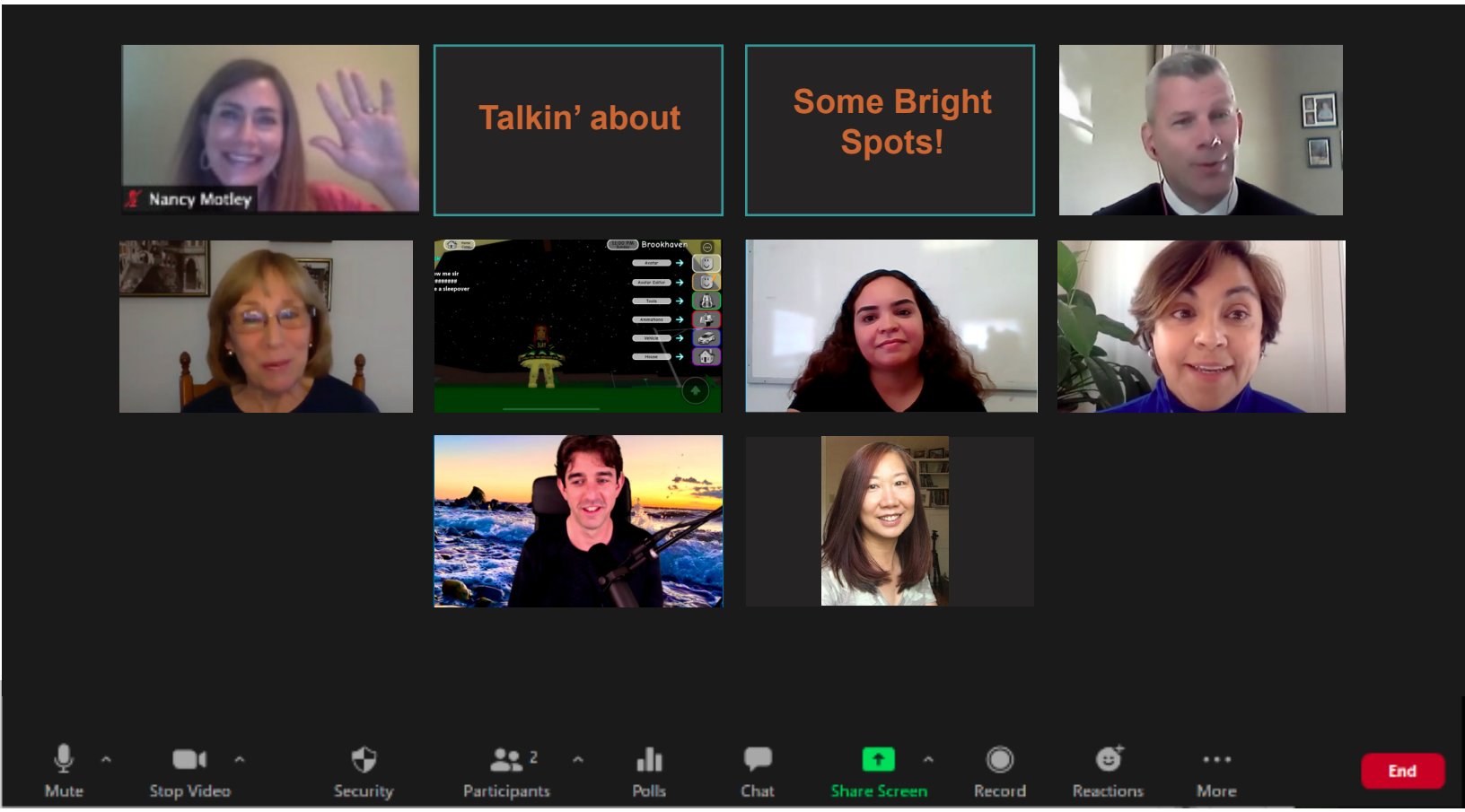
THE RI-TELLER

The Newsletter for Rhode Island Teachers of English Language Learners & ELL Professionals

www.ritell.org

Issue 19: Spring 2021



Academic vocabulary took an unexpected turn this year as we all wrapped our heads around 'zooming,' 'masking,' and 'social distancing'. We learned how to 'flatten the curve,' 'unmute', and 'put it in the chat.' As much as we collectively learned, we also felt the collective loss - of language growth, of authentic community, of being with our people. And yet, RITELL members amazed us with creativity, resilience and unwavering dedication to your students. You showed up, turned your cameras on, and did what you always do - you taught from your heart, with emojis and all. 😍 **This issue is dedicated to you and the bright spots you found along the way. ¡Adelante!**

Spring 2021

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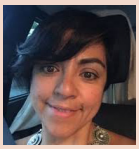
NANCY CLOUD, Ed.D. is Professor Emerita at Rhode Island College in Providence Rhode Island where she previously directed the M.Ed. in TESL Teacher Preparation Program in the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development. Prior to her work in Rhode Island, she coordinated the TESL and Bilingual Education Teacher Preparation Programs at Hofstra University on Long Island. Her publications deal with the design and delivery of effective instruction for English Language Learners in both ESL and Dual Language Programs. Most recently she served on the writing team that developed TESOL International Association's 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners, Grades K-12, released in 2018. Currently, she continues her work in schools as an educational consultant regarding best practices in the instruction and assessment of MLLs, whether enrolled in ESL or Bilingual/Dual Language Programs.

JAY BUSSE is an instructor at Rhode Island College, where he has been since 2002. He has taught ESL, job skills and writing classes at the Outreach Program. He has also been teaching ESL and TOEFL classes with the continuing education department since 2014. In addition, he has taught ESL and TOEFL classes at the Intensive English Language Institute Program at Worcester State University since 2015. He received his MAT in TESOL from RIC in 2001. Between 2011 and 2015 he taught a variety of classes and worked in the writing center at Kaplan University, online. He has conducted professional development seminars in Cali, Colombia and facilitated webinars here in RI.

EDITORS

TRICIA KELLY is the English Language Program Coordinator at Nowell Leadership Academy, a charter school serving pregnant, parenting, and underserved high school students. She is also an adjunct lecturer in the MAT in Urban Education program at Brown, where she supports secondary teacher candidates in adapting instructional techniques to support multilingual learners across disciplines. She has over 20 years of experience working in language education and especially loves learning with joy alongside her students.



IVETH ZORAYA STREISAND is a native of Quito, Ecuador. She has been teaching Spanish as a world language for ten years. She is currently teaching middle school and high school Spanish at Rocky Hill Country Day School in East Greenwich, RI. She has taught ESL Adult Ed at Progreso Latino in Pawtucket, RI and is currently enrolled in the TESOL Program at Rhode Island College. She has also presented workshops on connecting culture to curriculum.

LAURA FARIA-TANCINCO is a member of the RITELL Coordinating Council and has taught Adult Ed ESL in universities & institutions all over RI. She has been in the ESL field for 10+ years. She began her ESL journey in 2006, after a degree and professional attempt in Graphic Design left her wanting more. After a few years living in Quito, Ecuador, she returned to RI and she began adjuncting at colleges and universities around RI. She completed her M. Ed in TESL from RIC in 2015 and is currently the Coordinator of the ESL Intensive Program and Project ExCEL at RIC. She always says, the best people in the world arrive in her classroom. She enjoys all the challenges & rewards that come with the profession.

BETH TONEY is a member of RITELL's Coordinating Council. She has held various positions in education over the last 29 years including classroom teacher, school administrator, and currently, ESL/Reading Specialist for Central Falls. She holds master's degrees in Urban Education and K-12 School Administration and is certified as a K-12 ESL Specialist and K-12 Reading Specialist. Originally from Massachusetts, she has lived and worked in Rhode Island for 8 years. In addition to spending time with her grandchildren and other family members, she likes to travel and is an amatuer photographer.

NEWS & NOTES

Conference Update

RITELL Spring 2021 Webinar Series

Over 90 educators attended each session of RITELL's Spring '21 Webinar Series entitled *Educators Rising to the Coronavirus Call: Zooming in on Multilingual and Immigrant Students and Families* with Dr. Tatyana Kleyn on April 5th and April 12th. Members can access Dr. Kleyn's wonderful resources on the RITELL Website.

RITELL's fall 2020 webinar series is featured in this edition of the RI-TELLER. Stay tuned for information on plans for RITELL's fall 2021 plans.

RIDE Update

Right to Read Act

The Rhode Island Right to Read Act was passed in July 2019. According to RIDE, all K-12 ESOL and bilingual/ dual language teachers will be required to "demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and practices of the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy" by the 2023-24 school year. Local districts will provide more information on approved pathways and RITELL will work to provide resources on ensuring MLL students' needs are prioritized in the process.

Gallery Walk

Gallery Walk 2021

This year's Gallery Walk is going virtual! The annual event invites teachers, students, and community members to celebrate their identities. The virtual event is sure to be another powerful representation of Rhode Island's beautiful multilingual, multicultural landscape.

Click here to fill out the Google Form to register your class and receive the Padlet link.

Awards

Nancy Carnevale Award

The recipient of this year's Nancy Carnevale award will be announced soon! This award supports teachers for their hard work in "teaching from the heart."

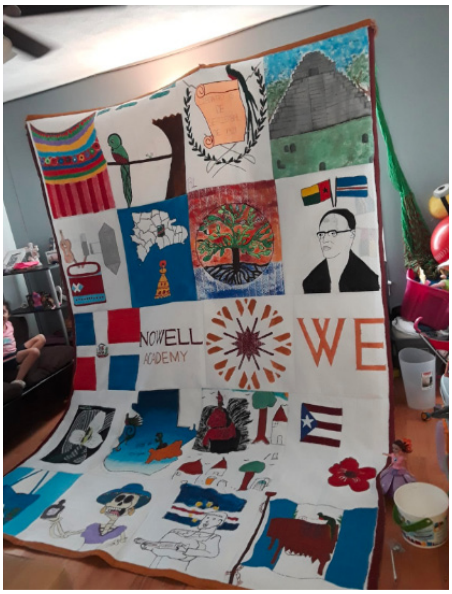
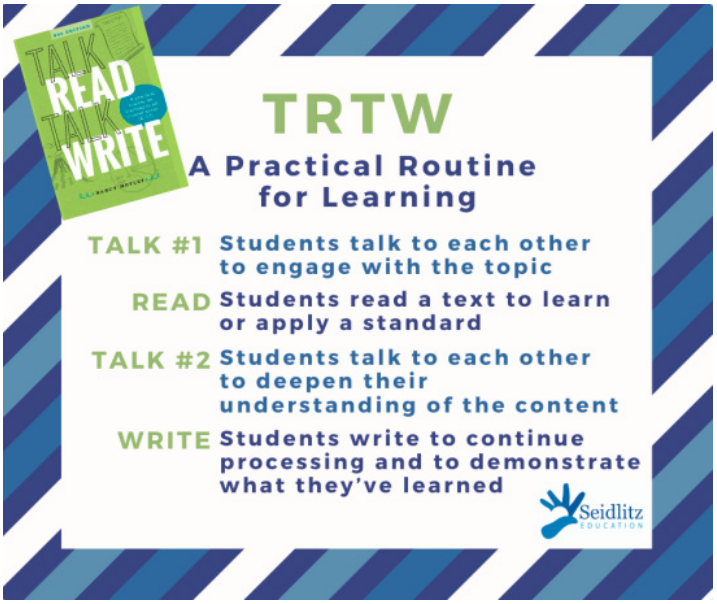
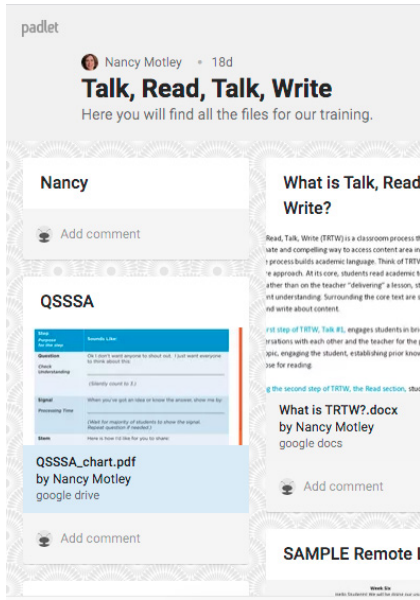


Photo caption: Yomely Marte, 2019 Grant Recipient, completed a Multicultural Quilt project with her students at Nowell Academy. The quilt, which was assembled by her former ESL student from Dorcas International Institute, will hang in Nowell's new school building for all to enjoy.

Targeting Student Talk

Nancy Motley





Nancy Motley

At the end of my first year of teaching, my principal asked what my plans were for the summer. After outlining my still-fuzzy summer agenda, she volun-told me to include getting ESL certified in those plans. She explained that it would be great for my career, that I'd earn a $500 stipend ($84.32 after taxes, right?), and most importantly, that she really needed me to help our English learners next year. Always up for a challenge, I agreed. Despite having had very little professional development regarding English learners, I was a good test taker and earned my certification. Upon returning to school for my second year, I had a class roster that included a majority English learners.

While I was, admittedly, ill-equipped to meet my students' linguistic needs, I did know a few things, one of which was that they needed to talk. My English learners would not acquire more English unless they had a chance to use it. Knowing this, I did "think pair shares" and "turn and talks" all the time. Multiple times in each lesson, my students were able to talk with a partner or their table mates about what they were learning. They became less shy, and I felt confident that they were all acquiring more English.

That second year of teaching was hard work, with many ups and downs, but as my students and I entered "testing season" we were all feeling good. However, the feeling only lasted until I received my students' state level English language development test results back. Less than 50 percent of my English learners had increased at least one level in their language proficiency. I was devastated and felt like I had failed them. I was speechless when I saw that even in the speaking domain, only a handful of my hard-working students had demonstrated growth. How could this be? They talked ALL the TIME!!

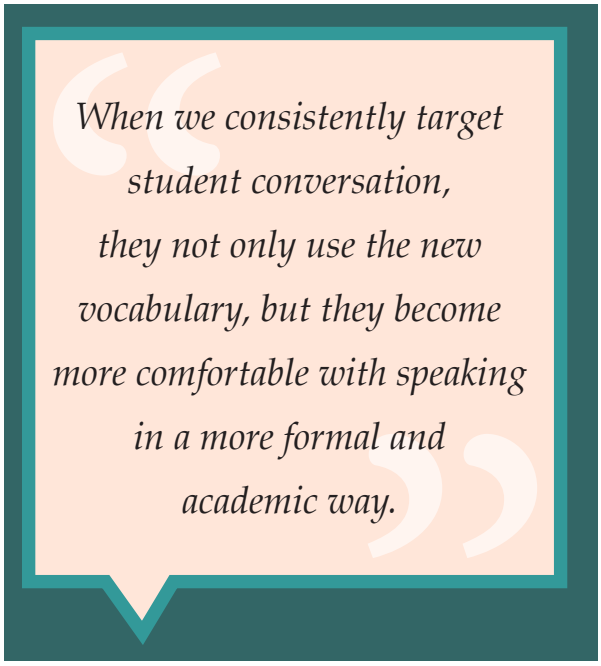
Talk Isn't Enough

I wish I could go back to my second-year-teacher self and tell her, "Talk isn't enough!" The opportunity to speak (which was plentiful in my room) is not equivalent to a structured plan for students to use the language of the lesson. You see, even though my students were talking a lot, they were only using the words in English with which they were comfortable.

Let's look at an example. Imagine my class was solving a two-digit by two-digit addition problem (15 + 44) for their math warm up, which is a review of the previous day's learning. In this scenario, I asked my students to turn to their partner and explain how they solved the problem. Here is what typically happened:

Alicia (to Michael, her partner): Umm...I did 5 and 4 and got 9 and then did this one (pointing to the tens place) for 5, so I got 59.

Michael (at Alicia): Me too. 59.



Did Michael and Alicia do what I asked them to do? Yes...with the words in English that they were comfortable with and already "owned." Did they acquire more English as a result of this opportunity to talk? I do not believe so.

Target the Talk

In order for our English learners, Michael and Alicia, and any other students to acquire academic English, we've got to ensure they are actually using the words and phrases about which they are learning. This is easier to accomplish than you might think. All we have to do is ask them to use them. Simply put, we tell them the words we want to hear right before we ask them to speak. I call this targeting the talk.

Let's go back to the example above. What are the academic words or phrases I would want to hear? How about "ones place," "tens place," "sum," "equals?" I might want to focus on phrases like "number sentence" or "solved the problem." So how do I "target their talk" toward these terms? I ask them to use them. Here are some options for how that might sound:

- Please explain how you solved the problem to your partner. I'm listening for you to use the words "ones place" and "tens place."
- When it is your turn, use this stem: "I solved this addition number sentence by…"
- As you talk with your partner, use the words from our anchor chart. Let's read them together: "addition," "equals," "sum."

If I had used any of the phrases above, the overwhelming majority of my class would have followed those directions, which would have resulted in each of them actually using the academic English of the lesson.

My "go-to" phrases for targeting student talk:

"I'm listening for…"

"Use these words…"

"Here's your stem…"

"It should sound like this…"

A few less direct ways to target student talk:

"Remember to use your words from the _____ (word wall, anchor chart, smart board)."

"Open your journals/notes, and use them while you talk."

Can you imagine how much language our students will acquire if everytime we ask them to speak to each other, we use one of these phrases? When we consistently target student conversation, they not only use the new vocabulary, but they become more comfortable with speaking in a more formal and academic way. We are "normalizing" academic conversation.

I'd suggest picking one or two of the phrases above and practicing. In order to remember, I like to post these phrases in various places in my room to serve as visual reminders for me to do it. While it might take some practice to build this habit, it is worth the effort. I can promise you that when we target student conversation, we do not end the year with disappointing test scores. We finish with a classroom full of students who have dramatically increased their proficiency in academic English.

Article reprinted with permission by Nancy Motley.

To find Nancy Motley's PADLET, please click here.

Capturing Speaking Opportunities as You Teach MLLs Online: Ideas for K-8 Educators

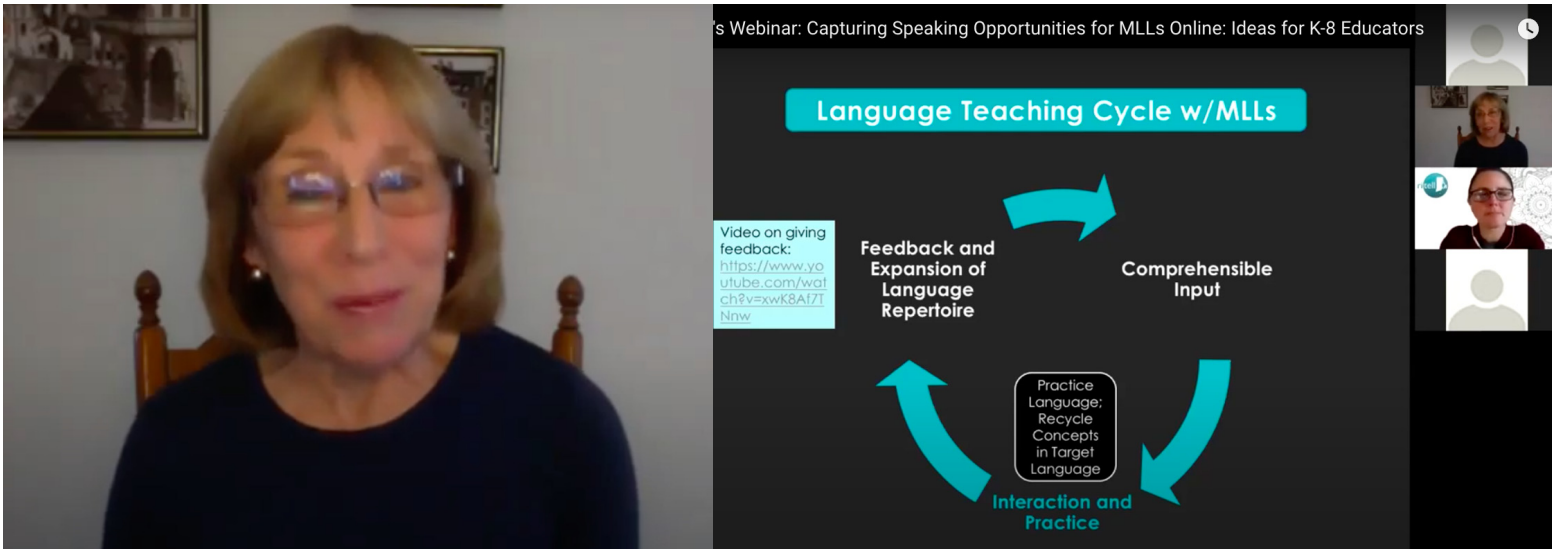
Dr. Nancy Cloud *Ed.D.*
Professor Emerita, Rhode Island College

OVERVIEW: Nancy Cloud
This session consisted of 4 parts:

- Choosing a communication platform that supports speaking practice
- Nine commonplace class activities that can get kids talking online (e.g. read alouds & book talks, virtual fieldtrips, responding to visuals and prompts, giving directions, reporting on a project, sharing a biography/autobiography, etc.)
- Supporting MLLs of all proficiency levels, but especially those at the Entering and Emerging Levels when speaking online, and
- Pushing students forward, making sure they speak in level-appropriate ways and gain more complexity and precision in their oral language to advance their proficiency

Two platforms were recommended to capture students' production as they engage in speaking activities: Seesaw for young children or low proficiency learners and FlipGrid for more advanced proficiency or upper grade students. Both offer tutorials for students, teachers and parents in a variety of languages to help them learn how to use these apps.

Across the presentation, many examples and resources were provided to teachers of MLLs so that they ensure plentiful speaking opportunities for their MLLs, even when working with them remotely.



Please visit RITELL's "Conference Resources" website for access to video recordings and webinar session resources for Nancy Motley's sessions, Iveth & Jay's session and Nancy Cloud's Session.

If you cannot access the resources, please renew your RITELL membership.

Engaging Adult ELs in Conversations in a Distance Learning Platform

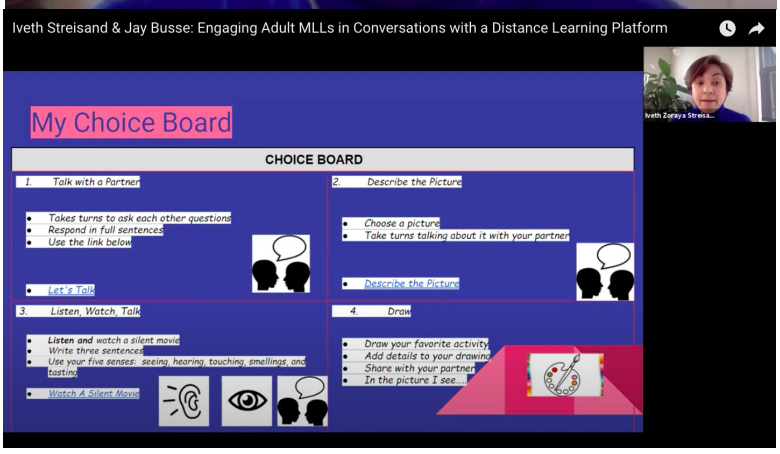
Iveth Streisand & Jay Busse

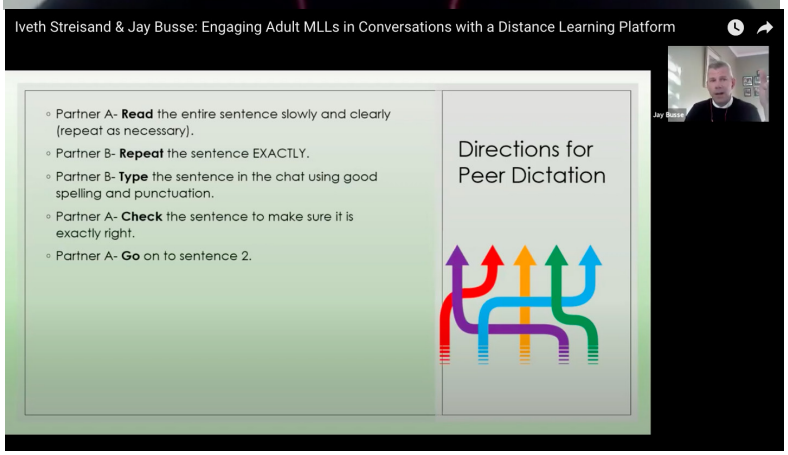
OVERVIEW: Iveth Streisand

Iveth Streisand's portion of the webinar provided activities to engage multi-language learners in various speaking tasks. With the use of choice boards, students are able to access speaking opportunities in a varied and differentiated manner. Some of the activities included think-pair-share, using images, using short silent movies, and drawing.

OVERVIEW: Jay Busse

Jay Busse's portion of the webinar provides activities tailored to distance learning and making the most of class time. The content includes strategies, activities and resources to make the most of class time. All of the included material is designed and presented with practicality in mind. Check it out and leave with ideas to help you in the classroom tomorrow.





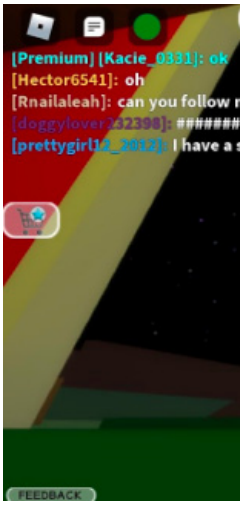
MLL Bright Spots

Tricia Kelly

We asked you to share some of the ways in which your students and families have shown resilience in the face of countless adversities this past year. You responded loud and clear - Rhode Island's multilingual students and families are incredible! Here are some of their stories:

Daniela

Karen Drolet's DL class



DANIELA, Charette, Providence
In her own words: Los primeros días y meses de la pandemia fueron los más difíciles pero también reflexioné y pensé acerca de quién quiero ser. Tu eres tu propio héroe y debes luchar por tu futuro porque nadie lo hará por ti. Tantos meses de encierro por la cuarentena le ha dejado como enseñanza a algunos niños, estudiantes y adultos a tener más responsabilidad y a aprender a vivir el día a día y apreciar los bellos momentos como también a saber lidiar con aquellos malos momentos que van y vienen de vez en cuando. Cuando te propones algo y te prometes a ti mismo que lo harás siempre lo cumplirás solo debes poner dedicación.

This year Daniela managed to work full time, pay rent, and excel in her school work. I'm so proud of her. If she continues in life with the same endurance she is going to make it to the stars. *Janice Jay*

Nothing stops Daniela and she is always willing to take challenges with a positive approach. There is no language barrier, pandemic or job responsibility that can stop her from accomplishing her goal in school and in her life. *Yomely Marte*

Daniela has a bright future ahead. She has been accepted to CCRI, Rhode Island College and Johnson and Wales. I cannot wait to see everything she will accomplish in her future. I'm very proud of her already. *Rosa Ramirez*

DURING this pandemic, I am playing video games with my distance learning students during our daily lunch meets. I can't believe how wonderful it is for reading, writing, speaking and listening with my MLL fourth graders! It's hilarious and they don't even realize they are learning as we are playing. They absolutely love that they are better than their teacher. During these difficult times I feel it is so important to connect with students and families. My distance learners are so isolated from their friends and many of them crave that socialization we had when we were all in school.

Kelli Gillis, Myron J Francis Elementary School, East Providence

MY students each created their own Google Slides book about an animal they researched. They created them from scratch and then read the published books to their classmates and families. Although many of the vocabulary words were difficult for them to read, they persevered because they were proud of the work they created. We sent the books home digitally so they could read them with their families. They were so excited and proud of their hard work.

Rachel Greenberg, Bailey Elementary School, Providence

PRIOR to distance learning last year, my MLL student had begun to break the code for reading in English, and I was hoping for a big jump in his reading skills. Initially, I worried that distance learning would set him back, but he eventually proved that I didn't need to worry. He began asking for help, taking initiative in his own independent reading, and gaining motivation to get his work done. He became more interested in science and social studies. Because of

Videogames in Kelli Gillis' DL class

his hard work, despite obstacles, he has made great gains in his reading skills. He did succeed in making the big jump in skills that I had hoped for last year.

Lisa Sherman, Wakefield Hills Elementary, West Warwick

MY newcomer has broken the code! His L1 to L2 transfer has been so successful, he's teaching Spanish to his MLL Liberian classmate. It's something they decided to work on unprompted. I love working with MLLs. So many more "lightbulb" moments than in a typical regular room.

Patricia Landy, Alfred Lima, Providence

THE bright spot for me is the positive acknowledgement of families as they learn English along with their child. It is necessary for families to support their child while we are having our online class. I have been told by many that they are able to learn English within content areas and also learn how to read along with their child.

Karen Drolet, Raices Dual Language Academy, Central Falls

MY bright spot came during ACCESS testing! I tested 16 children in grades 6-8. All 16 showed up on both days! Every parent and student made the effort to not only show up, but at 8 am on the dot. Pinch me! One parent took time out of work to transport their child. I was blown away by the response. The pride and commitment of these families warmed my heart and filled me with hope. I believe this is a result of building relationships; respect, trust, and caring. In my book, relationship is the most important thing.

Isnelda

Patricia Kirwan, Davisville Middle School, North Kingstown

ISNELDA, Nowell Academy, Providence
In her own words: It has been a very difficult year for all of us, having to stay at home, work and study at the same time, take care of our children. I will say that I improved this year, I feel more comfortable receiving classes from home, and at the same time I can be taking care of my daughter. Last year I was not focused on my classes, and almost never did my work. It is difficult to be a mom, to study and work, but not impossible. I just will give thanks to my teachers, they have always been there to support me in everything and I know they will continue to support me.

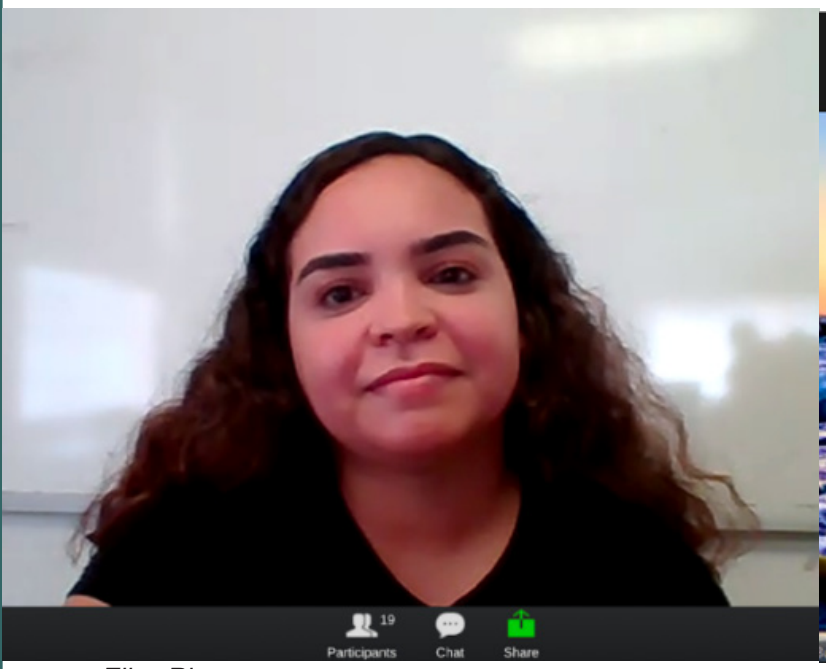
Isnelda has shown incredible personal integrity during our distance learning. She is on time to all Zoom classes and often turns her camera on so we hear and see her beautiful daughter working alongside her. She is taking a college level computer science class and the CLEP Exam in Spanish and is participating in an online internship now with a Chef from New Mexico as part of her self designed Senior Capstone Project. ¡Ella es increíble! *Tricia Kelly & Yomely Marte*

Also in Adult Education BRIGHT SPOTS

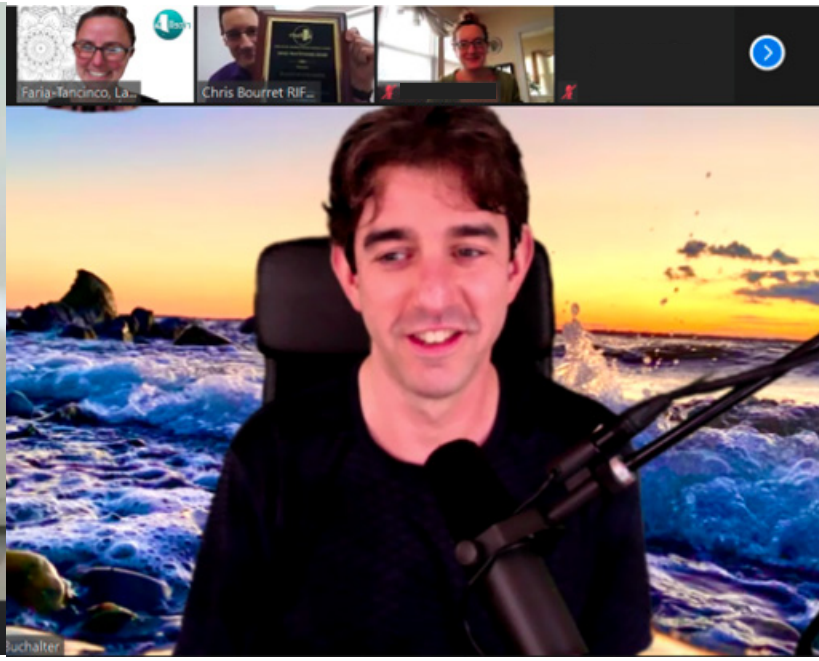
SHUK Chun Yiu, a student in Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative's Transitions to College class at Pawtucket Public Library was featured in the September 2020 edition of The Change Agent, an adult education magazine for social justice. You can read her article entitled Pandemic Haircut here (Packet 25) and on page 12 of this edition of RI-TELLER.

A Chat with...
Award Winner: Elisa Rivera

2020 MLL Teacher of the Year Award Winner
Interviewed by Iveth Zoraya Streisand



Elisa Rivera



David Buchalter

Elisa Rivera is the first recipient of the RIDE/RITELL Multilingual Learner Teacher of the Year award! She has been an ELL educator at Raíces Dual Language Academy in Central Falls, RI for two years, teaching Pre-Kindergarten to 6th grade.

How did you decide to work in education, specifically with ELLs?

Elisa stated that her desire to enter the education field came at a very young age and developed thereafter. As a young child, she always pretended to play school, she volunteered as a Sunday school teacher with small children, she did some translating in high school, and her experiences as an English language learner herself, gave her an insight and desire to enter the field.

What do you find rewarding and surprising about working with ELLs?

Elisa found ELL's to be resilient and admired their dedication to demonstrating growth over time.

What are some challenges about working with ELLs?

Elisa reported that juggling home and work life can be very challenging and has had to set boundaries for herself. Furthemore, understanding as an educator that there is a silent period in acquiring and using language, and having the patience and providing the necessary support for her students to overcome this stage.

What advice would you give teachers entering this field?

Elisa's advice for teachers entering the profession include the following: understanding that language acquisition is a process and takes time, honoring students wherever they are in their learning journey, fostering a atmosphere that makes students feel safe and supported, allowing for use of their native language in school, offering opportunities for students to see themselves in your curriculum, and embracing becoming a lifelong learner.

What are some of your plans for the future?

As of January 2021, Elisa has taken on a new role as MLL specialist along with continuing to work as the Dual Language Coordinator. Some of her responsibilities include programming, coaching, and offering support to teachers. She hopes to someday become a principal.

Spotlighting... Award Winner: David Buchalter

2020 Adult Education Practitioner Award Winner

Interviewed by Laura Faria Tancinco / Edited by Tricia Kelly

It is RITELL's pleasure to introduce David Buchalter, the 2020 recipient of the Adult Education Practitioner Award. Since 2016, David has been a Learning Facilitator at Genesis Center in Providence, RI, where he teaches intermediate-level ESOL and a college-and-career pathways class.

How did you decide to work in education, specifically adult education?

When I was in second grade, a "new girl" enrolled at Peaslee Elementary School, in Northborough, Massachusetts. Her name was Katie Ka. Katie's family had recently immigrated to the US. She didn't yet have any friends. She was an Asian girl in a school of White kids. To most of the kids, she looked different, sounded different, was different. That Katie didn't fit the typical mold was fine by me, because, as someone who identifies with being on the autistic spectrum, I was different too.

One day, at recess, we found each other and began a little conversation. It went like this:

KATIE KA (offering me a piece of gum): You want?
DAVID: What flavor is it?
KATIE KA: "flavor"? What is flavor?
DAVID: You know, like strawberry or banana.
KATIE KA: Huh?
DAVID: (Pointing at my tongue, scrunching up my face as if hesitatingly probing the taste of something unknown, and then smiling as if to say, that's delicious!) I explained: "flavor" means, well, the way things taste."
KATIE KA: Ohh, flavor!

That little interaction was my entrée into teaching. It oriented me. It played a formative role in my development, not only as an educator, but as a human being. In many ways, the two identities are inextricably linked--I don't always know how not to be a teacher, sometimes to a fault. The opportunity to teach Katie that word, and many more to follow, changed the way I related to the world. Teaching English as a second language took me twice to China, led me to become a PhD student in English literature and enabled me to get involved with both the Hubert Humphrey fellowship program and the Fulbright program.

What advice do you have for teachers who are new to working with ELLs?

Regarding pronunciation,

- learn how the tongue works. Study its movements and their relation to the production of sound. Draw pictures of the tongue in its various shapes, positions, and juxtapositions.
- Give your students mirrors. Get them to notice where their tongue is in relation to the lips, teeth, roof of the mouth.
- Gargle water to demonstrate where sounds like /-ing/ are produced.
- Wash your hands and touch your finger to the tip of your tongue to produce /th/. Get students to do the same.

Regarding attitude,

- Do not confuse talking slowly and clearly with speaking in a condescending tone.
- You are here to serve the learners; they are not here to serve you.

Regarding genuineness and respect,

- Do not dole out false praise.
- Do not laden thy feedback with adjectives. Stick to specifics, which are constitutive of constructive criticism.

Regarding expectations,

- Be clear about what you want from students, and when they don't deliver it, don't tell them they did. That only confuses things.
- By the same token, you must learn to say, "no, that's not correct," without a tone of vanquishment or air of judgementality.

Regarding dignity,

- Language learning is by nature infantilizing. Without commanding the words to linguistically represent one's own identity, the subject's very subjectivity comes under threat. And, although under the right circumstances, a mild crisis of identity can benefit the ELL seeking to develop a new persona in the target language, it is nevertheless important to give ELLs plenty of opportunity to express their subjectivity through non-linguistic means, if they are to become part of a classroom culture.
- So give learners the dignity of telling their own story, even if it's not through words. Encourage them to find alternate modes of expression, like drawing pictures, using body language, singing, or sharing photos.
- ELLs may in many cases be part of a vulnerable population, but that doesn't make them stupid or weak. Assume the intelligence and inner strength of every student far exceed the scope of our measure.

Pandemic Haircut

Shuk Chun Yiu

BEFORE YOU READ: How have you been getting your hair cut during the pandemic?

This pandemic has shut down many activities. We have to stay at home for a time to make the virus spread slowly in our community. It feels like we are in a war. This war involves everyone in our earth village. ***No matter*** how bad the circumstances are, we have to keep ourselves strong and healthy to run this marathon. It helps if you can find ways to laugh and be joyful.

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For me, this opportunity came when my husband invited me to trim his hair. He had not had a trim for almost one month. I am the only one who could do it for him during the pandemic. I had never done it before. We made a joke that if I did an ugly cut it was no problem because no one would see him! We had a great time laughing together!

I imagined myself as a hairstylist. This was one of my dream jobs when I was young. For good preparation, I searched how to trim hair on YouTube. I learned some skills, like how to cut hair close to the ear and around the neck. We prepared the haircut scissors and haircut apron.

He sat on a short stool inside the bathtub and covered himself with the apron. I followed his original hairstyle and trimmed it. He obeyed my request to turn his head to the left and right. I gave him a mirror to check the look, same as in a salon. The result was good. Both sides were even and the top was flat. I like it. He likes it, too! We did a great job, and we were joyful. The main thing was we had fun in this uncertain time.

Shuk Chun Yiu is a student at RI Family Literacy Initiative's Transitions to College class at the Pawtucket Public Library in Pawtucket, RI. She is from Hong Kong, and she now lives in Rhode Island with her husband, who moved there for work.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Notice how the author uses "no matter" in the first paragraph. Compare it to how Alicia Keys uses the word "matter" in her lyrics (p. 18). What other ways do we use "matter" in English? Write several sentences using "matter" or "no matter."

2. What is the main idea of this essay?

Pandemic Skills

What have you had to learn during the pandemic? How did you teach yourself? Share your skill with the class by using presentation software, such as Powerpoint or Google slides. Take pictures to go with your slides. Teach your classmates the skill you learned. Photos of Shuk Chun Yiu's haircutting tools (left) and of her husband's new haircut (right).

Shuk Chun Yiu, a student in Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative's Transitions to College class at Pawtucket Public Library was featured in the September 2020 edition of The Change Agent, an adult education magazine for social justice. You can read her article entitled Pandemic Haircut here (Packet 25).