**Jump into the Pool and Swim: Using the target language in early language classrooms**

**Submitted by Lois Gendreau**

In July several members of RIFLA attended the NNELL Summer Institute 2015 hosted by Glastonbury Foreign Language Department in Connecticut. There were fifty teachers from around the country in attendance which allowed for great networking opportunities for the RI teachers.

ACTFL president Jacque Bott Van Houten gave some specific uses of the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements in the Early Language Classroom including daily posts of short, attainable statements, parent conferences where students tell their parents what they are able to do, and reporting to administration in the form of data and SLO’s. She challenged us to set up proficiency targets, use backward design, and connect the three modes of communication in each Integrated Performance Assessments. So that we don’t get overwhelmed, she suggested we begin with one unit this year!

Christi Moraga, creator of the RHYME celebration, encouraged the use of small groups for the presentational mode of assessment. She also reminded us the importance of teaching Intercultural Competence. Our task to help our students interact effectively with people of different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds includes all different people groups, not just those of the target language we are using for instruction. When we teach about family members, we may show pictures from around the world to open the eyes of our young students. Sister cities are another resource for intercultural connections that we can tap.

There were several presentations around the topic of advocacy for early start programs including a short video from LEAD with Languages found here: <http://www.leadwithlanguages.org/> . Diane Denoon, World Language Coordinator in a large district in Kansas, showed us how everything we do is advocacy, including the use of social media, an ongoing conversation that doesn’t stop, parent communication, visibility in our schools, and making our classes engaging so that our students become our best advocates.

Barbara Jones from the publisher Santillana gave some specific examples of using infographics from the target language to increase our informational reading as stressed in the Common Core State Standards. Teachers shared some Apps and websites like McDonald's nutrition labels in Spanish, Earth101 app, and Gapminder.

A very powerful presentation by Laura Terrill called the Power of the Image left a great impact on us. She shared how there must be emotion for language to stick. The picture of a cacao with the caption *The end of chocolate?* would stimulate a strong emotion that leads to the desire to discover more about what is happening to the chocolate industry in Costa Rica.

On the topic of using the target language in the classroom, Terrill gave a persuasive metaphor. A swimming coach who keeps a child on the side of the pool and simply *talks* about swimming for most of the class will not allow practice. Children must jump into the pool in order to learn to swim. Let’s make sure that our students have the opportunity to jump into the great pool of language learning 90-100% of every day in order to foster global competency.