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A Letter from the President

Dear Fellow Three Rivers TESOL Members,

This past April 19th I became the new President of Three Rivers TESOL. I look forward to an exciting year as our organization seeks to continue fulfilling it's and TESOL's mission statement: "To ensure excellence in English language teaching to speakers of other languages". In order to do this, I see our organization needing to actively seek out those professionals within the TESOL field to let them know what we have to offer. In the past we have enumerated the benefits of membership in our newsletters, at our socials and at our conferences. I hope to continue this tradition on a larger scale. In early September, I am taking the socials on a road trip (at my own expense) to Edinboro, Indiana and Washington, PA in order to actively seek new members in their own home territories throughout Western Pennsylvania. I'm hoping this "road trip" will help spread the word to everyone about our fall conference Saturday, October 25, 2008 at Franklin Regional Middle School as well. This year our theme is "Moving Forward: Focusing on Quality in the ESL Classroom". Our website will be open for proposals soon. We encourage ESL professionals to actively participate in workshops and panel discussion, providing the leadership and insight that experience gives, as well as researchers with the latest information on educational and second language research.

At TESOL's leadership conference on January 25, 2005, Neil Anderson addressed those in attendance by asking, "Who are we and what do we believe are the unique contributions that we can make? Covey (2004) encourages us to identify and create passions in life." I ask each member to consider these words carefully. I am passionate about the need for all ESL teachers at all levels of the education process from public schools, private schools, higher education entities to community organizations to join our organization and become leaders in their own right and place through the opportunities offered by Three Rivers TESOL. Throughout the year, members may address their individual needs and concerns to the board through email and in articles in our newsletters, at our socials, our 2 meetings and at the fall conference. I value your ideas and support and hope to meet each and every one of you as I "hit the road" this summer and fall. Won't you join me, and "develop the leader within you" as we meet and share ideas and support this year.

Best Wishes,
Janet Pierce

Meet the Webmaster

Greg Mizera works at the English Language Institute at the University of Pittsburgh, where he received his Ph.D. in applied linguistics. Greg has taught ESL at the ELI, in his home state of Connecticut and in Mexico. Right now, he's teaching a course in developing language teaching materials at Pitt. Greg lives in the Greenfield neighborhood of Pittsburgh with his wife and two daughters.

Meet the Editor

Brianne Harrison is a newcomer to the field of teaching. A 2004 graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, she holds a Master's degree in education and a TESOL teaching certificate from the Department of Linguistics. She is currently employed at her alma mater as a part-time instructor with the English Language Institute. Brianne is thankful for organizations such as Three Rivers TESOL that encourage continuing education, networking and camaraderie.

3R TESOL Board Member Profile

My name is Rose Marotta. I am originally from Greensburg, PA. My first experience with ESL was about 8 years ago when I traveled with the multi-cultural leadership organization called the Up With People Worldsmart Program. There were 160 cast members from 23 different countries who performed a musical devoted to bringing peace around the world. I continued my passion for the theatrical arts and learning a second language at Seton Hill University. While at Seton Hill, I traveled abroad to Mexico and Spain. I was a work study for three years with the University's Writing Center as well as a Resident Teaching Assistant for one year. Upon graduating, I decided to continue my education at West Chester University for an MA TESL. During my studies at WCU, I worked as an ESL Instructional Assistant at a local area high school.

I graduated on a Friday in December 2006, moved back to my parents house in Greensburg on a Saturday, and began working as an ESL/Family Literacy Instructor for the Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council on the following Monday. I currently teach the refugee and immigrant population in Prospect Park (South Hills area). At that time, Shannon Mischler was the Vice President of Three Rivers TESOL. She had asked me to be a part of a panel discussion for the Spring Meeting in 2007. At the meeting, I felt so new to the field. I told myself that I needed to get more involved in order to 'pick the brains' and learn more from other colleagues and ESL practitioners.

I am very excited to be on the board as secretary. I hope that I will be able to share, utilize, and contribute my skills that I have gained from my previous language learning and teaching experiences with the Three Rivers TESOL organization.

Three Rivers TESOL Social Relaxing Summer Kick Off



Three Rivers TESOL board members and guests enjoyed the food and time spent at Tusca Restaurant in the Southside Works on Tuesday, June 17th. At the board meeting prior to the social, the board was able to discuss and clarify ideas for the fall conference on October 25th and organize committees for the event. At the social, we enjoyed the tasty tapas and creative food combinations you see here and posted on our website. While our numbers were few, our spirits were high as we relaxed and spent time talking about ourselves. This was a great time for new board members to get to know other board members and our guests. This September, board President Janet Pierce plans to take the social events “on the road” to Edinboro, Indiana and then Washington, PA to encourage ESL teachers to join and reap the benefits of belonging to an organization that can help them professionally.



A Night on the Town: Your dedicated board members and some new 3R TESOL recruits enjoying a relaxing evening at Tusca on the Southside.



Sesame encrusted tuna: One of the many delicious tapas enjoyed by the members and guests of 3R TESOL at their summer social.

Call for Articles!

We'd love to hear from YOU! If you have an article, lesson plan, teaching tips, or news pertaining to the field of TESOL - let's hear it. Please submit your articles or ideas for articles to editor@3rtesol.org

Take Time to Listen...and Talk!

By Emily Corrado

I teach a Foundations level ESL class four days a week. One day, I sat down with my students to take time to talk. In the process, I learned an invaluable lesson that should apply to teaching low-beginning students: take time to listen...and talk.

From the moment my students enter the classroom, I begin conversations with them, as a class, on topics that range from the day of the week to the weather outside. I ask them questions like “What day is today?” and “How is the weather outside?” in order to elicit and reinforce words and phrases that they have learned, and to model small talk. Although I would say that my approach to teaching is communicative, I figure that they need language to produce language; so I check to make sure that my method of ‘banking’ English has paid off and that my students are able to use it correctly.

Of course, I am satisfied when they respond well; however, I have higher expectations for them. I would like for my students to participate in natural conversations. Perhaps this is too ambitious a goal for a Foundations class but *how often do we allow our students at this level time to speak?* I would guess not often, and I would say that a better question is *how much time do we allow them to come up with the words on their own?*

On that day not long ago, I decided to take a break from routine and try a ‘real’ conversation with my students. I sat down with them and asked a man from Burma if he liked Pittsburgh. I had to rephrase the question, “Pittsburgh good or Pittsburgh bad?” I thought that he would not answer, but I gave him time. He tilted his head to the right and squinted his eyes. Did he understand? Then after about a minute he said, “Pittsburgh good.” I thought, good; this is great, so I repeated his answer and followed with another question, “Why?”

This time I waited a few minutes for an answer, mostly because I was a little tired and he looked like he was thinking, but then to my surprise he blurted, “Pittsburgh, good food and good apartment.” I was thrilled not only because he said something that was straight from his heart but the content was interesting (especially in the context of his background, which is known to me). This was much better than the practical but ‘artificial’ conversations I have had with the class. He was using English to talk about something important to him.

Encouraged, I decided to try the same question on a woman from China. I led the conversation by telling her, “I-Ling*, Than* likes Pittsburgh—Pittsburgh good. Pittsburgh, good food, good apartment.” All the while Than was nodding his head in agreement. Then I asked her, “Do you like Pittsburgh?” She looked at us... “No!” I was so happy for the honest truth. “Why?” After a long while she answered, “Pittsburgh, no friend. Three friend, New York.” I was stunned, as the conversation continued with everyone intent on listening, especially me (!), and speaking.

I know my students and their abilities well, but I could not believe they were able to say so much. It made me think of how little time we might give low-level students for expression, apart from the standard drills we find useful. That is why I would say that the emphasis in conversations should be on listening because if I had not been patient, and expected answers right away, I might have figured my students either did not have the answers or did not understand. And, therefore, I would not have happened on our small conversation.

My students were happy that they were speaking English, and I was happy for them. I am sure they are encouraged to use English more now. When I saw one of them in the hallway the following week, I asked him how he was doing and I caught myself expecting the quick “Okay.” But he came up to me and slowly told me that he was sick and that he would return to school in two days—more than he has ever said to me before.

So, the implications for taking time to listen and talk are huge! All teachers, inexperienced and experienced alike, frequently run out of patience or easily get discouraged by extremely quiet students, thus they need to be reminded on a regular basis that they should give those students a chance. Great progress can be made in the form of a breakthrough.

* Names have been changed.

Emily Corrado teaches adults ESL at Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council and has actively participated in Three Rivers TESOL since 2006. She writes, “During these past two years, I have come to know you well mainly by bridging board-member exchanges by email, as your Secretary; however, I have also extended myself to you in person when we have met at meetings. Our relationship is a reciprocal one, and I value it for the knowledge, skills and experiences we share with each other. I am happy to continue to serve you, as Vice President, and I am confident that you will not doubt my commitment to my students and colleagues in the field.”

Mark your calendars!

AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER
<p><u>Presentation Proposals</u></p> <p>Fall conference presentation proposals are being accepted beginning August 1, 2008.</p> <p>Proposal guidelines and submission information available on the 3R TESOL website.</p> <p>Please see www.3rtesol.org for more details!</p>	<p><u>Back to School</u></p> <p>Don't procrastinate—send your proposals now.</p> <p>Proposal deadline is fast approaching!</p> <p>Make September “Join Three Rivers TESOL” month—tell a friend today!</p>	<p><u>3R TESOL Fall Conference</u></p> <p>“Moving Forward: Focusing on Quality in the ESL Classroom”</p> <p>Saturday, October 25, 2008 at Franklin Regional Middle School (Murrysville, PA)</p> <p>Plenary speaker: Robert Measel, ESL/Bilingual Education Advisor for the PA Department of Education</p>

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