

Conference Report: TESOL 2012 Convention

A Declaration of Excellence in Philadelphia

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KOTESOL Representative to TESOL 2012

Even a glimpse of Old City Hall seen from the Avenue of the Arts looks imposing, and the view presents the overall atmosphere of the Independence Mall area and of Philadelphia in general. Surprisingly, the way people step down into the subway beneath the classic Independence Hall symbolically demonstrates the combined characteristics of the town – historical and modern.

Near Independence Hall, the Convention Center covers many blocks, and as always, the 46th TESOL Convention was an “intellectual festival” on a grand scale, accommodating several thousand TESOLers from over one-hundred countries around the world. The participants were invited to “reflect on their practices, voice their opinions, and declare their pursuit of excellence in the ELT profession.” In addition to over 1,500 presentations, including plenary,



View of Philadelphia's Old City Hall in Independence Mall from the Avenue of the Arts.

invited, and concurrent sessions, a range of professional opportunities were provided: the Exhibit Hall, the Job Marketplace, educational site visits, Breakfast or Tea with TESOL's Best, and K-12 Days. Moreover, various kinds of administrative meetings and workshops were held in every possible corner of the Convention area and at the nearby Marriott Hotel.

As the KOTESOL representative and Chair of TESOL's Program Administration Interest Section (PAIS), I attended a number of receptions that were sponsored by the U.S. Embassy, TESOL, and the TEOL president, where I well represented KOTESOL. Even at the SpellEvent organizational meeting that I attended, TESOL's comment was that KOTESOL is a well-established TESOL affiliate that they are so proud of. Still, there is always room for improvement.

Accommodating other people's strengths to make our own organization better is important, even though it is not always simple.

First of all, the way Interest Groups (there are about 23) were playing an integral role at the Convention was impressive. At TESOL, each Interest Section has to organize and host its own academic session (2-hour 45-min. time blocks) and intersections (between different sections, 1-hour 45-min. time blocks) concurrently with other selected presentations. If KOTESOL could adopt this system, it could involve SIG participants more and enhance their activities. In fact, as the Chair of Program Administration, I had an opportunity to deepen my knowledge of the field as well as to broaden my network in the process by contacting dozens of well-known presenters on such a specific theme, “Quality Assurance.”

Another noticeable feature was that the Electronic Village offered so many different programs, including a Webmaster’s Workshop, which was fairly well attended. The Electronic Village (EV) and the Technology Showcase were hosted by the Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) Interest Section. At these events, Convention attendees could explore technology resources for language teaching and learning for both online and offline use. Software designers, web designers, and computer specialists were invited to provide tips on how to use technology, including mobile technology devices and applications. I did not have the time to attend any of them, but Convention participants made positive comments on the updated content and exciting programs.

In addition to these programs, TESOL offers workshops for two strands of their Leadership Development Certificate Program (LDCP) during the Convention. KOTESOL could offer similar types of workshop for future KOTESOL leaders on a smaller scale. KOTESOL can provide sessions to introduce the organizational structure, policy, and governance issues. In addition, some other sessions could be designed to enhance participants’ general understanding of leadership and practical skills to manage meetings and facilitate teamwork. It is always important for current officers to remember the mission of how KOTESOL can best function as the motivating force to enable our members to better develop their leadership as well as their understanding of ELT within the KOTESOL community.

In addition, how to set up a KOTESOL culture that would allow for more peaceful and encouraging dialogue could be learned from TESOL’s example. I attended the TESOL Annual Business Meeting (ABM), and there I met with role-model TESOL leaders whose vision and challenges definitely brought changes to the organization. What was noticeable was that from the stage, there were many humorous comments that were well received. What was most evident was that there was mutual respect between the officers on the stage and the general members of the floor. In addition, there were on-going dialogues between the outgoing officers and incoming officers, and they seemed to share a common heritage. There was definitely a decorum and tradition observed throughout the meeting. In fact, the way TESOL officers stayed calm and elegant, without anyone losing their temper, was likely due to most of the substantial preparatory work of the conference being thoroughly taken care of by the TESOL full-time office staff. That is why the officers could easily show respectful gestures without making any display of exhaustion or anger at the end. Let us not forget that

KOTESOL officers deserve a lot more respect from their fellow officers as well as from members because they tend to spend endless hours of time and energy for the betterment of KOTESOL. Hopefully, we can develop KOTESOL ABM culture where all the officers could be truly proud of others for their dedication and hard work. I really wish the KOTESOL ABM could create a harmonious atmosphere for a happy reunion among KOTESOLers to create a better vision of the field for the upcoming years.