

The A.P.P.L.E. Seed



(American Professional Partnership

for

Lithuanian Education)

E-Zine

In This Issue

Organizational Development Message

Heard in Lithuania

A.P.P.L.E. Membership Profile

Special Education Corner

Summer Program Activities

Reminders

Quotables and Quizzes

Greetings!



Message from the President

Happy Memorial Day! With the summer season officially before us, we are busily preparing for A.P.P.L.E.'s 20th Summer in Lithuania.

While in Lithuania last month, Giedre Stankunas, one of our board members, met with Ann Derse, the US ambassador in Vilnius, who offered to host a 20th anniversary reception for A.P.P.L.E. at her home in Vilnius on Friday, July 9th. More information on the event will follow at a later date. Vida

Anton, another board member, who will be in Lithuania early this month is our 20th Anniversary Coordinator. So, if any of our friends and colleagues who will be in Lithuania on July 9th and wish to join us at this reception, please contact her at croli@optonline.net, so that she can add you to the list .

In addition, the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science will host a reception for us on Saturday morning, July 10th. Then in the afternoon, a bus will take all the participants of our 20th Summer Sessions to Kaunas and Klaipeda. The sessions will officially begin on Monday, July 12th, with an opening ceremony.

The Camp Viltis contingency will be traveling on Friday, July 9th, as the Camp is scheduled to begin on July 10th.

As we continue celebrating our 20th Anniversary, our summer meeting has been rescheduled for Washington, D.C., this year for the week of September 24-26. Vida Anton was able to connect with the embassy in Washington, and they offered the use of their facility for our meetings. They also offered to host a reception on Saturday night. Again, any of our friends and supporters here in the United States who can join us in Washington, D.C., please contact Vida Anton. More information will be posted at a later date.

My best wishes to all our friends and supporters, and I look forward to seeing many of you in Lithuania and Washington D.C.

Vida (Strazdaite) Gavin, Ed. D.
President

Mission Statement:

"The American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education (A.P.P.L.E.) is a volunteer international non-profit educational organization. With the support of the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science, A.P.P.L.E. partners with Lithuanian educators to foster the implementation of innovative educational approaches that contribute to the development of a democratic society."

Organizational Development Message

Reorganization within A.P.P.L.E. is becoming a reality..... The By-Laws Study Team has set their schedule for their proposed revision of the by-laws to be completed a full month before the next board meeting in September. This will allow all board members to be fully aware of the proposed changes and to offer their suggestions, comments, and questions on-line well in advance of the meeting.

A big "ACIU LABAI" to John Baltrus.... for his yeoman-like work on the latest edit of the A.P.P.L.E. By-Laws. His knowledge and experience with the guidelines relative to the by-laws of non-profit organizations, specific to the State of Pennsylvania, has proven to be a blessing to this critical

project. We are well on our way toward hitting our target goals and deadlines.

Have you been considering becoming personally active in a worthwhile volunteer

organization?..... We have been looking for you! A.P.P.L.E. is actively recruiting volunteer members who feel their need to contribute to a cause larger than themselves. We have been an integral part of the positive development of the educational system of Lithuania for the past twenty (20) years, as it emerged from fifty (50) years of Soviet rule. There is much more work to be done.

We would welcome greater participation on the part of our members and friends in the continued development of our organization and the support we provide to the educational and social needs of Lithuania. **If you have thought about it....contact us.**

ARTICLES

Additionally, we want to remind you that **you are encouraged to send articles** to us that you feel would be of interest to our readers. They can be items that you have authored or articles from others, including photos, from whom you have received permission to duplicate and to publish.

Heard in Lithuania

How much is a Lita worth?.... Here are the monetary values of the Lita, the Euro and the Dollar relative to each other to assist those going to Lithuania with us this summer with their finances. With the Euro in decline over the past few months relative to the dollar, we can expect a significant increase in buying power this summer. **Only five (5) weeks to go!**

As of 5/26/10 the relative values for each currency were:

1 EURO = 1.22 DOLLARS; 1 DOLLAR = .812 EUROS; 1 LITA = .354 DOLLARS;

1 EURO = 3.45 LITAS; 1 DOLLAR = 2.82 LITAS; 1 LITA = .287 EUROS.

A.P.P.L.E. Membership Profile



Ramute Zemioniene was born in the southwest of Lithuania, in the Vilkaviskis region. After finishing Secondary school in Kybartai, she entered Vilnius Pedagogical University and earned a bachelor of History and Philology of English Language degree. For fifteen years she has

been teaching English in Vilnius Seskine Elementary and "Versme" Secondary schools.

Ramutė is married with two children, a daughter and a son. The daughter Gabija is studying administration of tourism in Denmark at the moment. Her son, Eimantas, is 12 years old and just finishing the fifth grade. Ramutė has one sister. She is a florist and also lives in Vilnius.

Everything in our lives has its beginning. Although we sometimes think that many things in our lives happen occasionally and have nothing in common with our intentions and expectations, I do hope that our thoughts are a powerful tool which enable our lives to change in one direction or another.

After graduating from the Pedagogical University and starting my work at school, I was constantly thinking of something different from my daily routine which might enrich and diversify my daily life. In other words - I was searching for challenges.....

That early spring day of the 2000 I still remember very well. My cousin from Boston phoned me and after having told me all her news, she simply mentioned (by the way) that Gita Kupcinskiene (the A.P.P.L.E. president in 2000) asked whether she (my cousin) knew anyone in Lithuania who could speak English and had basic computer skills to help with some preparations before and during the A.P.P.L.E. courses in Lithuania. I remember asking her why the courses had such a strange name - A.P.P.L.E. However, my cousin was not able to give an appropriate answer to this question. "I think, because apple is a very memorable word", she explained to me.....

Since I was looking for new challenges and had "itchy feet" to experience something new, I agreed with Gita's proposal. That is how I became involved with A.P.P.L.E.. Speaking honestly, the very first years were really challenging. It took me some time while I gained confidence, got familiar with the PPRC staff and my duties and responsibilities as an office manager.

I remember in detail our very first staff meeting in Vilnius at the PPRC. Though I could understand only 50 percent of what had been said, I was full of admiration and respect for all of the American lecturers, wondering what they would do in Vilnius for the whole two or even three weeks. "Are they really going to live in that abandoned dormitory, taking cold showers in the morning? Are they going to eat our cepelinai? They might get sick?" Those were my thoughts while spending my first days with the A.P.P.L.E. team.

Indeed, the first steps were very difficult and challenging. And today I'm just thankful to the A.P.P.L.E. administration staff and all the lecturers who helped me in organizing and maintaining our APPLE courses we have there today.

I have always been looking very seriously at what I have been doing for A.P.P.L.E for ten years. Getting in touch with the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Teacher's Centre to coordinate the programs, the arrivals and departures of the lecturers, as well as recruiting

interpreters - these are the part of my responsibilities.

Dr. Algirdas Grigonis, RIP, once said to me: "You are a bridge between two continents, helping us to get together each summer." This is, of course, a metaphor, which I would like to extend, saying that the foundation of this bridge is made of love and trust between all of us. That trust and love enable us to continue the ongoing work of A.P.P.L.E.

I am willing to help A.P.P.L.E. the community for as many years as they need me. It does not matter where the courses take place: in Vilnius, Klaipeda or in the most remote part of Lithuania.

I wish all of you great health, perseverance and a lot of beautiful and sunny days. Stay happy and healthy! I have missed you all very much!

Ramute Zemioniene

A.P.P.L.E. Office Manager in Lithuania

Special Education Corner



Creating New Paths

We all struggle with change when it is accompanied by stressful adjustments. Recollect the most stressful times of your life and you will recognize a common feature; the requirement to adapt to the

demands of change. In educational systems, just as in personal life, there is a natural inclination to maintain the status quo, and to do things the way we always have. Teachers experience stress because of change in their professional lives related to system demands such as increased accountability for student performance, the need to meet the diverse educational needs of individual students, and ever-changing system expectations to improve student performance in specific areas. For some these demands are amplified by budgetary constraints related to school closures and larger class sizes.

Educational change is frequently the result of a 'top down' system mandate. However, change can also emanate from the influence of communities of practice which are naturally occurring groups, such as teachers and administrators that set the standard for practice within a school or program. This kind of change can be thought of as 'bottom up' change. Parents, advocacy groups and educational research strive to influence both sources of change.

Typically A.P.P.L.E. presentations put forward educational innovations clearly relevant to Lithuanian educational system goals, making teachers receptive to new information. Research in professional development has shown that teachers' perceptions of need for new information is highly predictive of inservice resulting in changes in practice. However, sometimes A.P.P.L.E. presents new ideas in education that may not map directly to system expectations. A.P.P.L.E. special education presentations often present ideas with the goal of influencing communities of practice, to make teachers realize they can affect positive change in meeting the educational needs of children with disabilities, with an ultimate goal of influencing expectations at the system level. At Camp Viltis (Hope) at Gerulai, A.P.P.L.E. workshops encourage Lithuanian teachers to try something new and to advance the educational opportunity of a child with a disability.

The story of Izidoris is an example where A.P.P.L.E. workshops impacted a community of practice and changed the educational path of a boy with a disability. Izidoris lives in a small town outside of Vilnius. He faces many physical challenges. He requires support for mobility, communication, and other daily activities. He is a sociable child and communicates with some verbal language and gestures. Fine motor tasks are a challenge, but he is able to move his wheelchair around on smooth surfaces independently. He frequently needs help with mobility and self-help skills typically managed by children independently.

Izidoris and his family attended numerous A.P.P.L.E. summer workshops at Camp Viltis. His parents began to believe that there might be educational possibilities for Izidoris that they had never imagined. Attending his neighborhood school became a goal. Attending the local school would mean that he would no longer spend extensive travel time to attend a segregated facility exclusively for children with disabilities. A plan for Izidoris being included in a regular school began to blossom. The family convinced a general education teacher to attend the A.P.P.L.E. workshops at Camp Viltis, sponsored by an organization of parents of children with disabilities. During these summer workshops, a strategy for Izidoris to be included into a 3rd grade class was created.

This 3rd grade classroom became an exciting adventure for all involved. A new and vibrant school community developed. Students met every morning as a class and participated in planning adaptations and modifications for Izidoris. The larger school community was initially resistant, but through perseverance and relationship building, support for Izidoris grew. He became a participating member of his class and school, where he learned while his peers were learning about him and disability. Teachers learned how to provide for him educationally, influencing change in their community of practice, and positively impacting the attitudes of his school peers.

This past summer at Camp Viltis, a mother of a boy named Saulius related a different story. She too attended numerous A.P.P.L.E. workshops and wanted very much for her son to experience inclusion. The school did not support the concept of education Saulius, nor did it regard him as an opportunity to improve their community of practice. Saulius had neither a system nor a community of practice to guide his path to an inclusionary educational experience. Eventually the family had no option but to move Saulius to a more segregated facility.

Creating educational environments where students with disabilities can thrive is difficult and may induce stress associated with change for all of those involved. Just like every child, every community of practice faces its own unique challenges and must be considered individually. Open discussion is a requirement in crafting a workable action plan for devising an appropriate inclusive education. A.P.P.L.E. workshops play a major role in initiating this dialogue. Workshops can act as a catalyst for teachers and others invested in a child's education to engage in critical thinking regarding possibilities for the future, and together can create a guide for going down the road less traveled.

Vitas Underys, Detroit, MI & Anita Adamitis Scarborough, Chapel Hill, NC

Summer 2010 Program Activities

Interesting sights to see in Klaipeda.... The oldest city in Lithuania has been focusing in recent years on developing itself as a more attractive tourist destination. In that pursuit, it has invited a number of artists from all over the country to submit proposals for public art works to be featured in local parks and various locations around the city.

One such sculpture that carries some significance is the monument to Martynas Mazvydas. Mazvydas was the author of the first Lithuanian book, a collection of religious songs called Katekizmas (Catechism). It was the first book in which the Lithuanian alphabet appeared. The monument was erected in 1997, to commemorate the 450th year of the publishing of the first Lithuanian book.

Reminders

Check your passports.... Those of you who are going to Lithuania with us next month should verify that your passport is current, valid and not within six (6) months of expiration. If you have not actually looked at the expiration date recently, it is definitely worth doing it while you may still have time to renew it, if necessary.

Don't you hate to pay a fee for currency exchange?.... As we suggested in our January issue of *The A.P.P.L.E. Seed*, you can avoid paying a fee to exchange your Dollars for Litas by contacting Travelex Currency Services at a local branch office or their website at www.travelex.com. If you exchange \$500 for Litas on your initial exchange with them, they will waive the exchange fee and guarantee to buy back any Litas you may bring back with you at the prevailing rate. If \$500 is more than you intended to exchange, buddy up with anyone else and split the amount to \$250 each. Still more than you intended to exchange? Add a third party and split the amount to \$166.66 each. Why pay a fee if you can avoid it?

Quotables and Quizzes

"The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor."

- Vince Lombardi, football coach

This electronic newsletter is designed for quick delivery of A.P.P.L.E.-related news to an audience that includes current A.P.P.L.E. members, friends of A.P.P.L.E. and interested potential members both within the United States and Lithuania.

Increasing communication and the exchange of ideas among our members increases the strength of our organization and our ability to be relevant to our Lithuanian constituents. Exciting and pertinent events occur all year round, and we want to keep all of you abreast of what is happening, when it's happening.

Editing for grammar, punctuation, and spelling of submitted materials is the responsibility of the authors.

Organizational Development Committee

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