in the Classroom

by Ginny Sunderland

*“Newspapers in particular provide a window into the culture as well as providing authentic, useful, and practical information for the English language learner.”*

## 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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*“There are also many possibilities for role-play based on the ads: for example, interviewing for a job, buying a car, calling the newspaper to place an ad, and so forth.”*

Newspapers can provide an inexpensive and readily available resource for all sorts of classroom activities, which can be modified for every level of proficiency. Whether the teacher needs a short “filler” exercise or an entire lesson, newspapers, magazines, or any sort of print media can all be extremely useful.

Newspapers in particular provide a window into the culture as well as providing authentic, useful, and practical information for the English language learner. While immersed in this readily available resource, the students will find themselves participating in group discussions designed to help each other grasp and think critically about the things they are learning.

Beginning students can re-assemble cut-up panels of comic strips to help develop prediction, sequencing, and vocabulary. Easily identified words or letters already studied in class can be circled. Short articles are great for teaching intermediate students to develop skills for finding meanings for unfamiliar words by either using their dictionaries, or by discerning meaning from context. Photos without captions can be used as a springboard for students to compose verbal or

written pieces about what they see in the images. I have collected many unusual pictures to stimulate discussion including photos from the July 4<sup>th</sup> “Alien” festival in Roswell, a picture of a Sumo wrestler with a tiny dog on a leash, rowdy sports fans in costumes, and so forth—which make good “icebreakers” and have elicited some very creative commentaries! Comics can be read aloud and discussed. Did individual comics seem humorous—why or why not? Often humor doesn’t translate between cultures, which gives the learners an opportunity to provide their unique cultural perspectives. In short, the goal of many of these activities is promote conversation in a relaxed, non-threatening way.

Ads, both classified and commercial, are fantastic. Grocery and other retail ads offer great visual prompts, as well as relevant information on current sales and prices. However, the classified ads are especially good for class activities. Again, due to their short length, these can be used to introduce students to prediction as well as interpretation of abbreviated content. We usually assemble a list of commonly used abbreviations from each section of the want ads—students in past classes have been very engaged in

deciphering the ads after becoming familiar with the format. There are also many possibilities for role-play based on the ads: for example, interviewing for a job, buying a car, calling the newspaper to place an ad, and so forth.

Although this is a very brief overview of lessons based on newspapers, there is a wonderful resource online you can go to for more in-depth information on the topic. An extensive article by Dyne Macha entitled ESL, The Newspaper and the Classroom which is put out by the Albuquerque Publishing Company, Newspapers in Education, is truly a fabulous resource. The web site is [www.nieonline.com/austin/downloads/guides/2006esl\\_activities.pdf](http://www.nieonline.com/austin/downloads/guides/2006esl_activities.pdf). This article provides material for all sorts of lessons, broken down according to sections of the newspaper, classified ads, page one news, sports, etc. There are suggestions that would be helpful to the novice and experienced ESL teacher alike. Definitely worth a look!

*Ginny is a volunteer ESL tutor at CNM. She is currently working on a her second degree in Education at the College of Santa Fe with an emphasis in TESOL.*