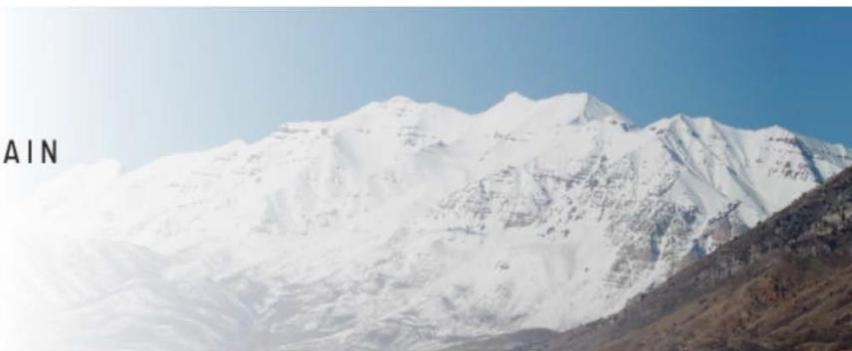




INTERMOUNTAIN  
TESOL



## Message from the Presidency

*Maria Ammar (President)*



Dear ITESOL Community,

Welcome to the August issue of the ITESOL Newsletter, a newsletter for our Intermountain TESOL (ITESOL) members, other TESOL affiliates, and all professionals who work in the field. I hope you are all doing well, staying healthy and safe, and continuing to stay connected with each other.

Our upcoming ITESOL Fall 2020 Virtual Conference is fast approaching. Although we will not be able to come together in person for our conference this year, it is our hope that we will be able to come together virtually and have a conference that provides us with shared experiences, knowledge, and information that benefits us professionally and personally. We hope to see you in October!

I hope you all will take some time to post questions, news, or comments about current happenings in the

ITESOL world to our Facebook Page: [www.facebook.com/itesol.org/](https://www.facebook.com/itesol.org/) We enjoy seeing your posts, especially when it starts an important discussion that moves others to state their thoughts, opinions, and feelings about current events and topics in our field.

Professional development in ITESOL is important to maintain, and one area that we are exploring is offering free webinars to our ITESOL members and community. Over the summer, five ITESOL members volunteered to create presentations about their remote teaching experiences. They submitted their presentations to ITESOL, and these presentations have been posted on the ITESOL YouTube channel for anyone to watch: <https://bit.ly/3iuJi8s>

Thank you to Andrea Lobb, Jean Kleinhaus, Nitia Islam, Ekaterina Arshavskaya, and Jared Sell for contributing to this new area of professional development for ITESOL! We hope to continue growing this opportunity to share members' knowledge with others.

We hope to improve member engagement through the ITESOL Newsletter, the ITESOL Facebook page, and ITESOL webinars. We welcome your participation, and we are always interested in hearing from you.

Best regards,

*Maria Ammar*

## Coming Up



ITESOL Conference  
October 9-10

-Registration is open now at [ITESOL.org!](https://itesol.org/)

-Don't forget to submit your proposals by August 31 (you have about 2 weeks left!)

You can submit proposals for 45-minute Presentations, Poster Presentations, 20-minute Teaching Tip, or 1 hr. 45 min. Workshop

-There is now an additional Keynote Speaker co-presenter! You can read about her in this newsletter.



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## Coping with Covid-19

*Included below are two interviews with ITESOL members regarding how they have coped with issues in our field in relation to Covid-19. We are glad to get to know our members better and learn from their experiences and perspectives.*



*Jacob Broadhead*

Jacob earned a Spanish degree from BYU-Idaho and then a MA in TESOL from the Monterey Institute of International Studies. He taught Business English in Korea, ESL in high school, and is currently teaching Spanish dual immersion to 5<sup>th</sup> grade elementary students. He also teaches ESL to adults in the community.

### **1. What have been your biggest challenges professionally with all of the changes?**

The biggest challenge professionally has been knowing that certain students are struggling, but they won't respond and do any work. Even though I would call, text, email and try and set up one-on-one video chats, certain students did almost nothing. I couldn't tell if they were having a hard time with the uncertainty of the future or if their families were going through unemployment or if they were sick, or whatever long list of concerns that could make it hard to do any academic work. The other difficult challenge was giving support related to technical issues, but not being able to see the student's computer and actually use it. Instead, I could only help using my voice, or if we could figure it out, they could share their screen to show me what they were seeing.

### **2. In what ways have you adjusted, in addition to going online with everything?**

I had to flip my classroom entirely and use precious synchronous time in live video chats to answer questions, give instructions, clarify misunderstandings, and make connections. I would also model how to complete activities. I would post a recording of the synchronous video session and then students would work asynchronously without my help or without the help of other students. When we were in the classroom I spent the majority of my time circulating the room and helping students in real-time with just-in-time feedback. However, that wasn't possible now, so I had to let them flounder and then see what they would turn in. I would then grade and give feedback to every student. I spent most of my time giving feedback and making screencasts for specific challenges or questions whereas in the classroom I did most of that during the classroom time.

### **3. What have been the students' biggest challenges and how are they adjusting?**

The biggest challenge for students has been to not have a teacher at their disposal at all times. Sometimes they would forget something or need help, but the feedback or help would be really delayed. In those cases, students would get frustrated or give up on certain tasks. Another major challenge would be time management. I gave due dates and checked in with students, but without them in my classroom, it was much harder for them to commit to working on assignments or even sometimes attending the daily video chats. Despite the fact that they used to come to school almost every day from 8 to 3, they now had a hard time finding when to get anything done. The freedom and lack of an accountability partner like a teacher made some students very forgetful or they would try to do all the work in one day.

**4. Did you have to cancel any classes?**

Aside from teaching elementary students, I also taught ESL night classes with Adults. Until we developed a sustainable online model, we had to cancel the Community ESL classes. It took us 3 weeks to reorganize before we started teaching online.

**5. What have you done with helping students to not drop courses?**

Call, text, and email at least weekly to figure out what their situation is like. Try to be a counselor as much as a teacher.

**6. How many classes did you teach online before/how many now (what are they)?**

I was teaching 5th grade dual immersion before & Adult ESL before and after I'm still teaching Dual immersion and I only taught a month of Adult ESL community classes online before they decided it was not worth the cost to the decreasing budget because of low attendance.

**7. How quickly were you able to get up and running at home and what was involved?**

Fortunately, I have worked several extra side jobs, so I have a home office setup in my unfinished basement with two monitors, a desk, and a comfortable office chair all ready to go. Because of the work from home jobs, I was also very comfortable with working remotely using collaborative technologies like Google Docs, Google Drive, Slack, as well as video conferencing software like Zoom & Google Hangouts. I also had trained all my students to get all of their information and assignments through Google Classroom, so it was a quick process that was relatively easy to push out assignments and work because I had done that even before we went to distance learning.

**8. Where is home and where do you do your teaching from (describe what that's like (noises/interruptions/obstacles/etc.), including your surroundings)?**

I currently live in Heber City, Utah. I have my home office in my basement, which allows me to close off the rest of the house and focus. However, if I don't have headphones on I can hear my kids and wife and running and yelling, which is very distracting. Also, because I have been at home while working, it is hard to separate work time from family time, so I might mow the lawn in between grading assignments or watch the kids for a bit before a video call. It makes the separation between work and home more blurry, which can be nice for flexibility, but it can also be really hard to do less than desirable parts of a job knowing there are other things you want to do or feel like you need to do just beyond the door of the home office.

**9. How have your expectations about deadlines and maybe grading standards changed?**

Because this is crisis teaching instead of well-planned online instruction, I have been very lenient. I have cut my normal expectations of assignments down to about half. I have given longer deadlines. Then I also have allowed students to resubmit assignments as much as they would like.

**10. What is/are the upside/silver linings so far with the changes you've made?**

I would like to use more recordings of me teaching lessons and then sharing them so that students that want to rewatch at home can do it. Also students that are absent could watch the recordings as well. I think this experiment has shown the importance of being nimble with the use of technology. My classes more than almost any of my other colleagues were prepared because we had used a learning management system and collaborative technologies. That allowed us to do very similar types of learning even though we were not in a classroom together.

**11. What are you hearing from other professors and how they're dealing?**

I think everyone is happy when a student does anything online because no one expected to be in this situation. Everyone has really low expectations with online teaching if they have never taught online. Some teachers report a majority of the class is doing something, but many others report that almost none of their students are doing anything. The experiences are so uneven and unusual



*Mariah Krauel-Nix*

Mariah Krauel-Nix is from West Valley City, Utah and has been teaching English as a second language for about 8 years. She is currently ending her term as the Reading Skill Area Supervisor at Brigham Young University's English Language Center. Her interests include the development and implementation of self-regulated learning within intensive English programs, reading, writing, curriculum and materials development. Recently, she has been working on making student homework more effective and autonomous.

**1. What have been your biggest challenges professionally with all of the changes?**

The biggest challenge has been building, maintaining, and encouraging community among teachers and students during this time. Since everyone is isolated, it has been hard to connect with people at the same level as before. Yes, Zoom and other online systems are available, but it isn't the same.

**2. In what ways have you adjusted, in addition to going online with everything?**

Adjustments have been plentiful and varied. Some include using PowerPoint presentations every day, using more online programs, the focus of my day-to-day planning, giving more feedback than normal, making myself more available to students, and my overall attitude towards the class and students.

**3. What have been the students' biggest challenges and how are they adjusting?**

The biggest challenge for students is that they are not in the classroom. In the classroom, students had classmates to turn to, more face-to-face interaction, and could more noticeably ask questions. They have had to learn new strategies, like how to stay focused and schedule, as well as adapting to the new teaching approach. I have noticed that their attitude towards everything has been the most helpful. They keep trying and coming, and even though it is not what they would have liked, they keep working and looking forward. They truly are inspiring.

**4. Did you have to cancel any classes?**

No classes were cancelled. However, we did have to cancel our extracurricular activities. I was leading a reading group that had to be cancelled as well.

**5. What have you done with helping students to not drop courses?**

I have found that students appreciate consistency. Last semester, since we transitioned from in-person to online, I really tried to give them the same quality of teaching as before. This semester, even though it is all online, I am trying to give consistent quality each day. I am also giving more feedback than I normally would and have made myself more easily available to answer student questions and to just see how they are doing.

**6. How many classes did you teach online before/how many now (what are they)?**

Before COVID-19, I had never taught a class online. I had created online courses and helped to pilot some, but I had never solely taught a class online. Now, I am teaching all of my classes, three, online as well as helping to create and monitor a few additional classes. Now, I have taught a variety of classes online: intermediate/advanced reading, intermediate writing, novice/intermediate writing, intermediate grammar, advanced grammar.

**7. How quickly were you able to get up and running at home and what was involved?**

We had to transition quickly since we found out about the change on Friday, helped students become familiar with the technology and taught on the next Monday, and then taught fully online the next day, Tuesday. Transitioning took checking Internet stability, making sure headphones worked, showing students how to use the interface and to share their video, and replanning my teaching approach and classes.

**8. Where is home and where do you do you teaching from (describe what that's like (noises/interruptions/obstacles/etc.), including your surroundings)?**

Home is an upstairs of a house in Provo. I teach from the spare room. I am blessed to have a fairly quiet space, so there aren't many interruptions. My husband is also home, so he is able to deal with the door and any potential interruptions. The only issue I have had has been with a hard chair and not having a webcam. Webcams were out of order, so I am teaching from my laptop. Initially, I was teaching with my laptop stacked on boxes, so the camera would allow me to sit up or stand.

However, now I have a laptop stand and am able to manage more things at once.

**9. How have your expectations about deadlines and maybe grading standards changed?**

Since I have tried to keep my teaching quality consistent, I have tried to keep similar expectations. However, I am more lax with Internet problems and connection issues. My penalties for late work are not as strong, especially at lower levels, and I provide more feedback on assignments to help students improve.

**10. What is/are the upside/silver linings so far with the changes you've made?**

Positive things I have noticed about the changes are that I "see" my students more as individuals rather than just a class, I am learning new skills, and my confidence in online teaching has greatly increased. First, since students are all in their individual spaces, I have been trying to be aware of them in that space and to better evaluate their needs. This has helped me to plan more towards students' needs. Next, I have definitely expanded my skill set. I try to use a variety of online resources to provide variety and to try new things. It is helping me to build a library of possible resources and what they can be used for in the future. Finally, I have become more confident with teaching online. Before, I felt like it was something that I never wanted to do. However, now I have found my groove and actually enjoy it. I am now more willing to teach online if the opportunity arises. It has also helped me to understand what it is like, so when I work on online curriculum in the future, it can help me to be more informed and aware.

**11. What are you hearing from other professors and how they're dealing?**

In my current position, I work with both novice and seasoned teachers. All teachers have been amazing in their approach and ability to transition so quickly. The main issues have only been with technology and lack of resources. It has also been hard for some to become familiar with the new interfaces and requirement to multi-task online. For novice teachers, it has been daunting for them to plan and get started without already having the experience, but once they get started, they do really well. I have been impressed by the quality of teaching being done and the creativity that has been incorporated into their classes.

## Keynote Speaker Co-presenter for Fall Virtual Conference



*Dr. Anna Krulatz*

Dr. Anna Krulatz is Professor of English at the Department of Teacher Education at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, Norway. She holds a PhD in linguistics from the University of Utah. Her research focuses on multilingualism with English, pragmatic development in adult language learners, content-based instruction, and language teacher education. She has published articles, teaching tips, and book chapters. She is actively involved with the international TESOL community and in-service professional development for EFL teachers in Norway.

She and Dr. Christison have been working together on a project on educating multilingual learners and teachers of multilingual learners. We are looking forward to hearing from her and Dr. MaryAnn Christison about their exciting work at the upcoming ITESOL Fall 2020 Virtual Conference!

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*Newsletter Editor: Rachel Messenger*