

Vice President's Letter

OFLTA VP Champions Standard Five!

Dear OFLTA Members,

The office of OFLTA Vice President is the rookie year of a four-year commitment. If you haven't been on the board before, you have a lot to learn. I studied my binder and still I was confused. The Board members were unfailingly kind and helpful as I conscientiously followed the guidelines on some of my jobs, but was completely clueless on others. Purposefully or not, I put my energy into creating evaluation forms for our conferences and into the Teacher of the Year process. Elise asked me to create a display for the Teacher of the Year award, which I thought that was a great idea. It inspired me to do more to raise the profile of our organization's somewhat new award. I hope the 2010 Teacher of the Year will be noticed in the community at large, as well as in our professional settings. I believe this award has a fantastic potential for raising awareness of foreign language teaching in our state. If you have any ideas for promoting our organization through our Teacher of the Year, please let the vice president know.

Creating, distributing, and collecting evaluation forms was quite a process. I realized that many of you are generous with your time, making astute and supportive comments on our programs and sessions. Thank you so much for taking the time to give us constructive feedback. Lastly, I want you to know that I agreed to come onto the board because of the leadership of Elise Robillard. She has not disappointed me. The focus and drive that she has brought to this organization have resulted in many positive outcomes. I especially admire the knack she has for recruiting and leading the teachers in her building to contribute so much to OFLTA and to grow as teachers. With strong and creative leadership like Elise's, supported by our amazing board members and continued by our new president, Russell, OFLTA will continue to serve as the vital and important professional support organization that it has been since its inception.

Stephanie Sylvester

Low-cost Syllabary Keypad for Cherokee Developed

In an ongoing effort to strengthen the use of the Cherokee language, the Cherokee Nation has developed a unique keypad that allows the user to more easily type in the Cherokee syllabary instead of using the Latin alphabet that is standard to modern computer keyboards. The special keypad is made of thin black silicone, and fits over the top of a regular computer keyboard.

"The creation of this keypad has helped us leap forward in the teaching of Cherokee," said Dr. Neil Morton, Group Leader for Education Services for the Cherokee Nation. "Before we were only able to utilize the print media, but now our students have computers for homework, messages and more where they can actually type and text in the Cherokee language."

Read more:

http://nativetimes.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3152:cherokee-nation-creates-syllabary-keypad&catid=50&Itemid=26

Writers at Work!

Oklahoma Writing Project

Darcy Pippins, Teacher Consultant, Oklahoma Writing Project; Spanish teacher, Norman High School
dpippins@norman.k12.ok.us

This summer I was accepted to the Oklahoma Writing Project (OWP) Summer Institute that was sponsored by the University of Oklahoma's College of Education. The OWP is a branch of the National Writing Project, a professional development network that serves teachers of writing at all grade levels in all subject from primary school through university. The OWP's mission is to improve student achievement by improving the teaching of writing and improving learning in Oklahoma's schools, and the OWP believes that access to high-quality educational experiences is a basic right of all learners and a cornerstone of equity.

Participants in the Summer Institute (SI) met one weekend in April and another in May, and then for three weeks in June. There were 14 "fellows" that participated in the SI, five OWP coaches, and 2 co-directors.



OKLAHOMA WRITING PROJECT

Improving the quality of writing in elementary and secondary schools

Each of the fellows received a stipend from OU (approx. \$1800) to pay the Bursar's bill, and as a result we each received 6 hours of graduate credit FREE! We began every day with a quickwrite to get the writing juices flowing. Then, OWP
T e a c h e r

Consultants wrapped up the morning with presentations, and in the afternoons we met with either our writing groups or presentation groups, each of which had 3 fellows and a coach. In writing groups we brought writing samples to share with the group. In presentation groups we worked on our presentation of best practices to be presented at the end of the SI.

Teachers from all over the State of Oklahoma participated. There were three Spanish teachers involved, Rebecca Borden, Eloisa Briones, both from the University of Oklahoma, and me. At the end of the institute each fellow had presented to the group, written a personal narrative and had produced at least three other pieces to be published in an anthology. Each fellow is now an OWP Teacher Consultant and will be asked to present their workshops all over the state of Oklahoma.

I have experience as an NBPTS assessor, I am Nationally Board Certified, and I've been to several ACTFL, SWCOLT, and OFLTA Conferences in my career as a Spanish teacher. Of these, I think that the OWP is one

of the best professional development opportunities that I've had. Everything that I learned during the SI can be adapted to my Spanish classes. I never thought of myself as a writer, but after this opportunity I feel confident writing with my students and sharing my work with others. Writing is, of course, one of the four skills that our students need in order to be proficient in the target language.

I would recommend the OWP Summer Institute to ANY world language teacher. Next summer the SI will be in the month on July and I will be a coach. Please send me an email if you are interested in participating or would like more information.

CAMWS Report for Oklahoma, 2010

Health of Classical Languages in State Detailed

John Hansen

The economic crisis has begun to affect Oklahoma Latin programs adversely at all levels of instruction. The University of Oklahoma and at least one private school will lose faculty members as a result; at least two public schools will lose their entire Latin program this year. Latin could still expand, however, into other public schools were it not for the lack of available teachers with regular certification. Even if veteran public school teachers delay their retirements, the long-term health of Latin in those schools remains uncertain.

At the end of the 2008-09 school year, despite a shuffling around of teachers, there were no retirements or (career) resignations. Four OU students took and passed the Latin OSAT in the summer of 2009; all accepted



teaching positions—3 in Oklahoma, 1 in Texas. These new teachers would have kept all existing Latin programs in place; during the summer, Sapulpa High School cancelled its classes so that Michael Janosek could teach math full-time. Our state program numbers, however, remained the same (23 public or charter schools, 12 private*; many elementary-level and home-school programs were unreported) because we gained Monte Cassino Middle School in Tulsa: former Teacher of the Year Heather Bierly Mulhern, after obtaining a higher degree at the University of Indiana, has returned to teach there. Those, unfortunately, may be our largest numbers for the near future. At the end of this school year, Belle Isle Enterprise Middle School (in OKC) will cancel its innovative program (the subject was required of all entering students) in order to focus more on standardized test scores in Language Arts. Two positions have already been combined into one at Heritage Hall in Oklahoma City. Casady School

(also in OKC), which for many years has had one of the largest programs in the state, will reduce its Latin faculty to two at the end of the year.

High school students themselves, while still enrolled in Latin classes, may be less active in Junior Classical League chapters than in previous years. According to the JCL website, during the 2008-09 school year,



Oklahoma had registered 23 individual chapters, with a total of 671 members. This year (2/16/2010), those numbers have decreased dramatically: 16 chapters, with a total of 498 members (almost 200 fewer students!). The smaller number of chapters may also indicate declining teacher membership in the American Classical League. Angela Wells, of Broken Arrow, has reported how difficult it is to convince her students to participate in Latin Club when there are so many other options available. Last spring's OJCL Convention, held at Edmond North, would have had fewer students than the previous year's (2008: 13 chapters, 266 delegates vs. 2009: 14 chapters, 208 delegates); an unfortunately-timed snowstorm shifted the convention several weeks later, dropping the total number to 6 chapters, 140 delegates. Despite that setback, everyone involved was impressed by how gracefully Edmond North's Stephanie Sylvester handled all the last minute changes. For that and many other contributions to the professions, the Oklahoma Foreign Language Teaching Association honored Ms. Sylvester as the 2010 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year; Ms. Sylvester has also agreed to represent Latin by

serving as that organization's next Vice-President. In late July 2009, state sponsors Betty Ivich and Dina Kincaid accompanied 9 students (representing 5 different chapters) to the NJCL Convention at the University of California, Davis campus. Linda Jenkins (Edmond Memorial), Julie Odom (Edmond Santa Fe), Chris Shademan (Putnam City West), placed in both academic and artistic competitions, and the Oklahoma delegation also earned a Spirit Award.

State numbers for other Latin activities remain steady. In the spring of 2009, 797 Oklahoma students took the National Latin Exam, with 40 earning gold medals. This is consistent with the number of test-takers in previous years (2008: 788), although gold medals have declined (cf. 40 in 2007). An educational emphasis on national standards may explain these high figures. University students of Latin and Greek have also been encouraged by the NLE to take these exams. In 2009, OU students Bethany Burklund, Erich Merkel, and J.P. Mensching all earned gold medals on the NLE; Ms. Burklund and Mr. Merkel also won gold medals on the National Greek Exam. Dr. Samuel Huskey, chair of the Classics & Letters Department, has mentioned using these exams as standard assessment tools for OU students. A large number of state Latin students also attended the annual OU Classics Day, held November 24 on the OCCE campus: 500 students representing 17 different programs.

Several schools in the Oklahoma City area—Norman, Moore, Westmoore, and Putnam City North—will



add AP Latin to their curricula in the 2009-10 academic year. Students at these schools have told their teachers that fourth level Latin becomes more attractive when it offers AP credit. We hope that those district administrations will continue to support the new AP classes as they develop. Veteran teachers in other districts have found that, although schools like to advertise Advanced Placement Latin, they are rarely willing to give it dedicated class time.

Educator workshop attendance has, with one exception, been good this past year. Latin representation was high at the Southwest Conference on Language Teaching (SWCOLT), held in Norman, April 2 through 4: 11 teachers (9 high school and 2 college) were there. To renew its commitment to high school Latin teachers, as well as to inaugurate its new space in the north campus Carnegie Building, OU Classics and Letters held a two-day workshop on July 10 and 11, featuring Sally Davis. On Friday, 16 current and prospective teachers joined us; Saturday, that number increased to 28—very close to the number of Latin

teachers in the state! The department hopes to make this an annual event; Dr. Huskey has already invited Dr. Barbara Weiden Boyd, author of several AP Virgil texts, to present this coming summer. In contrast, turn out for the OFLTA Fall Conference—held on September 26 on the campus of Northeastern State University in Broken Arrow—was very low: despite three sessions of Latin offerings (that is, 3/4 of the entire day), only 6 teachers came . . . and 3 of those were the presenters! Dr. Joe Sullivan, OU German professor,

Although schools like to advertise Advanced Placement Latin, they are rarely willing to give it dedicated class time

joined our group for part of the day; so convinced was he by the presentation “Getting Started in Spoken Latin,” that he may participate in Nancy Llewellyn’s *Rusticatio* this summer. Local Latin teacher attendance for the CAMWS 106th Annual Meeting—scheduled March 24-27, 2010 in Oklahoma City—will also be low, since the OJCL convention is set for that same weekend at Edmond Santa Fe High School.

Budget concerns have also impacted Latin, Greek, and Classics education at the college level. The OU Department of Classics and Letters is unable to reappoint two of its instructors when their present contracts end, nor will it offer language classes in the summer. Spring enrollment at that university stands at 54 Greek students and 186 Latin (2/15/10). That second figure is only slightly lower than last spring’s, but shows that Latin enrollment at OU has yet to regain its recent high of 257 students in the spring of 2008. Dr. Rachel Ahern Knudsen has joined the OU faculty as an assistant professor of Classics, and Dr. Kyle Harper (also of Classics & Letters) has been named the Interim Director of the new Institute for the American Constitutional Heritage. This institute will enable Letters majors to choose a Concentration in Constitutional Studies as part of their program, and non-Letters majors to add a Minor in that same topic. Because Letters has never offered a minor program, the latter option should attract majors in other disciplines, such as business and the sciences.

Other state universities show growth in Classics. The University of Central Oklahoma graduated its first 3 Humanities degree majors in December 2009. This new program, first offered in the fall of 2008, requires a substantial number of courses in ancient culture and philosophy. Dr. Margaret Musgrove states that more Humanities students—including the first with a minor in Classical Studies—will graduate in May 2010. Dr. Joseph Faulds, of Northeastern State University, reports that 14 students have continued in his elective-