What happens when a college philosophy teacher with international living experience as a child faces college unreadiness in the form of inadequate compositions? For Christina Burton, this is not the start of a bad joke and the answer is not simply that the papers receive bad grades. Rather, it is the spark that led her to set the world on fire with immersion schools.

It was 1997 and Burton, holding an ABD in philosophy and 12 years of college teaching experience, became so dismayed with her freshmen's compositions that she did something radical – she went to the root of the matter. While her interpretation of the root of the matter may have been influenced by her young daughter's recent entrance into school in Florida, the result was Burton's leadership in the creation of an academically rigorous charter school. Fast forward 10 years to 2007 and to Colorado where Burton relocated, and Burton puts all of her passions together to create Global Villages Academy (GVA), a Charter collaborative non-profit Spanish/Chinese/French immersion school in Aurora that this fall has opened a gleaming new 32,000 square foot facility for 900 students. Simultaneously, a branch of the GVA (for Spanish, Chinese, and Russian) has opened in Northglenn for 300 K-4 students. The concept is so magnetic that parents drive their children from as far away as Estes Park. Burton, the CEO and CAO of the GVA Collaborative, just submitted a multi-million dollar grant proposal that would fund the opening of four more immersion schools in Colorado.

If approved, Colorado will see its first indigenous language immersion school – a Navajo school in the Four Corners region. As exciting as that may sound, it might be good to consider the implications of these developments for us at CU. Immersion students exit their programs able to articulate sophisticated concepts in all subject areas of the school curriculum – in two languages. If Burton and the GVA have their way, students from their schools will be the leaders in meeting the challenges of the 21st century. Strong in the liberal arts and the STEM subjects, they will also be multilingual and able to negotiate world diversity, i.e., they will bring to the table the internationalized perspectives so vaunted in CU's Flagship 2030 vision.

But there are some clouds to this silver lining. “People don’t know what to do with us,” Burton told me in a recent call. "The goal for our students will be to learn content in their second languages in college. Colleges are going to need to get creative in order to provide even more linguistic proficiency for our students through content-based disciplines. I realize there are dual degrees and there are other ways to cooperate with each other, but we need to rethink things, nevertheless. It’s not working right now.”

In higher ed, there are some exceptions to the rule. Language Flagships follow the immersion principles. Therefore, for GVA students who want to continue with immersion at the undergraduate level in Mandarin, they can choose from nine Flagships, including ASU, Western Kentucky, Indiana, and Oregon (note that none is located just below the Flatirons). For GVA Russian students, there are four Flagships, including UCLA and Wisconsin (none is the alma mater of Glenn Miller). There are also Flagships for Arabic, African languages, Korean, Hindi/Urdu, and Persian (sadly, none has a mascot named Ralphie). Immersion graduates will be among Colorado's best and brightest, and should CU-Boulder be their school of choice, their chances to build on their educational background will be limited. If they want to remain near their families, the closest Flagship is in Utah. As for the graduates from French and Spanish immersion, there is no Flagship – anywhere – for them.

Further complicating the picture is the lack of certification programs for immersion teachers, which would require extensive collaboration between the School of Education and Arts and Sciences. Says Burton, “This crosses disciplines and barriers and gets rid of old scaffolding that we are not always ready to get rid of.”

There is time before even the oldest immersion students graduate, and CU has made efforts to secure a grant for Language Flagship status. We could also borrow from the Languages across the Curriculum concept such as the University of Binghamton's, or we could develop something akin to the Yale Fields Program.

For Burton, the cycle continues. What had been a response to lack of student readiness at the higher ed level now has become a call for greater linguistic and curricular readiness in the academy. Let’s hope we can respond to that call.
SLA Workshop

This past August, ALTEC hosted the Third Annual SLA Workshop. For the first time, participants looked at the pedagogical development of a specific skill—in this case, writing—as a window into some of the larger issues facing the field. Some of the topics discussed included the most efficient types of error feedback, new genres brought about from the influence of the internet, and how the notion of the “rhetorical problem” should be factored into writing assignments. We were honored to have participants drive from as far away as Manitou Springs and Colorado College. The Wordpress blog for the course may be accessed at: http://rkmaknowles.wordpress.com

Next year’s SLA Workshop will return to the Maymester time period, and ALTEC will also soon announce the companion piece to the SLA Workshop, the SLA Reading Group which meets during the academic year.

FLTP Completion

Congratulations to Fang Liang (EALC), Zhe Zang (EALC), and Ahneka Valdois (TESOL) on completing all the requirements of the FLTP.

Interactive Whiteboard

ALTEC recently purchased two interactive whiteboard systems from Mimio, an award-winning, ed-tech based company. One is installed in Hellems 152 and is ready for use. The other one will be available for check out by the end of September.

Mimio whiteboards systems are small and portable. All you need is the base (see picture), a laptop running the Mimio software and a projector.

This system transforms any whiteboard surface into an interactive surface. Watch a demo at: http://tinyurl.com/3ud5nyw

Don’t miss our workshop on Interactive Whiteboards led by Sarah Withee, Academic Tecnology Specialist at Colorado College, on October 19th, 10am to noon or 1pm to 2:30pm.
Online Pilot Course
French for Graduate Reading

At the request of the Music school, ALTEC designed and offered an online course teaching basic reading skills for graduate students. The 12 graduate students who took the course were able to fulfill their foreign language reading requirement by taking this six week intensive non-credit course. Taught entirely online in CU’s new course management system (Desire to Learn) the course required that students submit translations, dictionary exercises and other assignments three times a week, engage in online discussions and attend weekly Skype sessions. This course will be offered again in the near future and, once its design has been revised based on the students’ evaluations and feedback, ALTEC will add it to its list of non-credit courses. We’re hoping to use this course as way to offer graduate students a chance to experience online teaching. If you are interested in learning more about this course or possibly, teaching it, please e-mail Edwige.Simon@colorado.edu.

Course (Re)Design

In spring 2011, Juliette Bourdier (French Doctoral candidate), Marcelo Schincariol (Portuguese instructor), Sangbok Kim (Korean instructor) and Patrick D’Silva (Arabic instructor) received course re-design grants from ALTEC. Juliette redesigned a 3000 level course on contemporary events into a project-based course where students collaboratively design and develop a news magazine with a companion website. Sangbok is developing a webpage that incorporates natural discourse to develop learners’ listening and speaking skills. Marcello is designing ten sets of web-based activities based on video clips. Patrick is re-designing first and second year Arabic courses to address the multiple colloquial varieties of the language using the Pimsleur digital audio method. If you are interested in applying for a course redesign grant, download and fill out the application form from our website (https://www.facebook.com/pages/Foreign-Language-Technology-Program/258919084139742) and schedule an initial meeting with Mark Knowles by February 1st.

STARTALK

For the second year in a row, ALTEC played an important role in the implementation of a STARTALK grant awarded to CU’s Program to Teach East Asia. Entitled “The Middle Kingdom in Middle School,” the program welcomed 15 middle school teachers from throughout the US who came to learn about creating and sustaining an effective Chinese language program at the middle school level through (1) sound pedagogy and practices, (2) effective learning technology, (3) collaborative interdisciplinary work, and (4) strong teacher advocacy and school community communication. ALTEC’s Mark Knowles was a lead instructor and Edwige Simon was the technology instructor. STARTALK is a National Security Language Initiative that seeks to expand and improve the teaching and learning of strategically important world languages that are not
Fall Language Classes

The ALTEC Fall language classes are underway. This semester faculty, staff, and graduate students from many departments are taking classes in American Sign Language, French, Spanish, and Swedish. We look forward to also introducing some less commonly taught languages to the campus in the future. The ALTEC language program offers summer classes as well (check our website for updates). Many thanks to the dedicated students and instructors who make this program possible year after year!

Contact:
david.nicoll@colorado.edu
303-492-8224

Full course list:
altec.colorado.edu/languageclasses

ALTEC’s language classes are now available to members of the Boulder community!

ALTEC Offices Move to HLMS 156

In an effort to better utilize office space in the Hellems A&S building, ALTEC was asked to release one of our staff offices to make room for new faculty arriving this fall. Although our square-footage was reduced slightly, we received generous funding from the College to renovate and furnish our existing staff and student offices in room 156. The result: a more open, inviting and collaborative space, which defines our Center's main office and IT workplace better. There are some details to finish but the project should be completed by the end of this September. We’re pleased with the end result and hope that this fresh new look enhances the experience for our language students, faculty and staff. See our photos below or better yet, come see it in person!