

REF

PENNSYLVANIA LANGUAGE FORUM



Pennsylvania State Modern
Language Association

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ABOUT

Pennsylvania Language Forum (PLF) is the semiannual online publication of the Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association. It features articles on teaching strategies, lesson plans, project ideas, and research by and for world language teachers in Pennsylvania.

PSMLA Members will receive an invitation to view the journal online through the publications section of our website. A digital archive of previous issues is also available online. Visit <https://psmla.org/pennsylvania-language-forum> to access *PLF* online.

SUBMISSIONS

Article submissions are accepted on a rolling basis but must be received by February 15 to be considered for publication in the Spring issue of *PLF* or by August 15 for the Fall issue.

Contributors have the option of submitting their article for peer review. To learn more about that process, please see the final pages or the website for further details. All other submissions should follow the guidelines outlined below.

Submission Guidelines

- PSMLA members may submit titled articles related to teaching and language education.
- All submissions must be written in English, though examples of lessons or student work may be in the target language.
- All articles must be submitted as a Microsoft Word document or a Google Doc, formatted using Times New Roman 12-point font and be double-spaced. PDF article submissions will not be considered for publication.
- Scanned documents and photographs that accompany the article submission must be clearly identified and labeled. They must be submitted as a JPG or PNG.
- All documents of the submission must include the following information:
 - Name(s) of author(s)
 - Affiliation(s)
 - Language(s) taught
 - Intended levels, when relevant
 - Release Form(s) for any photographs (available at [online](#))

Submissions must be submitted online using the submission link on the [PSMLA website](#).

All authors and any co-authors must be current PSMLA members or a member of a NECTFL reciprocal state organization at the time of publication. PSMLA members whose work is chosen for publication will be notified via email. All formatting and final edits are at the discretion of the editors.

Contact PLF

PSMLA and the *Pennsylvania Language Forum* invite vendors and organizations to submit advertisements that share our mission. Vendors wishing to advertise should consult the Ads & Exhibits page on the PSMLA website (www.psmla.org). All other questions may be directed to Christina Huhn or Nathan Campbell, Co-Editors of *PLF*, at PALanguageForum@psmla.org.



Pennsylvania State Modern
Language Association

*INSPIRING MULTILINGUAL
COMMUNICATION AND
INTERCULTURAL
UNDERSTANDING*

**The mission of the Pennsylvania
State Modern Language Association
(PSMLA) is to enhance world
language education throughout
Pennsylvania by:**



Promoting the teaching
and learning of world
languages and culture at
all levels (Pre-K through
university)

Providing
opportunities for
professional growth
and networking



Recognizing excellence
in the field

Collaborating
with local, state,
and national
organizations



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Editors' Message

Spring 2025



Nathan Campbell & Christina Huhn *Editors* *Pennsylvania Language Forum*

Devoted world language educators,

Welcome to the Spring issue of the PA Language Forum! This issue is our **100th Volume**, and we have compiled another full issue to share with our language education colleagues!

To start things off, on p. 9 you will find the recipients of the 2024 PSMLA awards! These awards include **PSMLA Teacher of the Year (2024): Nathanael Campbell**. Sr. Campbell was also named NECTFL Teacher of the Year at the 2025 Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, competing among candidates from thirteen states, and will now go on to compete at ACTFL in New Orleans in November. We will keep you updated!

At the university level, we recognize our long-time PSMLA member **John Grande** as **Pennsylvania Language Educator of the Year (2024)! Congratulations to all winners**; detailed profiles can be seen on p. 10.

As cellphones have become such a ubiquitous part of the world of our students, teachers have had to find ways to both harness the technology and mediate overreliance. We know that too much screen time can be detrimental, so we asked our teachers how they handle this issue in the classrooms. See responses on p. 12

Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications continue to make headlines - with both useful and unnerving advances. Case in point, within this issue you will find a map created through an AI and human collaboration (p. 20): AI was used efficiently to gather data - but human thought and intervention was required for a fully accurate result. Raquel Lodiero's article on whether we can be replaced by AI rings true - the role of a human being and human emotional interaction cannot be replaced by a machine.

Classroom pedagogy remains front and center, and Rich Madel presents an article on the benefits of free reading opportunities

in the language classroom, using a classroom library (p. 29). Rich also offers a research spotlight on PSMLA's very successful Peer Mentoring program

World Language Advocacy remains central to our work at PSMLA, and Cherie Garrett of Dallastown High school provides an update on the April 28 PA Language Summit (the culminating work of a Task Force formed at the 2023 PSMLA Conference. Recently, the

Pennsylvania Department of Education released the number of teaching certificates issued in the 2023-2024 school year. As Michael Bogdan shares on p. 17 the numbers for world language certification are not encouraging. Read how we as educators can advocate for the future generation of teachers.

We hope you find this a thought-provoking and practical issue of our journal!

Be the Star!

**Guiding students on the path
toward proficiency.**



SAVE THE DATE!
PSMLA Annual Conference
Bethlehem, PA
October 15-17, 2025

President's Message

Spring 2025



Megan Flinchbaugh
President
PSMLA

Greetings, PSMLA members and world language educators!

PSMLA was delighted to welcome ACTFL to Philadelphia November 20-24, 2024. The ACTFL Convention and World Languages Expo brought to our state informative and engaging sessions, opportunities to meet colleagues from around the world, and awareness of the many resources available to teachers of all languages. Just as important, the convention was a great opportunity for your PSMLA Executive Council to connect with world language teachers from Pennsylvania, sharing with you the work we do throughout the year to serve teachers and students in our field. Keep reading and check out our [website](#) for a refresher on the many facets of PSMLA's important ongoing work.

Professional Development

Make room on your calendar! This spring, PSMLA is proud to offer many opportunities for you to grow professionally. The professional development committee has organized a free, members-only webinar series featuring presentations from current and past Pennsylvania world language Teachers of the Year. Teachers are invited

to attend one, all, or any number in between, and we hope you will join us for these great learning and networking opportunities.

On March 22, 2025, more than 30 of our colleagues attended the Spring PSMLA Workshop at Messiah University for the workshop "Reaching the Whole Student and Educator in the World Language Classroom" with Amy Necci. Participants learned more about reaching the whole student *and* educator. We hope you will join your colleagues for future professional development opportunities. Remember, registration is discounted for PSMLA members!

In addition to free or discounted registration rates, PSMLA members can receive Act 48 hours for these events. If you have let your membership lapse or still are not a PSMLA member, now is the time to join! Visit our website, and [join now](#).

To learn more about our professional development plans and opportunities, contact our chair Jennifer Campbell at jen@psmla.org, and visit our [calendar](#) for more information and upcoming events.

Getting involved

Pennsylvania Language Summit

2025 is an exciting year for world language in Pennsylvania. This year, PSMLA's advocacy committee is spearheading the Pennsylvania Language Summit, to be held on April 28, 2025 at Penn State Harrisburg. This free event is open to all stakeholders in K-16+ world language education. You can join the efforts! Sign up to attend this free event, and get involved in mapping a path for world language education in Pennsylvania. If you cannot attend the summit but are interested in joining the efforts in other ways, [sign up](#) to receive more information about our language task force. Email PSMLA's vice president and advocacy committee chair Cherie Garrett at cherie@psmla.org for more information.

PSMLA Programs

You can also support world language teaching by participating in PSMLA's [peer mentoring program](#) as a new teacher or mentor. This is a great way to connect with colleagues, share experiences and

expertise, and strengthen the profession. PSMLA's [Global Scholars](#) program and [PEP awards](#) are great ways to recognize outstanding world language teachers, students, and schools and are a great way to be part of the world language education community.

PSMLA Executive Council Nominations

PSMLA is seeking nominations for members to [serve on our executive council](#) beginning in 2026. If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering energy, passion, and enthusiasm for world language and leadership, we invite you to submit a nomination to isabel@psmla.org. Visit our website for more details about the work of the [executive council](#) and PSMLA.

On behalf of PSMLA, thank you to all the world language educators in Pennsylvania for the investment you make in our local and global communities and for the passion you share with your students. We are grateful and happy to serve you, and we hope you will take advantage of the many opportunities PSMLA has to offer.



World language educators pose with workshop instructor, Ami Necci, at Messiah University, March 22, 2025.

2024 PSMLA Award Recipients



PSMLA Teacher of the Year (2024)

Nathanael Campbell

Nathan Campbell is an accomplished Spanish educator with nearly two decades of experience in language instruction, curriculum development, and professional leadership. A teacher at Manheim Central Senior High School since 2008, he has taught all levels of Spanish, including Advanced Placement, and played a key role in redesigning the curriculum to enhance student learning.

Campbell earned his National Board Certification in World Languages in 2010, demonstrating his expertise in subject matter, reflective pedagogical practices, and contributions to the profession—achieving certification on his first attempt. His dedication to language education extends beyond the classroom, serving as Pennsylvania State Director for the *Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica* and co-director of the Association of World Language Educators. He has organized international student trips, spearheaded cultural events, and presented at numerous professional conferences including at ACTFL, PSMLA, NECTFL, and Millersville University.

His excellence in teaching has earned him multiple accolades. Including PSMLA's Outstanding WL Educator Award (2017) and Manheim Central Secondary Teacher of the Year (2013). Nate's passion for language learning and cultural exchange continues to inspire students and educators alike, making him a deserving recipient of the Pennsylvania Language Teacher of the Year award.

NECTFL Teacher of the Year (2025)

Nathanael Campbell

The PSMLA Teacher of the Year (TOY) is selected to compete at the regional Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NECTFL). This year's annual conference was held February 27 – March 2, 2025. Nathan was selected among seven candidates competing among the thirteen states that make up the Northeast region. He was officially named NECTFL Teacher of the Year at the awards ceremony on Friday, February 28, 2025. Nathan will not compete as one of five finalists at the national level for ACTFL Teacher of the Year.



Nathan receives his award from Dr. Kelley Webb



Pennsylvania Language Educator of the Year (2024)

John Grande

John Grande is a passionate and experienced world language educator and leader with a distinguished career in teaching, curriculum development, and professional leadership. As a mentor and cooperating teacher, he has guided both new and aspiring educators, fostering excellence in language instruction.

John has played a key role in shaping language education by planning and leading department-wide professional development. His expertise has been recognized at the state and national levels, serving on the Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association (PSMLA) Executive Council from 2012 to 2024, including a term as President. He has also organized professional development conferences for world language teachers across Pennsylvania and presented at ACTFL, MCATFL, and PASE conferences on curriculum development and best practices in language instruction.

In addition to his work in K-12 education for over thirty years, John currently serves as a professor at Holy Family University, where he shares his extensive knowledge of Spanish with his students. In addition to teaching Spanish courses from level 100 to 400, John has also developed courses focusing on communication and culture to maintain student retention in language courses.

John’s leadership, dedication, and impact on world language education continue to inspire students and educators alike, solidifying his legacy as a transformative figure in the field.



Xperitas Language Matters Award (2024)

Teresa Hoover

PSMLA is pleased to partner with Xperitas to offer one \$250 mini grant annually for World Language teachers to improve existing programs, implement new ones, and promote the study of world languages in schools with a demonstrated need. Teresa Hoover, Dauphin County Technical School was the 2024 recipient of this mini grant. Señora Hoover will set up a pilot program to help her students earn the Pennsylvania Seal of Biliteracy.



Congratulations

PSMLA 2024 PEP Award Schools

GOLDEN GLOBE AWARD

Academy of Notre Dame de Namur, Villanova, 2024-26
Derry Area High School, Derry Area S.D., Derry, 2024-26
Merion Mercy Academy, Merion Station, 2024-26
North Hills Senior High School, North Hills S.D., Ross Twp., 2024-26
Parkland High School, Parkland S. D. Allentown, 2023-24
Penncrest High School, Rose Tree Media S.D., Media, 2024-26
Pittsburgh Allderdice High School, Pittsburgh S.D. Pittsburgh, 2023-24
Plymouth Whitemarsh High School, Colonial S.D., Plymouth Meeting, 2023-24
Sewickley Academy, Sewickley, 2023-24
Upper St. Clair High School, Upper St. Clair S.D., Upper St. Clair, 2023-24



SILVER GLOBE AWARDS

Gettysburg Area High School, Gettysburg Area S.D., Gettysburg, 2024-26
Greater Latrobe Senior High School, Greater Latrobe S.D., Latrobe, 2024-26
State College High School, State College Area S.D., State College, 2024-26

BRONZE GLOBE AWARDS

Dallastown Area High School, Dallastown S.D., Dallastown, 2023-24
Delaware Valley High School, Delaware Valley S.D., Milford, 2023-24
Norwin High School, Norwin S.D., Irwin, 2024-26
Titusville Area High School, Titusville Area S.D., Titusville, 2024-26



GLOBE AWARDS

Boiling Springs HS, South Middleton S.D., Boiling Springs, 2023-24
Highlands High School, Highlands S.D. Natrona Heights, 2023-24
Lower Moreland HS, Lower Moreland S.D., Huntingdon Valley, 2023-24
Deer Lakes High School, Deer Lakes S.D., Cheswick, 2023-24

2024 PSMLA Exemplary Program (PEP) Award Schools & PSMLA Global Scholars awards have also been announced. The full list of awardees from all years, as well as program criteria can be found on our [website](#).



Member Survey

CELLPHONES IN THE WORLD LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

How do you perceive the impact of cellphone use on students' engagement in language learning during class?

"They pose a clear distraction to learning and have a significant negative impact on learning in the classroom as a result."

"Students are much less engaged in classroom activities, and much more distracted by notifications coming in on their phones."

"Using cell phones in the classroom for the purpose of your lesson objective is a great way for students to be engaged in classroom activities."

"Detrimental!"

"All technology can help and can hinder. When students are more concerned about their cell phones than about school, they are problematic."

"They are a huge distraction in the classroom."

Change is often said to be the only constant in life. Classroom educators have a front seat to cultural and societal shifts. We must learn to adapt and conform to those changes. Cellphone use has been a hot topic of debate in education for some time and the issue only seems to grow as access to mobile devices and our global dependence on them also grows. We asked our members how greater access to cellphones has impacted the learning in their classes.

– Nathan Campbell, co-editor, *PLF*

"This year, students are not allowed to have their phones on them during the school day and the change is wonderful. It's one less distraction available to them during class and the battles of 'give me your phone / put it away' are gone."

"Most students are completely distracted by their phones. It is affecting their ability to pay attention in class and their verbal skills are deteriorating."

"I would say that it is positive since they are only allowed to use their phones for language learning games like Kahoot, Gimkit and Quizlet Live."

"If it is regulated well or restricted, it can be a neutral factor."

What challenges have you faced regarding cellphone distractions during class, and how have you addressed them?

"We have a cellphone dock where students place phones at the beginning of class and students can 'check in' between classes."

"The biggest challenge is keeping them 'off and away.' I address it by warning, removing participation points, discipline referrals and eventually parental contact."

"Phones are out on desks or within easy reach. When students are asked to stop texting in class, they claim that their parents are texting them and that they are just responding."

"My school has a policy against cellphone use, but the consequences are inconsistent. There are always at least a few students in each class who continue to use their phones and wear earbuds."

"Some kids who are already lost in class will use their phones to further zone out."

In what ways have cellphones enhanced or hindered your teaching methods in the language classroom?

"They are helpful when students are having difficulty with their laptops. It's much easier to hop on to Quizlet or GimKit. Also, it's a wonderful tool for voice recordings and videos."

"Cellphones enhanced my teaching as students get to the game/activity more quickly than using other devices"

"Cellphones are useful when students need to take photos of something, look up something that is blocked by the school system, or have tech issues when their school devices do not function."

"I rarely use phones anymore. They used to be a good tool for fun interactive activities. We just use computers now for those. They have hindered classroom management."

"Sometimes it's nice to have a backup technology device when playing Quizlet or Kahoot"

Have you observed any changes in students' communication skills, both in the target language and their native language, due to cellphone use?

"They write like they text!"

"In their native language, their communication seems to focus a lot on what videos they're watching, who posted what, and sharing information gleaned from text messages."

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"Yes, in their native language. Most tend to use abbreviations even when they are submitting formal papers/essays/etc."

"Yes, it's much easier for students to withdraw in general with any tech. As a level one teacher, I have students every year who need more and more help in finding the courage to converse with their classmates in both their native and target language. On a positive note, it feels good to be able to help students learn to use their social skills while practicing the TL in an era where we are seeing students too willing to withdraw behind a screen."

p. 13



Pennsylvania Language Summit Develops PA Language Roadmap

Cherie Garrett

Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association (PSMLA) Advocacy Chair

The PSMLA Task Force, first announced at the PSMLA Fall Conference in October of 2023, was formed to address obstacles facing world language education in the state such as decreasing enrollment in world language programs, reduction or elimination of language offerings at institutions of higher education, and a significant drop in the rate of world language teacher certification. To make Pennsylvania more competitive economically, these challenges need to be addressed to create a multilingual workforce that can compete in interconnected global markets, participate in meaningful ways in civic life, and engage with diverse local communities.

To address the issues facing the Commonwealth, the PSMLA Task Force is hosting the first-ever PA Language Summit on April 28, 2025, at the Penn State Harrisburg Campus in Middletown. The PA Language Summit is an in-person meeting of K-16 educators, state legislators, business leaders, healthcare professionals, administrators, community members, and other language supporters to discuss the linguistic and cultural needs in the workplace and to develop a *PA Language Roadmap* to boost Pennsylvania's economic competitiveness and community language needs by strengthening language education.

Language proficiency is a critical asset in today's global economy. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) notes that employers in various sectors—from healthcare to technology—are increasingly seeking multilingual employees (ACTFL, 2019), and in Pennsylvania, the situation is the same with over 5,000 vacant bilingual job positions (Indeed, 2025). One reason for this lack of multilingual workers is the lack of a state graduation requirement for world language. Although state law requires that every school district offers instruction in at least two languages besides English, many students only take lower levels of language instruction. Unfortunately, this dilemma isn't only unique to Pennsylvania. The United States faces a persistent language skills gap, with fewer than 20% of K-12 students enrolled in foreign language courses (Stein-Smith, 2019).

The PA Language Roadmap will address Pennsylvania's lack of multilinguals by providing strategic goals and core recommendations not only

The roadmap will have 3 goals:

1. Develop leadership and advocacy for language education.
2. Develop continuous and effective language programs for all students.
3. Develop and sustain teacher language talent.

to foster language programs K-16+, but to enhance Pennsylvania's economic competitiveness and global engagement. The roadmap will have three goals: *to develop leadership and advocacy for language education, to develop continuous and effective language programs for all students, and to develop and sustain teacher language talent.*

The first goal focuses on the development of K-16 quality language programs that are sustainable while the second goal is to ensure that all students have access to quality language programs and are provided the opportunity to develop their linguistic abilities to their highest potential. The third goal is to expand recruitment of qualified language teachers, ensure quality preparation and professional development opportunities, and improve teacher retention K-16. This document will then be used by leadership in the state as a guide to meet the linguistic needs of the community and workforce. However, achieving the ambitious goals outlined in the PA Language Roadmap requires more than a vision; it demands sustained leadership and strategic advocacy by a full-time World Language Advisor in the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Reinstating a full-time World Language Advisor after a 14-year vacancy, is not just an administrative adjustment—it is a vital step toward securing the future of world language education in the state. By aligning the strategic goals of the PA

Language Roadmap with sustained and dedicated leadership, Pennsylvania has the opportunity to foster a multilingual workforce, enhance cross-cultural understanding, and position itself as a leader in global competency. The collective advocacy of educators, policymakers, industry leaders, and language organizations is needed to ensure that world language education receives the attention and resources it deserves since this investment is essential to empowering Pennsylvania residents with the tools they need to thrive economically, socially, and globally in an increasingly interconnected world.

References

- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. *Making Languages Our Business: Survey Findings from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)*. Supported by Pearson LLC and Language Testing International, 2019, p. 5.
- Indeed. *Indeed* [Website]. www.indeed.com. Accessed [January 15, 2025].
- Stein-Smith, Kathleen. "Foreign Language Classes Becoming More Scarce." *The Conversation*, 6 Feb. 2019, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, www.amacad.org/news/foreign-language-classes-becoming-more-scarce.

PA Certification Numbers Show Improvement, but Not for World Languages

Michael Bogdan
PSMLA 1st Vice President



The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) recently published its [certification data](#) for the 2023-2024 academic year. The total number of in-state initial instructional certificates (5,624) reached its highest level since 2017-2018 but remains well below the 9,893 issued a decade ago. While there has been modest

overall growth in recent years, the distribution of these new certificates varies across subject areas. Notably, world language certifications continue to decline annually, even as the overall number of teaching credentials in the Commonwealth rises.

This table illustrates the continued decline in world language initial certificates issued by PDE:

	2010-2011	2013-2014	2022-2023	2023-2024
French	51	23	10	9
German	17	7	5	3
Latin	9	5	2	1
Spanish	159	99	46	42

No other language had more than one initial certification. These numbers do not include out-of-state conversions or instructional add-ons through testing, both of which remain in the single digits.

World languages are not the only subject struggling to attract new teachers. Fields such as Family & Consumer Science, Library, and Technology Education see more add-on certifications than initial ones. Physics has only 17 new teachers, while Computer Science had no initial certifications—only out-of-state candidates and testing add-ons. Even traditionally stronger subjects have experienced

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declines over the past decade: Art (-66%), Health & PE (-52%), and Math (-57%). However, the situation for world languages is particularly concerning, as it leads to the closure of some K-12 programs—not due to a lack of interest, but a shortage of qualified applicants.

Emergency Permits & Their Growing Role
Emergency permits allow college graduates to serve as substitutes in subjects where they lack certification. At 28,378, the number of emergency permits is the highest on record. While these educators provide much-needed support, some have little or no training in pedagogy or subject content.

These are the number of emergency permits for long-term substitutes in world language instructional areas issued in 2023-2024:

- French, 35
- German, 9
- Latin, 7
- Spanish, 161

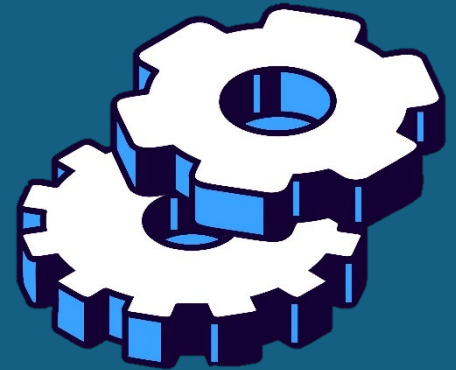
Alarmingly, in all these languages, more emergency permits were issued than initial certifications. While some permit holders are working toward certification, others are building substitutes without proper training.

A Pathway to Address the Shortage: The Instructional Intern Certificate

PDE has been promoting an alternative pathway for career changers: the [Instructional Intern Certificate](#). This allows college graduates who pass the content test to secure full-time, paid teaching positions while completing their coursework. However, many prospective educators remain unaware of this option, mistakenly believing they must return to school full-time without pay. To improve accessibility, PDE recently eliminated the fee for this certificate.

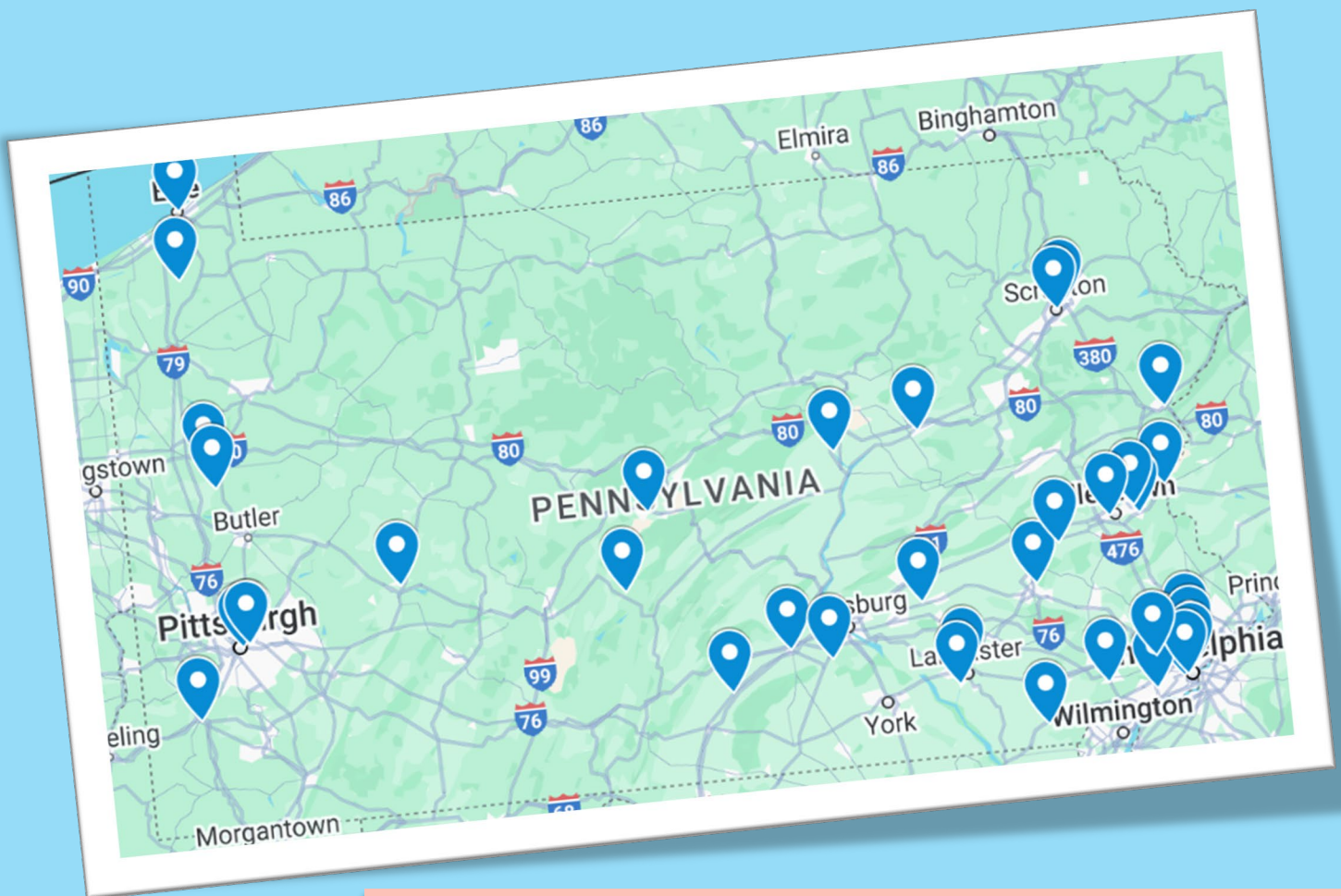
What Can You Do?

- Encourage your students to explore teaching as a career.
- Engage students through the [Global Scholars Program](#) and the [PA Seal of Biliteracy](#).
- Involve students in professional learning events and conferences.
- Speak positively about the teaching profession.
- Promote [PSMLA student membership](#) for college students.
- Recommend the [PSMLA Peer Mentoring Program](#) to new teachers or become a mentor.
- Suggest that colleagues in other departments with language experience add a language certificate through testing.
- Support and advocate for university language education programs.
- [Champion](#) language programs and teacher support initiatives at your school board and with policymakers.



PA Universities that Offer Language Study

Research supports the need for extended sequences of study to develop language proficiency. Despite all the recent cuts to language study at PA Universities, there remain many opportunities for students at the post-secondary level!



[Click here](#) or visit psmla.org to view the interactive map!

This map was created using an AI and human collaboration. Should you find any errors or omissions, please contact Dr. Christina Huhn, huhn@iup.edu or PAlanguageforum@psmla.org with the corrected information!



Will AI Replace Our Teachers?

Raquel Lodeiro

Penn State Harrisburg

As we navigate an increasingly digital world, a pervasive fear has emerged regarding the potential for artificial intelligence (AI) to replace teachers and other human roles in education (Handley, 2024). While AI creators assert that technology will never supplant the unique contributions of human educators, the importance of human connection in teaching cannot be overstated.

Human connection is vital in any educational setting, particularly when it comes to mental health and learning outcomes. Teachers are not just providers of information; they are mentors, guides, and emotional support for their students. The relationships that educators build

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AI systems lack the ability to read expressions, assess emotional states, and provide the personalized support that many students need to thrive.

with their learners significantly impact student engagement, motivation, and overall well-being. Research conducted by the American Psychological Association indicates that the human connection between teachers and students is crucial in promoting student motivation and engagement (American Psychological Association, 2020).

When students face challenges in their lives, their ability to learn can be severely hindered. For instance, a student struggling with mental

health issues may find it difficult to focus on lessons. In such cases, a teacher's ability to recognize and respond to emotional cues is invaluable—something AI simply cannot replicate. AI systems lack the ability to read expressions, assess emotional states, and provide the personalized support that many students need to thrive.

Consider popular educational tools like Duolingo, which aim to enhance language learning. While Duolingo offers some benefits, its effectiveness is limited. According to a study published in the *Modern Language Journal*, Duolingo's pedagogical content knowledge falls short in areas such as learner engagement and effective feedback (Chun, 2023). The platform relies heavily on repetitive exercises and lacks the nuanced understanding that a human teacher brings to the classroom.

The Educational Records Bureau emphasizes the importance of helping students understand the "why" behind each lesson. This cognitive skill development is critical and extends beyond simply producing a final product. Teachers facilitate a deeper understanding of content through discussions and interactions that AI cannot provide (Educational Records Bureau, 2023).

In a classroom, one size does not fit all. Teachers can adapt their methods based on individual student needs, learning styles, and external factors. This flexibility is crucial in fostering an environment where all students can succeed. AI, while capable of processing vast amounts of information, lacks the human judgment required to navigate complex social and emotional dynamics in the classroom.

Incorporating social-emotional learning—skills like empathy, conflict resolution, and emotional regulation—are essential components of effective teaching. As an example, since the pandemic, I have integrated activities that encourage students to engage in their mental

Emotional learning is fundamentally tied to academic success.

health, such as sharing pictures of themselves practicing self-care. These activities not only foster connections among peers but also help students feel seen and included.



Emotional learning is fundamentally tied to academic success. Research shows that students who feel included and connected to their teachers are more likely to retain information and perform better academically (Durlak et al., 2011). By creating an inclusive environment, teachers help students form meaningful connections that enhance learning retention and emotional well-being.

For instance, my colleague Dr. Charla Lorenzen, a Spanish and yoga instructor and owner of Lorenzen Studios, is a testament to the benefits of integrating emotional well-being into education: "Mindfulness practices and an emphasis on play have transformed my teaching and my students' learning experiences," she notes.

Dr. Lorenzen's work with the use of improv theater techniques in the language classroom is an example of the use of authentic language in meaningful contexts that require social collaboration, negotiation of meaning, and careful planning and guidance by a human teacher. These are crucial components that foster human connection and empathy in ways that no language-learning software could replicate.

While AI continues to evolve and find its place in the educational landscape, it is essential to recognize the irreplaceable value of human connection in teaching. The relationships formed between educators and students are foundational to effective learning. As we embrace technological advancements, we must remember that the heart of education lies in our ability to connect, empathize, and inspire those we teach.

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Integrating the Sustainable Development Goals in the language curriculum

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The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); or in Spanish, *Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible* (ODS) (Figure 1), recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth - all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests (United Nations, 2020). Many educators around the globe are already working to bring the SDGs to their classrooms by creating pathways and spaces for their students to take part in this collective movement that aims to make the world a better place.

In 2022, I designed and facilitated a course around the SDGs called *Spanish in the Community*. The course is relevant to the demands of the current digital and global world

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as well as in curricular experiential learning. In terms of course objectives, students can a) familiarize themselves with the Sustainable Development Goals, b) research impactful events around the SDGs organized by the United Nations and other organizations around the globe, and c) take action on campus and in the local community by organizing their own events to support the SDGs.

The following are examples of activities and projects that my students did during the course.

A) Introduction to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

After watching the introductory video *¿Sabes cuáles son los 17 objetivos de desarrollo sostenible?* ([Naciones Unidas](#), 2019), students reviewed the main ideas with interactive

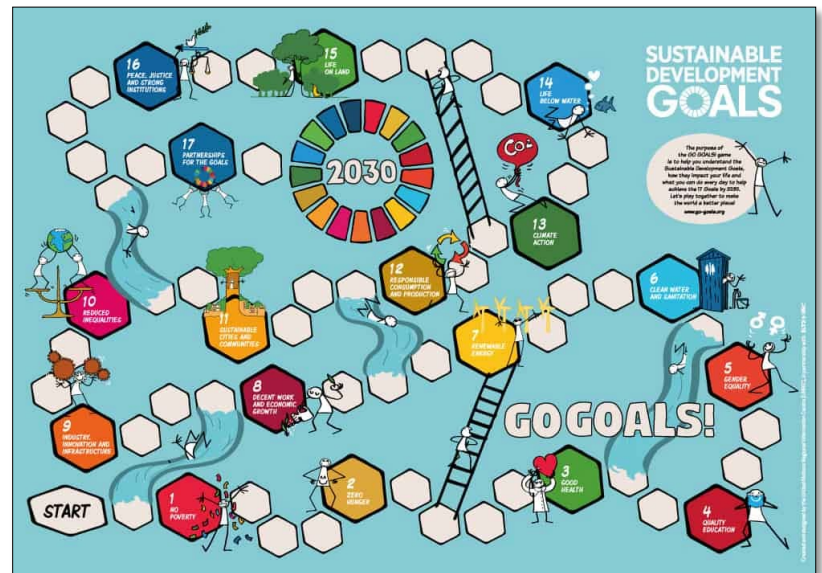
activities available at the website *ProfedeELE*. The introduction to the SDGs concluded with

students playing a round of the board game *Go Goals!* (Figure 2).

Figure 1. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2020)



Figure 2. *Go Goals!* (United Nations, 2025)



B) Goal #13: Climate Action

Students designed memes to support the *International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies*. Figure 3 is an example, in Spanish, or the prompt that I provided students. Figures 4 and 5 are two examples of memes that students created with *Mematic* (Müller, 2023).

Figure 3. Prompt (United Nations, 2022)

Cada año, el **Día Internacional del Aire Limpio por un Cielo Azul** (el 7 de septiembre) se centra en un tema diferente que pone de relieve ciertos aspectos de la problemática. En 2022, el tema es: **"El aire que compartimos"** y es que la contaminación atmosférica no tiene fronteras. Todos respiramos el mismo aire y por ello hay que asumir la responsabilidad colectiva de cuidar el medio ambiente pensando en todos.

Crea un **meme** con una foto, un mensaje y la etiqueta **#ElAireQueCompartimos**

Figure 4. Student-created meme #1



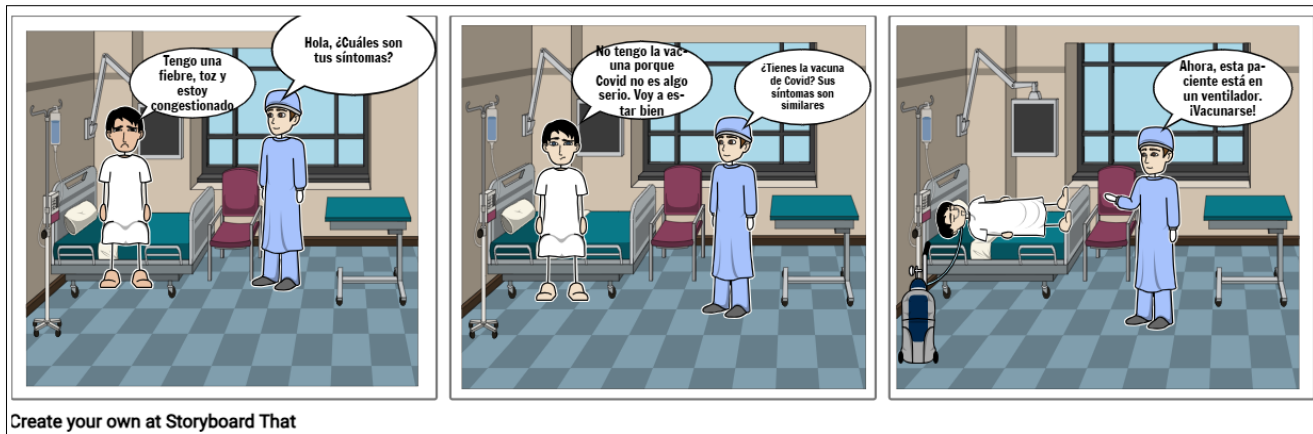
Figure 5. Student-created meme #2



C) Goal #3: Good health and well-being

Students designed comic strips to motivate/inspire others to act on Goal #3. Figure 6 is one example of a comic strip created with *StoryboardThat*. (Clever Prototypes LLC, 2025).

Figure 6. Student-created comic strip



D) Goal #16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

Students played the interactive games *Immigration Nation* and *Do I Have a Right?* around Goal 16, and they also completed activities before, during, and after the games (iCivics, 2025). Both games are available in English and Spanish, and activities can be downloaded from their website. Figures are screenshots of the initial game screen as well as examples of activities.

Figure 7. Immigration Nation



*Figures 7-10 (iCivics, 2025)

Figure 8. Writing activity for the game *Immigration Nation*

D. El sueño americano. Krísten es de Noruega y siempre ha querido vivir en los EE. UU. Habla tres idiomas y le encanta la ciudad de Nueva York y la comida picante. Ya es adulta y está lista para mudarse. Cuenta su historia y determina si puede o no vivir aquí. Usa la imaginación e inventa los detalles que sean necesarios.

Principio: Incluye detalles sobre Krísten antes de que se mude a los Estados Unidos.

Medio: Incluye detalles sobre cómo planea Krísten emigrar a los Estados Unidos.

Final: Incluye detalles sobre si Krísten pudo emigrar o no. Explica por qué o por qué no, y qué puerto utilizó.



Figure 9. Do I have a right?



Figure 10. Speaking activities for the game *Do I have a right?*

Principiante	Intermedio	Avanzado
Veo _____. ¿Qué ves tú?	Creo que él/ella está _____ y, luego, él o ella _____, porque _____.	Cuenta una historia breve sobre una persona de la imagen. Algunas preguntas posibles: ¿Quién es la persona? ¿Por qué está en el tribunal? ¿Cómo se siente? ¿Qué puede llegar a hacer después?

E) Goals #2 and #12: Zero Hunger and Responsible Consumption and Production

Students took action about some of the Goals on campus and in the local community. One of the student projects focused on raising awareness of food waste on campus. Below is the project proposal from the student, flyers that they created, and pictures from the event that was organized as a result.

“Para noviembre, mejoraré los hábitos de consumo de comida en el campus creando conocimiento de los desperdicios de alimentos y al crear conciencia, reducir la cantidad de desperdicios en el campus por medio de carteles colocados en las mesas del comedor y las áreas de comida alrededor. Si es posible colocar un contenedor claro con todos los desperdicios, hará todo más evidente para el público. (información para aprender, actividades para completar, número de personas a involucrar, etc.) Los carteles, colocados como centros de mesa, contendrían información como los desperdicios por cápita por persona viviendo en los estados unidos, porque es importante reducir los desperdicios, el impacto beneficioso que tiene en los esfuerzos por mejorar el medio ambiente y que pasaría si no cambiamos nuestros hábitos. Los carteles también podrían contener un código de QR para aprender más de los otros objetivos propuestos por las Naciones Unidas.”

Images 1 & 2. Photos from the Food Waste event



Figures 11 and 12:

Flyer displayed at the Food Waste event

¿SABÍAS QUE?

DESPERDICIO DE COMIDA EN EE. UU.

El objetivo 2 propuesto por las Naciones Unidas tiene la meta de poner fin al hambre y mejorar la calidad de alimentación mientras se adoptan medidas de agricultura sostenible. Mejorando los hábitos de consumo y disminuyendo los desperdicios de comida se ayuda a combatir la escasez de alimentos.

Objective 2 proposed by the United Nations has the goal to end hunger and improve nutrition quality while adopting sustainable agricultural measures. Improving consumption habits and reducing food waste helps combat food shortages.

Learn Más

El objetivo 12 está creado con la intención de combatir el cambio climático, reducir la pérdida de biodiversidad, y disminuir la contaminación de recursos naturales. Creando conciencia del consumo y con la comparación de recursos se puede reducir, incluso, revertir algunos de los problemas que afectan a nuestro planeta.

Objective 12 is created in an effort of combating climate change, reducing the loss of biodiversity, and reducing the pollution of natural resources. By bringing awareness to the consumption of resources, we can reduce some problems that affect our planet.

2 **Zero Hunger**
Hambre Cero

12 **RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PROTECTION**
PRODUCCIÓN Y CONSUMO RESPONSABLES

DESPERDICIO DE COMIDA EN EE. UU.

FOOD WASTE IN THE UNITED STATES.

¿SABÍAS QUE?

De acuerdo con el estudio realizado por Feeding America (Alimentando América), **81.646.626.600 Kilogramos** (108 billones de toneladas) de comida se desperdician al año.

FEEDING AMERICA

According to a study conducted by Feeding America, **108 billion pounds** (81,646,626,600 Kilograms) of food is wasted each year.

F) Conclusion

There are many more class activities and projects that my students designed during the course. If anyone is interested in learning more, please don't hesitate to contact me directly. As a conclusion, I would like to include the last journal entry of the student who hosted the Food Waste event.

Student Journal Entry [sic.]:

"Mis acciones de impacto global incluyeron disminuir el consumo de energía y uso de plástico. Las acciones personales son usar menos agua al tomar una ducha y también cargar los aparatos electrónicos menos frecuentes. Mi proyecto enfocado en el desperdicio de comida fue una acción para crear conciencia del desperdicio que se

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crea durante un día. La traducción del libreto para Blackburn Center fue personalmente una de las acciones más significativas para mí porque al hacer documentos de este tipo accesibles le puede salvar la vida a alguien. Durante el semestre, mientras desarrollamos los proyectos en la universidad, surgían diferentes situaciones que requerían diferentes conocimientos. Aprendí de la importancia de analizar todas las posibles situaciones que pueden surgir al querer hacer algún cambio. Lo que me pareció sorprendente al entender esto es que también las organizaciones humanitarias enfrentan conflictos similares si hay poca accesibilidad a la comunidad. Ahora comprendo más completamente por qué ciertas cosas no se pueden lograr con tanta facilidad en ciertas áreas bajo diferentes gobiernos."

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Evaluating the Impact of Free Reading Classroom Libraries in High School World Language Classes

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Colonial School District

Background

In the Fall of 2022, the Colonial School District Education Foundation (CSDEF) provided a grant to establish classroom libraries for the purpose of expanding free voluntary reading (FVR) routines in its high school world language classes (originally piloted as described in the action research article by Madel, 2020). In response to foundational literature and expected outcomes, the expressed goals and objectives of the program were to spark joy and cultivate feelings of success while supporting the development of target language proficiency in accordance with course communication targets.

Various world languages and selected levels implemented free reading opportunities within course routines as a pilot. Multiple sections were identified to pilot the program based on unique levels of readiness in terms of student proficiency and curricular flexibility. Specifically, data was collected at multiple stages to inform the following questions:

1. How interested are students in utilizing the free reading library during [an independent study hall period]?
2. How often and for how long was free reading implemented during class time?
3. How much do students read for pleasure in English before taking the pilot course? Does

the amount of pleasure reading differ significantly after concluding a course and engaging with the FVR project?

4. How much do students enjoy reading for pleasure in the target language before taking the pilot course? Does students' enjoyment for pleasure reading in the target language differ significantly after concluding a course and engaging with the FVR project?
5. How confident are students when reading in the target language? Does their reading confidence differ significantly after concluding my course and engaging with the FVR project?
6. What are students' general opinions about the implementation of FVR in their language class?

Ethical Considerations & Permissions

This action research study was conducted as part of a district-approved and grant-funded initiative. As an informal reflection on instructional practices, no formal IRB approval was required, and data collection was conducted within the standard professional framework of evaluating instructional programs. The process and outcomes were under the purview of supervising building- and district-level administration.

Action Research Data

This report shares the summarized descriptive quantitative data and raw qualitative responses collected to inform the aforementioned action research questions and are presented below
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organized by each question. Further analysis would facilitate making statistically significant or otherwise empirical conclusions.

1. How interested are students in utilizing the free reading library during Bonus Block?

Between September 28, 2022, to December 22, 2022, free reading in Spanish was offered on eight separate occasions during Bonus Block. Attendance during these bonus block sessions ranged from 3 to 17 students. On average, 12.25 students attended bonus blocks dedicated to free reading in Spanish. During the data collection period, there were 98 unique instances of students attending a bonus block expressly dedicated to free reading in Spanish.

2. How often and for how long was free reading implemented during class time?

Each pilot teacher maintained records of when and for how long they used class time for students to read independently in their target languages. On average, pilot classes implemented a free-reading session about 13 times during the pilot period, for an average of approximately 10 minutes. Implementation frequency depended on course and ranged, however, from once to 24 times and implementation duration ranged from 8 minutes to 15 minutes per instance. This information is summarized and further detailed in Table 1. Spanish 1B is included in this data set as they had a unique experience of exploring the books on one occasion but, due to their limited language proficiency, were

not suitable to participate in the free-reading program to the same degrees as the other levels.

3. How much do students read for pleasure in English before taking the pilot course? Does the amount of pleasure reading differ significantly after concluding a course and engaging with the FVR project?

At the beginning of the Fall 2022 semester, students were asked to share how many books they read for pleasure in English the prior year. At the culmination of the pilot period, students were then asked to report how many books in their target language they had read. Table 2 shows the summaries of students' responses at both intervals. Responses show a significant increase in pleasure reading in the target

language after concluding the pilot period and engaging with the FVR project as compared to total pleasure reading in English in an entire year. The average number of books read for pleasure in English during an entire year was 4.73 compared to 3.68 in the target language from a pilot period of about three months.

Note that initial data collected regarding pleasure reading in English refers to a period of an entire year. Averages with outliers omitted (identified via Tukey's, 1977, fences test) are also shown in Table 2. The data collected after the pilot program represents just the pilot implementation period of approximately three months. As such, the FVR book totals could be quadrupled for a more reasonable and representative comparison.

Table 1

Implementation frequencies and total class time dedicated per language/level.

Course	Spanish 1B	Spanish 3	Spanish 3H	Spanish 4	Spanish 4H	French 3H	French 4H
Implementation Range	9/12/22-12/22/22	9/30/22-12/22/22	9/9/22-12/22/22	9/30/22-12/22/22	9/12/22-12/22/22	9/30/22-12/20/22	9/12/22-12/22/22
FVR in-class frequency	1	11	24	10	14	12	21
Class minutes dedicated per instance	15	10	8	10	10	10	9
Total time dedicated to FVR in class	15	110	192	100	140	120	189

Table 2

Average responses at initial data collection interval and after about three months of FVR pilot implementation.

PILOT CLASS	Beginning of Semester (Pre-FVR experience)			End of Semester (Post-FVR experience)		
	Pleasure Reading - Total Books English	Target Language Reading Confidence	Target Language Reading Enjoyment	Pleasure Reading - Total Books Target Language	Target Language Reading Confidence	Target Language Reading Enjoyment
	<i>Last year</i>			<i>9/12/22-12/22/22</i>		
Spanish 3	3.69					
<i>Outliers removed</i>	1.36	4.97	4.42	3.25	5.65	5.49
Spanish 3H	5.6					
<i>Outliers removed</i>	2.28	6.05	5.49	4.11	6.98	6.64
French 3H	3.06					
<i>Outliers removed</i>	2.5	6.11	5.33	NR	8.80	8.50
Spanish 4	2.41					
<i>Outliers removed</i>	2.17	4.83	4.08	3.93	6.00	7.50
Spanish 4H	7.15					
<i>Outliers removed</i>	1.84	6.22	5.07	4.80	6.89	6.33
French 4H	6.47					
<i>Outliers removed</i>	4.77	5.81	5.13	2.29	6.35	6.65
ALL PILOTS	4.73	5.67	4.92	3.68	6.78	6.85
<i>Outliers removed</i>	2.49					

1. How much do students enjoy reading for pleasure in the target language before taking the pilot course? Does students' enjoyment for pleasure reading in the target language differ significantly after concluding a course and engaging with the FVR project?

At the beginning of the Fall 2022 semester, students were asked to rate how much they enjoy reading in Spring 2025

their target languages. At the culmination of the pilot period, students were prompted once more to

rate their enjoyment. Table 2 shows the summaries of students' responses at both intervals. Note that response values were anchored at 1= Not at all! and 10= Very much!

Before the pilot course and FVR project, students had a moderate enjoyment of reading for pleasure in the target language, with an average enjoyment level of 4.92 across all piloted levels. After the course and FVR engagement, their enjoyment significantly increased to an average of 6.85. This substantial rise indicates that the FVR project effectively enhanced students' pleasure in reading the target language, fostering a more engaging and enjoyable reading experience.

2. How confident are students when reading in the target language? Does their reading confidence differ significantly after concluding my course and engaging with the FVR project?

At the beginning of the Fall 2022 semester, students were asked to rate how confident they feel they are reading in their target languages. At the culmination of the pilot period, students were prompted once more to rate their confidence. Table 2 shows the summaries of students' responses at both intervals. Note that response values were anchored at 1= Not at all! and 10= Very confident!

Before the pilot course and FVR project, students' confidence in reading the target language was moderately high, with an average confidence level of 5.67 across all piloted levels. After concluding the Spring 2025

course and engaging with the FVR project, their confidence significantly increased to an average of 6.78. This notable improvement suggests that the FVR project effectively boosted students' confidence in reading the target language, helping them to feel more capable and assured in their reading abilities.

3. What are students' general opinions about the implementation of FVR in their language class?

Students were asked to provide additional comments or suggestions regarding the free reading experience upon the final data collection interval. Total responses from students per pilot language and level are compiled in Table 3. Reviewing the individual responses, certain notable themes emerge:

a. Frequency and Duration Preferences

Many students expressed a desire for more frequent and longer reading sessions, with some suggesting specific durations (e.g., 10-15 minutes) or more consistent scheduling. Other students suggested reading should occur more consistently and frequently, especially towards the end of the semester when their comprehension had grown.

b. Enjoyment and Engagement

Overall, students enjoyed the free reading sessions and found them beneficial for building their language skills. Enjoyment varied, with some students specifically liking the challenge and others finding certain types of books or the act of reading

itself less engaging. Additionally, students appreciated having a variety of books to choose from, including different genres and difficulty levels.

c. Confidence and Skill Improvement

Many students reported an increase in their reading confidence and skills as a result of the FVR sessions. Comments indicated that reading in class helped them improve their vocabulary, comprehension, and overall language proficiency. Some students noted that reading simpler books boosted their confidence, while others felt that exposure to different types of books was beneficial.

d. Suggestions for Improvement

Students made various suggestions for improving the FVR sessions, such as having more advanced or interesting books, adding Spanish versions of popular books, and ensuring a wider selection of materials. Some students proposed incorporating more interactive elements, such as group discussions or reading aloud, to enhance the reading

experience. Recommendations also included having more engaging and relatable content to maintain interest and improve comprehension.

e. Personal Preferences and Challenges

Individual preferences varied, with some students enjoying nonfiction while others preferred fiction or comics. Some students found it challenging to read in the target language due to unfamiliar vocabulary or less engaging content. A few students mentioned difficulties in maintaining attention or understanding the material, highlighting the need for appropriate reading levels and more support.

f. Pedagogical Impact

Students acknowledged the positive impact of the FVR project on their language learning, particularly in terms of reading and speaking skills. Many recognized that free-reading sessions contributed to their overall language development and confidence. The project was generally seen as a valuable and beneficial component of their language education.



Table 3*Pilot students' comments and suggestions per pilot language/level.***Spanish
3H**

reading more often because i always forget where i am in the book
I like it because it works your brain
I feel that taking eight minutes of the class to read independently helped me to build my speaking skills
When it says confident in my ability to read in Spanish, I'm just talking about the simple books I read.
I really liked this part of class :)
Nope
no, I enjoyed it and I think it is good as it is
Maybe more frequently but so far I think its been a good amount of times per week.
I think it should be longer but less days
Allow us more time to read. Maybe 10 minutes or 15.
I only read nonfiction, so my only experience with fiction was the in class novels. That might be why my confidence is so low, due to the fact that I am being exposed to a different type of book that I am not used to.
I typically enjoyed the free reading. I think towards the end of the semester like now it would be nice to have it a little more because our spanish comprehension has grown.
I think that towards the end of the semester we stopped reading as much so I think it should be a little more frequent/consistent.
I really like how theres different levels you can choose from
nope, I like it
i very much enjoy
no i just don't like reading
I think the reading schedule should be more consistent. When I'm reading a longer book I sometimes forget what happened in the reading before.
There should be a few more interesting advanced books
maybe like a safety net like to understand the words
Yo prefiero leer mas y es necesario tener mas oportunidades para leer independiente. Es muy benefical para entender la lengua de los Espanoles.
I enjoyed it, I think it should be a little longer.

**Spanish
4H**

I suggest to other students that they try reading more advanced books. It's a good challenge.
Personally I enjoy it and hope that the other language teachers give free reading time too.
I like to see books that I know in English because it is easier to follow along.
I feel like it should be a once a week thing maybe like every Monday
No, es bueno experiencia, mucho ayudar
I enjoy it, and I think it's very beneficial for me and my classmates!
Not my favorite thing to do
I think everything was very helpful and allowed me to find new vocabulary
No, I like it and think it's beneficial
The majority of books ive read this semester have actually ben intriuging.
I like it. It exposes me to other words.
I like it because it allows me to feel like I am actually learning a language, and intepreting it.
I suggest you add spanish versions of popular books.
More selection if its possible.
I think 10 minutes is a good duration to read for at the start of class

French 4H

I did enjoy it and I wish we did it more often. I found it helpful to practice reading in French.
Its nice as a once a week thing.
I suggest a little more reading time because some of us are still behind in our reading skills.
its fun to sit every once and a while but not everyday
I would like to do more SSR.
since we have B lunch I'd rather use the entire 30 minutes before or after lunch to read
I enjoyed +A1:B44being able to read the books, but i think if i read more complicated books, i wouldn't have been able to read them.

Spanish 3

it just isn't for me
It was alright, it just didn't really keep my attention
it was alright
My favorite books were the picture books with rhymes like the elephant one. I didn't enjoy the ones focused on a teenage main character as much as I did the ones focusing on animals.
The novels we read helped me improve my Spanish skills in reading and speaking
I enjoy reading spanish books but some are a little more boring.
I really liked getting to read because I am more confident in my ability to read in Spanish than to talk in Spanish. I enjoyed getting to experiment with different reading levels and genres too, from children's literature to informational books about animals and people.

I suggest to read books on topics that relate to the students.
No i think its relaxing
The reading wasnt my favorite but I think it helped me learn better.
I think that the reading in spanish was a good exercise for me because it helped me understand more spanish personally
I am in the middle I do not mind it or not enjoy it
I feel like the reading is actually pretty good because its cool seeing how many words i can understand and how well i can understand the book, even though its in a different language.
I did not like the reading as much because I felt bored and it just was not for me.
I like it better when the teacher reads it aloud or in small groups where on person reads the book and the other people gives a summary on what that page/section was about.
I llks the books to be engaging more than just straight paragraghs
I feel as though we should all get books rather then just paper because like it's kind of a waste of all that paper. But other then that i liked the reading and i thought it was interesting all though some of the activity work with it was a little confusing i thoroughly enjoyed it.
It can get a little boring at times but when you give us the assignment and we're able to just work on it with peers, I feel as if its more fun and efficient to do it that way.
No I like it
I enjoyed the reading because it gave me a challenge because some of the words I was unsure of but reading the other information gave me an idea to what it was.
It was hard reading it when I don't know most of the words in Spanish. The worksheets were not engaging for me but I thought that the overall plot of the book is interesting. The book has a lot of turns and surprises in it which I like.
I know this may not be applied but what if you had the kids who didn't want to read because they either can't read and or don't want to just listen to the book or another Spanish book online because some students tend to learn auditory. I am not one of those students and I think the reading was great and much needed for our current grade and skill level!
I feel like sometimes I would zone out or not pay attention to the words, so I think having a lot of easier books to read would be helpful in making sure people understand whats going on in the book.
yes, at times the reading can be a little bit boring, and i'd rather work with my peers around me/near me because the work in the class and reading is much easier and more efficent.

I really enjoy free reading because it is a great way to enjoy learning. Having a story to follow along with makes learning more enjoyable and I perform better while doing it. Also, I am not very confident in my Spanish reading so I enjoy getting better at it.
I preferred reading because it helped me strengthen my connection skills when I didn't know certain words.
I really enjoyed the time I had to myself to read. It was interesting to see how much Spanish I actually understand.
It was a good way to start Fridays.
I liked it because it was time to practice Spanish
They were good stories to read, but I just can't read Spanish that fluently.
I don't really like to read to begin with and the book is in Spanish which makes reading and understanding it harder. I did enjoy the quiet time though.
When I read, I only know a few words in the paragraph. I just piece them together and assume what the paragraph means. I've been studying Spanish verbs to understand sentences better.
I feel like there should be more comic and comedy books that can keep people's interest.
I believe that free reading is a beneficial way to improve a student's exposure to Spanish being expressed naturally and fluently. This technique of seeing and piecing together plots and stories in Spanish is also a different way to provide learning of the grammar as well. Though there are many benefits to this style of learning. I do believe that some of us are not receiving the right level of content to maximize comprehension. The novels or stories provided usually do not match the level being too extreme in one direction for understanding. I do believe that it is also more enjoyable if free reading involves more engagement with other students to further exploit its benefits. Chapter check-ins with others and increased group activities could make free reading less tedious.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the implementation of FVR in high school world language classes, supported by a grant from the host district's Education Foundation, demonstrated promising outcomes and corroborated findings originally shared by Madel (2020). The pilot program aimed to enhance students' enjoyment, confidence, and proficiency in

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their target languages through regular and voluntary reading sessions. Data collected over the pilot period indicated a significant increase in both the amount of pleasure reading in the target language and students' enjoyment and confidence in reading. Students expressed positive feedback, highlighting the benefits of diverse and frequent reading opportunities, though they also suggested

improvements such as a broader selection of books and more interactive reading activities. Overall, the FVR project effectively supported the development of language skills and fostered a more engaging and enjoyable learning environment.

The results of this pilot study suggest that implementing FVR in world language classrooms can foster increased confidence, engagement, and reading enjoyment among students. By providing structured opportunities for independent reading in the target language, educators can support language development while also cultivating intrinsic motivation. Teachers and administrators seeking to enhance language acquisition and literacy should consider how integrating FVR, whether through classroom libraries, dedicated reading time, or access to engaging, level-appropriate texts, might fit within their own instructional contexts.

Works Cited

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Research Spotlight: Strengthening Language Education Through Peer Mentoring

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collaboration, and increased use of communicative language teaching. Findings suggest that such mentoring programs can enhance teacher retention and improve instructional practices.

What the researchers did

- A qualitative study was conducted using in-depth interviews with five participants (three mentors and two mentees) from the PSMLA Peer Mentoring Program.
- Participants engaged in a structured mentoring process divided into three phases:
 - Phase 1: Setting classroom management and instructional goals.
 - Phase 2: Focusing on personal professional growth with mentor support.
 - Phase 3: Engaging in shared professional learning experiences.
- Researchers observed program meetings, reviewed mentoring documents, and analyzed participant interviews to identify themes.

Research Brief: [Journal Article] "Peer Mentoring for Professional Growth and Sustainability: A Model for Support, Leadership, and Learning"

In the March 2025 edition of the NECTFL Review, a research study examining the PSMLA Peer Mentoring Program was published by authors Rich Madel and Nancy Zimmerman. Below is a summary of key takeaways from the article.

What this study is about and why it is important

This study explores how a year-long, structured peer mentoring program supports world language teachers in their professional growth and classroom practices. With teacher shortages and high attrition rates in language education, there is an urgent need for effective support systems. The Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association (PSMLA) developed a peer mentoring program to provide structured guidance for both new and experienced language teachers. This study investigates the benefits of participation, including professional development, Spring 2025

What the researchers found

Reflective Teaching and Classroom Practices:

- Both mentors and mentees improved their instructional strategies, particularly in communicative language teaching.
- Mentors reported greater self-reflection on their own practices.

Collaboration and Professional Development:

- Participants valued opportunities to share strategies, attend conferences, and discuss pedagogical challenges.
- Exposure to professional networks encouraged ongoing learning and engagement.

Support and Encouragement:

- The program provided emotional and professional support, reinforcing teachers' commitment to the field.
- Mentors found renewed enthusiasm for teaching, while mentees felt more confident in their roles.

Challenges and Areas for Improvement:

- Some mentees struggled with differences in teaching contexts (e.g., urban vs. suburban schools).
- Participants suggested more in-person meetings and mentor-mentee pairings based on school environments.

Things to consider

- Peer mentoring programs can play a crucial role in supporting language teachers, particularly in reducing professional isolation and improving retention.
- Future mentoring initiatives might benefit from closer attention to mentor-mentee

matching, considering factors like teaching context and geographic proximity.

- Schools and professional organizations could explore ways to provide more institutional support for mentorship, such as funding conference attendance or allowing classroom observations.

This study highlights the value of structured mentoring programs in strengthening language teaching practices and fostering a supportive professional community.

If you are interested in participating in the PSMLA Peer Mentoring Program as a mentor or a mentee, you can visit psmla.org for more information on how to apply!



Call for Submissions – Peer Reviewed Articles

Pennsylvania Language Forum: Peer Review Process

Aim and Scope: *Pennsylvania Language Forum (PLF)* is PSMLA’s annual publication. The journal features a selection of original scholarly articles that are chosen by a peer review process.

The Editorial Board of *PLF* welcomes original scholarly, research-based articles that address issues directly related to world language teachers in Pennsylvania. Peer Reviewed articles should maintain a classroom relevance for world language educators at all levels in Pennsylvania. Dissertations should be refined and re-focused, as dissertations are too long and detailed for a published article. Research conducted in the K-12 classroom is highly encouraged.

Potential Topics may include:

- **Empirical research studies** and application of high-leverage practices in the World Language Classroom in the state of PA. Submissions of *empirical research* for the peer-reviewed section of the journal should generally include the following sections
 - ✓ Introduction
 - ✓ Literature Review
 - ✓ Methodology
 - ✓ Discussion or Results
 - ✓ Implications for the Classroom
 - ✓ Conclusion
 - ✓ Acknowledgements (optional)
 - ✓ Works Cited
- Literature reviews of published scholarship on *Technology in World Language Education, including AI, classroom applications, etc.* The reviews of literature should include research with a classroom focus, and focus on research completed within the last 10 years”
- Scholarly research focusing on *language proficiency development.*
- Scholarly articles on **literary topics, cultural topics, or interdisciplinary topics** are welcome, provided the article is focused on classroom applications.
- Literature reviews or scholarship on *World Language Advocacy.*
- Scholarship on *unique learning contexts, such as content-based instruction, heritage language learners, special needs, or social-emotional learning, among others with a classroom connection to the PA World Language Classroom.*

All submissions should follow the general constructs of academic research and be applicable to the World Language Classroom in Pennsylvania.

Peer-Review Process: All manuscripts follow a blind review process and are first reviewed by the editor(s) of the journal and then sent for blind review by members of the Editorial Board. Manuscripts must follow the submission guidelines below.

Manuscript Preparation Guidelines

1. Submissions must be original work that has not been previously published or be presently under review by another journal.

2. Submissions must be written in standard academic English. Authors should follow APA guidelines consistently. Use https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html as a reference as needed.
3. All submissions are initially read by the Editor(s) (first review) and then if deemed appropriate and *all* guidelines were followed, sent out to a group of appropriate experts for blind review. Submissions should include a title page as a separate document that includes:
 - a. Article Title
 - b. Article abstract
 - c. Name(s) of author(s)
 - d. Affiliation(s)
 - e. Language(s) taught
 - f. Intended level(s), when relevant
 - g. Release Form(s) for any images or materials (available at <https://psmla.org/pennsylvania-language-forum>)
4. The anonymity of the author(s) *must be ensured* by removing all identifiers from the manuscript. This can be done by referring to any identifying information as “Author X, University X, etc.)
5. All manuscripts must be submitted as .doc, docx, or rtf files. Use Times New Roman 12 point, double space.
6. All in-text quotes require page numbers or paragraph sources for nonpaginated sources. Use *italics* for emphasis; not quote marks.
7. Word limitations are as follows: Title [15 words]; Abstract [150 words]; Key Words [5]; full article, [approximately 5,000 words (roughly 15 pages)].
8. Submissions must be submitted online using the submission link on the [PSMLA website](#).
9. All submissions will be acknowledged by the Editor(s) within 2 weeks of receipt.
10. Authors are responsible for completing Human Subjects and IRB requirements and securing publication rights when using images.

Rubric for peer-reviewed submissions:

	Exceeds	Meets Expectations	Further Development Required
Relevance	Article is very relevant and timely both to the Aim and Scope of the PLF and World Languages.	Article is relevant to Aim and Scope of PLF but some improvements should be considered by the editor(s).	Article topic not relevant to Aim and Scope of PLF.
Citations	Article is well cited, following APA citation guidelines as identified in the Author instructions.	Article is well cited, following APA citation guidelines, but there are a few errors that will require attention from the editors,	Article is missing citations or citations are largely inaccurate.
Mechanics	Article is very well-written, free of typographical or structural errors.	Article is well-written and free of typographical errors but may have a few sections that will require the editor(s) attention.	Article contains significant typographical errors or structural errors beyond what the editorial process can support.

Thank you to all our authors, reviewers and
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language-forum](https://psmla.org/pennsylvania-language-forum)



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