**Message**

So many exciting things in this week’s newsletter! Be sure to check out a new feature making its first appearance, which is the Educator Highlight on page two. Thanks, Kathryn Larson, for being our first interviewee! Thanks also to intern Isabel Honigman for putting this together.

It’s time to start preparing for this year’s [Seal of Biliteracy](https://www.flameorg.com/seal-biliteracy) applications! For the early birds who are hoping to apply soon, I want to let you know that the application is temporarily closed while it undergoes updates. Thank you for your patience! It should be ready to go by next Friday, and I’ll be sure to include an announcement in the newsletter. There will also be a training on the Seal of Biliteracy on November 4th at 3pm. See the Professional Learning section on page two.

Last but certainly not least, I want to call your attention to FLAME’s call for members on page six. This is my fifth year serving on the FLAME Advisory Board, alongside some of the finest language educators in the state! If you would like to be part of an organization that strives to improve language learning opportunities for all Maine students, that values all languages and cultures, and that will support you throughout your career, I encourage you to join FLAME today. As FLAME undergoes a process of rebranding, President Elena Sullivan, 2021 ESOL Teacher of the Year, and the rest of the FLAME Advisory Board welcome all ESOL teachers and World Languages teachers to help shape our next chapter!

*April Perkins*
As a new feature for the newsletter, we will be highlighting language educators across Maine. Isabel Honigman, Bates College senior education minor and intern at the Maine DOE, will interview a teacher about their history, philosophies, and teaching practice. This week, in recognition of International Day of Sign Languages, Isabel interviewed Kathryn Larson, an American Sign Language teacher at Gray-New Gloucester High School.

**Can you tell me a little bit about your background? What motivated you to become a teacher? What was your journey of becoming a teacher?**

I was a double major in elementary and special education. During my senior year of college, I realized I wanted to teach deaf students. But I also wanted to start teaching right away so for six years, I was a special education teacher in Virginia. I went back to school and received my master’s degree as a Teacher for the Deaf. I then began teaching at the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf, which helped me become more fluent in ASL. After I took time off when I had children, I became a teacher that went to different schools in Maine and worked with the deaf students in those schools. I did a lot of teaching at the schools in Gray-New Gloucester and I was finally hired full time to work with deaf students at the middle school and then eventually the high school. While I was working at the high school, I wanted the deaf students I was working with to have classmates they could talk to because they were often isolated from the rest of their peers. I created an ASL class that I taught along with the resource English classes I was already teaching. Once those deaf students graduated, the ASL class disappeared and I became a full-time resource English teacher at the high school. I did not start teaching my ASL class again until an advisory student I had expressed interest in ASL and I was able to start the program again. I now teach ASL full time at the high school.

**What is your favorite part about teaching ASL at your school?**

I love that I get to teach all grade levels and have mixed classes with mixed age and level. I also like that I teach voices off for most of the class, meaning I teach almost completely through signs. I found you learn ASL much faster if you don’t have auditory interaction with the visual. The other thing I love about teaching ASL is that students who are visual learners feel like they are not good students because a lot of schools use an auditory learning style. Then, they come to my class and they are superstard and it is just so comfortable. The information is coming through in a way that makes sense to them and it makes it a level playing field with them and the other students. Finally, I love...well the teaching of tolerance. When I teach about deaf culture and the oppression of deaf people, students gain empathy toward the deaf community and towards other people in general. I aim to make a bridge between the deaf world and the hearing world.

**What is the most significant breakthrough moment you have experienced with a student?**

One of the students that comes to mind was a student who had anxiety coming into my class. They had the option to have ASL to have classmates they could talk to. But, I teach the class where it is okay to make mistakes so she was able to take ASL 1, ASL 2, become my teacher aide, and eventually go to school to become a teacher. It was a gift to watch that process and to watch her come out of her shell.

**Why did you want to teach ASL? How has your work teaching ASL changed you as an educator and person?**

A group from the Virginia School of the Deaf that came to my college and put on a production of “You’re A Good Man Charlie Brown” when I was a senior. I had a friend that was hard of hearing and we went to see the show together. After watching the production, I just knew I needed to learn ASL because I loved how they expressed words and emotion with their hands. As a hearing person becoming a teacher of the deaf right when the deaf empowerment movement was becoming strong, I felt a part of that history and wanted to share that experience with my students.

**What is a teaching tip you want to share with other educators?**

Most teachers do not realize how valuable their non-verbal communication is when interacting with students. The best tool for behavioral management in a classroom is the eyes. I control my class with my eyes. Other things, too but it starts with the eyes. If you show with your eyes and your body language that you are paying attention to your students, they will be more open. Make mistakes and model how to handle it with your body language. It will encourage students to take more risks. Teachers don’t realize the power they have through their body language. One of the things that makes me the happiest about the ASL classes I teach is even during the pandemic when we had online classes, my students wrote on a class reflection sheet that what they liked most about my class was that they felt safe and comfortable.

**If there was one piece of education policy that could be immediately implemented statewide, what would you choose?**

I always thought that all teachers should have access to teacher aides so that the needs of all their students’ needs could be met. If there was more money, it should be used for smaller class sizes, or more teachers’ aides, so you can do group work and have aides to support that work. From all my years of teaching, I have always thought that I have taught at all levels and at all those levels, having extra hands and extra people to care give the students better learning outcomes.

**Do you think ASL should be taught in all schools and be a second language class option like Spanish or French?**

I absolutely feel that way. It deserves parity with the other languages. Because it is a visual language, what you call through the air language, it is more accessible. The other languages require you to be able to listen, speak, and write, while with ASL, you are able to see it and communicate without verbalizing. The popularity of my ASL class is incredible. There are way more students who want to take it then can get in the class. I hope next year to teach ASL 3 because I have built the program to have enough students to expand it.
Professional Learning

All virtual Maine DOE offerings will be recorded and posted to the Maine DOE YouTube channel unless noted with an asterisk.

Maine DOE Professional Development Calendar

WIDA Self-Paced eWorkshops are available 9.1.21-8.31.22

Recording: Maine DOE Improving Students' Motivation to Learn a World Language

9.22.21-6.1.22 (Various Dates) 4-5pm: National Association of EL Program Administrators, in partnership with CCSSO and US DOE
EL Continuous Improvement Series

9.28.21 at 1pm: CARLA Bringing Social Justice into Language Classes: Templates to Guide Instructional Planning

10.5.21 at 1pm: Maine DOE Submitting English Learner Data (This is a repeat of the training that occurred on 9.9.21, due to technical difficulties that prevented attendees from entering and affected the recording.)

10.14.21: WIDA eConference (Waiting list for registration.)

10.19.21 and 10.26.21 from 2-3:30pm: WIDA Nurturing Speaking Growth

10.21.21 at 3pm: Maine DOE Cultural Appropriation in World Languages Classrooms

10.29.21-10.30.21 9am-4pm: Maine Chinese Conference at Husson University

11.4.21 at 3pm: Maine DOE Seal of Biliteracy

11.6.21 8:30-4pm: Northern New England TESOL Virtual Conference

11.19.21-11.21.21: ACTFL Virtual Convention and Expo

Articles of Interest

NPR: We Know Students Are Struggling With Their Mental Health. Here's How You Can Help

Comprehensive Center Network: How to Deal with Missing and Unreliable Academic Data Due to COVID-19

National Association of State Boards of Education: Equity and English Learners Post-Pandemic

Bangor Daily News: Afghan refugees could come to Bangor if feds approve resettlement request

EdWeek: White House Launches Hispanic Education Initiative Led by Miguel Cardona

Language Magazine: Gestures Can Help Vocabulary Learning

Language Magazine: Sep. 23 is International Day of Sign Languages

The Conversation: The genocide of signed languages: protecting the linguistic rights of Africa’s deaf children

Bangor Daily News: New Bangor High program aims to help predominantly white school confront racism

Book Study Opportunity for World Languages Teachers

Would you like to build your knowledge and skill for Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence? Up to 20 teachers can sign up to receive a free copy of the book and participate in a virtual book study facilitated by April Perkins. If you’re interested, register and share your scheduling preferences here. A final schedule will be shared with participants that takes everyone's preferences into account as much as possible. There will be six total one-hour sessions, and 12 contact hours will be awarded for time spent reading and engaging in the discussions. Minimum of 10 participants. Registration will close on 10.1.21.
**Assessment Updates**

NEW for SY 21-22: ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs materials orders will be provided to WIDA/DRC by Maine DOE, using local SAU enrollment data from Synergy State Edition. Please confirm that all ELs have a recorded EL Start Date in Synergy. **Please confirm that ELs with a significant cognitive disability who participate in alternate assessments have the alternate flag checked in Synergy.**

To request paper materials per the student’s IEP or 504 plan, including ACCESS paper tests, Braille forms, and large print, submit the paper materials request for 2021-2022.

**Resources & Opportunities**

You’re invited: sign up to participate in a review of ACCESS for ELLs test content in development! We value the fresh eyes, unique perspectives, and range of experiences that educators bring to items, and we revise test items based on this feedback from the field.

If you’re interested in lending your expertise and perspective to ACCESS, head over to the Building a WIDA Assessment webpage and click on the 'sign up to participate' button. While you’re on the webpage, you’ll find more information on the types of events you can participate in, plus the process WIDA follows to build our assessments.

**ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs**

**Important Dates for SY 21-22**

- **11/9/21** - Maine DOE provides student file to WIDA to generate materials ordering. Materials ordering is facilitated by Maine DOE using Synergy enrollment data.

- **12/15/21** - Materials are received by SAUs.

- **12/15/21-2/25/22** - Additional materials ordering for new and transfer ELs; facilitated by SAUs.

- **1/10/22-3/4/22** - ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs administration window.

For those English learners who are receiving special education, it is important to confer early in the school year with the case manager/IEP team about which assessment accommodations are in place per the student’s IEP or 504 plan. The accessibility features and accommodations provide important access points for students with disabilities and are part of the student’s legal rights to FAPE under IDEA.

The Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is Maine’s alternate assessment of English language proficiency, designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Eligibility to participate in alternate assessments is an IEP Team decision, must be documented in the student’s IEP [section 6B], and is based on state guidance for participation.

With questions, contact Jodi: jodi.bossio-smith@maine.gov.
Robin’s "Spotlight”

How can I identify a student’s assets and personal interests for the purpose of designing instructional supports into my units and lessons?

Student assets include linguistic, cultural, experiential, social and emotional, and prior educational experiences.

Too often a student is identified by the skills that they do NOT have, rather than by their strengths and abilities.

**Example**: Juan is ten years old and he can’t write his name yet.

**Alternative**: Juan is ten years old and can repair all the bikes of his friends in the neighborhood.

**How do I learn that Juan can repair those bikes?**

It is important to connect with families/guardians and ask what their child enjoys doing, their favorite activities, their natural disposition, (outgoing, shy, nervous, happy, leader). What does the family identify as the child’s strengths? Maybe a family highly values the ability to argue and debate. Knowing that fact could help you understand why a student questions or debates, most new information, that you and other teachers present to them.

If the child had prior educational experience, ask the family/guardian to describe the learning environment. A student who was in a collective learning environment, being asked to complete assignments individually, will require some additional supports. A student who was only required to memorize information and was not encouraged to express an opinion or to use higher level thinking skills, regarding content, will need supports and practice with the new high-level learning expectations.

Provide opportunities for activities that allow your students to share their interests, the times that they feel successful, what do they take pride in, and what are their personal goals. Maybe a student wants to be the highest scoring player on the soccer team, or maybe the student wants to be able to compose a song and play it on the guitar. We will only know if we make the time to incorporate activities that allow the student to share themselves with us. There must be an environment of safety and trust, for any of us to feel comfortable to share personal information with each other.

Resources for further information:

- [Student Assets for Learning | WIDA Secure Portal](https://www.wida.us)
- [Teaching Strategy: Identity Charts (Remote Learning) | Facing History](https://www.facinghistory.org)
- [Your Students Have Assets, Not Deficiencies: Differentiating Instruction for English Learners based on Strengths and Interests – Confianza (ellstudents.com)](https://ellstudents.com)
FLAME: Calling all language teachers!

FLAME (Foreign Language Association of Maine) is looking for great teachers to join our ranks. We not only want new members, but also want people to consider being a part of our Advisory Board.

As our purpose continues to evolve, FLAME finds itself in the very early process of rebranding to become inclusive of ALL language teachers in the state of Maine. FLAME is looking to bring ESOL teachers into the group along with any other language teachers who might want to join us. We will be working to get new ESOL members to contribute their wealth of knowledge to monthly PD sessions and show off their skills at our March Conference along with our World Language teachers.

Our Advisory Board is looking to fill the following positions: Public Relations/Advocacy, Secretary and Newsletter writer. The positions are all being wonderfully taken care of by present board members who can guide any new persons to taking over these positions.

If you are interested in joining FLAME and/or want to be part of our Board, please send an email of interest to flame.president@gmail.com. Thank you and may your year be successful!

- FLAME President, Elena Sullivan

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**Monthly Office Hours**

An informal opportunity to connect with DOE staff and teaching colleagues

**ESOL**

3rd Wednesday of Each Month

Next: 10.20.21 at 3:30pm
Focus Topic: English Learner Data & Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Eligibility

[Register](#) by 10.17.21

**World Languages**

2nd Wednesday of Each Month

Next: 10.13.21 at 3:00pm
Focus Topic: Gender-Inclusiveness in World Languages

[Register](#) by 10.10.21

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