

WITESOL NEWSLETTER



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UPCOMING EVENTS

* **WIABE Conference**

April 17-19, 2026

The [Wisconsin Association of Bilingual Education conference](#) will be in the Wisconsin Dells this spring!

* **Lunch & Learn, MKE**

Friday, April 24

WITESOL is sponsoring a FREE Lunch & Learn at South Milwaukee Public Library. To learn more and register, [visit this link](#).

* **WI Multilingual Learner Summit, CESA 2**

June 18, 2026

Join CESA 2 for a day of learning in Sun Prairie. For more information and to register, [visit the event page](#).

Welcome, Natalija!

After a successful few years under the leadership of Heather Linville, WITESOL finds itself with a new President, with Natalija Krsteva stepping into the role. Natalija is a Bilingual Resource Teacher in Verona, WI, where she teaches newcomer English courses.

While Natalija always knew she wanted to be a teacher, moving to the United States and experiencing life as an English Learner and immigrant is what moved her to work in the field of ESL. Krsteva notes, "My personal journey shaped my understanding of the linguistic, cultural, and emotional challenges multilingual students face." It's no surprise that Natalija is passionate about working with newcomers. Through her work, Natalija aims to equip her students with the academic, linguistic, and social tools necessary to thrive



both inside and outside of the classroom, while also preserving and valuing their cultural identities and home languages. Krsteva recognizes the complexity that multilingual educators face, noting that we frequently take on responsibilities, such as translating, providing social emotional support, and acting as a family liaison.

Natalija became affiliated with WITESOL in 2018 while still in college. "Once I began teaching," she says, "I knew I wanted to stay involved. I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished as an organization and grateful for the opportunity to continue advancing our mission now as president."

Message from the Editor

In an effort to bring you more high-quality content, we are trying out a new format. With that said, I am pleased to present WITESOL's first quarter newsletter of 2026. Through this bulletin, we aim to provide updates, professional opportunities, and highlight the amazing work of our members throughout the state! WITESOL exists for you; please consider emailing a story or project to be featured in our June newsletter. We would love to highlight you!



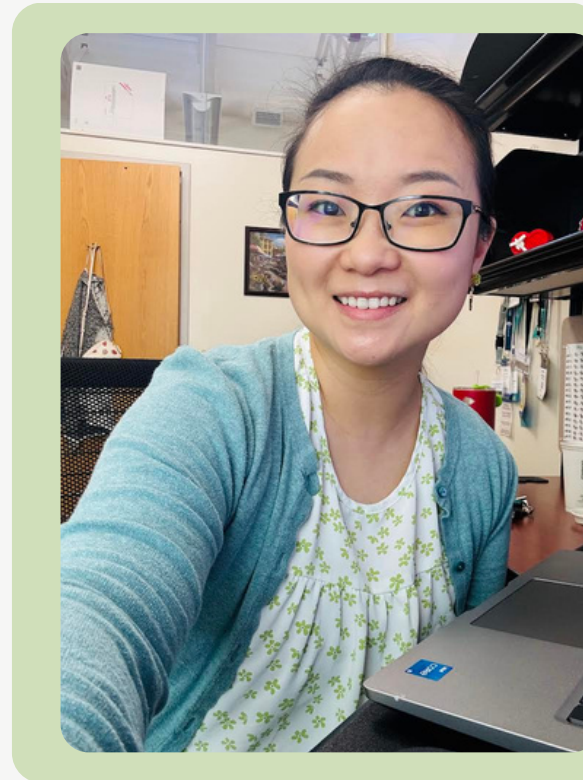
Katie Worpel
Newsletter Editor

Meet The Board

Member at Large: Jiahong Wang

We are excited to welcome Jiahong Wang to the WITESOL Board. Dr. Wang recently began her role as a TESOL professor at the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay. An immigrant and lifelong language learner herself, Jiahong is a dynamic group member who brings an important perspective and expertise to the work WITESOL does across the state of Wisconsin. Dr. Wang is also proud to be a National Board-Certified Teacher in Teaching English as a New Language. Jiahong knows three languages – Mandarin Chinese is her first language, English her second, and Spanish her third.

In her current position at UW–Green Bay, Jiahong works with pre-service and in-service teachers to help them effectively support multilingual learners in diverse educational settings. Before joining UW–Green Bay, she taught EFL in China for four years and then served as a high school newcomer ESL teacher in Kansas for eight years. Her passion lies in multilingual education and advocacy. Jiahong is thrilled to be part of the WITESOL community to learn, collaborate, and contribute. If you plan on attending the WIABE conference, be sure to attend her presentation!



Member at Large: Adeline De Angelis

We would like to extend another warm welcome to Adeline De Angelis, who was also voted onto the board at the end of last calendar year. While this is her first year on the board, Adeline has already been involved in WITESOL work; as the conference chairperson, she coordinated the schedule and sessions of last year’s fall conference. We are thrilled to have her along as a Member at Large! Dr. De Angelis is a Teaching Faculty member in ESL Education at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, where she prepares teacher candidates to support multilingual students’

success and well-being across academic contexts. Prior to moving to Wisconsin, Adeline worked in TESOL, teacher preparation, and teacher professional development in Ecuador from 2013 to 2024. She began her career in 2009 in the Philadelphia area and has an MEd from Temple University and an EdD from SIT Graduate Institute. She is passionate about multilingual pedagogies, the role of local teacher expertise in teacher education, and equity in and through language education.

Other News & Updates

Voces de la Frontera is an immigrant rights organization based in Wisconsin. Please consider visiting their website to view the services and resources they offer. Their Facebook account also actively shares updates regarding immigration activity throughout the state.

Website: <https://vdlf.org/>

Facebook: [Voces de la Frontera](#)

ICE Hotline: 1-800-427-0213

ACCESS Test Scores will be available electronically in WIDA AMS on April 27. Districts can expect to receive hard copies of score reports around May 11. The data validation window will open shortly after. For more information, visit [Wisconsin's page on WIDA's website](#).

Purposeful Pedagogy: Working with Newcomers

Working with newcomers comes with a unique set of challenges, but is incredibly rewarding! All multilingual students, particularly newcomers, are a vulnerable group, especially during uncertain or tumultuous times. Natalija Krsteva has provided points for reflection when collaborating with other educators, as it is common for some educators to feel hesitant working with multilingual students or view newcomers as the sole responsibility of the multilingual department.

- Newcomers deserve thoughtful, intentional support paired with high expectations. Collaboration is key to achieving this!
- Their success is a shared responsibility among all educators and administrators.
- As multilingual educators, we must advocate for these students and help others move away from deficit thinking and instead meet students where they are.
- Not having learned English previously or not having attended a US school is not a deficiency—it is simply a different starting point. What skills and knowledge can they leverage in this new learning environment?

When provided with the right support, multilingual students consistently rise to high expectations and demonstrate tremendous resilience and growth.

Advocacy Corner

Legislative Days

Eight WITESOL Members engaged in advocacy work during Legislative Days on February 9–11. The main ask was to reinstate the Wisconsin in-state tuition law, which was previously in place in 2009–2010. Our WITESOL members met with 14 legislators (8 representatives & 6 senators). While most of the legislators were receptive, it will be an ongoing effort by WITESOL and other educators to reinstate this law.

Book Club

This semester's virtual book club, facilitated by Melanie Schneider, is reading *The School I Deserve: Six Young Refugees and Their Fight for Equality in America* (Jo Napolitano, 2022, Beacon Press). If you'd like more information on reading assignments and monthly meeting dates, please email witesolboard@gmail.com.

If you are interested in joining in the Advocacy efforts, please contact the Advocacy Chair, Melanie Schneider.

Contact the Board

President: Natalija Krsteva

Past President: Heather Linville

President Elect: Chelsea Olsen

Secretary: Matt McParker

Treasurer: Marcia Mihdawi

Advocacy Chair: Melanie Schneider

Member at Large: Adeline De Angelis

Member at Large: Maria Hickman

Member at Large: Jiahong Wang

Member at Large: Katie Worpel

To contact any board member directly, please send an email to witesolboard@gmail.com. Thank you!





Teacher Feature

Spreading Kindness Through Coffee

For the third consecutive year, multilingual students at Belleville Elementary School partnered with the local coffee shop to spread kindness over Valentine’s Day weekend. Throughout the beginning of February, students crafted coffee sleeves with messages of love, kindness, and encouragement in multiple languages.

Though the project is simple, it has several benefits. First, the writing and drawing serves as a quick brain-break for students while highlighting their creativity and the beauty of their home languages. The partnership also supports a local business in the community. The district shares the story on social media, which hopefully leads to a few more customers for the coffee shop. Finally, it’s free, since the coffee sleeves are provided by the coffee shop. They’re small and easy to transport, which are added bonuses.

This project could be paired with any occasion, such as homecoming or the end of the school year too!

“What started as a small writing project has turned into a kindness campaign in our community. We are grateful to the Lingonberry Llama for being an inclusive community partner!”
 –Katie Worple, Belleville Elementary School

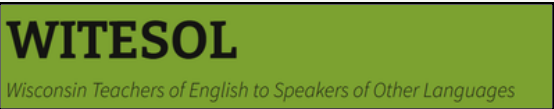
What’s on Deck?



Thank you to everyone who submitted work to our annual Writing and Art Contest! Winners will be announced in early April. We will share some of the winning submissions in our next newsletter.



Several WITESOL Board members will attend the TESOL International conference in Salt Lake City, Utah in March. Adeline De Angelis and Jiahong Wang will attend the conference and represent the WITESOL chapter. Chelsea Olsen will lead a session at the conference as well. Best of luck!



The WITESOL Board Retreat will take place this spring, as board members engage in conference planning and more.

In our June newsletter, you can expect preliminary conference information, more profiles of current board members, and an exciting update to the WITESOL Writing & Art Contest.

SEND US A STORY!

Would you like to be featured in an upcoming newsletter? Share a project, teacher tip, or other ideas! Submit your story and a photo to witesolboard@gmail.com.