Teaching with passion means incorporating whatever will spark students’ passion for your lessons. My own passion is science. As an undergraduate student at Western Illinois University, I was a pre-medicine major when I had an accident that forced me to drop my chemistry lab in favor of another Spanish class, and the rest is history. I fell in love with learning language and became a language teacher. But in spite of my certainty that I chose the right career, I have never lost my fire for my minor, biology.

After teaching for 21 years, I find that some of my most powerful units are rooted in cross-curricular lessons with our science teachers. Whether designed for novices or intermediates, these lessons have a greater impact in part because my own eyes light up when I get to use Spanish to talk about waterborne illnesses or biodiversity. I truly believe that my passion ignites student engagement. As these science-based units unfold, there is no doubt that everyone gets excited to check their test tubes for contamination in our local water samples and record the results in the daily graph. Target language is being used to think critically and to solve problems both

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at home and abroad. While the lessons do look a lot different in Level 1 Spanish versus Level 4, I have found that even a novice language learner can be connected to world problems through classroom lessons.

ACTFL’s Global Competence position statement (www.actfl.org/news/position-statements/global-competence-position-statement) focuses on the different needs which language learners may have as they successfully interact with people locally, nationally, and globally. One of these needs is global problem-solving. Global problem-solving is important as students examine issues related to the environment, health, and innovation. These students may collaborate across borders as they share perspectives and insights and seek creative solutions. Global competence is developing the ability to communicate, on a variety of topics, in the target language of the people with whom one is interacting and maintaining an open, non-judgmental, and inquisitive attitude to mediate between two cultures. Most of our language students will not become language teachers. However, by giving them global competence, we are preparing them to use language in many careers and helping them find the keys to becoming lifelong learners and lovers of languages.

Planning for Global Competence

In order to plan an engaging unit that encourages critical thinking and global problem-solving, ask yourself what types of local problems you can connect to world issues in countries where the target language is spoken.

It all comes back to passionate teaching. I elicit the strongest student engagement when my students and I are passionate about a topic. You can test the waters by polling student interests; one of my favorite ways to do this is using the free site, Poll Everywhere (www.polleverywhere.com). It’s as easy as entering several topic choices and having students choose a favorite. This has a double reward in that students have shown an interest in the topic and they feel like their opinions were a valuable part of the learning process.

Once you have decided on an area of interest, narrow it down by asking yourself the following:

• How does this topic affect my local community?
• How can my students use what they learn to collaborate and communicate with speakers in target language countries?
• How can I use this unit of study to connect my students with opportunities to give and serve both globally and locally?
• How can I select appropriate vocabulary and structures for the students in front of me?

A unit that encompasses issues both in my community and abroad is my early intermediate study of biodiversity and conservation. These are two topics that are heavy on cognates in Spanish so this unit is appropriate as early as late Level 1 but can be recycled later to dig deeper into the target culture when students’ proficiency is higher.

My biodiversity unit incorporates authentic resources and authentic experiences that scaffold students’ learning experiences toward the key question: “How can conservation efforts in the Panama Canal watershed help me find ways to serve the Corps of Engineers in the Carlyle Lake (IL) watershed?” As written, this unit was designed for third-year Spanish students in their first week of study.

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A video exchange is a great method for connecting with native speakers.

As the doodling began to slow, I encouraged them to open our text, a book from Scholastic’s Explora tu Mundo collection called La Selva Tropical (store.scholastic.com/Books/Hardcover-Books/Scholastic-Explora-Tu-Mundo-La-selva-tropical), and add things that they immediately recognized as cognates or from prior knowledge. We hung the posters around the room and did a gallery walk so that everyone had the opportunity to revisit some old vocabulary and ideas before we tackled the new material.

Provide an Authentic Audience

Ask how an authentic audience might enhance the unit for your students. While designing a unit, consider native speakers who can give students the opportunity to use language beyond the classroom.

Human authentic resources are a powerful tool that teachers may underutilize. To kick off the study of biodiversity, I introduced students to the idea of the watershed by bringing in an officer from the local Corps of Engineers to tell them about the issues facing Carlyle Lake and the flora and fauna in our area. Rather than telling them about my experiences traveling to Panama, I asked the guide from our student tours if he would be willing to participate in a video exchange with our class. It was exciting to see students agonize over just the right words for the questions they would ask; this is something that they don’t do when the answers come from me. They wanted to sound professional and polished because they knew that these questions were destined for someone other than their own teacher.

The questions were sent and our guide returned his replies, and then I used these clips to create a video which we watched together as a class. This interpretive task had real meaning to them because the questions he was answering were their own. It made them push themselves harder as they listened with the intent to understand. Of course, the guide used some language with which they were not yet familiar but they all felt that they understood his message and the unfamiliar words provided a great starting point for unit vocabulary.

The Panamanian naturalist guide interacted with students throughout the unit. In order to show them plants, animals, and even consequences of deforestation firsthand, he made a video of himself guiding them through the forest. What we were studying in our book and in our community came alive in his videos.

So Easy a Novice Can Do It?

Some teachers think we only can plan these types of experiences for intermediate or advanced students. No doubt many of us do feel challenged when needing to create units that introduce novice language students to global issues without overwhelming them with incomprehensible input. The key is in the planning.

The same rules and goals apply to novices as apply to intermediates. Ask yourself:

- What do you want your students to know?
- What do you want them to be able to do?
- What can you reasonably expect from their performance?

Great Resources

The Keys to Planning for Learning: Effective Curriculum, Unit, and Lesson Design by Donna Clementi and Laura Terrill www.actfl.org/publications/books-and-brochures/the-keys-planning-learning

ACTFL Unit and Lesson Planner app (on iTunes) tinyurl.com/actfl-app

A key to global competence is using the language to communicate with people from the target culture. Students love these authentic interactions. Considering solutions to a shared problem builds a bridge between their two cultures.

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Gaining Intercultural Communicative Competence

When you have clear answers, your planning comes down to what vocabulary and structures they need in order to tackle an environmental issue. Global problems in health care and biodiversity are great for novices, in Spanish especially because of the high number of cognates. These units help students who plan to pursue careers in health care and engineering by providing an immediate connection between the language they are studying and their future.

Assess for Proficiency

While planning, consider how to assess students’ understanding of the concepts, vocabulary, and global challenges presented in the unit. Ensure that assessments reflect the goals you set for the unit.

Goals are an important part of unit planning. They shape the road map that leads you from the starting point, your idea, to the finish line, your assessment. Establishing goals before you begin each unit allows you to plan instruction that will help students successfully find their way to the finish line. (See chart below for the goals and assessments for this unit.)

ACTFL’s Global Competence position statement reminds teachers that our students will reach global competence following different pathways. If we embed global experiences like solving problems in the environment, health care, and conservation in the language classroom beginning in the Novice level, we will touch our students’ passions and build in them a lifelong love of language and service.

Carrie Toth is a Spanish teacher at Carlyle High School, Carlyle, Illinois.

Use Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe’s Graph of Curricular Priorities to categorize all vocabulary and structures students might need to know during the unit of study. The enduring understandings are what students will remember for life and represent a limited amount of information. These are things that all learners should acquire. The two outer rings are perfect for differentiating for students who acquire language more quickly. The “chuck-it bucket” is my own addition. As you plan your unit, use it liberally to keep the target vocabulary and structures manageable and discard the rest.

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<tr>
<th>GOALS</th>
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<td>I. Students will connect sedimentation removal efforts in the Panama Canal waters with efforts to remove sedimentation from Carlyle Lake and will consider ways they can help locally.</td>
<td>Students completed a presentational writing task in which they suggested a way that the Carlyle Corps of Engineers could apply techniques used to reduce sedimentation in the Canal Zone to the sedimentation problem at the mouth of our lake.</td>
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<td>2. Students will identify similarities and differences between conservation efforts in their local watershed and the Canal Zone.</td>
<td>After our speaker from the Corps of Engineers had shared news about the state of our water supply and students had viewed and discussed the video of their question and answer with the Panamanian guide, they did a hula hoop Venn Diagram of the issues presented by our two guests (see picture above). In this interpretive task, teams had to read each problem and identify it as a problem for the Carlyle Lake watershed, the Panama Canal watershed, or a shared problem.</td>
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<td>3. Students will be familiar with the parts of the rainforest and of the forest in our community. They will link species commonly found in their local community with species common in Central America.</td>
<td>In this interpersonal task, each table had three conversation starter cards in the center. Their job was to turn over the card and sustain a conversation at the table for 3 full minutes. When the timer sounded, they turned over the next card for another 3-minute conversation. The cards encouraged teammates to ask and answer questions about the parts of the forest in Carlyle, the rainforest in Panama, and the wildlife that can be found in each. Asking questions is an important part of becoming a proficient speaker, and this activity allowed the students to take the lead in questioning.</td>
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<td>4. Students will provide a guided tour of the forest in the Carlyle Lake watershed for their Panamanian guide in the target language with attention to the same details that he shared with them.</td>
<td>The summative assessment was a presentational speaking activity. Following the pattern of the video they received from their Panamanian guide, students created their own tour of the forests surrounding our local watershed. They shared with the guide the same types of information that he shared with them. Because the audience for this assessment was someone other than the teacher, the quality of the products students created was excellent.</td>
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