



Three Rivers TESOL Newsletter

Volume 27, Issue 1

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Greetings & Fall Conference

Greetings, three rivers TESOL members! As the President of Three Rivers TESOL, I represent the board to thank for your wonderful support for our local professional home. We are very eager to serve this organization and we will try our best to provide good services to all of you!

As you may have already known, our annual fall conference will be held Saturday, October 21, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in College Hall at Duquesne University.

The theme of the conference will be "The Highly Qualified Teacher: Core Practices for ESL Education." The plenary speaker will be Dr. Meghan Madigan Percy, associate professor of applied linguistics and language education at the University of Maryland.

Prof. Percy has taught ESL and Spanish to learners of various ages, and she has conducted research on the preparation and ongoing training of language teachers. Recently her research has focused on the relationship between theory and practice in second language education. Her talk at the

3RT conference will be titled "Identifying and Using Core Practices for Students Learning English." Prof. Percy will address several key questions, including these:

- _ What are core practices for teaching?
- _ How do these practices inform teacher preparation and practice?
- _ What core practices are specific to ESL teachers?
- _ How are these practices identified and how can teachers and students alike benefit from their use?

There will also be a full schedule of presentations, discussions and poster sessions. The schedule is available at the 3RT website at: <https://threeriverstesol.org/wp/>

We hope to see you and your colleagues there!



Telling stories

Have you ever felt your place at your institution is on the margin because you serve a minority group of students, whether they are international students, non-degree students, or English language learners? Come to read Linh's article about telling stories.

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TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit

This summer, Ying represented Three Rivers TESOL to attend the TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit. Wonder what it is? Come to read her report.

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2017 TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit

By Ying Zhang, 3RT President

On June 18-20, 2017, I, as a representative of Three Rivers TESOL, joined 110 other TESOL educators in Washington, DC for the 2017 TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit. During the two-day summit, I learned more about federal policy issues impacting TESOL educators and English learners, and also actively engaged in advocacy activities visiting the offices of Representatives and Senators.

Before attending the event, TESOL has guided us to prepare for the summit. Through TESOL's new networking platform, myTESOL, I got connected with other three TESOL educators in Pennsylvania and we, as the PA team, sent out emails to Senator Casey and Senator Toomey's offices to schedule meeting times. It was not very easy to get hold of the senators, but after several attempts, we successfully had our names down in the schedule book. Two colleagues from the East Penn TESOL also made an appointment with their Congressman.

When I arrived in Washington, DC, I started to learn many important issues affecting TESOL educators and our students. For example, I learned about the federal funding for Every Student Succeeds Act and the BRIDGE Act. TESOL invited several federal officers to update us about the current

policies. Besides, I also heard from the American Federation of Teachers, National Skills Coalition and Migrant Legal Action Program. It was a little overwhelming at the beginning, but at the same time, I felt well-supported as everyone was so nice and open.

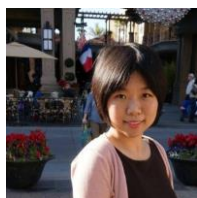
Following the various breakout policy sessions, the Summit shifted its focus to advocacy with preparations for meetings with members of Congress. TESOL divided us by state and provided tips, story examples, and even invited past attendees to share their experiences on the Hill. We, as the TA team, prepared our stories, shared statistics, and jotted down the key points.

On June 20, we went to Capitol Hill to have meetings with members of Congress and

staff. I was so excited but also nervous stepping on the floors of the senator buildings. We met the legislative aids from Senator Toomey's office, Senator Casey's office, and the Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick's office. We talked about our concerns, statistics, and personal stories working with ELs. It was a wonderful experience of advocating for our teachers and students. Through this experience, I had a new understanding about advocacy. To me, advocacy is to educate, to let the voice be heard, and to show that I care.



New Three Rivers TESOL Board members for 2017-18



Vice President

Jialei Jiang, Indiana University of Pennsylvania



Treasure

Michael Burke, Duquesne University



Secretary

Greg Mizera, University of Pittsburgh



New Grant Opportunities

Three Rivers TESOL are now offering two grants to support local TESOL professionals.

Travel Grant

\$500-\$1000

This grant will provide financial support to a 3RT member who wishes to attend the International TESOL Convention.

Professional Development Grant

\$500-\$1000

This grant will provide financial support to anyone who wishes to provide professional development activities to serve the ESL/EFL community.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, please go to our website:

www.threeriverstesol.org

Have you ever felt your place at your institution is on the margin because you serve a minority group of students, whether they are international students, non-degree students, or English language learners? Have you ever felt that because the students you work with are different, they are seen as a problem? I am sure many of us have experienced those feelings. While certain departments, fields of study, and people will always be viewed as more central and valuable, I see it as my responsibility to

communication strategies, such as paraphrasing, asking for clarification, and confirming comprehension. Adopting instructional strategies that work for

international students will help university professors to be more inclusive in their instruction. That is something many minority students are starting to demand but usually do not get. In addition, engaging in sustained dialogues with an open mind with people who have different identities and lived experiences

Telling Stories to Advocate for International Students

by Linh Phung, Chatham University

advocate for my students, my colleagues, and myself. One of my advocacy efforts is to frequently publish eNews, which is sent to the whole campus community, to feature stories by diverse people, including international students. Students and teachers from the English Language Program, exchange students, international degree-seeking students, and study-abroad students have written stories about their experiences learning English or another language and studying and traveling abroad. Students are free to talk about the benefits as well as the challenges with their honest voices. Here is an example of [the latest eNews](#).

Using the same communication channel, I have recently written [an article](#) arguing for a shift in the perception of international students. That is, we need to view them as an asset with diverse languages, cultures, and lived experiences, not merely as “legal aliens” or “nonnative speakers” who need support and accommodation (although support and accommodation are also important). Interacting with international students will help both sides develop their intercultural communication skills by practicing various

will certainly expose us to things we have never thought of before. Through these dialogues, perhaps, we will develop the ability to listen to understand others instead of listening while being busy with forming our response (i.e., listening to respond). The question that I have been pondering is how to facilitate these dialogues, especially dialogues about critical issues, among international and domestic students to raise differences and foster better understanding, a first step in contributing to a more equitable world.

I’m sure you have your own advocacy efforts, and I would like to learn more from you. If you’d like to share your experiences or collaborate on an article for our next eNews, you can email me at lphung@chatham.edu

