



AMTESOL News

ALABAMA-MISSISSIPPI TEACHERS OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

VOLUME XXV, NUMBER 2

FALL 2007

DATES TO REMEMBER

- **November 29 - December 01, 2007**
2007 Southeast TESOL Conference
Louisville, Kentucky
- **January 18-19, 2008**
2008 AMTESOL Conference
Meridian, Mississippi
- **April 2-5, 2008**
2008 TESOL Convention
New York City, New York
- **September 24-27, 2008**
2008 Southeast TESOL Conference
Birmingham, Alabama

Proud Sheet

Congratulations to **Esim Erdim**, AMTESOL's Mississippi K-12 Representative for becoming a US citizen on May 1, 2007. She reports that the journey to citizenship has been wonderful and she is delighted to be at this point in her life.

The **English as a Second Language Center**, a part of the Office of International Education at **Mississippi State University**, has recently been featured with a chapter in the TESOL publication Revitalizing an Established Program for Adult Learners which was published in September 2007. To read more about this innovative program, see page 4.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

2008 AMTESOL CONFERENCE

Learn the Language:

Embrace the World

January 18-19, 2008

Meridian, Mississippi

Deadline: December 7, 2007

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AMTESOL News is a twice-yearly newsletter serving the Alabama and Mississippi TESOL affiliate.

Contributions from members about teacher preparation, student concerns, classroom ideas, educational material and services, opportunities for professional growth, and information of general interest are welcome.

Contact the newsletter editor at the address on this page if you would like to contribute an article or have news of interest that you would like included. Please send material by e-mail attachment.

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TESOL's office is generally open from 9am to 5pm, Eastern Daylight Time, Monday-Friday, except major national U.S. holidays.



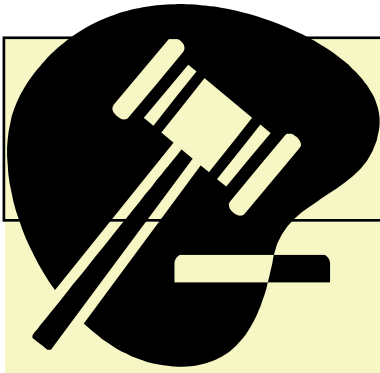
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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear AMTESOL Members,

The 2008 AMTESOL conference is just months away so we need to start planning now to attend. Marlynn Martin, conference chair, has been working diligently putting together a memorable event for us that will take place at the MSU Riley Center in Meridian, MS on January 18-19, 2008. Please visit our website at www.antesol.org (this should be currently on your bookmarks or favorites toolbar!!!) to download the appropriate forms to participate. As usual, we will have informative presentations and generous exhibitors. I would also recommend making arrangements for your accommodations soon since rooms can fill quickly. Please encourage your colleagues in the mainstream classrooms to join us in January since they are becoming more and more a vital component in the education our language minority students.

Even though it is rejuvenating to meet each year at our Alabama – Mississippi conference, it is exciting to participate in our regional and national TESOL conferences. This year the 2007 Southeast TESOL conference will take place in Louisville, KY from November 29- December 01, 2007. For details, go to: <http://www.kytesol.org/KYTESOL%20Conference/SETESOL07.pdf>

I hope to see a good representation of our membership there to let others know all the exciting changes that have been happening with ESOL in Alabama and Mississippi. The regional TESOL conferences are some of my favorites.

Now if you want to get a taste of what TESOL is doing nationally, consider attending the “BIG TESOL.” This is the 42nd Annual TESOL Convention & Exhibit at the New York Hilton & Sheraton. It will take place from April 2-5, 2008. Click on: http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/seccss.asp?CID=1518&DID=8281 for details. Everything in the “World of TESOL” will be there!

And of course do not forget to mark your calendars to attend the 2008 Southeast TESOL conference in Birmingham, AL at the Birmingham Sheraton from September 24-27, 2008. It is our turn to host the regional conference and we definitely want it to be an exciting event for our southeast regional members.

Participating in these professional meetings gives us an opportunity to learn from others, share ideas and meet fellow ESOL educators. As you all know, at times it can feel that you are “out there” all alone. As you carefully read over the latest issue of our AMTESOL Fall newsletter, enjoy and be proud what we have accomplished as an organization in the past 25 years.

All my best!

Robert D. Leier, 2007 AMTESOL President

Getting to Know You: PROGRAMS IN AND AROUND AMTESOL

Mississippi State University's English as a Second Language Center — Featured with TESOL!

By Molly Watkins

The English as a Second Language Center, a part of the Office of International Education at Mississippi State University, has recently been featured with a chapter in the TESOL publication Revitalizing an Established Program for Adult Learners which was published in September 2007. The chapter focuses on all of the changes that have taken place in the ESL Center for the past several years, which has led to an increase of students and programs.

For the past several years, the ESL Center has been working to become more than just an intensive English program for international students. One of our main goals is to serve the Mississippi State University international community through credit course offerings, more special group programming to introduce more students to all MSU has to offer, more culture events open for all international students, and part time study opportunities for international families.

We now offer 5 different in four different levels of undergraduate students skills. This fall semester, we classes with us.

“ . . diversifying our offerings has helped us to become a strong English language and culture program . . . ”

English language credit courses English to help graduate and develop their English language have 32 credit students taking

Our short-term special group programming has blossomed in the past few years. We offer several three- to five- week programs throughout the year where we bring in students from universities in other countries for short language and culture programs. This year, we expect programs from five different countries. We also provide the intensive English language courses for the Fulbright pre-academic program where 30-40 Fulbright students are involved in intensive language study with us in the summer.

Our cultural offerings for international students and Americans on campus and in the community are also becoming very popular. We offer conversation partners for all ESL students and international undergraduate students. We also have a weekly conversation connections gathering where students and faculty, both international and American, get together to meet each other and share cultural experiences. Other cultural events, like day trips for shopping and weekend cultural trips are offered for all students as well.

Finally, we offer part time and full time non-credit study options for members of the international community. Currently, we have several part time students who are choosing to take courses to improve their English. These students are blended with our regular non-credit intensive English students, whose numbers have also grown over the past few years.

Our focus on serving the MSU community and diversifying our offerings has helped us to become a strong English language and culture program, which led to our recent spotlight in the TESOL publication. For more information about any of the program in the Office of International Education, please see our Website at www.inted.msstate.edu.



Culture Matters

Ramadan Nature Walks

by Alan Corbin

We're now well into Ramadan, the ninth month of Islam's lunar calendar. For 2007, this covers the period from September 13 to October 12. During this holy season, all able-bodied Muslims are expected to engage in self-reflection and to abstain from food and drink during daylight hours. While not a Muslim myself, I have nevertheless had a general awareness of Ramadan over the years due to contacts with friends of that faith as well as to travels that have taken me as far as Turkey, Iran, Central Asia and even Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation.

But Ramadan has had a much more personal meaning for me ever since the year I was finishing up my master's degree in ESL at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and working as an instructional aide at a Birmingham-area high school with a strong ESL program and a rapidly growing number of native speakers of Arabic, the third largest L1 in the school after English and Spanish. Our ESL teachers had traditionally accommodated fasting students by allowing them to spend their lunch breaks in the classroom rather than sit in agony in the lunchroom, their stomachs agrowl. The year I joined the team, we took this accommodation a step further by instituting what I referred to as "Ramadan Nature Walks," a way of showing respect for our students' cultural diversity while at the same time taking their minds off food – or so we hoped!

Once a week we went on a short, brisk walk through the leafy nature preserve located just a few steps down the road from our gym. During these popular jaunts, which had the administration's full backing, we were able to commune with nature, talk about local flora and fauna, and learn a few words of English.

Mother Nature provided copious realia, with "kudzu" and "goldenrod" at the top of the list. One day, while reveling in the beauty of the changing leaves and the ever crisper air, we noticed the similarity between the words "fast" and "feast." This, in turn, caused us to embark upon a linguistic journey leading to the expression "feast for the eyes." Moreover, it led us to the realization that – to borrow from another great religious tradition – "man shall not live by bread alone." For the short span of time devoted to our nature walks, no one thought of pizza, or of chicken fingers, or of chocolate milk.

Back in the classroom, after dusting off my shoes and pulling those small, prickly things off my socks, I looked for further ways to tie the theme of Ramadan to the curriculum. Since the kids were always keen on knowing the precise hour and minute when they could break their fast every evening, we looked up Islamic websites giving the exact time to break the fast on specific dates in specific locations (down to the city!) all over the world. This exercise provided practice not only with using computers and telling time; it also offered insights into geography and the rotation of the

Alan Corbin teaches ESL to foreign graduate students for his alma mater, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, from which he received a BA in German and, more than 20 years later, an MA in Education / ESL. In between, he received a master's degree in international business studies from the University of South Carolina and spent 13 years living and working in New York, London, Frankfurt and Moscow. Alan would like the readers of our Newsletter to remember that not all Arabic speakers are Muslims, and that not all Muslims are speakers of Arabic.



Alabama-Mississippi TESOL Conference

January 18-19, 2008

“Learn A Language: Embrace the World”

Reserve a space on your 2008 calendar to join us for this year's **Alabama-Mississippi TESOL Conference**, which will be held on **January 18th-19th** at the newly renovated **MSU Riley Conference Center in downtown Meridian, Mississippi**. This year AMTESOL will promote the exchange of knowledge addressing the unique needs of the English Language Learners across all realms of the education world. *“Learn A Language: Embrace the World”* will provide participants with information and tools that will enhance all educators facilitating the needs of our growing ELL population.

Attending the **AMTESOL** conference is a great way to share ideas with others in the field. The conference will offer a variety of presentations including, **Understanding Title III Legal Requirements, Working with Immigrant Families, Standardized Assessment, AYP and ELLs, and Understanding World Cultures**. Our excellent selection of vendors will provide you the latest books and materials you need to better serve your English Language Learners.

Conference **information, call for presentations and registration forms** are located on the **AMTESOL** website at www.amtesol.org. The deadline for **pre-registration rates** is **January 4, 2008**. The **Hampton Inn** and **Comfort Inn** will offer special **AMTESOL** room rates if made by **December 14, 2007**.

Contact Marlynn Martin at marmartin@bellsouth.net if you have specific questions about the conference.



NEWS FROM ALABAMA

Alabama English Language Learner Professional Development Academy (ELL-PDA) By Dely Roberts

YEAR 1 Secondary Pilot Schools

One outcome of the Alabama ELL Comprehensive Needs Assessment was the ELL-PDA. It kicked off its first year with an orientation in May 2007 for eight secondary level pilot schools. At the recommendation of the State Needs Assessment Committee, the instructional teams include a district ELL Coordinator, school principal, three content-area teachers, an ELL teacher, and a reading coach or instructional specialist.

These school teams had attended a 2-day training sessions in August and September to learn about second language acquisition and sheltered instruction and will attend a final 2-day training session in October. The instructional teams will reconvene in December to design a professional development plan to implement at their school sites in the spring of 2008. The goal of the ELL-PDA Year 1 is to close the achievement gap by developing academic language and literacy for ELLs at the secondary level capacity building at the school level.

YEAR 2 Secondary Schools and Elementary Pilot Schools

In our second year of this rollout we plan to have another round of training very similar to the first round of training for secondary schools and begin an elementary pilot program. This training is on a voluntary basis. Local School Education Agencies (LEA's) must apply for these pilot programs. We are anticipating having a great number of LEA's to apply for the up coming year.

Please look for this information coming to your LEA about these pilots from the State Department of Education (SDE) in the up-coming months.

The SDE is also piloting a workshop on Mastering Writing in English Language Learners (ELL) Classrooms. We are beginning this training on November 7, 2007 in the Northern Region of the State. We plan to provide this training to every in-service center across the state.

Please be aware that we have worked very hard to revise the ELL Policy and Procedure Manual. We will give the first copies of this to Federal Program Coordinators' Conference in Tuscaloosa on October 19, 2007. We will do regional training on this after that conference

NEWS FROM MISSISSIPPI

For information regarding English Language Learners, check out the website

http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/innovative_support/index.html

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One Teacher's Journey: The Pursuit of National Board Certification

NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION
By Cindy Sharpless

I began to contemplate pursuing National Board Certification after attending a session at the AMTESOL conference in Birmingham several years ago. Friends who had earned certification in other subject areas encouraged me to do so. In 2005, I attended a summer workshop that presented an overview of the process, including a detailed explanation of the requirements for each portfolio. I realized that my teaching style and methods met the requirements necessary for National Board Certification. Earning certification would be a matter of demonstrating that to the panel.

After I decided to become certified, I enrolled in our two local summer National Board Certification preparation classes. One class involved meeting with the mentor once a week throughout the summer to write the essay to apply for Alabama's grant that pays the fees for selected applicants. The second class involved meeting once a week to brainstorm, organize, and prepare each of the portfolios of the certification process.

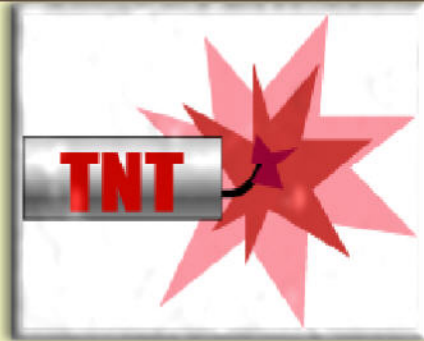
The certification process requires four specific portfolios. The English as a New Language—Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood Entry One requires two student assessments, one taken prior to implementation of a unit plan and a second one taken during the unit, accompanied by a 14-page written commentary of the context, description, analysis, and reflection of the lesson and assessments. Entry Two requires a videotape of the introduction of new information “scaffolded” for student access, accompanied by the 14-page written commentary of the context, description, analysis, and reflection of the lesson, as well as the students' participation. Entry Three requires a videotape that emphasizes teaching strategies for small-group instruction accompanied by the 14-page commentary with emphasis on collaboration. Entry Four requires a description and analysis of eight accomplishments / activities that demonstrate collaboration with family and community within the prior five years.

For all educators, the first month of the school year is very hectic and has tremendous demands; therefore, it was a huge benefit to have done as much preliminary work as possible toward the certification process before school began. This was crucial to my success. When school began in the fall, I immediately had parents sign permission for participation forms and fill out surveys for parent-community-school projects. I had class newsletters in English and translated into several languages ready to go. The deadline for all completed portfolios is in March. However, in order to have adequate time, high school teachers on a semester system need to complete all of the videotaping and student case studies by the end of the first semester in December.

Fortunately, Baldwin County offered a mentoring program at no cost to the applicant. In October, I began to videotape lessons to review with my mentor for critique. Throughout the three months, she offered suggestions, ideas, and invaluable input for improvement on the videotaped lessons and writing.

I attribute my success primarily to my mentor, as well as to my husband for his tireless efforts and support. My students were amazing throughout all of the videotaping, surveys, and responses required of them. Fellow ESL teachers helped me to create better plans, edit the writing, and prepare for the exam. The most valuable lesson learned from this process is the importance of collaboration—among colleagues, supervisors, family, and community. There is incredible educational power in collaboration.

Cindy Sharpless earned a B.A. in Elementary Education at the University of South Alabama. After she discovered that she loved teaching English to international students, she earned an M.A. in ESL at the University of Southern Mississippi. She taught elementary education for five years before teaching ESL in Baldwin County for the last 9 years.



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An Interview With a National Board Certified Teacher

For more information about the National Board Certification Process, check out the website <http://www.nbpts.org/>.

National Board Certification is more than just adding a set of initials after your name. It is the highest symbol of professional teaching excellence. The rewards are many and becoming a National Board Certified Teacher attests to the fact that you have been judged by your peers as one who is accomplished in your field.

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Marisol Bet-Sayad was born in Santiago, Chile. She came to the United States in 1971 with her parents and family. To help her learn English, she was enrolled in a summer school world history class. The first day, her teacher made her get up and read out of the textbook. The class laughed at her because she mispronounced a word and she never spoke again in the class. So much for helping her learn the English language! She is married and has two children: Marisol, 26 and William, 19. She got her teaching degree from Athens State in December of 1994. She started in ESL until last year when she changed to a 2nd grade position. She hated the paperwork in ESL. She loves teaching and she will continue to use all the experiences she has been through to guide her in the best way to reach all her students.

Why did you pursue National Board Certification?

I was looking for "real professional development" in my area. I was so disappointed that every time I went to a professional development meeting, I came back not having learned anything new. In talking with some colleagues, I was told that this would be an excellent professional development opportunity. Of course, my friends were all regular classroom teachers. As I found out more information, I was pleased to see standards that we had not seen in ESL. I was encouraged to pursue this by a colleague who thought the professional development I would gain from this would be wonderful. She never told me it might be an asset to have a Master Degree in ESL or ELL or even in Elementary Education. I only have my BS in Elementary Education.

What were some of the challenges you encountered as you pursued your certification?

There were no other teachers in this area to bounce off ideas in my field. By then, I had already sent my money and I just had to go through with it. I attended a class because I was told it would give me some direction as to what I was supposed to be doing, but once again there was no one in my area. It was so frustrating. I faced all kinds of problems, but I did make it through. Thank God!

What are some tips you would like to offer other ESL teachers interested in pursuing this certification?

If others want to try it I would encourage them to seek financial aid first. I would also have a master's degree first. Most people I have talked to about this seem to think it is a must. You don't have to have one, but it helps. I could tell you so much about going through the process but ... it's kind of like having a baby. Once you hold that baby in your arms, you sort of forget all the pains and struggles you went through to get there.

SETESOL

Regional Conference

Louisville Marriott Downtown

November 29-December 1, 2007



Special Thanks to:

Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky Migrant Education,
& Jefferson County Public Schools

Please visit our website: www.kytesol.org/SETESOL2007
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