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Message

This week’s newsletter is packed with lots of information and opportunities! One of my top priorities as I dive into my new role at the Department is to highlight the great work that language educators across Maine are doing. If you have stories, opportunities, or events to share with me and your colleagues across the state, please reach out.

This week the US DOE released updated guidance on how states identify, assess, and exit students who are English learners in light of the pandemic. The guidance clarifies expectations around the annual ELP assessment. If you have any questions, Jodi and I are happy to help.

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Professional Learning

- Maine DOE ESOL Professional Learning Calendar
- 1/23/21 and 1/28/21, 2/4/21, 2/27/21: Embassy of Spain—Free Workshops for Spanish Teachers
- NECTFL Virtual Workshop Series (1/23/21, 2/27/21, 3/14/21, and 3/20/21)
- 1/24/21 4-5:30pm: St. Mary’s Webinar with Steve Wessler—Anti-Immigrant Bias in Maine and What We Can Do About It
- 1/26/20 2:30pm: TransACT/Carril Silva Webinar on Peer-to-Peer Interaction in Remote Environments—Success for Diverse Populations
- 1/26/21 5:00-6:00pm: Ballard & Tighe Webinar—Best Practices for Using Remote Assessments to Guide Instruction for English Learners
- Centre de la Francophonie des Amériques Webinar Series: Noires Amériques—Conversations littéraires (1/26/21, 2/2/21, 2/9/21, 2/16/21, and 2/23/21)
- Alliance Française French Classes Starting in January
- Coach Foreign Language Project: Teaching with Culturally Responsive Comprehensible Input Webinar Series (Upcoming Sessions 12/5/20, 1/9, 2/27, and 3/13)
- Duke/UNC/University of Michigan Webinar Series “How to teach about the Middle East—and get it right!” (1/28/21, 2/25/21, 3/18/21, 4/22, and 5/20)
- 2/4/21 4:30-6pm NALPA Webinar: Supporting Teachers to Foster Authentic Digital Interactions
- Starting 2/9/21 Maine State Teacher of the Year Association: Free Workshop Series—Anti-racist Education for all of Maine
- Save the Date! 3/12/21-3/13/21 FLAME Conference (Virtual) — Call for Proposals Now Open (Due by 1/31/21)
- Save the Date! 5/7/21 (Time TBD): Maine ESOL Meeting (Virtual)
- 6/23/21 (Time TBD) French Cultural Services—National Seminar on French Dual Language Immersion and Education
- 7/25/21-7/31/21: Deutsche Woche in Bar Harbor
January 21, 2021

Dear WIDA Community,

At WIDA, our work is driven by a core purpose: providing educators and families with high-quality tools and resources that ensure equity in education for multilingual learners. This commitment is woven throughout the entire WIDA system of assessments, research, language standards and professional learning.

To promote equity and comply with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the 40 states, territories and federal agencies that make up the WIDA Consortium must ensure that their educators are monitoring and reporting on student language development progress. This is accomplished by using ACCESS for ELLs, our suite of summative English language proficiency assessments.

WIDA recognizes that for the administration of ACCESS assessments this year, pandemic conditions require WIDA Consortium members to manage student safety, equity concerns and federal requirements (USED Guidance 1.18.21). Last fall, WIDA discussed detailed options for a remote administration of ACCESS with consortium members. We listened to voices from all corners of the consortium. The primary concern we heard was the burden that any equitable, remote administration would place on already overloaded local educators and families of multilingual learners. These challenges, along with other concerns, outweighed the potential benefits of remote delivery.

At the request of consortium members, WIDA developed a best practices resource designed to support test coordinators and test administrators in safely administering ACCESS and WIDA Screener. This guidance is based on CDC suggestions and safe practices that we learned from member states who administered ACCESS during the pandemic in 2020. WIDA is also working diligently with consortium members to provide as much flexibility as possible with respect to testing window timeframes. Many states have successfully begun testing. Most states have delayed or extended their testing windows. WIDA will continue to adjust testing windows in response to the needs of consortium members.

WIDA firmly believes that student and educator safety is paramount. As such, we fully support state and local guidance to prioritize safety in student testing during this challenging time. We also recognize that there may be circumstances where families do not allow their students to test. We support families’ choices. For those students who are able to test, WIDA is developing guidance with respect to appropriately interpreting and using these score results to better understand student language progress and educational needs. We thank you for all that you are doing to support multilingual learners.

Sincerely,

Tim Boals, WIDA Founder and Director

Articles of Interest

New York Times: The Potential Plus of Having a Former ‘English Learner’ as Education Secretary

PBS Newshour: Lesson Plan—Discuss 22-Year-Old Amanda Gorman’s inaugural poem “The Hill We Climb”

Horizon Magazine: Studies into bilingual cognition could help improve language learning

Maine DOE Newsroom: Celebrate the Read to ME Challenge During the Month of February

SmartBrief: Why foreign-language skills matter for the next-generation workforce

USA Today: Despite COVID-19, standardized testing may force English learners back to school campuses
Job Opportunities

Five Town CSD/MSAD 28: Long-Term Substitute Spanish Teacher
RSU 71: Long-Term Substitute Spanish Teacher
Waynflete: Part-Time French/Spanish Teacher
South Portland: Multilingual and Multicultural Coordinator
Sebago Elementary: Part-Time ESOL Teacher
Cultural Alliance of Maine: Pilot Project Director
Saco: Long-Term Substitute ESL Teacher Grades 3-5

Seal of Biliteracy

National Seal of Biliteracy Report

Emily Bowen, a French teacher and UMF graduate student who is conducting a capstone research project on Bilingualism and the Seal of Biliteracy in Maine. All Maine world language and ESOL educators are invited to participate in a survey and consider participating in a one-time, follow up interview with the researcher about these topics. Please click on this link to read the cover letter and find links to the survey. Thank you for your consideration!

Maine Seal of Biliteracy

If you have any questions or would like assistance navigating the Seal of Biliteracy application process, please contact me at april.perkins@maine.gov or 441-9043.
Best of luck to you and your students!

Highlights

Registration for this year’s Manie Musicale is now open! Click here to sign up. For those of you new to Manie, it is a Francophone song competition modeled after the March Madness basketball tournament. Over 900 schools from around the country and around the world are signed up already. For more information and collaborative opportunities, visit the website linked here or join the Facebook group, Manie Musicale Collaborative. Your students will love it!

Virtual Office Hours

ESOL

Our next virtual office hour will be on 1/27/21 at 3:00pm. We will be joined by Julia Maluf, a Bates student interning with me this year. Julia will share an exciting new project she’s working on and ask you for some feedback.

Join Zoom here.
Meeting ID: 839 6220 3107
Passcode: ?2j!TtAe

Recordings will be available on the Maine DOE YouTube channel after each session.

The 1/20/21 Office Hour was cancelled, so there is no video this week.

World Languages

Thank you to those of you who attended last week’s meet & greet! It was lovely meeting you!

On 2/5/21 at 3pm, I will be hosting an informal office hour. Stop by and chat with me and your colleagues across the state. All questions, ideas, venting, celebrations, and topics welcome!

Join Zoom here.
Meeting ID: 825 3957 1009
Passcode: @DTh3scw
Community Supports

Introducing: Unified Asian Communities

By Amy Chea

We are Unified Asian Communities, or UAC for short. We recently formed due to the growing needs of Asian and Asian American communities in Maine, which are exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. UAC believes that everyone deserves to live in a community that fosters a sense of belonging, values compassion, and supports their neighbors. We aim to unify and empower Asian communities through civic engagement, community service, and member-led initiatives.

The members of UAC, much like the educators of Maine, have long been entrenched in their communities, doing the day-to-day work on the ground that really helps an individual obtain the things they need to survive in America. By supporting our communities, we are strengthening the families in Maine public schools. For years, families were unsure of who to turn to when they needed help with legal, governmental, and/or medical services. UAC is here to help the wonderful teachers of Maine with providing these resources and connections for their students and families.

UAC is composed of a small staff of volunteers who can assist with the following services:

- Translation and interpretation
- Green Card applications
- Immigration assistance
- Notary services
- Short and Long Term Disability Claims
- State of Maine Unemployment assistance
- Writing Resumes
- Referrals

We know that teachers in Maine bend over backwards for their students and families! We admire your work and dedication, and hope to be a helpful partner for you, because together, we can empower our students, families, and communities. With your help, we will continue to advocate and organize to support our Asian and Asian American communities in Maine. Please reach out to us at unifiedasiancommunities@gmail.com if you have any questions!