

**Amanda Seewald**  
**Nelson H. Brooks Award Acceptance Speech**  
**February 14, 2020**

***Ichigo ichi e – one meeting one chance...*** This is a Japanese proverb about making sure you see the opportunity when it presents itself. And tonight I am very much aware of how this has shaped my career.

- ~ 20 years ago, my mentor/professor took me to my first prof. Learning exp. And my first NECTFL conf.
- Fast forward to 11 years ago when I stood at this very awards ceremony to see my mentor, Marjorie Hall Haley, receive this award.
- Then as a NECTFL MEAD fellow in 2007, and two times a NECTFL board member - - what I am saying is that I am wearing red, but this girl bleeds NECTFL Teal.

NECTFL is and has always been my home.

This award is extremely meaningful to me because of that connection, but beyond that, this is an award for leadership and service. And for me that means ***empowerment of teams, collaborative growth, advocacy, and broadening of perspectives.*** These are the tools that I have endeavored to use to work towards our common goals.

In my experience, it has also meant **coloring outside the lines** while solving problems, looking for new pathways, and yes, in many cases “**getting in the way**” in order to be heard. I did not choose the traditional path. At the time my children were born, I knew that they would not have the chance to learn in an immersive language environment in NJ like my first students in Arlington, Virginia had, so **as any educator would do...I built them one.** I worked to create curriculum, write and record music, publish tools for other teachers on my own, bring it to as many preschools as possible, AND to be actively involved in the profession in every way. My career took a different trajectory because of that and it pushed me to straddle the world of education and entrepreneurship, something that was challenging in many ways but also helped me see how leadership could be defined. I have had the unique opportunity to use this unexpected platform to impact classrooms, programs, and even legislative priorities, to speak up and shake things up even when many teachers feel they can't use their voices because of their contracts.

I have learned that in order to **catalyze change** you need to **raise your voice in the right places with the right people often even when people disagree with or**

**don't want to hear your ideas.** Our voices, our experiences, and our willingness to stand up for what we believe in from the classroom, to the conference, to the collaborative meetings, to Capitol Hill is what makes us **the most formidable globalizers that our country has.**

None of what I do or have done would be possible without the support and guidance of so many people. I have been blessed with the support of **my parents** to pursue my crazy major of romance languages and east asian studies (just down the road here at NYU), the support of **my husband** to grow creatively and travel to work with others, and the strength/passion/and compassion that my Nana and the long line of strong Zeilengold women in my family have shown me. But all along, I have had a not so secret weapon and focal point in my life that helps me keep going....my kids, **Hannah and Joshua**, who have grown up in my very language focused world. Our kids are our message to the world and **every single thing** that I have done and continue to do is for my children who are an unending source of pride for me and whose world perspectives prove that it is all worth it. I love you both so much.

For me, this profession, specifically language education, is all about friendship and connection to each other. My colleagues in this profession are more like my extended family. To Marty and Rita for patient guidance and for being my leadership role-models. To Keith for encouraging me to keep speaking up. To Chris, Francesco, and Nathan for being my angels and hearing me, seeing me, and believing in me everyday, even when I have doubts.

To where My educational world began, with my students, who brought my ideas to life.

To the teachers I coach who grant me their trust to guide and stretch them.

To my many colleagues and great friends who have listened and shared with me.

I've come to the conclusion that the ultimate form of life satisfaction is to incorporate your passion and beliefs into the personal and professional road you are on every single day. ..into every step you take.

I just want to finish by saying that **We know** that language is THE PIVOTAL KEY to understanding and organizing the world around us and beyond our doorsteps. **We know** that To know someone's language is to understand the foundation for their perspective. Taking the steps **each day to be the global liaisons that our schools**

**need**, is our chance to make a lasting impact on the future of our country by teaching students to use language as a catalyst for positive global change.

Help them find that perspective by empowering them with the tools of communication for human compassion and problem solving **and we will all win.**

Thank you all so much for this incredible honor.