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It's been 400 years since the death of Miguel de Cervantes, and my 2016 challenge as a Spanish teacher is to bring the language of Cervantes to students of the twenty-first century. My life as a language educator, not unlike that of Cervantes's protagonist, has been a series of adventures. It surprises my students that my personal language-learning adventure didn't begin until college. It was so easy to fall in love with the language and its rich, diverse culture. I vividly recall the excitement and thrill of being able to communicate and be understood in my new language. That is our collaborative goal: helping our students to become proficient and communicative in the languages we teach. We should strive to meet that goal with purpose and intention.

Our globally connected world requires our students to do more than translate, conjugate, or even be transported across time and place through great literature. Our students have real world opportunities to use their Spanish and Portuguese skills at home and abroad. Language proficiency has become our challenge and our opportunity, making it an exciting time to be in the classroom. Yes, my old way of teaching produced results; students like me, who loved the subject, succeeded. But in the twenty-first century, second language acquisition is no longer a "nice to have," it's a "need to have."

To prepare *all* students to meet the demand for proficient bilinguals, I find myself asking the question, *What if?* What if I gave real-world assessments? What if I provided a native-speaker target audience? What if I used authentic resources instead of teacher or text-book created materials? What if I gave open-ended prompts and encouraged risk-taking? Instead of settling for what I've always done, I'm choosing to stretch professionally, take risks, and try something new to engage students and help them reach their own proficiency goals. *What if* has transformed me, my instruction, and my student outcomes.

Salvador Dalí said: "So little of what could happen does happen." It's time to change that. The twenty-first century offers us an opportunity to shift public opinion about the importance of language study. I'm honored to advocate for dual-language and immersion programs and applaud states that have adopted the Seal of Bilingualism to recognize students who demonstrate proficiency in English and another language. May your students, and mine, be **#Bilit2quit**.

Biography

Linda L. Egnatz, NBCT, is a Spanish teacher at Lincoln-Way High School in Frankfort, Illinois and is an adjunct instructor at DePaul University, Chicago. A popular keynote speaker and trainer, she focuses her presentations on teaching for language proficiency, connecting language study to twenty-first century learning, preparing for the global workforce, making intentional cross-curricular connections, and the importance of teaching efficacy. Her commitment to taking language learning into the real world is evidenced by the 2015 ACTFL Global Engagement Award she received for her annual cross-curricular, student service tours to Latin America.

Egnatz has been recognized for her work both in and out of the classroom. In 2013, she received the **Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching**. In the same year, as President of the Illinois Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ICTFL), she testified on behalf of the Illinois Seal of Biliteracy to recognize high school seniors who are biliterate in both English and a second language at graduation. When Illinois became the third state to adopt the Seal, she convinced her school district to pilot the program. Her work on the Seal of Biliteracy has been featured in a live interview with Univisión television and on the front page of the Chicago Tribune. Egnatz is now a recognized national advocate for the Seal of Biliteracy and proudly served on the joint task force that established the National Guidelines for its implementation.

In her ICTFL role, Egnatz led or co-led several initiatives to support language educators. She counts as privileges her opportunities to serve as a Spanishdict.com scholarship judge and to be a trainer/consultant to the Sak & Fox Nation as part of the Sauk Language Revitalization project. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) named Egnatz the **2014 National Foreign Language Teacher of the Year** in recognition of her passion for student learning, innovation, and leadership. A consummate learner and teacher practitioner, Egnatz graduated summa cum laude with her BA from Olivet Nazarene University in 1981 and earned her MA in Spanish Literature from Purdue University in 1996.