



Georgia TESOL Newsletter

February 2005

Conference Registration is quickly filling up!

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Dear Fellow GATESOL Members,

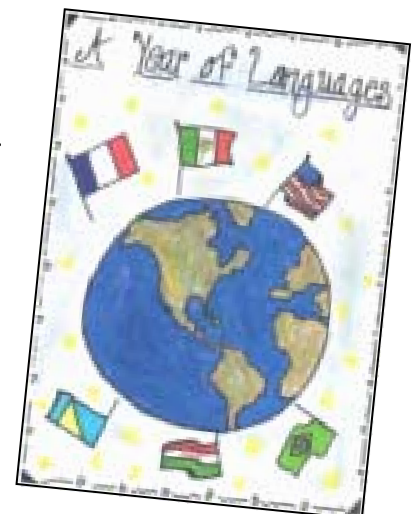
We are anxiously approaching our 2005 Annual GATESOL Conference on March 4th and 5th at the Sheraton Buckhead. This year is especially important, because it marks the 25th anniversary of Georgia TESOL. The committee has been working diligently to ensure that this year's conference will have something to offer everyone, including a new administrator's strand. It should also be mentioned that we have received enormous assistance and collaboration with Dr. Evelyne Barker, State Coordinator for ESOL. Dr. Barker has been instrumental in assisting us in all areas of the planning. Dr. Barker will also be presenting some important, informative information at the conference.

A reminder that Kathy Mellor, the first National ESOL Teacher of the Year will be our opening plenary. In addition to Kathy, we have secured; Dr. Eugene Garcia, noted scholar and Vice-President for University -School Partnerships and Dean of the College of Education at Arizona State University, Mr. Shawn Arevalo McCollough, principal of Gainesville Elementary School who has received national recognition by President Bush and the New York Times for the outstanding gains he is making with his Hispanic students, Dr. Esperanza Zendejas, Superintendent and author from San Jose, CA , and our closing plenary, internationally renowned author Dr. Mary Lou McCloskey. Besides these speakers, we have many other promising events that hopefully will present you with inspiring and useful ideas to take back to your districts.

The information for the conference is on our website at www.gatesol.org. The rates go up after February 19th and we will have to stop registration when we reach 500 due to hotel accommodations. I urge you to register before the 19th to ensure a space at the conference. Room information is also available at the website. Parking at the hotel will be at special rates of \$10.00 for day parking, \$15.00 for overnight parking and \$20.00 for valet. Enclosed in the newsletter, you will find information on another parking garage near the hotel. We are in the heart of Buckhead with many things to do in the evening within walking distance.

Again, I would like to thank Dell Perry, Program Chair, Pat Allison, Registration Chair and Torrie Voss for handling registration, and Dr. Judy Holzman, Kennesaw State University as Publisher Chair. We look forward to seeing you all at the 2005 conference, "A Year of Languages."

Sincerely,



Message from the President by Ernie Blankenship

It has been my great pleasure to serve you as president this year. As my term draws near to an end, I am both sad and happy—sad to leave the day-to-day tasks of running the organization but happy to pass the experience on to Barbara Beaverson. She has worked tirelessly to guarantee that this year's conference is the best one we've ever had. Barbara will make an outstanding president next year; Georgia TESOL will continue to grow and thrive under her leadership. I want to thank Marsha Taylor for her three-year commitment to our organization. She has seen us through one of the most difficult periods in our twenty-five year history. Her leadership has made us strong and prosperous, and it will be missed next year. Fortunately for students and teachers, she will continue to demonstrate her leadership in the classroom and with her endorsement classes.

Recently I was asked to submit a reflective essay on my personal staff development for TESOL's Affiliate Newsletter. I think it says much about the present uncertainty of expectations for ESOL teachers with all the education-related changes that are taking place in our state and country. Some of you may even decide to follow my example to insure that you are considered "highly qualified" under anyone's definition. HOWEVER, keep in mind that nothing at this point is written in concrete. There is NO need for ESOL teachers to hit the panic button worrying that they must take additional classes. Dr. Evelyn Barker, the ESOL program specialist for the Georgia Department of Education, will be working with university and school system leaders throughout the state to make sure that all ESOL educators are treated fairly. Don't bombard her with questions; she will get information to us in a timely fashion.

This is the reflective essay I submitted to TESOL:

The *No Child Left Behind* act has created confusion in Georgia with what it means for an ESOL teacher to be considered "highly qualified." Until recently, Georgia did not have a certification field for ESOL. Instead, a certified teacher in any content area could take three courses—Linguistics, Culture, and Methodology—and receive an add-on endorsement for ESOL. Because of NCLB, a debate has been waging about whether an ESOL teacher must have English certification to be "highly qualified." This fall, I became concerned that in the next academic year I might not be considered qualified enough to teach the classes I am currently teaching.

I am an ESOL teacher who is certified in science. I taught sheltered science classes for years, but for the past six years, I have been teaching ESOL language arts. I consider myself to be highly qualified to teach these classes. I minored in English almost thirty years ago. I spent two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Yemen, gaining rich cultural experiences that have served me well as an ESOL teacher.

I wouldn't object to teaching science again. However, since I have had much success with my students acquiring English and passing the Georgia graduation tests, I didn't want my school to look for someone with both English certification and the ESOL endorsement. Therefore, I undertook a staff development program to become certified in English/Language Arts. I spent four months preparing for the PRAXIS II in *English, Literature, & Comp.: Content Knowledge and Content Essays*. From my years of teaching, I had confidence in my knowledge of grammar/mechanics and pedagogy. What I did was review works of literature and practice writing meaningful essays about them. I devoted time every weekend and most evenings reading and studying Advanced Placement Literature test preparation booklets. I took the PRAXIS II on November 20. On the Monday after Christmas, I received my results; I did well on both tests.

Rather than complain that jumping through additional hoops due to NCLB is not only unnecessary but also an unfair burden, especially for veteran teachers, I spent around \$200 to take the PRAXIS II tests and studied for many hours. I don't regret it; the experience was a valuable staff development program that was made more rewarding because I initiated it myself.

Since I submitted the essay, I have received a new certificate with English (6-12) added to it. When I opened the letter and saw the certificate, I was elated. Even so, I realize that many ESOL teachers do a sensational job in their classrooms without being English-certified. Having English certification is probably only required for teaching some ESOL classes at the high school level. Whether you choose to seek English certification, full ESOL certification (passing a Praxis II in the field would do it), or obtaining the endorsement if you're a new or prospective ESOL teacher, I encourage you to attend our conference and stay active in Georgia TESOL. The conference is the best way to network with other teachers and to receive the most up-to-date information affecting all ESOL teachers from Dr. Barker.

I thank all of the Georgia TESOL members I've met this year. You inspire me to strive even harder to structure success for the wonderful students I am blessed to have in my class each year.



Shawn McCollough, Conference Guest

Meet one of our conference speakers, Gainesville Elementary School principal Shawn McCollough. He has been recognized by George W. Bush in his acceptance speech, and Dr. Ron Paige, US Secretary of Education during his annual back to school address in September 2004. He has received awards and acknowledgements from the governor of Georgia, the GA Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the National Society of Hispanic MBAs, as well as the Outstanding Georgia Citizen Award by Georgia Secretary of State, Cathy Cox.

Find out what has been happening in our own back yard and what makes Mr. McCollough newsworthy as he leads his school to achievement. We will hear from this nationally recognized school and community leader and speaker on At-Risk Schools.

If you want to do your homework and read more about this speaker before the conference, go to this article.

<http://www.gcscsk12.net/gesweb/New%20York%20Times%20Online.pdf>

January 20, 2005

*****Letter from Dr. Barker*****

Dear Colleagues,

Accountability...Assessment...Achievement...high quality teaching...parental involvement. Under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, English language learners (ELLs) are being held to the same high standards for all students. Never before in the history of education has the spotlight of educational reform shone more brightly on ELLs. Never before have states collaborated to develop large scale proficiency assessments to evaluate ELL social and academic language. Never before has the distinction of "National Teacher of the Year" been awarded to an ESOL teacher.

Clearly this is an exciting time for Georgia TESOL and its membership. The upcoming conference has been planned to provide teachers and administrators with quality sessions and opportunities for networking. There will be featured presentations by the 2005 National Teacher of the Year, key administrators from school systems in high density ELL states, and reform-minded principals in Georgia.

In closing, I encourage you to invite your school leaders and mainstream colleagues to join you at the GATESOL Conference, March 4th and 5th. It will be an important first toward building professional collaboration statewide for ELL academic success.

See you soon,

Evelyne Barker, ESOL Program Specialist, GADOE

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Let's Celebrate Cultural Commonality by Susan Larson

This article first appeared in the January 19, 2005, edition of the *Gwinnett Daily Post*, and then in *The Weekly*, a community newspaper for the northwestern part of Gwinnett County, and it is reprinted by permission of the author. The author can be reached at <weeklpub1@mindspring.com>.

The biggest delight in teaching ESOL is not in seeing students' differences but in discovering that "surprise something" they all have in common. Years ago when I wrote a word for a class of Vietnamese and Mexican warehouse workers in Duluth, a man said, "Is Latin word?" "How did you know that?" I asked. "Grow up Catholic in Vietnam. Learn Latin." I immediately resurrected that dead language for Vietnamese and Hispanics alike.

In a class at Gwinnett Tech, most of my students were doctors, engineers, computer analysts and priests. I can't recall what concept they were struggling with, but I thought syllogisms might help make it clearer. As I wrote T's, F's and arrows on the board, a young man cried, "No! I had this in Pakistan and I hated it there!" "Welcome to America," I said, "because you're going to hate it here, too. In fact, to make you really feel at home, you can work the first example." All the other students coached him in the best English they could muster up. And I discovered they understood the logic better than I did!

While subbing at Nesbit Elementary, I visited a friend on my way to work. She greeted me with a chuckle and a caterpillar in her hand. "I just paid to have my house cleaned and this caterpillar crawled across the floor and picked up all this dust the cleaning lady didn't get." I took the dusty caterpillar to school to show to my kids, then asked what other animals might help clean house. "The cat could lick things clean," said Karina. "The dog could dust with his tail," said Kathya. "The bird could peck off pieces of dirt like dried cereal," said Franklin. Then Yuritz piped in, "The snake could wrap himself in Wet Wipes and slide over the floor." With that, the kids pretended to wrap themselves up, then giggled and wiggled all over the room. Now if I had to list 100 words I thought were universally understood, Wet Wipes would not be among them.

But my Nesbit days are over. The principal found a real teacher to replace me. I was sad to leave my home away from home, but a sub is never homeless for long. Last week I subbed in kindergarten at Meadowcreek Elementary. I love the way ESOL students of all ages develop a sense of empathy--and a sense of humor--as they try to properly pronounce each other's names. Though I've dealt with ethnic names all my life, I still come across some that cause my tongue to trip. When I messed up for about the tenth time, Osama raised his hand. "Don't feel bad, teacher," he said, "You do a real good job of saying

Socio-political Concerns by Jackie Saindon with the help of Rosemarie Goodrum

Editor's Note: This article was inadvertently left out of the fall newsletter.

I was asked to take on the role of socio-political liaison for Georgia TESOL, and I was happy to do so. Below is a newsletter article focusing on a political concern to the profession - the treatment by Immigration and Naturalization Officials (INS), and consular personnel, both abroad and at US airports.

On Friday, March 12th, the Higher Education Interest group met at the 2004 Georgia TESOL Conference in Augusta to discuss common concerns. We had no agenda for the meeting; it was a place and time to share concerns that we had as faculty, instructors, and graduate students in higher education. We discussed many issues: the closing of the American Language Program was an area of concern to all of us, as was the difficult times all intensive English programs are facing. One issue stood out - the difficulty international students have had in applying for visas to come to the United States to study. We heard stories from some of the graduate students present about the difficulties with consular and US immigration personnel in their own countries to the INS officials in Immigration in the US.

We heard that INS was asking personal questions that had no business being asked in an immigration interview. A personal friend of mine who grew up in Juarez and commuted daily to the University of Texas in El Paso and never had difficulty crossing the border was asked if she was pregnant because she was wearing a loose fitting native dress. We also heard that single women from South America were having an extremely difficult time getting visas from the American Consulate in Columbia; the reason being that INS didn't want people to come to this country who were not planning on returning to their home country. Since that meeting other incidents have come to the attention of the press. In one case Professor Ahboud Syed Lingga who is Institute of Bangsmaoro Studies and chair of the Bangsamoro People's Consultative Assembly was on his way to attend professional conferences in New York, one at the United Nations. When he arrived in Los Angeles from Manila to attend the conference, he was told he was "inadmissible to the United States." He had a choice to appeal the case before the Immigration judge or return home. Because the conference was the next day, he returned home. (See Lingga on being turned back by US immigration: "when people do not welcome you, why insist?" by Carolyn Arguillas / MindaNews / 17May 2004 <<http://www.mindanews.com/2004/05/17nws-lingga.html>>)

The immigration officials in Portland have come under heavy criticism for their treatment of internationals waiting to be admitted to the US. The city's reputation has become so bad that many Asians have termed the city "Deportland." (See "Portland earns reputation in Asia as 'Deportland': INS takes offensive in action against foreigners -- travelers and illegal aliens," September 1, 2000, by Sam Howe, Verhovek, The New York Times. <http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/ore01.shtml>)

Another obstacle facing many internationals trying to visit the US is the requirement that all visitors to the US with passports issued after Oct. 26 of this year (2004) must carry the new "biometric passport." Officials say these cannot be produced until the middle of the new year at the earliest. So British visitors coming to the US even if for only a few days will have to obtain visas in addition to their passports. Visas for British citizens entering the US haven't been required since 1986. See this link: <http://www.britishembassy.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1058276055196>

The GATESOL Higher Education Interest Section group agreed that this issue isn't one we could just discuss and let go - we all felt we needed to write a statement to be sent to the International TESOL Conference to be passed as a position statement. We wrote a rough draft of the statement and then worked on it some more over the weeks following the conference.

Note: We will be submitting this proposal at this year's International TESOL conference to be held in San Antonio, March 30 through April 2nd of 2005.

Given the numerous difficulties that our international students have faced in their respective countries during the last year when attempting to come to the United States to study, we, TESOL, ask that the Department of State review the policies, procedures, personnel, and fees currently in place at each U.S. Embassy that deal with students who are applying for visas. We believe that each applicant who desires to come to study in our schools and universities is deserving of being treated with dignity and fairness by any representative of our country, and we appeal to the Department of State to insure that such behavior is mandatory.

Ms. Arolue Flemmen Awarded \$920 Mini-Grant

Congratulations to Arolue Flemmen on being selected as the recipient of the 2005 Lindy Lopez-Butner Memorial Mini-Grant. Ms. Flemmen is an itinerant ESOL teacher in the Clayton County school system. She teaches six classes daily, kindergarten through fifth grade, at Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School and E. W. Oliver Elementary School in College Park, Georgia.

A check for \$920 will be presented to Ms. Flemmen at the conference luncheon on March 4th. Her proposal is to investigate the premise that use of the Leapfrog Schoolhouse literacy curriculum enhances scholastic reading achievement. She intends to use the award to purchase materials for her kindergarten classes. She wrote the following as her objective:

In that early positive reading motivation is so critical for later reading success (Mazzoni, Gambrell, & Korkeamaki, 1999), I want to target kindergarten students, providing them with a visual, tactile, and aural activity curriculum which develops reading and writing skills that contribute toward this success (Leap into Literacy Center Teacher's Manual, 1999).

As the recipient, Ms. Flemmen will write an article regarding the use of the grant money in next year's newsletter. She will also give a presentation at the 2006 GA TESOL conference.

If you are interested in applying for next year's Lindy Lopez-Butner Memorial Mini-Grant, you can obtain more information on our website: www.gatesol.org

GA TESOL Member Recognitions

- Ernie Blankenship** (Gwinnett County) served on a select panel to review/revise new test items for the Georgia High School Graduation Test in English/Language Arts on December 3-4, 2004. Mr. Blankenship will be presenting "Preparing Content Teachers of English Learners" with Dr. Lucilla Lopriore, EFL professor from Italy, at the TESOL Convention in San Antonio, Texas, on March 30th. Mr. Blankenship is an ESOL teacher at Grayson High School.
- Dr. Diane Boothe** (State University of West Georgia) received a grant from the Chinese government at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in October, 2004. She gave two presentations: one on problem-based learning and another on creativity. Dr. Boothe is Professor and Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the State University of West Georgia in Carrollton.
- Dr. Mary Ann Browning** (Fayette County) received certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. She was awarded a SHOPA grant as well as a Fayette Education Foundation grant. She also received a Fulbright-Hays Fellowship for study-travel in Lithuania, Latvia, and Russia.
- Diane Clack** (Gwinnett County) was chosen Teacher of the Year for Parsons Elementary School. She then became a finalist for Gwinnett County's TOTY.
- Paulette DeHart** (Bethany Baptist Church) has been teaching ESOL at Bethany Baptist Church in Snellville for the past 13 years. She received a \$1000 grant from the Snellville Super Walmart for her church's ESL ministry. In addition to this, Ms. DeHart was recently named the Literacy Mission Consultant for the Georgia Baptist Convention. Her responsibilities in this role are in the following areas: Adult Literacy, Tutoring Children & Youth, and Adult Reading/Writing to Hispanics in Spanish.
- Sharon Forrester** (Houston County) served on a select panel to review/revise new test items for the Georgia High School Graduation Test in English/Language Arts on December 3-4, 2004. Ms. Forrester teaches ESOL at Perry High School.
- James and Janie Lineberger** (Athens) were the conference chairs of the Best Practices for the ESOL Teacher Mini-Conference at Gainesville College November 13, 2004. The conference was attended by 110 people who enjoyed the variety of sessions and the chance to network with other ESOL professionals.
- Ana Menezes-Brown** (Cobb County) will coordinate the F.A.M.E. (Family Achievement Makes Excellence) program, which will be launched in February, 2005. It is a family-outreach program geared toward reaching parents and students who are non-native speakers of English. The program will use the Rosetta Stone Software as part of its curriculum and technology integration efforts. Ms. Menezes-Brown is the Instructional Lead Teacher at Clarkdale Elementary School.
- Elaine McGee** (Clayton County) was one of five recipients of the first "Building Bridges" award from the Islamic Speakers Bureau. This led to recognition by the Clayton County Board of Education. Ms. McGee is a 32-year veteran teacher. She has taught ESOL for the past 13 years. She currently teaches at Kendrick Middle School.
- Novlett Salmon-Davis** (Gwinnett County) earned National Board Certification in World Languages Other Than English on November 19, 2004. She is a teacher at Berkmar High School.
- Donna Jimenez** (Gwinnett County) earned National Board Certification in 2004. She is a teacher at Berkmar High School.
- Margaret Tharpe** (DeKalb County) was selected as the 2004-2005 Teacher of the Year for the International Center in DeKalb County.

Continued on next page

Dr. Varanee Vaddanayana (DeKalb County) was a recipient of the American Star Teacher Award from President Bush and Rod Paige, former superintendent of the U.S. Department of Education. She was the only recipient from Georgia. She also won the 11 Alive Class Act Award. Her stories aired on WXIA TV on Monday, October 15, 2004. In addition to these honors, Dr. Vaddanayan completed her Ph.D. in leadership in 2004. She is the ESOL Coordinator at Clarkston High School.

Alice Walkemeyer (Bibb County) presented a workshop at the Costa Rica TESOL Conference recently. She was the only international speaker from Georgia.

Margo Williams (DeKalb County) was the recipient of the Unsung Hero Award. She wrote a grant and was awarded \$500.00 to utilize on a special project in her ESOL classroom. She is a National Board Certified teacher. Ms. Williams is a teacher at the International Center in DeKalb County.

Dr. Terry Williams (Gwinnett County) received a College Board AP Fellowship to attend an Advanced Placement Summer Institute in English Literature. He also served on a select panel to review/revise new test items for the Georgia High School Graduation Test in English/Language Arts on December 3-4, 2004. Dr. Williams is the ESOL Coordinator at Meadowcreek High School.

***Editor's Note:** If you have information about yourself or another member that you want printed in the next newsletter, please send it to Ernie Blankenship at erniebl@yahoo.com.*

GATESOL Membership: Enjoy EASY On-line Renewal

Many of you have recently joined GATESOL or renewed your membership through our new on-line registration process. As of April 1, 2005, more than half the current memberships will expire. If your membership is about to expire, we encourage you to renew your membership via the on-line renewal process.

Of course, for those who choose not to pay by charge card, there is a printable renewal form on the website.

GATESOL loves having you as a member! Thanks for your participation.

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Membership Application Form - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar shows "http://www.gatesol.org/Membership_Form.htm". The page content includes the GATESOL logo, a navigation menu with options like "SE TESOL", "Search", "Newsletter", "Contacts", "Membership Form", and "SE Affiliates". The main heading is "GATESOL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION" with a sub-heading "Online Membership (click here)". Below this, there is text for current members to find their membership number and links for new members: "Members A-G", "Members H-P", and "Members Q-Z". At the bottom, it lists membership benefits and contact information for Pat Allison, including the address "3225 River Summit Trail, Duluth, GA 30097", phone "770-418-9231", and email "gatesol@yahoo.com".

Out of the Ashes: Phoenix Academy Allows Newcomers to Soar

By Kristin Bair, *ELL Outlook* Staff Writer

Gainesville City is located sixty miles north of Atlanta, Georgia. It was originally called "Mule Camp Springs" and was established in the early 1800s near the crossing of two Indian trails that were often used by settlers. Two centuries later, this growing town continues to be a center for the coming together of cultures. Over the last ten years, Georgia's Hispanic population has increased by 300%, and many of the families who make up this population have settled in Hall County, where Gainesville City is located.

Known as the Poultry Capital of the World, Hall County generates more than \$720 million in poultry-related products each year. This industry drives the increase in the Hispanic population; as the number of jobs increases, families from Mexico and Central America move to Gainesville City, where they qualify for migrant benefits and where they can secure a solid education for their children.

In 1987, when Laura Herrington began teaching at the high school in Gainesville City, she was the only ESOL teacher. "I taught the beginning, intermediate, and advanced classes," she said.

Back then, the ELL population in Gainesville City was small, nothing like that of Miami, Florida where Herrington had begun her teaching career a few years before. But today, of the 5,000 students currently enrolled in the Gainesville City School System (K-12), 50% are ELLs.

To accommodate the burgeoning population, the school board and administrators of Gainesville City have made a number of progressive choices. "Today we have four or five full-time ESOL teachers between the middle and high schools, as well as sheltered classes," said Herrington. "And, of course, we now have the Phoenix Academy."

The Phoenix Academy opened its doors at the start of the 2004-2005 school year. Like many newcomer programs, it is designed to address the needs of ELL students who have limited or interrupted formal schooling in their native language. Herrington is one of three full-time teachers and one part-time teacher exclusive to the Academy.

Robert Thorpe, director of the Phoenix Academy, and Cheryl Wienges, the ESL director and the director of the International Registration Center of the Gainesville City School System, played key roles in the creation of the Academy. "We got the charge from our superintendent to create the Academy in late April of this year," said Thorpe. "It was serendipitous for us because at that time Cheryl, myself, and a few other teachers in our district were part of the University of Georgia's CLASE team."

The Center for Latino Achievement and Success in Education (CLASE) is an initiative of the University of Georgia that was created in January 2003. Its mission is to make sure that Latino and Hispanic students have the best opportunities to pursue and achieve an education in Georgia's public school system, and to that end, it offers a summer institute to its members. "In order to participate in the summer institute," said Wienges, "you had to have a project. And boy, did we have a project!"

Their goal was to plan, create, and implement not just a newcomer program by the start of the next school year, but an entire academy designed to meet the needs of a growing at-risk population. "We wanted to create a cocoon," said Wienges, "where there is a risk-free environment in which the students understand that everybody else in the room is low-literacy as well as low-language in English. But we didn't want them to feel so cocooned that they couldn't go out of here and feel confident." With CLASE's support and guidance throughout the summer months, the Gainesville City Team achieved its goal.

"The Phoenix Academy is unique," said Wienges proudly. "We have one middle school and one high school that back up to one another, so we purchased a brand-new modular six-classroom unit and situated it in the parking lot that is contiguous to both schools. So even though it sounds like a school within itself, it's not. And that's an important piece of the program." We didn't want them to feel so cocooned that they couldn't go out of here and feel confident." With CLASE's support and guidance throughout the summer months, the Gainesville City team achieved its goal.

Thorpe agrees. "The students of The Phoenix Academy are enrolled at either the middle or high school," he said. "They arrive to school on buses with the native English-speaking population. They eat lunch at their respective schools and have their fourth-period class there as well. It's very important that we don't isolate the kids from the resources of the schools or from their peers."

Currently, twenty-two students are enrolled in the Phoenix Academy (there are also five more in the GED program). The seven girls and fifteen boys come from a number of countries, including Mexico, El Salvador, and

Honduras. "Most of our students have a third- or fourth-grade education in their native language," said Herrington, "and we have one student who has never been to school at all. It's very different from teaching in an ESOL classroom. When the students have skills that are transferable, it makes a big difference. But here, if I say we are going to list or circle verbs, most students don't know what a verb is. It's challenging, but extremely rewarding because everything is a learning experience."

In order to meet the needs of the twenty-two students enrolled in the Academy, the teachers and administrators divided them into three groups by ability level, as opposed to age or grade level. Middle school students are mixed in with high school students in all three groups. In addition, the groups rotate from teacher to teacher on schedule with the 90-minute block schedule of the high school.

"By rotating among us, the students get to learn English from different people," said Herrington. "Throughout the years I've learned that when students hear the same voice every day, they become dependent on that. I had this happen to me at the high school; a student went to another class and came back to me and said, 'Mrs. H, she doesn't speak English.' She did, of course, but the student had become used to my accent and my speech patterns."

The amount of English spoken in each class depends on the level of the group. With the beginning-level students, the teachers spend a good bit of time speaking in Spanish, while at the advanced level, they speak mostly in English. In all groups, the students are encouraged to talk with one another in English, since this is often the only place they have to practice their skills.

José, a sixteen-year-old student from El Salvador who has never attended school before, said that he works on math, English, and more English at the Academy. When he first arrived in the United States in 2003 and had to register for school, he felt sad and ashamed. But now, he said, he understands much more English and tries to speak more often. "I can read and write a little," he said. "Before I could not do anything."

The two areas of content instruction on which the teachers focus are math and language arts. Jim Bradley, who moved to the Academy from the middle school, teaches math; in addition to his own teaching tools, he uses a math program designed by the Department of Defense. Elaine Levitt, another transplant from the middle school, teaches English and language arts. Herrington, who also teaches English and language arts, uses a computer-based literacy program to enhance her classroom. Patricia Guerrero-Cook, originally from Colombia, runs both the GED program and the reading enrichment program for the Academy students. Reading enrichment is one of the students' favorite activities. Each day, the three groups convene for thirty to forty-five minutes of concentrated reading time.

"Right now, we're reading Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*," said Herrington. "Pat reads the book to the students in Spanish, but the students have an English copy to follow along in. When she finishes a chapter, we stop, talk about it, and outline the chapter on the board. The students have a notebook for the book, and they take notes the whole time. We've also read *My Side of the Mountain* [Jean Craighead George] and *Esperanza Rising* [Pam Munoz Ryan]."

In addition to strengthening the students' English and reading skills, the reading enrichment period gives the teachers a chance to observe their students' learning styles. "What we've found is that the students who may not be the strongest in class are often the ones paying close attention during this time and answering questions when they're asked," Herrington said. "We can use this information in other learning situations."

Working together as a team and finding opportunities in which they can observe the students have proven to be invaluable tools for the teachers as the Phoenix Academy continues to evolve. Each day they share a common planning period, which Herrington said she didn't have with her fellow ESOL teachers at the high school. In addition, the Academy features a laptop computer lab. For most of the students, this is their first opportunity to work on a computer and, according to Herrington, they love it. "It's exciting for them," she said. "Once they realize that the mouse clicks and makes things happen, they click on everything. I have to calm them down, because they'll just click and click and click."

The lab plays an important role in educating the students. Earlier in the year, the three groups worked on a joint project for Hispanic Heritage Month. In addition to making posters, researching countries, and gathering recipes from a variety of cultures, the students worked with the GED students to create a PowerPoint presentation.

As the weeks have passed since the grand opening of the Academy, Herrington said that the students have finally begun to trust each other and the teachers. "School started in August, but the students are just now starting to tell their stories," noted Herrington. "They often tell how they came to the United States. For some of them, their parents were here first and the children came later. Some traveled only with siblings, no adults, which I can't

even imagine. One told me that he traveled on a train for five days with only water."

Herrington said that these stories come out at odd times, not when the class is having a discussion, but when the students are actually working on something. "All of a sudden," she said, "a student will just start talking about it. They obviously feel the need to share their stories, to express how they're feeling, to tell how they came to be here." And the fact that they feel comfortable enough to do so shows that the Phoenix Academy is connecting them to something important and creating an environment of trust.

Future plans for the Academy are extensive. "We're now working on a vocational component," Herrington said. "We've planned it from the beginning but, like everything else, it requires funding. Now that we've got the academic portion going, we can add in other components."

One such component that stirs a great deal of excitement in both Thorpe and Wienges is Plazas Comunitarias, an initiative of the Mexican government spearheaded by Mexican president Vicente Fox. In essence, Plazas Comunitarias is a Web site that provides access to learning in Spanish for people all over Mexico, throughout the United States, and around the world. On the site, people can take classes to improve their Spanish literacy, finish their high school degree in Spanish, or learn English as a second language. In addition, life classes are offered, such as parenting, how to deal with violence in the home, and much more.

"Plazas Comunitarias is designed to provide educational opportunities via the Internet to Hispanic students 15 years of age and older who have been left behind in the educational process in their native countries," Thorpe said. "For example, we got a student last year who was in her last semester of high school in Mexico. When she came here, she had to start all over again. With Plazas, she would be able to complete her degree in Mexico."

Thorpe and Wienges recently returned from a week-long trip to Mexico, where they participated in an introductory workshop for Plazas Comunitarias. They're looking forward to signing an agreement with the Mexican consulate as soon as possible and implementing the program at the Phoenix Academy.

As for the students in the Academy, the future looks brighter and brighter. Yami, a sixteen-year-old girl from El Salvador, said that she is rapidly learning to comprehend the English language. "I want more schools like this to open," she said. "It is a step ahead. I feel more ready for Gainesville High School."

If you have any comments about this article or questions for the author, please send them to: alex@elloutlook.com.

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Membership Directory Published in May

As we did last year, we expect to publish the directory soon after the conference while all the information on members is current and in time to deliver it before the school year ends. Phone numbers, mailing addresses and email addresses change rather frequently, especially as the school year ends.

Check your mailing label. If your membership is due to expire in April 2005, please renew soon so that your information will appear in the Membership Directory to be published in May.

If you submitted a conference registration form that has an address different from that in our current database, please be aware that we do not use that information to update memberships. Since the conference duties are separate from the membership duties, we cannot match addresses, etc and note changes.

Please let us know by email at www.gatesol@yahoo.com if you need to update your home address, phone or email address.

**Get Included in
the Membership
Directory
Published in May**

ANNOUNCING THE GATESOL SLATE OF OFFICERS

Election to the 2005-2006 Georgia TESOL Executive Board will take place following the announcement of the candidates at the luncheon/business meeting on March 4th at the Sheraton in Buckhead. The following individuals have been nominated by this year's Board. Other nominations can be made from the floor at the business meeting prior to the election.

First Vice-President: Dell Perry

(University of Georgia)

Second Vice-President: Torrie Voss

(Fulton County Schools)

Secretary: Mary A. Phillips (Gwinnett County Public Schools)

Treasurer: Terry N. Williams
(Gwinnett County Public Schools)

Member-At-Large 4 will be elected

Paulette DeHart (Bethany Baptist Church)

Dr. Judy Holzman (Kennesaw State University)

Dr. Paul Matthews (UGA)

Adrienne Ochoa (Georgia State University)

Angie Reed (Fulton County Schools)

Dey Smith (Walton County Schools)

Brief biographies of the candidates will be posted on the www.gatesol..org website.

Parking Information for Conference

Parking at the Buckhead Sheraton is \$10 for day parking, \$15 for overnight parking and \$20 for valet parking. If the parking lot is full, additional parking is located at **Two Live Oak Center**-next to the Bucket Shop Restaurant.

You will take a right out of the Sheraton parking lot and go 1-1 ½ blocks. On the right, just past the Bucket Shop Restaurant, will be the entrance to the parking garage.

WARNING: Do **NOT** leave your car overnight in the Lennox Mall parking area for customers. Vehicles are subject to being towed.

Parking Rates

0-30 minutes \$1.00	121-150 min. \$5.00
31-60 Min. \$2.00	151-180 min. \$6.00
61-90 Min. \$3.00	181-210 min. \$7.00
91-120 min. \$4.00	Full Day \$7.00

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“I didn’t receive my newsletter.”

If you received this newsletter in the mail, obviously this is not a problem. But for those who seemed to not be receiving gatesol publications, this might be the reason.

Most gatesol materials are mailed BULK mail which keeps costs down. However, if you have moved, the post office does not forward bulk mail to new addresses, nor does it return the mail to the sender. Thus, we are unaware of who receives the mailings and who does not.

Keep checking your mailing labels for

accuracy and to make sure your membership does not lapse. We want to keep in touch with you.

If you have missed newsletters, check the website www.gatesol.org to read back issues.

See you at the conference!

