

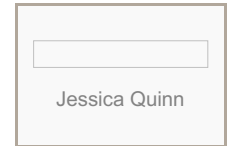
Stipend Awardee Brings Home Diversity of Ideas From SD Regional

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CATESOL News

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By **JESSICA QUINN**



—As a CATESOL Educator Foundation Regional Conference Stipend awardee, I had the chance to attend the San Diego conference held on March 7 at Grossmont College. I found the conference full of new ideas and chances to network and discuss topics of concern to all teachers of ESL/ESOL. I spent time chatting with colleagues over a delicious breakfast before the morning's plenary speaker, Dr. Kate Kinsella, gave her talk about preparing students for the higher vocabulary and register demands of colleges and careers. This led me to reflect on the everyday interactions I have with my students at Miramar and Cuyamaca colleges and the ways I can integrate the process, models, and linguistic tools she suggested into not only my writing classes, but also into the listening/speaking and reading courses I teach.

My day was filled with new information covering many aspects of language teaching and learning. I attended a thought-provoking session on end-of-class activities that will give me the chance to finish my classes meaningfully by reviewing or asking students to produce a target skill. The many options presented made me think about how I finish each lesson and what ideas I want to emphasize at the end of each class session. These ideas will affect the way I approach lesson planning by ensuring that I keep concrete goals in mind. At another session I attended, we explored a new way of teaching parts of speech in a step-by-step method that trains students to understand how words are used. By starting with basic structures and building up to more complicated ideas aided by color and symbol coding, students can learn how parts of a sentence go together, which will surely create better readers and writers. The poster sessions and publishers' tables were also sources for new information. Talking with each poster presenter about his or her ideas or research and sharing my classroom needs with different publishers gave me many new resources for class activities and original ideas for developing lessons.

Overall, the most valuable of the sessions for me was Dr. Eliana Santana's presentation on reading skills. She shared her method for improving her students' reading during a 16-week session at Southwestern College. She gave useful advice about ways to break down students' previous assumptions about how they should read with short activities that show them how much they can understand without the crutches of reading (or pronouncing) every word or translating with a dictionary. She shared her methods for creating routines that allow students to build their skills both in and out of class. I was immediately inspired to motivate my students with this type of reading instruction and revamp the way I teach reading. Her insight into how students think when they approach reading provided me with a reminder of how to introduce essential vocabulary and sentence structure before students attempt a reading. Also, her focus on mental pictures prompted me to include more visual resources in my current reading class and encourage my students to create their own mental pictures as they read.

As I reflect on the conference, I consider the day a success that is due to the careful planning of the committee, the knowledge and helpfulness of the presenters, and the presence of like-minded colleagues, all of whom were working to create better classes and programs for our diverse students' needs. I am glad to have had the chance to attend to broaden my teaching horizons and gain new ideas to implement in my classrooms.

Jessica Quinn teaches at Miramar and Cuyamaca colleges.