



In this issue of NYS AFLT News, you'll get to know Kate Stewart and to read reflections on our current distance learning situation.

If you don't see all of these important features, there's a possibility that the newsletter is being truncated by your email server. Be sure to scroll all the way to the bottom and to click on "view entire message" so that you don't miss a thing!

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The President's Corner

The 2019–2020 school year is drawing to a close as never before! Since March, we were hurled into distance learning and the experience has been unprecedented, overwhelming, daunting...it is difficult to choose just one word to describe it! Throughout it all, we have been meeting the challenges and crafting a new reality.



For me, the biggest lesson is that nothing can take the place of the teacher in the classroom. Technology has a place in language acquisition, but the human component is key and the technology simply cannot replicate it.

I have always relied on NYS AFLT to enhance my teaching and now is no different. I am very sad that the COVID-19 situation caused the cancellation of so many of our regional conferences but I am so glad to have the webinar series and special webinars to help give me direction through the remainder of the school year and into the next.

Soon we will begin to look ahead to fall and the start of another school year. We will all be adjusting curriculum for whatever our reality is going to be. [Jenny Delfini](#) has lined up a stellar program for NYS AFLT's Summer Institute, which will be completely online. I am excited to participate and learn from such knowledgeable and generous presenters.

Annual Conference planning progresses as much as possible given the unknowns of the COVID-19 situation. The conference is scheduled for **October 23–24, 2020** in Syracuse. Our chairperson, [Sally Barnes](#), has a fantastic line-up of presenters and Rebecca Aubrey, ACTFL Teacher of the Year, is the keynote speaker!

NYSED and OBEWL Associate in Instructional Services, [Candace Black](#), are moving ahead with the revised learning standards for world languages. It is an exciting time for world language educators. NYS AFLT's Summer Institute and Annual Conference will provide professional development as we create rich language acquisition experiences for our students under our new standards.

There are many uncertainties, but NYS AFLT is here to support us! I am thankful for the professional development I have gotten from NYS AFLT conferences, webinars and collegial conversations.

I look forward to seeing you online in August and hopefully in person at the Annual Conference in Syracuse. May these last few weeks of the year bring no more new challenges for you. I hope you have a chance to rest, and come back ready for a new year of language learning.

Summer Institute



NYS AFLT is excited to announce that this year's Summer Institute will be ONLINE! If traveling to Oneonta in August was an impossibility before, or if you have had other commitments during our usual week on campus, this year is for you! We have twenty hours of professional development to offer you - with optional strands for the new NYS World Language Standards, FLES, and Comprehensible Input - with a superstar line-up of local presenters. Our schedule works for you: sign up for as few or as many sessions as you like. In keeping with the intimate camp setting of our traditional SI, we are still including social hours to keep the conversations going and build relationships! Won't you join us? Visit the [Summer Institute webpage](#) for full information on registration, scholarships, presenters, sessions, and more.



Annual Conference

At this point, we are still moving forward with plans for a face-to-face fall conference. For those not able or willing to travel in these uncertain times, we're exploring the options for a hybrid conference with some sessions being broadcast via webinar and recorded. Ideally we'd love to see everyone - so let's keep our fingers crossed for more "normal" rather than less!

Mark your calendars for this year's Annual Conference in Syracuse (Liverpool), New York **October 23–24!** The theme is "Looking to the Future: Recruitment, Leadership and Advocacy for World Languages." We are very excited to welcome Rebecca Aubrey, ACTFL 2019 National Language Teacher of the Year as our keynote speaker.

There is no doubt that now more than ever we need to connect and we need to talk about the future of world languages! New York State is moving forward with the revised standards which will impact our curriculum and assessments. **Candace Black** from OBEWL/NYSED will be a featured presenter, along with **Joanne O'Toole** and **Bill Heller**, who will help educators transition using the new standards.

There will be a wide array of workshops focusing on methods, instructional techniques, technology, assessments, advocacy and more. We have a wonderful lineup of talented educators who are graciously donating their time and talents to share their knowledge with us. It is always a great way to start your year with your NYSA friends to meet and share insights!

The Annual Conference Committee and I look forward to welcoming you to Syracuse in October!



Member Spotlight

For this issue's Member Spotlight, **Kate Stewart** shares her NYSAFLT story!

I've been a member of NYSAFLT since I taught in New Hartford from 1997–2002. My teaching career started later than most. I didn't always want to be a teacher. I grew up bilingual when my father was stationed in Germany and I went to Kindergarten in Stuttgart. Unfortunately, I forgot my German once we moved back to the United States. Despite having lived 4 years in Germany, when I wanted to study it in high school, our school district refused to let me try German any earlier than 10th grade because the language was "too hard." I found it fun rather than difficult, so I majored in the language in college. I studied for a year in Munich, but never really knew what I would do with it.



After 7 years of experimentation after college (window dressing, picture framing, temporary secretarial work, volunteering on an archeological dig in France), I returned to get my master's degree in German Language and Literature, and I was lucky enough to do it for free with a stipend as a TA at Syracuse University. Even though it had been ages since I consistently had used the language, the professors there had amazing faith that I could do it. My first full time teaching job was at Kent School in Connecticut, where I also ran a dorm of 96 girls, coached girls' ice hockey, and co-ed mountain biking. Four years later, I relocated to CNY to where my family lived and began teaching in New Hartford. My former NH boss, **Louis Baskinger** (a past president of NYSAFLT) introduced me to the organization and got me started on the Annual Conferences. Thanks to Lou, I have met many impressive and inspiring world language teachers over the years, and my connection to NYSAFLT has been instrumental in a great deal of my own successes.

In terms of professional development, on a NYSAFLT scholarship, I studied French in Trois Rivières, Québec. More than one study trip to Germany has been underwritten by NYSAFLT travel scholarship. By attending Annual Conferences, I have met like minded German teachers and connected with other world language teachers who have given me exciting, challenging and interesting fodder for enhancing my classroom. Eventually I gave my own presentations at the Annual Conferences and gained confidence. Summer Institutes by NYSAFLT in Oneonta have been a delightful way to get credit, refresh before the new school year starts, and reconnect with cool world language teachers. Naturally, I have to mention that membership and officership in the CNY-AATG has been an equally important part of my professional development, and the roles I've been graced to fill have been extremely fulfilling. Additionally, I've been an AP scorer, have helped on the NYS Regents exams Final Eyes committees, and helped write content exams for NYS German teacher candidates. I've successfully nominated several students for travel and study awards thanks to the generosity of NYSAFLT. Thanks to some wonderful colleagues who were extremely kind to nominate me, I was honored to win the Ruth E. Wasley Distinguished Teacher award from NYSAFLT in 2010 and my website was co-winner of the NYSAFLT Website of the Year in 2013. I cannot say enough about the benefits to my career that NYSAFLT has provided me.

Today I am in my 18th year of teaching at Fayetteville-Manlius High School, in Manlius, NY. German is not taught in many districts, so I know how lucky I am to have my position. But my good decision making, thanks in part to the start by **Louis Baskinger**, has enabled me to flourish in this position.

Member Spotlight

Mid-Hudson Westchester

PWRFL held its first meeting of the year on **January 7, 2020**. President **Alexis Thornton** presented on Authentic Resources in the World Language Classroom. Participants were able to

explore resources like Pinterest, Twitter and Instagram to look for #AuthRes.

Trisha Moller is the newly elected director from the Mid Hudson. She is a middle school and high school teacher in the New Paltz CSD. She is also a coach for the NTPRS conference as well as a presenter on Comprehensible Input methods. She is honored to be able to represent our area.



ALoud welcomes new board members, Jessica Robb, president and Dan Edwards, vice- president.

In November 2019, ALoud received an update on the upcoming changes to the state standards from **Dr. Jennifer Eddy** at Pine Bush HS.

Thanks to **Eleanor Dana** for her three years as our Mid-Hudson director. We appreciate her support and contributions.

ALoud would like to congratulate **Mary Holmes** on being selected as the NYSAFLT Teacher of the Year. We would like to wish her the best as she continues to the next step at NECTFL.



Western New York

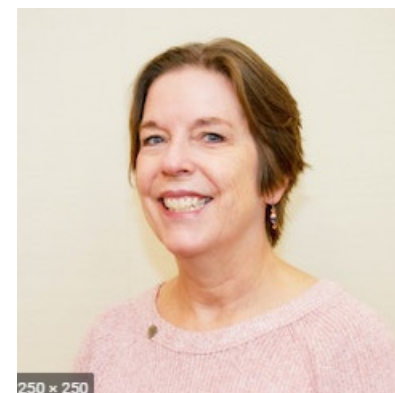
Did you know that the Rochester Regional Conference celebrated its 50th anniversary on **March 7, 2020**? Check out this great write up of the event from [NYSED's OBEWL website](#)!

Reflections on Distance Learning

In this issue, we have 3 different perspectives on our current situation of remote instruction and distance learning. Keep reading to see what **Sally Barnes**, **Michele Sennon-Britton** and Michelle Olah have to share! Hopefully you will find some inspiration, hope and/or camaraderie in reading what other have to say.

Distance Learning and Teaching in the Time of COVID-19 **Sally Barnes**

Although I never considered myself a "techie" as an educator, I feel as if I have had a crash course in it, given the present circumstances. Our district is supporting "asynchronous" teaching online, so in the past months I have learned to become proficient in programs and activities I never would have thought I was capable of years ago.



I always claimed that I never had "time" to research new websites, programs, and activities. Now it's all I have, and yes, I have had some success with my lessons using new resources and becoming more confident with trying out new technology.

But do I really have time? I have learned that with online teaching, what one would have normally accomplished in the classroom takes at LEAST twice as long to do online. Sending emails, correcting papers, logging in assignments, posting announcements and reminders on Google Classroom...it can be overwhelming. I have been inspired by recent workshops with NYSED/OBEWL, the NECTFL Conference, and my involvement in NYSAFLT webinars to go further and do more. Am I really finding the time?

Deep breath! Yes, I have more time to read what other world language educators on Twitter and FaceBook have to share (thank you). Let's be honest though...it can be overwhelming and challenging to engage your students with new programs that you are piloting! So, I am trying to accomplish small feats with little steps...bit by bit. If I can introduce one or two new programs or resources to my students and assist them with the mechanics of Google Classroom or another platform, I feel successful. If I hear from a student who is feeling more supported and confident in language acquisition because of a new website or online activity, I am happy.

At the end of the day, the most important thing is the social and emotional well-being of our students. No matter if one teaches synchronously or asynchronously, with bells and whistles or none at all, at the end of the day we are ALL experiencing a new normal and dealing with so many non-academic issues. We are learning what is really important in our lives as well as in the lives of our students.

We are human and we need each other. I realize now how much I truly value the face-to-face collaboration with my colleagues, my students and with people I encounter on a daily basis. Hopefully we will emerge from this time as better people, cognizant of how important our connections are with each other. I hope to see you all sooner rather than later. Be safe and healthy!



Change is Never Easy, but Sometimes Inevitable **Michele Sennon-Britton**

In the words of British writer, Arnold Bennett, "Any change, even a change for the better, is always accompanied by discomforts."

American psychologist, Abraham Maslow, famed creator of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, said: "In any given moment we have two options: to step forward into growth or step back into safety."

Mid-March of this year, as New York City began to undergo restrictions and experience the adverse effects of Covid-19, the entire public school system shut down and all school buildings closed.

As a result, we experienced a sudden and swift change in how teachers deliver and

language classrooms.

First, we can help students by fostering a sense of safety. How can we do this? Well, for the remainder of this year we can continue to reach out to our students and connect with them as a trusted adult. We can keep showing up for those office hours even if no one comes. We can keep reaching out and sending those check-in emails, even if we don't think they are paying attention. By providing students a space and system for them to contact us for help if they need it, we support their sense of a caring adult support system. Next year, we can continue to tell students we are here if they need us.

Second, we can foster a sense of connectedness in our classrooms. As we practice social distancing, I think we are all feeling a sense of disconnect. It is important for teachers to deliberately provide opportunities for students to make connections. Not just with us and our curriculum, but between students as well. Next year you will be starting the year with new students and, whether you are teaching them in person or virtually, it will be important to build community and foster connectedness in your classroom. We know that language learning will be hampered if students don't feel safe and accepted. They need to know that they can fail and make mistakes in order for them to learn and grow. We can't rush to "catch students up" and skip this crucial step of connection and building classroom community! Have fun, get to know each other and create a safe space for students' language ability to grow!

Lastly, we can give students hope. Hope is the expectation that everything will work out ok. Right now, it's hard to feel that way. We can give students hope by encouraging them, affirming their feelings, and encouraging them to reach out if they need help and to reach out and help others. What they need from us is to say, "It is ok. We have a foundation to build off of and we will get everyone to the destination in the end."

I'm hoping by asking "**Who am I teaching?**" you will think about your most vulnerable students and then create engaging, realistic, standards-based lessons that will bring out the best learning in **all** of your students.

Question #2 - Why am I teaching this?

As you start planning for next year, the other questions I hope you will focus on is **why**. **Why am I teaching this content?** With less time with your students and less than ideal circumstances, it will be more important than ever to plan instruction with very clear learning goals and outcomes in mind. Now is the perfect time to stop and think about the big picture. What is your vision for students learning? At the end of the school year what does success look like? A strong vision will help sustain and focus teaching and learning through the rest of the school year and into the next. **Now is the perfect time to reset and remember our "why."** As educators sometimes we get caught up in the day to day grind and we forget why we are doing things. Before COVID-19 and being thrown into teaching virtually, were you concerned about "covering" the curriculum or finishing the textbook? Did you teach what you've always taught without much thought to why? Free yourself from all those past pressures and expectations and give yourself the gift of purpose and creativity! Really think about why you are teaching your language and why the lesson you are planning is truly important to your students' learning. Question everything you planned to do. Instead of planning instruction to "catch students up" from what they missed this year, plan your units on what really matters to you and to your students. Give yourself permission to be creative! Move textbook chapters out of sequence if you need to in order to meet students where they are at and move them further in their proficiency. Skip some sections of the textbook entirely if it doesn't focus on essential content. Cut the amount of vocabulary in half or only focus on the most important and frequently used grammar structures if needed. Just know **why** you are making those choices and then put your energy, enthusiasm, time and passion into creating focused, meaningful standards-based instruction around the essential content that moves students closer to your vision. I want you to be able to say "At the end of (this year, this unit, this week) what I really want **every** student to know is _____ **because** _____." It is through well thought out, backwards-designed lessons that are based on essential content that students will grow their communicative and intercultural proficiency, not by "catching them" up on what they missed this year.

NOW comes the What and How

Now that you have your students and their needs in mind and the purpose behind what you want them to learn, now comes the **what** and the **how**. Now you are in the right frame of mind to tackle the specific content and learning experiences that your students need to achieve the vision you've set for them. Now you can focus on the vocabulary, structures, cultural connections, etc. that advance students' proficiency toward your vision with an intentional learning plan. Now you can choose the best websites, platforms and resources that actually advance your students on the clear path you want them on. You won't go down a rabbit hole of learning a half a dozen new websites you've never used before – chasing after the "best, new tool." You have the clarity of vision to critically evaluate their effectiveness based on your specific goals and needs of your students.

Reflect, Connect and Learn

I hope that you will be able to take some time soon to enjoy the lull in the storm. That you will reflect on what you have learned about yourself and your students. That you will connect deeper with your colleagues and continue to learn. By continuing to reflect, connect, and learn, we will all be more prepared to meet the next storm better prepared. And don't forget, you can do this!

References

Aupperle, R. L., Melrose, A. J., Stein, M. B., & Paulus, M. P. (2012). Executive function and PTSD: Disengaging from trauma. *Neuropharmacology*, 62(2), 686–694. doi: 10.1016/j.neuropharm.2011.02.008

Strauss, V. (2020, March 26). Analysis | A trauma-informed approach to teaching through coronavirus - for students everywhere, online or not. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2020/03/26/trauma-informed-approach-teaching-through-coronavirus-students->

Public Advocacy

Postcard Campaign

With the cancellation of our many regional conferences across the state, our postcard campaign to reinstate world language state assessments has been placed on hold. Cards collected thus far have been tallied but not yet mailed as we wait to determine our best course of action. Our timeline for the campaign was contingent upon the adoption of the new World Language Standards.

Once we understand if/when the New World Language Standards are adopted and if/when classes resume in the fall, we can work out options for continuing our postcard campaign.

(New) World Language Standards

At this time, the NYSED Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages is slated to present at the Board of Regents' meeting **June 8–9**. It is our hope that they will approve the name change from Languages Other Than English to World Languages. This will require a public comment period before acceptance. The Board's adoption of the New World Language Standards would hopefully occur in the fall. The possibility exists that the agenda for these June meetings may need to be revised due to the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, and our timeline may have to be revised.

Remote Learning – Is this our future?

Governor Cuomo has suggested that it may be in our best interests to pursue remote learning on a much wider scale - to "reimagine" education, even after the pandemic. Have your experiences this year led you to believe this is the direction we need to take? We encourage you to contact Governor Cuomo (gov.cuomo@chamber.state.ny.us), or The

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of NYS, NYS State Capitol Building, Albany, NY 12223) and share your positive and negative experiences with remote learning.

Coding vs. World Language Credit

Senate Bill S.3122, the High School Coding Opportunities and Development for Equitable Students (CODES) Act, introduced to the 115th Congress (June 2019) by NYS Senator Chris Jacobs (R, C, IP of 60th Senate District), proposed that students be permitted to take a coding class in place of a foreign language class as graduation requirement. The bill has not been reintroduced for this Congressional session.

CARES-2

Governor Andrew Cuomo has said that the state is facing a \$13–15 billion budget shortfall because of the devastating drop in revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To offset this loss, he wants to slash school funding by 20%.

The CARES-2, federal COVID stimulus package, would give critical support to NYS education. This package would provide at least \$175 billion for public pre-K through post-secondary education, without a waiver or three-year average provision.

You can contact your federal legislators, at NYSUT's Member Action Center, urging them to pass the CARES 2 stimulus for funds to preserve our public and higher education.

Member Spotlight

Language Association Journal Call for Papers

Want to share ideas or research with your colleagues but prefer the written word? Then it is time to think about submitting to the *Language Association Journal*! We welcome a range of topics, generally following the formats of teacher to teacher articles, scholarly research, and reports. The *Language Association Journal* is published two times per year with the next deadline being **September 1, 2020**. Find full details and submit your work through the [NYSAFLT publications page](#) and share all the best with your colleagues

In memorium: Virginia Levine



Virginia Levine (1947-2020) passed away on March 29. Ginny was a member of NYSAFLT for over 30 years and was involved in various committees including the Advocacy Committee, Articulation Committee and the Post-Secondary Committee. She also served on the Executive Board as 2nd and 1st vice-president.

You can learn more about Ginny's relationship with NYSAFLT in the Member Spotlight article from [December 2019](#).

A memorial fund has been established in Ginny's name at SUNY Cortland. Contributions to this fund can be made at RedDragonNetwork.org/ginny.

NYSAFLT Cards

In memory of

Virginia Levine

-Susan Barnes

Congratulations to

Mariam Abugasea-Heidt, PhD

on receiving

SUNY Brockport's Presidential Teaching Excellence Award!

-Marie Campanaro

Are there people whom you would like to recognize or honor? You can now send greetings, words of comfort, or any other sentiment with a NYSAFLT card. For a minimum of \$5.00 per card, we will print your message to indicate that a donation has been made. These will be published in the *NYSAFLT News* and will benefit the teacher travel scholarship.

Cards may be obtained by going to the donations page or by sending a check (made payable to NYSAFLT) to:

NYSAFLT Headquarters
2400 Main Street
Buffalo, NY 14214-2364

Member Spotlight

June

NYSAFLT Election (online), **June 1–30**
Executive Committee (online), **June 8**
Board of Regents Meeting, **June 8–9**
[James E. Allen Award Applications \(Post–sec\)](#), deadline **June 30**

July

[Summer Institute Scholarship Applications](#), deadline **July 3**
Board of Regents Meeting, **July 13–14**
Summer Institute (online), **July 30–August 11**

August

September Newsletter Submissions, deadline **August 1**
Executive Committee and Financial Management Meetings, **August 3–4**

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