

WITESOL NEWSLETTER


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UPCOMING EVENTS

* **Writing and Art Contest** October 9, 2026

All submissions for the WITESOL Writing & Art Contest will be due on Oct. 9. Please see more information about the change in this newsletter.

* **WIDA Conference** September 15-18, 2026

The WIDA Annual Conference is offered in three formats- in person, virtually, or by recording only. Visit the [WIDA Website](#) for more information.

* **WITESOL Fall Conference** November, 14, 2026

WITESOL is excited to host its annual conference in Verona, WI. More information is included on page 4 of the newsletter.

The (Fall)Writing & Art Contest is Here!

Welcome back to school! The first few weeks of school are filled with excitement as we learn about our students and begin creating our new classroom communities. Throughout this time, we hope you will consider including the WITESOL Writing and Art Contest in your learning environments.

If you're familiar with the contest, you may be used to submitting student work in early spring. At the board retreat in April, the team discussed shifting the contest to the beginning of the school year for several reasons. First, we hope the prompts will support you in getting to know your students. Second, we hope it won't interfere with an assessment window, final tests or projects, etc. We also wanted to align the contest with the conference in November.



Photo of last year's Grand Prize Winner

Details regarding submitting student work and volunteering as a judge can be found on the following page. We hope you'll join us!

Message from the Editor

Hello and welcome! I'm happy you're here. On behalf of the WITESOL Board, I would like to welcome you to another school year. While we know there will be bumps in the road, we wish you a safe and successful new year. I would also like to thank you for being a member with us and hope that this newsletter feels like an added benefit of your membership. It's a pleasure to prepare the newsletter for you and I hope you find it valuable. I look forward to connecting with you at the conference in November!



Katie Worple
Newsletter Editor

Fall Conference Registration is Now Open!

Member at Large and Conference Chair, Adeline De Angelis, has been hard at work all summer preparing for our fall conference. At this time, we have several sessions geared for each of the following strands: K-12, Adult Education, Higher Education, and General Interest.

We are also thrilled to announce our two **speakers: Jo Napolitano** is our keynote speaker, and the author of one of last year's Advocacy Book Club book studies, *The School I Deserve: Six Young Refugees and Their Fight for Equality in America*. **Alondra Garcia**, President of WIABE, is our plenary speaker.

Our Treasurer, Marcia Mihdawi, has also been working on securing sponsors. While sponsorships are still rolling in, WITESOL would like to thank the following sponsors for committing to our conference:

- Cambridge Press
- HMH
- Anton
- Benchmark Education
- Loyola Press

Interested in attending? For more information, you can view pricing options [on our website](#) for full time & part time educators, as well as student pricing.

EARLY BIRD PRICING

Register by **September 15** to receive a discounted price AND a special gift at the conference.

We aim to keep our conference affordable. Already a member? If you register by the 15th, your rate is \$115. Not a member yet? You can bundle a conference registration and membership for \$145 for year-long benefits!

NEW THIS YEAR: GROUP RATES

Planning to attend as a group? If you register five people, you will receive a complimentary registration for a sixth attendee. More information is on the website and registration form.

(Fall) Writing & Art Contest

WITESOL is accepting student entries for the 2026 (Fall) WITESOL Writing and Art Contest! From now until **Friday, October 9**, have your ML students write an essay or poem, or create a work of art, that fits the theme "**Challenge(s) You Have Overcome.**"

Educators can submit student entries through the following form: [WITESOL Writing and Art Contest](#).

Student age level categories are K-2nd, 3rd-5th, 6th-8th, 9th-12th, and Adult. Winners will receive a CASH PRIZE, have their work published in a booklet, and will also be highlighted at the fall conference in November.

To see winners from previous years that might help inspire your students for the contest, head to the [contest page on our website](#).

WITESOL is also seeking several volunteers to help with reviewing and rating writing and art entries for the Writing and Art Contest. Entries will be ready to be reviewed in mid- to late-October. This is usually a commitment that takes an hour or less, can be completed through email, and is super fun as you get to see the great artwork and writing of our amazing multilingual students!

If you plan to have your students enter the contest, please indicate at what level, so you can be assigned to judge a different age category.

If interested, please send an email to witesolcontest@gmail.com. Thank you for helping to make this the great activity it is each year!

Meet the Board

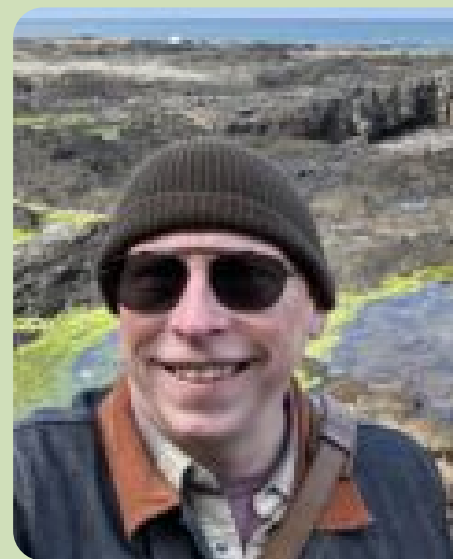
Secretary: Matt McParker

Dr. Matt McParker has been connected with WITESOL since 2019. After attending the annual conference, he knew this was a group of people he wanted to stay connected with. Since then, Matt has been on the board as a Member at Large and as the current Secretary.

Dr. McParker currently teaches in the education department at the University of Wisconsin La Crosse. There, he teaches Social Studies Methods for elementary- and middle-school ages. He also supports preservice teachers through their elementary field experience and supervises student teachers. Matt has also taught TESOL courses. It's no surprise that he is very passionate about supporting MLs in the regular education setting.

Prior to coming to Wisconsin, Matt served in AmeriCorps for two years, working with elementary schools in rural western Oregon, where he worked with students in a migrant camp. From there, he worked for 13 years in a middle school with over 35 different languages! To best serve these students, he learned all he could about TESOL.

Matt really enjoys witnessing the expertise amongst his students, whether that is preservice teachers or multilingual students. Dr. McParker writes, "Someone once told me, 'everyone you will ever meet knows something you don't.' In my experience, working with multilingual learners made that quote tangible." Here at WITESOL, we are so grateful for the expertise Dr. McParker brings to our organization!



Member at Large: Katie Worpel



Katie Worpel is currently a Member at Large, with her main role being the Newsletter Editor. Katie has been a member of WITESOL for several years, finding value in the professional development and networking opportunities, especially as an educator in a rural district.

Katie first became interested in working with MLs when she was a student employee at UWSP's International Students Office & ESL Department. Meeting, befriending, and learning from people from all over the world changed her life. Still, creating relationships with families and students is one of her favorite parts of being a ML teacher.

Katie is currently the Multilingual Program Coordinator at the School of Belleville and directly works with MLs in

4K-6th grade. For several years, the ML Department was a department of 1, which is why Katie craved being a part of a group of professionals in her field. As the caseload and ML Department continues to grow, WITESOL continues to be a source of joy, friendship, inspiration, and support.

If Katie could give one piece of advice to new educators, it would be to find their support group. Twelve years ago, she was hired as the first ESL-certified teacher in the district and laid the groundwork for the current ML Program. Katie is so grateful for the steady support from the CESA 2 EL Network, WITESOL, her Masters Degree cohort, and more recently, a Rural ML Teacher Network. She looks forward to gaining another circle of support as she works towards her National Board certification.

Advocacy Days in Washington, D.C.



Our president, Natalija Krsteva, joined TESOL and NABE members in Washington, D.C. in June to advocate for multilingual learners before members of Congress. Natalija, along with WIABE President Alondra Garcia and other TESOL and NABE affiliates, spent a full day on Capitol Hill, meeting with Wisconsin representatives as well as

both Wisconsin senators Tammy Baldwin and Ron Johnson. Natalija and Alondra had productive conversations with all the Congress members they met and reported that support for multilingual programs and services was strong overall.

Story and photos submitted by Natalija Krsteva



Purposeful Pedagogy: A Series by UW Green Bay Students

In collaboration with Dr. Jiahong Wang, a WITESOL Member at Large and professor at UW Green Bay, we are excited to use this corner of the newsletter to feature projects created by students in both undergraduate and graduate-level teacher preparation courses.

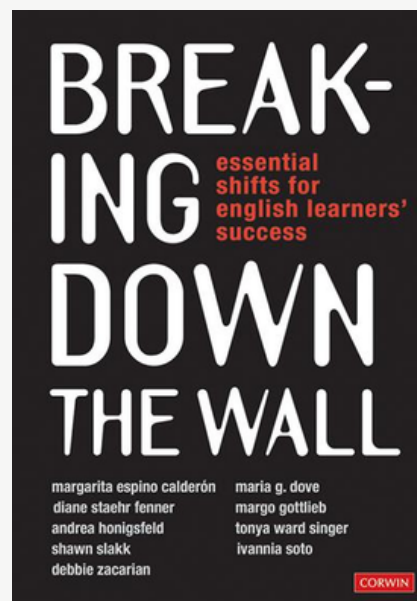
Coursework will be highlighted from two different courses. The first will focus on supporting multilingual students in the PK-12 classroom, focusing on strategies grounded in key theories and methodologies that support teachers' abilities to building up and develop students' academic English proficiency while making content accessible in all disciplines.

The second course is all about disciplinary literacy and systemic functional linguistics within content instruction. Highlighted projects will explore literacy development, academic tasks in the four language domains, English Language Development standards, and more.

Thank you in advance to Dr. Wang and the students who are generously sharing their work with us! We hope you find this collection of projects both affirming and inspiring!

Advocacy Corner: Book Club Begins

The Advocacy Book Club will start back up soon for first semester! The book is titled "**Breaking Down the Wall**" and is linked here.



Meetings will take place on the second Thursday of each month from 4:15 pm – 5:30 pm. The dates are outlined below:

- September 10
- October 8
- November 12
- December 10

The group will discuss the **first two chapters** in September. Future assignments will be discussed at the first meeting. If you are interested in joining, please contact the Advocacy Chair, **Melanie Schneider**. She can pass along the virtual meeting link.

Email: schneidm@uww.edu

Purposeful Pedagogy, Continued: Welcoming Students to School

The beginning of a new school year is full of a range of emotions for educators, families, and students alike. As you begin the year, here are a few tips to welcoming students to school.

Representation & Identity Matter

- **Say their name.** Creating a welcoming environment begins with a smile and greeting students by name. Using a tool like saymyname.io, educators can search for how to pronounce a student's name, or better yet, have students record their own virtual name cards. These cards can be shared amongst staff to ensure all staff are addressing the student correctly.
- **Say your name.** Ensure that students know who you are and know both your name and the names of other teachers and staff members in the building. Do they only see the art teacher once a week? Do they know who to ask for help in the cafeteria? You can use a name recording tool as well, and could also have a picture chart that include staff photos and names.
- **Know their language and culture.** Work with your program coordinator or a secretary to review Home Language Survey data for the kids in your school or on your caseload. You can use this as a starting point to build relationships with families, and it will help with the two subsequent bullet points!
- **Work with the librarian.** Libraries (and librarians!) are full of treasures. Chances are, librarians have a budget and/or common school funds that they can use to purchase books in other languages, and/or that reflect a variety of cultures so all students can see themselves represented in your school. They could also potentially help with finding and funding language learning games and tools for the library. Bonus: Keep your public library in the loop, too!
- **Decorate the walls & halls.** Flags, symbols, realia, photos & collaborative posters – there are so many ways to build a visually-inclusive space. But, don't feel like you have to take on this work alone! Work with a committee of students and/or staff members, enlist the help of family volunteers, or see if any community groups or local businesses would be interested in sharing any culturally or linguistically relevant ideas, decorations, or resources.
- **Participate in the Writing & Art Contest!** Use the prompt to get to know your students a little bit better. 😊

WITESOL

Wisconsin Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

Contact the Board

President: Natalija Krsteva

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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 Worple

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



Send us a Story!

Would you like to be featured in an upcoming newsletter? Share a project, teacher tip, family engagement ideas & strategies, or other ideas! We know there is amazing work being done in all corners of the state; we would love to highlight you!

Please consider submitting your story and a photo to witesolboard@gmail.com.