

*Summer farm landscape near
Elgin, Nebraska*

Summer 2023

MIDTESOL Matters

*The Mid-America
TESOL Affiliate Newsletter*



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CONFERENCE PREVIEW
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***“Weaving Hope in the Heart of
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MIDTESOL Matters

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A Letter from the President

Zach Smith
MIDTESOL President
Des Moines School District
Des Moines, Iowa



Hello, MIDTESOL friends and colleagues!

As we progress through the summer, I want to wish each of you a happy, restful, relaxing and recharging summer break. I hope that you are able to soak up some sun and enjoy time with friends and family during this well-deserved break.

During this summer, I have decided that I want to try to find one new practice to implement in my classroom that I am truly excited about, and I challenge you to do the same. I truly believe that this is something we all can do no matter what area we are teaching in, if it is K-12, higher education, teacher preparation, community college, etc.

This summer, I have spent time researching ways to build connections and community with students and within classes, as I want my new practice to really allow me to be even more intentional on relationship building with students. Therefore, I have spent some of my free time watching some great ideas on Teachertube, Edutopia, etc.

I, luckily, have found what I think is going to be my new practice to implement. I will be doing a daily dedication within my class. This means that I will ask students to dedicate this class to someone who they find inspiring. It can be someone they know personally or not, but they will spend about 30 to 60 seconds in the beginning of the class explaining who they are dedicating today's class to and why; one student dedication presentation (lasting 30 to 60 seconds) will happen at the start of each class. [Here](#) is a quick video example and explanation from Edutopia.

This is my challenge to you! Summer is halfway over, but there is still plenty of time to participate! Please find one change, or idea to implement within your classroom to start with day 1 this school year. Stick with it for the year! More importantly, at the MIDTESOL conference this year, please, when I see you, let me know what the item that you implemented into your class is! I want to hear all about your ideas so I can have a list of other things to implement to my classroom in the years to come. I look forward to learning from you in our conversation at the upcoming MIDTESOL conference.

Wishing you a lovely remainder of summer and truly looking forward to seeing you in October at MIDTESOL in Kansas City!

Yours in Service,

Zachary Smith
President
MIDTESOL



Kaylene Sasse
MIDTESOL Past President
ESL Instructor
Bellevue, NE

From the Past President

Hello Fellow Members!

As this is one of my last opportunities to address all of you as a member of your MIDTESOL Board, I want to thank you for being a part of this group with me at any point over the past several years and allowing me to serve you in various leadership roles. Each of you has played a vital role in attending our conferences and contributing to our field in various ways. I hope that some of you will consider serving our MIDTESOL membership as part of the board within the next few years. **We currently have open positions in the roles of Vice President, Secretary, State Members-at-Large, and Interest Section Chairs.** (See list on the next page of the newsletter.) If you have any interest in knowing more about these roles and what it would mean to serve in any of them, please email me at kaylenesasse@midtesol.org, and I will be happy to answer your questions or help you pursue such leadership!

I would also like to reflect for a moment here on the topic of expectations in ESL education. We must indeed have some sort of standard by which we assess learning and development that occurs in the minds and hearts of our learners at a reasonable pace. Additionally, it is good to hope for great outcomes in our own professional development and in the ways that we advocate for the needs of our learners and their loved ones. However, we can grow weary or be overly burdened by expectations which are too great for us or our learners to meet.

Last summer, I was laid off from my ESL-based job in higher education. I had worked at that institution since 2016, and I had taught or otherwise served in some ESL/EFL capacity nearly continually since 2002. Due to the odd nature of the job market last year, by way of new employment, I found myself serving a wide variety of customers in commercial insurance billing. But recently, a local community college notified me they were in serious need of summer course adjuncts and asked if I would cover an evening grammar section for diverse intermediate adult learners.

I agreed to take on the temporary role; after all, my husband and I needed the supplemental income, I'd always enjoyed teaching grammar before, and I wanted to see if I would like being back in the classroom again. As I write this, two weeks of the new course are behind me, and my students had overall abysmal results on the first unit test they just took. Yesterday, when I stacked the freshly graded tests neatly to slip in my bag, I thought about the pressure I am feeling. The lead instructor told me clearly that I was expected to cover five (if not seven) units of material over the course of the 12-week term. And the first unit was supposedly material simply included for "review." Yet, many of my students are still not understanding how to apply it. Most of them work during the day and have little time for homework. And most of them are having trouble also completing tasks online that the college would like to see them master for the sake of technology-based learning standards.

I know I have skill as an educator and that my learners are bright individuals. But we still feel the crunch of the standards we must meet in order to have a successful class in the eyes of the school. Yet, I find now that I need to have a reset to my thinking. I need to look ahead to the next ten weeks and reconsider how I might equip my students with the basics of the topics we need to cover in such a way that they will not only legitimately pass the class by a general measure of progress--but far more importantly in such a way that their desire to learn is not crushed and they are able to communicate more smoothly with the people around them. In the end, even if some online tidbits are dropped and some quizzes have lower average scores, the latter factors certainly matter more.

My friends, please remember when you face institutional/state/community standards in your own sphere: the hearts of your learners are more important than their test percentages at the end of the day. And your heart is more important too. Reach for doing well by the measurements given, but always keep the main thing the main thing. Love your learners well and give yourself grace in the face of your own limitations.

Best,

Kaylene Sasse
(MIDTESOL Past President, 2023)

Join the MIDTESOL Team!

Open Positions (starting at conference time, 2023)

Are you looking for a way to make an impact while gaining experience, serving the profession, building your C.V., and expanding your network by collaborating with a diverse group of English language teaching professionals? MIDTESOL has several open board positions to be filled yet this year. Please reach out to Kaylene Sasse (kaylenesasse@midtesol.org) to indicate your interest or with any questions.

Vice President (3-year commitment: Vice President goes on to serve as MIDTESOL President and Past President in subsequent years) [In striving for equal representation on the Board of MIDTESOL's four states, the state of the holder of this position rotates. This year we are looking for someone from KANSAS to run for the Vice President's slot.]

Secretary (2-year commitment)

Interest Section Chairs (term length decided by Interest Section, often 1 year)

State Members-at-Large for KANSAS and NEBRASKA (typically 2-year terms)

Conference Committee members for MIDTESOL 2024 in Omaha ~ Council Bluffs (Conference Chair, Conference Program Chair, etc.)



MIDTESOL 2023 (October 13-14, 2023) in Kansas City!

#MIDTESOL23 Conference

Registration is open for the MIDTESOL 2023 conference! MIDTESOL 2023, *Weaving Hope in the Heart of America*, will provide exciting opportunities to network with and learn from colleagues and invited English teaching experts, while enjoying Kansas City's famous Plaza district. Read on for more information about...

- Invited conference speakers
- Conference schedule
- Conference special events
- Conference registration deadlines
- Conference travel awards

MIDTESOL 2023 Overview from Ben Vilkas, Conference Chair:

After the MIDTESOL 2022 Conference ended, the feeling that emerged the most was one of "hope." It was great to reconnect with colleagues, share insights into best teaching practices, and learn from each other. To build off that energy and optimism, the [MIDTESOL 2023 Conference](#) has the theme of "[Weaving Hope in the Heart of America](#)." As Kansas City has often viewed itself as the "Heart" of America, we are looking forward to another successful conference. We hope you'll be there so that we can come together to support and encourage each other.

This conference is all about weaving **hope**, and—in addition to YOU being there--we encourage you to reach out to colleagues ahead of time and bring someone who has not yet attended a MIDTESOL conference!

Early bird registration ends on **September 15**.

Join us for #MIDTESOL23! (Info at a Glance)

Theme: [Weaving Hope in the Heart of America](#)

Dates: Friday-Saturday, October 12-14, 2023

Location: InterContinental Kansas City at the Plaza, 401 Ward Pkwy,
Kansas City, MO

Session Types:

The conference will offer presentations on practical and research-oriented topics as well as workshops and round-table discussions. In addition, many opportunities for networking will be included and exhibitors will be onsite so you can connect with them face-to-face and learn about available resources.

Featured Speakers:

- Dr. Mariya Dostzadah Goodbrake (founder and executive director of Global FC)
- Dr. Kisha Bryan (Tennessee State, ESL Education and Department of Teaching and Learning)
- Dr. Shelley Fairbairn (Drake University School of Education).

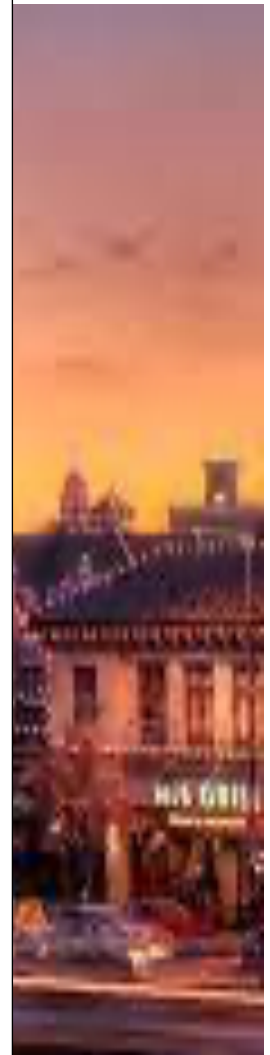
Featured Events: Interest section meeting discussions, state meeting discussion sessions, presentations from MIDTESOL's gold sponsors

Bookmark the [MIDTESOL Website](#) for more details about the conference, including the MIDTESOL 2023 Schedule-at-a-Glance.

Check out information on [Interest Section and Presenter Travel Awards](#) for eligible conference attendees. Deadline **September 10**.

Early bird discounts for registration are available until **September 15**.

Read on for more conference details!



CONFERENCE INFORMATION

(for planning your MIDTESOL 2023 experience)

MIDTESOL 2023 Featured Speakers

Dr. Kisha Bryan – Friday Lunch Invited Speaker



Kisha Bryan is an Associate Professor of ESL Education and Chairperson in the Department of Teaching & Learning at Tennessee State University in Nashville, Tennessee. She earned an MEd in TESOL from the State University of New York-Stony Brook and a Ph.D. in TESOL/Bilingual Education from the University of Florida. She is a former public school English Language Arts and ESL teacher. Dr. Bryan has served on the editorial advisory boards of the TESOL Journal, Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice Journal, and the Caribbean Educational Research Journal. In addition, she is an English Language Specialist for the U.S. Department of State and a current director on the TESOL International Association Board of Directors. Dr. Bryan identifies as a public scholar and advocates for marginalized peoples around the world. Her

current research focuses on language weaponization and the role of language, literacy, and racial ideologies in adolescents' identity construction. A native of St. Helena Island, South Carolina, USA, her linguistic background and schooling experiences were the impetus for both her career choice(s) and her unyielding advocacy for marginalized populations. In her free time, she enjoys listening to podcasts, shopping, and hanging out with her teenage daughter, Ryann Olivia.

Dr. Bryan's luncheon presentation is entitled "ELT Policies, Practices, and (Proposed) Priorities."

Mariyah Dostzahde Goodbrake – Saturday Lunch Plenary Speaker

Mariya Dostzadah Goodbrake is the founder and executive Director for Global FC, a Kansas City non-profit organization supporting refugee youth and families using soccer as the primary vehicle for positive change. Previously, she worked with International Medical Assistance in Mexico, coordinating medical projects to advance health care for the economically deprived Maya populations in the Yucatan Peninsula. A native Afghan raised in Iran and India before immigrating to Canada with her family, she relocated to the United States in 2012. Mariya is also a Cultural Diversity Professional (CDP), active public speaker, intercultural trainer, researcher, and training curriculum developer. Her presentation is entitled "Weaving Hope in Your Community."



Dr. Shelley Fairbairn – Workshop Leader



Former *MIDTESOL Journal* lead editor Shelley Fairbairn, Ph.D., is a veteran ESL teacher and a professor in the Drake University School of Education in Des Moines, Iowa. Her teaching foci include preparing pre-service teachers to design effective lesson plans and assessments for K-12 students and empowering both pre- and in-service teachers to meet the needs of multilingual learners through linguistically and culturally responsive practices. Prior to joining the Drake University School of Education faculty, Dr. Fairbairn concurrently taught English as a second language courses for the Drake University International Center and served as a K-12 ESL teacher in two Des Moines area school districts.

Dr. Fairbairn's international experience includes three years of teaching English as a foreign language in Jakarta, Indonesia and one year of teaching ESL and ESL certificate courses at the Regional Language Centre in Singapore. She has conducted teacher professional development sessions and workshops in Belize, China, Canada, and across the U.S., generally focused on linguistic differentiation of instruction, assessment, and grading. Her scholarly work has focused primarily on effective assessment and instructional practices for multilingual learners, but more recent publications have focused on faculty self-care practices. Her workshop is entitled "Weaving Hope through Academic Access: Linguistic Differentiation for K-12 Teachers," a practical how-to for differentiation across five levels of English proficiency for our multilingual learners.

MIDTESOL 2023 Informal Event

Friday Night Dinners – a Networking Opportunity

If you are looking for an opportunity to meet others and network over a relaxing dinner, take advantage of the opportunity to reach out to other conference goers. While this is **completely informal and unstructured** (no sign-ups), the conference location makes this easy for you to arrange on your own, since there are over 32 restaurants and eateries within walking distance of the Intercontinental Hotel in the Country Club Plaza area. The benefits of connecting with other ELT professionals is tremendous.

NOTE: This year, the State meetings and Interest Section meetings are scheduled on Friday so that you will have met people BEFORE Friday night dinner. Please reach out to other conference attendees (particularly those who are solo) and help make this social event a valuable time for networking and getting to know other ELT professionals.



Summary: Tentative Schedule at-a-Glance

Thursday, October 12: Onsite registration and check-in, 5 – 7 pm

Friday, October 13:

- Registration and check-in: 7am – 5 pm
- Continental Breakfast (included with registration): 7:15-8:30 am
- Sessions: 8:30 am – 12pm (morning refreshments 10:15-11:00) and 1:30 – 4:30 pm (afternoon refreshments 2:00-3:00)
- Exhibit Hall: 8am – 5 pm
- Lunch (included with registration): 12 pm – 1:30 pm
Invited Speaker: Dr. Kisha Bryan

Saturday, October 14:

- Registration and check-in: 7am – 12 pm
- Continental Breakfast (included with registration): 7:15-8:30 am
- Sessions: 8:30 am – 12pm (morning refreshments 10:15-11:00) and 1:30 – 4:30 pm (afternoon refreshments 2:00-3:00)
- Exhibit Hall: 8am – 5 pm
- Lunch (included with registration): 12 pm – 1:30 pm
Plenary Speaker: Mariyah Dostzadah

See the MIDTESOL 2023 Detailed Tentative [Schedule-at-a-Glance](#) (Subject to Change)

MIDTESOL 2023 Fees

Registration Fees

MIDTESOL members get a significant discount on the conference rate. In fact, the annual membership fee plus the early-bird rate for the conference is less than the non-member fee. If you aren't a member, consider [joining MIDTESOL today](#).

Early Bird Rates (register by September 15, 2023)

- Student & Paraprofessional Member: \$129
- Student & Paraprofessional Non-Member: \$160
- Professional Member: \$229
- Professional Non-Member: \$280

Regular Registration Rates (for registration September 16 – October 12, 2022)

- Student & Paraprofessional Member: \$229
- Student & Paraprofessional Non-Member: \$280
- Professional Member: \$249
- Professional Non-Member: \$299

Onsite Registration for all attendees: \$319

[Register now](#) for MIDTESOL 2023!

MIDTESOL 2023 Hotel Information

Hotel: InterContinental Kansas City at the Plaza, 401 Ward Parkway, Kansas City, Missouri

MIDTESOL 2023 will take place at the iconic InterContinental Kansas City at the Plaza Hotel with views of the renowned Country Club Plaza and its iconic fountains and architecture.

- The hotel is offering a **reduced rate** to MIDTESOL attendees who use [THIS LINK](#) to book hotel rooms by August 31, 2023. Click “Book Now” and enter the conference dates.
- Key hotel amenities:
 - **Complimentary Wi-Fi** in guest rooms and throughout the conference spaces
 - **Live music** in the lounge area in the evenings
 - **Indoor fitness center**
 - Paved **walking path** along the scenic river right outside the hotel doors

MIDTESOL 2023 Kansas City Information

Kansas City Tourism Information

Escape for a little evening or post-conference fun or make the conference weekend a KC event for the entire family!

Country Club Plaza: The Country Club Plaza is famous for its Spanish-inspired architecture, dozens of fountains, unique shopping opportunities and a wide variety of restaurants, from simple bistros to elegant dining establishments. As you stroll through 15 beautiful city blocks, you will be able to shop for trendy designer brands and the best of Kansas City’s locally made products.

Art lovers are in for a special treat! The hotel is also within a mile of two world-famous art museums, the Nelson-Atkins and the Kemper. ([The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art](#); [Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art](#))

Dining Options

- [Country Club Plaza Dining](#)
- [Eat KC: The Country Club Plaza](#)

Other Entertainment and Shopping Options Nearby

- [Royal Livestock Show](#)
- [Country Club Plaza Shopping Guide](#)
- [Worlds of Fun](#)





MIDTESOL 2023 Presenter and Interest Section Travel Award applications are being accepted!

**MIDTESOL
Member benefit!**

MIDTESOL is proud to offer awards to help eligible members with conference-related fees.

Interest Section Travel Award

Up to six MIDTESOL members from different interest sections (one member per interest section) will be awarded a check in the amount of \$125 to cover travel and registration costs for the **MIDTESOL 2023** Conference on October 13-14, 2023.

The six MIDTESOL interest sections are

- Community College/Adult Education
- Educational Technology
- Higher Education/Teacher Training
- Intensive English Program (IEP)
- K-12
- Program Administrators

To be eligible, applicants must be employed in the ELL profession but receive little or no funding from their employers for expenses to attend the conference.

To apply, please submit the following in writing:

1. Name, Position, Employer(s)
2. IS section applying for
3. Statement verifying that little or no funding is received for professional development from employers
4. Statement indicating whether you have previously been awarded any travel awards from MIDTESOL
5. Statement verifying that you are a current member of MIDTESOL
6. Statement verifying that you're willing to volunteer a few hours at the conference
7. A brief summary explaining the impact attending the MIDTESOL conference has had on you in the past, the benefits you will receive by attending this time, and any professional involvement you have had and/or contributions you have made to the field of TESOL (these may include professional organizations, publications, interest groups, or projects in your workplace/community)

Applications must be sent to Awards Committee Chair Andrias Susanto (andriassusanto@midtesol.org). The subject line of your email should read my“**#MIDTESOL23: IS Travel Award.**”

Deadline is September 10, 2023. The Awards Committee and IS Interest Chairs will judge entries. Winners will be contacted by September 12, 2023 so that they can register for the Early Bird rate for the conference.

Presenter Travel Award

If you have been notified of acceptance to present at #MIDTESOL23, you are encouraged to apply for a Travel Award to help fund expenses. Up to three (3) Travel Awards of \$150 each will be granted.

To apply, the following items must be submitted to Awards Committee Chair Andrias Susanto (andriassusanto@midtesol.org) by **September 10, 2023**. The subject line of your email should read “**#MIDTESOL23: Presenter Travel Award Submission.**”

All application materials must be combined into one continuous document *arranged in the order listed below*:

1. Contact information, including name, email, and institutional affiliation;
2. Notification of proposal acceptance;
3. A brief statement (approximately 300 words, 12-point and double-spaced) describing the benefit that attending and presenting at the MIDTESOL conference will bring to you and other ELT professionals in your community;
4. An account of any outside funding sources received for travel to the conference;
5. A list of MIDTESOL Travel Awards received in the past; and
6. An agreement to submit a report outlining your presentation within a month of the conference for publication in MIDTESOL Matters, the organization’s electronic newsletter.

You will receive confirmation from the Awards Chair that your submission has been received and then a notification if you are a winner by September 12, 2023 to allow you to register for the conference at the Early Bird discounted rate. Submissions undergo blind peer review. Incomplete applications or applications that are not in compliance with the instructions listed above will not be considered out of fairness to all applicants.

In the event that there are more proposals deemed worthy than there is money available to fund them, preference will be given to the applicant who (1) does not have external support for travel to the conference and (2) has never before received a MIDTESOL Travel Award. Decisions made by reviewers are final.

Best regards from the MIDTESOL 2023 Conference Planning Committee:

*Conference Chair Ben Vilkas (Wayne State College, Nebraska)
Program Chair Sule Yildirim Biten (University of Kansas)
Exhibitor Coordinator Carolyn Heacock (University of Kansas)
Communications Chair Vicki Anderson (Concordia University Nebraska)*



Report from our TESOL Travel Award Recipient!

MIDTESOL Award recipients are English language professionals who have agreed to share their TESOL convention experiences with other MIDTESOL members. Aimee Leisy, Associate Teaching Professor at Wichita State University in Wichita, Kansas, was a 2023 Award Recipient for the TESOL2023 Virtual Convention.

TESOL2023 Virtual Convention: Reflections on Teaching Writing Aimee Leisy

The TESOL2023 Virtual Convention was excellent! The sessions, presenters, and keynotes were outstanding, and the virtual platform provided the flexibility of attending live and/or recorded sessions. I collected many useful strategies, tips, and insights on a myriad of topics. However, with the recent advent of ChatGPT and an opportunity to teach a GenEd English composition course at my university, I decided to hone in on writing. I attended three TESOL presentations that were particularly insightful on the topic of writing. Here they are:

1. Plagiarism Alert: The Use of Artificial Intelligence-Based Writing Tools

- Michelle Bell, University of Southern California; Ezra Vasquez, University of Southern California

“Writing is thinking.”
“Clear writing is clear thinking.”

The presenters grabbed audience attention by emphasizing the value of doing one’s own writing, even in the age of Artificial Intelligence. According to Bell and Vasquez, writing is an essential skill for becoming the “thought leaders” of the future. Bell and Vasquez argued that writing is a critical tool for:

- Critical thinking
- Expressing oneself in one's own words
- Distinguishing between effective and mediocre writing

Vasquez provided some helpful classroom advice when discussing AI text generators with students. He reminds his students that ChatGPT often produces repetitive, overly generalized writing with lots of “BE verbs.” To ensure students improve their writing skills, Vasquez has students write daily during class and does not allow the use of BE verbs in writing assignments. He aims to teach students to write better than ChatGPT.

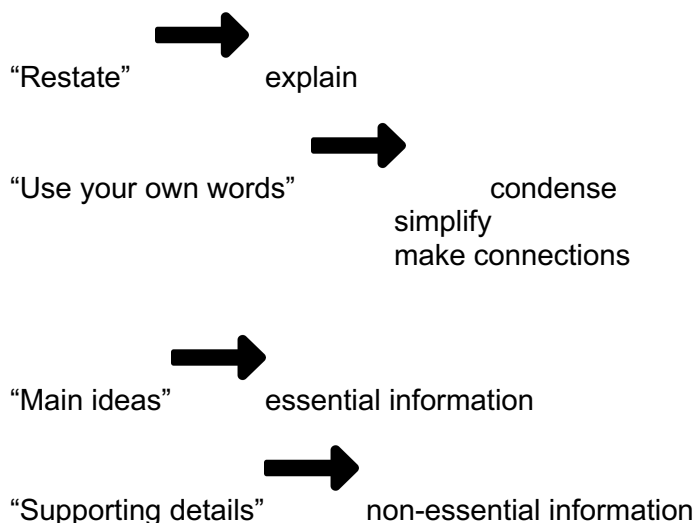
For a comprehensive look at AI Text Generators, I recommend visiting this [Google document](#) compiled by Anna Mills for the Writing Across the Curriculum Clearing House.

2. **Setting Up ELs for Success with Summary Writing Tasks**

- Amber Scroggs, University of Central Missouri

When preparing to write a summary, choosing essential information from a text is similar to packing a suitcase. One must condense the information into a summary that is shorter than the original. Likewise, when packing, it is important to leave out non-essential items so that the suitcase will zip closed!

Scroggs shared 5 creative tips for teaching summary writing successfully with English learners, including mnemonic devices to aid in recall of key vocabulary. The suitcase-packing mnemonic helps students remember what it means to “condense” information from a reading passage. Another summary-writing tip she shared is to rephrase directions using simpler terminology. Instead of:



A third summary-writing tip is to use comprehension checks to make sure students understand the reading passage they will be summarizing. She suggested using google forms to make a brief quiz to make sure students understood the essential information within a reading passage. Finally, she recommends doing condensation practice. To do so, cut sentences from a reading passage into strips. Students sort the sentence strips into two piles of essential and non-essential information. Next,

students use subordinators (although, since, because, while, etc.) to combine the essential sentences into a summary paragraph.

3. **When Practice Trumps Mastery: The Case for Labor-Based Grading**

- Nicole Brun-Mercer, Boise State University; Ti MackLin, Boise State University

“A single grade hardly sums up the complicated mixture of strengths and weaknesses present in students’ work, and if an instructor’s goal is to teach invention, feedback, revision, and other process-oriented skills, grading one final product misses the point entirely.”-(Cowan, 2020, p.1)

Brun-Mercer and MackLin co-teach English 101, a composition course that includes native speakers, bilinguals, and multilinguals. After switching the course from traditional grading to labor-based grading, they noticed that students took more risks while writing, and in turn made more progress. Labor-based grading, also known as contract grading, assigns a grade based on the amount of labor that is agreed upon by the instructor and students. See Asao Inoue’s [example contract](#) (2020).

The presenters suggested adapting one writing assignment to a non-graded assignment before attempting to change an entire course. To do so, break the writing assignment into steps. For assessment, the presenters included a rubric with three sections:

- Required elements (submitted and named correctly; 400-500 words) 0 points
- Response to prompt (writing should focus on prompt) 1 to 0.5 to 0 points
- Revision (assignment shows evidence of revision) 1 to 0.5 to 0 points

For an overview of issues related to labor-based grading, I suggest reading Alfie Kohn’s article “[From Degrading to De-grading](#)” and for a comprehensive look at the topic Asao B. Inoue’s [book](#) is available online in PDF format.

I’m thankful for the teaching methods and insights I gained at the TESOL 2023 Virtual Convention. Did you attend the conference? What did you learn that has benefited your teaching? Would you be willing to share your experiences in a future addition of MIDTESOL Matters?

Note from the Editor:

It’s been a few months, but if you would be willing to share your insights from TESOL 2023 in an upcoming edition of MIDTESOL Matters, contact MIDTESOL Communications Chair Vicki Anderson at vickianderson@midtesol.org.



A Message from the Socio-Political Concerns Chair

Adrienne Johnson
MIDTESOL Socio-Political Concerns & Professional Standards Chair
Associate Professor of Education
Missouri Western State University
St. Joseph, Missouri



TESOL 2023 Advocacy News

Advocacy Updates for TESOL Professionals

Every year, TESOL international publishes issues and policy areas that the organization strongly supports. These priorities are shared with legislatures and members of the TESOL community with hopes of increasing awareness of needs in the field, educating others regarding successful approaches to address those needs, and celebrating effective legislative steps. In 2023, the issues include requests for adequate funding to keep pace with growing multilingual populations and inflation, as well as various legislative proposals that will enhance or support multilingual learners and the educators that support them.

The following is a list of the current TESOL International Association's legislative priorities for 2023:

1. Funding for Title III ESSA and the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) State Grants.
2. Support for the Families Learning and Understanding English Together (FLUENT) Act - legislation to provide literacy support to families of multilingual learners.
3. Supporting Young Language Learners' Access to Bilingual Education (SYLLABLE) Act – legislation that supports high quality dual language programs.
4. Reaching English Learners Act (RELA) – legislation to support grants for future teachers of multilingual learners.
5. Providers of English Language Learning (SPELL) Act – legislation to add English language education to the list of high need fields eligible for existing loan relief and forgiveness programs through the Higher Education Act.
6. Uplifting Immigrant Students Act – legislation to support monitoring of access to education for multilingual learners, as well as training and other resources to support multilingual learners.
7. Strengthening Research in Adult Education Act – legislation that supports data on effective practices in adult education.

8. Adult Education Works Act – legislation to support accountability, educator involvement, and other improvements to WIOA Title II (AEFLA).

9. Dignity Act of 2023 – bipartisan legislation that supports comprehensive immigration reform.

MIDTESOL and other community members who wish to learn more about these legislative priorities are encouraged to visit the TESOL Advocacy Action page: <https://www.tesol.org/advocacy/advocacy-action-center/> . Individuals do not need to be a TESOL or MIDTESOL member to access these resources.

What's next? MIDTESOL is planning for state level advocacy training sessions and information sharing opportunities, as well as events to encourage collaboration among MIDTESOL members who are interested in advocacy. If you know of issues that are affecting multilingual learners or their teachers in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, or Nebraska, please let us know by visiting the [MIDTESOL Advocacy & Leadership page](#) and sharing your knowledge and experiences.

Also, look for opportunities to connect and learn more about local and national advocacy issues at the MIDTESOL conference October 13th -14th, 2023 in Kansas City, MO. Hope to see you there!

Best,

Adrienne Johnson

Connect with MIDTESOL on social media



MIDTESOL 2023 Student Essay Contest Winners!

MIDTESOL wants to extend a hearty congratulations to this year's student essay contest winners, multilingual students of MIDTESOL members (and rockstar ESL teachers!) **Jamie Telgenhoff and Elissa Jones**. Winning submissions received cash prizes, and these students and their teachers will be honored in a special manner at the upcoming MIDTESOL 2023 conference. Way to go, students! And thanks for the impact you make, Jamie and Elissa!

The Biggest Influences of My Life

(Paola Pacensia, Junior, Benton Community High School, Van Horne, Iowa)



Throughout my life, many people have influenced me, leaving an impact on who I am today. Some impacts were small, others were big, and some taught me life lessons. No matter the length of time those people were in my life, they were all important and meaningful in shaping me. I give thanks to all the people who have supported me in my journey so far and who have helped me every step of the way, but there are a few people I really consider blessings in my life because without them I wouldn't be where I am right now.

Usually, when people get asked who has influenced their life the most, the answer is their parents. Parents are essential in their kid's character shaping, values, and ways of seeing life. My parents are my heroes without a doubt. They are the greatest examples of life I could ever imagine and I am so proud to be called their daughter. Since I was little, my parents have always taught me to fight through the struggle, to work hard for what I want, to be independent, kind, honest, patient, to have fun, to respect, and to help others. Most importantly, they taught me to be me and never let anyone decide who I get to be. I am the only one who decides how far I can go. I've never met anyone as hard-working as my parents; they have always done their best to raise me and my siblings to the best of their abilities, provided us with everything we needed, and made many sacrifices for us. The greatest example of their love is that they left their own country, culture, and family because they wanted a better life for us, so we could have more possibilities for our future. All I can hope is to one day make them proud and make their sacrifices worth it all.

I arrived in the United States knowing no English at all. I was in 4th grade when I arrived to my first American school. On my first day, I met Mrs. Lindke, my ESL teacher. I had her as my teacher for two years, and throughout that time, I learned to deeply care for her. Since the beginning, she always made sure that I got the attention I needed, she talked to my other teachers so they would help me study as much English as I could in class so I wouldn't fall behind on other subjects. We studied every day before and after school and she always helped me if I had any questions. Little by little we went from communicating through an iPad using translator, to being able to have an actual conversation. Mrs. Lindke had a vast and very important role in my learning, and if I can speak English on a proficient level today, it's mainly because of her. She was caring, patient, and

supported me all the time until she moved away. She never gave up on me. I will always remember and appreciate everything she did for me.

After Mrs. Lindke, I thought that I was never going to have another teacher with whom I would feel comfortable or that would be as special as her, until I met Mrs. Telgenhoff. Since my siblings got to high school, I heard many stories about this teacher who was always supporting them and helping them. I didn't get to meet her until I got to middle school, but never really had a close relationship with her until high school.

Mrs. Telgenhoff has been an angel to my family. She has helped us so much since she met us, in and out of school. She is always supporting her foreign students and pushing us to try our best so we can succeed even when we have felt inferior. She has defended us when students from the school were racist towards us or if we were mistreated. She makes her students feel like they matter and that they belong no matter where they come from. Mrs. Telgenhoff is a great teacher and human being, and I'm thankful for having her in my life.

Many people have come and gone throughout my lifetime, but only some have left a mark on my life and in my heart. It's not about how many people have come through my life or how many have influenced it, it's about how many have actually impacted who I have become.



My Educational Journey

(Evelin Hernandez, Senior, Benton Community High School, Van Horne, Iowa)

When I was a young little girl I remember in 4th grade, I had ESL class during the day. I noticed not everyone had this class, just certain kids. That's when I noticed we all had accents whenever we spoke English. Some of those kids I knew since I was just a baby, because I grew up with them. I was later informed this class was specifically for kids who were struggling with English fluency. The more time I spent in this class the more it started to feel like a safe place. This became my favorite class and I became very close with the students in that class along with me. The teacher, Mrs. Lindke was my favorite during my childhood. She cared for me so much I could feel it everyday and I looked up to her.

I passed the ELPA test before I came up to middle school, I was proud but at the same time I was upset. The ESL teacher at the middle school/high school is Mrs. Telgenhoff, she has been a great influence for me. Just because she isn't my ESL teacher she has still taught me so much and had a big influence on me. She helps me chase my goals and pushes me to always go the extra mile. As a teacher and a mother her impact on me has been greater than no other teacher has ever had on me. When I need help with something or there is a chance for an opportunity she encourages me to give it a chance. Her class has become a safe place for me

throughout all middle school from 7th grade, to senior year 12th grade. It felt like my childhood all over again, the comfort, the liability, and trust.

Because I was able to pass the ELPA test at such a young age many opportunities came up for me. These opportunities also helped me decide what I wanted to do with my life when I reached the age. I was able to have regular classes just like any other non-bilingual kid at school. It helped me improve and speak English well, which was my second language, because we spoke Spanish at home. Now senior year; I'm taking college classes, joined the Iowa National Guard, and studying nursing school. Passing that test has benefited me in the long run because it has helped me gain opportunities not many people get. Some students really struggle with passing this test and others don't. Everyone is different though, and that's the best thing about this world; diversity.

With all of this being said, yes, although the ESL teachers didn't work together they still impacted me the same. They were the ones who helped me achieve my goal of having a successful education here in America. I am so blessed and thankful I had them in my life and the opportunities I had. I am happy where I am today with my education and I am also very excited to see where it will take me. Making them proud is my biggest mission yet to come, graduating is my first step. This just goes to show how one person or many people can influence your life and your future. They are one out of many loved ones who I will always keep deep in my heart and thank them for taking a chance on me.

Influences in My Life

(Miguel Ortega Diaz, Topeka West High School, Topeka, Kansas)



Today, I want to speak about my mother and father who have had a significant effect on my life, I'm thankful to her for motivating me to live the way I do. My mom is unique in every way. She is lovely, intelligent, and a little bit of a perfectionist. She constantly encourages me to be original and be myself. She's a fantastic role model, and I appreciate her more and more every day. I want to take a minute to thank my mother for her strength, her capacity for forgiveness, and her unwavering love. I remember when i was 6

i broke a car's windshield and she was very upset with me but instead of hitting me like most do she forgave me She has helped me through hard times and she has taught me how to cook most simple food so I don't have to depend on others when I'm actually hungry. She has taught me how to be responsible and respectful growing up.

My father has inspired me to be hard-working, he has always taught me to be hard-working always try to learn new stuff. Never satisfy with knowing how to do one job if you have the capability to live then you have the capability to try everything and live it to the fullest. He has taught me how to do most of the mechanic stuff I

know just so wouldn't be taking it to a dealer like most people do. He taught me how to ride my first bicycle when I was five i fell a couple of time's trying to learn

They both have taught me how to manage my money and not spend it all in one place and go broke for one item, if you cannot buy it six times then don't buy it at all. They both have been with me through ups and downs. They try and get me to save my money for necessary goals that I need or want later on in life and support me to the fullest. My mom and dad have been there to help me grow through the rough times in life and have grown with them also as they go. They have taught me to respect others even if they are not respectful towards me and just move away from the situation so it wouldn't escalate. Overall they have helped me develop myself in life.





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