

Project—Based Learning in the Russian Language Classroom

John R. Rook, Smith Middle School, Glastonbury, Connecticut

Introduction to Project—Based Learning

On March 25, 2022, ACTR offered a webinar on project-based learning (PBL) in pre-college and college Russian language classrooms to member teachers. Project-based learning (PBL) or project-based instruction is an instructional approach focused on giving students the opportunity to develop their own knowledge and skills through engaging projects, designed around challenges and problems they may encounter in the real world. As world language teachers, we can all state that our students complete projects every year in our classes, but what is the difference between a regular project and that of project-based learning?

Project-based learning is much more than just having our students complete a project in the world language classroom. The primary differences between PBL and traditional projects can be found in the process of implementation and the application of world language standards. In a PBL project, students are required to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex problem or challenge, typically with a more deep and sustained focus on the task at hand.

With typical classroom projects such as an Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA), teachers assign tasks in which students are required to demonstrate their linguistic skills and content learning after they complete a required amount of learning activities and formative assessments. In this case, the project is a culminating event, happening at the end of a traditional unit and only after all student learning has already taken place. The knowledge and skills taught in the traditional unit are not always needed to complete the project, and the project itself does not typically reflect all student learning. Often, the project has no real-world connection for the students and once it is complete, the project is no longer used for any other academic purpose. In addition, most assessment of student learning has already taken place, in the form of quizzes and tests, with a project reflecting a few, if any, of the learning outcomes.

In this case of traditional projects, the majority of the learning takes place prior to the project even being started. In contrast, a PBL project can be thought of as “learning by doing.” As a result, students develop deep content knowledge as well as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills. A PBL unit gives students a clear “why” from the start, whereas traditional units give their “why” at the end with a culminating project. In PBL, an authentic purpose drives student learning. Students then apply their learning throughout the PBL unit. In a traditional teaching unit, learning takes place but application is not determined until the end.

Elements of Project—Based Learning.

The traditional and essential components of PBL can be summarized as follows:

Challenging Problem - A PBL project is always constructed around a meaningful problem to be solved, question to be answered, or challenge to be addressed. A well-crafted question, problem, or challenge allows students to elaborate and explore throughout the learning process. Furthermore, a compelling project is more likely to increase motivation and engagement. Students can also be given the opportunity to identify a topic that is of interest or relevant to them.

Sustained Student Inquiry - Students working on a PBL project engage in an extended and rigorous research process that includes inquiry, research, and application. It requires students to think critically about the essential question, problem, or challenge. The majority of PBL projects take longer than a few days to complete. Students need adequate time to locate quality resources, apply their learning, synthesize results, and develop a solution.

Authenticity and Relevance - An authentic project involves a real-world context, includes 21st century skills (critical think-

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ing, creativity, collaboration, communication, information literacy, media literacy, technology literacy, flexibility, leadership, initiative, productivity, social skills), and considers the relevant concerns, interests, and issues in the lives of students. It should connect students to other people and communities, thus creating a unique learning experience. At the start of the PBL unit, students either receive or co-design a rubric outlining what tasks or products they will have to create or complete.

Student Voice and Choice - Project-Based Learning gives students the opportunity to make decisions about what they create and how to express their ideas. This element of autonomy in student learning encourages a sense of ownership and accountability, wherein students, as creators, will make decisions and share their learning with peers and a greater audience.

Reflection and Review - A well-designed PBL project will include adequate time for reflection. Time for reflection gives students a chance to self-assess, make changes and grow from the learning experience.

Critique and Revision - PBL encourages students to give, receive, and apply feedback to revise and improve their final product. The critique and revision process also includes opportunities for peer interaction and collaboration.

Public Product - The final step of the PBL project is for to students make their work public by sharing, explaining, or presenting it to an audience outside of the classroom. In this manner, it allows for increased communication with parents and the outside community.

It should also be noted that a PBL project should be based on the existing world language standards for Russian with regard to content knowledge, skills, and proficiency levels.

What are the benefits of PBL?

Many times, traditional learning projects never venture beyond the classroom. Project-based learning connects students to the world beyond the classroom and prepares them to meet challenges in the real world, similar to what professionals have to do on a daily basis.

Instead of short-term memorization and summative reproduction, project-based learning provides students with an opportunity to engage deeply with the content, resulting in a more long-term retention. PBL also improves student attitudes toward their own education by keeping them engaged and motivated at all times. Student learning that is centered on a central question or problem leads to a desire to understand the answer or solution, and provides for a more meaningful outcome for them.

Because of its focus on 21st-century skills, the PBL model also enhances students' technology abilities and digital literacy. Project-based learning helps students develop teamwork and problem-solving skills, along with the ability to

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Уважаемые коллеги!



We are grateful that the new 2022-2023 school year started normally. In New York City schools, all students returned to the regular classrooms and to the regular schedule of after-school activities. The only difference from the pre-Covid era is that many students continue wearing masks in the New York public school classrooms. It is still hard not to see the students' smiles and hard to hear their pronunciation of Russian words. Everything is back in Staten Island Technical High School classrooms: thirty-four students per class learning Russian, preparing for the NYS examination in world languages, and practicing for NEWL in Russian.

As educators, we understand that online learning brought not only a completely new experience for students and teachers but also a significant impact on students' life and study. We continue offering our students not only learning materials and teaching the language but also seeing the study of Russian as one of the many components of social-emotional support. The war in Ukraine brought to our Russian classrooms a new reality. This political situation affected the Russian classroom talk about traditions and holidays.

Our organization, the American Council of Teachers of Russian, continues helping to answer many questions related to teaching and learning all aspects of the Russian Language and Russian culture. The Teachers' Lounge remains welcoming to all ACTR members on Fridays twice a month for professional discussions. If you would like to suggest a topic for discussion, please e-mail Irina Dubinina at idubinin@brandeis.edu, John Rook at RookJ@glastonburyus.org, or Olga Klimova at vok1@pitt.edu.

On October 1, 2022, the ACTR Board of Directors had an annual meeting in Zoom. The Board of Directors discussed the implementation of the new initiatives and reports of the ACTR standing committees. Currently, the following committees are working to serve members of the organization:

Bylaws Committee

Membership Committee

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEAI) Committee

Editorial Board, ACTR Newsletter

Editorial Board, Russian Language Journal

Professional Development Committee – Teachers' Lounges / Webinars

Public Relations Committee – social media

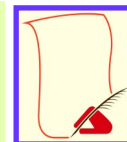
Web Services Committee

National Russian Essay Contest Committee (HS Level)

National Post-Secondary Russian Essay Contest Committee

Olympiada of Spoken Russian Committee

ACTR President's Corner СЛОВО ПРЕЗИДЕНТА



Olympiada Materials Revision Committee

Pre-college/Postsecondary Bridge-Building Taskforce

Russian Scholar Laureate Award Committee (for HS students)

Post-Secondary Russian Scholar Laureate Award Committee

Service Award Committee

Pre-College Excellence in Teaching Awards Committee

Post-Secondary Excellence in Teaching Awards Committee

Excellence Award for Graduate Student Instructors Committee

Please contact the ACTR Board Secretary John Rook RookJ@glastonburyus.org if you would like to participate in the work of the committees or have recommendations or suggestions for them.

The Olympiada Materials Revision Committee is looking for your experience using new and updated materials. You can contact the Chair Mara Sukholutskaya at msukholu@ecok.edu.

We invite all ACTR members to visit the organization's web page actr.org for information on our programs, the Olympiada of Spoken Russian materials, awards, and opportunities for professional development. You can also find information on the *Slavic Honor Society (SLAVA)* and the *Dobro Slovo*.

The ACTR Nomination Committee welcomes nominations and self-nominations for the Board of Directors; please use the organizational website to submit it and note the deadline of **December 14** for nominations.

The ACTR Annual Membership meeting will take place in **February 2023**. The membership meeting date will be posted on our website, as well as a link for registration to attend the meeting via Zoom.

Поздравляем с наступающими праздниками! Желаем всего самого наилучшего!

Nataliya Ushakova, President ACTR

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communicate effectively with others. The collaborative nature of projects also reinforces social and emotional learning (SEL) being implemented in many schools around the US, especially during the time of Covid.

What are some challenges to PBL?

For teachers and students, PBL might present some problems at first. PBL requires the teacher to coach more and instruct less, to embrace interdisciplinary learning instead of remaining in one subject area. It also requires that teachers become more comfortable with uncertainty and discovery during the learning process. For many instructors, PBL is a stark contrast to the more traditional form of education that they experience. For students, it requires more independence and accountability during the learning process. There might be a period of adjustment, on both the part of educator and student, but the academic benefits will be visible in the short and long term.

Examples of PBL from the March 25

ACTR Webinar

John Rook –

Smith Middle School, Glastonbury, CT.

For my PBL presentation, I highlighted a project (Наш городской центр - *Our City Center*) that I have my novice students complete in 7th grade Russian. The essential question for this project concerns what one can find or do in the center of a city or town. By the end of this project, students can name key places in a city or town and identify them on a map, in addition to describing such places and naming related products, services and activities. Ultimately, student groups are required to design and lay out a city/town center with streets, businesses, services, green spaces, etc. Prior to embarking on this project, students learn about and practice with basic tourist maps of downtown areas in St. Petersburg and Moscow, Russia. As novice learners, they are required to create a list of typical places and sights that they view when working with the Russian maps. Through backwards design, the acquisition of key vocabulary and grammatical structures is scaffolded through an array of diverse learning activities. For city vocabulary, students are provided with a blank map grid and asked to watch a YouTube video and layout of typical city places in a logical manner in Russian. They also practice with forming nominative plurals by listing traditional products and services that can be found in various city places. Another scaffolding activity concerns reading an authentic text about a Russian city (Novgorod)

and identifying key places in the center. Other activities include dialogues, online shopping, menu ordering, and designing a store front/window.

After acquiring the necessary background knowledge, students are then able to successfully start on the design and creation of their city center. In small project groups, students collaborate in a creative manner to name, lay out, and populate their city center posters. Once this product is finished, students will use their poster to create other products that will be shared with their peers and family. These include a video-advertisement and promotional flier to market their city to potential tourist and residents, as well as an interview about their city center. Technology is incorporated into the project with students using their I pads to perform research and access authentic videos, websites, and such applications as Flipgrid, Puppet Pals, and Voice Memo to create products. The entire project is designed to last 3-4 weeks and culminates with students completing a self-reflection about their work, voting for the best city center in the class and sharing their work with family, friends and school personnel.

Nataliya Ushakova –

Staten Island Technical High School, NY

Nataliya Ushakova presented on a PBL project entitled, “*I can learn and teach a structure of the Russian language.*” To start on the project, Nataliya’s students had to choose a partner and a topic related to a grammatical structure in the Russian language. As a final product, students had to create a Power-Point presentation detailing the main functions and grammar rules, comprised of seven slides, seven concepts, a seven-minute presentation, as well as fourteen examples as class exercises. Each group member worked on the slides and collaborated on examples, including the posting of reference materials for their classmates on Google classroom. Students made their presentations in class to their peers, going through each slide as a teacher and explaining each point thoroughly. Classmates completed the shared handouts or exercises on Google Classroom and then the project collaborators checked the work. During the reflection phase, students reflected on their work, what they presented, and how students learned during their project. Topics covered in the student presentations concerned Russian time expressions (times of day, days of the week, months of the year, seasons, stating the year and date, adverbs of time) and prepositions governed by various cases.

As part of her PBL presentation, Nataliya also included feedback that her students received from their classmates. All students, presenters and learners, were required to reflect on the class presentations. Learner feedback was provided to pre-

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Targeting Literacy Needs through Russian in the World Language Classroom

~ By Morgan Lynch

I can only speculate about the immense depth and diversity of topics that are addressed every day in Russian language classrooms across the United States, but one that surely is and should be a constant element is the cultural concept of literacy. I would like to argue that we understand «грамотность» very differently in our country. Where here in the U.S, literacy is confined to curriculum and tests, there is a profound sense of “us-ness” and inclusion that pervades the experience of learners from the U.S. when they enter the cultural bubble of Russian speakers and face Russian literature.

As a non-native speaker of Russian, I have always struggled with a disconnect in how I myself am even able to access the literature at the center and depths of Russian-speaking culture. The pages of masters are held within the minds and souls of a diverse peoples, with lines of poetry as a uniquely binding factor that emerges in everyday communication. In dealing with students, I often fight to articulate this Russian cultural value and esteem to my students that literature is a central and vital part of this language. For them, the closest connection to our own U.S. experience is the sort of seamless speaking in quotes from our favorite movies, series, music and shows as we chat and joke. It is entirely alien to us to know the works and words of writers such as Pushkin with such soulful control that it is used in itself as a form of conversational expression as our Russian-speaking educators, community and family do.

But students aren't facing that question. To quote one of my high schoolers, “Literature is hard and uninteresting as is. Russian would just make it even harder.” From the short stories of Chekhov to Pushkin's verses, there are so many details and cultural nuances to unwrap and yet few that will be truly

understood and revered in translation. We can count even less titles that are approachable for beginner and intermediate students of Russian, assuming that I can get the majority of them to turn the pages or read the stanzas at all. And I am not set on classics as the only avenue for authentic reading materials. We are rich in blogs, sites, and other materials produced by Russian-speaking authors. But when it comes back to the sociocultural role that Russian authors play, their significance to sayings and reports, and the ever-so-direct but loving expectation that most all students of Russian should consume and hold on to an array of classic literature, cannot be denied.

As we start our new year of school here, I have been reminding myself that it may not be me or Russian authors that are driving my kids away. The intricacies of Tolstoy and the depth of Dostoyevsky are not responsible for a lack of engagement in reading for most of my students. The reality is likely much more discouraging in that it lies with the literacy and first language ability of our learners. Working with upper middle school and lower high school age learners has illuminated, not an incapacity, rather a dependence and forced comfort with teacher-centered reading, internet summaries, and instructor's notes. While we are far from reverent of the written word in our culture, even avid young readers and driven students are daunted by the challenge of even simple Russian language texts. As a Spanish and Russian teacher, I often deal with students facing second language learning for the first time in their lives, all in the context of heterogeneously mixed classes, with special ed through excel and gifted students. Without question, the students that need the most support land within the middle ground, where they have not been explicitly taught strategies to cope with language in context, nor do they hold a developed enough knowledge of metalinguistics to benefit from most textbook grammar explanations. In doing so I have dedicated much of our work into addressing the following for our students:

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Introduce students to Russian through cognate vocabulary to allow focus and control of the sound and written system instead of double-duty effort to learn meaning and develop phonological understanding at the same time.

- ◆ Develop an inventory of reading strategies around morphological awareness with a growth-mindset lens. Students need to recognize that root words drive the main information, while case endings and other suffixes act as detail that we will build on in time by targeting language in context, fighting the intimidation of more extensive and complicated readings as we do so.
- ◆ Provide explicit instruction and practice in using reading skills through highlighting and diagramming, word or part of speech categorization and identification, and vocabulary scavenger hunts and activities that physically engage the students with the aforementioned techniques at the beginning of their course. Simple text analyzing exercises where students mark verbs or objects in a writing are an approachable way to introduce conjugate forms with their connected pronouns or to help students to differentiate between the applications of dative and accusative case.
- ◆ Offer “by-the-way” definitions and use student-input-based-glossing of first language terminology whenever there is a breakdown in understanding. The Russian might not be the obstacle. My students understand what I need them to do in their first language, then in Russian, so specific vocabulary and linguistic terms like “conjugation,” parts of speech, or higher-level vocabulary in the L1 such as “implies, necessitates, reiterates, etc.” can be taught simultaneously through a quick verbal check-in or by asking the class to provide synonyms. Give Instructions and directions that provide appropriate differentiation within the first language, such as by using multiple synonyms for key words (above, “instructions and directions” as an example) to ensure clarity.
- ◆ Introduce word-building in Russian early on to alleviate the stress and fear induced by lengthy words and bridge connections between like-words, like-forms, and similar structures in the language. Basic vocabulary such as “студенческий” or “русскоговорящий” isn’t necessarily immediately understood because of the narrow window that most beginners see them through as they try to process a word and decipher it at the same time, even if it is directly connected to familiar terms. Therefore, we can more effectively present terms like “русскоговорящий” through simple visual cues, like underlining the root word and activating student prior knowledge by prompting them to search for familiar vocabulary within word.
- ◆ Provide contextualized vocabulary lists consisting of a smaller number of applied terms and structures. Many of these words hold a variety of uses, particularly with high-frequency vocabulary such as: speaks, things that, wants, sees, likes, etc., and so we need to train them to understand and apply them in all of these ways (such as играть with different prepositions and cases). Using comprehensible input strategies, we can teach conjugation, declination, and patterns by having students focus on a small group of terms or structures that present rules as vocabulary instead of as formulas or abstract concepts. A unit might consist of a few main phrases “Я слушаю рок музыку,” “Он любит футбол,” and “Они играют на гитаре.” This way we do not overwhelm them, providing subsidiary and on – the – spot vocab to support their own communication needs as they learn to recognize, comprehend, write and speak with them. Finally, it also allows you to model the many messages that we can send with only a small but flexible arsenal of words and patterns so that students can rely less on direct memorization and hold more natural utility over their language.

Luckily, the challenge of helping students develop literacy skills can also result in one of our grandest contributions to education. Literacy is such a culturally valuable concern that builds bridges for our learners to delve deeper into Russian and, beyond that, purely find success in life. At the same time, literacy is a challenging goal that we need to meet, ensuring that we are meeting our students where they are currently. While English courses are primarily engaging with higher-level language tasks, we can reinforce the central elements of a strong and life-long reader. Enriching our students' education starts with providing the training on how to comprehend words and phrases and tackle larger texts independently. Often, in the past I have made the mistake of relying on assumptions of what students understand in their own language when I have planned for reading exercises and have been teaching the alphabet. I constantly remind myself that students can open their window of opportunity themselves if I provide them with the appropriate set of keys for the job. What's more, with differentiation in our classrooms as a universal and prominent goal in today's education system, we are doubling the impact of our teaching by working to address learners' needs in multiple languages.

So far, I am relieved to see our first-year students' ability to figure out new words and relate vocabulary without having scarcely started to even learn the alphabet itself. I always look forward to the days in Level-one Russian when we will be discussing imperial history, glacial science, music tradition, or just making up theatrical stories as a class entirely in Russian. More so, I look forward to watching the engagement, laughter, and investment from first-year students that are able to follow along in the target language, at times for over an hour. I have been astounded by my second and third year students' retention of vocabulary and ability to jump into reading and listening seamlessly after months of summer and what many confirm to be a "break" from their Russian. I am truly amazed to see that a student of a semester and a half of Russian can be handed a

menu from a random Russian restaurant off of Yandex and effectively and wholly decipher it on their own to order in our mock restaurant.

All in all, the road to reading "Преступление и Наказание" in its native glory is still a long way ahead for these students. The difference is that they are approaching it more equipped and more self-sufficient in their language than students of language in my own generation, who too often cling to verb charts, dictionaries and word banks in the face of complex and profound language. The hope is also that the confidence that accompanies the ability to independently tackle reading, from the basics to masterpieces, will erode the misconception that they cannot reach such a proficiency and pave the road for their success.

Знакомьтесь

Morgan Lynch is a high school Russian and Spanish teacher at Noble High School in North Berwick, Maine, and a Lecturer for Russian at St. Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire. After studying abroad in Russia during his undergraduate years, Morgan worked with several groups of students as an in-country student advisor for Northeastern University's Dialogue of Cultures



summer programs in Russia and the Baltics. Professionally, Morgan is focused on curriculum design and methodology in teaching Russian for public and grade school learners that incorporates cross-curricular studies in the target language using comprehensible input and communicative approaches to language learning. Additionally, Morgan collaborates on diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives at the school and district level. Morgan tries to find time to host Russian cooking master classes with his students and colleagues and play tennis whenever possible.

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Teachers' Lounges Fall 2022

5:30 - 6:30 p.m. EST

Please register at <https://www.actr.org/webinar-series.html>

The theme of the fall 2022 Teacher's Lounges is "Teaching for diversity, inclusivity, and belonging at the lower proficiency levels." Classes at the lower end of proficiency (such as 1st and 2nd year classrooms at high schools or universities) present a special challenge for material selection and task design. Most textbooks do not adequately engage the topic, leaving instructors to develop their own materials from scratch. At the same time, Novice or Intermediate-Low learners are often perceived to be unable to engage with the topic in Russian due to their proficiency limitations. Consequently, instructors often skip the topic altogether. We invite ACTR members to participate in conversations on how these challenges may be resolved in our 1st and 2nd year classrooms. Each of the lounges will be dedicated to exploring how instructors can introduce and teach diversity and promote inclusion and belonging within basic "beginner" topics, such as, for example, personal identity, family, clothing, food, etc. as well as through instructional practices that promote inclusivity and belonging. Book-ending these topics, are two Lounges dedicated to exploring approaches to teaching Russian and the diversity of the Russian-speaking peoples in the context of the on-going war in Ukraine.

Oct 7 - Teaching Russian today

The war in Ukraine continues to overshadow what we do in the classroom, both language-wise and

culturally. Recent events inside Russia (mobilization, brutal suppression of any protests) and on the occupied Ukrainian territories (the so-called referendums) present new(er) challenges for our teaching. Some programs have changed their course content and/or co-curricular events in response to the on-going war. At the same time, many programs have seen a decrease in enrollments that may or may not be affected by the war, but this decrease itself may influence our teaching. This Lounge will be dedicated to the difficult question of teaching the Russian language and culture under these circumstances.

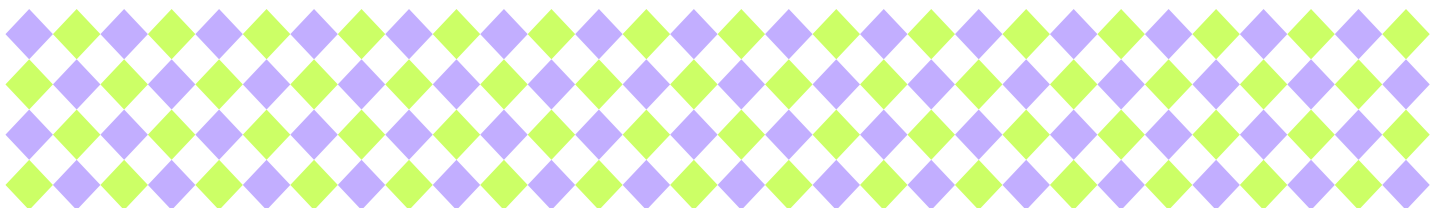
Oct 21 - Diversity and inclusion at the lower levels of proficiency I

Topics discussed: names, pronouns, family members, professions, discussing relationships and marriage status.

The following questions were explored: How do we get to know our students? What personal and family information do we ask from our students and what options do we provide to them for self-expression? How do we do this in a way that promotes inclusivity and a sense of belonging? What instructional practices promote inclusivity and belonging? What are some typical oversights in either our instructional methods or our content that can lead to alienation?

Nov 4 - Diversity and inclusion at the lower levels of proficiency II

Topics discussed: home, clothing, food, free time, travel, money/cost



The following questions were explored: How do we discuss the topics of home, clothing, food, free time, travel and/or money/cost in a way that supports diversity and promotes inclusivity? How might we go even further to explore social justice concepts through these topics at the lower proficiency levels? Can we help students to see these realities as embedded both in cultural values and socio-economic realities? Can our lessons help students to be more reflective of these realities? Can a more nuanced way of addressing these topics help students to develop intercultural competencies?

Nov 18 - Diversity and inclusion at the lower levels of proficiency III. Expanding cultural representation

The following questions were explored: How do students come to understand “Russian culture” and the Russian Federation through our classes? What images and topics are represented? How have we expanded the representations to promote diversity and inclusion? How do we avoid presenting stereotypes and oversimplifications? What work would we still like to do? What do we need in order to do it?

Dec 2 - Addressing the diversity of the Russophone world

The following questions will be explored: How might we continue to discuss the ethnic diversity within the Russian Federation, as well in the Russian diaspora in the near abroad, especially in the context of the war in Ukraine? How do we do this without being perceived to be promoting a Russian imperialist agenda? What are current best practices for teaching about the diversity of the Russophone world?

Dec 16 - DEAI Reading Group

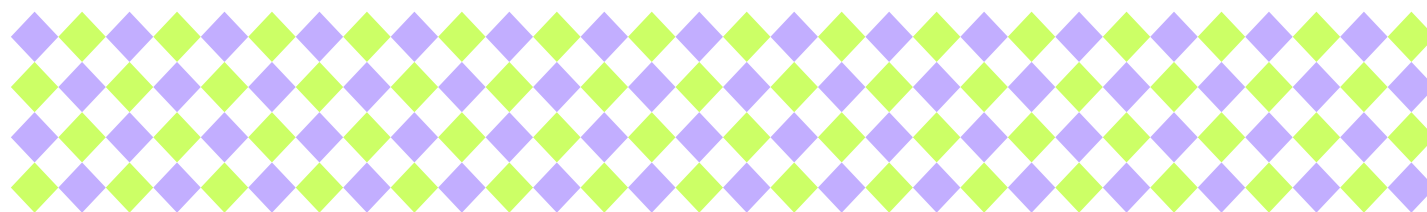
Re-evaluating methods of assessment for greater equity and accessibility

Participants will be asked to read a short article (TBD) that introduces and problematizes the issue. The meeting will include the following components:

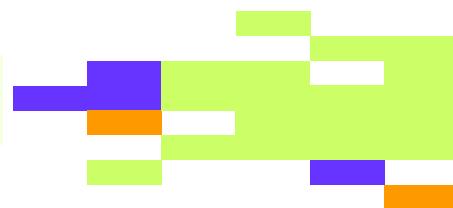
- ◆ a summary of the background reading
- ◆ examples of how the information in the reading can be applied to Russian language teaching
- ◆ discussion in breakout groups

Nominations for election to the ACTR Board of Directors are now open

At its last membership meeting (*19 February 2022*), in an effort to diversify the organization’s leadership, the ACTR general membership approved amendments to the ACTR Rules of Governance (Bylaws) placing the nomination and election process online and allowing for a second stream of nominations to the Board of Directors directly through the ACTR Secretary from the general membership and not vetted by the Board’s Nominations Committee (“open nominations”). All members of ACTR are encouraged to read the description of the Board’s duties and to consider nominating themselves or a colleague for membership on the Board of Directors. The Board’s duties, the protocols for nomination, links to relevant forms as well as to the Rubric for evaluating candidates passed by the Board at its 1 October 2022 meeting on the recommendation of the ACTR Committee for Diversity, Inclusion and Equity, are all available online at <https://www.actr.org/>



ACTR SERVICE AWARD



This award, originally established *in memory of Jane Barley and Fred Johnson*, is given annually to recognize outstanding service to ACTR. The award is traditionally presented at the annual ACTR membership meeting.

Nominees must be members of ACTR in good standing. They should have demonstrated prominent service to ACTR in the form of active involvement in the work of the organization and promotion of its goals. Additional considerations include demonstrated devotion to the profession in terms of activities such as teaching, professional involvement, and activities in the field beyond ACTR and the classroom. Those were qualities exemplified by Jane Barley and Fred Johnson.

Members of the awards committee are Elena Farkas, Betsy Sandstrom, and Jane Shuffelton.

Nominations for the award may be addressed to *Elena Farkas*: Rus-sianaz@alaskan.com. Nominations for future awards may be forwarded at any time.

Past recipients:

- 1995— George Morris
 - 1996—Marian Walters
 - 1997—Zita Dabars
 - 1998—John Schillinger
 - 1999—Irwin Weil
 - 2000—Elizabeth Neatrou
 - 2001—Renate Bialy
 - 2002—Jane Shuffelton
 - 2003—John Mohan
 - 2004—Halina Danchenko
 - 2005—John Sheehan, Richard Brecht*
 - 2006—Robert Channon
 - 2007—Betty Leaver
 - 2008—Elizabeth Sandstrom, Vitaly G. Kostomarov*
 - 2009—Maria Lekic
 - 2011—Patricia Zody
 - 2012—Thomas Garza
 - 2013—Peter Merrill
 - 2014—Benjamin Rifkin
 - 2015—Dan Davidson (special lifetime award)
 - 2016—Cynthia Ruder
 - 2017—William Rivers
 - 2018—Camelot Marshall
 - 2019—Paavo Husen
 - 2020—Alla Smyslova
 - 2021—Evgeny Dengub
- *special award

Nominations for election to the ACTR Board of Directors are now open

[nominations-to-the-actr-board.html](#). These materials can also be accessed directly from the [actr.org](#) homepage.

The deadline for completion of forms for “open nominations” is **14 December 2022**. (Because the current ACTR secretary is up for re-election to the Board this year, “open nominations” will be processed by the Nominations Committee for completeness only.) If you have any questions about the process or if you require assistance with the online process, please contact Raquel Greene (greener@grinnell.edu).

Russian Scholar Laureate Award 2022

School year 2021-2022

The year 2022 has been another very interesting year, full of changes and challenges.



We are happy to announce 30 outstanding Russian high school students from multiple high schools nationwide who were nominated for the prestigious annual ACTR Russian Scholar Laureate Award. These students were carefully selected and nominated by their school administrators and by their Russian teachers to proudly represent their school and its' Russian program.

Congratulations to our 2022 Scholar Russian Laureates for their constant dedication and enthusiasm for Russian.

Kateryna Ratushnyuk
Co-Chair ACTR RSLA

Nina Vaykhanskaya
Co-Chair ACTR RSLA

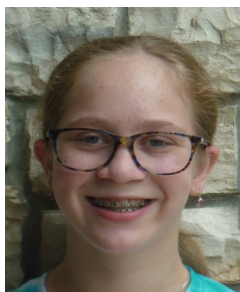


Alexis Keys

Teacher-

Zana Sukaj

Bowie High School, Bowie,
MD



P'nina Cohen

Teacher-

Nina Vaykhanskaya

Bruriah High School, Elizabeth, NJ



Elizabeth Keller

Teacher-

**Julia Kriventsova
Denne**

By the Onion Sea,
Arlington Heights, IL



Alisa Shapiro

Teacher-

Marian Barnum

Cherokee High School,
Marlton, NJ



Rowan Starr

Teacher-

Sue Ellen W Turscak

Classical Learning
Resource Center,
Naples, ID



Alina Kalimullina

Teacher-

Natalia Billings

James Madison High
School, Brooklyn, NY



Milena Urlaub

Teacher-

Ekaterina Kalmanson

James Madison High
School, Brooklyn, NY



Amalyn Castro

Teacher-

Rebecca Kaegi

Pritzker College Prep,
Chicago, IL



Jamie Schwartz

Teacher-

Olga Gotta

Glastonbury High
School,
Glastonbury, CT



Madison Riva

Teacher-

Debra Solomon

Hollidaysburg Area Senior
High School,
Hollidaysburg, PA



Aldo Magana

Teacher-

Irina Zaykovskaya

Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy,
Aurora, IL



Dominic Fontana

Teacher-

Ted Krejsa

Kenston High School,
Chagrin Falls, OH



Caitlin Kry

Teacher-

Valentin Cukierman

Langley High School,
McLean, VA



James McGowan

Teacher-

Nazalie Nersesian

Langley High School,
McLean, VA



Mason McKeague

Teacher-

Michael White

Maggie L. Walker Governor's School,
Richmond, VA



Jedaiah Ojeda

Teacher-

Lauren Nelson

Pritzker College Prep,
Chicago, IL



Elizabeth Coulson

Teacher-

Elisa Frost

Roland Park Country School,
Baltimore, MD



Miriam Pomerantsev

Teacher-

Lyudmila Andreyeva

Russian Language School Ckyku Net,
San Jose, CA



Athena Kurtti

Teacher-

Natalya Peretyatko

Russian School of Hampton Roads,
Yorktown, VA



Colin Cavanagh

Teacher-

Robert Chura

St. Louis University High School,
St. Louis, MO

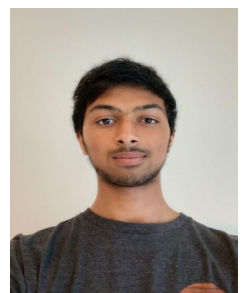


Anisha Talreja

Teacher-

Betsy Sandstrom

Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology,
Alexandria, VA



Kevin Sridhar

Teacher-

Betsy Sandstrom

Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology,
Alexandria, VA



Sophia Wilcox

Teacher-

Nadejda Hess

West Anchorage High School,
Anchorage, AK



Maria Guerra

Teacher-

Nadejda Hess

West Anchorage High School,
Anchorage, AK



John Hanes

Teacher-

Richard Uzzell

William G. Enloe High School,
Raleigh, NC



Nicolas Smith

Teacher-

Valeriya Anderson

Elbert County Comprehensive High School, Elberton, GA



Dallies Wood

Teacher-

Ekaterina Myakshina

The Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky, Bowling Green, KY



Madeline Germain

Teacher-

Svetlana Filkova

Thunder Mountain High School, Juneau, AK



Adam Zafrani

Teacher-

Nataliya Ushakova

Staten Island Technical High School, Staten Island, NY



Aaron Tyutyunik

Teacher-

Natalya Levina

Staten Island Technical High School, Staten Island, NY

Поздравляем студентов и учителей!

Русский язык - это прежде всего Пушкин — нерушимый причал русского языка. Это Лермонтов, Лесков, Чехов, Горький.

Русский язык — язык, созданный для поэзии, он необычайно богат и примечателен главным образом тонкостью оттенков.

В духовной жизни, как и в практической жизни, тот, у которого знания держатся, всегда прогрессирует и имеет успех.

Джеймс У.

Единственный путь, ведущий к знанию,- это деятельность.

Шой Б.



STUDY ABROAD WITH AMERICAN COUNCILS

Advanced Russian Language & Area Studies Program (RLASP)

American Councils is pleased to offer RLASP in Almaty, Kazakhstan and Yerevan, Armenia for the intensive study of Russian language in summer and fall 2023. The academic program features courses in speaking, grammar, reading, writing, and cultural studies.

2023 programming offers 20 hours a week of intensive coursework, homestays with local families, conversation partners, and excursions in and around Almaty and Yerevan. Participants earn U.S. academic credit through Bryn Mawr College and have the opportunity to volunteer in their host cities.

Summer 2023 applications due February 15, 2023

Fall 2023 applications due March 15, 2023

Eligibility requirements, financial aid, and scholarship info are available at:

www.acStudyAbroad.org

Questions? Contact us: outbound@americancouncils.org

DEAI Reading Group

Organizer: Susan Kresin

The ACTR DEAI Reading Group first met on May 6, using as its starting point a recent issue of ACTR's *Russian Language Journal*, "[Diversity, Equity, Access and Inclusion: Lessons for the Russian Language Classroom](#)," guest edited by Colleen Lucey.

We began with a very practical topic: adaptations to syllabi that can be made to enhance inclusivity, accessibility, and the diversity of perspectives represented in Russian courses at all levels. The focus of this session was a presentation by Thomas J. Garza based on his article "[Here, There, and Elsewhere: Re-Imagining Russian Language and Culture Course Syllabi for Social Justice](#)." He suggested various ways to revise assignments, supplementary materials, and the tone and phrasing of syllabi, considering both who is currently in our classes and who is not. He began by discussing examples of course syllabi that he has created and adjusted over the years to incorporate more diverse perspectives, a wider range of modalities, and intersectional lenses with a broader appeal among current students. With a project-based, learner-centered framework, courses such as "Chechnya 360: People, Power and Politics," now relabeled as "Chechnya 360: Understanding Trauma and Occupation," have enabled his program at the University of Texas to attract students with a greater diversity of backgrounds, experiences and learning styles, and to forge deeper connections between students' personal experiences and their academic journeys.

He then turned specifically to Russian language instruction, posing questions such as the following and offering models of adjustments from his Russian language course syllabi.

- Who is represented in our textbooks (faces and texts)? Are they representative? Can they speak to the diversity of students that are in your classroom? What steps can be taken immediately to increase inclusion and diversity in the course you teach?
- What are the modes of presentation (in textbooks)? Are they talking at us? Are they telling us how it is? Or do they give the option, the possibility to find that 'elsewhere' and allow us, our texts and our students to have a conversation with each other? How can we move from "covering" texts/materials in our classes to "interrogating" or "challenging" them in our courses?

- How can the diversity of the Russophone world be showcased to help learners see themselves in our materials, and acquire a broader view of what "Russian" means or can mean? What does the Russian world that you present in your classes include? What would you like it to include, if you had all the resources you need? How do you show a diverse representation of ethnicities, religions, sexualities, lifestyles, etc.?

We then turned to breakout group discussions, facilitated by Thomas Garza and other members of the ACTR DEAI and Professional Development Committees, Irina Dubinina, Olga Klimova, and Lee Roby.

The second ACTR DEAI Reading Group meeting was held on July 29. At the request of attendees of the first meeting, it was planned as a follow-up for people who wished to work on enhancing DEAI aspects of their syllabi over the summer.

The readings for this session were two sample syllabi:

<http://www.teachingwithoutwalls.com/2011/05/time-for-extreme-syllabus-make-over.html>

and <http://page.teachingwithoutwalls.com/syllabushosp>.

Susan Kresin began the session with an overview of some ACTR-based resources relating to DEAI goals, including recordings of webinars, a padlet for sharing DEAI resources, and the World Readiness Standards for Russian, with accompanying scenarios that can serve as lesson plan models, and then summarized suggestions made in the May 6 breakout groups. She discussed trends in recent research on syllabi and introduced the idea of visual syllabi, which Olga Klimova illustrated with an example from her program at the University of Pittsburgh. Breakout groups focused on specific types of modifications that can easily be made to syllabi for Fall 2022 courses. Guided by members of the ACTR DEAI Committee (Thomas J. Garza, Olga Klimova, Lee Roby and Izolda Savenkova), each group chose from the following topics, illustrated with models on a handout:

- ◆ Compare phrasing regarding *course goals, participation, attendance*.
- ◆ What are some advantages and disadvantages of a *newsletter-style syllabus*?
- ◆ What are some advantages and disadvantages of using *videos* in a syllabus?
- ◆ How do you express your *course policies and rules*?
- ◆ Will you include a "*student toolkit*" with useful links for students?
- ◆ Will you include an *inclusivity and/or diversity statement*?

DEAI Reading Group, continued from p. 15

- ◆ How will you express the *goals of the course*?
- Will you use *images* relating to the Russian-speaking world? How will you choose them?

A third ACTR DEAI Reading Group meeting was held on August 12 to offer another opportunity to discuss specific aspects of syllabi. Olga Klimova presented on visual syllabi in greater depth, and Julia Denne offered numerous [suggestions of contemporary artists](#) whose works can be used in syllabi and coursework. After these presentations, breakout groups led by Thomas J. Garza, Raquel Greene, Olga Klimova and Susan Kresin discussed attendees' choices from the eight topics listed above.

The next DEAI Reading Group meeting will be held on **December 16**, 5:30-7 pm EST. The topic will be "Reevaluating methods of assessment for greater equity and accessibility." A background reading will be provided for participants to read before the meeting if possible, and the meeting will consist of the following parts:

- Brief summary of the key points of the background reading
- Illustration of how the information in the reading can be applied to Russian language teaching
- Discussion in breakout groups

The Fall 2022 ACTR Teacher's Lounges will also be devoted to a related topic: ["Teaching for diversity, inclusivity, and belonging at the lower proficiency levels."](#)

ACTR Post—Secondary Awards



The ACTR Post-secondary Awards Committee announces the first awardees of the *ACTR Professional Development Fund in honor of Olga E. Kagan*: Natalia Petrova, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Kamila Saifeeva, University of Kansas.

Honoring Olga E. Kagan, an expert in second language and heritage language pedagogy and a colleague who was

renowned for her dedication to professional development, the purpose of this award is to support the professional development of Russian language instructors.

In its inaugural years, (Spring 2022 and AY 2022-2023), the focus group for this award is graduate students. Two small grants awarded annually help offset the cost of professional development in language pedagogy. Eligible reimbursable expenses include travel to professional and academic conferences, conference registration fees, pedagogical workshops, and other professional development and/or training activities which focus on language pedagogy. The deadline for AY 2022-2023 is December 15, 2022.

Two additional post-secondary awards will be initiated in AY 2022-2023: the *ACTR Award for Excellence in Teaching Russian at the Post-Secondary Level for Gradu-*

ate Student Instructors, with a deadline of November 1, and the *ACTR Award for Excellence in Teaching Russian at the Post-Secondary Level* (for post-secondary colleagues other than graduate students), with a deadline of December 15.

For more information about these three awards and access to the submission links, see the "College" tab of the [ACTR website](#).

Both of the Spring 2022 recipients of the *ACTR Professional Development Fund in honor of Olga E. Kagan* attended workshops in the [PEARLL Summer Institute Series](#) at the University of Maryland.

Natalia Petrova, University of Wisconsin-Madison: In the summer of 2022, I received an award from the ACTR Professional Development Fund in Honor of Olga E. Kagan to participate in the online PEARLL Summer Institute Series at the University of Maryland. I learned about this fund from my advisor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where I study second language acquisition and teach Russian. Additionally, the ACTR staff posted several announcements on SEELANGS listing multiple professional development opportunities for applicants. Therefore, I could examine all the options and choose what most fitted my interests.

The institute I attended for 3 days was called [Connect-ing Learning Target to Checks for Learning](#). The goal of this 3-day series was to teach school and university edu-

cators, who teach world languages at various levels, how to create and share daily learning targets and reference them throughout the lesson. Additionally, I learned how to design activities that help students make progress toward the learning target and how to use checks for learning during and at the end of the class to determine if students have met the learning target or if additional practice is needed. The institute was well-organized and equipped me with lots of valuable and simple techniques that will make my teaching more systematic, result-oriented, and less stressful for my students. In addition, this workshop filled the gap in my knowledge of how to create simple and clear learning targets and when to share them with students. I also learned how to track students' progress with more precision daily instead of evaluating it holistically after a module is over.

Kamila Saifeeva, University of Kansas: I had the pleasure to take part in an online workshop "Using the Target Language" held by PEARLL summer institute at the University of Maryland. This workshop was focusing on strategies that make the target language comprehensible and allow for its use at least 90 percent of the class time. In this 3-day workshop, our instructor Meiching Chang (Glastonbury Public Schools) introduced us to various techniques that allow using the target language with students of various levels. We then had a chance to apply what we have learned in small group discussions: everyone had a chance to present their lesson to other educators and receive valuable feedback on how well the new

techniques were applied.

One of the most valuable and helpful takeaways was that using the target language is possible at the novice level, in a way it is not intimidating or uncomfortable for students. I liked the idea of using a reward system to encourage students to use the target language more often. Another insightful idea was providing students with so-called "exit tickets" at the end of each class: asking students various reflective questions allows us to make sure the new information was clear and adjust our instruction accordingly. With the new semester already started, I had an opportunity to apply some of the techniques in my Intermediate Russian course: I try to explain the new vocabulary in the target language rather than simply translating it into English. I also started applying "exit tickets" and found it helpful both for students and myself as an instructor.

We extend our warmest congratulations to Natalia Petrova and Kamila Saifeeva, and look forward to submissions for the three post-secondary awards in the 2022-2023 cycle and in future years.

ACTR Post-secondary Awards Committee

Susan Kresin, UCLA (chair)

Evgeny Dengub, USC

Irina Dubinina, Brandeis University

Olga Klimova Magnotta, University of Pittsburgh

Kaylin Land, McGill University

Benjamin Rifkin, Fairleigh Dickinson University

ACTR Award for Excellence in Teaching Russian K-12 Level

The ACTR Award for Excellence in Teaching Russian for K—8 Teachers

The ACTR Award for Excellence in Teaching Russian for 9—12 Teachers

This award will recognize K-12 teachers for their dedication, professionalism and excellence in Russian language instruction across the US; highlight the accomplishments and achievements of Russian teachers at the K-12 level; further engage ACTR member teachers through national recognition; highlight and strengthen ACTR and Russian language programs nationwide.

Eligibility

- The award is presented to an elementary, middle school, or high school teacher from a public or a private educational institution.
- The nominee must be a current member of ACTR.
- The nominee must have taught for at least five (5) years.

Nomination Process

- ⇒ Nomination Form (must be filled out online—ACTR website)
- ⇒ Nomination Letter (300-400 words)

Requirements for Nomination / Criteria of Excellence for Candidate (detailed rubric will be posted on the ACTR website)

- **Knowledge and Application of Subject Matter**
- **Development of Student Learning**
- **Student Empathy**
- **Professional Growth and Contributions**

Overall Selection Procedure for Awards

The ACTR Award for Excellence in Teaching Russian Committee seeks to select one (1) candidate from each level (K-8 and 9-12) who demonstrates high leverage teaching practices, enthusiasm for learning Russian, and the ability to serve as an influential advocate for teaching Russian on a regional and national basis. The final winners are notified and publicly announced through ACTR Newsletter, social media, and a letter to the teachers' administrators.

All nominations/supporting materials due.

December 15, 2022

40 Years of the ACTR National Russian Essay Contest

~by John Rook

Last year, ACTR's National Russian Essay Contest (NREC) celebrated its fortieth anniversary. For so many years, the NREC has provided middle and high school students of Russian with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of and proficiency in the Russian language. Participating students are either non-heritage or heritage learners of Russian, comprising the categories of beginner, intermediate, advanced and native speakers. The contest is administered by teachers during the third week of November, with students writing their essays on a given topic within the course of a two-hour time frame. Essays are then compiled and sent to an NREC Committee member who will inventory, sort and distribute them to a number of contest judges for the first round of judging. Judges typically have one month to review, evaluate and assign a medal of bronze, silver, gold or honorable mention. This first round of judging is typically completed toward the end of January. Results are then sent to teachers by the end of February – beginning of March via email.

When the first round results are finalized, any advanced, advanced heritage or native speaker essays that receive a gold medal are then forwarded to the second round of judging. The reader of these essays is an instructor of Russian as a second language and who assigns a medal of gold, silver or bronze to an essay. In addition, the reader will also order the second round essays in each level by their written performance and achievement. Lastly, the reader will also send along an accompanying letter to the participating teachers, mentioning several essays of note, including any memorable ideas regarding the topic. The second round results are usually available by the beginning of March and then communicated to teachers via email. With both rounds of essay judging completed, teachers are sent award certificates and any appropriate medals to students who received gold, silver or bronze.

The NREC Committee is typically comprised of three ACTR members (from the ACTR Board and General Membership). Every year, the NREC committee members strive to draft a topic that is appealing and general in nature so

that all proficiency levels (novice, intermediate, advanced and native speaker / heritage and non-heritage) can address it in written form. Students are able to write up to two pages, single-spaced on the designated topic. Some of the topics that students have written about over the years have dealt with important people in their lives, school, life in the US, and free time. More recent NREC topics have concerned friendship, online life, and professions and careers. Essays writers are judged on how well they treat and communicate on the topic, in addition to organization, lexical proficiency and vocabulary, style and fluency, and syntax and orthography.

The history of the contest over the years can be traced back to the 1980's when ACTR Board Member, David Burrous came up with the idea of an essay contest, based on one that existed for language learners in Colorado, where he was living and working. David proposed the idea for the contest to the ACTR Board as an Olympiada of Written Russian that would complement the Olympiada of Spoken Russian that already existed at that time. The original premise behind the contest is no different from the contemporary NREC – students should be encouraged and rewarded for their proficiency in the Russian language. The other key idea was to reward as many student essayists as possible for their learning accomplishments and not to focus on the best or top essay. Additionally, Burrous envisioned awarding multiple gold and silver essays as a means to accomplish the original goal of widespread recognition.

The name of the contest has since changed to the National Russian Essay Contest, but the goals of the contest remain the same in present day. Initially, there was no division of students according to the various levels of proficiency or years of study, nor were native speakers encouraged to apply. By the seventh NREC, native speakers were allowed to participate in the contest. The NREC came into being just as ACTFL began producing provisional proficiency guidelines and more than a decade before the publication of the Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century. In proficiency terms, students who are writing NREC essays are communicating

in the presentational mode of linguistic expression, writing at an appropriate level for their language learning. Student writers are demonstrating to judges that they have something meaningful and personal to say regarding the topic, in addition to using their Russian beyond the classroom setting.

After David Burrous' tenure as contest Chair, there have been numerous other ACTR board members who devoted their time and energy to make the NREC possible, year after year. Jane Barley succeeded David Burrous as contest Chair and her successor was Dan Desmond, who served as contest chair until 1991, when Jane Shuffelton assumed the role. In 2004 Beverly Ignatovicz agreed to share the administrative duties as Co-Chair. George Morris supported the contest for a number of years, issuing certificates and medals to contest participants until his retirement after the 30th NREC. The 30th NREC was the last contest chaired by Beverly Ignatovicz and Jane Shuffelton, after which Bozena Szulc served as Co-Chair for one year with Paavo Husen. When Bozena stepped down, Evgeny Dengub and I joined Paavo Husen as contest co-chairs, focusing on certificates-medals and judging, respectively. After Evgeny stepped down from the NREC committee, his replacement and current co-chair was Phillip Stosberg, who now handles the contest award certificates and medals.

NREC registrations grew over the years and hit a high mark in 1997, when 1,630 students were registered. In more recent years, total registrations have averaged between 1,200-1,400. Due to the impacts of the Covid pandemic and required e-learning, the total number of registrations decreased over the past couple of years, with some Russian programs unable to participate in the NREC. For example, the 2019 NREC saw 1,188 registrations, but only 468 in 2020 in the midst of the pandemic and e-learning. With the return to in-person learning and for the 2021 contest, the registration numbers were greater than in 2020 (730 total), but still not back to the contest average. Over the years, there have been some Russian school programs in the US that have closed, which have also led to a slight decrease in registrations. Conversely, the NREC has also seen an increase in participation by heritage Russian language learners and students enrolled in private Russian language teaching schools across all the proficiency levels.

As mentioned above, some essays are entered in a second round of reading and judging. In addition to for-

warding a second round of judging results, the person who has read the essays, also drafts a letter addressed to Russian language instructors who had students participating in the contest. For the 2021 NREC, the reader wrote a letter in which they expressed heartfelt feelings and respect for American schoolchildren who have chosen to study Russian far beyond international borders. This same sentiment was also extended to their parents who support their children in their work, and for the teachers who carry out their noble mission to develop mutual understanding between peoples through the language.

The evaluator continued to state that this year the essay theme of friendship is particularly important at a time when all people find themselves in a completely new situation that has not happened before. The usual connections were broken, parties and meetings disappeared, even the lessons themselves almost completely moved into the virtual world. Moreover, how important it is in such times to maintain normal human relations, to feel the warmth and support of loved ones. In drafting the accompanying letter, the second-round reader typically highlights several excerpts from 2nd round NREC essays that stand out in their mind. This year, numerous important points of essay writers regarding friendship stood out, including "It is friendship that makes us human! The most terrible torture is loneliness", "Friends help you not to be afraid", "Friendship is needed so that we do not live alone!", and "You cannot know what difficulties await you when the help of a friend is needed". It was clear to the reader that for young people, friendship is precious, and a special feeling different from any other that should be appreciated, cherished and cared for.

The 41st NREC will take place for pre-college students of Russian between November 14 – 18, 2022. I would like to express my gratitude to Jane Shuffelton who graciously shared her article about the history of the NREC that appeared in the 40-Year Anniversary Edition of the ACTR Newsletter in 2014. Lastly, I would also like to thank my current Co-Chairs on the NREC Committee (Paavo Husen and Phillip Stosberg), who work tirelessly to administer the NREC and provide this unique opportunity for our students of Russian year after year.

By John R. Rook,

Co-Chair, National Russian Essay Contest

PBL Learning in the Russian Language Classroom, continued from p. 4

senters that was very helpful and constructive and which concerned the content of the presentation, comprehensibility of the information presented, the oratory skills of the presenters, the technology used, and the overall effectiveness of the instructional materials created.

Katya Ratushnyuk

Staten Island Technical High School, NY

Katya Ratushnyuk presented two different PBL projects for her webinar presentation: Ток-Шоу (*Talk Show*) and Город моей семьи (*The City of My Family*). For the PBL project, *Talk Show*, Katya required her non-heritage learners in a second-year Russian class to create a talk show program, modeled after the most popular Russian talk shows. This concerned a unit on likes and dislikes and the duration of the project lasted for three weeks. To start the project, Katya's students were required to outline the project with a graphic organizer and set project goals by drafting their own can-do statements. Students wrote such can-do statements as (1) I can converse on both familiar and everyday topics, (2) I can ask questions about other's likes and dislikes and (3) I can state and answer questions about my preferences in literature, music, art or sport. Next, students completed research by exploring their chosen category of music, art, literature or sport. One of the final products was a gallery walk that required classmates to read about information concerning a chosen topic. Next, students performed an actual talk show in which they engaged in a dialogue about the information contained in the gallery walk. As a last stage for this project, Katya's students were required to reflect on their work, provide feedback, and conference with her.

The other PBL project, *The City of My Family*, was designed for Katya's heritage speakers of Russian and the unit concerned city and community. The timing of the project was one month in duration and began with students creating a project outline and writing appropriate can-do statements as project goals. In this project, students also collaborated on creating a project rubric against which they would be evaluated. The final products were an in-class presentation and video recording about the Russian city of origin of the student's family. To research for this project and after creating appropriate interview questions, Katya's students had to record and interview a family member, who spoke about the home city of their parents or grandparents as immigrants from other countries where Russian was spoken. For this project, students were evaluated by their peers after in-class and video presentations. Similar to the first project mentioned above, students reflected on their work and performance by considering peer feedback and conferencing with their teacher.

Raquel Greene

Grinnell College, Iowa

As a final project for her Russian class at the college level, Raquel Greene assigned a PBL project to her students to work with a partner to plan a trip to one of the cities where the students in their textbook are currently studying - St. Petersburg, Kazan, Irkutsk and

Yaroslavl. The departure city will be Moscow and planning for the trip needed to include three parts: (1) discuss the plan and the actual trip in the past, present, and future; (2) use both imperfective and perfective verbs and (3) incorporate as much vocabulary and grammar as possible from various units covered during the course. The final product is a presentation lasting 8 to 10 minutes with additional time for questions from classmates and instructors at the end.

During the research phase of the project, students had to check the weather forecast for the days they will be in the destination city, in addition to which articles of clothing are required. Students also needed to complete online research to determine the method of travel, itinerary, costs, where to stay. Other considerations concerned appropriate gifts for friends, souvenirs for family and friends, which tourist sights to visit, including a preferred museum, and a restaurant of choice. When considering the above, students needed to reflect and justify why they had made those choices when planning their trip and document their experiences in each location. Raquel and the Russian Language Assistant for the course also provided various online resources for her students to facilitate the research phase of the project, including websites for weather, museums, restaurants, and travel in all four cities.

After presenting on project-based learning and sharing examples of such projects, it is my hope as well as the hope of my co-presenters from the March 25 webinar, that teachers of Russian at all levels will consider incorporating this innovative and dynamic teaching methodology in their classrooms. To start with project-based learning unit planning, teachers might want to consider experimenting with some aspects by selecting a few targeted, content-related goals within their curriculum. Teachers might also want to reconsider a pre-existing product and redesign it by applying some or all of the principles and practices of PBL. By doing so, teachers just might realize the benefits of PBL and change the way they and their students view content learning and mastery.

Знакомьтесь

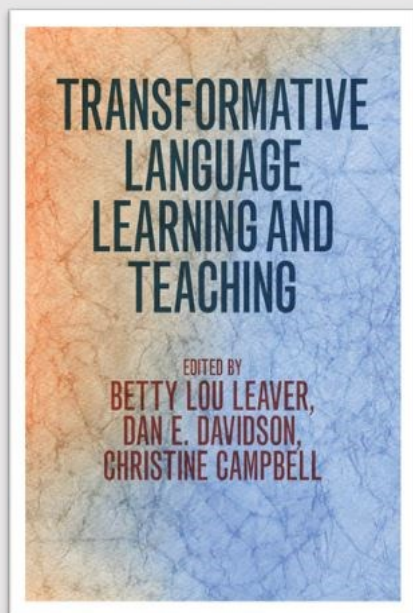
John Rook has been serving on the ACTR Board of Directors and as the ACTR Secretary since 2021. He is a teacher of Russian and Spanish at Smith Middle School in the Glastonbury Public School District in Connecticut where its long-established Russian program is celebrating its 65th year. For ACTR, John also serves as Co-



Chair of the National Russian Essay Contest, Committee Chair for the K12 Teacher Awards Committee, and is actively involved in the planning and hosting of the ACTR Teacher's Lounges.

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS PRESENTS

Transformative Language Learning and Teaching



Transformative learning has been widely used in the field of adult education for over twenty years, but until recently has received little attention in the field of world languages.

Drawing on best practices and the research of distinguished international world language experts, this volume provides theoretical and classroom-tested models of transformative education in world languages at major university, overseas,

state and governmental programs. Chapters outline theoretical frameworks and detail successful models from cutting-edge programs in a wide range of languages, with plenty of examples included to make the theory accessible to readers not yet familiar with the concepts. Classroom teachers, program administrators and faculty developers at every level of instruction will find support for their courses. With its innovative approach to the teaching and learning of languages, this volume is a seminal text in transformative language learning that will stimulate discussions and innovation in the language field for years to come.

- Edited by Betty L. Leaver, Dan E. Davidson, and Christine Campbell, the volume draws extensively from work in the Russian field, including contributions by Andrew Corin, Karen Evans-Romaine, Diane Murphy, Tom Garza, Dan Davidson, Betty Leaver, Maria Lekic, Nadra Garas, Rebecca Oxford, and Ray Clifford.
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