ATA's School Outreach Program

Understanding the Value of Educating the Public

By Meghan McCallum

As translators and interpreters, we all understand the value of language skills, but it is important for the general public to be aware as well. So, why not start by sharing your knowledge in your local school or university? ATA's School Outreach Program makes it easy by offering ready-made presentation materials that you can access with just a few clicks.

Since 2003, ATA's School Outreach Program has helped professional linguists educate students of all ages about the exciting career paths of translation and interpreting. The School Outreach website (www.atanet.org/ata_school) serves as the program's main hub for information and resource material, providing a pool of downloadable, age-appropriate presentations that you can adapt for use in the classroom. Language professionals worldwide have taken advantage of the program's resources to set up speaking engagements, prepare content, and get tips from past presenters.

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School Outreach co-founder Lillian Clementi explains that the program started spontaneously in the mid-1990s, when she agreed to speak to third- and fourth-graders at a local career day. With no experience in school outreach and only 30 minutes of presentation time, she decided to focus on two key points: the difference between translating and interpreting, and the need for skills beyond bilingualism.

Despite the unexpected hurdle of being told at the last minute that she would have to share her time slot with another presenter—a member of the Secret Service, no less—Lillian had a wonderful time at the event. The students were engaged in the conversation and activities and were curious to know more. During the question-and-answer session, one young girl even asked, "So, you work in your basement? Do you ever get scared down there?"

When Lillian shared her experience with colleagues, she discovered that other language professionals were speaking in schools across the country. She and Ohio-based translator Amanda Ennis soon decided to pool all of the existing presentation material on a single website. "For that first presentation, " Lillian says, "I had to create my material out of nothing. We wanted to put it all on

the web so people don't have to reinvent the wheel when they're invited to their child's Career Day."

As Lillian and Amanda compiled the material and wrote the copy, the School Outreach Program took shape. The collection of material on ATA's website not only provides speakers with ready-made presentation solutions, but also ensures that they deliver a consistent message around the world. Lillian adds, "In a class of 30 you might have one student who chooses a career in languages, but you also have 29 potential translation consumers." In this sense, it was important for the School Outreach Program to be built around ATA's mission and vision.

The webpage was up and running by the fall of 2003, and the annual School Outreach Contest was created a year later. ATA members participating in school outreach events worldwide are encouraged to submit photos of themselves in the classroom, and each year one photo is chosen as a winner. The prize is free registration to the next ATA Annual Conference. (See page 11 for entry details.)

Nanette Gobel (far right), of Santa Monica, California, spoke to students in kindergarten, third grade, and fifth grade.

Johanna Klemm (left), of Kenilworth, United Kingdom, spoke to first- and third-graders.

School Outreach Close-Ups

But don't take our word alone regarding the personal and professional rewards that come from offering a school outreach presentation.

Nanette Gobel: Santa Monica, California

English>German translator Nanette Gobel visited her children's school and spoke to students in kindergarten, third grade, and fifth grade. She used interactive activities such as film clips with subtitles, songs, and storybooks to keep the students engaged.

School Outreach: How and why did you first get involved with school outreach?

Nanette: When Career Day came along at a local elementary school, I wanted to share information about our profession, especially since a lot of children growing up in Santa Monica are bilingual—not just in English and Spanish, but in languages such as Portuguese, Japanese, Icelandic, and French. The school bulletin invited parents and other family members to come speak on Career Day, so it was only a matter of e-mailing the parent organizing the event.

School Outreach: Regarding your approach to the presentation itself, which setup worked best?

Nanette: The greatest success was a game show with the fifth graders. To demonstrate the linguistic and cultural differences between various languages in a playful manner, the classroom was set up as game show, with four bilingual kids as contestants, myself as host, and the rest of the class as the audience. The audience, directed by the host, called out colloquialisms, expressions, and idioms in English, and the bilingual contestants needed to figure out if a literal translation would make sense in their respective language. For example, the English "let the cat out of the bag" works in German as well (*die Katze aus dem Sack lassen*), but do Icelandic, Farsi, and Spanish have a similar expression? In a second round, the contestants back-translated idioms from their respective language into English and the audience had to figure out what they could mean. For example, the German *das ist mir Wurst*, meaning "I don't care," literally translates to "that is sausage to me." On top of learning how difficult translation can be, the class was having a blast!

Johanna Klemm:
Kenilworth, United Kingdom

Having lived in Germany, the U.S., and the U.K., English>German translator Johanna Klemm's children are fortunate to have experienced different languages and cultures at a young age. The family's international history, coupled with Johanna's career in translation, make for a great starting point when speaking to students. Johanna has made two visits to her children's classes in the U.S.: once when her daughter was in first grade and again when her son was in third grade. Johanna got the students involved by using material from ATA's School Outreach website, some translated children's books, and interactive activities.

"When I go to a classroom, it's not my aim to convince every student to become a translator or interpreter," Johanna says. "Obviously not all of them will become translators, but they will be users of translations, so it's nice to raise awareness."

Carolyn Yohn (far left), of Granite Bay, California, staffs a booth at a career fair at Georgetown University.

School Outreach: How did you approach the topic of translation and interpreting to grab the students' interest?

Johanna: The first step was to make them think about how translation is present in our lives. I started off asking whether they knew any languages. I asked for a map of the world and we looked at the countries where these languages are spoken. That was my way to get them involved and show them that this is something that has to do with their lives.

School Outreach: What activity was the most successful with the students?

Johanna: I spoke about both translation and interpreting, but focused on interpreting because you can do a mock interpreting session and the students see it happening. I brought in props such as a doctor's coat and a surgical cap and I got a student to volunteer to be a doctor, while my daughter was dressed up as an interpreter. I pretended to be a tourist in the U.S. who had eaten a big ice cream sundae, five hot dogs, and a square of fudge, and was feeling really sick. I explained all of this in German while my daughter interpreted, and the "doctor" advised me not to eat so much and to drink plenty of water. The students were totally into it. It prompted them to think about being in the situation of not knowing a language and needing something urgently. That was a lot of fun. I found that the live situation is what really sticks with them.

Carolyn Yohn:
Granite Bay, California

French>English and Hungarian>English translator Carolyn Yohn's involvement in school outreach started with a career fair at Georgetown University. She contacted the event organizer and explained that while other exhibitors at the fair would be recruiting potential employees, her mission was to make students aware of the translation profession. "I wasn't going to hire kids; I was just going to present another option for them," Carolyn says. She brought informational handouts from ATA's School Outreach Program website as well as a "choose your own adventure"-themed presentation board. Many interested students stopped by Carolyn's table to learn more and ask her questions. "I'm looking forward to doing a visit or presentation again," she says.

School Outreach: What kinds of students were you interacting with at the career fair?

Carolyn: The fair was targeted at students in the master's in communications program at Georgetown. These students were mostly interested in international communication, including marketing and writing. They were also focused on the cross-cultural aspect of communication. Many of these students seemed to know a lot about translation as a career and came with some very specific questions. They wanted

to know the nitty gritty about how to find work, how to get paid, and how to bill for work.

School Outreach: How did you use your material to get the message across to the students?

Carolyn: I presented the pros and cons of working in-house versus freelance, working part-time versus full-time, specializing versus generalizing—all of the different business-related options for someone considering a career in translation.

School Outreach: Did you find your setup was helpful for having one-on-one discussions with students?

Carolyn: Definitely. In fact, after the event, I kept in touch with one of the students. We've met up a couple of times for coffee to discuss translation one-on-one!

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Become Involved

Now that you have heard other colleagues' experiences, maybe this is the year to consider giving your own presentation to students. Why is *now* the best time to get involved in ATA's School Outreach Program? Below are just a few reasons:

- Win free registration to ATA's 55th Annual Conference, November 5-8, in Chicago, if you enter the School Outreach Contest by July 18.
- Get involved in your community.
- Participate in your child's education.
- Teach future language professionals about careers in translation and interpreting.
- Help future consumers work successfully with language professionals.

Ready to get started? Then check out www.atanet.org/ata_school or contact me at meghanraymccallum@gmail.com for more information. I look forward to welcoming the next School Outreach Contest winner to Chicago at ATA's 55th Annual Conference! ■

Make a School Outreach presentation this year, and you could win free registration to ATA's 55th Annual Conference in Chicago, Illinois, November 5-8, 2014. Here's how to enter.

1. Visit ATA's School Outreach Resource Center at www.atanet.org/ata_school/school_outreach_contest.php and click on Presentation Resource Materials.
2. Choose the age level and download a presentation, or use the resources on the School Outreach page to round out your own material.
3. Speak on translation and/or interpreting careers at a school or university anywhere in the world between August 1, 2013 and July 18, 2014.
4. Get someone to take a picture of you in the classroom. For tips on getting a winning shot, visit the School Outreach Photo Gallery on ATA's website at www.atanet.org/ata_school/photo_gallery.php and click on Photo Guidelines.
5. E-mail your photo to Meghan McCallum (meghanraymccallum@gmail.com) with the subject line "School Outreach Contest," or mail your entry to ATA, 225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590, Alexandria, VA 22314. Please include: your name and contact information; the date of your presentation; the school's name and location; and a brief description of the class. **You may submit multiple entries.**

The deadline for submissions is midnight on July 18, 2014.

The winner will be contacted no later than August 20, 2014. You must be a member of ATA or an ATA-affiliated organization to enter.