Welcome to the Spring 2020 edition of the RITELLER!

This edition is jam-packed with information because Rhode Island has been a hub of recent action focused on our multilingual learners. RITELL’s spring and fall conferences, WIDA's national conference, and the appointment of Rhode Island’s first Latinx Commissioner of Education have all highlighted the urgent nature of the work we are doing every day with our students. In this edition, we look back at some of these 2019 events and we look forward to ways of continuing the important conversations that they sparked. Throughout the issue you will see this icon: with a link to add your response/ideas. We will share your thoughts on the RITELL website and in the next issue of the RITELLER. It’s another chance to join our voices together in advocacy for our students. ¡Adelante!
RITELL Wrap Up 2019

CATHY FOX has been teaching multilingual learners for 35 years. She was nationally board certified in early childhood and certified in early childhood, elementary and ESL. She taught in Central Falls for 27 years and now works part-time in Johnston, coordinating services for Multilingual Learners. She has served as adjunct professor at RIC and PC. Cathy enjoys traveling, reading, music and good times with family.

JILL REISS has been teaching K-12 students since 2009, with diverse experiences teaching in vastly different educational systems in Korea, China and the United States. She currently serves as the Program Director of Literacy Volunteers of Kent County, an adult literacy organization with a 40-year history. She enjoys working with volunteer tutors and literacy students, providing personalized assistance to meet the unique needs of each student-tutor pair. When she’s not working or studying, you’ll find her doing crafts with her young children.

YOMELY MARTE has been teaching multilingual learners for 17 years, with diverse experiences teaching in different settings and countries. She is currently the English Language Development Specialist at Nowell Leadership Academy. She enjoys working with English learners, especially those who are unheard or underrepresented high school students. She likes to create a sense of community in her classrooms where students from all over the world feel safe and welcome. She likes to partner with other community organizations to bring resources to her class. She feels that language is not a barrier when you can communicate in the universal language of LOVE.

SARAH REISS has been teaching multilingual learners for 25 years, and holds early childhood, elementary, and ESL certifications. She currently teaches Kinder Garten at Asa Messer School in Providence. She is excited to be part of the planning of the 2020 Gallery Walk for MLLs and sits on the state MLL Advisory Council. Sarah enjoys traveling and supporting refugees by volunteering with the local organization Women’s Refugee Care.

MITCHELL SANDERS is a talented student of photography who specializes in portraiture and astrophotography. At 20, Mitchell has an unusual amount of experience in the field and has worked with well-known artist mentors for years. Currently based in southern Rhode Island, he attends Salve Regina University in Newport and is continuing his freelance photography business and artistic endeavors.

YUNI KIM has been teaching Korean to K-12 students since 2009, with diverse experiences teaching in vastly different educational systems in Korea, China and the United States. She currently serves as the Program Director of Literacy Volunteers of Kent County, an adult literacy organization with a 40-year history. She enjoys working with volunteer tutors and literacy students, providing personalized assistance to meet the unique needs of each student-tutor pair. When she’s not working or studying, you’ll find her doing crafts with her young children.

LAURA FARA-TANCINO is a member of the RITELL Coordinating Council and has taught Adult Ed ESL in universities & institutions all over RI. She has been in the ESL field for 10+ years. She began her ESL journey in 2006, after a degree and professional attempt in Graphic Design left her wanting more. After a few years living in Quino, Ecuador, she returned to RI and she began attending at colleges and universities around RI. She completed her M. Ed in TESL from RIC in 2015 and is currently the Coordinator of the ESL Intensive Program and Project English at RIC. She always says, “the best people in the world arrive in her classroom. She enjoys all the challenges & rewards that come with the profession.

BETH TONEY is a member of RITELL’s Coordinating Council. She has held various positions in education over the last 20 years including classroom teacher, school administrator, and currently, ESL/Reading Specialist for Central Falls. She holds master’s degrees in Urban Education and K-12 School Administration and is certified as a K-12 ESL Specialist and K-12 Reading Specialist. Originally from Massachussetts, she has lived and worked in Rhode Island for 8 years. In addition to spending time with her grandchildren and other family members, she likes to travel and is an avid photographer.

TRICIA KELLY is the English Language Program Coordinator at Nowell Leadership Academy, a charter school serving pregnant, parenting, and underserved high school students. She is also serving as the EL-Ambassador to Prepare RI, where she is conducting research on supports that newcomer students need to successfully matriculate in college. She has over 20 years of experience working in language education and especially loves learning with joy alongside her students.

IVETH ZORAYA STREISAND is a native of Quito, Ecuador. Iveth lived in Puebla, RI with her husband, 2 teenagers, and 2 ShihTzus. Her passion for education started 10 years ago. She has taught Spanish in preschool, elementary school, middle school, and most recently in high school. She also taught English to adult learners at Progreso Latino. In her free time, she enjoys cooking, dancing, cycling, and doing pilates.

RITELL's Coordinating Council welcomed the following members to a three-year volunteer term:

- Megan Abreu
- Sarah Hesson
- Laura Faria-Tancino
- Tricia Kelly
- Iveth Zoraya Streisand
- Beth Toney

RITELL Coordinator Council welcomed the following members to a three-year volunteer term:

- Doug Norris
- Jessica Gueranto
- Michael Paul

RITELL has announced a new initiative focusing on multilingual learners and is asking for community input. The goal is to create a blueprint that will “drive shared responsibilities in teaching language to all students, build world class talent and improve outcomes for multilingual learners.” Parents, teachers, and students are being asked to complete surveys by May 4, 2020 to contribute their voices to the process.

Surveys are available here in a variety of languages. Please complete the survey and share with your networks.

POSTPONED: The RITELL Spring Conference, scheduled for Saturday May 2, has been postponed. If possible, we hope to offer the same theme and keynote speaker at a date to be determined.

Let’s Talk: Engaging Multilingual Learners In Meaningful Discussions

Our keynote speaker will be Nancy Motley, an educational consultant from Houston, Texas, and author of the book Talk, Read, Talk, Write: A Practical Approach to Learning in the Secondary Classroom.

Let’s Hear from YOU

Have you or a colleague recently been promoted, won a grant, presented at a Conference, or received a recognition for your work? Don’t be shy - share your good news! We love to highlight accomplishments in the RI-TELLER!
Evaluating the Quality of Informational Texts for Accuracy and Cultural Relevance


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Questions to Ask</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>• Are the author and illustrator experts in the topic and do they know the topic because they have lived the experience? • Can they speak with cultural authority about the subject? • What research or credit do they not in preparation of the book? • Are authors or consulted experts members of the cultural groups being depicted? • Does the book avoid privileging one cultural group at the expense of another?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>• Are the facts accurate and up-to-date? • Are language patterns, family relationships, cultural conventions, and values accurately depicted? • Are regional terms, captions, and labels used accurately and specifically?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriateness</td>
<td>• Does author organize the material in a logical sequence and provide textual support such as tables of contents, chapters, headings, charts, glossaries, or other graphic aids? • Is the language level and vocabulary challenging but understandable for your students? • Does the text provide enough context or visual support for learning new academic vocabulary and content knowledge? • Does the text draw on any content that reflects your students' community and understandings? • Does the text provide concrete examples and make comparisons to content, experiences, or places that might be familiar to your students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistry</td>
<td>• Does the book employ a variety of literary devices so the information is interesting and will capture the attention of the reader? • Is there a hook at the beginning of each chapter to keep the reader looking for more information? • Is the hook culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td>• Will the illustrations entice the reader to want to learn more about the subject? • Do a variety of visuals and graphic aids provide direct support for understanding of the text? • Are the illustrations accurate and non-biased, avoiding tokenism or stereotyping of cultural groups or urban contexts? • Are cultural details of the time and place (architecture, dress, hairstyles) accurately depicted in illustrations, photographs, and diagrams?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Characteristics of High Quality Children’s Literature - Realistic Fiction


General characteristics of high quality picture books

1. Cover
- Is the cover of the book visually interesting?
- Do the illustrations and title on the cover give useful information about the content that draws the reader to the story?

2. Character
- Does the story contain a memorable character who is about the same age as the students?
- Is the behavior of the characters consistent with their ages and backgrounds?
- Are the characters well developed and convincing?

3. Plot
- Will students enjoy the story (is it interesting, fun, or engaging on its own)?
- Will students understand the problems and be able to follow the sequence of events?
- Is the text segmented to add the drama of turning the page?

4. Theme
- Is the theme worthwhile and developmentally appropriate for young children?
- Is the author’s message one that children can relate to?

5. Language
- Does the story contain natural, vivid language that reflects the mood of the story?
- Do the words evoke clear, concrete images of characters and actions?
- Do the words evoke clear, concrete images of characters and actions?
- Are the characters well developed and convincing?

6. Illustrations
- Do the illustrations establish the mood, theme, and setting as the story unfolds?
- Do the illustrations complement and enhance the story?
- Are the illustrations interesting and engaging?

Characteristics of high quality urban children’s literature

1. Authenticity of characters and culture
- Are culture and language accurately portrayed from the point of view of someone inside the group?
- Does the book capture experiences, values, and attitudes that resonate with members of the cultural group depicted?
- Are gender, racial, and cultural stereotypes avoided among the characters?
- Are culture and language accurately portrayed from the point of view of someone inside the group?

2. Familiar Context
- Does the story depict a familiar urban context?
- Will urban public school children be able to see themselves in the story and among the characters and settings?

3. Familiar Language
- Does the story use natural language and authentic dialogue that children will recognize?
- If set in non-urban setting (suburban, rural), would vocabulary and dialogue change significantly?

4. Authentic Urban Scenery
- Do the illustrations and descriptions accurately and realistically depict urban settings?
- Will children recognize the setting as similar to their neighborhood/community?

5. Diversity of Characterization
- Does the book show diversity within an/or across urban cultures (age, race, ethnicity, SES, family structure, lifestyle)?

6. Diversity of Setting
- Is urban diversity represented by having a variety of city settings (apartment buildings, city sidewalks, city parks, local businesses, vacant lots)?

Better Books for Multilingual Learners
Iveth Zoraya Streisand
Photos: Mitchell Sanders

We all want our students to access books that they can connect with and that have messages of empathy, sensitivity, linguistic pride and cross-cultural awareness. We asked local experts to share their ideas for diverse and inclusive books for our multilingual learners. We shared these lists at our Spring 2019 Conference and we reprint them here for your reference. We hope that you can use these booklists to support your teaching and we hope that our learners can see themselves in these books. Let’s go and read!

What is a favorite picture book that you use with your multilingual learners?

Booklist by Bonnie Lilienthal
Senior Children’s Librarian
Providence Public Library
401-455-8025

Picture Books
American Wei - Marion Pomeranc
Apple Pie Fourth of July - Janet Wong
Angelina’s Island - Jeanette Winter
Big Umbrella - Amy June Bates
Carmela Full of Wishes - Matt de la Pena
Color of Home - Mary Hoffman
Day You Begin - Jacqueline Woodson
Different Pond - Bao Phi
Dreamers - Yuyi Morales
Goodbye, 382 Shin Dang Dong - Frances Park
Grandfather’s Journey - Allen Say
Here I Am - Patxi Kim
I Hate English - Ellen Levine
In America - Marissa Moss
In the Small, Small Night - Jane Kurtz
Journey with Papa - Deborah Mills
Laailah’s Lunchbox - Reem Faruqi
Mama’s Nightingale: A Story of Immigration and Separation - Edwidge Danticat
Mango, Abuela and Me - Meg Medina
Marwan’s journey - Patricia de Arias
Matchbox Diary - Paul Fleischman
My Chinatown: A Year in Poems - Karm Mak
My Diary from Here to There - Aranada Perez
My Name is Sangoel - Karen Williams
No English - Jacqueline Jules
Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote: A Migrant’s Tale - Duncan Tonatiuh
Quiet Place - Sarah Stewart
Someone New - Anne Sibley O’Brien
Stepping Stones: a refugee family’s journey - Margaret Ruurs
Teacup - Rebecca Young
This is Me: A Story of Who We Are and Where We Came From - Jamie Lee Curtis
Uncle Rain Cloud - Tony Johnston
Very Important Day - Maggie Herbert
Watch the Stars Come Out - Riki Levinson
We Came to America - Faith Ringgold
Yo soy Muslim: A Father’s Letter to his Daughter - Mark Gonzales

Journey with Papa - Deborah Mills
Laailah’s Lunchbox - Reem Faruqi
Mama’s Nightingale: A Story of Immigration and Separation - Edwidge Danticat
Mango, Abuela and Me - Meg Medina
Marwan’s journey - Patricia de Arias
Matchbox Diary - Paul Fleischman
My Chinatown: A Year in Poems - Karm Mak
My Diary from Here to There - Aranada Perez
My Name is Sangoel - Karen Williams
No English - Jacqueline Jules
Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote: A Migrant’s Tale - Duncan Tonatiuh
Quiet Place - Sarah Stewart
Someone New - Anne Sibley O’Brien
Stepping Stones: a refugee family’s journey - Margaret Ruurs
Teacup - Rebecca Young
This is Me: A Story of Who We Are and Where We Came From - Jamie Lee Curtis
Uncle Rain Cloud - Tony Johnston
Very Important Day - Maggie Herbert
Watch the Stars Come Out - Riki Levinson
We Came to America - Faith Ringgold
Yo soy Muslim: A Father’s Letter to his Daughter - Mark Gonzales
Better Books for Multilingual Learners (con’t)

**Booklist by Bonnie Lillenthal (con’t)**

**Books for Older Children**

All the Way to America: The Story of a Big Italian Family and a Little Shovel - Dan Yaccarino
America, My New Home: poems - Monica Gunning
Dancing Home - Alma Flor Ada
Dear Whiskers - Ann Nagda Whitehead
Dreams in the Golden Country: The Diary of Zipporah Feldman, a Jewish immigrant - Kathryn Lasky
Drita, My Homegirl - Jenny Lombard

**Books by Beth Leatherdale**

We are Americans: Voices of the Immigrants - Dorothy Hoobler
Turtle of Oman - Naomi Shihab Nye
and Hope in the New Land - John Coy
Refugees - Mary Beth Leatherdale
Stormy Seas: Stories of Young Boat People - Sarah Weeks
Refugee - Alan Gratz

**Books by Kathryn Lasky**

Ada is a young boy on a journey he never expected to make. He travels by canoe, rickety old train, and on foot, and is swallowed up by everyone he meets. Marwan wants to make a home for his family, but he finds no welcome at the end of it. Then imagine a child who gives you something small but very, very precious. When the government refused to allow 3000 child refugees to enter this country in 2016, Nicola Davies was so angry she wrote a poem. It started a campaign for which artists contributed drawings of chairs, symbolizing a seat in a classroom, education, kindness, the hope of a future. The poem has become this book, movingly illustrated by Rebecca Cobb, which should prove a powerful aid for explaining the ongoing refugee crisis to younger readers."

**Booklist by Literacy Volunteers of Kent County**

Younii Kim
What Can You Do with a Paleta? - Carmen Tafolla, 2009, Fiction
My Way - Lynn Reiser 2007, Children’s Literature
Salsa - Jorge Argueta 2015, Poetry, Cookbook
My Name is Gabriela - Monica Brown 2005, Biography
Magda’s Tortillas - Becky Chavarria-Chairez, 2000, Children’s Literature
The Storyteller’s Candle - Lucia Gonzalez, 2008, Children’s literature, Historical Fiction
Abuelita, Full of Life - Amy Costales 2007, Fiction
Antonio’s Card - Rigoberto Gonzalez 2005, Fiction, Children’s literature
Pepita Talks Twice - Ofelia Lachtman 1995, Fiction
Circus Day in Japan - Eleanor Coerr 2010, Fiction, Children’s literature

**Booklist by Nicole Galipeau**

Teacher-Librarian
Guiteras Elementary School
Bristol Warren Regional School

The Journey
Francesca Sanna
Refugee from war
My Night in the Planetary Observatory - Innosanto Nagara
Political Resistance, Based on author’s childhood

I Hate English!
Ellen Levine
Family structure, language
A Day’s Work
Eve Bunting
Language difference, misunderstanding – two very different perspectives
I Speak English for My Mom
Muriel Stanek
Family structure, language
Mango, Abuela, and Me
Meg Medina
Family structure, language barrier between grandchild and grandmother
When We Were Alone
David A. Robertson
Family separation; specifically First Nations ( Cree) child in Canadian Government boarding school
Drawn Together
Minh Le
Language difference between grandchild and grandfather

** summaries of Other Works**

The Day War Came by Nicola Davies
- illustrated by Rebecca Cobb.
Summary: “A powerful and necessary picture book – the journey of a child forced to become a refugee when war destroys everything she has ever known. Imagine if, on an ordinary day, war came. Imagine it turned your town to rubble. Imagine going on a long and difficult journey – all alone. Imagine finding no welcome at the end of it. Then imagine a child who gives you something small but very, very precious. When the government refused to allow 3000 child refugees to enter this country in 2016, Nicola Davies was so angry she wrote a poem. It started a campaign for which artists contributed drawings of chairs, symbolizing a seat in a classroom, education, kindness, the hope of a future. The poem has become this book, movingly illustrated by Rebecca Cobb, which should prove a powerful aid for explaining the ongoing refugee crisis to younger readers.”

Islandborn / Lola by Junot Diaz ; illustrated by Leo Espinosa ( Islandborn is the English translation of the Spanish language Lola)
Summary: “Lola was just a baby when her family left the island, so when she has to draw it for a school assignment, she asks her family, friends, and neighbors about their memories of her homeland … and in the process, comes up with a new way of understanding her own heritage.”

Stepping Stones: A Refugee Family’s Journey
Margriet Ruurs ; artwork by Nizar Ali Badr. In “this picture book, a young girl and her family are forced to flee their village to escape the civil war that has engulfed Syria and make their way toward freedom in Europe.”

Better Books for Multilingual Learners (con’t)
Dr. Marybelle Marrero-Colon, from the Center for Applied Linguistics, presented the Keynote entitled Creating Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for English Learners who Struggle Academically as well as a secondary school breakout session. In her interactive keynote, Dr. Marrero-Colon challenged participants to evaluate their schools’ current practices using Response to Intervention (RTI) and whether or not they included an emphasis on ELs’ complex processes of second language acquisition. She shared personal stories from her own family and from her passionate work to stop students from “slipping through the cracks” of insufficient support services. Drawing on key research, Dr. Marrero-Colon encouraged school personnel to ask these questions prior to referral and evaluation of students:

- Has the student received preliminary (e.g. Tier 1) and intensive (e.g. Tier 2, Tier 3) interventions using appropriate materials/strategies designed for ELs, and have they been implemented with fidelity over time?
- Does the team have data regarding the rate of learning regarding learning patterns and language use in the home?
- Are the error patterns seen in L1 similar to the patterns seen in L2?
- Are the learning difficulties and/or language acquisition patterns manifested over time similar in different settings and in different contexts? (Cummins, 1984; Ortiz, 1997; Ruiz, 1995; Butterfield, 2014)

Passionate adult ESOL teacher Dr. Robin Lovrien Schwarz, joined us from Maine to lead an Adult Practitioner breakout session, entitled Adult ELs Who Struggle to Learn: Why They Struggle and What We Can Do About It. In her session, she shared personal anecdotes and research on her work with adult learners from various backgrounds and the ways she teases apart the complex overlap between language acquisition and learning differences. She highlighted the following seven areas for teachers to consider and analyze with their learners:

- Physical and mental health issues
- Unique adult language learning needs
- Influences of dominant language
- Phonological processing skills
- Level of literacy; extent of experience with formal education
- Cultural influences, ideas, attitudes
- Exposure to inappropriate pedagogy

Dr. Schwarz and participants discussed the power that effective games can have in ESOL settings. Click here for her follow-up blog post on how to effectively implement games with adult learners.

Dr. Leila Rosa, Assistant Professor of Educational Studies/TESOL & Bilingual Education, presented her breakout session entitled Crossing the RTI Bridge for Students that are Emergent Bilinguals. Focusing on the elementary level, Dr. Rosa discussed the under and over-identification of MLI/EL students and urged teachers to probe deeper into multi-tiered systems of support to better serve those students that need Special Education Services. She led teachers to consider multiple factors in determining whether a disability exists, including:

- Identifying a pattern of difficulty as compared to other students who share similar backgrounds, across settings
- Identifying behaviors that are not primarily the result of cultural, linguistic, or socioeconomic differences, and
- Identifying behaviors that persist despite instructional support strategies.

In order to address this pattern of difficulty, she suggested improvements in the areas of academics, behavioral, and social-emotional learning. Finally, Dr. Rosa highlighted supporting our students by implementing a multi-tiered system that includes classroom instruction, targeted small group discussion, and intensive individual attention.

How do you collaborate with the Special Education team at your school to serve EL students?

Remember to check out the RITELL Website for extensive teacher resources from all RITELL Conferences.

Written by Tricia Kelly, Photos by Beth Toney
Celebrating Our Identities in Rhode Island

Gallery Walk: April 2019

Sarah Reis & Cathy Fox
Photos by Mitchell Sanders

The Gallery Walk is an annual event where teachers of multilingual learners of all ages in Rhode Island schools and adult learning programs are invited to share student-produced artifacts that reflect identity in a positive light. Artifacts can be written, spoken, visual, musical or any representative combination thereof. Bilingual presentations are encouraged for this event. In order to honor student voices and reflect current proficiency levels, pieces need not be edited. This event strives to celebrate the richness these students bring to the classroom and recognize the value in these literacy practices. In the past four years, we have moved from a school-based exhibition to a broad, welcoming community celebration. Previous celebrations have included presentations from up to 500 multilingual learners from 20 districts and organizations throughout Rhode Island. Thirty-four different languages have been represented and presenters have ranged in age from 5 to 63.

Community members are invited to view these beautiful student artifacts displayed on tri-boards, in book format, in verse, through paintings, and in other art forms. Last year, schools from several districts brought buses with students and their families to participate in the Gallery Walk. All audience members were treated to live readings from students in the Author’s Corner as well as a dedicated Video Room to watch personal narratives about language acquisition and immigration. Main Stage 2019 was graced with a variety of expressions, including music from Inner City Rhythm Drummers, dancers from Shea High School and PC’s Motherland Dance Group, and spoken-word poetry performed by Sussy Santana. The Women’s Club from South County attended our celebration and came with homemade baked goods.

We invite and encourage you to participate in the 2020 Gallery Walk, which will be held at The Center at Moore Hall at Providence College on Thursday, April 9th from 5:00-7:00 PM. The Cranston Public Library, North Kingstown Public Library, and Villa Nova Middle School in Woonsocket will serve as drop-off stations for artifacts. For more information, reach out to identitytextsgallerywalk@gmail.com

Come celebrate with our multilingual learners and honor their stories of courage, loss, struggle, gratitude, and love.

This article was written before the COVID pandemic began to take shape. We are printing the article as it was originally intended to be printed. Sadly, the 2020 Gallery Walk has been canceled due to the COVID pandemic.

Way Back at WIDA...

Tricia Kelly

Hundreds of teacher experts and researchers from around the country landed at The Providence Convention Center in October for the WIDA Annual Conference, entitled Teaching for Equity in a Multilingual World. In one keynote address, poet José Olivarez inspired the large group by sharing a few striking, gritty poems from his collection called Citizen Illegal. He provided free copies of this book to all conference attendees and participated in a lively Q&A with participants following the reading. The son of Mexican immigrants, Olivarez’s poems touch on issues of race, language, assimilation, cultural pride and relevance. In addition to writing, he co-hosts the Poetry Gods podcast and is the marketing manager for Young Chicago authors. We thought his poem, The Voice in My Head Speaks English Now, might resonate with some of your students in these New England winter months.

The Voice in My Head Speaks English Now
José Olivarez

snow finds me underneath layers. maybe the cold wants to hang out. take me skiing, wants me to see winter isn’t a bad a country & it’s not, but i’m still shivering. i make snow angels & come out snot-nosed. throat blistering.

it never stops being cold. my new voice fit with coughing. my friends say summer is coming. they’re lying. on gray days, i wear the sun, but it falls off my shoulder. if you catch my mom in good light, it’s impossible to tell where the sun ends.

i tell myself that’s where i’m from, but i’m not sure. when i was a baby i used to get fevers. maybe that’s why my parents had me planted in snow.

now i’m a long way from the fire my parents feared & so close to this new blue flame.

Did you attend WIDA? What was one highlight or key take-away for you?

Reprinted with permission from the author and Haymarket Books. See José Olivarez for more information on the poet.

WRAP UP: WIDA Conference 2019

WRAP UP: Gallery Walk 2019
1. How did you decide to work in education?

When I was in high school in San Francisco de Macoris, a small town in the Dominican Republic, teachers who got into college would always use me as their assistant. I don’t know why, but they always asked me to explain what they were teaching when students couldn’t understand it. In fact, in the ninth grade I developed a classroom of my own. But I couldn’t understand it. In fact, in the ninth grade I developed a classroom of my own. In that school, I created a project where students used clay to create a computer abacus. It was incredible - the kids took it to a whole new level.

2. What are some favorite activities you have done with your students?

When I was in New York, I got my Associates Degree in Business Administration with Computer Science Option. I graduated with a 4.0. But, do you know what? I hate business and computer science - unless I have to teach it! I moved back to the Dominican Republic for a while and was hired as a teacher in a private school. That's when I taught what I really love to teach - love the subject. I just need to know how to teach you to fall in love with that particular subject. In that school, I created a project where students used clay to create a computer abacus. It was incredible - the kids took it to a whole new level.

3. What is the hardest part of your job?

I want to help students change their lives, but I know there is only so much that I can do. It is hard for me to leave things at the end of the day. Sometimes my husband can’t believe it. He’ll say, “Do you really have to answer that phone call?” And I do, because they’re my students, and I have to do everything that I can.

4. What surprises you about your work with multilingual learners?

I think the thing that surprises me the most is how much they handle. They have to deal with so many obstacles and so many challenges, but they show up and do everything they can for themselves and their families. I am constantly reminded how smart English Learners are, how eager they are to learn, even when all odds are against them.

5. What advice do you have for teachers who are new to working with multilingual learners?

My biggest piece of advice is to be careful to not judge students quickly. Lack of language is not a lack of intelligence. That was so frustrating for me when I first came here and people thought I couldn’t do something because I couldn’t speak the language. I always wanted to show them my report cards and say, “See! Look at these!” I would advise teachers to be patient and to embrace all the skills that English Learners bring with them, including their native languages. Learn about their culture and understand them better. And, most of all, remember that love can be expressed without words. Love is universal and we can all communicate with that language.

To answer that phone call? And I do, because they’re my students, and I have to do everything that I can.

5 Questions with... Award Winner: Yomely Marte

2019 Nancy Carnevale Award Winner

Recipent of the RITELL’s Nancy A. Carnevale Teacher of the Year Award for Excellence in ELL Teaching. Yomely Marte is an educator with Dorcas International Institute. In honor of the award’s namesake, Yomely was honored for ‘teaching from the heart.’ Her project will be the creation of a multi-generational quilt that explores cultural identities of her high school students in English Language Development at Nowell Leadership Academy.

1. How did you decide to work in education?

When I was in high school in San Francisco de Macoris, a small town in the Dominican Republic, teachers who got into college would always use me as their assistant. I don’t know why, but they always asked me to explain what they were teaching when students couldn’t understand it. In fact, in the ninth grade I developed a classroom of my own. But I couldn’t understand it. In fact, in the ninth grade I developed a classroom of my own. In that school, I created a project where students used clay to create a computer abacus. It was incredible - the kids took it to a whole new level.

2. What are some favorite activities you have done with your students?

When I was in New York, I got my Associates Degree in Business Administration with Computer Science Option. I graduated with a 4.0. But, do you know what? I hate business and computer science - unless I have to teach it! I moved back to the Dominican Republic for a while and was hired as a teacher in a private school. That's when I taught what I really love to teach - love the subject. I just need to know how to teach you to fall in love with that particular subject. In that school, I created a project where students used clay to create a computer abacus. It was incredible - the kids took it to a whole new level.

3. What is the hardest part of your job?

I want to help students change their lives, but I know there is only so much that I can do. It is hard for me to leave things at the end of the day. Sometimes my husband can’t believe it. He’ll say, “Do you really have to answer that phone call?” And I do, because they’re my students, and I have to do everything that I can.

4. What surprises you about your work with multilingual learners?

I think the thing that surprises me the most is how much they handle. They have to deal with so many obstacles and so many challenges, but they show up and do everything they can for themselves and their families. I am constantly reminded how smart English Learners are, how eager they are to learn, even when all odds are against them.

5. What advice do you have for teachers who are new to working with multilingual learners?

My biggest piece of advice is to be careful to not judge students quickly. Lack of language is not a lack of intelligence. That was so frustrating for me when I first came here and people thought I couldn’t do something because I couldn’t speak the language. I always wanted to show them my report cards and say, “See! Look at these!” I would advise teachers to be patient and to embrace all the skills that English Learners bring with them, including their native languages. Learn about their culture and understand them better. And, most of all, remember that love can be expressed without words. Love is universal and we can all communicate with that language.
Passion and Gratitude
Award Winner: Youmi Kim
2019 Adult Practitioner Award Winner

Youmi Kim, Program Director of the Literacy Volunteers of Kent County (LVKC) program, was awarded the RITELL Adult Practitioner Award at the 2019 Fall Conference. In her work, she oversees the training of literacy tutors and the education of ESL students throughout Kent County. After being notified of winning the recognition, Youmi shared this beautiful note of appreciation and agreed to have it reprinted below.

W hat an honor! I was so surprised and humbled after learning what organization RITELL is and what the award means. Words cannot describe how much it means to me. This kind of moment is when I wish I had better English skills to express my deepest gratitude.

As the first immigrant to hold the position as program director, the last couple of years at LVKC has offered me an opportunity to dive into the community and mingle with diverse populations. Working with more than 130 students and volunteers, each with unique talents and language needs, I’m inspired every day by their determination. I enjoy the challenge of pairing students with the right tutor to help them achieve their specific goals. The true reward comes when our students feel empowered, equipped with new skills to help them improve their lives. Seeing this change in LVKC students always reminds me of my own grandmother’s journey towards literacy.

Born the early 1930s, during the Japanese colonization of South Korea throughout the 30s and 40s, my grandmother was deeply affected by the Japanese Ethnic Extermination Policies, one of which was eliminating the Korean language, using coercive measures to carry this out. During this time period, Korean people were killed protecting Korean books and dictionaries. She dropped out of school in the 2nd grade and was illiterate until her late 50s. She learned how to read and write in the 1990s and took great pride in copying down bible verses every day. As a young child I distinctly remember thinking my grandmother’s handwriting was a bit childish. I couldn’t have known then how much writing those words must’ve meant to her, but, today, I realize, it meant everything. Deeply rooted inside of me resides a deep sense of gratefulness. The writing those words must’ve meant to her, but, today, I realize, it meant everything. Deeply rooted inside of me resides a deep sense of gratefulness.

Life in America wasn’t always easy for me; sometimes it took twice the effort to get things done, some days English just didn’t come easy and my tongue would freeze, and sometimes I felt self-conscious and homesick. My focus, however, to grow and thrive in my new environment strengthened my patience to endure the difficult times and sparked my creativity to overcome the challenges. LVKC has been the biggest support for me. The members of the Board of Directors saw the transferable skills I had, and believed in my passion despite the lack of experience in the American workplace. Daily communication with tutors always teaches me something new, and interaction with adult learners brings me humbleness and respect. Learning more and more about adult literacy impacts our educational and economic well-being. I recently began my journey at URI to pursue my master’s degree in Adult Education.

I began by wanting to share a little bit of background story where the sincere gratefulness I feel comes from, and just realized it’s rather long. Hope I didn’t bore you! I understand I have a short resume compared to other award recipients, and also there are so many dedicated and amazing adult educators in Rhode Island. I humbly accept the award as I consider this honor a pat on the back to continue learning and sharing. I’ll do my best to “practice” better and harder as the 2019 Adult Practitioner of the Year. I hope this opportunity, being recognized by such a wonderful organization as an immigrant, will be an inspiration to other adult educators especially from different cultures and backgrounds.

Thank you again for all your kindness and support.

Warmest regards,
Youmi Kim

To read an article from The Warwick Beacon featuring Youmi Kim, click here.

RITELL Adult Practitioner Award Winner

RITELL is committed to supporting teachers in this time of transition.

Below are two programs recommended for online instruction.

Screencastify is a free screen recorder for Chrome. No download required. Record, edit and share videos in seconds. Videos autosave to your Google Drive account. More information about Screencastify.

Kami allows users to edit PDFs and make them "fillable". It is a PDF & document annotation app for schools. More information about Kami.

Remote Learning Resources

Online Lesson Planning Resources for Teachers of MLLS/EIIs

Mami allows users to edit PDFs and make them “fillable”. It is a PDF & document annotation app for schools.

Kami allows users to edit PDFs and make them “fillable”. It is a PDF & document annotation app for schools.

Online Teaching Resources

Screen, record, and share.

Remote Learning Resources

Learn more about Screencastify.

Kami recommends for online instruction.

Be sure to visit the "Teacher Resources" section of the RITELL website for many more high quality, online teaching recommendations!

Online Lesson Planning Resources for Teachers of MLLS/EIIs