



# Maryland TESOL

**SPRING/SUMMER  
2020 ISSUE**



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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Ashley Jenoff

Our country and the world is going through such a difficult and unprecedented time right now with the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we are all quarantined in our homes, it is a good time to count our blessings. Hopefully, you are all safe, healthy, and able to get to the grocery store.

During these times, it reminds us to lend a helping hand to others in our community who may not be able to get a ride to the doctor or get groceries or who may unfortunately have tested positive to COVID-19. What about some of your neighbors who are not working now nor receiving a paycheck? Are you able to "pay it forward" and alert people in the community about where food and meals are being distributed? In our everyday, fast-paced life we might not have time to stop and think about these important issues.

This is a frightening time especially for our students and their parents who have an extra barrier, a language barrier to tackle, when it comes to understanding issues and new directives that come from the Federal and State level on a regular basis. Also, school Kindergarten to higher education continues throughout this pandemic. Many students are finding challenging completing all learning online especially since a significant number do not have internet with very little instruction. I would like to close with a quote from Indian spiritual leader Amit Ray. "The greatest compassion is the prevention of human suffering through patience, alertness, courage and kindness."

I want to personally thank all the doctors, nurses and other essential workers who are risking their lives each day. With this being said being said, if there is anything I can do to help you during this time, please feel free to reach out to me at [president@mdtesol.org](mailto:president@mdtesol.org) or [ajenoff@gmail.com](mailto:ajenoff@gmail.com).

Stay well,  
Ashley Jenoff





# EDITOR'S MESSAGE

by **Billie Muñoz**

"I am an ESOL teacher. I am part weather reporter. Parent -It's snowing. Do you think they will cancel school? I am part realtor. Parent - We don't rent the apartment. We just have a room. How can we prove we live here? I am part nurse. Parent- My son has a fever. When can I take him back to school? I am part tour guide. Parent - Do you know where the clinic is? I am part nutritionist. Parent - I heard there was fresh chicken in the food pantry today. Do you know how I can get some? I am part psychologist. Parent - My son said he is being bullied. Of course, he is completely innocent. Do you know how I can get the teacher to keep him away from the bad children who are picking on him? I am part human resources employee. Parent - I have no documents and they tell me I have to wait until 2022 to get a work permit.

Do you know where I can get a job right now? I am 100% happy and fulfilled. What other job allows you to change lives for the better any ordinary day of the week?" Now, in a post pandemic world, I would add the following. I am a Community Resource Specialist. I am a computer and hot spot liaison. I am a cheerleader and an unemployment benefits counselor. I am a detective finding children who seem to have gone off the grid. I am a virtual teacher in an on-line course. I am a statistician for my county. I am a connection to a world that has disappeared overnight. Who have you become?



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# NEW PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY KATIE MILLER

Dear Maryland TESOL members,

Teachers are some of the hardest-working people out there. As one school year winds down, we are already busy preparing for the next. 2020 marks the 40th Anniversary of Maryland TESOL and we have some big celebration plans in store, including our 40th Annual Fall Conference on November 14th. We welcome your ideas and suggestions on how to fulfill our mission of creating excellent professional development and networking opportunities. As always, we thank you for your support and participation!

Katie Miller, President, Maryland TESOL.



# NEW EDITOR'S MESSAGE

BY IVETTE CRUZ

Dear MDTESOL Members,

Welcome to another issue of the MDTESOL newsletter! The edition of this newsletter took longer than usual. It was in the process to be published when the COVID-19 pandemic started. As you may have experienced, we were all in a COVID daze running around to make sure our students continued progressing towards their academic goals while also dealing with the joys and challenges of working from home.

**THIS NEWSLETTER MORPHED AND EVOLVED AS THE PANDEMIC DEVELOPED. IT CERTAINLY REFLECTS THE TRANSITION TO THE NEW NORMAL.**

During this time of crisis, our educational organizations have shown resilience and adaptability. As this situation continues to unfold, educators keep collaborating and learning from each other. I invite you to consider sharing your experiences with other MDTESOL members by contributing to the newsletter. Please send articles to [ivette.cruz@outlook.com](mailto:ivette.cruz@outlook.com)



# THE CIRCUITOUS PATH: DISMANTLING THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE ONE KID, ONE POLICY AT A TIME

*By Billie Muñoz*

*This is the first in what is hoped to be a long series of articles on teachers who once lived another life. It will explore what passion drove them to make a seismic change.*

Katherine Mullen came out of college with a degree in criminal justice, a minor in social work, and a desire to work with young people who were involved in the criminal justice system. She explains, "I did that for many years, and I found myself doing a great deal of advocacy for students who had been long term suspended from public schools for issues like violence, student-teacher conflicts, gross insubordination and sometimes drugs. During that time Rochester City school district (NY) experienced a tragedy. A much beloved teacher was stabbed and killed by a student who had recently been released from a juvenile detention facility. It was suspected that he committed this deed while under the influence of drugs. This sad even heightened the realization of how ill-equipped the school district was in policy and practice to deal with kids like this and keep teachers safe".

Katherine immediately began working with the school district as a consultant. But she realized she needed more. She needed to become an educator. She ended up becoming the superintendent's designee for suspensions and expulsions. This was all about 25 years ago. That led to spending 15 years on the behavioral health side of criminal justice and having a desire to be on a more direct connection with young people. Back she went to the classroom as a student. She already had an MA in Educational Administration, earned during those years with the superintendent's office. A fast track certification was all that was needed to get another degree – this time an MS in secondary instruction. By remaining in the classroom and serving on the TABCO BOD, Katherine feels she can now unite all the different aspects of her life and passions with sound policy and practice.

Today she can be found teaching US and World History at Dundalk High School. This is her 7th year in the classroom in BCPS. Katherine describes, "Dundalk High School is an ESOL center, so I find myself being introduced to a whole other population with a unique set of challenges. My students are from El Salvador, Honduras, Dominican Republic and Mexico. I made a point of going to some of these countries in order to get a better understanding of the lives my students led before coming here. I traveled with some friends who had been in these places before and were able to guide me off the tourist path". One of the things that tugs at her heart strings the most is that her students are trying to come here and adjust to life in the United States and the English language. That does not always align with what we have in mind for them. Students who work in order to support their families, students who were considered adults in another country that now have to carry a bathroom pass to leave a room and even students who are already raising a child of their own – these are everyday situations for Katherine Mullen.

# BUILDING MATH REASONING WITH ELS

*By Hilary Lawch*  
*MAT ESOL Frederick County Public Schools*

Presenting and scaffolding mathematical content for English Learners (ELs) can seem like a herculean task, especially when presented with the rigorous, high level thinking and reasoning tasks that both Common Core and MCAP present. Mathematical reasoning tasks require not only a knowledge of the math standards--which when unpacked can be complex in their own right--but of metacognitive strategies, attending to precision, and academic verbiage.

Since math instruction has moved toward open ended justifications that are graded for academic vocabulary and clear thinking, it can leave many ELs in the lurch when it comes to showing what they may already know mathematically.

However, it doesn't have to!

We know as EL educators that language acquisition and content acquisition work best in tandem. So, when teaching, I advise taking the time to teach students how to think about the math--the vocabulary and math concepts will come with application and repetition through modeling.

## **Think Alouds and Making Sense of the Problem**

In order to teach any learner how to progress through a multi-step math problem, we need to equip learners with the metacognitive strategies to monitor their thinking. One great way to do this and pack in the explicit vocabulary instruction and math concepts is a think aloud. There are different ways to do this, but the bottom line is to illustrate to learners how re-reading, note taking, and monitoring for understanding look in a math problem. Visuals lend themselves very well to this process, as you can model them as tools for student use during your think aloud:

2 Step Problems	
1st Read	What is happening? Can I retell it?
2nd Read	How can I get started? What should I do first?
3rd Read	What was I trying to find out? What should I do next?
4th Read	Does my answer make sense?

Image: Math In Practice Think Aloud Strategy, Revised by Hilary Lawch

In Math in Practice, authors O'Connell, Akers and SanGiovanni suggest modeling how and why we re-read problems. Teachers can use a visual like this to guide themselves during modeling, as well as students.

Continues from page 6

More simply, a teacher can demonstrate the skill using a “First-Then” chart:

What does the problem want me to find?	
First I need to...	Then...

Keeping the learner in mind, use whatever level of scaffolding seems appropriate for breaking down what it looks like to comprehend a word problem in all of its wordy glory!

### **Building Language to Communicate Mathematical Thinking and Agency**

Common Core standards and MCAP reasoning tasks require students to articulate one or all of the following:

- Explain how a visual represents a mathematical concept
- Identify or correct a flaw in reasoning
- Use examples to prove or disprove a statement (or conjecture as they may see it in MCAP)
- Identify or construct a reasoning path

For any learner, especially an EL, that’s a lot of language both to receive and to produce. So how can we train their ears to comprehend and their pencils and mouths to make it? Two words: recasting and modeling.

First, I recommend teachers spend time modeling the creation of an answer, either verbally or visually using the same method as a think aloud. Walking students through your process of how you remember to include academic verbiage solidifies to them the definitions as well as their uses within the context of an answer. You can even elicit answers from students to help them include key vocabulary in the answer as a group. In this way, students are using the language verbally and hearing it from you and their peers. You can also make use of visual tools that help unpack the verbiage, or “Thinking Verbs” as I like to call them.

Continues from page 7




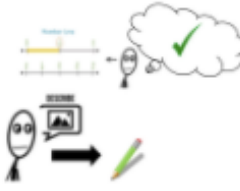
Making Sense	
<p><b>SUPPORT/JUSTIFY</b></p>  <p>A visual model A solution path</p>	<p>☐ I can see it in my model</p> <p>☐ I can <b>describe</b> what I see in my model using <b>math words</b></p> 
<p><b>EXPLAIN</b></p>  <p>Make plain or clear A visual model</p>	<p>☐ I can look at someone else's model and know what they were thinking</p> <p>☐ I can <b>describe</b> what I see in my model using <b>math words</b></p> 

Image: Thinking Verbs by Carroll County Public Schools, Revised by Hilary Lawch

In addition to faithful classics like sentence stems and word walls for language building, create or display tools that allow student agency in revising their work. Tools like the one below allow for student answers to be accepted and also convey a non-prescriptive take on language. Letting students know, "I understand what you're saying, but let me help you say it the way a mathematician does" allows them to take pride in what they have done, and revise work to meet the expectations of the rubric or standard.

I said...	I can use Specific math words... or Symbols
Crossed out took away →	Subtracted —
got →	added +
<del>borrowed</del> Changed moved →	renamed decomposed $\text{①} \rightarrow \dots$ <small>I ten → 10 ones</small>
Some →	? hundreds tens ones <small>How many?</small>

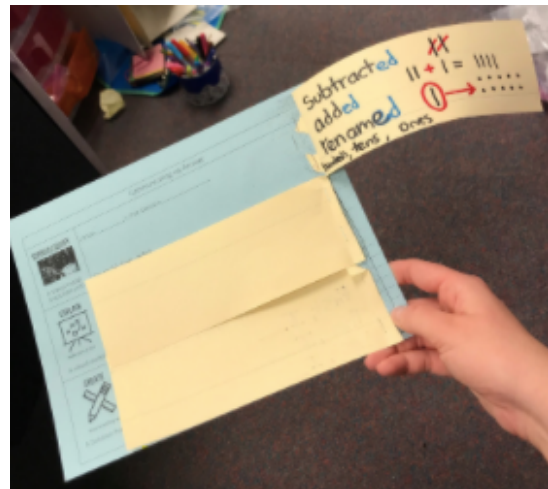


Image: Specific Math Vocabulary Anchor Chart and adapted Carroll County Public Schools Thinking Verbs Hilary Lawch

Lastly, be explicit about what math behaviors look and sound like. Encourage self-talk or closure conversations that allow students to demonstrate orally why they were successful during a lesson. Include teacher models and visuals that demonstrate what these conversations can sound like. These tools help students build the language needed as well as the metacognitive strategies to monitor their work.



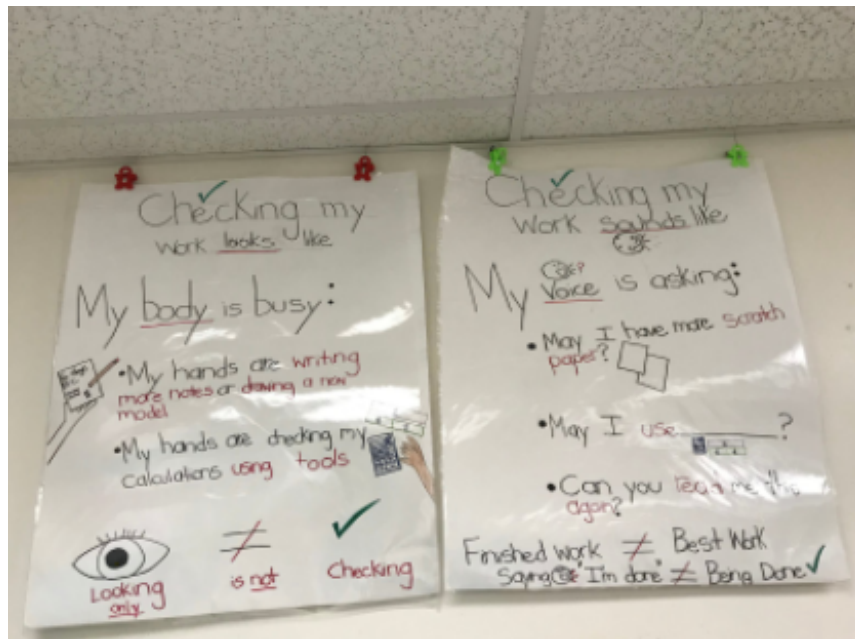


Image: Checkiing My Work anchor chart by Hilary Lawch

### Assessment Validity

Lastly, it's important to hold ELs to the same standards as their peers. However, when assessing math skills, have a varied approach to determine what your students know. Allow yourself the flexibility of using alternative or self-created formatives in addition to mandated testing. This can aid you in teasing out more targeted language and math needs. It can also prevent student washback that is more likely to occur in an already burnt out EL. Everyone is a mathematician, and when the right scaffolds and modeling are in place, all students can be a successful one.

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HIGHER ED  
TEACHER OF THE YEAR  
**DR. CHRISTA DE KLEINE**  
Notre Dame of Maryland University



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K-12 TEACHER OF THE YEAR  
**SUCHITRA MONEYHAN**  
Laurel High School  
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# INTEGRATING DIGITAL LITERACY IN THE ADULT ESL CLASSROOM

*By Amber Hengen and Kirstin Thomas*

In community colleges and adult learning centers across the country, ESL instructors have been called on to better integrate digital literacy into their lessons. There are valid reasons for this, as digital literacy is increasingly at the center of day-to-day life in the United States, whether for social, professional, or academic purposes. Tasks such as accessing local services, communicating and interpreting information, managing financial accounts, or applying for jobs can be carried out with greater autonomy by someone with basic digital skills. In addition, studies show there are economic benefits to digital literacy, which is now required for most mid-skilled jobs that pay family-sustaining wages (Muro, Liu, Whiton, & Kulkarni, 2017). For adult English Learners (ELs) who are new to the country and balancing work, family, and other responsibilities, the ESL classroom may be the only time and place where they can develop this essential life skill.

While most adult educators of ELs would agree that integrating digital literacy is important, for many it remains unclear how to do so. While some instructors have access to a fully equipped computer lab and curriculum, instructors with less resources or support may feel teaching digital literacy is restrictive or impractical. In situations where support is lacking, instructors may be left wondering, which digital skills should I teach and how should I teach them?

## **Defining Digital Literacy**

So what do we mean by 'digital literacy'? For ESL and ABE programs focused on workforce development, The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) has defined digital literacy as "the skills associated with using technology...to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate information." (S. 3530, 2018). This definition emphasizes the difference between passively integrating technology, for example, by sitting learners in front of a website to practice grammar exercises,

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3 (Integrating...)

versus teaching learners to engage with technology for informational, creative, or communicative purposes (Peromingo & Pieterston, 2018). Examples of this include website development, the creation of infographics, and blog or vlog posts among things. Effective digital literacy lessons simultaneously reinforce language, content and technology skills. Student needs assessment & classroom resources analysis. When initially developing digital literacy lessons, Adult ESL instructors should consider two tools: 1) a student needs assessment and, 2) a classroom resources checklist.

The student needs assessment should aim to determine students' levels of proficiency in using technology, and a classroom resources checklist should assess technology infrastructure and limitations. This allows instructors to identify alternate options in technology before they begin developing lessons. For example, if an instructor teaches in an environment where they do not have access to a computer lab, she or he might consider asking students to bring laptops from home (Vanek, 2017). Similarly, if an instructor does not have a projector or smartboard, she or he may opt to print screenshots for students to reference (Jenkins, 2015). Here is an example of a checklist you might use to assess access to technology resources in your classroom:

<b>Classroom Resources Checklist</b>		
<b>Resource:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Enough power outlets and device chargers for each device in classroom		
Access to a computer or tablet cart with enough devices per person		
SMART Board, Promethean Board, or other screen for information projection		
<u>Wifi</u> access and login credentials		
Access to headphones, Speakers and/or other audio device		
Notes:		

After analyzing student needs and resources, instructors can begin developing digitally enhanced lessons. The following section describes an approach which arrives at the effect of creating digitally enhanced lessons. The infographic (picture A) shows the relationship between the elements of content, language, and technology as they relate to lesson planning.

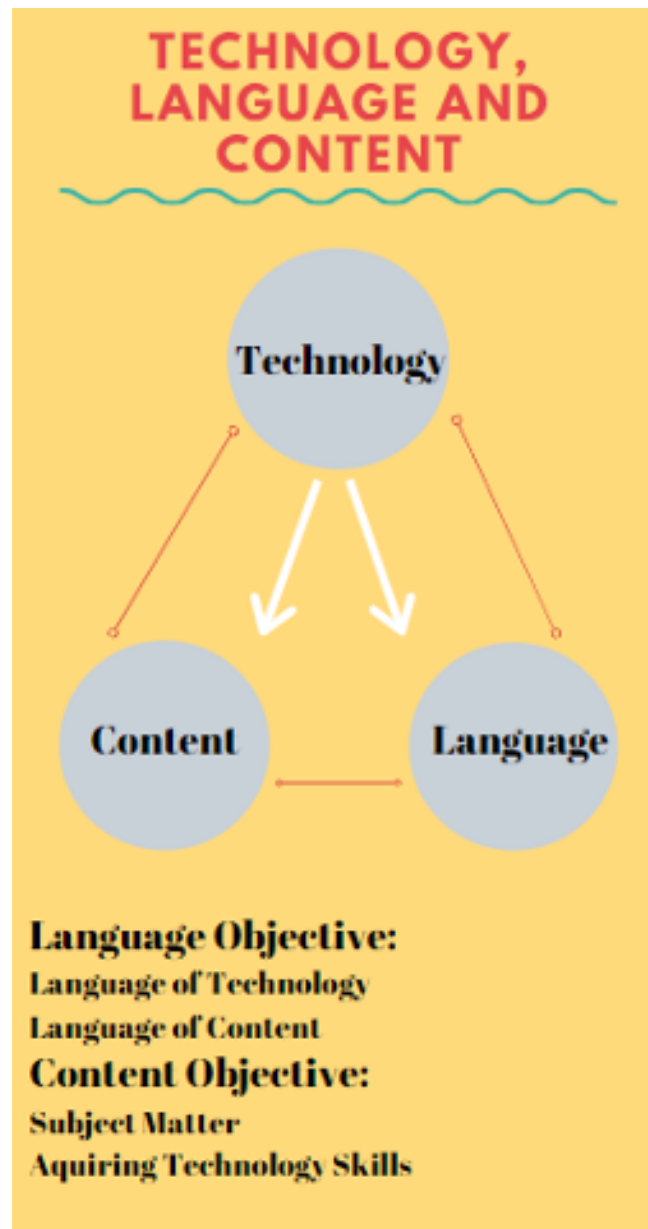
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## IMPROVE LANGUAGE LEARNING WITH DIGITAL ACTIVITIES

Digitally enhanced adult ESL lessons can begin by establishing language-learning objectives. As an example, imagine an instructor preparing a lesson for a low intermediate adult ESL class. The lesson topic is to identify community resources and the instructor begins her or his lesson plan as usual by setting a language objective: learners will be able to ask and answer information questions about places in the community. A traditional lesson plan might involve an extended practice wherein learners take turns responding to questions about local services depicted in their textbook. This activity can be easily modified to include practice searching for local services online.

This type of real-world practice is not only motivating, but allows learners to improve skills of using technology to find information. The extended digital activity provides a natural way to reinforce vocabulary development, for example, by asking learners to 'find a place they can get an ID'. This question requires learners to identify the vocabulary and the information question they must enter into the search bar. At the end of the lesson, the assessment includes both a language and technology objective that is being measured - can students write the information questions correctly? Can they use internet search to find information?

Picture A



**"EFFECTIVE DIGITAL LITERACY LESSONS SIMULTANEOUSLY REINFORCE LANGUAGE, CONTENT AND TECHNOLOGY SKILLS. STUDENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT & CLASSROOM RESOURCES ANALYSIS. WHEN INITIALLY DEVELOPING DIGITAL LITERACY LESSONS, ADULT ESL INSTRUCTORS SHOULD CONSIDER TWO TOOLS: 1) A STUDENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND, 2) A CLASSROOM RESOURCES CHECKLIST."**

One benefit to this approach is that it requires little adjustment to daily lesson planning, provided the instructor is already setting language-learning objectives. If a lesson plan does not have an obvious digital literacy extension, it may be helpful to reflect upon the elements of digital literacy defined by WIOA (find, evaluate, organize, create, communicate). This may guide instructors towards a practical digital literacy activity that relates to the topic being studied.

Technology standards also offer guidance in developing digital literacy lessons. Instructors can start by accessing the Maryland Content Standards for Technology (2001), which lists competencies and performance indicators for technology skills development. For example, under the standard, learners communicate effectively, there are performance indicators such as 'learners use a variety of resources (...email) to interact, collaborate and publish.' With this indicator in mind, an instructor might conduct a series of mini lessons related to email. These lessons could include having learners send an email attachment or adjust account settings. Each lesson would have a language focus that complements the technology being taught. An example language objective may be, 'learners will use the correct terminology to identify parts of an email inbox', or 'learners will read and follow written instructions to reset their password'.

## **Conclusion**

The approach an instructor takes to integrating digital literacy in their ESL classroom depends on many factors, including technology resources, student needs, curricular goals, teacher abilities, and student language proficiency. Instructors who are looking to improve their practice or learn more about how to teach digital literacy may consider joining the Integrating Technology Community of Practice (COP), offered through the Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS). This free service provides online discussions, webinars, and learning modules to help you integrate digital literacy more effectively.

In recognizing that digital literacy improves the quality of ESL instruction, it is our responsibility to independently seek professional development, while also collaborating and supporting each other. As technology becomes increasingly prevalent in the classroom and in society, it is our duty as adult ESL instructors to prepare our learners with this essential life skill.

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## AMBER HENGEN

*Amber Hengen is a graduate of the MA TESOL program at UMBC. She currently works at Baltimore City Community College, coordinating college and career readiness out-of-school time (OST) programming for refugee youth in Baltimore City. This is Amber's second year on the MDTESOL Board, her first year with the Adult Education Interest Section.*



## KIRSTIN THOMAS

*Kirstin Thomas is a recent graduate of the MA TESOL program at UMBC. She currently works at Baltimore City Community College where she coordinates lab activities and teaches computer literacy. Kirstin has taught adult English Learners for five years and has worked in Peru and in the U.S. This is her first year serving on the MD TESOL Board.*

# THE DANIELSON FRAMEWORK AND TESOL: CONSIDERATIONS

*By Drew Fagan and Loren Jones*

Understanding teacher education, its connection to and manifestations in classroom practices, and its ultimate influence on English learners' (ELs) language acquisition has long been at the crux of research and practice within the TESOL field. In moving these ideas forward, Johnson and Golombek (2020) argue that "greater attention [needs to be paid] to the design, enactment, and consequences of [language teacher education] pedagogy in order to meet the needs of current and future English language teachers in an increasingly diverse, mobile, unequal, and globalized world (p. 117). Central to this argument is the understanding that teacher education must enable candidates to reflect upon the characteristics of the immediate context in which they are working and apply the knowledge gained throughout their educational programs in ways that meet the needs of that particular context. In other words, teachers and their educators/supervisors need to move beyond generalized checklists of expected practices to assess classroom actions, and instead work to uncover why teachers do what they do in-the-moment.

Researchers have sought to uncover this through various methodological means, including through interviews and journaling (e.g., Farrell, 2018; Jones, Smith, & de Oliveira, 2019), or through more micro discourse analytic examinations of teacher practices (e.g., Fagan, 2018). Educators, supervisors, mentors, and others working with teacher candidates on the ground may have an interest in utilizing such tools but may not have the time or experience to implement them. What, then, is at their disposal?

Historically, teacher educators in TESOL have used various observation schemes to assess teachers' classroom practices and their influence on language acquisition opportunities. One example, the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) observationscheme, which has been a staple in the field since the 1980s (Allen, Fröhlich, & Spada, 1984), stems from second language acquisition research and its focus on communicative language teaching (CLT). Its focus is to see evidence of the use of CLT in classroom activities (e.g., do they focus on form or meaning, how are materials used to promote language learning) and classroom discourse (teacher talk versus student talk time). While we are not doubting the importance of these factors in ESOL classroom practices, the question remains are these generalized items appropriate at all times for all lessons? If not, then what can be used to get at the reasoning behind the teacher's actions in-the-moment?

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8 (The Danielson...)

It is this question that leads us to the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT; The Danielson Group, Inc., 2019). This framework was developed in 1996 by Charlotte Danielson in an effort to promote clear and meaningful conversations about effective teaching practices. The FFT is driven by three core beliefs which include (1) each and every student deserves access to quality teaching, (2) learning is done by the learner through an active, intellectual process, and (3) teaching is incredibly complex work. The FFT is organized into four domains for teaching: (1) planning and preparation, (2) the classroom environment, (3) instruction, and (4) professional responsibilities.

In recent years, the FFT has shifted from these four domains to six clusters with the goal of putting forth “big ideas” that encompass a multitude of teaching practices. These newly designed clusters provide a roadmap for student learning and include (1) clarity of instructional purpose and accuracy of content, (2) a safe, respectful, supportive, and challenging learning environment, (3) classroom management, (4) intellectual engagement, (5) successful learning by all students, and (6) professionalism. Each cluster is presented with three focus areas and several indicators and considerations (in the form of guiding questions) to prompt reflection, analysis, and goal setting. For example, cluster one, clarity and accuracy, has the following focus areas: learning outcomes, success criteria and activities, and presentation and explanation. An example guiding question from this cluster is “In what ways are the learning outcomes reflective of the standards of the discipline and appropriate to the students’ levels of knowledge and skill?”

The FFT also includes rubrics for each cluster which provide a more detailed description of varied practices. Together, these clusters, accompanying focus areas and guiding questions, and rubrics provide educational stakeholders (pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, administrators, teacher educators) with a multi-use tool to support professional growth. More specifically, the FFT clusters encourage purposeful examination of practice and professional learning, guided professional dialogue and collaboration, and coherence between improvement initiatives. This tool can also be used as a means to support system-wide school improvement efforts, and as a way to promote the understanding of teacher knowledge and practices.

The FFT clusters were created to be generic in nature and can therefore be applied to all teaching contexts, no matter the grade level, discipline, student age, or level. This would indicate that this tool is appropriate for our ESOL teachers across PK-16 and adult education contexts. In order to use this tool effectively, teachers need to be introduced to the FFT to guide them through the different clusters, areas of focus, and indicators. It’s also important to review the rubrics so that they have a nuanced understanding of how each cluster will be evaluated. As TESOL teacher educators, looking at the Danielson FFT, we see the value in this tool as it relates to uncovering why teachers do what they do in the moment. For example, the framework offers a comprehensive means to explore multiple and simultaneous teaching practices, ranging from how one provides a caring and respectful learning environment (cluster 2) to the on-the-spot feedback that teachers provide to students (cluster 5).



## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9 (The Danielson...)

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Furthermore, the framework itself is presented in such a way that it's accessible to all stakeholders involved in the evaluation process (e.g., teacher educators, professors, mentor teachers, supervisors, administrators). In order to ensure understanding of all involved, evaluators may complete a sample teaching evaluation alongside teachers where everyone observes the teaching and completes the corresponding rubrics. This sample evaluation may be in an authentic classroom environment or in a video format. While this activity may be completed with any observation tool, the Danielson FFT captures a wide variety of instructional approaches that may not be included in other tools. Though we recognize the strengths of the Danielson FFT, we also acknowledge that there are some drawbacks in terms of practicality. Some of the teaching practices require a more nuanced observation that may not be feasible in one or two evaluations of individual lessons.

For example, cluster 6, professionalism, focuses on continuous professional learning, collaboration, and honesty and integrity. While certain contexts may lend themselves to these areas overtly (e.g., co-teaching), other settings may not reveal these aspects of one's teaching. If a teacher, for instance, delivers a lesson based on an idea they acquired when attending an MDTESOL conference session, one could argue that it's a strong example of continuous professional learning; however, that information may not be known by the supervisor or administrator while observing the lesson. In short, getting at why teachers do what they do in the moment is no easy feat. Many evaluation/observation tools have been put forth over the years to address this challenge from a practical perspective. The Danielson FFT offers many possibilities in the world of TESOL to uncover the embodiment of teaching and all that it entails across contexts. It will be interesting to see where this tool takes us in the future.

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## MEMBER OF THE MONTH

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MDTESOL proudly presents our Member of the Month for May

**OWEN  
ANDREWS**

Instructional Specialist at Anne Arundel Community College

*Congrats!*

Want to nominate a coworker or self nominate?  
Visit [mdtesol.org/member-of-the-month](https://mdtesol.org/member-of-the-month)

# ADULT EDUCATION IN THE AGE OF CORONAVIRUS: NAVIGATING A NEW NORMAL

*By Rishan G. Habte*

On the second Monday of March, my coworkers and I at the Literacy Council of Montgomery County (LCMC) sat down for our bi-weekly meeting to discuss program updates and upcoming plans. As we spoke, the trepidation in our voices was loud and clear as the threat of a looming pandemic had become the elephant in the room. On the Saturday before our meeting, it had been confirmed that the virus was indeed in Maryland and one of the first cases was in Rockville, where our office is located. We had been receiving calls and emails from students, teachers, tutors, and volunteers stating that they were afraid of the Coronavirus and they feared leaving their homes. Although state officials had not made any declarations, we all agreed that we needed to make some hard decisions quickly.

LCMC is a mid-size organization that serves roughly 4,500 students per year. We offer over 70 classes, about a dozen conversation groups, and several hundred one-on-one tutor/student pairs. Our programs are held in libraries, public schools, community centers, and just about any other space that is available for public use. Because we are a non-profit, our administrative staff is very small and our resources are limited. We rely heavily on volunteers, grants, foundations, and donations. If we wanted to continue providing services in a worst case scenario situation, we all knew that considerable ingenuity had to be employed to make it happen. “LCMC is going virtual folks”, declared our Executive Director, Gabe Martinez-Cabrera. “Easier said than done”, I thought. I’m certain that some of my colleagues shared my sentiments.

In the past, we had always sought ways to incorporate more technology into instruction. We offered digital literacy classes to our students and technology centered professional development to our instructors... We had purchased laptops and programs. Our Data Analyst had been working on creating a Learner Management System for the past 10 months. We had recently created a YouTube channel to post professional development videos for our teachers and tutors and we even converted our Executive Directors office into a “Zoom Room”. All of our efforts were pointing us towards the future but as the uncertainty about the crisis grew, it became obvious that it wouldn’t be enough to sustain.

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12 (Adult Education...)

Many adult education programs are housed within community colleges giving them access to resources such as IT departments that are able to manage huge online learning platforms. LCMC doesn't have the luxury of being a part of a community college, however our small, non-profit status became our greatest asset when we were forced to make quick decisions. Having an administrative staff of 10 gave us the flexibility that isn't necessarily afforded to large organizations that must seek approval of a governing board.

Adult Education has a different approach than K-12 and higher education in the realm of ESOL. While the latter are centered in academics, adult education is centered in life skills and workforce development. Many of our students have low literacy levels and are often underemployed and underserved. When we discussed ways to go virtual, questions like "Do our students have the skill set to navigate online classes" and "Do our students have access to resources to allow online learning" kept being asked. In addition, we had to consider what we as an organization was capable of, given our limited resources, and the skill set of our instructors and tutors.

When making sweeping reforms, one must resist the temptation to assume and generalize. We did not have time to assess the digital literacy skills of our students, so we had to think in terms of what was the least they could manage. Ultimately, we decided that our strategies had to be accessible on a smartphone and could be implemented using email, social media, and clicking links. We use Google Suite, we have a Youtube channel, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn and we had recently acquired a Zoom account. At first glance, these are very meager resources, however these platforms are accessible to the masses.

We would use Google Hangouts for our structured classroom program, Zoom for our flexible conversation groups, and social media for recruitment. By Wednesday, Gabe had filmed several Youtube videos that showed how to access Google Hangouts and Zoom. He made different videos for instructors/tutors/facilitators and separate videos for students. However, at this point we had only created this content "just in case", we were still planning to bring our instructors into the office to do an in-person training the following week.

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12 (Adult Education...)

On Friday, March 13, the news we had all been anticipating was delivered and the worst case scenario had arrived. All Maryland schools, libraries, and community centers were closed and we were left holding on to faith in what we were capable of doing. As my colleagues and I packed up our laptops and other work materials, Gabe tried to quell our fears by reminding us that we had already created a worst case scenario plan and now it was time for implementation. We weren't going to suspend our services, we were going to navigate a new normal.

On the first weekend of quarantine, my colleagues and I spent our days verifying student email addresses and answering questions from instructors and tutors about the platforms we would be using. Within a week, we had launched 19 classes on Google Hangouts and 6 conversation groups on Zoom. Although we had exceeded our expectations, it didn't come without challenges. Online teaching was new to many of our instructors and many weren't comfortable with it. We hosted a virtual brown-bag session which gave everyone a chance to vent and share ideas that worked. Our instructors expressed that they needed more support and we created a buddy system. Instructors that were interested were assigned administrative staff members that would login into their classes and support as needed. The following week, we held another brown-bag session and we let our teachers lead by allowing them to share lesson plans and activities. By the end of the second week, we had 27 classes online.

At this point, we had begun receiving emails from potential students interested in our online classes as they had heard about our program from family and friends. We hadn't established an intake and assessment procedure for our classes however, they could join our drop-in conversations groups on Zoom.

As I logged into classes and conversation groups, I began to realize how therapeutic it was to our students. Inadvertently, we had created a safe space for students to talk about their fears and frustrations. They were sharing recipes and relaxation methods. Their children and spouses were sitting in on classes and online communities were being created. We were receiving emails and testimonials from students about how our programs gave them normalcy in the midst of chaos. We accepted the challenge and we went back to the drawing board to create more.

As the quarantine continues, nobody knows when we will be able to resume normal life. Furthermore, when life resumes, we aren't sure what normal will be. LCMC is confident that we have given our students the necessary skills to navigate the new normal.

# ESOL SUCCESS STORY: ALEXANDRA VILLAMIZAR

*By Billie Muñoz, Editor*

*The following is the latest in a series of articles that focus on how one high-achieving former ESOL student found success in The United States.*



Alexandra Villamizar (in the middle) with a group of students and 3 facilitators at the LC Chats.

Alexandra Villamizar is proud of her Colombian accent. After all, actress Sofia Vergara hasn't done too badly. What she does NOT like is people who think that non-native speakers of English should not be allowed to teach that language. It is true that accents carry strong cultural bias. Would you prefer to buy perfume from someone with a strong French or German accent? She states, "The challenges were not only while learning English, they were also present while trying to prove to everyone that I am excellent at what I do and that my accent does not make me inferior to a teacher who is a native speaker of English."

Alexandra is well aware that she has led a blessed life. She did not come here to escape war, poverty, famine or the other horrors that drive so many who immigrate. But lack of adversity is not a life without challenges. Alexandra first came here after high school to study through a program called EF. They placed her with a family in Westminster, Carroll County. She took classes at the local community college which had an ESL program. Told that her English was already much better than many of her peers, Alexandra was encouraged to make the switch to academic English classes. She was the only "foreigner" in these classes. She explains, "I had to study two or three times more than the rest. I got good grades and they taught me a lot."

Shortly thereafter, Alexandra became a Teacher Assistant. She also began to teach Spanish at McDaniel College in Westminster. Then, it was back to Colombia to finish her degree in business. Why not just stay here? "One day, I just woke up and felt that I was getting too homesick. I went back feeling pretty sure I was not returning to the US." Of her two siblings, Alexandra was the one closest to her mom. This affected her decision.

Yet two and a half years later, she was back! McDaniel offered a Master's degree in TESOL and she went for it! Alexandra was fortunate in that she had the support of both her mom and her host family. When times got tough, her mom tough loved her into sticking it out with the words "you went there to learn English, now stay there and learn English!"



Alexandra Villamizar (left) with a group of volunteer tutors she trained to teach adult learners.

These days all that effort pays off in the form of authentic stories Alexandra uses to encourage her students. "I know that they can feel hopeless many times and I want them to know that it is normal and it happens to all of us," she muses. It is safe to say that Alexandra has the gravitas of one who has "been there and done that."

## THE BILINGUAL CORNER

*By Billie Muñoz, Editor*

*Covid 19 is higher disproportionately among dense population such as seen in New York. Here in Baltimore County, population can be the most dense where there is poverty. Our immigrant families often rent a room in a house with other relatives or acquaintances. What is it like to be so vulnerable? How does our system treat those less fortunate or perhaps undocumented during a pandemic. This is the story of a mother and a daughter whose names are being withheld so as to maintain their privacy.*



"Marta" came to this country four years ago. Her sister had been here for 11 years and now that their grandmother was deceased, she felt tired from looking after her for six years. She had been confined to a wheelchair for an undiagnosed ailment and it was difficult to lift her. It was time to move on and look for a better life. Her now ten year old daughter was six at the time and she had no siblings. So, Marta and "Gracia" set out from their tiny little village of 2,000 people in El Salvador and landed in Baltimore County. Marta found odd jobs like cleaning houses and working in factories. She began paying a lawyer to obtain citizenship. This is a long and very expensive process. Her case will finally reach the Court in 2022. Recently, after cleaning houses began to worsen her chronic arthritis, Marta returned to factory work. The work was easier, did not require papers and paid the minimum wage of \$11/hour. This was just enough to cover the room she was renting in the house of a Salvadoran couple she had met. It was a simple life but they were together and Gracia was doing well in school. She embodied all the hopes and dreams of her mother. Marta was able to walk to her daughter's school most days and, if she had to work, there was always a neighbor to chaperone. She felt comfortable at the school where some of the teachers spoke her language, there was a Language Line for the others and Class Dojo could translate messages. Food was available twice a day for Gracia and they both looked forward to Food Pantry Day when a sack of pasta, rice, beans and other staples could be carried home. Sometimes there were fresh vegetables or even a chicken.

In late March, Marta developed some strange symptoms. Although she never got a fever, her throat burned with fire, her whole body ached and, strangely, her feet were in agony. She called an ambulance and was taken to the hospital. It was Covid 19! There, the staff put her in a separate room and kept her for three hours. Three hours! They sent her home with medicine and told her to isolate herself for 14 days. This meant that her daughter would go to live with her sister. The couple she rented the room from would later come down with COVID. The hospital staff told her that a bill would come in the mail for the ambulance and the three hour stay. Marta worries about how to pay for this, of course. Gracia cried every night during the quarantine at her aunt's house but they are now reunited. Marta's throat still hurts and she drinks a ginger tea to alleviate the pain. What grade would she give the hospital? They were not very warm to her but Marta accepts that because, "they were so busy." She can't explain why she was sent home after only a few hours. Marta will go back soon to get the clean bill of health that will allow her to return to the factory where she feels she contracted the illness. Her advice? "Stay home!" However, that is difficult to do when the rent is due. Marta is grateful to her daughter's school that has dropped food off at her door on several occasions and sent her a device so that lessons could be continued.

# LA ESQUINA BILINGÜE

*By Billie Muñoz, Editor*

*La incidencia del Covid 19 es mucho más alta en poblaciones densas como la de New York. En Baltimore County, la incidencia es mayor donde la densidad de la población pobre es mayor. Muchas veces nuestras familias inmigrantes rentan un cuarto en una casa donde viven otros familiares o amistades. ¿Cómo se siente el estar tan vulnerable durante esta crisis? ¿Cómo nuestro sistema trata a los menos afortunados durante esta pandemia? Esta es la historia de una madre e hija cuyos nombres se han mantenido en el anonimato para salvaguardar su privacidad.*



"Marta" llegó a este país hace cuatro años. Su hermana ya llevaba viviendo aquí 11 años y, ahora que su abuela había fallecido, se sentía cansada después de haber cuidado de ella por seis años. La abuela estuvo confinada a una silla de ruedas por una afección que nunca fue diagnosticada. Se le había hecho difícil tener que levantarla y cargarla diariamente. Era hora de continuar con su vida y buscar un mejor porvenir. Su hija, que ya tenía diez años de edad, tenía seis en ese momento y no tenía hermanos. Marta y Gracia se despidieron de su pequeña villa en El Salvador la cual estaba compuesta por 2,000 habitantes y llegaron a Baltimore County. Allí Marta encontró trabajos limpiando casas y en fábricas. Comenzó a pagarle a un abogado para obtener la ciudadanía. Este era un proceso muy largo y costoso. Su caso finalmente llegará a la corte en 2022. Recientemente, después de limpiar tantas casas, la condición de artritis crónica de Marta empeoró y tuvo que regresar al trabajo en fábricas. En trabajo es más fácil y no requiere papeles, pagando a \$11 la hora. La remuneración recibida por este empleo solo le alcanza para pagar por el cuarto que renta en la casa de una pareja salvadoreña que había conocido hace un tiempo. Era una vida simple pero ella y su hija estaban juntas y a Gracia le va bien en la escuela. Ella es el vivo ejemplo de todos los sueños y esperanzas de su madre. Marta ha podido caminar a su hija a la escuela casi todos los días y cuando ella no puede, una vecina de confianza le sirve the chaperona. Ella se siente bien en la escuela donde algunos de los maestros hablan su idioma y también cuentan con programas como Class Dojo que le ayuda en la traducción de mensajes. En la escuela también Gracia puede alimentarse dos veces al día y ambas les esperaban con ansias el día de la alacena, donde podían buscar pasta, arroz, habichuelas y otros alimentos que podía llevar a la casa. Alguna veces había pollo y vegetales frescos disponibles.

A finales de marzo, Marta desarrolló una serie de síntomas extraños. Aunque nunca tuvo fiebre, su garganta ardía como si tuviese fuego, todo su cuerpo le dolía y sus pies le dolían de manera agonizante. Ella llamó a una ambulancia y la llevaron al hospital. Tenía COVID-19. La colocaron en un cuarto en aislamiento por espacio de tres horas. Luego la enviaron a su casa con medicamentos e instrucciones de mantenerse en aislamiento por 14 días. Esto significaba que su hija debía ir a vivir con su hermana. La pareja que le rentaba el cuarto también se contagió con el virus. El personal del hospital le indicó que le llegaría una factura en el correo por la ambulancia y por las tres horas que permaneció en el mismo. A Marta le preocupa cuánto será el monto a pagar, claro está. Gracia lloró cada noche mientras se quedaba en la casa de la tía durante la cuarentena de su mamá pero ya por fin están juntas de nuevo. La garganta de Marta aún le duele y toma té de jengibre para aliviarse. ¿Qué nota le daría Marta al hospital que la atendió? La verdad es que les faltó calor humano pero Marta acepta que estaban muy ocupados.

Aún no se puede explicar porque fue enviada a la casa después de solo unas horas. Marta volverá al hospital a recoger el certificado de salud que le permitirá regresar al trabajo. Su consejo es que se queden en sus casas. Sin embargo, esto es difícil cuando hay que pagar la renta. Marta está agradecida a la escuela de Gracia por los alimentos que dejaron en la puerta de su hogar en varias ocasiones y por la tecnología que le prestaron para que su hija no interrumpiera sus estudios.



# HOW ARE OUR MDTESOL MEMBERS COPING WITH THE PANDEMIC?

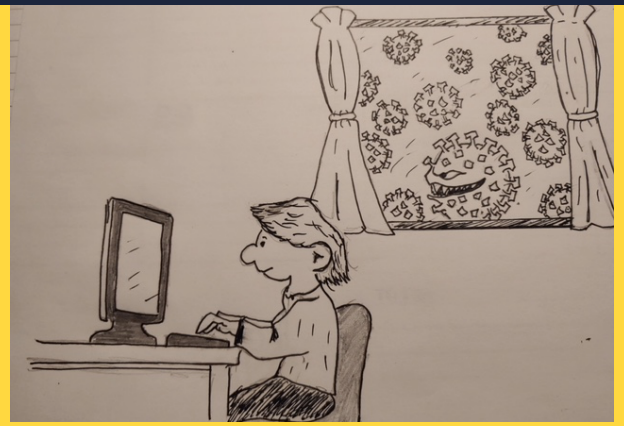
BY IVETTE CRUZ

*During these times of uncertainty, solidarity and compassion are necessary to keep on going. If there is one thing that this pandemic has taught us all, is the power of unity and solidarity. It is admirable how many institutions and organizations have come together to offer support to schools and educators, as we all struggled with the sudden realization that we had to transfer our educational programs online in the blink of an eye. For some educators this was not easy an easy task.*

*Dealing with digital inequities and lack of time for proper training was certainly a great challenge. Regardless, we persisted. The reason is very simple; students inspire us to achieve the impossible. All the educators I know -administrators and instructors alike- gave it all their might to make sure their students did not experience major interruptions in their instruction. We thrived. We trained ourselves. We helped others that had more difficulty with the transition. We were compassionate. We prevailed.*

*In the spirit of collaboration and collegiality, we asked our members to share their strategies for dealing with the effects of this pandemic. After hearing our idea in a board meeting, our 1st VP, Katie Miller, put together the survey and posted it immediately. In this section, I am sharing their responses word by word. I did not edit any of the responses as I want you to feel as if you are having a conversation with a colleague.*

*So go to the kitchen and get some coffee or tea. While you sip your favorite beverage, enjoy the company. Remember, you are not alone. We are all in this together!*



*Going viral takes on new meaning by Luis Muñoz*

## **What are some ways you are coping with the expectations of virtual instruction?**

*"Focusing on access and equity. Finding a way to enable all students to learn online is one of the top challenges facing school district leaders right now."*

*-Hazar Biddle, Title I Specialist at MSDE*

*"I am keeping an open mind with technology and ways to incorporate my teaching style in the online forum. Webinars. Meetings. Professional Development."*

*-Jeremy Lignelly, Instructional Associate at Montgomery College*

*"Taking breaks and walks then getting back to work".*

*-Helenor Mesias, ESOL Teacher at PGCPS*

*"Being patient."*

*-Alexandra Villamizar, Assistant Director at LCMC*

*"I find the more I plan in advance for a virtual lesson, the smoother it goes. I prepare a Google Slide show that includes all of the information that I will need to teach. After the lesson, I email this slide show to the students so they aren't wasting time copying down things."*

*-Karen Shilling, ESL Teacher at the Literacy Council of Montgomery County*

*"Prayer and meditation with lots of training and practice."*

*-Tamia, ESL Instructor at LCMC*

*"I had a big learning curve because I had never taught a class virtually and didn't even know what Zoom or Google Hangouts were until 3 weeks ago. So, I've been learning as I go along by watching videos and asking others for help. I decided to take it slowly by learning to handle the basics first and add on 'extras' as I become more competent. I feel I conduct a fine class that students enjoy and learn a lot".*

*-Gail Haag, ESL Teacher at the Literacy Council of Montgomery County*

**What are some ways you are coping with the general situation (stay at home, isolation, school/business closures)?**

*"In two words; exercise and diet. I walk an hour each day, even when the weather does not cooperate. I serve two decent meals to my son and a guest who is sheltering in place with us. In addition, we keep to a schedule and even little things like making the beds, keeping up with the dishes and the laundry and dressing as if it were a casual school day help keep depression and anxiety at bay".*

-Billie Muñoz, Teacher at BCPS

*"Faith, family, patience and gratitude."*

-Farhana Shah, Teacher/Department Chair at MCPS

*"I find structure keeps me mentally focused and moving forward. I structure each weekday for myself and my children and then on the weekends I let them and myself relax and be free. Little pieces of normalcy also keep me energized like wearing makeup, keeping the house clean, and cooking healthy meals. Oh, also, slipper socks."*

-Rachel Riggs, Family Literacy/ESL Instructor at Frederick Community College

*"I'm trying to maintain a schedule and keeping in touch with family and friends".*

-Suzy Tyburski, Teacher at The Literacy Council

*"I have worked on projects that have been neglected."*

-Jeffrey, Teacher in Montgomery County

*"I get up at the same time every day and have a loose schedule and activities I enjoy doing. These range from reading and playing to planning lessons, walking, fun movies and sewing a quilt. I have been finding comfort in daily scripture reading and contemplation. I also limit TV-coronavirus news as it can be overwhelming."*

-Gail Haag, ESL Teacher at the Literacy Council of Montgomery County

**What tips or tricks for distance learning would you share with other educators, students, and families?**

*"Be flexible, don't expect perfection; one class at a time!"*

-Alexandra Villamizar, Assistant Director of Curriculum Design and Training at LCMC

*"Take time away from your screen and turn off notifications! A few hours then check back."*

-Taylor, Teacher at the Literacy Council of Montgomery County

*"Be patient, flexible, and work together-team players!"*

-Tamia, ESL Instructor at LCMC

*"Take one day at a time. Stay calm. Try to see if there is anyone in the household who can help you with the technical part. The size of the class does matter. If you are lucky to have a smaller class, you can give each student a lot of individual attention. These students are very engaged and they enjoy seeing and talking with their classmates during the online lesson. Overall, it is a very positive experience. The classes can be fun and very user friendly."*

-Susan McLaughlin, Adult ESL Teacher at Literacy Council of Montgomery County

*"Create slides before class. Don't try to reinvent the wheel. You can use regular teaching methods online."*

-Suzy Tyburski, Teacher at the Literacy Council

*"Prepare as much as you can in advance! Ask students to keep up with homework assignments and give regular feedback on it."*

-Rivka Yerushalmi, Teacher at the Literacy Council of Montgomery County

*"Keep contacting students/parents if they are not participating. There is usually a good reason like not being able to login, not knowing the class code, etc. Get parents' emails!"*

-Helenor Mesias, ESOL Teacher at PGCPs

*"Keep learning. Don't stop perfecting. Try to get you and your style into the lessons and class again!"*

-Jeremy Lignelli, Instructional Associate at Montgomery College