

Fall 2005



ESL Newsletter

PDE Moving Ahead with New TransACT Training

Welcome to the TransACT Compliance & Communication Center!

This is the greeting you will see once your district subscribes to TransACT, an easy-to-use online service for translating important documents into different languages. This is at NO cost to all school districts and charter schools in Pennsylvania, thanks to an initiative from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. This includes both general parent notifications and specific No Child Left Behind (NCLB) parent notifications, which will enable your district and school to communicate professionally and consistently with families, thereby ensuring compliance with the NCLB and Office of Civil Rights parent notification requirements. Because the documents are available in multiple

languages, you can communicate with parents in the languages they understand!

The key here, of course, is that dozens of important documents that you may need to send home—such as the Home Language Survey, medical forms, special education forms, field trip forms—can be sent home in a parent's native language, so that the district is fully compliant with all state and federal laws. For example, do you want to send a parent the Annual Notice of Supplemental Services for Title I Schools in Arabic? No problem! Just click on the correct form. That's it!

In September PDE held trainings to teach users to how to use TransAct, but if no one from your district was able to attend, you can still enroll. However, you will need some help. Please contact Leonard Shurin, Staff and Curriculum

Developer, and he can assist you in the enrollment process and in the use of the TransACT website.

Once your district is enrolled, you can enroll others at your district to use the site. According to TransAct's records, indicate the most popular form is the one for Notification of Head Lice to Parent/Guardian (gross but true!). Certainly, one would want to permit the school nurse to be able to access that form in the many languages available.



What Languages Will be Available for Translation?

PDE has advised us that, initially, not all of the LEP languages used across the state will be available, but that the association with TransACT is just a beginning, and more will be added as time goes by. The

most commonly found languages will be available for translation, such as: Albanian, Anharic, Arabic, Bosnian, Cambodian, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Lao, Portuguese, Pun-

jabi, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Tigrigna, Urdu, and Vietnamese. You can go to the website and see for yourself at: www.transact.com

Did you know that.....

- In 50 major U.S. cities, the majority of public school students are classified as minorities?
- In the New York City school system, 35% of public school students are classified as LEP?
- One out of every three Americans are from a minority population (Asian, Black, Hispanic, etc.)?
- In the last ten years, public school students who are LEP have increased by 250%?



Although we may be remote from the cities and states that are experiencing exponential growth in LEP students, the U.S. Census Bureau has predicted that for Bedford, Blair, Cambria, and Somerset counties, the increase in LEP students will be around 100% each year!

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“Teacher Feature”: Greater Johnstown School District’s Mary Kay Milavec

Mary Kay is a respected and well-liked teacher in the Greater Johnstown School District, where she has taught for 36 years. She is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, earned a Master’s Equivalency, and has taught first, second, and third grade. Mary Kay currently teaches Instructional Support and ESL at West Side Elementary School. “I am very proud of the students, faculty, administration, and diversity of the district,” she notes.

Mary Kay now has two ELL students from Puerto Rico—one in second and one in third grade—and last year she had a student from Georgia, a country south of the Russia. Mary Kay adds, “I look forward to each day to my time with them. You definitely bond with these students. I think you become not only their instructor but their advocate. I think the parents of the students appreciate the concern you have for their children. The changes in my career of IST and ESL have definitely revitalized me!”

Mary Kay has lots of praise for IU8’s ESL Program Specialist course. “I thoroughly



National Flag of Puerto Rico

enjoy being involved with the ESL program through IU8! The content of the course has prepared me for my work with the ESL students. Also, I have been warmly accepted by the younger teachers in the ESL Program class. The rapport among the class members, including the instructor, has been fabulous!”

When not teaching school or attending the ESL Program Specialist class, Mary Kay enjoys time at home with her husband, Frank, and their two pet beagles, Stumpy and Domenica (Italian for Sunday). She also has 14 goldfish and koi, a type of Japanese carp.

IU8 Hosting 2005-2006 ESL Videoconference Series

IU8 is pleased to serve as a local host site for the 2005-2006 PDE ESL Videoconference Series. The first one, held on September 20, was attended by 50 participants. The October 11 date was cancelled by PDE. These are the scheduled dates for the remainder of the school year:

- November 8, 2005
- December 13, 2005
- January 10, 2006
- February 14, 2006
- March 14, 2006
- April 11, 2006

Topics are listed at the PDE (www.pde.state.pa.us) and PaTTAN (www.pattan.k12.pa.us) websites approximately four weeks in advance.

To register online, visit the PaTTAN website (www.pattan.k12.pa.us).

ALL of the videoconferences are scheduled at our IU8 Johnstown site, located on the second floor of the Greater Johnstown Career and Technology (GJCTC) building in the Richland area. Directions to that location may be found on the IU8 website (www.iu08.org).

I urge all ESL administrators, coordinators, and teachers to attend as many of these as possible, which are conveniently located in our own “backyard,” and also to show PDE that we are working hard to keep up-to-date with ESL!