

2021 Mead Fellows and Their Projects

Teaching Students World Language in a High Poverty Setting



When I learned about how poverty can affect language, my approach to teaching began to evolve. Learning about how poverty affects the brain and tapping into a student's mindset are often areas that are ignored. Many teachers "go by the book," as they present what they are told to, in order to perform to evaluation standards. But is this what students need? After many years of feeling defeated, I knew things needed to change. I began to look at the world of education through a different lens. Students need and crave more structure and creativity. As my mindset in teaching changed, I began to see an increase in engagement, community, and development of a growth mindset in my students. This project will allow me to continue to develop my research and create mini podcasts to provide WL educators the specific action steps to develop a growth mindset, in our students in order to engage them with our lessons. Strategies will also be shared to increase educators' awareness of the mental blocks that students of poverty face, how it affects language learning, and what activities can be provided in the WL classroom to help students develop a language.

Brenda Buckley is a teacher of ASL at PSLA@ Fowler, Syracuse City School District

Virtual Traveling Exhibit: "Gender-Related Social Justice in Hispanic World"



This proposed project is focused on addressing gender-based equity issues and challenges in Hispanic world, such as gender-based violence, discrimination related to work opportunities, gender-assumed roles within a family, or machismo, to mention a few. Students will first conduct research on a gender-based equity issue or challenge of their choice in a variety of countries within Hispanic world, and then create and present oral presentations based on their findings, accompanied by a visual they create as a contribution to the virtual "Traveling Exhibit" in support of their presentations. This collection of student artwork will be shared via printed stickers with a QR code linked to a webpage with details about this project as well as all student artwork. QR code can also be shared via social media directly. The goal is to raise awareness among Spanish language learners in the United States about gender-based equity issues and challenges present in many Hispanic countries, while enriching their vocabulary via reading and listening comprehension, as well as speaking and writing skills. This project will allow for fostering connections among students from participating schools, while implementing authentic materials to help students in their path to proficiency, as well as expanding their cultural awareness.

Martina Macakova is a Spanish Instructor at White Mountains Regional High School, Whitefield, NH

Implementing a Peer Mentorship Program for World Language Educators in Pennsylvania



In recognition of two areas of concern relative to the growth and evolution of the field of world language instruction – namely the critical shortage of world language teachers and the prevalence of non-communicative language teaching practices – this program seeks to research, design, implement, and evaluate a peer mentorship program in the state of Pennsylvania. It is expected that this project would support 1) teacher retention efforts in Pennsylvania, 2) novice world language educators in their professional and pedagogical development, and 3) elevate the status and voices of experienced teacher leaders. The program would provide resources and encourage the use of the most updated technology to facilitate the interpersonal relationship, sustained communication, exchange of resources, and support for fellow novices and experts. Lastly, intentional evaluation and data collection intervals will be incorporated in conjunction with the planning and implementation of the program to determine its efficacy. The results of the data analysis are intended to be shared with the field in an appropriate academic journal.

Dr. Rich Madel is a Spanish Teacher and the Chairperson of the Department of World Languages in the Colonial School District in Plymouth Meeting, PA.