

NMTESOL Newsletter

New Mexico Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
Email: nmtesol@gmail.com / Website: www.nmtesol.wordpress.com

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Spotlight on Penny Mortier: NMTESOL Secretary

by Joseph McPherson



Joseph: How did you end up in ESL?

Penny: One frigid Wisconsin winter I saw an ad for Spanish classes in Mexico. I'd always been interested in different cultures and my political activities had put me in touch with the Latino community, so I was intrigued with the chance to live with a Mexican family. After a month of intensive classes and experiencing the euphoria of meeting people from another country, I heard of a school that trained English language teachers. I returned to the U.S., sold my possessions, and went back to Mexico to teach. I was in love the minute my chalk hit the board!

I came back to the U.S. to teach migrant workers and refugees and ended up in New Mexico. I tutored at the Santa Fe Indian School and taught at a vocational school while getting my M.A. I've been teaching ESL, citizenship, and reading classes at CNM for years and can hardly believe I am getting paid to do this!

Joseph: What can NMTESOL do for New Mexico educators?

Penny: NMTESOL has begun providing a series of free or low-cost professional workshops on TESOL teaching strategies. These opportunities are important to new teachers who are getting their bearings as well as veteran teachers who need to keep upgrading skills and getting fresh ideas. Many of the English language instructors in New Mexico are part-timers like me who can't afford to go to the large professional conventions. The chance to network together provides invaluable support and growth opportunities for all of us. Having a state-wide organization allows us to stay informed about state issues and policies that affect our students and clients.

By working together we can increase public awareness of the needs of our students and make a concentrated effort to affect policy and allocations coming from the state legislature.

Joseph: What role might NMTESOL play in primary and secondary ESL education in New Mexico?

Penny: K-12 English language education is a critical factor in the lives of children whose first language is not English. So much is at stake in those early years when young people are developing their self images and exploring their abilities. We want to make sure that learners are not just tossed in to "sink or swim" but that there is a well-planned path to realizing their potential. Teachers need the proper training and credentials. We don't want English language learners being inappropriately placed and tagged as "slow learners" or dropping out because their needs are not being addressed. "No Child Left Behind" has not worked well for schools with large numbers of English language learners. NMTESOL can help reform efforts by bringing together educators to share experiences, enhance professional skills, and advocate for favorable policies in the schools. Through networking with teachers and support staff from college and adult education programs, K-12 teachers can learn about resources available for students after they leave school. Higher education teachers can learn about K-12 programs in which their students' children are enrolled.

ESL learning activities and strategies can be adapted for a variety levels, ages, and backgrounds. We all have a lot we can share with one another and NMTESOL can provide that opportunity.

Joseph has taught ESL and currently teaches 7th & 8th Grade Science at Truman Middle School (Albuquerque Public Schools).

A Tutor's Journey to Teaching Caregivers

By Bunny Guenther

I was confronted by the fact that (my students) no longer wanted to learn ESL fundamentals as I was teaching. In shock, I came up with the following questions:

"What do you want to learn?"

"How do you want me to teach you?"

- Bunny Guenther

I became a certified ESL Tutor in January 2008. Like all new



tutors, I anxiously awaited being "matched" with students, certainly never expecting my tutor-

ship to take place in my residential "backyard"!

I reside on the campus of the Center for Ageless Living in Los Lunas, and my six ESL students were employed as caregivers for 50 assisted-care residents, ages 70-102. The Director of the Center, Suzette Lindermuth, asked that I tutor Spanish-speaking staff experiencing difficulty communicating with English-speaking residents and staff.

We decided to meet once a week. I was extremely excited and totally motivated to move "full-speed-ahead." After meeting with the students, I learned that their level of English was much lower than I expected. We struggled for three long weeks until I "employed" a resident as a translator.

Translator/Volunteers

The translator, a former teacher, and I often planned lessons together. The interaction between us and the students created a comfortable flow. It was like a "dance" in language! I was continuing to introduce basic learning skills: *the ABC's and simple words and phrases*. I had also invited residents to come into the classroom to encourage or clarify a word or a phrase. All of this seemed to be working well until month number five.

My "Aha" Moment

It was then that I was confronted with the fact that they no longer wanted to learn ESL fundamentals as I was teaching. In shock, I came up with the following questions: *"What do you want to learn?"* and *"How do you want me to teach you?"*

The response was overwhelming and I knew we were "on to something BIG". Their answers to my questions I heard loud and clear. They wanted to learn *conversational skills relating only to their positions as caregivers*. The need for them to do a better job, have less fear of being fired, and not be ashamed around residents and co-workers was paramount to them. I heard new goals and motivation. Most importantly, the students had taken charge of their ESL program!

The Program

"Shelving" most of my formal training, I designed and wrote a new **ESL Program for Caregivers**, still maintaining the overall classroom structure with presentation, white-board instruction, and translation. Each student was given a personal notebook in which they could copy information from the board and take notes. It was a challenge for the students to begin writing, forming words and sentences.

Activities/Materials

Eventually, I learned how to integrate the following:

Picture Flash Cards

Photos were cut from health-care magazines of items used during the work-day: wheelchairs, bedpans, walkers, bed and bath linen, clothing, toiletries, cosmetics, food, beverages, and items found in living quarters. These pictures were

pasted on large index cards.

Roleplays

Students acted out role-plays using telephones to practice making professional calls and taking clear messages. We created a variety of scenarios involving family members, friends of residents, doctors, nurses, EMT's, nice people, mean and angry people, and yes the "dreaded BOSS".

Word Flash Cards

We graduated to using word flash-cards based on each letter of the alphabet. We worked on four to six new words per class session. The words were written on the board and the entire class would define and discuss the words in both languages. The last step would be to use the new words in sentences and then write them in their notebooks.

Computer Training

None of the students had used a keyboard. So laptops were brought in for hands-on demonstrations.

My Own Backyard

After a year, the students had changed schedules or moved on to other projects. I still see some of them from time-to-time. It is gratifying to see their increased confidence in speaking English. They continue to improve! And I learned that all the materials I needed were "in my own backyard!"

For caregiver vocabulary visit: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/vocabulary/>

Bunny is a Volunteer ESL Tutor for the Valencia Literacy Council in Los Lunas.

Do you want to join NMTESOL?

Yearly membership dues are:

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\$20.00 regular

Your contributions allow us to continue to:

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- Offer webcasts
- Provide our newsletter
- And grow!

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Ask Rae! “What are some tips for teaching comparatives & superlatives?”

by Rae Nichols

Comparatives are used to compare two people, things, actions, or ideas. As a rule of thumb, we know that short adjectives of *one* and sometimes *two syllables* require only the addition of ‘**er**’ and the word ‘**than**’ to create the **comparison**.

- I am older than my sister.
- My father is taller than my mother.

Superlatives are used to talk about the best or the worst of people, things, actions, or ideas. To form the **superlative**, the letters ‘**est**’ are added to the adjective, which is preceded by the word, ‘**the**’.

- I am the oldest boy in my class.
- My father is the tallest one in our family.

However, if an adjective has *more than two syllables* the **comparative** is made by preceding it with the word **more**.

- The book is more expensive than the pen.
- The sofa is more comfortable than the chair.

If an adjective has *more than two syllables* the **superlative** is made by preceding it with the word **most**.

- Anne is the most beautiful girl in school.
- My birthday is the most important day of the year.

Of course, there are always exceptions in English, such as:

- good/better/best
- bad/worse/worst

Activity Tip: Send students in pairs on a scavenger hunt around the school with a list of questions such as:
1. Which is wider, the bathroom door or the library door? 2. Who is taller, Maria or Lee? 3. Who has the biggest shoe size?

The possibilities are endless!

Have a good day! Rae

Send your questions to:
rrnichols28@msn.com



Joining the International TESOL Community

by Catherine N.H. Lewis

On behalf of NMTESOL, I attended several affiliate meetings, workshops, and social gatherings at the recent TESOL Annual Convention in Denver. At each of the sessions I attended, everyone was *very* excited to hear about the reestablishment and reemergence of NMTESOL.

TESOL officials and affiliate members from across the nation and world offered a warm welcome and congratulations. Those affiliates from our region, Colorado, Arizona, Texas, and Utah, sent their best wishes and expressed hopes of working together.

NMTESOL is now officially able to join the international TESOL organization as an “*affiliate organization*.” This status enables NMTESOL members to share resources, information, and activities with the worldwide TESOL community. Our members will also be able to access valuable networking and professional development opportunities at regional, national, and international levels. The global association we will be joining has organizations throughout

the United States, Asia, Oceania, Europe, Eurasia, Central and South America, Africa, and the Middle East.

At the orientation meeting in Denver for affiliate leaders, the group determined that the 2009

“*affiliates-to-be*” were India and New Mexico. Congratulations NMTESOL members, you will soon be part of a HUGE international community!

Catherine Lewis is the Affiliate Liaison for NMTESOL and an ESL instructor at Santa Fe Community College in Santa Fe.



View from the Denver Convention Center: Snowy weather did not keep TESOL members from attending presentations and taking advantage of networking opportunities.



The most exciting aspect of it all is that we are growing mainly by word-of-mouth.

It is encouraging and rewarding to be advertised by our own students.

-Jenny Meredith

Upcoming Event Sponsored by the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy (NMCL):

June 18: Nancy Pearl, www.nancypearl.com, author of the popular Book Lust series, will be



signing autographs at a networking event prior to the annual meeting.

June 19: Nancy Pearl will speak and conduct a workshop at the **NMCL 21st Annual Meeting at the Nativo Lodge in Albuquerque.** There will also be workshops for students, tutors, board members, administrators, and the public.

Register for the event at: www.nmcl.org or call **800-233-7587**

¡Bienvenidos a San Juan College! by Jenny Meredith



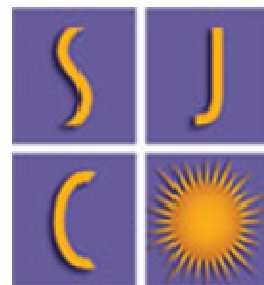
Hello! It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to brag about our fabulous program, teachers, location, and most importantly – our students.

Though some of our students travel from a variety of adjacent smaller towns, the bulk of our student population lives right here in Farmington—a city boasting nearly 50,000 residents. It is fascinating to see how many newcomers call good old Farmington *home*. Who is to say whether it is the surrounding scenery, fabulous climate, or natural resources that draw them near? Regardless, Farmington is maintaining a consistent flow of migration and thus developing an international flair.

San Juan College's ESOL program is glad to serve the needs of this region and to offer a variety of classes to our international population. We work closely with Project Read (The Adult Literacy Program) and ENLACE (Engaging Latinos in Com-

munity & Education) to insure we reach a broad range of students. The most exciting aspect of it all is that we are growing mainly by word-of-mouth. It is encouraging and rewarding to be advertised by our own students.

As the lead ESOL instructor, I envision great things for this program. However, we all know that it takes a lot more than a person to make an organization thrive. The growth & success of Farmington's ESOL classes are in great part due to the commitment, creativity, and compassion of a tremendous team of teachers. There are six of us working hard to teach approximately 300 enrolled students. (That's two more teachers and almost 100 more students than last year.)



Who knows what the upcoming school year will bring? We are certainly gearing up for it and eager to tackle the task of empowering returning and new ESOL students. Perhaps you will pay us a visit. Please stop by if you are in the region. We hope to host one of the NMTESOL conferences in the near future and dazzle you with our beautiful college and surrounding scenery.

Happy teaching to all!

Jenny is the ESOL Lead Instructor at San Juan College in Farmington.



San Juan College ESOL students posing for the camera with great enthusiasm in front of the College.

Second Language Vocabulary Building

by Candace Maher

Second language vocabulary activities are a useful and important aspect of building fluency in language classes. The following outlines background methodology, classroom strategies, and hands-on activities that are useful to learners.



Pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis

This is the longest word in English according to the Guinness Book of World Records. It refers to a lung disease caused by inhaling very fine particles of volcanic silicon dust. Formidable at first, it appears an impossibility to see the morphemes, or word parts, that come together to form this word. Upon *parsing* the word, morphemes can be identified: pneumom (lung), ultra (extremely), microscopic (small view), silic (silicon), volcan (volcano), osis (disease). Although not a word we would introduce in an ESOL class, providing ways to break down words and make connections with concepts students already know can make vocabulary comprehensible and memorable.

Importance of Vocabulary

Among the many reasons developing second language vocabulary is critical to learning a new language are: building confidence (competence and performance), developing utility and practicality, academic knowledge, and gaining workplace-related knowledge. In addition, gaining vocabulary 1) helps learners acquire a general range of skills and 2) is a key to reading. Reading and writing both depend on the recognition of letters of the alphabet and how they are grouped to form words. Part of English literacy is learning to relate the writing system with the spoken language. Receptive skills, along with productive skills, are necessary for functional literacy in the

US. In English, it is important to demonstrate how the orthography (writing system) relates to the spoken language.

Vocabulary Activities & Games

Scattergories

Games can add a competitive edge that is useful in the class. Using categories or themes allows students to think of semantically related words and, as a game, can be very challenging. For beginners, food could be a category, while green vegetables could be a category for high intermediate or advanced students.

Scattergories is usually played with a 26-faced die with a letter of the alphabet on each face. Various parameters may be chosen for the game. For example, initial letter, color, and size could be the criterion to form a list. For lower levels, three minutes seems sufficient time allotment for teams to create a short list (with or without a dictionary). For advanced players, I suggest less time.

Pictionary and Taboo

In order to bridge the sound/meaning relationship, **Pictionary** is great for all levels. A player from each team sees/hears the same word. The player returns to the team and draws a picture of the word. The first team member to shout out the word being drawn wins the round. I recommend rotating artists. A related game, **Taboo**, is quite similar in that one player from each team understands the secret word and must verbally describe it. However, the secret word is "taboo" to say out loud.

Cloze exercises

Cloze (gap-fill) activities engage students in listening, spelling, and overall comprehension. A cloze exercise with a favorite piece of music is popular. Remove target words and have students listen the first time as you read the words to the song. Then have them listen again while writing the words that they hear, comparing answers with others, and discussing the lyrics. Next, they listen a third time to verify what they have heard. Conclude with playing the song for the class.

Word Bingo

Word bingo is fun for any level. Make bingo cards using vocabulary words. Call out the definition and have the student

place a marker on the word.

Sentence Jumble

A sentence jumble asks students to understand parts of speech and English syntax. Using index cards with one word on each card is a quick and easy way to create some sentences.

Concentration

A favorite game of teachers and students is **Concentration**. It is applicable to verbs, nouns, definitions, and word relationships. Have students write appropriate pairs of words (one on each index card). Have more advanced students verify them before moving on. Mix them up and place the cards face down in rows and columns. Have students turn up any two cards for everyone to see. (It's good to have students read the cards out loud). And if a word pair is found, the student continues on and flips over another two cards. If no match results, cards must be turned back over and placed in exactly the same position, otherwise chaos can ensue!

Other favorites

Experiment! Take out old favorites like **Hidden Words**: *Make as many words as you can from the phrase "Have a good summer."* **Word Searches**, and **Crossword Puzzles** are great as a review tool. (See www.puzzlemaker.com to make your own puzzles.) **Hangman** is a quick ten minute game to increase spelling potential. **Jeopardy** is another useful tool for practicing categories and constructing questions. For some template ideas, visit ESOL Materials on the NMESOL website: <http://nmesol.wordpress.com>.

Conclusion

In building second language vocabulary, it is important to get feedback from students. If some exercises or puzzles are particularly engaging, consider using these types of activities with other classes. Observe students' level of comfort or distress. Consider group and individual activities where all students are able to participate and learn. Most of all, find the "fun factor" for both your students and you!

Candace teaches ESL and English at UNM and Central New Mexico Community College in Albuquerque.

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