

Molly Popchock was nominated by a colleague for the Sally Wellman Excellence in Teaching Award. What follows is an excerpt from the nominating letter:

*Molly Popchock has almost 30 years of experience as an ESL professional teaching all levels from preliteracy to advanced level 6. During this time her passionate advocacy and commitment has made her a leader in ELL instruction. Since 1993 at the Institute for Extended Learning, later Spokane Community College, she has tirelessly advocated for, instructed, and guided refugees / immigrants, as well as served as a leader, role model and mentor to countless English Language teachers.*

*Molly created, implemented, and oversaw countless new and established programs. She wrote the JRESL (job readiness) curriculum. She partnered with community entities like Keytronics and St. Luke's Rehabilitation providing students opportunities to learn work-related ESL at their job sites. [...] She received the SCC Excellent Faculty award and Deccio award for outstanding advocacy and promotion of diversity. She has always been willing to share her knowledge by repeatedly presenting at the Spokane Regional and WAESOL conferences. She has always opened her classroom to volunteers and practicum students for the benefit for her students and ESL professionals.*

## Molly Popchock: Response to Sally Wellman Excellence in Teaching Award

English language teaching is a commitment—like a religion, like a way of life: to stay free, to be a link to a different world, to be different, to be a champion for others, to serve as advocate, to be the one who represents all the positives and negatives of the English-speaking culture, to be an outcast at times because of the xenophobic nature of society, to be humble, ever recognizing that there is so much to learn from those we teach. This is the persona of the *teacher*, the basis for the building of respect for other people so that the world can become a set of interdependent communities, a world of peaceful existence.

*Sally Wellman*

Reaching out to you as the recent *Sally Wellman Excellence in Teaching Award* awarded by WAESOL in Sally's name, I'm humbled and grateful. My history with Sally and her influence and power date a long way back, and I'm here as a testament to that influence. Her presence along with her creation of the ESL Minor endorsement program at EWU were both a testimony to her commitment to and her goal for the college and the students coming through. I got lucky to be one of those in the first endorsement cohorts. I never got to meet her in person, but she was everywhere. As she

said, "English language teaching is a commitment—like a religion, like a way of life: to stay free, to be a link to a different world, to be different, to be a champion for others, to serve as advocate, to be the one who represents all the positives and negatives of the English-speaking culture..." She knew what she was talking about, and she guided so many of us in an era when ESL, ESOL, EFL were coming into the fore, we were becoming a legitimate degree and profession.

I will never forget how I fell into it, through the course Teaching in a Pluralistic Society with Dr. Salisbury—having to volunteer, making it then to the AEC and ESL with Doug Mayhew. I’ll never forget how it felt, just as Sally said, “Once you start into English language teaching, you’ll never be the same. English language teaching changes a person, affecting self-concept and altering egos forever.”

That experience led to my ESL endorsement program which led to my Master’s in TESL with Dr. Lester, Dr. Urcia, Dr. Reeves... It was a good ride—all of us older, with families, and making our choices for the profession we believed in. I can say that that beginning spurred many, many leaders into this profession today and throughout these years. Into the Adult Ed Program came many: Karen Snell, Kathy Laise, Lisa Randall, Bill Heinz; into Gonzaga: James Hunter, Martha Savage, Bridget Green; into Mukogawa; into Whitworth.... We got wisdom and guidance through that program from masters like Janet Yoder, Susan Stannard, Mary Brooks, and Evelyn Renshaw. We worked hard, we worked together, we built strong and meaningful programs, we were a force. I believe now, upon reflection, we were that force that Sally Wellman challenged us to be. When the state standards, in all of their iterations (SCANS, ICANS, EFF, WA State Learning Standards, IDEA, then CCR Standards) came for us in Adult Ed, we were ready.

I acknowledge all of those before and all those who have been on this journey with me: Doug, Charmaine, Michael, Leon, Karen, Kathy, James, Linda, Lucy, Mary Ann, Cielito, Sabina, Joan... We worked so hard and for so long. We were dedicated, we were committed. As Sally said.

It was an era, and I am grateful for having been part of it. I hope and think, I feel, that I helped to make it Sally’s wish, a commitment to those we have served. Those who taught

us so much about the world. I know that Sally was absolutely right when she said that that perspective will change our lives forever. Grace and Peace. I’m honored to have been recognized by you. Give it up for Sally, she did a great and important thing. I think collectively, we worked her vision. Now we leave it to the next generation, many bright stars among them, to carry on this important work of English language teaching.

I don’t have a single Statement of Beliefs, but I do have beliefs. I believe teaching is a vocation, teachers don’t or didn’t necessarily want to be teachers, but something along their educational journey or their life journey gave them real examples of good teaching. All teachers, I would proffer, were given that calling from good teachers that they have had. It is like an elixir when you are in the presence of great teachers—it draws you to it, if that is in your heart and skill set. To be a great teacher? You need that passion to serve, that drive to continue to learn and always elevate your field, a commitment to work with your peers to bring the best to your work, always for the benefit of the students you serve. You need to be organized.

Teaching is about serving, working, it is about thinking of the goals of your students, your institution, above your own. That is a big sacrifice and one we good teachers pay for. To be honest, the balance is hard to find, but when you’re in it, your loved ones remember that this is why they love you and are with you. Teaching is a vocation. When it’s not, get the hell out. But if you stay, give everything you have to make it the most for all you serve: for your students. Keep their lives, their goals, their purpose as your driving force. You’ll never lose with that.

Thank you,

Molly P –

## References

Wellman, S. (1991) *Excerpts from Sally’s Keynote speech at 1991, Spokane Regional ESL Conference*. WAESOL. <https://waesol.org/grants-awards/sally-wellman/>

## Cite this article:

Popchock, M. (2023). Molly Popchock: Response to Sally Wellman Excellence in Teaching Award. *WAESOL Educator*, 48(2), pp \_\_\_ - \_\_\_.

# WAESOL News: Grant Reports

## Augmented reality in education: Empowering teachers and engaging students

ALI ASIRI

Visualization has long been recognized as a valuable concept for enhancing text comprehension, particularly for ESL students. In line with this, the goal of my project is to leverage the power of augmented reality (AR) in classroom teaching by providing teachers with the necessary tools and resources to create and utilize AR experiences effectively thus enriching students' understanding of content through visualization of text. The project strives to make AR accessible to all teachers and students, ensuring that everyone is benefiting from this innovative educational approach. Ultimately, I believe the project will further demonstrate the immense potential of augmented reality to revolutionize education, making the learning process more effective, accessible, and impactful.

In support of this project, the WAESOL Project Fund was crucial to the development of the project as it gave me

access to the necessary tools and assets to develop AR experiences. This fund is also helping to build comprehensive how-to guidance and practical examples, explicitly focusing on using software like [Unity](#) for educational purposes. The aim is to empower teachers with the knowledge and confidence to create authentic AR experiences or access the ready-to-use materials resulting from this project. The invaluable support of the WAESOL organization, through funding and belief in the project's cause, has been instrumental in driving this initiative forward.

It is essential to understand that there are many phases to this project; it is not a one-time endeavor but an ongoing initiative that seeks to involve all teachers and students in the journey of AR integration. As of now, I have developed a number of AR experiences using the Unity engine which



Image 1: A picture of an individual object added to Unity workspace and ready to be used



Image 2: A picture of a group of objects added to the Unity workspace and ready to be used



Image 3: A picture of Unreal AR headset for testing the objects

has allowed me to build (see Images 1 and 2) and test at the same time using Unreal AR glasses (see Image 3). The ultimate goal of this phase is to develop, test, and categorize these AR experiences based on how they could be used (e.g., things you see in the classroom, things you see at an office). Future steps include the development of a library for all the AR experiences, development of the guidance/how-to steps on using and developing AR experiences for teachers and developers. Furthermore, the project aspires to help teachers incorporate AR-building activities into their classrooms, fostering students' digital literacy skills as an integral part of their educational journey.

The integration of AR in education holds great promise. I hope this project will empower teachers, facilitate immediate usability, provide a supportive ecosystem for AR adoption, and lay a foundation for transforming the educational landscape. By leveraging the potential of augmented reality, education can become a truly immersive and transformative experience, equipping students with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in an increasingly digital world. I would like to thank WAESOL for their support and I look forward to sharing the findings of this project and any takeaways.

---

# WAESOL professional development grant recipient report

WING SHUEN (ALICE) LAU

*“Diversity always has power, meaning, and beauty.”*

Sammy Ramsey, Opening Keynote Speaker at TESOL 2023  
International Convention & English Language Expo

I am grateful to have been the recipient of the *WAESOL Professional Development Grant 2022* to attend the TESOL 2023 Convention in Portland from March 21 to 24. At the convention, I had the privilege of meeting ELT educators from all over the world. This year, I am also honored to receive the *TESOL Leadership Mentoring Program Award 2023*, which allows me to engage in more roles in the organization which includes more than 13,000 members coming from 184 countries. With the support of both WAESOL and TESOL grants, I was able to attend the awards ceremony and TESOL convention in person. This was an incredible and unforgettable experience for me to connect with so many dedicated TESOL leaders in such a globalized community.

TESOL 2023 convention had an overarching theme of “Inspiring Innovation; Empowering ELT Professionals.” All the presentations and workshops I attended offered innovative and practical ways to teach English language learners. In particular, sessions such as “SEL in ELT: Effects of Teacher Preparation and Classroom Practices,” “Translanguaging as a Strategy for ELs Social-Emotional Learning,” and “Integrating Social-Emotional Learning

Practices into Daily EL Lessons” provided concrete teaching examples of how to promote the wellbeing and identity of both educators and students through everyday classroom practices. Other presentations such as “Culturally Sustaining Teaching Practices for Young MLLs” and “Embedding Diverse Children’s Literature in Preservice Teacher Education” offered valuable resources for educators to develop ELT strategies that connect with learners’ prior knowledge and cultural assets. For example, speakers Deborah Howard and Juyoung Song proposed the idea of creating a collaborative writing space (e.g., a dialogue journal) for multilingual learners and cited useful literacy resources for inclusive reading practices (e.g., [Unite for Literacy](#)). I found these topics specifically relevant to my research work that explores varied and interdisciplinary pedagogies (e.g., culturally responsive teaching and social-emotional learning) related to teacher education and literacy instruction for English language learners. A project that I am currently working on is to examine the integration of specific domains of social emotional learning, with a particular focus on supporting multilingual learners from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Additionally, I was delighted to have opportunities to meet face-to-face with some of my research collaborators at TESOL 2023 in between sessions. TESOL connects us through our shared interest in empowering a greater diversity of voices in the ELT field. I was particularly

motivated by Sammy Ramsey's keynote speech, which stressed the value of diversity. To me, diversity is not just a buzzword, it's a fundamental principle that ELT educators can adopt to help students gain a deeper appreciation of the vast variety of language usage in the world.

---

## 2022 Project funding grant

HANNA HONG

Scholars have demonstrated that to better understand classroom teachers' implementation of practice and institutional processes, it is critical to examine how teachers construct their understanding of instruction. Literature also shows that teachers' instructional practices are situated within a complex system of macro and micro conditions that send teachers a variety of messages about instruction, creating multiple and potentially competing logics among teachers in a school. I applied for the WAESOL grant in order to fund this qualitative study that would extend this line of research by investigating how the organizational environment shapes general education elementary classroom teachers' understanding of instruction and practice for multilingual learners (MLs). By highlighting how the organizational environment interacts and shapes teachers' logics when thinking about instruction for MLs, the findings could lead to ways for schools to identify conditions for change and to realize equity practices for MLs.

Since receiving the project grant, I have made significant progress towards achieving the study's objectives.

### **Achievements:**

1. identified a school site and recruited participants who aim to improve their instructional practices for multilingual learners;
2. conducted in-depth interviews of key participants;
3. carried out observations of formal social interactions (professional learning communities, co-planning, building professional developments, etc.).

### **Future Plans:**

1. complete data collection and analysis;
2. disseminate findings to the local school community and to educators and researchers through academic publications and conferences.

Thank you to WAESOL for supporting this research project. The grant has enabled me to thank teachers with a small gift card for their time following in-depth interviews. I look forward to sharing findings with the WAESOL community in early 2024.

## Land Acknowledgment

*Washington Association for the Education of Speakers of Other Languages (WAESOL) recognizes and honors our many diverse Indigenous and Native Peoples in the Pacific Northwest, in the United States, and globally-past, present, and future. We acknowledge that the arrival of the English language impacted the traditional languages and cultures of the Native, Indigenous, and First Nations Peoples and we celebrate the work to reclaim or maintain their languages and cultures. We stand in solidarity with the Native, Indigenous, and First Nations Peoples and respect their sovereignty, cultural heritage, and lives. May we all take a moment to honor the Indigenous tribes and Indigenous lands that we reside on and pay our deepest respects.*

