

Winter 2010

## MIDTESOL MATTERS

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**MIDTESOL Executive Board****President:** Suzanne van der Valk**Vice President:** Valerie Heming**Secretary:** Mary Liebich**Treasurer:** Dennis Muchisky**Past President:** Jennifer Johnston**Members-at-Large:**

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Paula Moore—Missouri

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## PRESIDENT'S WELCOME MESSAGE

BY SUZANNE VAN DER VALK, MIDTESOL PRESIDENT



Dear MIDTESOL Colleagues,

My name is Suzanne van der Valk, and I'm happy to be the new president of MIDTESOL. I work in the Intensive English and Orientation Program at Iowa State University; I'm also an ISU alum, having gotten my (mid-life) MA in TESL here. While we're not native Midwesterners, my husband and I have lived in Ames longer than anywhere else, raising three daughters and now enjoying our "empty" nest. (Funny how it's not at all empty; I don't know how five people ever lived in our house.) Two of my favorite activities outside TESL are sailing (once a year if I'm lucky) and doing crossword puzzles (daily necessity).

I'm excited to be coming to this position now – we have a lot going on. The election in October brought Val Heming to the board for her three-year stint as VP, Pres and Past Pres. Our membership chair, Bill Trudeau, left the board in 2009 after many years of service for which we're very grateful. After a couple of glitches, Amber Wadley has taken over that role. I'd like to thank Val and our treasurer, Dennis Muchisky, for preparing the membership records to hand on to Amber. Joan Chamberlin has replaced Barb Schwarte in Sociopolitical Concerns – thanks, Barb and welcome, Joan. There's been a lot of communication among the board members right from the week after the October conference – I'm glad to be part of such a dynamic and hard-

working group. I'd like to thank Jennifer Johnston for her efforts as president and the other members of the board for their continuing service to MIDTESOL

Two board members you'll be hearing quite a lot from are our conference chairs, Sandy Reno (2010) and Diana Pascoe (2011). Our 2010 conference will be held in Dubuque, IA, under the leadership of Sandy Reno and her colleagues at Divine Word College. The elegant Hotel Julien downtown is the proposed venue, and there are lots of things to do in Dubuque, an old river city. In 2011 it's Missouri's turn to host, and we'll be meeting in St. Louis. Diana Pascoe of St. Louis University is heading up preparations for that event. We are just in the very beginning stages of a discussion that may lead to a joint conference with NAFSA Region IV in 2012, which would be in Iowa. Watch the MIDTESOL website for more information on conferences.

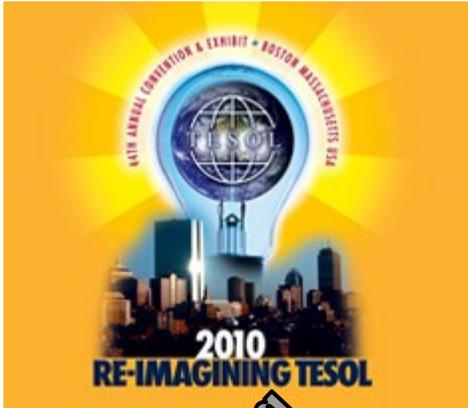
I hope that many of you will be able to attend "big" TESOL, the international meeting in Boston in March. You can check out the website and register now (tesol.org). Our affiliate social event is a Duck tour of Boston on Thursday, March 25. You should have already received an email from me about signing up for that. I can't wait to see our members there!

One of the items on our MIDTESOL plate at the moment is evaluating a teacher training program from Pearson Longman. We've put together a small committee to start this. If any of you with teacher training experience

would like to help with this, please let me know. We may also ask at a later time for some feedback from new teachers who might be able to help assess how this program might have fit into their (recent) training.

None of these things happens by itself. Again I'd like to thank the board and the membership for your efforts on behalf of your colleagues and profession. If you are new to MIDTESOL and would like to get more involved, contact any of the board members. The interest section chair for your interest group would be another good first contact. Or contact me and I'll put you in touch. In her role as Past President, Jennifer Johnston will be looking for new board members for next October's elections, which will be here all too soon. And something we can all do is to recruit our colleagues to join us as MIDTESOL members. Thanks for the overwhelming mandate you gave me in October. I look forward to meeting more of you and working with you in the coming year.

All the best,  
Suzanne



[www.tesol.org](http://www.tesol.org)

**TESOL 2010, Boston, MA**  
**Wednesday, March 24th-Saturday, March 27th, 2010**  
**Special Member Savings and Incentives!**  
**Join TESOL to take advantage!**  
**Registration is open.**  
See [www.tesol.org](http://www.tesol.org) for more info, such as Boston attractions, featured speakers, and other important information.

**Check out TESOL's Member Stimulus Plan with features such as:**  
**Membership discounts**  
**Publication discounts**  
**Convention discounts**



**MIDTESOL at TESOL**  
**What: Duck Tour of Boston**  
**When: Thursday, March 25th**  
**How:**

Contact MIDTESOL President, Suzanne van der Valk at [scv@iowastate.edu](mailto:scv@iowastate.edu) if you'd like to attend!

## Meet your new MIDTESOL Board for 2009-2010

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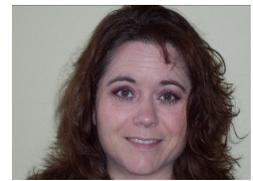
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## Meet your new MIDTESOL Board for 2009-2010 (cont'd from p. 3)

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## SAVE THE DATE!!

## MIDTESOL 2010

OCTOBER 22 & 23, 2010

HOTEL JULIEN, Dubuque, Iowa

“Stories to Tell”

“The face of the river, in time, became a wonderful book . . . which told its mind to me without reserve, delivering its most cherished secrets as clearly as if it had uttered them with a voice. And it was not a book to be read once and thrown aside, for it had a new story to tell every day.” Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*



Plenary speaker: TESOL Affiliate Leadership Council Chair, Don Weasenforth

Make plans to attend!

## MIDTESOL News

### MIDTESOL Matters is going digital (and green)!

This is your last printed edition of *MIDTESOL Matters*! Beginning with the next edition, *MIDTESOL Matters* will be distributed electronically to all members. The MIDTESOL board approved this measure with fiscal and environmental responsibilities in mind. By saving money we normally use to print the newsletter, we can use those funds in new ways, such as funding travel grants and other member-supportive initiatives. Along with this reason, going to an electronic format will allow us to do our part for the environment—going green!

Your next 2010 edition will be sent to you via email as a PDF attachment. That means we will need to have the following information, and you will need to ensure that you have done the following:

- Make sure MIDTESOL has your **current** email address;
- You will need to have Adobe Acrobat reader on your computer (this is a free download, and most computers have it);
- Add Morrison.jennifer1@sbcglobal.net to your address book so that the newsletter does not go into your spam folder.

Please make sure that you send any updated email information to our new membership chair at the following address. You may download a membership update at [www.midtesol.org](http://www.midtesol.org).

**Amber Wadley**

202 E. Cherokee  
Springfield, MO 65807  
[adw806s@gmail.com](mailto:adw806s@gmail.com)

We are excited about this change! If you have any questions, please contact the editor at [morrison.jennifer1@sbcglobal.net](mailto:morrison.jennifer1@sbcglobal.net).

### Check out the newly designed MIDTESOL website!

In case you've missed it, MIDTESOL's website ([www.midtesol.org](http://www.midtesol.org)) has a new look and a number of new features, including a photo gallery, discussion forums and a downloads section for frequently used forms and other documents.

We're looking for ways to become even more useful to members. Give us your feedback and ideas! What could we do to make the site more useful and user-friendly? What other sorts of information or resources would you like to see included? Contact MIDTESOL's webmaster, Jim Ranalli, at [midtesol@gmail.com](mailto:midtesol@gmail.com) or by using the *Contacts* form in the website.

### We need your help!!!

Please submit state news to your member-at-large! News about your school projects, professional triumphs, or other pertinent information is welcome.

Here are the email addresses again:  
MO: Paula Moore: [paula-moore@missouristate.edu](mailto:paula-moore@missouristate.edu);  
IA: Sarah Thao— [sethao@dmacc.edu](mailto:sethao@dmacc.edu).

Our communication gets better and better with help from our membership! Thank you!

MIDTESOL Matters  
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*About our Organization*

*MIDTESOL is a professional organization, an affiliate of International TESOL, whose goal is to support teachers and enhance the teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages.*

*MIDTESOL Matters is a quarterly publication and is distributed to subscribers and dues-paying members of MIDTESOL. Articles, Teaching Tips, and Reviews are welcome from all members. The editor reserves the right to edit for space, clarity, or editorial balance. Materials published in MIDTESOL Matters become the property of MIDTESOL and could be shared with other TESOL affiliate organizations.*

*Expressed opinions do not necessarily reflect the views of MIDTESOL, TESOL, or the MIDTESOL Executive Board.*

**Editor's Corner—No More No Child Left Behind?**

By Jennifer Morrison, K-4 ESL Teacher, Springfield, MO



Here we are again—getting ready to head to “big” TESOL in ol’ bean-town! I’m excited and ready to go, ready to hear some wonderful presentations and network with other professionals.

I’m sure that this year, there will be a lot of buzz in the K-12 world regarding the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, most recently known as No Child Left Behind. The Obama administration has decided on some changes that will be made to the much-maligned NCLB, and I, for one, am anxious to see what those changes are, exactly.

Although there are numerous problems with NCLB, I always take a skeptical stance when governmental agencies are the ones making changes to educational policy. Of course, I know that “experts” are consulted and have a voice in these changes, but that supposedly happened when NCLB was approved—and look what we got! Perhaps some of my skepticism comes from my experience in the particular field of ESL, in which ESL teachers are often thought to only have one or two extra classes to qualify them to teach—so who is an expert in this field, anyway? In simple terms, ESL experts are often undervalued and not consulted on educational issues.

Barring all of that skepticism, I would like to make some observations about NCLB because I do feel that there were both posi-

tives and negatives attached to the law; my hope—should I hold out hope?—is that the new administration can actually weed out what didn’t work and strengthen what did.

First, what worked for ELLs? In my opinion, one thing that NCLB did in favor of ELLs was to **force** school districts to at least consider being accountable for teaching students who do not speak English as a first language. In a district and region such as Southwest Missouri, this is an unbelievable plus; if it were left up to most local educational agencies to track ELLs’ progress and improve instruction in this region, I do not believe it would happen. In fact, even *with* NCLB, school districts can find ways around being held accountable for teaching this population—but it at least got better.

Another tick in the plus column for NCLB in relation to ELL instruction was the regulation requiring districts to hire teachers with ESL certification. In the past, any person who spoke English could teach ESL or come in and give some extra help; now schools aren’t allowed to hire teachers who have no training in the discipline, which has to be good for students.

The last positive I can think of right now is that NCLB actually helped ELL students’ families make connections with schools and understand what their children are learning and doing. The focus on parent involvement helped push schools to communicate with families in their na-

tive language, and actually made it a law that parents be informed about their children’s progress in a language they can understand.

So, what about the bad? I would venture to say that even non-public-school teachers have heard about NCLB’s focus on standardized test scores, and I think that is the one main mistake made in the legislation (that and connecting test scores to punishment). Any good teacher knows that “teaching to the test” creates an inauthentic environment, causing students and teachers to lose creativity and enthusiasm for the learning task. (Aren’t we trying to help other countries move away from this focus in language learning?) For ELLs, the test-as-God environment has created a hostile environment in which teachers are afraid to have an ELL in their classes because it will “affect their overall test scores.” What I hope Obama’s officials will do is allow assessment to become a tool for showing individual progress, not a means of comparing all students to one “ideal.” When it comes to language learning, we know that individual differences create a plethora of varying skills levels—there is not one “standard” against which to measure that progress.

Although there is more to say, I will end with this thought: could it be possible that the changes in NCLB (starting with a name change!) will really be a light at the end of this dark testing tunnel we have been in since 2001? We can only hope so.