



INTERMOUNTAIN
TESOL



Message from the Presidency

Udambor Bumandalai (First Vice President)



Dear Intermountain TESOL members,

As we approach a new academic year, two words have been on my mind lately: *resilience* and *excellence*. These two words can easily be used to describe the past year of what the world, and especially the world of ESL teaching, has experienced. Yet, they remind us what we can do moving forward.

Resilience

Schools, ESL programs, instructors, and students have rightfully proven, this past academic year, how resilient they can be while faced with the trials and changes during COVID-19. ESL programs and instructors have had to navigate the uncertain path of airport and embassy closures threatening low enrollment and, for some, even program closures, modifying and developing new curricula within a short period of time, and adjusting to new modes of instruction. On the other hand, students experienced equally unexpected changes such as being unable to travel home or to school, financial and economic instabilities, and adjusting to online or remote learning. However, regardless of these challenges, we didn't quit. Instead, we persevered through every challenge we faced.

As a result, we discovered and developed the ability to stay resilient, and we should be proud of this accomplishment.

Excellence

Despite the obstacles COVID-19 threw our way, here we are, refreshed and recommitted to starting a new academic year. This is one thing I found that shows how excellent teachers are. Especially during this pandemic, all teachers have been ever more excellent. We have kept our eyes on the target and worked hard to continue to provide quality education to our students. When COVID-19 hit, we had to teach remotely, and we made it work. We learned new programs, worked extra hours, and converted our courses to online formats. For some of us, we had to teach online only, and occasionally, the technology didn't work, so we had to learn how to troubleshoot. Our students also showed how excellent they are. No matter how homesick or worried they were, they managed to stay diligent and carried on with their lives by working closely with their peers and teachers. Learning to study online and or remotely was something out of their comfort zone, and at times, they felt completely lost, especially the students with low level of language proficiency. However, they persisted, practiced and managed to improve their language skills. All in all, everyone performed in excellence.

Now, I think, it is timely to meet at our annual fall conference to exchange ideas and best practices, expand our professional networks, and recommit to maintain our excellence and prepare to further grow our resilience. We are planning to hold the Fall 2021 Annual Conference virtually on Zoom. We hope to see you all online and participate

Coming Up

ITESOL Virtual Fall Conference!!!

Submit Proposals [HERE](#) (by Sep 10)

Register [HERE](#)

A Quest for Excellence

Plenary Speaker:
Dr. Justin Shewell,
Educational Technologist

Join us for our annual conference to
expand your professional development
in a continued search for excellence in
everything you do.



OCT 8-9, 2021

LOCATION: VIRTUAL ON ZOOM

in the conference. You will be able to view and participate in the opening exercise, keynote speaker presentations, interests section business meetings, and one Zoom session every hour during the two days. If you haven't submitted a proposal to present or registered to participate, you are not too late. Just go to www.itesol.org and follow the instructions.

We look forward to seeing you at the conference and also wish you a great start to a new academic year.

Teaching Tips

“One idea I have successfully implemented is making short videos about Grammar topics to showcase aspects of grammar which are found in signs in the local community. Students immediately recognize the images and make associations with the grammar. For example, click on this link to watch a fun video about gerunds and present participles. Perhaps you too will know where these images come from! And that’s half the fun of learning. It’s real.”

[Gerund Gerry and Participle Pete](#)

By [Teresa Stillo Ramirez](#) ITESOL president, 2021/ ESL instructor at Salt Lake Community College

There is an awesome resource online that is dedicated to providing Teaching Tips for English Language Teachers (TTELT): <https://www.ttel.org/>

If you have a teaching tip that you’d love to share with our ITESOL community, please submit them to the newsletter editor at rachelamessenger@gmail.com and we’ll put it in our next newsletter!

Spotlights on Teachers in Our Region



Tyler Young

Professional background

I’m originally from Logan, Utah, but I’ve spent many years traveling and living in different countries. I’m currently an intermediate ESL teacher in Salt Lake City Utah. I love teaching and learning languages. I’ve taught here in the USA, in Japan and in Bulgaria. When I’m not teaching, I like charcoal drawing and cooking, although not very well. I hope to start a master’s degree in applied linguistics next year.

Has COVID changed you as a teacher?

Of course COVID has changed me, as it has changed us all. Before the pandemic, teaching was all done in the classroom with some supplemental exercises that would be done from home. Now, with our school still being completely online, we’ve had to grow and adapt to a “Zoom classroom”. This was initially very shocking and, I’ll admit, quite boring. As time has gone on though, I’ve begun to find fun and interesting ways to explain various English skills, some of which are impossible to do in a class room.

What is something that gave you hope or showed you your teaching efforts have been worth it in the past year? Please share a success story.

I always feel a huge sense of gratitude and fulfillment at the end of the semester. It’s very easy for me to become attached to students, so it’s

hard to see them move onto new levels sometimes. One of the most gratifying experiences I had was with a student who struggled in my class. I worked really hard with him and he was able to pass and move onto the next level. The next semester, my class was overflowing with new students. Many of them told me that I had been recommended to them as a teacher by that one student. He had told them that I didn't just care about the student's grades, but about the student's well-being as well.

Based on your teaching experience in the past year, what plans do you have going forward? What are your next steps or goals you are working on?

My current goal is to start a master's program in applied linguistics. This has been one of my goals now for many years, and I'm finally in a place where I feel like it's actually feasible. After that, I'm not entirely sure what I will do. I like to focus on one goal at a time.



Kate Matthews

Professional background

I'm currently an ESL instructor at a language school in Salt Lake City. I graduated from Brigham Young University and have had the opportunity to teach at a few different schools in the Utah area. I also had the opportunity to teach English in Germany, where I worked in a refugee camp as a volunteer and as an instructor of English and German. I speak German and am hoping to learn Spanish soon! When I'm not teaching, I love being outdoors hiking or camping. I also love traveling, playing pickleball and trying out new restaurants.

Has COVID changed you as a teacher?

I think we can all agree that COVID has changed the way that everyone teaches. Going from a classroom with 18 students that can interact with me, each other, and participate in interactive activities inside the classroom, to virtual videos that cut in and out, making it hard to find interactive online material that still engages students as much as in a physical classroom would. Covid has really pushed me to get creative in my teaching methods. To research, explore, and find resources that I hadn't even considered or known about before. Instead of just sticking to old lesson plans, I have had to constantly look up new ideas to teach the same principles I was teaching before. My current position has me teaching the same group of students for 4 hours. Unless I have a variety of activities, my students will fall asleep, and I will even fall asleep. I have had to get creative, transforming race games that required a physical presence in the classroom, to an online setting. I have adapted games like heads-up, jeopardy, who wants to be a millionaire, Jumanji, Pictionary, etc. to engage students the same way they would be engaged in a physical classroom. I would not have originally thought this was possible, but thanks to all the other genius teachers who have shared their ideas online, I felt I was able to have an engaged class despite the difficulties of being online. To sum up, COVID has helped to get more creative and discover new fun ways of teaching something!

What is something that gave you hope or showed you your teaching efforts have been worth it in the past year? Please share a success story.

It was my first semester teaching online and I was assigned to teach an upper-level integrated English class, which I hadn't ever taught before. The class was online and in the evenings, so students were tired from the day and had a hard time focusing. I had a mixed bag of students that were anywhere from motivated to go to school and get a doctorate degree, to, totally checked out, simply here to maintain status. There was one particular student who I had a very hard time with. He was constantly telling me what to teach, how to teach, complaining about every assignment and then during class, answering every possible question, making it so no other student in the class wanted to participate. I felt that I couldn't connect with the other students, because I was constantly worrying about what he was going to say and if any of the other students were even getting anything out of the class. As it was my first semester teaching this particular level and teaching it online, everything was new and hard. Throughout the semester I incorporated a lot of ted talks with partner share and discussion questions in breakout rooms, in hopes that more students would be able to have a chance to speak. At the end of the semester, I was doubting whether I had actually been a successful teacher and if any of my students (besides this particular one) had actually learned or gotten anything out of my class. On the last day of class, one of my students sent me the most beautiful message. She complimented me on how patient I had been with this student, stating that she didn't know how I had been able to do it, and was very impressed with how I had handled it. She explained that she had previously been at another school where she didn't feel like they cared about her, and she didn't progress in her English. She explained that I had been the best teacher that she had had and she loved the activities and discussions I had planned. She explained how helpful they were and how she really felt that her English had improved. She complimented me on how much I let the students talk, rather than having me just explain and do all the talking. Her words brought tears to my eyes. One of my hardest semesters, where I didn't feel like I had accomplished anything, had actually touched one of my students. Her words meant more than she will ever know and gave me hope that even if it doesn't seem like it, I'm doing okay.

Based on your teaching experience in the past year, what plans do you have going forward? What are your next steps or goals you are working on?

I would like to continue pushing myself in my lesson plans. Rather than just feeling settled with the ideas or lesson plans I have had previously, I would like to continue to be on the lookout for new ideas. I want to continue to research what other teachers are doing and share what I have been doing with others. I want my students to realize how many different ways you can learn English and how something like a cause/effect essay or using conditional sentences can be relevant to their everyday lives. I want them to have fun and be engaged during class, whether I continue to teach online or in person.

K-12 Webinar Success!

The K-12 Interest section held its first Webinar this past June. Attendees heard from Michelle Love-Day and Nathan Moore. Both gave beautiful presentations on K-12 Teachers as Equity Advocates. K-12 teachers in attendance were able to connect with one another and those not familiar with the current climate of K-12 learned a little more about the struggles and accomplishments of students, teachers, and administrators who work in these contexts.

We hope to hold more webinars like this in the future, so stay posted with ITESOL on social media and via our website at <http://itesol.org/>!

Newsletter Editor: Rachel Messenger