



TESOL Connections

Keeping English language professionals connected

TESOL Board Connect: The 4 Es of Volunteering for TESOL

by [*Gabriela Kleckova*](#)

As my term as TESOL president is coming to an end, I would like to take this opportunity to share what volunteering with the association means to me.

I joined TESOL in 1999 and I've always been an active member of the association. I have gone from small volunteer roles to roles with higher responsibilities, and I've taken part many times in TESOL's online and face-to-face professional learning and networking opportunities.

I have continued seeking opportunities to volunteer for four key reasons—the same reasons I decided to run for the highest office in the association and serve as TESOL president. They are the fantastic pay-offs for giving time and energy to the organization. I call them four Es: enjoyment, engagement, excitement, and education.

Volunteering in TESOL Offers Enjoyment

Overall, I find joy, satisfaction, and pleasure in creating and shaping conditions that make other people feel good and that allow me to find and support people's potential. Volunteering in TESOL has allowed me to work with colleagues to create situations that make members feel satisfied professionally and personally. It has allowed me to interact and contribute, and to help build a place of collaboration with and of a diverse group of professionals who share similar passions.

The joys of serving and seeing the association blossom are similar to those joys I feel with my students when good things happen in the classroom—when I succeed in creating opportunities for our learners that allow them to thrive and grow.

Volunteering in TESOL Offers Engagement

Volunteering offers another level of engagement and social interaction with colleagues beyond professional encounters at TESOL events and activities. I have been able to make connections with people from various professional contexts and of various professional interests while joining efforts with them for a common purpose.

Volunteering in TESOL Offers Excitement

Serving in TESOL has provided me with thrills! Although I have had moments as president when the thrill was of a nerve-wracking nature, serving has mostly led to the feeling of great excitement associated with making a difference and bringing members together. It's a constant and gratifying challenge to meet the needs of the members, with their various levels of expertise, backgrounds, expectations, and desires. It's always exciting to figure out how to initiate a change or add to something—a service, program, or publication—in order to serve the members' needs and help them feel welcome and at home.

Volunteering in TESOL Offers Education

Any leadership position I have served in has offered me, like an education course, multiple lessons and series of lessons on one topic. I have not only learned about the culture of the association, but I have also had the opportunity to develop new ideas, experiences, and skills as a professional and a person. Interestingly enough, I sometimes have difficulty separating my learning outcomes from taking part in professional learning *provided* by TESOL and the learning outcomes of *volunteering* in TESOL. Both have afforded me new insights about the profession, leadership, myself, and the world through discussions and joint activities with fellow professionals from the different corners of the world.

Back to the Beginning: What TESOL Means to Me

In April 2021, I wrote about [what TESOL means to me](#). As I reflect on what I wrote then about membership in TESOL, I discover my volunteering with TESOL has enhanced the value of TESOL membership for me. This has been true from my very first volunteer experience as a TESOL student e-list comanager to my most recent one as TESOL president.

Like membership, my many years of volunteering in TESOL are a collage of professional and personal experiences that have made me a better professional—and in many ways even a better person. Being a part of member governance groups composed of diverse professionals has transformed my beliefs, ideas, and actions inside and outside the classroom and my leadership positions. Volunteering with colleagues from various multilingual contexts worldwide has changed me:

It has made me more open-minded and respectful of the variety of human beings we work with.

It has made me more aware of the world outside the Czech Republic.

It has inspired and informed my work as a second language teacher educator and leader.

If you wish to expand your professional learning opportunities and networking in TESOL, I would like to encourage you to seek ways to volunteer and join others in building our professional home and contribute to the advancement of English language teaching and the association itself. [There are many ways to get involved in TESOL](#). If you are currently volunteering or have already volunteered with TESOL in its 56 years of existence, I would like

to express my deep gratitude for you choosing to serve and to build the global community of English language teaching professionals and our profession.

Thank you, TESOL, for all the enjoyment, excitement, engagement, and education I have experienced on your grounds. Thank you, members, for electing me as your president and giving me the opportunity of serving in a unique leadership position. I have had a memorable ride with TESOL. It has been fun and an honor to serve you as TESOL president for 2021–2022.



P.S. I would be happy to discuss with you your volunteer experiences in TESOL or your interest in volunteering with the association. Please reach out to me!

Gabriela Kleckova, PhD, is TESOL International Association president (2021–2022). She chairs the English Department at the Faculty of Education, University of West Bohemia, in the Czech Republic. She has taught a wide range of general English courses and ESOL professional courses for preservice and in-service teachers of various cultural and language backgrounds. Her professional interests include the effectiveness and utility of visual design of ELT materials, teacher education, innovation in education, and leadership. You can follow Gabriela's year of leading the association on Instagram @tesol_president to engage in dialogue and to think about the profession.