



## HORSE EDUCATION GROUP

### Helga Fasciano Script

#### **Felicia Eybl (00:38)**

I am Dr. Felicia EYBL with the Crafty Polyglot, and we are very grateful to introduce to you Mrs. Helga Faciano. Her reputation precedes her, and her contributions to the field of dual language immersion are invaluable. She has served as a German high school teacher and within the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. She has been a world language consultant, section chief, and special assistant for global education. She has also managed the US Department of Education flat grants for both dual language program, state infrastructure and online Mandarin Chinese course development. In addition, she has published articles for the Ed Week global education blog, ACFOS, the language educator magazine and the college board. She is a consultant and advocate for language education.

Helga, we greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about dual language and immersion education, a topic of keen interest to both parents of DLI students and educators alike.

#### **Helga Fasciano (01:43)**

Thank you so much for having me. This is quite an honor.

#### **Felicia Eybl (01:45)**

Great, so let's jump in with our questions. Our interviews focus on how individuals and groups craft programs and opportunities for children to become polyglots. How did you personally become a strong proponent of dual language and immersion programs?

#### **Helga Fasciano (02:04)**

So that's an easy question. I actually grew up in a German speaking household. And in my teaching career, I taught both French and German. But with that, one of the things I did not have access to growing up is because I was actually born in the United States, whereas the rest of my family was born and actually had education opportunities while they were in Germany. I did not have that side of it until I reached college.

And it was once I was teaching and I was introduced to the program at that time, Smith Language Academy. I was totally amazed at the comfort of those elementary students that were going through that program, developing and becoming truly bilingual, biliterate and bicultural. And it was at that point that I was hooked. So when I had the opportunity to come to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction,

#### **Felicia Eybl (02:45)**

Mm-hmm.

#### **Helga Fasciano (02:53)**

One of the things that was really emerging because of the programs that had been so successful in North Carolina today, basically Smith Language Academy as well as Collins Woods Language Academy, there was a huge interest in the field to find out more. And I just arrived at the right time, the right place to kind of help make things happen.

#### **Felicia Eybl (03:12)**

That is great, yes. And that language education that we give to children is so, important. So tell us a little bit more about your professional journey and your teaching and how that led you to dual language and immersion programs, other than growing up in a German speaking household. What was your teaching background? You taught German and French. That's interesting.



## HORSE EDUCATION GROUP

### **Helga Fasciano (03:41)**

I did. was initially hired to do both and the mandate that was given by the superintendent of the school district at the time was for me to grow it into a full-time language program. with the German. And so by the time I ended up leaving there and going to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, we had levels one through six, a full German load happening at the high school where I was. I also was very heavily involved in our sister cities organization at the time. And we had just developed a sister city relationship with a school that was behind the Iron Curtain initially. And so that state, German state, had become basically a partner state. And this particular gymnasium was looking to do and to develop a relationship. What's interesting is, is I'm going to be aging myself here because during those times, email was just coming along. And so all we had up until three months into trying to develop this relationship were faxes.

### **Felicia Eybl (04:40)**

yes.

### **Helga Fasciano (04:40)**

So that was the quickest way. But thank goodness email came in and we developed this great partnership with this gymnasium. My upper level students in German were involved and they were ~ asked if they would like to host someone that came to us in the fall for a week. And the only caveat was if they agreed to host, then they also were agreeing to go in the spring to go stay with the family of the student that they were hosting. ~

### **Felicia Eybl (05:04)**

Mm-hmm.

### **Helga Fasciano (05:08)**

And we were able to do that for about five years. That short immersion experience that those students had was incredible because they were in a comfortable position. They already felt comfortable with their host. And it just worked out so beautifully. And those students, to this day, I hear from them about that experience. And I was thinking, what could we do more? And there was nothing happening with dual language immersion. I told you about my experience about learning about the programs in Charlotte. So I was definitely already hooked.

### **Felicia Eybl (05:08)**

Thank you. I'm not sure. ~ Wonderful.

### **Helga Fasciano (05:36)**

And so then coming to the department, one of the first calls I got was from the principal actually at Collins Wood Language Academy to say, hey, Helga, welcome aboard. Now, what can you do for us? And the bottom line was the interest was so high that all of the schools in Charlotte were just being inundated with requests for visits. which the principles and you having been a principal at one of those academies is something you love to do, but it can also overtake your day. It can overtake your year. And so the first thing that we did was just to host a ~ one day seminar and we had folks coming from South Carolina and Georgia as well. We were expecting maybe 50 people. We were talking about not.

### **Felicia Eybl (06:00)**

Always. Absolutely.

### **Helga Fasciano (06:15)**



## HORSE EDUCATION GROUP

teachers but the administrators to come and learn more. And so we have panels from the existing five programs in North Carolina coming in to talk and you know talk about their experience and learning. We ended up with 150 and they were crammed into the space but it was a start.

**Felicia Eybl (06:20)**

If you here.

**Helga Fasciano (06:35)**

And with that, then we went after a foreign language assistance program grant, which we used to have from the US Department of Education. And the whole idea behind that was we needed to develop infrastructure at the state level to support these programs. And so we got that FLAP grant. It was a three year grant and there were three objectives. One.

**Felicia Eybl (06:43)**

Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (06:56)**

was begin to develop professional development in North Carolina for both the educators, the teachers in the classroom and the administrators.

The second was to create a pathway by which those teachers coming to us from other states that had some type of background and or actual licensure from their states for at the time bilingual education or sometimes dual language education, depending on where we were with the nomenclature at that time. But we had no direct access or pathway for that to be a seamless process. So that was the second.

purpose. And then the third one was to develop actually standards within our North Carolina standard courses study that would also support the programming because with the standards that is what the districts and schools use to develop their curriculum to meet certain language objectives. And so that was the beginning of all of that and it worked great.

**Felicia Eybl (07:50)**

Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (07:54)**

During that time of those three years more schools were saying yes we're interested and they were coming on board.

**Felicia Eybl (07:56)**

You

**Helga Fasciano (08:00)**

And so fast forward from that after that successful and having that and we got those standards and those pathways and we were able to get more teachers in. There was a symposium done at NC State University for basically English language learner education and Drs. Thomas and Collier came to that symposium. They were invited and with that two of our ESL consultants were there at that symposium.

they started to chat and the next thing we knew is Thomas and Collier were saying, you know, we would love to do a longitudinal study in the state of North Carolina.

And so they came back all excited thinking, this is never going to happen. No, we made that happen. And so they did that study. I will say that their focus was more on what we would call the dual language emergence, so more of the 50-50 side, ~ because Dr.



## HORSE EDUCATION GROUP

Collier's background was L. The beauty of that was that the other one, Wayne Thomas, had a background in district administration, specifically in testing.

**Felicia Eybl (08:46)**

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (08:58)**

And so with that combination, so they started it, we did two years of the study and they just basically said, you know, this is just going to repeat itself.

We've got good basic study here and they use that information in what we call the Red Book publication. They devoted an entire chapter to North Carolina as a case study because what had developed in North Carolina going all the way back to the work done by those schools that I've mentioned previously, as well as the beginning of the FLAP grant and that symposium we did ahead of that, that we actually had a model in North Carolina and all

**Felicia Eybl (09:28)**

Thank you.

**Helga Fasciano (09:37)**

independently these schools were learning from each other but a program of implementation fidelity had developed. And so we were a great resource to each other, to other states already, and so that was kind of the beginning and it just kind of kept growing from there.

**Felicia Eybl (09:45)**

That's great. And my experience in that is just so wonderful. And I just love it and love those opportunities. And you've already answered part of my next question, which is about North Carolina, and that North Carolina is unique in that its earliest dual language immersion programs were designed primarily for students learning a language other than English rather than for non-English speakers learning English.

~ And some might find it surprising that learning in a language other than one's home language can have significant benefits. And we know that because we are language educators. So how did you help craft that understanding of the advantages of dual language and language immersion programs and build support for them in North Carolina other than the research from Thomas and Collier?

**Helga Fasciano (10:43)**

So it again is a combination of different things but what's interesting is that the first programs that actually were in Charlotte came about because of all of the German speaking folks that were coming in to work there for German based companies.

**Felicia Eybl (10:58)**

Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (10:59)**

And the same thing was had been happening in Miami. And that's how the first dual language school started down in Coral Gables. Same thing happened in ~ Alaska with their Japanese immersion. So what you had were these parents that were working in the United States, but knowing that their children were going to be going back home. and they did not want them to be behind in terms of their language development in their native language. And so that was kind of a two-pronged thing. Along with that, you had that population, then you had another interested population of basically English- speaking parents who wanted to provide that same opportunity because some of them were working with those other folks or they were hearing about it already. It was emerging. was growing in popularity.



## HORSE EDUCATION GROUP

**Felicia Eybl (11:40)**

Right. Right.

**Helga Fasciano (11:46)**

And the bottom line was is that when you can develop this gift in these students that they take with them, it makes them a global citizen. They have a tolerance. They have a curiosity. They want to know more and to help and to be part of that larger community.

**Felicia Eybl (11:54)**

Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (12:05)**

And the businesses in North Carolina were so grateful because they needed these skill sets from the employees that they were wanting. ~

**Felicia Eybl (12:11)**

Absolutely. Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (12:16)**

So with that said, also for those based companies, if you wanted to, as a United States citizen, be able to move up into those international companies, then one of the requirements was that you had to know the language. So these dual language students coming out of these models already were already had a leg up moving into those situations. So it kind of comes down to what is good for the student, because at the end of the day, that's what this is all about, has nothing

**Felicia Eybl (12:3)**

Mmm. Absolutely.

**Helga Fasciano (12:42)**

to do with me as an adult has nothing to do with the rest of the adults in the room. It is what is going to prepare our students to be the best they can be.

All right, for themselves, for their families, for their communities, and for their own careers and hopes and aspirations. So that is the overarching message. But honestly, when you hear students talk about it, it just blows you away. And you've experienced that yourself. And I've experienced that with these students coming and speaking to our North Carolina State Board of Education and doing a presentation seamlessly between two languages.

**Felicia Eybl (12:51)**

That's correct. Mm-hmm. Yes, yes, absolutely. Yes. Absolutely, yes. We had students who presented in Mandarin and the audience was absolutely just blown away. And they were also at the Board of Education, State Board of Education. And it just warms your heart and makes you proud to know that our students are able to master a second language seamlessly. And it's just a gift. It's always, I say, a gift that we give to our students. Absolutely, I agree.

**Helga Fasciano (13:43)**

And if I could just jump on that a little bit. I I grew up speaking German in a home, but I was not educated in German. Does that make sense what I'm trying to say throughout my whole public school career? I did not get the chance to develop a literacy component until I was in college, university level.

**Felicia Eybl (13:46)**



## HORSE EDUCATION GROUP

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yes. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (14:02)**

But to be able to do that in both of those languages at the same time, cognitively, and this is coming back to the research by Thomas and Collier, this is something that wakes up the brain. It makes connections. This is something that happens during this type of facilitated education that is increasingly showing that it is of a huge benefit to all students. It doesn't matter if they are identified as

**Felicia Eybl (14:13)**

Absolutely.

**Helga Fasciano (14:29)**

as an exceptional student because of their academic mastery or exceptional because they happen to have a learning challenge in which they have to find other pathways in order to be able to succeed. And this method, this educational model has proven to be of benefit to all students no matter who, where, what, zip code, all of that. It's just incredible.

**Felicia Eybl (14:37)**

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

It is, it is, it is incredible. Were there programs or initiatives that existed in North Carolina prior to your connection with DLI or did you just give them that impetus to get that started as you championed DLI programs?

**Helga Fasciano (15:10)**

So I came on board in 2003, January of 2003 to the Department of Public Instruction in North Carolina. Prior to that, these programs in Charlotte had already started in like 1996 and had been growing throughout there. By the time we did that one symposium in late 2003, there were two other schools where they were basically in kindergarten, first grade, and maybe second grade up to that point.

**Felicia Eybl (15:22)**

Mm. Mm. Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (15:37)**

And so when we did that, there were basically five different identified programs from which we could pull experts from for that. It was the fact that this is where collaborative opportunities make such a difference. Came back to that one principal calling and saying, how do we need to develop an infrastructure to support the state?

**Felicia Eybl (15:44)**

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (15:57)**

And it's those kinds of messaging back and forth and the willingness for people to hear that and to find pathways to move forward with that. And and that principle to this day will say those were opportunities that allowed me to learn from others as well. It didn't matter how long they had their program. It's the fact that we were learning from each other. But it was developing that that gave a platform upon which

**Felicia Eybl (16:05)**

Mm-hmm. Yes.

**Helga Fasciano (16:24)**



## HORSE EDUCATION GROUP

a principal or a district level person or the district superintendent could go to their own local boards in North Carolina to say here's what we know and here's what we have that can support us through that. I think one of the interesting things is that in the state of North Carolina this has always been more grassroots because there's never been state level funding other than the development of the infrastructure.

**Felicia Eybl (16:41)**

Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (16:47)**

to make this happen. But it's because of that infrastructure that we built the collaboration, the network, everybody learning from each other. So yes, there were things there, but by bringing that to another level to say help.

**Felicia Eybl (16:58)**

Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (17:02)**

then it allows for that collaboration, that networking to continue to grow. And from there, we just kept going with it. By the same token, along with what was happening in terms of No Child Left Behind and the mandates for English learners, then they were also utilizing that data that was not only coming from North Carolina, but from elsewhere that says this is a really effective and very, very successful model for our English learners. is they keep their own language. It's not where you're transitioning and you're using that language to begin the education process, but you continue to move over and eventually their first language goes away and it's just English dominant. That particular model does not help. It really hits those middle schoolers hard because they don't have their literacy base in their first language.

**Felicia Eybl (17:33)**

Mm-hmm. Thank Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (17:52)**

So with that then there was a growing interest and so there were some additional dollars that could be utilized but most people don't understand that that funding you had to use that as the sprinkles on the ~ cake icing because it could not be the basic cost of it but it allowed them to provide you know some additional things to help the basic model that was already there.

**Felicia Eybl (18:05)**

Yes. Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (18:14)**

So that was kind of some additional funding, but it was just a success. And then with that success, you get parents on board. And Dr. Igel, you have experienced this yourself.

**Felicia Eybl (18:23)**

Yes

**Helga Fasciano (18:26)**

And this has been the case otherwise. If there's ever been a question about, well, you know, we're just going to dispose of that program. Those parents come and they go to those local school boards and they let them know how important this is and what this has meant to them as a family, but specifically to those students. And not to mention,



## HORSE EDUCATION GROUP

that when you have those programs in your districts, then it's going to bring in more employment from interested companies that are looking to.

**Felicia Eybl (18:55)**

Absolutely.

**Helga Fasciano (18:56)**

be able to see, ~ we have people here that we know that speak this language. We're going to come into here because we know we have a recruitment pool that we can pull from here. So with all of that, I know I of traipsed away from your initial question, but I hope that that kind of came back to the root of what your question was all about.

**Felicia Eybl (19:09)**

That's okay. Mm-hmm. Yes, it did. Thank you very much. So you mentioned the federal flap grant that the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction received. Can you tell us a little bit more about that and how it was used to support one way and two way immersion programs? And when was the grant received?

**Helga Fasciano (19:35)**

Okay, so the grant was received in 2005 and so we did it for three years and again I came back to the three objectives. One was developing that professional development, secondly with the pathways for teacher licensure and then the third being those standards.

**Felicia Eybl (19:41)**

Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (19:55)**

So that built and developed the basic infrastructure to help support these programs. Unfortunately, even though we would have loved to have done something more in terms of maybe being able to do and develop more with an additional flat grant, that was zeroed out in 2010 by Congress. so between that one and then the, had mentioned the flat grant for the online Chinese program, that those were the last two that we were able to actually get as far as funding.

And I do know that some of the school districts in North Carolina also got a district level flat grant to help them do certain things. But again, based on those models and a lot of it was professional development, especially in helping those educators to understand levels of proficiency. And this was in parallel with what was happening in the Title III world, all right, for English learners. So it was a perfect match.

Had we not had that, we would not never have gotten the research that we got, which then the State Board of Education utilized that research when it was published. And we're like, we need to do more to support what's going on in North Carolina. At the

same time, there was another initiative that kind of became our umbrella initiative, and that was the Global Education Strategic Plan.

And when the State Board of Education began that work to look at that and be able to bring back a full strategic plan for the State Board of Education to adopt.

one of the State Board members tasked me with being in charge and working with the State Board of Education Office to develop the Listen and Learn opportunities for the State Board to begin to learn more about what is global education. And they were very specific that languages were going to be part of that. But by the same token, it was we want dual language education to become



## HORSE EDUCATION GROUP

something that is mainstream in North Carolina and they were very practical in terms of how they wanted that to happen and the idea was equity in access and so their whole initiative was that every district in North Carolina that the students in every district in North Carolina would have access to a DLI program if that is what they wanted and

**Felicia Eybl (22:15)**  
Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (22:16)**

What that did was exponentially when I then transitioned from being section chief to the special assistant for global education after the task force adopted its report and strategic plan was to work on a plan to ensure that that would happen in terms of the growth.

And they wanted that growth not just along elementary, they wanted that growth K-12 so that when students finished a program at the elementary level, they would be able to continue a DLI continuation model in middle school and into high school. So when I began as the special assistant back in 2011, we had approximately just under 50 programs. By the time I gave my final report to the State Board of Education, because I had the opportunity to retire and it was like, yes, this is a good thing, that we were able to show how those programs had grown. And by that time going from 47 to over 200 in that five year span as a grassroots.

**Felicia Eybl (23:03)**  
it. Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (23:20)**

was extremely impressive. And I'll just kind of fast forward, even with COVID, even with the challenges we've had with education budget on the federal level over the past year, these programs have survived because that foundation was there, they worked together, and we've been able to expand opportunities for both traditional world language and DLI

**Felicia Eybl (23:36)**  
Yes.

**Helga Fasciano (23:44)**

to have professional development opportunities together and one of those has been through the Foreign Language Association of North Carolina.

**Felicia Eybl (23:50)**  
Yes, yes, very good. So our podcast supports parents of dual language immersion with educational findings to guide their choices in beginning DLI education and in maintaining that educational pathway. What finding or findings from Thomas and Collier do you think are most important for parents to know?

**Helga Fasciano (24:11)**  
So I will start with Thomas and Collier and then I'm just gonna kind of throw in another couple of little caveats with that that have grown alongside all of this. The biggest from Thomas and Collier is the fact that if a student has the opportunity, whether they're English speaking or native speakers of another language, developing the foundation in your first language is paramount.

**Felicia Eybl (24:14)**  
Absolutely.



## HORSE EDUCATION GROUP

### **Helga Fasciano (24:34)**

in developing that same language proficiency in that other language, whichever way we're coming at that. That is huge because, and it still goes on today, but that is huge because there is still ~ a common belief. And this is not through malice or anything else. It's just that we all have our own experiences that we bring to the table. And if you've always heard, it is going to be a detriment.

### **Felicia Eybl (24:39)**

Mm-hmm.

### **Helga Fasciano (24:59)**

to introduce another language before the student has fully developed. So in other words, don't do anything with languages until they're in high school mentality. Then we can't say to them totally you're 100 % wrong because then you are attacking them. So we have to be very clear on what the research is saying and that yes, understandably so. This is what you've been told. This is what you've heard, but this is what the research is saying. And then especially with these parents that have had the experience, I am telling you the power of the story is the most important

### **Felicia Eybl (25:25)**

Yes.

### **Helga Fasciano (25:33)**

thing that you can share because it is great to read research, but when you have that actual research impact in your own household, then you can tell an advocate story that no researcher can tell. And it's because it's coming from someone that knows you and believes in you and has a friendship with you or whatever the relationship might be. It makes such a huge impact and a lasting impact. And don't ever forget the student voice. Let your students talk about what this means to them.

### **Felicia Eybl (26:01)**

Yes.

### **Helga Fasciano (26:07)**

All right, so that's one coming from the Thomas and Collier at the kind of the same time within a couple of years after they published the North Carolina story, there was this growing movement and in the US it did start in California.

### **Felicia Eybl (26:10)**

Mm-hmm.

### **Helga Fasciano (26:20)**

with something called the Seal of Biliteracy. And that is now available in all 50 states, which is an absolute miracle that all 50 states have some form of this. North Carolina's is called the Global Languages Endorsement because that became part of the state board's strategic plan was to make sure that that was available. With that said,

### **Felicia Eybl (26:23)**

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

### **Helga Fasciano (26:39)**



## HORSE EDUCATION GROUP

At the same time, you also had on the national level some real work being done in assessment for languages other than English. And we now have districts that can say to their parents. If you choose and you believe in this model of dual language immersion for your student starting in kindergarten. Then we know that if they will progress and continue this opportunity all throughout their K-12 experience, that we will be able to assess them and they will know exactly what their language proficiency is. And more importantly, we know because of what we've been able to develop with all of this information, that they will be able to graduate with a seal of biliteracy. that shows what your proficiency is in this language that you have worked so hard to develop. That is so marketable. I have shared this with legislators. It is truly when you think of something like the Sealify literacy.

**Felicia Eybl (27:29)**

Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (27:38)**

there is no question that that crosses both sides of the aisle. ~ There has never been in any office and with staffers that I've spoken to that say, this is not a good thing, absolutely not. As a matter of fact, they're going, I wish I had had that opportunity. Or now we're hearing, yes, I have my sealed by literacy. I know what my proficiency is. I know what I can do with this. And that's one reason why I was hired.

**Felicia Eybl (27:42)**

Yes. Thank you.

**Helga Fasciano (28:00)**

for this position. So for the parents, it's you are developing a pathway for your students. You make the decision for elementary, but you know it's up to your student after that. And that's where you and the school district partnering together can help to make that story. But what these students walk away with, they don't even realize until after the fact. But that they can see now when

**Felicia Eybl (28:21)**

Yes.

**Helga Fasciano (28:24)**

When I was doing this back in 2003, we didn't have that kind of a clear pathway for those students. It was like, yes, I graduated from here and yes, people can hear me speaking, but I couldn't tell you exactly what I could do with this language yet.

**Felicia Eybl (28:36)**

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (28:37)**

And now we have that. That is so concrete. That is a game changer ~ when it comes to the DLI model, what it does, and more importantly, yes, I am proficient. And I can tell you what my proficiency level is in that language other than English.

**Felicia Eybl (28:42)**

Yes. Yes, and that is great. That is really something wonderful that we can give to our students. So following your retirement from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, you became the executive director of formerly the Foreign Language Association of North Carolina. And you continue to be committed to foreign language education. What has motivated you to continue working in this field?



## HORSE EDUCATION GROUP

Sorry.

**Helga Fasciano (29:19)**

So first of all, Flank was my lifeline throughout my professional career. Flank was my happy place because my background was in languages. And when I became section chief, I had seven different content areas for which I was responsible for shepherding through the work at the department. And so it was like coming back home. And when I then decided to retire, then this opening came up at Flank and so it was like I get a chance to pay for now because Flank has been paying with Ford for me for all these years.

What is fantastic is that throughout that whole time, myself and Dr. Gunter, who is still the World Language Consultant at the department, as the advisors to Flank, it was like, this is a growing market segment and they have no professional development home. And so Flank opened up and that's one of the reasons why they went away from what you were saying, Foreign Language Association of North Carolina, they do business now as Flank because it is open to all language educators.

**Felicia Eybl (29:57)**

Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (30:17)**

irregardless of which pathway they're in. By the same token, it was really important that the board have someone as a member of the board of directors to also represent the DLI community specifically.

**Felicia Eybl (30:17)**

Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (30:29)**

and also to bring some knowledge with that. So with all of that, couple of things happened with the spring conference, which has historically been a place separate from where the fall conference was held, is the best stuff. So you had your top presenters invited to come back and do a one day. Along with that, on that Friday, we were able to then develop

**Felicia Eybl (30:42)**

Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (30:49)**

a way to ask any of the DLI schools in the area of that one-day conference to open their doors to a site visit.

**Felicia Eybl (30:57)**

Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (30:57)**

And so that's been happening. It started actually before COVID hit. We were actually able to one year do a couple of site visits virtually with that. But that is still one of the highlights that is occurring with that organization and the growing number of DLI educators that continue to come to the fly conferences.

is wonderful. Plus, what's so interesting is that they go to traditional world language presentations to learn and those that are in traditional world language programs come to the DLI sessions to learn. So they're learning from each other as well. This year, 2026, Flank is co-hosting with SCOL, the Southern Conference on Language Teaching, which represents 13 states in the southeast. It's going to be in Raleigh, North Carolina.



## HORSE EDUCATION GROUP

**Felicia Eybl** (31:39)

Thank you.

**Helga Fasciano** (31:46)

And for the first time, some schools in that area that have been around for a while now, including another ESA, so an International Spanish Academy recognized by the Embassy of Spain.

will be featured for the first time as a site visit and there will be a high school involved in that and it be between two languages but also several different models. So one is a school that is all K-8 and it is full dual language immersion. But we have the different levels, so it's in Spanish and we also have elementary and middle school Chinese program available to be seen. And this will be the first time that these schools have been involved in that blank professional development opportunity. But more importantly, this is almost an international thing because you've got people coming from all these other states that are coming in to see what's been happening in North Carolina and why it's happening and how they're doing it and how they're keeping it going.

**Felicia Eybl** (32:21)

Great. Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano** (32:41)

It's just, it's fulfilling to see it come full cycle, but Skuld board specifically asked, like, can you do that for Skuld for this conference? And so that's what's happened.

**Felicia Eybl** (32:48)

Mm-hmm. Yes, and they apparently also understand how language is growing and important in North Carolina. Yes, that's good. So in summary, from all that you've learned and accomplished in the field of dual language immersion, what advice would you give to parents about a DLI education? Dual language, world language, what advice would you give them?

**Helga Fasciano** (33:14)

So the most important thing is that you go into this with eyes wide open, do your own homework, talk to other parents who have had students there, listen to everything.

**Felicia Eybl** (33:21)

Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano** (33:26)

Nothing is ever a hundred percent just euphoric. Okay, and all schools will have challenges whether you're in a DLI program or not in a DLI program. It doesn't really matter. mean education is always evolving which means things are changing and one of the things that we as human beings just do not care for is change.

**Felicia Eybl** (33:35)

Yes. Exactly.

**Helga Fasciano** (33:47)

I mean, you know, there's that whole thing about the only humans that really like change are babies with a wet diaper. I mean, let's just be realistic about that one. But think about why this is important to you, because your students are going to be, depending on you, to tell them why this is important and why you believe in it.

**Felicia Eybl** (33:48)



## HORSE EDUCATION GROUP

Thank you.  
thing that's permanent is changed. you because

**Helga Fasciano (34:10)**

I think the other thing is that sometimes parents, they are not speakers of the language that their students are learning, may feel a little left out of the educational process because they're doing all these things. They may not be able to help them with the homework in the other language, but they're still there as the English speaking side of that equation. Or in the case of the students whose language, home language is not, then they're still part of the equation of whatever the language

**Felicia Eybl (34:15)**

Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (34:38)**

that is spoken in the home side, just like any other parent. And so you're still the parent, you're still helping, you're still helping develop that literacy, those communication skills, all of those things that are just so important to develop that individual to be able to be the best they can be. So if you believe in the program, then do whatever it takes to continue to educate, become involved. This is not done by one principle.

**Felicia Eybl (34:58)**

Mm-hmm.

**Helga Fasciano (35:03)**

This is not done by one teacher in the school. It is a community and it's the community collaboration that makes it the best it can possibly be. And you can bring so many things to that program as well. So don't feel like you have to stay outside and just watch everything from the sidelines become involved in whatever way that you can help.

**Felicia Eybl (35:21)**

very true. Fair to. Well, thank you so much for joining us, Helga. We appreciate you being a part of this Crafty Polyglot podcast series, and we look forward to speaking with you again in the future. Thank you so much.

**Helga Fasciano (35:36)**

Thank you so much for having me and everybody have a great day.

**Felicia Eybl (35:39)**

Thank