O F L T A

The OFLTA Newsletter

A Newsletter of the Oklahoma Foreign Languages Teachers Association Autumn 2010

Oklahoma Writing Project
Helping Students to Write More and Better
Page 7

Classical Languages Report
CAMWS Report
Page 8-11

Legislative Agenda
Language Learning for a Global Age
Page 13-16

Summer Fun
Teachers Put Grant Money to Good Use
Pages 18-19

Study Abroad
Undergraduate Relates Her Successes in Chile
Pages 20-21

Position Statements
ACTFL Takes a Stand on Use of Target Language, Maximum Class Size, More
Page 22-23

President's Welcome

Greetings to all who till the same earth,

As I began to consider my message my mind ran wild. What to say? There are so many subjects, missions, victories and challenges to discuss. I chose to tell a story.

It was a summer day in Oklahoma. It was a day, like most summer days but this day would change my life. The phone rang. It was a school superintendent from a district, from a town I had never heard of. I did not know how he found me. I declined his offer. I hung up the phone. He called back. Then he called again. I reluctantly agreed to meet with him. He was persuasive. I arrived the day before classes began. The secretary told me my room was on the second floor and she thought there were some books on a shelf. I was alone and on my own.

As I look back on that first year, I want to apologize to my students. I was quite possibly one of the worst teachers in the history of education. I had no training, no support, and no idea what I was doing.

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The next summer Dr. Lois Lawler-Brown allowed me to join her department. One of the many things that Lois did for me was to have me join OFLTA. Lois, Darcy Pippins, Jason Fritze and I were "wheels up" as we used to say before dawn on many a Saturday morning headed for an OFLTA workshop or conference. As I reflect on those times, I realize that in the beginning I did not even know how those early morning carpools would come to impact my classroom. I now know.

One day Lois told me I should give a presentation at an OFLTA conference. I was terrified. Today, I have given many presentations on the state and regional levels. I have hosted many teachers from across the state in my classroom, logged hours of phone calls and emails to fellow teachers, mentored student teachers and perhaps most importantly, told colleagues what Lois told me. Join OFLTA. It has been a glorious, emotional, and fulfilling journey. Thank you to all stakeholders in my journey.

I tell this story not because it is about me, but because it is about you. What will you do with the support of your friends and colleagues in OFLTA? More importantly, what would you do without that support? Accomplished teachers do not work in isolation.

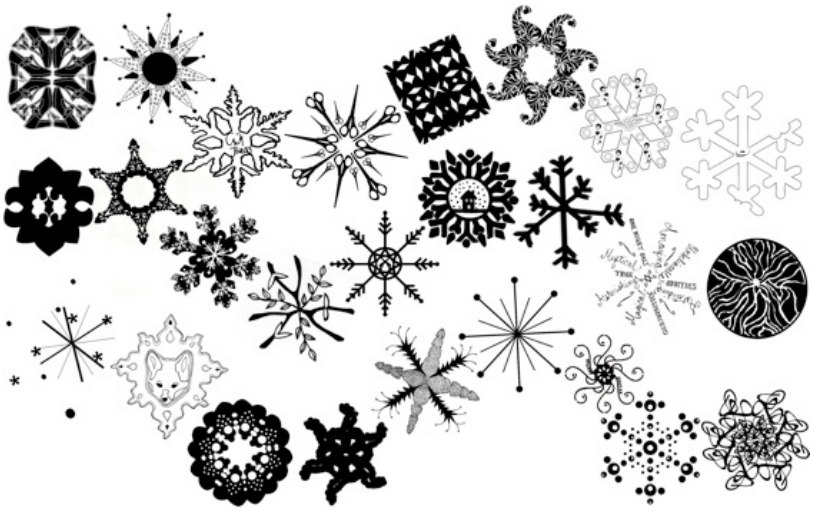
Please join me this year in reaching out to a colleague. Offer help. Ask for help. Collaboration is a key component to our success in, what a remarkable man, Arlen Gill, once described to me as, a truly noble profession.

Thank you for what you do to enrich the life of each student. I look forward to a remarkable year.

E. Russell Ray, NBCT, WLOE; President, OFLTA

"The ox is slow, but the plow is sure."

I wish to further thank Claudio Larragoite, Teresa Bell, Elise Robillard, Kelly Stone, Rebecca Borden, Larry Steele, Mike Xu, Hugh Himwich, Stacy Southerland, Desa Dawson and the OFLTA board members.



Join Your Colleagues in Enid for OFLTA's Winter Workshop!

January 22, 2010, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon

Northwestern Oklahoma State University, Enid Campus

Free to OFLTA Members!

more information at www.oflta.org

Happenings

OFLTA Summer Tech Conference

Dr. Donna Shelton lead the summer OFLTA workshop this past August at OCU. Some 20 teacher participants gathered to learn how to use technology more effectively in the classroom. Participants reported learning a lot from Dr. Shelton, noting that her easygoing style made risk-taking fun. Dr Shelton, in turn, noted that participants were a sharp group who gave her many new ideas for instruction. The summer tech workshop page can be viewed at http://ofltaworkshop.pbworks.com/.

Ethical Considerations

Why Study a Foreign Language: Justice

UK reporter Lindsey Hilsum writes on a benefit of speaking a foreign language:

"Politicians nearly always like to speak in their native language, so it's a huge advantage to be able to understand. Of course I have to work through translators in countries where I don't speak the language, but I think I do a better job when I can communicate directly.

"Take the time I reported from Equatorial Guinea, a former Spanish colony. The flunkies around President Obiang wanted me to conduct my interview in English but I knew that they would never translate my questions about corruption and poverty, so I insisted on doing it in Spanish. As a result, I got him to admit that only he and his uncle were signatories to the private account at the Riggs Bank in Washington into which all the country's oil revenues were paid."

http://blogs.channel4.com/world-news-blog/learning-a-foreign-language-does-make-a-difference/13834