



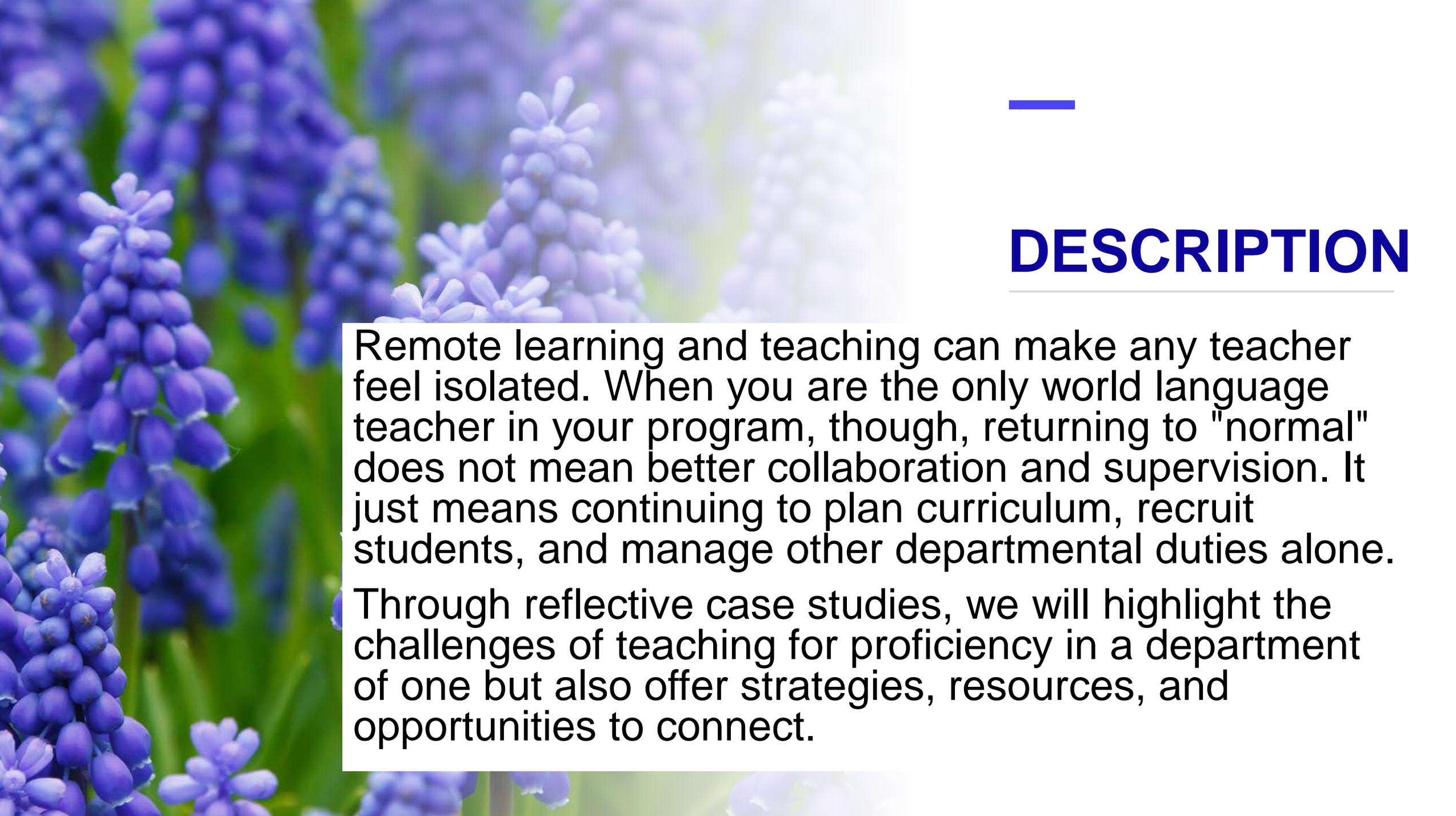
Department of One: How Isolated Teachers Connect and Collaborate

Presenters

Jaime Danks (danksjai@msu.edu)

Amanda Lanier (alanier@msu.edu)

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DESCRIPTION

Remote learning and teaching can make any teacher feel isolated. When you are the only world language teacher in your program, though, returning to "normal" does not mean better collaboration and supervision. It just means continuing to plan curriculum, recruit students, and manage other departmental duties alone.

Through reflective case studies, we will highlight the challenges of teaching for proficiency in a department of one but also offer strategies, resources, and opportunities to connect.

OVERVIEW



OVERVIEW



Challenges

- **ONBOARDING**
- **COLLABORATING**
- **EVALUATING**
- **DEVELOPING**

Opportunities

- **OBSERVE Yourself**
- **Cultivate Your MENTORS**
- **Build a Peer NETWORK**

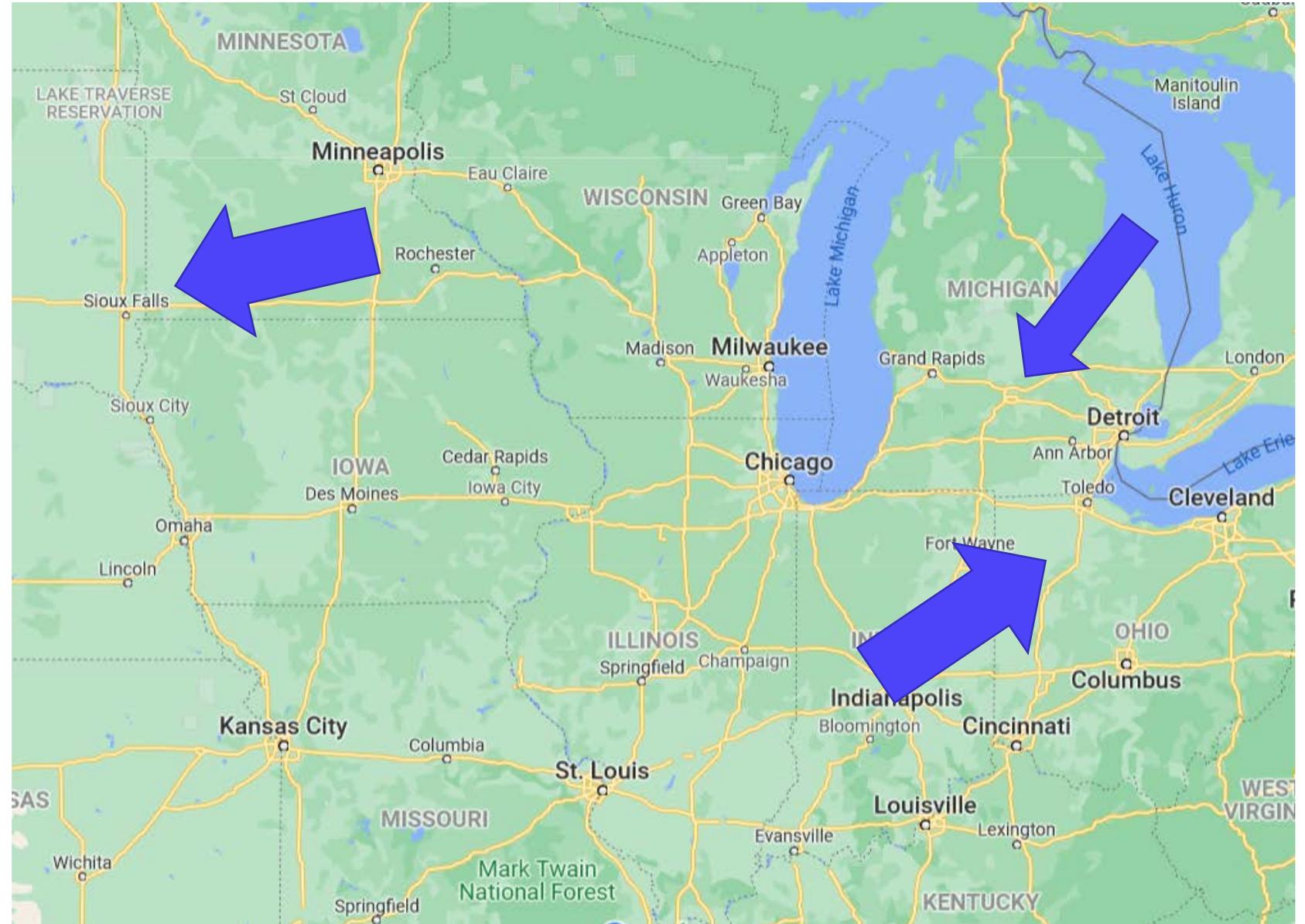
Where are the Departments of One?

These case studies:

- Southwest Minnesota
- Northwest Ohio

And many others:

- Suburban Missouri
- Northeast Japan
- LCTL teachers everywhere



LANGUAGE TEACHERS



Jaime Danks

Spanish Teacher, Grades 9-12

Southwest Minnesota

16 years of experience

B.A. in Spanish & Latin American Studies

M.A. in Foreign Language Teaching (MSU)



Becca Diaz

Spanish Teacher, Grades 9-12

Northwest Ohio

3 years of experience

B.A. in Spanish & International Studies

M.A. in Foreign Language Teaching (MSU)

Department of One **CHALLENGES**



How do you
manage...

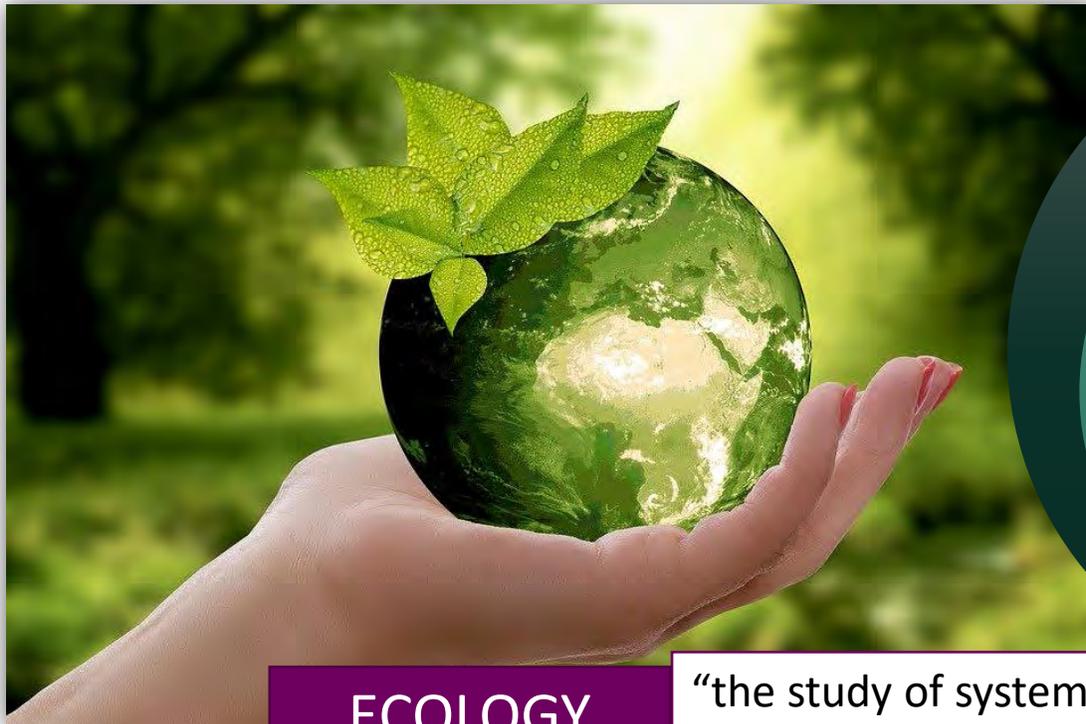
ONBOARDING?

COLLABORATING?

EVALUATING?

DEVELOPING FURTHER?

LANGUAGE DEPARTMENTS



ECOLOGY

“the study of systems within their immediate surroundings” and
“evolution of the system over time” (Pennington & Hoekje, 2010 p. 20)

Global Environment

Institutional Context

Language Program

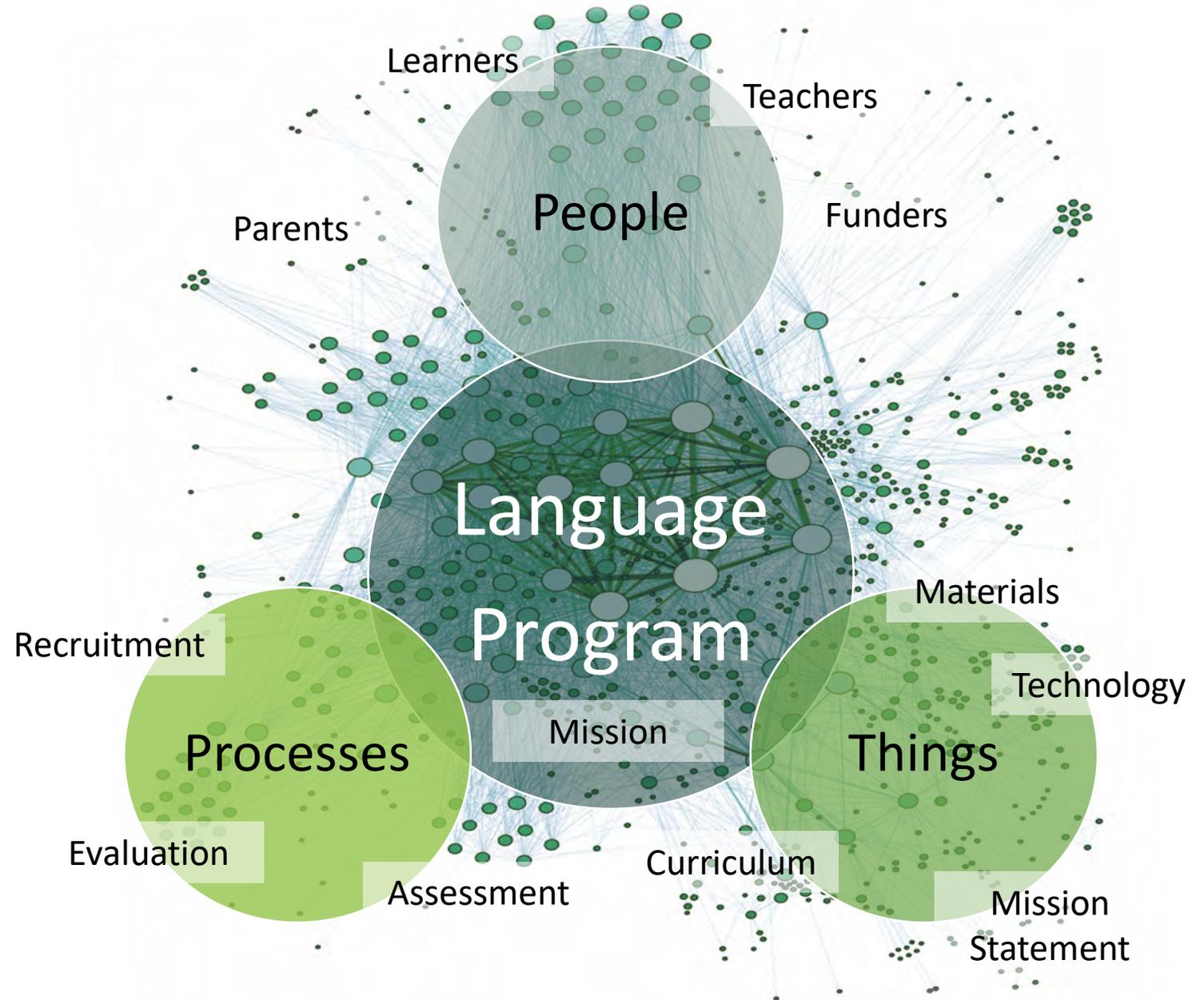
Faculty & Staff

Students

LANGUAGE DEPARTMENTS

What goes on in a language program?

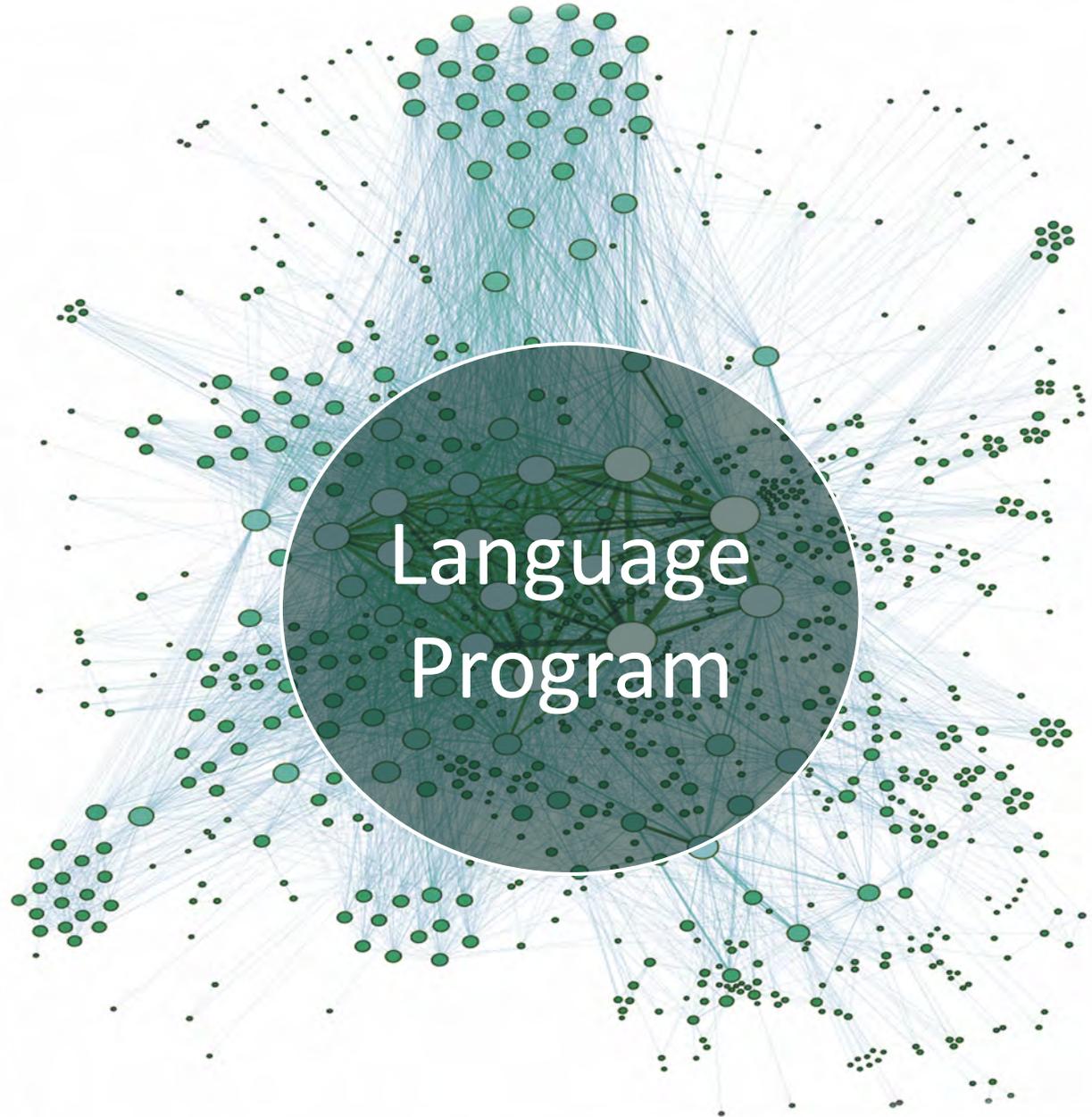
- People, Processes, Things
- Tangible and Intangible elements
- Internal participants
- External stakeholders



LANGUAGE DEPARTMENTS

What goes on in a language program?

- People, Processes, Things
- Tangible and Intangible elements
- Internal participants
- External stakeholders



Department of One **ONBOARDING**



“For foreign language teachers, learning language is divorced from the learning of teaching” (Tedick, 2009, p. 264).

“I often hear language teachers say they teach the way they were taught. I think this quote explains that so well. As language teachers, we are focused on learning the language, and there is a lack of methods courses which then forces us to teach the way we were taught because it is the only model we have to base our methods on.”

(Jaime, discussion post in response to prompt: Preparation, Hiring, and Onboarding, February 2021)

apprenticeship of observation
(Lortie, 1975)

Department of One **COLLABORATING**



What is harder when you don't have colleagues to collaborate with you?

Planning and designing lessons, syllabi, curricula, and assessments

Offering learners a variety of input and models

Setting reasonable goals – and reaching them

Giving each other feedback and advice

Covering for each other when you are sick, traveling, etc.

Recruitment, advocacy, student support, and community engagement

Department of One **EVALUATING**



- Supervisors are unlikely to have knowledge, experience, and insight into the key features of language learning
- One consequence can be poor ratings of appropriate pedagogical choices (i.e., if you are speaking the target language 90%, not 100%)
- Another consequence can be evaluations with little substance, e.g., “two kids in the back weren’t paying attention” or “good job – I won’t come back unless I have to”
- Often the result is no observations at all.

Department of One **EVALUATING**



Observations should not just prove you are doing your job – they should help you grow. Feedback is vital!

Department of One **EVALUATING**



Supervision

“**Supervision**, which implies **administration**, but actually is geared more towards encouraging **teacher growth**... can be done by anyone who has the teacher's professional growth as their priority”

(Heller, 2004, p. 71)

Evaluation When You Don't Speak the Language

“Although it may appear difficult to observe a class where you don't speak the language, with a clear framework on what to look for in a World Language classroom evaluators can be effective observers in any language”

(Ritz, 2021, Ch 6, 2nd para.)

Lesson Design	Target Language Use
Task Design	Curriculum and Assessment

Department of One **DEVELOPING**



REFLECTION

- It is up to you to reflect (or not) and improve (or not)

GUIDANCE

- You don't know what you don't know or what will help most

NEW IDEAS

- You have to seek new ideas and make sense of them on your own

REQUIRED PD

- Usually provided PD is unrelated to language teaching – and not free to seek other PD

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OPPORTUNITIES



How can you
develop?

OBSERVE Yourself

Build a NETWORK

Cultivate MENTORS

Department of One **OBSERVE Yourself**



REFLECTIVE TEACHING

- Gather and examine information on what is taking place within a language course
- Identify anything puzzling about the teaching-learning process
- Build awareness and deepen understanding of teaching-learning behaviors
- Collaborate with others interested in processes of reflective teaching
- Refine questions tied to teaching that are worth further exploration
- Locate resources to help clarify questions being posed
- Make informed changes to teaching-learning behaviors
- Document changes and share emerging insights with others over time

Student surveys or
focus groups

Use a checklist or
chart

Keep a
journal/blog

Ask a peer to
observe you

Video/Audio
record a class

Department of One **OBSERVE Yourself**



General Focus – everyday questions:

- What were the objectives? Did we get there?
- What went well?
- What will I do differently next time?
- What do I notice watching the video that I didn't notice when I was busy teaching?

**Video/Audio
record a class**

Specific Focus – some options:

- **Language use** – How much did I use L1 vs. L2? When did I switch languages? When did they switch?
- **Engagement** – Were most of the students engaged most of the time?
- **Learning Tools** – Did I integrate technology and other materials smoothly?
- **ICC** – How did I incorporate culture and intercultural competence in this lesson?

**Or use what you
already have**

Department of One **OBSERVE Yourself**



**Teacher
Effectiveness for
Language
Learning**

**The TELL Project
Domains**

<https://www.tellproject.org>

Self-Assessments and Feedback Forms

PREPARING
for Student Learning

Environment

Planning

ADVANCING
Student Learning

The Learning
Experience

Performance &
Feedback

Learning Tools

SUPPORTING
for Student Learning

Collaboration

Professionalism

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Cultivate Your MENTORS



Local Supervisors

- Help your administrators help you
- Offer them standards and FLT evaluation guides (Ritz, 2021)
- Listen to the feedback on general skills – but supplement it

Teacher Educators

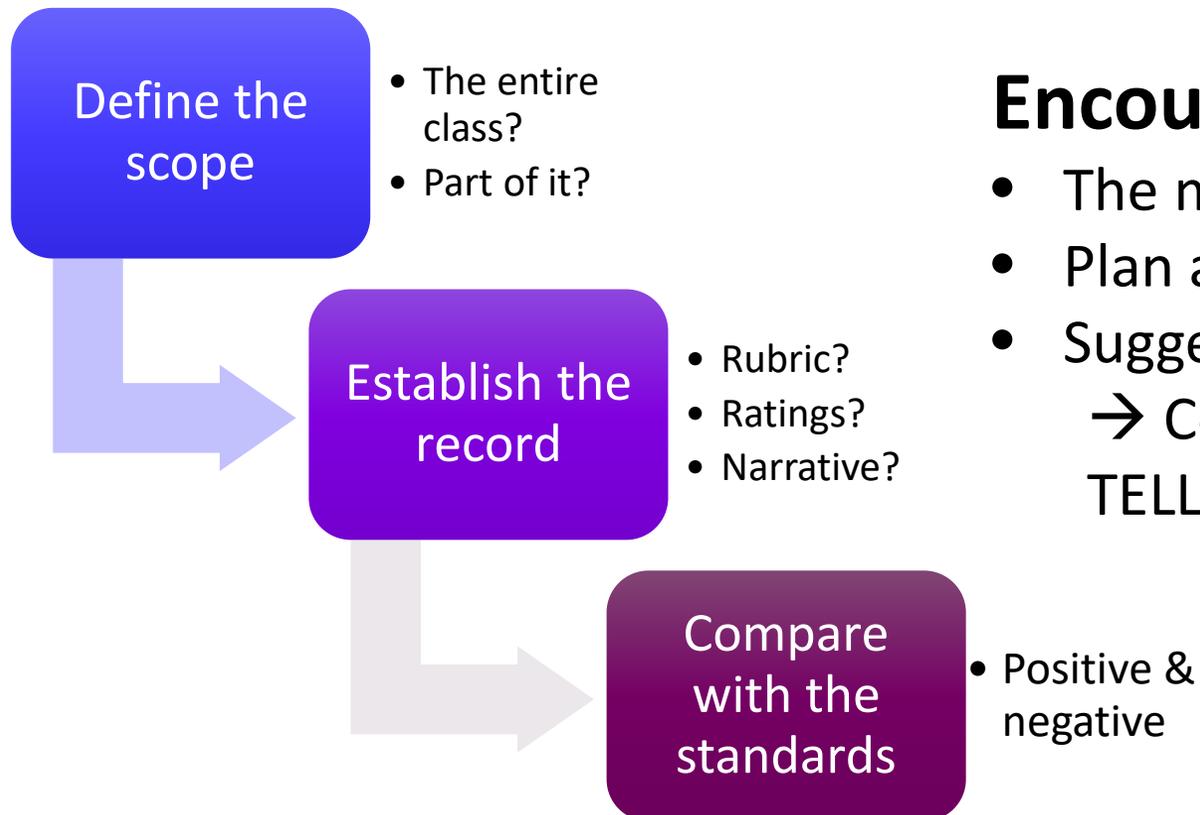
- Work with your network to find and schedule speakers
- Look for virtual training – usually free
- Consider starting a graduate degree or certificate

Peer Mentors

- Create a structured plan for formative observations
- Build rapport through discussion
- Share videos you record
- Use good observation protocols (Murphy, 2014)

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Cultivate Your MENTORS



Encourage better observations

- The more frequent, the less nerve-wracking
- Plan a time to debrief the observation
- Suggest a focus for the observation
 - Consider choosing criteria from the TELL Project domains (tellproject.org)

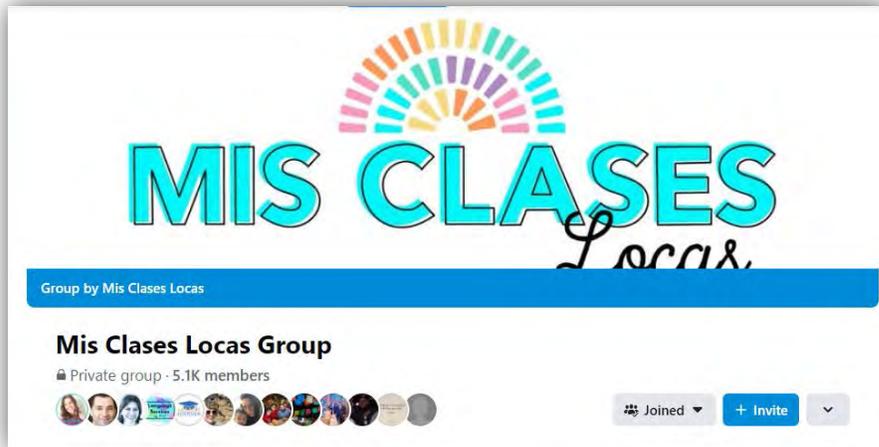
See Ritz (2021), Lord (2014), Murphy (2014)

Department of One Build a Peer NETWORK



Mis Clases Locas

Administrator is a Department of One in Iowa | 5.1K Members



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/MisClasesLocasGroup/>

Teachers of Spanish Heritage Students

3.6K Members



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/942240065921862/>

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Build a Peer NETWORK



What do you actually want and need from the peer network?

- *Not just joining an online group*
- *Not just sharing materials*
- *Not just forming a PLC*

- Discussion of challenges and solutions
- Peer observation and mentoring
- Models for planning, goals, techniques
- Training in specific areas – host speakers, workshops
- Meaningful mentor relationships
- Qualified evaluators

Department of One **CONNECTION AND AUTONOMY**



Contact with another person is a basic biological need; loneliness is a form of starvation. Even as adults, connection nourishes us in a literal, physiological way... We literally sicken and die without connection...

And it is also true that the lifelong development of autonomy is as innate to human nature as the drive to connect. We need both connection and autonomy.

From *Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle*
(Nagoski & Nagoski, 2019, p. 134-135)

**THANKS FOR
WATCHING!**

**What resonated
with you?**

**What would help
you feel more
connected?**

**In real time:
Use the Chat function or unmute!**

**What resources
do you need
most?**

**After the conference: Email us,
use LinkedIn, try Facebook...**

Michigan State University

MASTER OF ARTS



AND CERTIFICATE

MAFLT.CAL.MSU.EDU

Amanda
Lanier

- East Lansing,
Michigan
- alanier@msu.edu

Jaime
Danks

- Southwest
Minnesota
- danksjai@msu.edu

Department of One References and Resources



TELL Project – Teacher Excellence in Language Learning

→ <http://www.tellproject.org>

ACTFL – American Council for Foreign Language Teaching – Guidelines & Manuals

→ <https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals>

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Teacher Effectiveness for Language Learning

FULL CLASS OBSERVATION FEEDBACK TOOL



Teacher: _____ Language: _____ Grade/Course: _____
 School: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Many of the criteria in the *Teacher Effectiveness for Language Learning Framework* are observable as a teacher engages students in learning. This tool, intended for use during a full-class period or lesson, captures those criteria and allows the observer to catalog what is seen and provides a document from which feedback can be given.

Check strategies observed and/or note level of implementation.
 FO = Fully Observed PO = Partially Observed NO = Not Observed NA = Not Applicable

A. Setting the Stage				
1. The lesson's performance objectives are clearly stated in student-friendly language and posted in the classroom for the duration of the lesson.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
2. The teacher shares the sequence of learning activities with the students.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
Observed Behavior/Notes:				
B. Classroom Communication				
3. At least 90% of what the teacher says and/or materials the teacher shares with the students is in the target language.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
4. The teacher shares the sequence of learning activities with the students.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
5. Neither the teacher nor the students translate the target language into English.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
6. The teacher uses a variety of strategies (e.g., visuals, concrete objects, hands-on experiences) to make language comprehensible.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
7. The teacher frequently checks for understanding throughout the lesson.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
Observed Behavior/Notes:				
C. Learning Activities				
8. Students are engaged in activities designed to meet the daily performance objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
9. Students participate in activities aimed at all levels of thinking and appropriate to their stages of learning.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
10. Students participate in a variety of activities that are based on student attention/interest level and time needed for task.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
11. The teacher uses smooth and efficient transitions throughout the class period.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
12. The students participate in activities that allow for physical movement.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
13. Students engage in pair and/or small group activities.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
14. Students engage in cultural observation and analysis of both the new and the students' own cultures.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
Observed Behavior/Notes:				

D. Feedback				
15. Students are receptive to feedback given from the teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
16. Students self-assess language progress.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
17. Students peer-assess language progress.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
Observed Behavior/Notes:				
E. Learning Tools				
18. The teacher uses a variety of learning tools to facilitate the lesson.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
19. The teacher and students use available technologies to develop real world language abilities.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
20. Visuals used by the teacher are large enough to be seen from the back of the classroom, are colorful, and are culture-specific.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
Observed Behavior/Notes:				
G. Closing the Lesson				
21. The teacher returns student attention to the targeted learning objective(s) to affirm what they can do now that they couldn't do at the beginning of the class.	<input type="checkbox"/> FO	<input type="checkbox"/> PO	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
Observed Behavior/Notes:				
AREAS OF STRENGTH			AREAS FOR GROWTH	

<http://www.tellproject.org/tools/feedback/>

