

# REF

# PENNSYLVANIA LANGUAGE FORUM



Pennsylvania State Modern  
Language Association

Fall 2024

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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 back pages 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](http://www.psmla.org)). All other questions may be directed to Christina Huhn or Nathan Campbell, Co-Editors of *PLF*, at [PALanguageForum@psmla.org](mailto: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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**Nathan Campbell & Christina Huhn**  
**Co-Editors, *Pennsylvania Language Forum***  
**PSMLA**

Returning to our institutions of learning after a summer of respite from the hustle and bustle of the busy school season may usher in a myriad of feelings. As educators, we find motivation and encouragement from a variety of sources. These support systems help us to take on and overcome the daily challenges we face as we work to protect our programs, grow ourselves professionally, and most importantly, educate our students. In this edition of the *Pennsylvania Language Forum*, we asked teachers to focus on the positive aspects of our job. What motivates us to do our best? As you read, we encourage you to take time to ask yourself the same question and reflect on all the positive elements of our sacred profession.

The confluence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications and well-tested teaching strategies continue to emerge as developers aim to best incorporate this new(er) technology into the realm of education. Cherie Garret offers insight and recommendations for several popular websites that now incorporate AI assistants. Check it out on p. 15. If this topic interests you, or you are new to the topic, please see our spring 2024 edition, where we published several articles on the topic of AI.

First launched over a year ago, PSMLA's World Language Task Force has been working to organize a Pennsylvania World Language Education Summit. The summit will take place on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025, in Harrisburg. This monumental event has been led by our advocacy committee and spearheaded by Cherie Garrett. There are two important updates from our Advocacy committee in this issue. Please read about the state of education as it relates to world languages in Pennsylvania on p. 10 and the United States as a whole on p. 12.

This fall issue also features a Peer Reviewed article by Zambrano-Paff, Wiederhold and Loughary, entitled Literacy Practices Across Cultures: Intercultural Connection between Language, Equality, and Inclusion in the Classroom. This self-study explores how ESL and FL teachers can make a connection between language, empathy, artifacts, and music to teach cross-cultural communication, diversity, inclusion, equity, and differences through children's programming. Check it out on **p. 23**

The editors of this journal continue to be inspired and impressed by the work of members and colleagues. We hope that you too will be inspired and will join us in our common cause to share best strategies, advocate for our programs, and guarantee our students the best education that we can offer them.

Finally, as you read through this issue, consider the amazing things you are doing in your classroom. Are you willing to share? Check out submission guidelines in the about page of this journal or visit our publications tab on the PSMLA website.

May this school year be full of positive moments that remind you why you chose this career.

All the best, your editors.



# World Languages in Pennsylvania



## Student Needs:



- Cultural awareness for interactions with diverse populations
- Language proficiency in at least 1 additional language to communicate with diverse populations
- Skills & knowledge to fill demand for bilingual workers
- Well-funded teacher training & study abroad opportunities

## PSMLA Exemplary Program (PEP) Award:

- Identifies and publicly recognizes excellent world language programs in the Commonwealth
- Award duration is 3 years
- First offered in 2005; now offered annually
- In 2023, 21 schools were recognized

## Governor's School for Global and International Studies:

- 4-week program at the University of Pittsburgh for high school juniors & seniors
- Students develop critical thinking & communication skills, and study critical languages & cultures

## State-Level Needs:



- World language supervisor at PDE
- Funding for proficiency assessments for PA Seal of Biliteracy via BEST Act
- Address teacher shortage
- Funding for teacher training & study abroad opportunities

## PA Statistics and Information:



- Every school district must offer at least 2 languages + English
- There is no statewide graduation requirement for world languages
- More than 70K English learners (ELs) are enrolled in PA schools



## PSMLA Task Force:

A group of educators & language affiliates advocating for:

- A World Language Supervisor in PDE
- Recruitment of world language teachers
- The World LEAP Act
- K-12 world language and dual language education grants program

## PA Seal of Biliteracy (PASB):

- Recognized by PDE in March, 2022
- Certifies intermediate-high and advanced proficiency in English + 1 or more languages
- In 2021-22: 130 students received PASB, representing 19 languages
  - In 2022-2023: 341 students, representing 30 languages
- PA was the 46th state to recognize the Seal
- Many colleges and universities now offer credit for the PASB



**DON'T  
MISS THESE  
UPCOMING  
WORLD  
LANGUAGE  
EVENTS!**

Appalachian Professional Language Educators' Society Fall Workshop

## **THE INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT**

*Design, Implementation, Feedback*

This full-day workshop will introduce the Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA) as an integral component of second language instruction. Participants will learn how to design and implement the three modes of the IPA into their language classes. The critical role of the feedback loop in the IPA and performance rubrics will be discussed. Participants will analyze various types of multimodal authentic texts and will be guided through a text using the comprehension guide template. The goal of this workshop is to equip instructors to design and integrate their own IPAs into their classes. Participants are encouraged to bring an authentic text, which can be printed, audio, or video (or a combination) and which should feature an engaging and meaningful context for students to explore; participants will use this text to begin to design the overarching tasks of an IPA.



**Saturday, October 26, 2024**

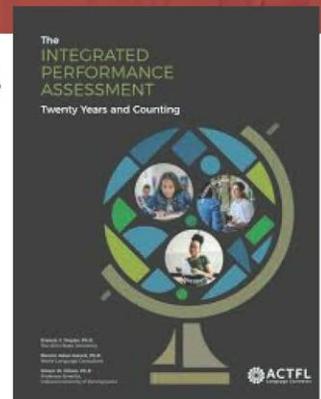
**9:00 - 3:00 pm**



**126 JANE  
LEONARD HALL  
IUP Campus**



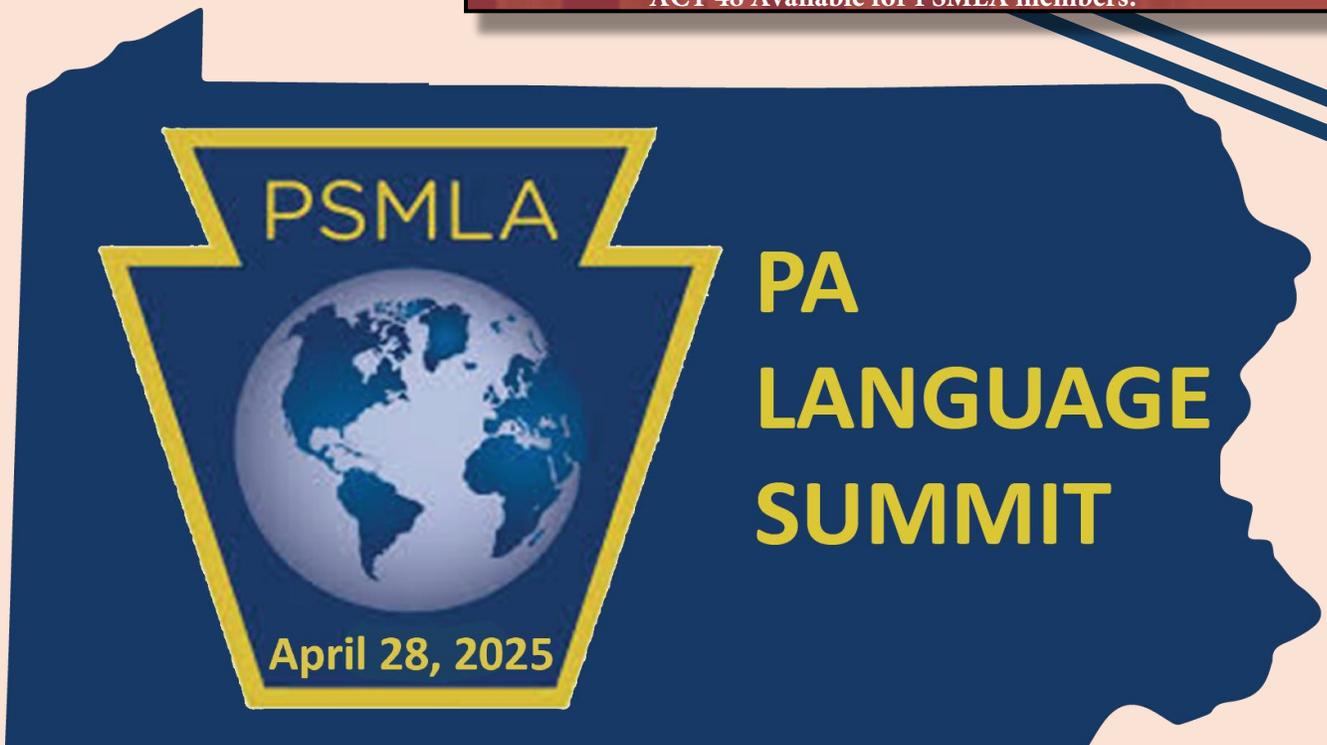
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**ACT 48 Available for PSMLA members!**



# INTRODUCING OUR 2024-2025 CATALOG!

At Klett World Languages, we are dedicated to building the future of World Languages through **transformative language education in the United States**. We provide high-quality language materials in **Spanish, French, German, and Italian**, thoughtfully crafted for today's reality in U.S. classrooms, following established standards and proven pedagogical methods. These materials are designed to **foster authentic communicative competence and empower global citizens**. Join us in shaping a future where language education thrives.

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# What is the current state of world language education in Pennsylvania?

Raquel Lodeiro, *Penn State Harrisburg*  
Charla Lorenzen, *Elizabethtown College*

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The Pennsylvania State Modern Languages Association (PSMLA) advocacy committee chair Cherie Garrett recently hosted two one-hour meetings on August 7<sup>th</sup> and August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024 to inform teachers, educational leaders, and other professionals of the current situation in world language education in Pennsylvania. The following data, which outline many of our current challenges, come from her presentation.

According to the most recent Pennsylvania State of Education report, **only seven other U.S. states receive a lower proportion of K-12 public education funding from state sources than Pennsylvania** does, even though Pennsylvania ranks seventh in public school enrollments in the U.S.<sup>1</sup>. To compound the situation, a staffing shortage is one of the biggest challenges we face in our state<sup>2</sup>, and teacher burnout costs us valuable resources amounting in

monetary terms to over \$20,000 per teacher that leaves the classroom.<sup>3</sup>

The same Pennsylvania State of Education report states that World Language teachers are the 4<sup>th</sup> most needed educators in PA. However, according to The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), the number of teaching certificates issued for teaching world languages has decreased 73% over the past 10 years. The Educator Preparation and Certification report compiled by PDE for in-state level 1 certifications of French, German, Latin and Spanish shows that these decreased from 236 in the years 2010-2011 to 46 in 2022-2023<sup>4</sup>. Enrollments in undergraduate teacher education programs have also decreased significantly. The PA State System of Higher Education PASSHE data reports in the fall 2010 there were 30,535 education majors but in the fall of 2023 the enrollment was only 15,429.<sup>5</sup>

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***“...the number of teaching certificates issued for teaching world languages has decreased 73% over the past 10 years...”***

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The question becomes: who will teach languages other than English to our students, at a time when 9 out of 10 employers in the US rely on employees with language skills other than English

but 1 in 3 employers reports a language skills gap in the workforce?<sup>6</sup> Anyone who thinks that being monolingual in English is sufficient in our state, let alone in our country, should bear in mind that international companies from all over the world are located everywhere, including throughout Pennsylvania. According to Dun & Bradstreet **there are 6,549 foreign-owned locations in Pennsylvania**, employing over 335,530 people.<sup>7</sup> Within these companies and beyond, there are many job openings for those with multilingual skills; according to Indeed, there are **currently over 2,000 vacant Spanish bilingual job positions** in PA<sup>8</sup>. World language educators are prepared to engage students in proficiency-oriented, standards-based education and to prepare future teachers of those languages, but we need support and guidance to do our best work.

According to the PSMLA advocacy committee, World language teachers in Pennsylvania are up against many additional challenges, beyond those mentioned above. Of utmost importance are that: (1) there is no PA state high school graduation requirement for world languages, unlike in other states such as MD, NJ, VA, WV and NY; and, (2) these (and other) states have a world language education content advisor who promotes and supports the study of languages and serves as a liaison between educators and industry. We lack this content area leadership in world language programs in PA; since 2011, the Bilingual Education content advisor and Fine Arts content advisor jointly share the role of

supporting World Languages. This is far from ideal. As there are no state world language proficiency guidelines, world language programs in the U.S. differ significantly from programs for English Learners, and we lack the necessary support and advocacy for world language programs, specifically. All these challenges directly impact not only individual world language teachers and their professional development, but also the programmatic-level ability to articulate instruction across grade levels, to mentor students to earn the Seal of Biliteracy, and to recruit new world language teachers.



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***The PSMLA advocacy committee will be hosting a Summit in Harrisburg on April 28, 2025***

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### **What can we as world language teachers do to change the current situation?**

The PSMLA advocacy committee will be hosting a Summit in Harrisburg on April 28, 2025. During this summit, world language educators and other stakeholders will develop a world language roadmap: a strategic planning document to enhance the economic competitiveness of Pennsylvania and meet the language and cultural learning demands of Pennsylvania's workforce and communities by strengthening world language education in our state. Please visit [psmla.org](https://psmla.org) to contact the PSMLA advocacy committee to sign up to attend the Summit and get involved.

We are at a crossroads in the U.S., a time when public opinion simultaneously devalues the usefulness of learning languages other than English and thinks that students can rely solely on technology to learn and communicate in other languages; these attitudes severely undervalue the roles of human connection, critical thinking, and K-16 articulation in language education. World language advocates must share the message as broadly as possible - especially to those who allocate resources - that communicating in languages other than English in culturally competent ways is vital in our globalized world, and investing in the recruitment, development, and retention of teachers is absolutely essential for world language learning.

Now more than ever, we need teachers who are trained to lead proficiency-oriented classrooms designed to prepare students to use the language outside the walls of the classroom in meaningful and culturally appropriate ways. Only human teachers can do the important work of teaching not just language but also culture in ways that embrace historically marginalized students and broaden student horizons while building on their existing strengths and fostering their academic and career success, and we will need to connect and collaborate - each of us joining in to contribute to the essential work spearheaded by the PSMLA advocacy committee.

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## REFERENCES

- 1 Pennsylvania School Boards Association. "2024-State-of-Education-Report." *Pennsylvania School Boards Association*, 2 Feb. 2024, <https://www.psba.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2024-State-of-Education-report.pdf>
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- 5 System Data. *Pennsylvania's State System of Public Education*, 13 June 2024, [www.passhe.edu/system-data/index.html](http://www.passhe.edu/system-data/index.html)
- 6 Making Languages our Business <https://www.languageconnectsfoundation.org/programs-initiatives/research/making-languages-our-business>
- 7 Dun & Bradstreet. <https://www.dnb.com/>
- 8 Indeed, [www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com)

# Advocating for Language Learning and Cultural Understanding

PSMLA Advocacy Chair: Cherie Garrett

The Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL-NCLIS) is a coalition representing over 300,000 professionals from education, nonprofit organizations, and industry, all of whom are connected to the field of language. The primary objective of JNCL-NCLIS is to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to learn English as well as at least one additional language. This endeavor is seen as fundamental to creating a more equitable society, enhancing national security, and promoting economic opportunity. To achieve these goals, it is critical that federal resources be allocated to support language and cultural studies. This article outlines key programs and legislative acts that align with the mission of JNCL-NCLIS (Advocacy Resources, 2024).

## **The World Language Advancement and Readiness Act (WLARA)**

One such initiative is the World Language Advancement and Readiness Act (WLARA). Recently, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a defense bill that would allocate \$15 million to fund WLARA. However, the Senate has proposed a reduced amount of \$10 million. Despite the ongoing debate over the exact funding level, it is expected that the next round of grants will soon be announced.

WLARA offers competitive grants to schools with a Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) program, enabling them to establish, improve, or

expand world language teaching programs. Priority for these grants is given to initiatives that integrate STEM, distance learning, and serve underrepresented populations or employ evidence-based program models. Additionally, preference is given to programs that promote the sequential study of world languages beginning in elementary school, support immersion programs, or utilize technology effectively for language learning. Importantly, WLARA also encourages the involvement of non-native English speakers from the community and partnerships with higher education institutions.

These partnerships allow high school students to take advanced language courses, earn college credits, or even explore pathways to becoming language educators. One of the primary goals of WLARA is to address the national shortage of language teachers at all educational levels, ensuring that every child in the U.S. has the opportunity to learn a language in addition to English. To further support this objective, special consideration is given to grants used for intensive summer programs focused on professional development for world language teachers (Advocacy Resources, 2024).

## **The Biliteracy Educational Seal and Teaching (BEST) Act (S.3595/H.R.7007)**

Another significant piece of legislation is the Biliteracy Educational Seal and Teaching (BEST) Act, which was reintroduced in January 2024. This act aims to enhance early language learning programs leading to the Seal of Biliteracy, a recognition awarded to high school seniors who demonstrate proficiency in both English and a second language. The act also seeks to cover costs associated with American Sign Language (ASL) instruction, support students with disabilities, and allocate funds for

professional development, public outreach, and Seal of Biliteracy testing for low-income students.

The Seal of Biliteracy is an important credential for students, as it aids universities in language placement and may even lead to college credit. Furthermore, it is highly beneficial to employers who seek bilingual workers, providing official documentation of a candidate's language skills, thus making it a valuable tool in the job market.

### **The World LEAP Act (H.R.5603)**

Introduced in September 2023, the World Language Assistance Program (World LEAP) Act represents another critical step in expanding language education in the United States. Currently supported by seven cosponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives, the bill still awaits a Senate companion bill. If passed, this legislation would establish the first multi-year grant program for K-12 schools aimed at improving and expanding world language or dual-language programs.

In addition to expanding language programs, the World LEAP Act emphasizes professional development for educators. The professional development programs supported by this act would be intensive, collaborative, data-driven, and directly tied to classroom instruction. Moreover, the act encourages pathways for paraprofessionals to obtain educator certifications and licenses, further addressing the shortage of qualified language teachers.

### **The Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act (H.R.4588/S.2261)**

The reintroduction of the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act in December 2023 underscores the importance of international education. This act encourages institutions of higher education to increase study abroad

opportunities, particularly in nontraditional destinations, for underserved American undergraduate students. New provisions in the bill specifically target institutions with study abroad programs that include a significant world language component, ensuring that language acquisition remains a central part of students' international experiences.

The ultimate goal of the Simon Act is ambitious: to increase the number of undergraduate students studying abroad to one million annually within the next decade. Such a dramatic increase in study abroad participation, especially in language-rich environments, is expected to significantly improve students' global competencies and cross-cultural understanding.

### **Conclusion: The Need for Federal Support in Language Learning**

As the United States moves toward a future that demands greater global engagement, it is imperative that language learning and cultural understanding become national priorities. Graduating high school students with proficiency in both English and a second language will not only enrich their personal lives but also make them invaluable assets in various sectors, including healthcare, business, education, law enforcement, and more.

The economic impact of a bilingual workforce cannot be overstated. Furthermore, fostering cultural understanding through language education can contribute to better global relations, improved communication, and greater social harmony. By supporting these legislative efforts and programs, we can work toward creating a society that is more inclusive, connected, and prepared to navigate an increasingly interconnected world.



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- This past summer, CIEE traveled 170 PA high school students and awarded over \$500,000 in scholarships towards program tuition.
- Students at your school can be the next Global Navigators next summer. Share our programs and scholarship applications with them.  
**Learn more at [ciee.org/hssa](https://ciee.org/hssa)**
- When 10 students in your school travel with CIEE, you travel too! Teachers and administrators gain access to free professional development opportunities, such as invitations to the annual Global Educator Summit or summer site visits to exciting destinations.
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# Leveraging AI in World Language Education: Enhancing Teaching and Boosting Student Achievement

Cherie Garrett

*Dallastown Area High School*

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In the ever-evolving landscape of education, technology continues to play a pivotal role in transforming classrooms. Among the most revolutionary advancements is the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in teaching and learning. For world language teachers, AI offers a suite of tools and resources that can facilitate their job, enhance instructional strategies, and significantly increase student achievement. This article explores how AI can be seamlessly incorporated into world language education to maximize both teaching efficiency and student outcomes.

Some of the more popular online platforms, used by many world language teachers, have begun to incorporate their own AI assistants. The popular platforms Quizizz and Quizlet, used to practice vocabulary, review for a quiz or practice cultural information; are now enhanced with AI to facilitate the creation of vocabulary sets and review games. [Quizizz](#) AI assistant offers lesson planning, quiz creation, making student accommodations and providing feedback while Quizlet offers individualized tutoring for students through [Q-Chat](#)

which is designed to make studying fun and effective. It can give explanations, give individualized practice and coaching. Also, [EdPuzzle](#) offers AI Assist which automatically generates questions for any YouTube video. Additionally, [Padlet](#), a way to compile and display student input, now assists teachers to create lesson plans, design custom boards and more.

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***As AI is growing exponentially in education, it is important for teachers to stay abreast of the latest technology tools.***

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In addition to the frequently used language tools mentioned above, there are two relatively new AI programs for teachers, [Brisk](#) and [Magic School](#) which quickly and effortlessly complete tasks that used to take hours. Magic School hosts more than sixty AI tools to help you lesson plan, differentiate, write assessments, design IEPs, communicate clearly, and more. Meanwhile, Brisk is a free AI-powered Chrome extension that is compatible with Google Docs, Slides, Forms, etc. and allows teachers to create instructional materials in seconds, manage administrative tasks effortlessly, rapidly develop student interventions and easily provide student feedback.

In the classroom, it is relatively easy to monitor students' work; however, it becomes almost impossible to know what sources are being used at home; therefore, it is important to set student guidelines with respect to the use of AI. One idea is to display a [visual](#) in the classroom so students know when it is allowed or prohibited to use AI (pg.11, Figure 2). Also, it is extremely important for students to maintain a paper trail of their work so the teacher can see their work and the progress made. Lastly, if students use AI, they need to [cite](#) their work correctly (pg.5). Even though there are AI detectors like [ZeroGPT](#), they are not 100% accurate.

As AI is growing exponentially in education, it is important for teachers to stay abreast of the latest technology tools. To do this, there is a free 2-hour [course](#) by AI Education to get started with ChatGPT, to save time, to engage students and to implement AI safely. Also, the International Society for

Technology in Education ([ISTE](#)) provides a plethora of resources for AI Education for teachers. Not only do they provide informational guides on how to use AI in the classroom, but they also provide a personal AI Coach for educators. Lastly, the [PA Department of Education](#) offers ACT48 hours for its new 5-hour Artificial Intelligence course.

Incorporating AI into world language education offers a myriad of benefits that can transform teaching and learning by enhancing instructional practices and improving student achievement. As AI continues to evolve, its potential to revolutionize language education will only grow, making it an indispensable tool for educators committed to providing the best possible learning experiences for their students. Embracing AI in the classroom is not just a step toward modernization; it is a leap toward a more effective, inclusive, and engaging educational future.



## Member Survey: (RE)IGNITING PASSION IN EDUCATION

There are many career options and paths for teachers outside of education and yet many of us still choose to educate. As this career path is attracting fewer people, the editors would like to highlight the positives of teaching. We hope you will set aside the professional challenges we face and focus on what makes the job enjoyable.

– Nathan Campbell, co-editor, *PLF*

Reflecting on the past year or so, what was a rewarding moment for you as an educator?

One of the most rewarding moments was awarding the PA Seal of Biliteracy to our students.

Filling up both sections of our new French program!

Working with adolescents to expand their awareness and knowledge of the Spanish language and the cultures that use it.

Seeing many former students now language teachers at the PSMLA Fall Conference!

When a senior student of mine won a future language educator scholarship to use for her university studies. Also, having 20 Global Scholars this year, tied for highest in the state!

One of the most challenging students I have ever taught came up to me at graduation and said, "Thank you for caring so much about your students. It meant more to me than you'll ever know."

Introducing students to new cultures!

Thinking of your morning routine, how do you "hype" yourself up for a day of teaching?

Step 1: Coffee.

Step 2: Morning Playlist.

Step 3: Affirmations.

Just being a teacher, working w/young people is all the hype I need. I love my job, and I love to work!

Fall 2024

I listen to music in Spanish in my car on my way to school while drinking my coffee and think about my lesson for the day.

Listening to feel-good music on the drive in.

Being prepared for the next day and organized is enough for me!

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The students' love of learning!

My students motivate me as well as the need for bilingual American citizens in the world.

I am motivated by witnessing first-hand their proficiency increasing day-by-day. It is very rewarding and motivates me to push them and me every day.

What motivates you to do your best for your students?

The fact that there are students who WANT to be there and want to learn. They want to feel safe and included and this motivates me to keep being the best for them.

The fact that they need people in their lives who can expand their linguistic and cultural awareness. This generation, more than any other I've taught, has grown up in an increasingly divided culture here in the USA. They need people in their lives who expand their awareness of other cultures, through language, to help them see that being different from someone is not better or worse. We all should have a seat at the table and respect and learn about other people.

One of my middle school teachers instilled a passion in me that has opened doors to some of the most incredible experiences in my life. I hope to be able to pay it forward.

The students make me feel that my work is valued. After students graduate, students email or visit me to tell me about their successes with their language skills and/or travel abroad experiences.

My students & PSMLA!

My students, those that were my current students and those who've graduated and gone on to their own teaching careers.

Who or what made you feel that the work you do is valued?

My parents, they never gave up on me and continue to see value in what I do.

Sometimes being a "teacher" extends outside of the walls of the classroom. Receiving thanks from administration for the engagement and contributions to the school community is incredibly validating.

My former students and often their parents who thank me and appreciate my efforts with their children!

Students, parents, colleagues, professors.

# Teacher Reflection: It's All About the Connections

Katherin Doncel-Slantz  
*Boiling Springs High School  
South Middleton School District*

*iSaludos!* I am at the beginning of my seventeenth-year teaching Spanish in the same district. A few days prior to the new school year, I was invited to have lunch by three recent graduates on their final days home before embarking on their new academic adventures. Two will study to be future language educators, YAY!!! The other, the first-generation daughter of Peruvian immigrants and the first in her family to attend a university. The three took *AP Spanish Language and Culture* together the last semester of their senior year, subsequently my first time teaching the course. I am so thankful to have had this crew, along with other wonderful students in that course, in what felt like a personal milestone. *Coincidentally, I moved into a room with windows last year, and that too feels like a promotion!* I was so positively filled and joyful by our time together, that I felt energized for my return to school.

The first few days of in-service, getting back into the classroom routine, creating a long checklist of initiatives and requirements that must occur prior to students returning, and the pressure and



*Katherin and student hug at graduation 2024.*

responsibility that I feel to perform, momentarily muddled my thoughts and made it hard for me to think clearly. If I am honest, I felt nervous and inadequate. It is crazy to think that with sixteen years of experience that I would feel that way, but I know that I am not alone.

With School now back in session, the checklist grows, some students are taking in that I speak Spanish exclusively with some exceptions (it's on my syllabus). A few students even questioned whether to continue in my honors sections. As I get older, my younger inner self wants to expend as much energy as I have in previous years; I fell asleep in my work clothes the other night.

Despite the professional and personal challenges, something marvelous happens as I get into a groove. I see those 'AHA' moments were my students' confidence (albeit sometimes slowly) grow. I get inspired repeatedly. I add, remove, change and adapt content based on their needs and mine, based

on what is relevant and is not. The fact is that I always want to spark their interest, I am continually looking to grow and expand my wheelhouse, and I am still very passionate about teaching language. Yet, what I realize more and more is that if I am in it for the long haul, I need conserve my energies to continue do my job well and cheerfully. How, you may ask, by prioritizing student connections. The most fabulous lesson falls short or flat if students are not invested in me and in others in the classroom. Students are more willing to try, to err, to get past their own discomfort in using the TL if they see that I am genuinely interested in them and attentive to their needs. In knowing my students, I can read the room and decide to execute my plans



*My first time in Europe, San Sebastian, Spain 2024.*

or opt for another course of action that is less demanding on me and more appropriate for them that day. Eventually, some begin to comprehend the awesome advantages and benefits of learning a second language, while others make new friends, and still others add you as another adult that they trust in their lives. I am more and more convinced of this as students greet me in the hallway, at events or in Target.

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***The most fabulous lesson falls short or flat if students are not invested in me and in others in the classroom***

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Often students visit me just to chat (and ask for a *merienda*) or to tell me of an encounter where their Spanish came to use. They continue to sign up for advanced classes, choose to travel with me and my colleagues or study abroad and message me frequently on WhatsApp. I have received loads of cards in Spanish expressing gratitude, wishing me a happy birthday, or offering condolences. One comes to help me set up my classroom (another future language educator), helping me carry loads of plants, before returning to college. I hope someday they too have someone to share their load when they teach.

# Teacher Reflection: A Community of Support, Encouragement, and Collaboration

Barbara Kurtz  
Meadville Area Senior High School



*Barb posing with colleagues at Slippery Rock Uni. Student PSEA Conference, 2023.*

After her first day of kindergarten in 1975, a little girl excitedly hopped off the bus and ran shouting to her mom, "I am going to be a teacher!"

Since that day, I have never looked back. Well...there was the time when I desperately wanted to be the whale/dolphin trainer at SeaWorld, but as someone terrified of water and barely able to swim, that's not a dream I really intended to pursue.

Fast forwarding to today, I still find teaching a thrilling and fulfilling career. Not every day is perfect, and sometimes there are extended periods of difficulty and discouragement. How do I stay motivated to teach, and to teach with purpose and passion?

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***When I see the awesome things that others are doing, I don't get discouraged, I take notes.***

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First, I find people who inspire me to be better than I currently am. I find excuses to be with them, to learn from them, to snatch ideas from them, and to collaborate with them. And my mentors aren't all

language teachers; some aren't even teachers. But they all motivate me, and I am enriched from time spent with them.

Second, I attend conferences and read blogs, books, and other publications that challenge me. When I see the awesome things that others are doing, I don't get discouraged, I take notes. How can I apply this? What is even more exciting is that I've personally contacted many of the people I've learned from, and they have always replied. Most people are willing to help us grow if we just ask for their advice or insights.

Third, I embrace opportunities to stretch; I rarely say *no* to a challenge! This keeps me fresh. And honest. As I take leaps into the unknown, even falls and failures make me stronger and wiser. Opportunities abound all around us, but sometimes we become so

focused on keeping up with what we already have to do that we miss glorious possibilities.

Fourth, I commit to focusing on and sharing the positive, and I endeavor to run from gossip, grumbling, and the gutter. I must choose my attitude daily, and I know what will bring me up and what will take me down. I also know what will bring others up and take them down. **What kind of influence do I want to be?** I strive to leave others with a positive memory.

Finally, I approach each day with joy and enthusiasm for my students and for teaching. Students are perceptive and they easily gauge our attitude. Their attitudes will often reflect ours. Some days I have to fake it, and some days I fail. But tomorrow is a new day. Adventure awaits!

Who would have thought that a five-year old's dreams would come true in a classroom in Northwest Pennsylvania?

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*Students sing "el girasol" during a lesson on nature.*

# PEER REVIEW CONTRIBUTIONS

**The following section contains contributed articles that have undergone our blind peer-review process.**

**A special thanks to our authors and peer reviewers for their contributions to this issue!**

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**Interested in submitting an article for Peer Review?**

**View our submission guidelines:  
<https://psmla.org/pennsylvania-language-forum>**



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## **Literacy Practices Across Cultures: Intercultural Connection between Language, Equality, and Inclusion in the Classroom**

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### **Abstract**

Cross-cultural communication fosters cultural understanding and tolerance between people from other cultures. Living in a global society means that we must become more effective in dealing with people from a myriad of cultures, educational backgrounds and with different political views and socioeconomic status. Preparing English as a Second Language (ESL) and Foreign Language (FL) teachers to become global, diverse, and inclusive requires exposure to multicultural perspectives to instill an appreciation of other people's cultures and their own. *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* programs captured adult and children's audiences by emphasizing kindness, respect, and social justice as well as making a connection between society, emotion, culture, and literacy in American society. This self-study explains how ESL and FL teachers can make a connection between language, empathy, artifacts, and music to teach diversity, inclusion, equity, and differences across American Society through Emotional and Cultural Intelligence as demonstrated in Mister Rogers' programs.

### **Key Words**

Cultural Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence, Intercultural communication, Mr. Rogers, literacy

### **Introduction**

Integrating culture into second language instruction has been a long-term task for many English as a second language (ESL) and foreign language (FL) instructors. Organizations such as

ACTFL have established World-Readiness Standards for Learning languages through the well-known 5 Cs: *Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities*, with *Culture* being one of five goal areas for learning a language beyond the classroom. According to B-Ikeguchi (2023), scholars have varied opinions on how much cultural understanding to incorporate in our classrooms to promote sensitivity and preparedness in understanding other cultures. As the world globalizes, effective interaction with culturally diverse people becomes essential. The question of how we equip our students with the necessary tools to understand other cultural perspectives and their own remains. The answer could be found in two psychological constructs: Cultural Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence.

*Cultural Intelligence* involves understanding and developing a mindful approach to the fundamentals of intercultural interaction, and building a repertoire of cross-cultural behaviors suited to different intercultural situations (Thomas & Inkson 2017).

*Emotional Intelligence* involves the combination of other “intelligences” such as verbal-propositional intelligence (vocabulary, sentences, and extended textual passages), perceptual-organizational and spatial intelligence to mention a few. These authors also define emotional intelligence as the ability to process emotions to develop into thinking that could generate emotion, knowledge, and growth. (Mayer, et al,1999; Mayer et al, 2004).

In looking into models that could serve as a guide to instruct students about emotional and cultural intelligence in the ESL/FL classroom, we highlight the show *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*. Mr. Rogers taught social and emotional learning through his dialogues with guests and puppets, he incorporated music to enhance learning, he discussed current events, and social issues such as divorce, not only to teach compassion and understanding of one another and the self but also to create a positive effect on the audiences’ lives. Fred Rogers has been iconic for bringing our society together in moments of uncertainty in a polarized culture. “[I]n this moment of uncertainty and polarization, our culture is crying out for a noble, reasoned, authentic, and unifying voice like that of French Rogers” (Ercolano, 2018, citing Klaren). Therefore, the present study showcases how Mr. Rogers’ teachings can be implemented to teach literacy in the ESL/FL classroom or adapted for the teacher’s professional field as cross-cultural competence. Developing cultural and emotional intelligence are key assets to be able to live and work in today’s global environment and interact effectively across cultures. What follows are two self-studies in which we model the intersection of emotional and cultural intelligence into ESL/FL literacy practices by analyzing Mr. Rogers’ connection between language, empathy, artifacts, and music to teach equality and differences in the ESL/FL classroom.

This article is an exploratory self-study in which we put into practice a classroom technique called *Personal Cultural Lens (PCL)*. Our general objective is to demonstrate how ESL/ FL teachers connect literacy, society, emotion, diversity and culture to promote linguistic diversity, equity, and inclusion in their teaching practices. More specifically, this study analyzes and contrasts the use of *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* episodes with a similar current program to gain knowledge of how academic, personal, sociocultural contexts, and sociopolitical points of view influence ESL/FL education in American society. All work presented in this article is original work of the authors which deem no IRB permission (Institutional Review Board).

## Literature Review

### *Defining Culture*

Integrating culture in ESL and FL classrooms has been a quest in American education, aiming to prepare students to communicate eloquently in a global society:

Language and communication are at the heart of the human experience. The United States must educate students who are linguistically and culturally equipped to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad. This imperative envisions a future in which ALL students will develop and maintain proficiency in English and at least one other language, modern or classical. Children who come to school from non-English backgrounds should also have opportunities to develop further proficiencies in their first language. (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015).

The Standards for Foreign Language Learning in preparing students for the 21st century propose the 5 Cs of world language education to identify what students should know and be able to do in the FL classroom. Among those 5 C's, one "C" belongs to culture with two components: Relating Cultural Practices to Perspectives and Relating Cultural Products to Perspectives.

Thus, organizations such as the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTL), the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF), the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG), and the American Association of Teachers of Spanish (AATSP) and Portuguese, recognize the imperative need to integrate culture as part of the content and curriculum in the FL and ESL classroom. (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). These organizations stress the necessity to link culture with the teaching of language. B-Ikeguchi (2023) agrees with other culture and language ESL and FL teachers that culture must be taught along with language. She further states that a successful language learner is one that is successful at learning about the culture of that language.

While anthropologists are not in full agreement, Hall (1973) defines culture as "a way of life of a people, a sum of their learned behavior, attitudes and material things" (p. 20). Anthropologists argue about what the essence of culture is. Furthermore, Hall (1966) explains that when it comes to the human nature of communicating with others, people need to decode *hidden codes* aside from the verbal or spoken codes to be able to understand each other. Basically, Hall (1966) reminds us of who the center of attention is in any given culture: humankind. Lastly, Hall (1966) reminds us that communicating with others is a culturally bound activity. Thus, gaining knowledge on how to communicate with cultural self-awareness is imperative due to ongoing interactions with different cultures and subcultures within the same country.

According to Thomas and Inkson (2017), culture is a set of shared values in a community: a set of shared behaviors, values, attitudes, knowledge, and assumptions. Thomas and Inkson (2017) state that these cultural constructs are passed on from generation to generation. Categorizing people based on these shared behaviors is an important aspect of culture: "This categorization of people into 'them and us' underlies much cross-cultural behavior" (Thomas & Inkson, 2017 p. 38). According to these authors, categorizing allows

people to understand their own cultural constructs which could help to establish comparisons with other cultures.

### ***Cultural Intelligence***

Under the ever-growing demands of a global economy, cultural boundaries and features are permeated by the forces of globalization. Thus, we are now experiencing more international interconnectedness, an increase in migration, and an increase in information and communication technologies. As stated above, people from different cultures tend to compare and contrast each other inherently (Hall, 1966). The question we ask is how can they communicate and interact with one another while understanding and respecting each other's differences? One answer lies in learning and developing cultural intelligence.

Early and Mosakowski (2004) explain that cultural intelligence entails being able to understand and/or interpret someone's gestures the same way a colleague would: "But occasionally an outsider has a seemingly natural ability to interpret someone's unfamiliar and ambiguous gestures in just the way that person's compatriots and colleagues would—even to mirror them" (p. 139). According to Thomas and Inkson (2017), people fail to understand others because of an expectation that everyone else is going to be like "us" or think like "us" or do things "my way" or follow "my rules." This is called intercultural failures, which is being unaware of the other culture's key cultural features. One way to overcome cultural differences is by becoming culturally intelligent. In sum, cultural intelligence is having the ability to understand other cultures by means of learning about the other cultures.

### ***Emotional Intelligence***

Emotional intelligence answers the question of how people can communicate and interact while acknowledging and respecting each other's differences. It is also known as the psychological construct of Emotional Quotient (EQ). In general, the main point of emotional intelligence is to allow our emotions to guide us towards positive actions to maintain harmonious relationships among people. Understanding diverse emotions leads to positive outcomes or changes in communities. Mayer, et al. offer the following definition:

The capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth (e.g., (Mayer, et al,1999; Mayer et al, 2004).

Given these constructs, psychologists and anthropologists recognize the value of becoming emotionally intelligent to be able to build stronger relationships with just about anyone and in just about any setting. Segal, et. al. (2024) introduce four key concepts within emotional intelligence: 1) self-management, 2) self-awareness, 3) social awareness and 4) relationship management. Self-management deals with using one's emotions to make constructive decisions about one's behavior. Self-awareness deals with being able to connect to one's emotions even when these emotions are subject to change. Social awareness is the ability to recognize and

interpret the mainly nonverbal cues others are constantly using to communicate with you. Relationship management means working well with others as a process since any relationship begins with emotional awareness and the ability to recognize and understand what other people are experiencing.

### ***Personal Cultural Lens***

The *Personal Cultural Lens* (PCL) assignment is a cross-cultural project developed to explore how to: 1) incorporate emotional and cultural intelligence knowledge, 2) implement methods to understand ESL/FL students, and 3) identify and describe the impact of identity, role, cultural understandings, personal biases and conscious knowledge of U.S. culture. Exploring the connection between ESL/FL and cross-cultural practices can lead to a more inclusive and empathetic learning environment fostering deeper understanding and diverse cultures and perspectives.

The name *Personal Cultural Lens* (PCL) stems from the idea that we all have a unique way “to see,” to interpret, to feel what is around us based on our upbringing, socioeconomic status, language, and culture. This concept can be seen in my contrastive analysis of three short stories, for example. (Zambrano-Paff, 2024). A personal cultural lens allows one to learn about oneself first, enabling one to pass on learning experiences to others. What is innovative about the present PCL is the analysis, comparison, and contrast of Mr. Rogers’ teachings with another more current program that mirrors issues in our current society.

### **Personal Cultural Lens – Tasks**

This intercultural project was divided into 3 tasks with deliverables. The final artifact was an infographic. The tasks were as follows:

TASK # 1: Provide your personal cultural analysis (lens) on any episode and identify 3 of Mr. Rogers’ teaching in the episode you choose.

TASK # 2: Analyze how his teachings could be adapted as a literacy practice in an ESL/FL class. In an infographic, provide concrete examples using some of his techniques.

TASK # 3: Find another program similar to *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*, but from another culture. Analyze and compare how this cultural program teaches literacy in another culture using your own cultural lens.

The co-authors, Wiederhold and Loughary, present their models of these tasks below.

### **Emotional Learning in *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* (Zambrano-Paff, unpublished work)**

When thinking about how to connect emotional intelligence, cultural heritage, and literacy in American society, I could only think of one American show that encompasses all three: *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*. Fred Rogers, the creator of this educational show, which aired from 1968 to 2001, connected with children and taught the audience about compassion, diversity, inclusion, and literacy. According to Mattingly (2008), the United States was a divided society back in 1969 due to the Vietnam War, racial discrimination, and social distress to

mention a few. Mr. Rogers' main objective was to make children feel special and secure again by highlighting what was good without forgetting the societal pressures at that time. We found tremendous value in *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* because we believe its teachings can be applied in today's ESL/FL classrooms. These teachings are as follows:

1. It's okay to feel whatever it is that we feel.
2. Other people are different from us—and just as complex as we are.
3. We can work to make a difference right where we are.
4. We are neighbors.
5. It's important to make time to care for ourselves.
6. It's our responsibility to care for the most vulnerable.
7. But our feelings aren't an excuse for bad behavior (Tuttle, 2018).

Thus, Fred Rogers showcases the importance of emotional intelligence and cultural understanding through his iconic episodes.

### **Teaching Equity and Inclusion through Literacy**

This exploratory self-study is to aid teachers' literacy practices by modeling how to make the connection between literacy, society, emotion, and culture to promote linguistic diversity, equity, and inclusion. Therefore, we turned to Mr. Rogers' philosophy of teaching emotional and cultural intelligence—as demonstrated in his shows—as an evaluative tool to create literacy teaching practices for ESL and FL teachers.

Fred Rogers was known for his sincere interest in not only teaching American children about kindness, literacy, and well-being but also for helping children better understand their own emotions and needs. The consistency across episodes makes our model easily replicable. Each episode had the same organization: greet the audience, take his jacket and shoes off, interact with his puppets and/or visitors, and then sing a song at the end of each episode. We recognize the following constructs in his shows that support teaching equity and inclusion through literacy: *language teaching*, *empathy education*, *artifact exploration*, and *music integration*. *Language teaching* refers specifically to telling stories through which Mr. Rogers taught literacy. *Empathy education* is found in all his shows since Mr. Rogers cultivated empathy in every possible opportunity either by storytelling or anecdotal experiences shared by his iconic puppets. *Artifact exploration* has to do with the ability to make a cultural connection with any artifact (letter, puppet, sweatshirt). *Music integration* was always present in his shows that emphasized empathy, diversity, and inclusion. We believe that using these constructs as literacy practices aids concentration, supports cognitive performance, and helps to do collaborative work.

### **Teacher-Participants' PCLs**

This exploratory self-study highlights the critical role of emotional and cultural intelligence in ESL/FL classrooms when it comes to promoting diversity and inclusion. The intercultural projects selected for this article uphold all PCL objectives. By engaging in cultural exploration in one of the episodes of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and contrasting it with another one, Wiederhold and Loughary illustrate how practical Fred Rogers' teachings are in today's globalized classrooms. Wiederhold and Loughary both demonstrate the connections

between language, culture, emotion, and cultural artifacts in their intercultural PCL to promote understanding of American cultures. The co-authors provided the PCL writing samples and artifacts (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

The first example of the PCL project comes from Wiederhold, titled *Creating a Brave Space for Emotional Vulnerability and Learning*.

I grew up watching *Sesame Street* and *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, and for my PCL, I analyzed an episode of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and how it engages the audience differently than *Sesame Street*. I was born in Mexico, and my mother was Mexican. A show like *Sesame Street*, which had Hispanic characters, helped provide a casual diversity that helped me feel that my family was just like any other family, and that was important. Casual diversity is the strength of *Sesame Street*. In a recent episode, a gay couple is simply introduced with complete acceptance and without question (Lankford et al. 2021). *Sesame Street* presents the world as it should be while Mr. Rogers helped lead me to a more organic exploration and co-creation of meaning. My family was very poor. We often didn't have food. I often worried about the power being shut off or being kicked out of our house, which ultimately, we were. And inside of that tension, a show like *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* provided me with a kind of surrogate parent that helped me work through problems. Mr. Rogers helped me cope and construct meaning, rather than just telling me that everything was okay.

In talking about her dissertation research, Alexandra Klaren said Mr. Rogers “encourages the child viewer to think about the world and reflect on her role in it” (Klaren as cited in Ercolano, 2018). That ideology seemed particularly present in the episode I analyzed. In the episode, Lady Aberlin wonders about how to define love, asking everyone in the neighborhood for their opinions. She seems unsettled that their definitions don't fit with what she seems to be looking for, a definition that explains how you can love someone you are angry with. The episode expands on her thinking about what love could be, but it refuses to define a clear answer. Because they resist giving a clear answer to the question, they allow the viewer to do exactly what Klaren pointed out, reflect, and co-construct meaning based on their own experience. I know I certainly actively did as I watched. For the PCL, I identified three teachings:

**It's important to make time to care for ourselves:** Lady Aberlin is given the advice that “You can't love anyone else until you love yourself.” It's a gentle reminder to children that loving others begins with loving yourself.

**It's okay to feel whatever it is that we feel:** Lady Aberlin struggles to accept anyone's definition of love because she wonders, “How can you feel it if you can't understand it?” It's a beautiful encouragement to children that it's okay to be confused. And it's okay to be angry with someone. And that being angry with someone doesn't mean you don't love them.

**Other people are different from us—and just as complex as we are:** Toward the end of the episode, Mr. Rogers starts singing to the audience, *you are special*

*to me*, emphasizing that there is only one of us. His celebration of our uniqueness is what he says makes us special. Through that lens, all differences can be celebrated, not just accepted.

Being a neighbor implies closeness. I want to create the same neighborly feeling in my own classroom, where we're able to talk about uncomfortable things. Psychologist Margaret McFarland counseled Fred Rogers on the need to talk about the uncomfortable things: "Anything human is mentionable, and anything mentionable is manageable" (Tuttle, 2018). A central, driving principle of Mr. Rogers was his commitment to present honest, real communication to children—especially with regard to difficult topics and ideas that others might be afraid to confront or talk about openly. In keeping with that philosophy, I want to shift to what Arao and Clemens (2013) suggest is a better metaphor to replace the idea of a shared safe space: "brave space instead of safe space" (p. 142). The shift embraces the idea that we should be talking about difficult things. We should be prepared to be challenged and challenge others in a respectful way where we can co-construct meaning.

As seen above, this PCL aligns with the analysis of Mr. Rogers' teachings and identifies three constructs that Zambrano-Paff originally found in Rogers' program: language teaching, empathy education, and music integration. When it comes to teaching equity and inclusion, Wiederhold realized through the PCL project how important it is to emphasize empathy in the classroom setting to create a space for students to participate in a low-anxiety environment. The PCL also required the creation of a physical artifact that would illustrate how Mr. Rogers' teachings could be used or adapted as a literacy practice in an ESL class in the format of an infographic with a brief description of 350 words. A physical artifact could be a drawing, a song, or a poem. For this project, the co-authors created an infographic.

**Figure 1**  
*Brave Space*



Figure 1 (Wiederhold) is meant to help scaffold and remind students of those ideas that help foster that brave space, borrowing from principles and the modeled behavior of Mr. Rogers.

**Embrace Differences.** When we teach students to make arguments, we also teach them to refute or provide counterarguments. It's perhaps a negative lens to look through which positions other ideas as needing to be defeated or overcome. In a brave classroom, I'd like students to see conflicting or diverse perspectives as enriching their own unique position.

**Strong Vulnerability.** I sometimes wonder if students say what they mean or if they just say what they think the teacher and others will accept. Vulnerability is about more than just feelings. In communicating, it can be taking an unpopular position, or like Mr. Rogers, talking openly about topics that feel scary.

**Listen to All.** We have all experienced strong voices dominating the conversation. As a secondary teacher, this can be a particular problem. Sometimes I have one to three consistent student voices dominating a room of thirty-five students. Part of "care[ing] for the most vulnerable" (Tuttle, 2018) begins with making sure that everyone has a voice, including the quietest in the room.

**Be Brave.** I think it may take the most bravery to adopt the viewpoint of another. It doesn't seem to happen in adult discourse. Perhaps that begins in school when students are taught to take a position and defend it. I'd like to teach students to listen and adopt the viewpoints of others. Or at least be open to doing so.

In the episode that I studied; it was jarring to see that Mr. Rogers didn't feed the fish, something I had seen him do in every episode I watched as a child. Famously, people now know that he received a letter from a blind girl who asked him to not only feed the fish, but to audibly announce that he was feeding the fish. Doing so allowed the blind girl to feel included and assured that the fish were being fed. I didn't know that as a kid. I just knew that he always fed the fish, and as a kid who was often hungry, it meant a lot to me. Mr. Rogers fed the fish, but in doing so, he made me feel like he would feed me if he could. I realize now that small actions—like feeding the fish—directed toward one student sends a message to all students. If we care about one student, then we send the message that we're capable of caring for all students. In contrast, if we neglect or disregard, or treat one person poorly, we send the message that we might do the same to our other students.

Another example is the PCL project from Loughary titled *Fostering Emotional and Cultural Intelligence in Language Teaching*.

**Figure 2**  
*Fostering Emotional and Cultural Intelligence in Language Teaching.*

# TEACH LITERACY LIKE MR. ROGERS

**Be sincere**  
Even the youngest learners can distinguish between sincerity and an act.

**Use routines**  
Use routines consistently to connect with your students and create stability.

**Value diversity**  
Everyone is unique. Find out what you have in common and learn what makes you different from others.

**Be a good neighbor**  
Treat others with respect. Help others when you can. Practice compassion and empathy.

**Create**  
Use what you have to create something new.

**Share how you feel**  
Share and learn from your emotions.

As a French teacher, each of my classes is filled with a range of backgrounds from the student who is head over heels in love with the language to the one who barely passed and bumped heads with a previous teacher. My job is to fill in the gaps and make sure the whole class is prepared to take the next course in the sequence. Language teachers at all levels can draw on pedagogical practices from children’s television programs such as the

ones described in this article. Where emotional and cultural intelligence intersect in a language classroom can be a powerful springboard for learning the target language as well as how to be a compassionate member of society.

The artifact I made for my PCL is an infographic that focuses on the traits of emotional and cultural intelligence to enrich language teaching practices. I took a closer look at an early episode of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* alongside a newer program called *C'est pas Sorcier* which was first made popular in France.

The earliest episodes of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* were untitled. In episode 7, Mr. Rogers takes care of a canary, Lady Elaine in the Neighborhood of Make-Believe learns that you cannot learn by magic, but you must practice (study) in order to learn, and Mrs. Ruben shares examples of birds that have been made out of very different materials. These three elements demonstrate core values that reoccur in every episode (Tuttle, 2018).

**It's our responsibility to care for the most vulnerable.** Although Mr. Rogers wants to free the canary, he says he shouldn't because it cannot take care of itself. The canary relies on a caretaker for food, water, and shelter.

**It's important to make time to care for ourselves.** Lady Elaine tries to learn about too many birds at once using magic, so X (the owl) teaches her that we cannot learn through magic, but we must practice, or study, in order to learn. Children will identify with wanting to learn automatically through magic, but realize that practice takes time.

**Other people are different from us—and just as complex as we are.** Mrs. Ruben shares examples of different birds her friends have made using various items such as potatoes and toothpicks, feathers and crumpled paper, and pipe cleaners and aluminum foil. Each one shares the common characteristics of a bird, but each one is unique and made with different materials.

The conversation with Mrs. Ruben reinforces the need for “moral interpersonal relations within the larger context of a neighborhood community” (Ercolano, 2018). The routines throughout the 30-year run of the program created stability that many children do not have at home. The topics presented always emphasized the themes above.

In contrast with Wiederhold, Loughary explored episode 7 of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* highlighting language teaching and artifact exploration constructs to instill literacy, perseverance, and diverse teaching and learning strategies in his classroom setting.

*Figure 2 (Loughary)* represents some of Mr. Rogers' strategies and core themes. It would be effective to incorporate his strategies with language learners because they are clear and consistent.

First, ***be sincere***. Students need to trust their teachers. Some teachers feel pressure to always give a sparkling performance in front of their students, colleagues, or administrators. Don't try to cover flaws, but embrace teachable moments.

***Use routines***. Students feel more comfortable when they know what's ahead and what the teacher's expectations are. No one likes to have a curve ball whiz at them unexpectedly. Take time to establish solid routines in the language classroom such as regular silent sustained reading, free-writes, and read-alouds.

***Value diversity***. In a language classroom, that means diversity within the classroom, but more importantly, diversity of teaching materials and perspectives. Don't teach from an ethnocentric approach. Instead emphasize different varieties of language, including nonstandard varieties, and differing cultural practices. Discuss and break down stereotypes.

***Be a good neighbor***. There are many ways to be a good neighbor, but there are equally as many ways to avoid being a rotten one. Treat others the way you want to be treated. In a language class, give everyone a voice, advocate for those who do not have a voice, and celebrate the collective good.

***Create something new every day***. Language students should be encouraged to create with the language they are learning and make connections to the languages they already know. Let students create a mix of group and solo projects that demonstrate what they can do in the target language. Make up new songs, use creative writing prompts, and reader's theater for learning and entertainment.

***Share how you feel***. A range of emotions is a normal part of every day. Let students express their feelings through listening, reading, writing, and speaking activities. Teach students how to control their emotions and to learn from them. One of the best ways to do that is by teachers sharing their own emotional responses to lived experiences.

My personal lens as a French teacher is that learning another language naturally piques curiosity about something different. Students are drawn to a language class out of a desire (or need) to communicate in a new way.

A popular children's show that originated in France is called *C'est pas sorcier!* Loosely translated, it means, "It's not hard." or "You don't have to be a rocket scientist." The show was well-loved and ran from 1994 to 2014. It was dubbed into multiple languages, and it inspired two spin-off series: one based on one of the characters of the original, *Le Monde de Jamy* (2014), which is similar to the relationship between *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* and *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, and another called *L'Esprit Sorcier* (2015).

By dubbing the show into multiple languages rather than relying on subtitles which are challenging for younger viewers, the show reaches a larger audience. Through a French

perspective, the show touches on the following general themes: 1) earth/universe, 2) environment/biodiversity, 3) sports/health, 4) science/tech, and 5) history, culture, and society.

The show reflects a more modern view of emotional and cultural intelligence, albeit less polite than Mr. Rogers, and it characterizes the French respect for the themes above. While there is much overlap in what French and American students appreciate, there are stark differences in cultural values for language use, the environment, and public interactions. Children who watch *C'est pas sorcier!* learn about different topics through travel, interviews, and exploration of different models or teaching props.

### **Conclusion**

Segal et. al. (2024) stress the fact that while a high Intelligence Quotient (IQ) could guarantee a spot in an Ivy League college, it is Emotional intelligence, or Emotional Quotient (EQ), that handles personal, emotional, and stressful situations that could prevent you from being fulfilled in life. In sum, EQ serves as an aid to understanding the social complexities at school and at work. EQ helps people to communicate effectively, empathize with others, and calm conflicting situations.

We recognize that every culture has their own children's programming that emphasizes literacy that would be appropriate as interpretive input in a language class. For example, the French education television program *C'est pas sorcier!* can serve as a target language source that would be appropriate for French students. Many children's programs—*Sesame Street* being a good example—incorporate key aspects of emotional and cultural intelligence that could be helpful to language teachers. However, *Mister Roger's Neighborhood* contains all the constructs we find helpful in teaching equity and inclusion: language teaching, empathy education, artifact exploration, and music integration. Using the PCL—as we have modeled—to explore intercultural practices in the ESL/FL classroom could foster a more inclusive and empathetic learning environment. Understanding and respecting each other's differences in the classroom setting is the beginning of understanding other cultures and diverse perspectives. We live in a global economy that requires interconnectedness at all levels. Preparing our students to communicate and interact with empathy will help them exhibit culturally intelligent dispositions.

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