

Report from the 2019 TESOL Advocacy and Policy Summit in Washington, D.C. June 17-19, 2019



Jeanne-Marie Wright

Over the past 30 years Jeanne-Marie has been an ELL teacher K-12, Instructional Coach, TOSA and GLAD/SIOP Trainer. She has also done extensive professional development throughout her career as an Elementary ELL Coordinator for Evergreen School District, an ELL TOSA for Vancouver Public Schools and an ELL TOSA K-12 for Portland Public Schools. While working for PPS she also taught in the ESOL Endorsement Program at Portland State University. In addition to her involvement in K-12 education, she has taught ESL at Portland Community College, Clark College and the College of Micronesia.
jeanne-marie@waesol.org

This year, WAESOL sent two repeat advocates, Michelle Roth, 2019 WAESOL President, and Jeanne-Marie Wright, WAESOL Member-At-Large, to Washington, D.C. to attend the TESOL advocacy training and conduct visits with lawmakers on Capitol Hill. As in years past, the week started with an overview of the federal laws that fund and support ELL programs for K-12 and Adult Basic Education. In addition, we learned about policy statements that TESOL has drafted on issues that affect TESOL members. In general, TESOL supports:

- **Sufficient and effective funding** for federal education programs serving all English learners and newcomers, from birth through adult education.
- **Improved professional development** and career pathways for existing and future English language teachers to gain the skills required to meet the needs of the country's diverse English learner population of over 4 million K-12 students.
- **Fair immigration policies** that do not discriminate or favor individuals based on their country of origin, English language skills, or education level, and seek to promote welcoming environments within schools and communities. (TESOL International "Policy Recommendations for the 116th U.S. Congress" 2019 1)

The main "ask" this year was to encourage support for the *Reaching English Learners Act* ([H.R. 1153](#), S. 545) which would provide grants to increase the number of teachers graduating from teacher preparation programs with the necessary skills to help English learners succeed. The bill was written last year with the help of TESOL International, and was reintroduced this year with bipartisan support. For the bill to be taken up, however, more lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, and on both sides of the hill would need to sign on as co-sponsors. TESOL asked us to go to the hill to find new co-sponsors and get the word out. Michelle Roth and I stopped by the offices of all 10 Washington State congressional districts to leave information about the *Reaching English Learners Act*. If you would like to contact your Representative on H.R. 1153, you can call or email them any time to express your opinion. [Here](#) is a website to help you find your elected leaders in Congress. In addition to this, TESOL supports full funding for Title II and Title III of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), which provides supplemental funding for instruction of English learners and professional development for instructors and school leaders. For adult English learners, TESOL recommends full funding of Title II of the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) which funds adult and family literacy programs. For exchange scholars, TESOL rejects a proposed cut to the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and



from l to r: Michelle Roth, Senator Patty Murray, and Jeanne-Marie Wright in Washington D.C. June, 2019

advocates for maintaining support for the Fulbright Program and other educational and cultural exchanges. Finally, TESOL stands in support of the *American Dream and Promise Act* of 2019 (H.R. 6) and the *Dream Act* of 2019 (S. 874) which would provide a pathway to citizenship for recipients of DACA and other undocumented individuals who arrived in the U.S. as young people.

As a K-12 ELL Specialist, I spoke to the issues of K-12 education for English Language Learners in the public schools and the importance of funding under ESSA for Title II and Title III.

We met with Manuel Contreras, who is the Educational Assistant for Senator Patty Murray, and shared our concerns about any funding cuts to ESSA Title II and Title III. Jeanne-Marie was able to share how this would impact ELL programs in the schools and answered several questions he had regarding ELL support and services.

We invited Manuel to visit our schools and see first-hand how we support our ELL students and families. In addition, we met with Anna Breen, the Legislative

Assistant for Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler (WA-03). Our main ask was support for the *Reaching English Language Learners Act* and support for Title II for professional development for teachers working with ELL students. We also discussed our roles working with ELL students and their families and invited her to visit any of our ELL Programs.

To round out the trip, Michelle and I knocked on the office door of every member of the House of Representatives from Washington state. We left behind information about the *Reaching English Learners Act* and our contact information. Later, we received follow-up communication from staff from Representative Adam Smith (WA-09), and we extended an invitation to one of his district staff to join us at our WAESOL conference in Renton. At the conference, we learned from him that, for congressional staff to encourage co-sponsorship of a bill, it is a tremendous help to hear from constituents. If you would like [your representative](#) to co-sponsor the *Reaching English Learners Act*, make sure to call or email.