

CELEA News

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Letter from the President: *Shoshannah Hernandez*

I have a lot of family and friends who have recently embraced the tradition of choosing a “word of the year” instead of making New Year’s resolutions. I’ve never really participated in this tradition but was asked to do so this year at my university. In my department, we each chose a word for the academic year, shared the reason for our choice and committed to supporting one another in these words.



Choosing a word led me into great reflection over the last few years of life, and after much deliberation I came out with the word “dependence.” Saying the word out loud was harder than I had anticipated, mostly because I am pretty fiercely independent. I have always been confident and taken pride in being competent at certain things and useful to those around me, not needing much from them. However, the past year has included challenges that I could not have overcome without God, first and foremost, nor without the love and support of my family, friends, and coworkers. So, I decided that I needed to embrace that dependence.

Of course, dependence is demonstrated for us in Scripture through the image of the Body of Christ, the example of Jesus depending on the Father as we should, and the model of early church living together and sharing everything. But how often do we live as though we believe in dependence, at least in Western

cultures? As Christians, how much do we live out humility and dependence in love for the world? And as educators, do we collaborate or do we perpetuate the egg-carton mentality?

As I think about the value of this organization and look forward to us gathering in Denver this coming spring, dependence is at the core. Many of us are scattered around the world teaching in isolation, ministering with limited resources, and not utilizing the Body of Christ we’ve been given. CELEA exists to be a resource, to support, to rally around our common aims, and to be the Body of Christ for one another. What is it you’re needing from this community? What resources would benefit your teaching and your ministry? How can we serve you better? Making your needs known is a first step to community, support, and dependence. So, reach out. Let us know.

This year my word is dependence, and I hope it’s yours too. My prayer for us as an organization is the same as Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians, that we will be rooted and established in love and have power together with all God’s people to grasp and know the love of Christ, so that we will be filled beyond measure (Ephesians 3:17-19).

Shoshannah Hernandez

Editors' Note: *Hannah Cole & Annie Wong*

Dear CELEA Community,

As believers and TESOL professionals, our work is not just a job, but a desire to serve both God and people. This implies a unique interest in and affection for those whose cultures differ from our own. For us, these contrasts are not a challenge— they're a bonus, a spark that attracts us, a highlight!

In this issue we feature a piece from an undergrad student, Jarden, who saw God at work during his TESOL internship to connect with his students in a place far from home. A graduate student, Kathryn, explains how she connected her love of other cultures, her faith, and her call to teach. Graduate student Elesha tells us how growing up in a bilingual household prepared her for expanded opportunities and relationships.

CELEA board member Robin Gingerich shares an article about online TESOL studies which sustain and enhance international connections, and board member Maxine Pond reviews a book about how to better serve international students in university settings.

We celebrate not only our love for the nations and peoples God has created, but also reaffirm our goal to teach them with excellence and understanding. The cross-cultural relationships we establish are well worth the effort!

CELEA looks forward to receiving your proposals for the 2020 CELT conference in Denver.

Hannah Cole and Annie Wong

Have ideas or feedback? Tell us at <http://bit.ly/CELEAnewsfeedback>.

Click on the image below to provide feedback:

The image shows a screenshot of a web form titled "CELEA E-NEWS Feedback Form". The form is set against a light gray background. It contains four text input fields, each with a label and a "Your answer" placeholder. The first field is labeled "Email address *" and has a red asterisk above it. The second field is labeled "Name". The third field is labeled "Feedback *" and has a red asterisk above it. The fourth field is labeled "Ideas for future issues/Other *" and has a red asterisk above it. Below the fields is a blue "Submit" button. A small red asterisk is also visible at the top left of the form area.

TESOL Student Features



Student Feature: *Jarden Ens*

Pursued by the Spirit: Lessons Learned During a TESOL Internship

My TESOL internship this past summer significantly shaped me as a person and as a teacher. My team and I were teaching in Asia, in a place where the gospel is not seen favourably. Our focus was on teaching to the best of our ability as Christ's ambassadors. Even so, the work of the Holy Spirit was not muted or limited in any capacity; quite the contrary. I hope this article will encourage the reader as I share my experience.

During the trip, I often doubted the effectiveness of my own ability. One reason for this was my professor's insistence that my team would never again experience a more engaged class and that the learners would become very attached to the teachers. However, I experienced the exact opposite. As the weeks went on, my class became quieter and quieter. Even outside observers could sense that my class was becoming increasingly disconnected. I couldn't help but feel disappointed and wonder if I really had a purpose in being there. Yet, behind the scenes, the Spirit was working.

A week before my team and I were assigned the classes we would teach, I sensed by the Spirit that out of 7 classes, I would teach Class 5, and this was indeed the case. It may seem like an insignificant detail, but for me, it was a tangible reminder that the Spirit was at work. On multiple

occasions, the Spirit would lead members of the city's long-term team to pray for exactly what I needed. For instance, I was given a prayer to affirm in me a sense of purpose, but I had not made mention of my feelings. Even with these undeniable signs, I still had my doubts. Near the end of my internship I sat with the team, feeling exhausted and defeated. Before I uttered my prayer needs, our team leader suggested beginning the class with gratitude. It was such a simple answer, yet when I implemented it that day in class, the difference was palpable. My energy and the learners' energy were enhanced, and the final days of teaching were perhaps the most exciting.



I learned a few lessons about God and His Spirit during my trip. First, God is worth trusting. He was pursuing me the entire time, even when I felt doubtful of my purpose. The second lesson is that the Spirit can work in various ways, depending on the context and people involved. Third, there is freedom in praying with expectancy. We can feel disappointed when our specific prayers are not answered, but surrendering to the possibility that God's plan may far exceed our own opens us to greater trust in Him.

My TESOL internship taught me that the Spirit can do more than we could ever hope for. This applies to our teaching, our learners, and all the people around us if we are simply thankful, trusting, and open to His work.



Jarden is a third year undergraduate student in the TESOL program at Briercrest College and Seminary in Saskatchewan, Canada.

Student Feature: Kathryn Nielson

What Led Me to TESOL?



For as long as I can remember I have been fascinated with people from other cultures. As a six-year-old girl, I used to dream of being Asian. On trips to the grocery store, when the electric doors would open, a gust of wind would blow through my hair, and every time, at that moment, I would imagine that anyone looking at me saw a girl with long black hair and exotic eyes. When I got older, I would hold the TV antenna as my microphone while I belted out some tune attempting to sound Spanish complete with rolled r's flying off my tongue.

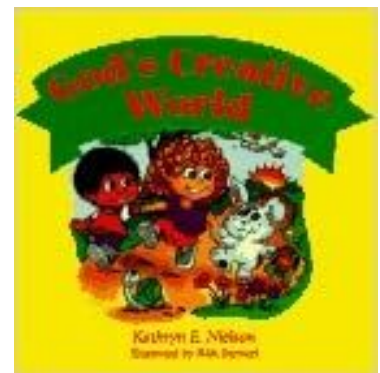
At 17, I found myself at a boot camp of sorts for kids going overseas with Teen Missions International. I was heading to France, and this was our two-week crash course in learning to work with our teams in how to effectively witness to people from other cultures. Halfway through the training we were introduced to a group of MTA's, or Missionaries to America. Until that point, I was delusional enough to believe that all Americans knew God, and it was our job to go out and tell everyone else out there about Him. That day changed everything for me.

Now at almost 50 years old, I have watched as time and again God has brought the world to me, giving me the privilege of meeting people from all over the world and tutoring them in English. Each time I meet someone new I'm reminded again that we are all alike. We all have a story to tell. We've all been through heartaches and celebrations. And we all need Jesus.

I have loved every single minute that I have had with each one of them, and even though I was able to help them with their English, I realized pretty early on that I needed some instruction in how to be a better teacher of English. My ultimate goal is two-fold: to work myself out of a job as a tutor by helping them gain a practical usage of English for their everyday lives. Secondly, I want their usage of English to open the door for us to communicate on a deeper level than just as student and tutor. Maybe to even become life-long friends.

Every time I look at someone who is different from me, I see the creativity of God, and I can't help but praise Him for His craftsmanship.

Kathryn Nielson is a graduate student at Huntington University, pursuing a Master of Education in TESOL.. She is passionate about teaching others to use English successfully in order to flourish in an English-speaking environment. She also spends her days writing and has published a children's book entitled God's Creative World.



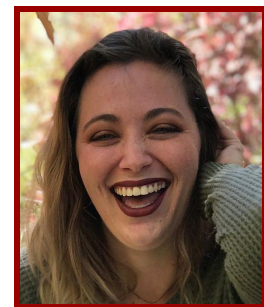
Student Feature: *Elésa Pettit*



Growing up, I have always been immersed in two cultural settings, fascinated by different ways of life. I grew up in a household with English and Spanish being spoken, and food from both cultures at mealtimes. My interest in other languages, cultures, and people started early on. As I grew older, I never settled for the ordinary. I wanted to know more, see more and experience more. The world has so much to teach and offer us if we are willing to seek it out. Growing up in this type of environment from the beginning made me see a bigger picture of the world with more opportunities and possibilities.

Teaching English as a second language is an exciting way to see the world and the people in it. I want to establish myself in this field not because I solely want to teach English, but because I want to establish relationships and build communication with people in meaningful ways. I understand what it is like to be hit with two different cultural worlds and find your place among the majority. I want to show that with multiple cultures and languages more doors can be opened and more relationships can be born.

Elésa Pettit is a graduate student at Azusa Pacific University, pursuing a Master's degree in TESOL. She hopes to use her graduate degree and undergraduate degree in film to teach English around the world.



TESOL and E-Learning

A Surprising Community: Connecting Teachers Online



For me, school has always been a physical building. As a teen, I drove to a Mennonite high school which was housed in one building. Later, I attended a Mennonite college where I sat on hard wooden chairs in lecture halls. In 1994, I went to newly-independent Lithuania to teach at a newly-established school; we rented 5 classrooms. Twenty-two years later, I find myself as the director of an online teacher training program, a format that does not rely on a brick and mortar building.

Skeptical at first of e-learning, I am now convinced that the virtual classroom can be a powerful means of instruction. Elizabeth, Kaitlyn, and Maria are three students who completed an MA TESOL degree at LCC International University (LCC), a blended learning program with two-week summer residency sessions and complete online courses throughout the year.

Elizabeth's goal was to complete her MA TESOL degree while living in the Middle East, so she began searching for online programs. Kaitlyn had raised funds to teach in China with a Christian organization; although an MA degree seemed like the next step, most MA programs were too expensive. Maria had studied in the USA and in Europe but was attracted to a program in her home country of Lithuania that aligned with her Christian worldview. All three women discovered personal connections and high-quality instruction through the online program.

Elizabeth was initially skeptical of distance education because she wanted to connect to her classmates in a personal way. She wanted to study in a community, not with "avatars." However, during the two-week residency courses in Lithuania, Maria, Elizabeth, and Kaitlyn got to know each other and the other six students in their cohort as they attended classes and lived on campus. Their relationships continued to strengthen over the succeeding months of their online studies. In addition to the required forum posts and video chats, the cohort launched their own social media group to help them stay in touch over the winter until they met again the following summer.



This learning community is uniquely international. While Kaitlyn (American) is teaching in Mongolia, she is communicating with Maria (Lithuanian) in Spain. And while Luan (Vietnam) is teaching adults in Norway, he is doing a project with Bobby (Canadian) in Saudi Arabia. This cross-cultural connection is often the norm, and a strong community can be fostered intentionally through online learning.

The global nature of the program is balanced with the practical “people-centered” aspect of the profession. A distance-learning program not only helps students to conceptualize theories of second language acquisition and pedagogical frameworks, but also requires reflection and research in real classrooms with real pupils.

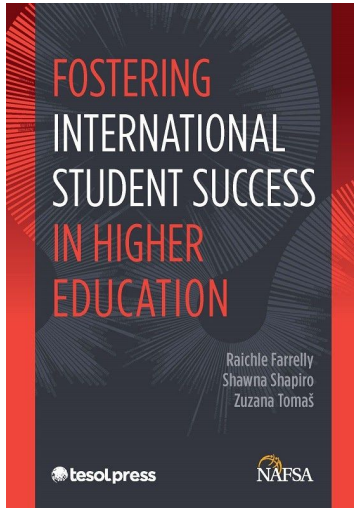
An online program can offer an affordable Christian learning community. Professors teach from their personal Christian perspective, while the classes support the integration of faith and learning. Distance education opens up endless possibilities that don’t exist within the four walls of a classroom. In August 2019, Elizabeth, Kaitlyn and Maria graduated from LCC’s online MA TESOL program. They will carry what they learned in the virtual classroom into their own classrooms around the world.

Dr. Robin Gingerich chairs the English department and is director of the MA TESOL program at LCC International University in Lithuania. She has given professional development workshops for English teachers in Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, Russia, Albania, Turkey, Estonia and Congo.



Book Review

Fostering International Student Success in Higher Education



Shapiro, Farrelly, and Tomas' (2014) book *Fostering International Student Success in Higher Education* seeks “to help college-level teachers better understand the backgrounds, needs, and contributions of international students, so that teachers can be effective not only in supporting this population, but in helping their institutions make the most of what an increasingly internationalized student body has to offer” (p. 2). Theoretic framework for this professional development resource includes research in applied linguistics, education, and intercultural communication. The book effectively communicates that good teaching for international students is in fact good teaching for all students.

Current international enrollment in the U.S., the financial benefits and increased cultural awareness that this trend creates, as well as the ethical responsibility of the institutions that receive international students are all topics of the book's introduction. The authors consider the right of international students to receive equitable treatment which includes “teaching practices, appropriate support resources, and non-punitive policies” (p.5). The classroom teaching staff is an important link between the international student and the institution. Instructors are responsible for providing equitable treatment by the institution but also are encouraged to help the student to learn how to be proactive in assessing the help and resources available on campus. They list four critical questions being asked by thoughtful instructors:

- What do I need to know about students' cultural backgrounds in order to help them to be successful in U.S. academic culture?
- How can I ensure that the content for my course is comprehensible to students who are still learning English?
- How do I design assignments and assessments that measure student learning fairly, but still acknowledge the difficulty of doing academic work in a second or foreign language?
- How might I treat international students as a linguistic and cultural asset in the classroom, and help them to become institutionally integrated? (pp. 1-2)

The teacher training book progresses from cultural considerations to principles of second language acquisition. The last two chapters address assignments, assessment and empowering international students. The format of the chapters is highly engaging. Text is enhanced by the use of boxes with classroom anecdotes, reflection questions, quotes from students and instructors, cultural notes, sample student writing, culturally appropriate and less-than-appropriate responses by instructors to international student behavior. Each chapter

includes practical suggestions for classroom activities and application of sound pedagogical approaches. This is a practical book based on sound theory.

International students need a base level of proficiency to enter postsecondary studies, and Chapter 2 reminds the practitioner that language acquisition continues throughout the students' course of study. Topics addressed include scaffolding, noticing, interaction in classroom lectures, discussions, and course readings. The debatable topic of accommodations for international students is tackled in Chapter 4, which thoroughly addresses the responsibilities of the student and the expectations of the instructor. Academic fairness is discussed regarding assessment, measurable goals and grading criteria and issues such as plagiarism and feedback. The book maintains a strong focus on building awareness and offering practical solutions.

The final chapter defines and discusses the institutional integration, academic and social, of international students. The authors suggest that when instructors are using the practices offered in earlier chapters, international students will have less stress and be more likely to have time and emotional energy to pursue a social life. Suggested classroom activities that promote socialization are followed by suggestions on how to help the students benefit from other campus support systems. This chapter also suggests ways to enhance the classroom by accessing the rich cultural resources the international student can contribute. Helpful resources available in the appendices include classroom activities, tips for writing effective rubrics, exam questions, and grammar help.

What Choudaha insisted in 2016 is even more imperative in 2019: it is time that instructors, institutions, department heads, English language teaching staff, and departments involved in international student recruitment address the ethical responsibility of preparing staff and campuses to support the success of international students. *Fostering International Student Success in Higher Education* provides a sound, practical, research-based curriculum from which to open the dialogue and begin preparing instructors and institutions to address Choudaha's imperative. This information is critically needed and highly recommended!

Maxine Pond (maxine.pond@montana.edu) is semi-retired. She has taught ESL on the high school and postsecondary level and conducted teacher-trainings both in the U.S and overseas.



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