

THE MONTHLY

NETWORKER

APRIL 2025 | VOL. 8

WORDS FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Dear Colleagues,

As we move through the 2025 school year, I want to take a moment to reflect on the journey we are on together to strengthen English teaching and learning across our education system. A key part of this transformation is the development of a new English Curriculum grounded in Competency Standards.

This updated curriculum is designed to better meet the linguistic and communicative needs of our students, providing a strong foundation for more effective and meaningful English instruction. To support its successful implementation, we have begun an induction process that will soon be followed by an online training program. This training is essential to ensure everyone has a solid understanding of the curriculum before it becomes part of our everyday classroom practice.

As part of our ongoing commitment to improving English teaching, we are also getting ready for the upcoming National Conference of English Language Teachers, taking place from the 16th-20th of June under the theme: “Competency-Based Education: Transforming English Language Learning.” This event will bring together national and international educators to exchange ideas, share experiences, and explore innovative practices that can elevate the quality of English education.

These collective efforts reflect our shared vision: to empower students not just to learn English, but to use it confidently in academic and professional settings.

I encourage you to stay focused, stay engaged, and remain open to new approaches that respond to the changing demands of 21st-century education. Together, we are laying a stronger foundation for the future of English language learning in our country.

Ms. Cole



LETTER FROM OUR EDITOR

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the April edition of The Monthly Networker! As we embrace the spirit of renewal, we're excited to share inspiring updates, fresh perspectives, and uplifting stories from across the National English Network.

This month in Regional News and Updates, we highlight how MEDUCA honored the passion and resurrection of Jesus through a meaningful Stations of the Cross event. We also celebrate the official inauguration of the Aneldo Camarena School Health Clinic in Panama Norte — a major achievement featured In the Spotlight.

In Industry Trends, we dive into topics like the evolving role of educators in "Challenges and New Perspectives for English Teachers in the Technological Era," and the growing impact of blended learning.

Behind the Scenes highlights continuous professional development, with a focus on improving technological skills among Panama's educators. In The Road to Implementing the New Curriculum, read about induction sessions taking place across regions as we move forward together.

Don't miss Resource Corner, where we introduce a dynamic platform using music videos and lyrics to make language learning engaging and effective. Wrap up with our Thumbs Up spotlight and fun trivia from the Fun Fact section.

Thank you for being a vital part of our network. Let's keep learning, growing, and connecting.

Happy Reading!

Raul Sieiro
Editor, The Monthly Networker

REGIONAL NEWS & UPDATES

MEDUCA COMMEMORATES THE PASSION AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS WITH A STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Press Center of the Ministry of Education

As part of Holy Week, the Ministry of Education (MEDUCA), through the Chaplaincy and the Educational Pastoral, held a significant Stations of the Cross at its facilities in Cárdenas, with the aim of promoting spiritual values. The event brought together authorities and administrative staff to commemorate the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus in an atmosphere of reflection and spirituality.

Bernuil Rodríguez, National Coordinator of the Educational Pastoral, emphasized that this activity seeks to highlight faith. "We are in the time of Lent, preparing to receive the Messiah who came to save us," added Rodríguez.



During the religious event, the Stations of the Cross were carried out, with representations that highlighted key moments in the life of Christ, from His condemnation to His resurrection.

For his part, Jorge Rivera-Rodríguez, MEDUCA's chaplain, expressed: "It is a time of grace that the Lord gives us, an opportunity for us to meet. May Holy Week be a path of hope and peace in the hearts of all."

Attendees participated in chants and prayers, underscoring the importance of this tradition as an opportunity to strengthen values.



REGIONAL NEWS AND UPDATES

THE ANELDO CAMARENA SCHOOL HEALTH CLINIC WAS OFFICIALLY INAUGURATED IN PANAMA NORTE

Press Center of the Ministry of Education

The Aneldo Camarena School Health Clinic was officially inaugurated on March 17 at Nicolle Garay School in Alcalde Díaz, Panama North Region. After 15 years in development, its opening marks a major milestone, providing essential health services directly to students.

Alongside the clinic's launch, the school program also began, signaling a new era of health and educational support. The clinic will offer general medical care on weekdays and dental services on Tuesdays and Thursdays, ensuring students receive comprehensive healthcare without leaving school.



INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY: PANAMANIAN EDUCATORS EXPAND HORIZONS AT IATEFL CONFERENCE

By Claudia De León



After successfully completing all the requirements, nine participants from our Training of Trainers program were awarded an opportunity for international mobility by attending the IATEFL Conference. This prestigious international academic event, which took place at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC), was a dynamic gathering filled with incredible activities designed to enrich English teaching practice and inspire continuous growth.

Our teachers engaged in diverse plenary sessions with expert speakers in English Language Teaching (ELT), as well as innovative workshops, presentations, and discussions that focused on the latest trends and global perspectives in ELT. Additionally, they visited exhibitions showcasing the latest teaching materials, digital tools, and technology in English language education.

This was a fantastic opportunity for these teachers from Panama Norte, Panama Oeste, Chiriquí, and Veraguas to grow professionally and expand their horizons in the field of English language teaching. Soon, they will share their learning experiences in a way that could enrich other Panamanian English teachers by sharing best practices and fostering a culture of collaboration and excellence.

SPOTLIGHT SECTION

ENHANCING ENGLISH LEARNING THROUGH INNOVATION: THE ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE LAB AT NICOLLE GARAY BILINGUAL SCHOOL

By Miguel Escartin

Nicolle Garay School is under the leadership of Professor Antonio Ureña as principal and Professor Nitzia Villarreal as vice principal. It is a small, remote school located in the town of Alcalde Díaz, yet it has proven to offer high-quality education.

In 2025, the school has seen some remarkable outcomes, such as its participation in the TERPEL project, where it emerged as a national winner. The school will represent Panama in Japan this coming October, accompanied by its Computer Science teacher.

The lab provides students with the opportunity to improve all aspects of their language skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. By incorporating a wide range of innovative methodologies, the lab ensures that learning is both enjoyable and effective. The materials and activities available in the lab include educational games, pronunciation exercises, songs, karaoke sessions, and specialized applications designed to reinforce language acquisition.

Beyond traditional teaching, the lab leverages modern technological tools to further enhance the learning experience. Through its interactive features and diverse activities, students are able to actively engage with the language in a way that promotes deeper understanding and mastery.



INDUSTRY TRENDS

CHALLENGES AND NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS IN THE TECHNOLOGICAL ERA

By Lourdes Rodríguez de Alvarado

In today's world, technology has transformed almost everything, including education. English teachers face many challenges in a world where everything is constantly changing. Learners are always connected, and we, as teachers, must adapt to this new reality. We must try to teach in different ways and adapt our methods to new technologies.

EMBRACING STUDENT DIVERSITY

One of the main challenges is student diversity, as they come from different social, cultural, and technological backgrounds. Each student has their own learning style, making personalized teaching more difficult. Teachers must integrate technology in an inclusive manner, ensuring that all students, regardless of their technological proficiency, can access available resources. This approach demands continuous professional development in the use of digital platforms, educational apps, and online collaboration tools.

SUSTAINING INTEREST IN A FAST-PACED WORLD

Another significant challenge is maintaining students' interest and motivation. The culture of immediacy that characterizes the digital era, combined with constant access to information and entertainment, has created a need for adaptation in teaching methods. Teachers must find ways to make English learning engaging by using interactive resources such as podcasts, gamification platforms, and videos. Additionally, it is crucial for educators to encourage critical reflection on the use of technology in learning.



TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE DIGITAL ERA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The effective use of technological tools also represents a challenge in today's classrooms. With so many options available, not all are suitable for learning English. Teachers must be trained to select and use the most appropriate platforms, ensuring they don't overwhelm students with excessive information. This process requires a clear and well-founded pedagogical approach.



SELECTING THE RIGHT TOOLS WITHOUT OVERLOAD

Another important challenge is the digital divide. Not all students have access to the same devices or a stable internet connection, which can lead to inequalities within the classroom. Teachers must remain aware of these disparities and adapt their strategies accordingly. This includes using resources that do not rely exclusively on technology, ensuring equal opportunities for all learners.

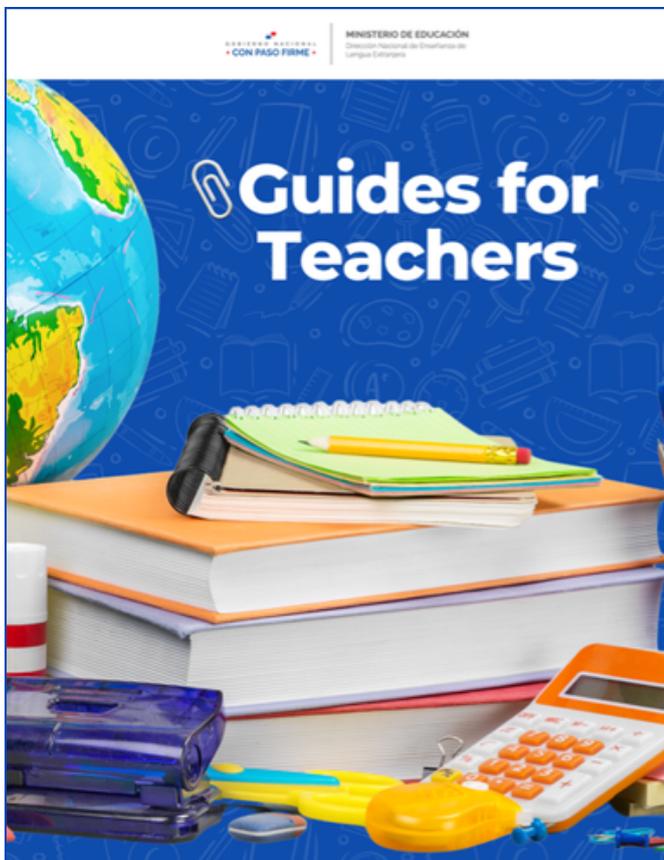
Despite these difficulties, teaching English in the digital era also presents great opportunities. It calls for teachers to be creative, flexible, and committed to their professional development. By doing so, they can effectively integrate technology into their classrooms and provide inclusive, meaningful learning experiences for every student.

THE ROAD TO IMPLEMENTING A NEW CURRICULUM

INNOVATIVE GUIDES FOR TRANSFORMING ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN PANAMA

By Claudia De León

In our commitment to enhance the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum, we are excited to introduce meticulously crafted teaching guides designed specifically for educators. These guides are not just resources; they are key tools that empower teachers to create engaging, relevant, and student-centered lesson plans. Below, we present a concise overview of what each guide offers, highlighting how they can transform your teaching experience and elevate student outcomes.



Essential Guide to Crafting SMART Objectives

One of the standout resources available is "A Teacher's Guide to Writing Specific (SMART) Objectives." This invaluable tool assists educators in translating educational standards into clear, actionable steps, transforming each lesson into an opportunity for meaningful communication in English. The guide simplifies the process by helping teachers clarify curriculum standards into straightforward and achievable learning goals that cater to the diverse needs of their students.

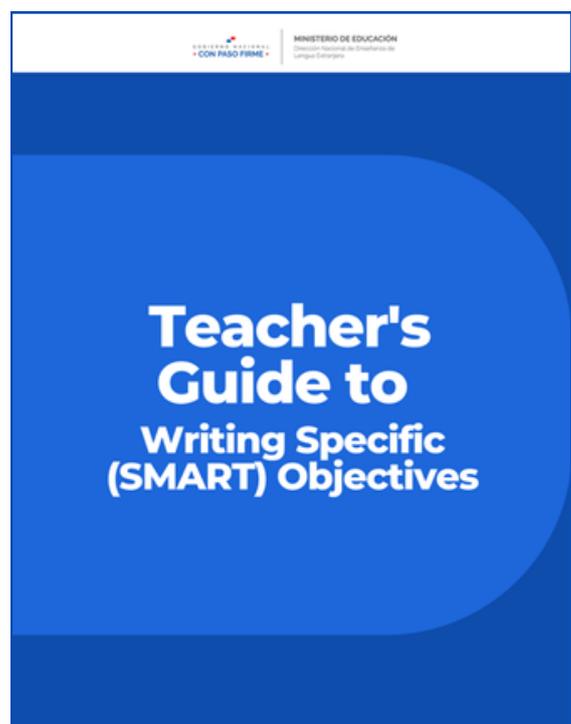
The guide includes:

- Sentence Starters and Templates: Designed to streamline the writing process.
- Model SMART Objectives: A collection organized by skill and grade level to provide inspiration.
- Suggested Action Verbs: Tools for crafting strong, effective objectives.
- SMART Objective Checklist: A quick tool to evaluate if objectives meet the SMART criteria.

Task Scaffolding in the Action-Oriented Classroom

Another essential resource is the guide titled "Planning, Timing, and Task Scaffolding in the Action-Oriented Classroom", that offers flexible scheduling models and detailed lesson structures tailored to various classroom environments. It includes options for single or double periods (35 or 40 minutes). Also, it outlines plans for five-lesson units culminating in a final 21st-century project.

This structure enables teachers to scaffold learning effectively, supporting student progress across all communication skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and mediation.



THE ROAD TO IMPLEMENTING A NEW CURRICULUM

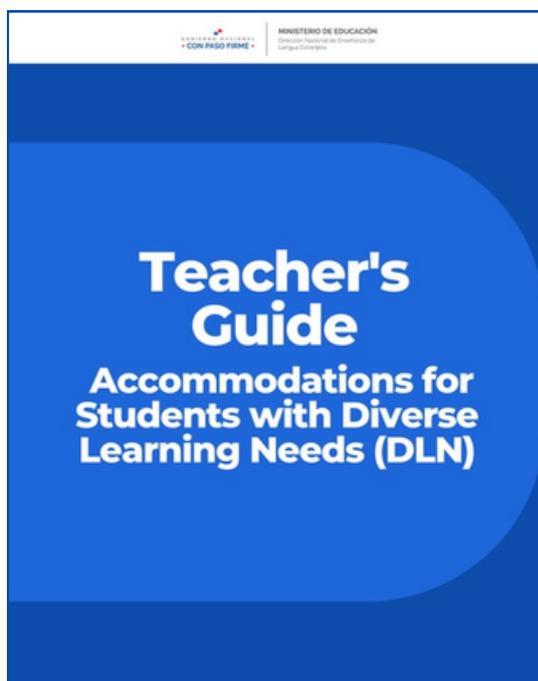
This guide includes strategies for spreading five-lesson units over 10 or 15 class periods, techniques to maintain a logical flow across lessons for continuous learning progression, detailed examples showing how to sequence activities from language introduction to final projects.

Empowering Diverse Learners in English Classrooms

Aligned with Panama's inclusive education policies, the new English curriculum includes "Teacher's Guide: Accommodations for Students with Diverse Learning Needs (DLN)". This practical guide provides ready-to-implement strategies that allow teachers to ensure all students, regardless of their abilities, can meaningfully engage in English learning activities. It emphasizes that adaptations do not equate to lowered expectations; instead, they aim to remove barriers to success and foster inclusion.

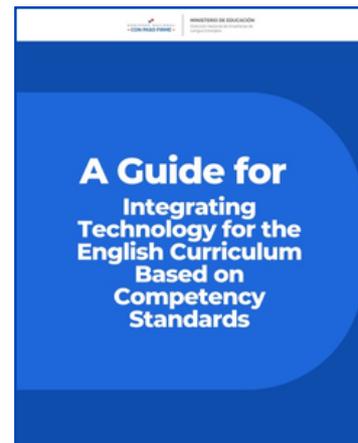
Some of the key features of these guides are:

- **Focus on Strengths:** Encourages teachers to emphasize what students can do and design tasks that build confidence.
- **Collaboration Tips:** Suggestions for working effectively with support teachers and using checklists for inclusive lesson planning.
- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** Principles to incorporate into everyday instruction.



Integrating Technology in the Classroom

Another invaluable resource is "A Guide for Integrating Technology for the English Curriculum Based on Competency Standard.", which will help teachers to use technology intentionally and effectively to enrich language learning experiences. It provides practical strategies, tool suggestions, and project ideas that align with the Action-Oriented Approach (AoA) and the 21st-century projects emphasized in the curriculum.



This guide includes:

- **Project Versions:** Low-tech and high-tech options for 21st-century projects based on available resources.
- **Digital Tool Examples:** Insights on using digital tools to boost communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking.
- **Learning Models:** Suggestions for blended learning and flipped classroom settings.
- **Inclusive Practices:** Strategies for using technology to differentiate instruction effectively.

Empowering Educators for a Brighter Future

Together, these innovative guides empower educators to personalize learning experiences, track student progress, and deliver academically rigorous lessons that are deeply connected to students' lives. By equipping English teachers with these resources, we can lead Panama's transformation toward a more dynamic and effective educational landscape. Embrace these tools and step confidently toward a new era of English teaching!

***Extracted from the script content for the Introduction to the Lesson Planning and Competency-Based Curriculum session.*

THE ROAD TO IMPLEMENTING A NEW CURRICULUM

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION: INDUCTION INTO THE NEW CURRICULUM BEGINS**PANAMA OESTE**

During the induction sessions with teachers from the Panama Oeste region, the experience was both positive and rewarding. The educators showed a proactive attitude, engaging enthusiastically in the workshops. They shared personal teaching experiences and asked thoughtful questions to better understand the new curriculum.

As the sessions progressed, they realized that it was possible to implement the proposed scenarios and themes without strictly following the traditional didactic sequence. This insight brought a sense of relief and encouraged creative thinking. By the end of each workshop, many expressed a motivated curiosity about when they would begin applying the new curriculum in their classrooms.

**CHIRIQUI**

The curriculum induction sessions with teachers from the Chiriquí region were highly positive and engaging. From the start, participants showed strong commitment and enthusiasm. They actively contributed to the workshops, shared valuable insights from their teaching experiences, and asked thoughtful, relevant questions to better understand the objectives and structure of the new curriculum.

As the sessions progressed, teachers began to clearly recognize the flexibility and practicality of the proposed curriculum. They realized that implementing the learning scenarios and themes was entirely possible without strictly adhering to a rigid didactic sequence. This realization led to meaningful group discussions and encouraged a more creative, reflective approach to planning and instruction.

By the end of each workshop, many expressed genuine curiosity and a clear sense of motivation about when they would begin applying the new curriculum in their classrooms. The training created a collaborative and supportive space that fostered professional growth, shared learning, and a collective sense of readiness for the changes ahead.

THE ROAD TO IMPLEMENTING A NEW CURRICULUM

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION: INDUCTION INTO THE NEW CURRICULUM BEGINS**VERAGUAS**

During the induction sessions with teachers from the Veraguas region, the experience was both enriching and encouraging. The educators actively participated, demonstrating a keen interest in the new methodologies and content. They openly shared their experiences in the classroom and asked insightful questions, eager to better grasp the updates to the curriculum.

As the sessions unfolded, they came to realize that the proposed scenarios and themes could be adapted and implemented flexibly, without the need to rigidly follow the traditional teaching sequence. This realization brought a sense of freedom and sparked creativity among the teachers. By the end of each workshop, many expressed a strong desire to begin integrating the new curriculum into their classrooms and were excited about the opportunities it presented for enhancing their teaching practices.

**PANAMA CENTRO**

Curriculum induction sessions have begun in Panama Centro, marking a key step in preparing educators for the updated curriculum. The objective is not only to inform teachers about the new structure and expectations but also to equip them with practical strategies for bringing the curriculum to life in their classrooms.

With a focus on collaboration and hands-on learning, the training sessions are designed to foster open dialogue, where teachers can exchange ideas, reflect on current practices, and explore innovative approaches to teaching English. The initiative underscores the region's commitment to quality education and continuous professional development, ensuring that every teacher is supported and empowered throughout this transition.

The positive response from participating educators has already been encouraging, setting the stage for an engaging and transformative journey as the new curriculum begins to take shape in schools across Panama Centro.

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES

CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A FUNDAMENTAL APPROACH TO IMPROVING TECHNOLOGICAL SKILLS AMONG EDUCATORS IN PANAMA

By José Luis Gutiérrez

Continuous professional development serves as the fundamental approach to improving technological skills among Panama's educators. Today's educational environment demands the integration of technology as a fundamental requirement for effective teaching and learning methods.

Panama's teaching professionals rely on continuous professional development (CPD) as a fundamental component for building technological skills which allows teachers to address the educational demands of modern-day students. During the third week of February, the Ministry of Education (MEDUCA) organized an "ENTRE PARES" seminar to reach nearly 50,000 teachers as part of its strategic educational advancements. The initiative marks an essential beginning to create a culture of ongoing advancement within Panama's educational system.

The "ENTRE PARES" seminar enabled educators to share knowledge and best practices while learning new skills for classroom technology integration.

The event promoted collaboration and demonstrated peer-to-peer learning as a dynamic method for professional development. These programs provide teachers with digital skill enhancement while simultaneously driving innovative teaching methods through creative practices.

The event promoted collaboration and demonstrated peer-to-peer learning as a dynamic method for professional development. These programs provide teachers with digital skill enhancement while simultaneously driving innovative teaching methods through creative practices.



The development of professional skills among Panama's teachers stands as an immediate non-negotiable priority. Educators who develop their expertise become essential mentors who help mold both the intellectual abilities and social skills of the upcoming generations. Through investment in CPD teachers maintain their adaptability and effectiveness which drives national educational advancement.

Continuous professional development through recent initiatives by Meduca serves as the main strategy to enhance the tech abilities of educators in Panama. Teachers who adopt lifelong learning as a core value can drive the nation's education system toward unprecedented achievements



MEET OUR TEAM

JOSÉ LUIS GUTIERREZ*English Regional Supervisor for Bocas del Toro*

As a dedicated educator since 2010, my teaching philosophy centers on creating a welcoming, respectful, and inclusive environment where students feel comfortable, confident, and motivated to learn.

I believe that education is a lifelong journey, and I strive to continue growing both personally and professionally through ongoing studies, training, and reflection. It is essential for educators to embrace lifelong learning in order to remain effective and adapt to the ever-changing needs of students.

I have had the privilege of teaching at various educational levels, which has allowed me to develop a broad understanding of the diverse needs of learners. Currently, I serve as the English Coordinator for the National Directorate of Foreign Language Teaching of MEDUCA in Bocas del Toro. In this role, I support curriculum development, mentor teachers, and facilitate the regional improvement of English instruction across schools. I work closely with educators to help them implement effective teaching strategies that are engaging and student-centered.

My true passion lies in language education, leadership, and innovative teaching practices that foster student engagement, autonomy, and critical thinking. Over the years, I have earned the respect and admiration of both students and colleagues through my commitment to creating positive learning experiences and building strong professional relationships.

Beyond my professional life, I am passionate about reading, traveling, and learning about different cultures. These activities not only enrich my personal life but also enhance my teaching approach, providing a broader global perspective that I bring into the classroom. I remain committed to making a meaningful impact in education and inspiring others to pursue excellence.

PROFILE OF THE MONTH

MIXIURIS MADELEN MALTEZ REYES*English Teacher at I.P.T. La Pintada, Coclé*

I describe myself using five key terms: conservationist, proactive, creative, loyal, and persevering. With 16 years of teaching experience, I've faced numerous challenges that have shaped my approach to education and personal growth.

These experiences have reinforced my commitment to continuously improving how I engage with students, creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

My educational philosophy is grounded in the belief that the primary purpose of education is to cultivate critical thinking and foster personal growth, including both intellectual and emotional well-being. I believe that the most effective learning happens through collaborative, project-based approaches. These methods, when enhanced by thoughtful use of technology, increase engagement and provide diverse learning materials, helping students navigate the complexities of the world.

As an educator, I strive to go beyond traditional teaching methods. I see myself not just as a teacher but as a facilitator and mentor, empowering students to take charge of their learning with curiosity and independence. I encourage creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving, while also promoting personal accountability and self-reflection in the learning process.

My ultimate goal is to create a collaborative, nurturing learning atmosphere where students feel safe to explore, inquire, critically think, engage, and learn together. I believe assessment should not be a final judgment, but rather a developmental tool aimed at fostering continuous growth, encouraging curiosity, and offering constructive feedback, which in turn promotes metacognitive awareness, self-directed learning, and the development of problem-solving skills, resilience, and a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them.

RESOURCE CORNER

LYRICSTRAINING: LEARN ENGLISH THROUGH MUSIC*By María del Pilar Guerra*

LyricsTraining is a unique platform that offers an enjoyable and effective way to enhance your foreign language skills, using music videos and lyrics from favorite songs as authentic, engaging, and up-to-date learning and teaching material.



The platform allows learners to adjust content to their ability level, providing a personalized learning experience. This is achieved through the categorization of music videos into three difficulty levels, along with the addition of three extra game modes. Instructional scaffolding is available through helpful features, such as the karaoke version of a song for previewing before playing the game, as well as offering simultaneous translation to enhance understanding.



Users receive immediate feedback, as they need to correctly fill in the missing word for the game to continue. Additionally, at the end of the session, they get feedback through a clear and simple scoring system. For those who open a free account, this data is stored, providing extra motivation by allowing students to track their progress in a measurable way.

In conclusion, LyricsTraining combines music and personalized feedback to make language learning fun and engaging. Its adaptable features help learners track progress effectively.

The Electronic Journal For English as a Second Language.
Lyrics Training. Retrieved from:
<https://tesl-ej.org/wordpress/issues/volume14/ej54/ej54m3/>



New Launch! MEDUCA SIG is here!

This innovative tool brings together academic and administrative data, along with real-time tracking of infrastructure projects. With its user-friendly and interactive platform, MEDUCA SIG makes accessing information easier than ever. A big thumbs up for progress and transparency! 👍



Eggs have long symbolized new life, which is perfect for Easter's theme of rebirth. The egg hunt? Thank Queen Victoria for that! She loved the tradition as a child thanks to her German mom, and helped make it a springtime staple. So next time you're searching for eggs, you're not just playing, you're part of history. Royal history! Pretty cool, right? 😊

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Inspiring
EXCELLENCE
in every
lesson!