

Learning and Leading:
A Saturday Volunteer Program for Newcomers
featuring Newcomer and Volunteer Student Panel

COSA 2016 State English Learners Alliance Conference

"Diversity, Language Learning and Student Success"

Hilton Eugene, March 11, 2016

11:35 - 12:30 Hellman Room

Staff Presenters:

Barbara Page, SNA Lead ELL Specialist
Noelia Ruiz, SNA Lead Bilingual Facilitator
Molly Anderson, SNA ELL Specialist
Ana Bermúdez, SNA Bilingual Facilitator
Michelle Espada, SNA ELL Specialist
David Salgado, SNA Bilingual Facilitator



Panelists

High School Volunteers:

Van Le
Raul Rodriguez Luna
Jaqueline Hernandez Perez
Antoni Lemus Perez
Paola Michi Quezada
Monika Monterrosas,
Valeria Vera Sanchez
Yuan Zhang

Current & Former Newcomers:

Alfredo Bravo Flores
Esmeralda Bravo Flores
Karime Esqueda Romero
Battol Saad
OmAlbanin Saad
Aisha Saleh
Faiza Saleh
Chenxi (Ginny) Zhang



“The volunteers encourage the students as much as they teach them. They’re role models of how to learn the language and succeed in a new country. Es como una cadena.” (It’s like a chain reaction.)

--- José Bravo Rodríguez, Saturday Newcomer Academy parent

SESSION DESCRIPTION: In this session, student panelists and presenters will discuss how an innovative Saturday Newcomer Academy in the Beaverton School District brings together Newcomer English learners and high school volunteers. Panelists will tell their own stories of adjustment to a new school and language, describe how they support each others’ learning, and explain how volunteer tutoring can be mutually beneficial.

The Saturday Newcomer Academy (SNA) began in at Meadow Park Middle School in 2013 and has now expanded to grades 5-12 district-wide, including a dedicated team of volunteer tutors from nearby high schools. For our district’s many newcomers from around the world, coming to a welcoming classroom filled with talking, laughing and learning has become a Saturday morning ritual which helps to accelerate language learning and ease the adjustment to a new country.

The SNA started with the goal of focused interaction as a means of supporting English language acquisition for the newcomer students (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; Foster & Ohta, 2005; Swain, Brooks, & Tocalli-Beller, 2002; Walqui, 2006). Maximizing their learning is urgent since they will have double the work (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007) to catch up in English as well as master academic content. We soon began to notice other benefits emerge as the high school volunteers used their own multilingual and multicultural skills while helping to scaffold learning and ease the cultural adjustment of the newcomers. By acting as more-capable guides to academic English and the school experience, the volunteers’ own academic identities are strengthened and reinforced (Manyak, 2004; Orelana, Dorner, & Pulido, 2003; Suárez-Orozco, Pimentel & Martin, 2009).

The SNA leverages the bilingual, bicultural talents of volunteers and the determination and energy of newcomer students and families, creating a cycle of success. In stark contrast to deficit views which position English learners and their communities as linguistically and culturally limited, our program capitalizes on the funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) English learners bring to our school district: their knowledge of multiple languages, their experiences as global travelers, and their skills in navigating diverse social systems. Our session will highlight the inspiring voices of these young newcomers and volunteers who show up early on Saturday mornings to learn, to contribute to their community and to connect across cultures.

REFERENCES

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