

# President's Perspective, March 2006

Submitted by Sarah DeMaris  
(IFLTA President)  
Valparaiso University

"DISCOVER LANGUAGES: DISCOVER THE WORLD!" is the theme of a sustained public-awareness campaign on behalf of language education initiated by our parent organization, ACTFL. The brand-new, decade-long initiative builds on the splashy "2005: Year of Languages" project that asked us to "celebrate, educate, and communicate" the importance of language education in America.

Your IFLTA Board of Directors is underscoring the importance of discovering a new language by taking the phrase "Discover Languages: Discover the World!" for our own 2006 conference theme (November 2 - 4). As language educators we know about the cultural and linguistic discoveries language learners make; the world is indeed a more open and welcoming place when you understand even one new culture and its language.

Please visit ACTFL's "Discover Languages" website now and often. There you will find many ideas to help raise the profile of language learning in your community. Just go to: <[www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org)> and click on "Discover Languages" (or on "2005: The Year of Languages" for ideas used last year). Remember that this website also has valuable information about advocacy and (it seems!) a million other good topics. Explore it!

## Looking Back to the 2005 IFLTA Conference

Our annual conference brought over 600 of you to Indianapolis to attend workshops, sessions, and special events sponsored by IFLTA and by our constituent organizations.

New in 2005 was a Thursday-evening wine-tasting that featured wines from countries represented by our constituent organizations. This casual "buffet" wine-tasting allowed for interaction among friends who see each other seldom and provided a relaxing event for those of us who must drive long distances and therefore must arrive at the conference on Thursday. We expect to see even more of you there in 2006!

"University Night" was in its third successful year: a record ten universities or colleges were represented. Participants learned about the World Language programs offered around the state, nibbled on snacks, and (in many cases) won prizes offered through a raffle event.

The 2005 "Teachers of the Year" (one from each level of instruction) were announced and introduced along with the "Teachers of the Year" selected by our

constituent organizations. Alan Garfinkel was honored with a "Distinguished Service Award" for his years of service to IFLTA and the World Language profession, and Louisa LaGrotto, who had recently been selected "Indiana Teacher of the Year" was also recognized. A list of all the "Teachers of the Year" is elsewhere in this newsletter.

## Looking Forward to 2006

### **IFLTA Conference:**

When you look next at the IFLTA website you will see that you can submit a session proposal, register, and register for a hotel room for the November 2006 IFLTA conference. Please consider participation at a higher level than in previous years: submit a session proposal for the first time, attend "University Night," stay through the very last session on Saturday.

Conference registration through Pay-Pal will no longer be possible on-line. Almost 100 of us *thought* we had registered on-line for the 2005 conference, but evidently did something wrong in the process. Since PayPal doesn't alert us to uncompleted transactions, many of us arrived at the conference only to learn that we still had to register on-site, which led to a long line for on-site registrants. To save us that frustration we are reverting to more old-fashioned (but reliable!) mail-in registration. Simply go to the website ([www.iflta.org](http://www.iflta.org)) to find everything you need.

### **ACTFL's "General Principles" and "Position Statements"**

Our parent organization, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), is frequently asked for its official position on basic issues in world language education. ACTFL therefore asked delegates to its 2005 annual conference in Baltimore to provide input on several important questions. The "General Principles" and "Position Statements" are still in draft form and under discussion, so your input and reaction is solicited. (You can send your comments directly to ACTFL ([headquarters@actfl.org](mailto:headquarters@actfl.org))).

Draft "General Principles" from ACTFL are:

- 1) All students should learn or maintain at least one language in addition to English.
  
- 2) Learning languages should be a central part of the curriculum at all levels of instruction, from young learners through graduate school and adults (Pre-K through 20 and beyond).

3) Language learning should be offered in extended well-articulated sequences that provide multiple opportunities to develop increasing levels of proficiency at each level of instruction.

Draft "Position Statements" from ACTFL are:

1) Early Language Learning:

Since research shows that an early language learning experience generally results in the development of native or near-native pronunciation and intonation, it is recommended that students are provided the opportunity to learn a second language as early as possible in school. This early language-learning experience not only helps to develop native-like pronunciation but also promotes higher level of proficiency if the student continues in a well-articulated sequence of language learning. Research corroborates additional benefits including strengthening of literacy in students' first language, raising SAT scores more than multiple years of studying any other subject area, and developing comfort with cultural differences. These benefits accrue with instruction that is continuous throughout the school year, connected grade to grade, and more frequent than twice per week. Students in most industrialized nations begin to study a second language in elementary grades and often a third language in secondary grades.

2) Languages Schools Should Offer:

Since research shows that generally learning a third or fourth language is facilitated after learning a second, the opportunity to learn any second language is more important than the specific language that is learned. The language offerings of a school or institution of higher education should reflect the needs and interests of the communities they serve, as well as national and international needs. Offering a variety of languages prepares students for future economic, diplomatic, and personal interests.

3) Class Size:

Given the goals of a standards-based language program, i.e., the development of students' communicative competence in the interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational modes, there must be opportunity for frequent and meaningful student-to-teacher and student-to-student interaction, monitored practice, and individualized feedback during instructional time. This warrants attention to a class size that remains as small as possible.

## 2005 Teachers of the Year

The language instructors listed below were honored both by their constituent organizations and by IFLTA at the November 2005 conference. Please congratulate them when you see them!

IFLTA World Language Teachers of the Year:  
(Indiana Foreign Language Teachers Association)

|            |                      |
|------------|----------------------|
| K-8        | Angelika Becker      |
| Secondary  | Janice Wheeler-Cowen |
| Collegiate | Thomas F. Broden     |

AATF Teachers of the Year:  
(American Association of Teachers of French)

|            |                  |
|------------|------------------|
| K-8        | Michelle Fife    |
| Secondary  | Ruth Ann Price   |
| Collegiate | Thomas F. Broden |

AATG Teachers of the Year:  
(American Association of Teachers of German)

|           |                   |
|-----------|-------------------|
| K-8       | Angelika Becker   |
| Secondary | Gislind Pentecost |

AATSP Teachers of the Year:  
(American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese)

|            |                      |
|------------|----------------------|
| K-8        | Nicci Saari          |
| Secondary  | Janice Wheeler-Cowen |
| Collegiate | Herbert J. Brant     |

AITJ Teacher of the Year:  
(Association of Indiana Teachers of Japanese)

|           |                  |
|-----------|------------------|
| Secondary | Sachiko Kawakubo |
|-----------|------------------|

ICC Teacher of the Year:  
(Indiana Classical Conference)

|            |               |
|------------|---------------|
| Collegiate | Marilyn Bisch |
|------------|---------------|

IN-NELL Teacher of the Year:  
(Indiana Chapter of the National Network for Early Language Learning)

|     |                      |
|-----|----------------------|
| K-8 | Mary Louise Cardwell |
|-----|----------------------|