



## **Practices, People, and Programs That Inspire – Introduction**

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Everyone seems to be looking for the magic bullet that will propel foreign language teaching to a level of professionalism that is beyond reproach and that insulates the field from criticism, personnel layoffs, and general malaise. Indeed, although No Child Left Behind and the National Defense Initiative, both educational initiatives of the George W. Bush era, promoted the importance of foreign languages, operationalization of these policies has been neither evenly implemented nor truly supportive of foreign languages. Our profession remains weary and wary the watchful eyes of legislatures, at the state level, and district officers, at the local level, who see cutting foreign language programs as an easy way to repair years of budgetary mismanagement.

Given the fiscal realities of the State of New York and, in fact, the nation as a whole, and the challenges for survival that Languages Other Than English (LOTE) departments face, this year's New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers (NYS AFLT) theme, People, Practices, and Programs That Inspire, is especially appropriate. By focusing on the real-life differences that LOTE professionals make, NYSAFLT is helping to illuminate the meaningful ways in which our profession contributes not only to personal enlightenment but also

to the economic development, or perhaps recovery, that is key to social justice and high standards of living for all.

Within the pages of the Annual Conference Publication (ACP), five authors share their thoughts on a variety of aspects of program development and pedagogy that can help begin conversations about the continued vitality of our profession. Juan Antonio Thomas, Assistant Professor of Spanish at Utica College, shares his thoughts on the effect of online, interactive video series on the development of linguistic and cultural skills. Éliane McKee, formerly of Buffalo State College, speaks eloquently and directly to the need to begin foreign language learning at early ages. Chris Sams, Assistant Professor of Linguistics at Stephen F. Austin University (Texas), discusses his conceptualization of the best practices in foreign language teaching. Harry Tuttle, an experienced foreign language teacher and methodologist at many learning levels, offers two articles: Peer Formative Assessment Improves Student Fluency and Modern Language Mobile Learning Apps. The articles present unique perspectives on peer-to-peer interaction and the new face of language learning technology, respectively. And finally, Virginia Stelk, a retired New York teacher who supervises student teachers for the University of Southern Maine, discusses the value that retired LOTE teachers, with years of experience in the field, can add to university foreign language education programs.

As the editors of the ACP, we are fortunate to have received manuscripts that speak directly to the conference theme and the continuing challenges that face our profession. We trust that each of these articles will inform your own work and provide food for thought as we consider the people, practices, and programs that truly make a difference in the LOTE environment.