

The 2013 Founders Award for Professional Excellence in Language Education



Two names are synonymous with excellence and leadership in language education: Helena Curtain and Carol Ann Dahlberg. They exemplify best practices in teaching and research, while modeling collegiality and scholarship. Together they provide an inspiring model for all language educators to follow. Each has made countless contributions to language teaching and learning.

Drs. Curtain and Dahlberg focused their research into effective curriculum, instruction, and assessment around language learners in elementary grades. They have taken the lessons they learned and helped others apply them to language learners in middle schools, high schools, and postsecondary settings. They dug deeply into what makes for effective early language learning, expanding from pedagogy to include institutional and administrative support, program models of varying amounts of instructional time, a focus on meaningful content, and the importance of showcasing learning through a mix of assessment evidence. It is clear that many others in the Central States region feel the same. Each of the four editions of their book, *Languages and Children: Making the Match*, served first as our textbook, then our “bible” for teaching. This may be true whether our students are 8, 18, or 81 years old. Although they are teachers of German, both have applied their expertise to developing curriculum, materials, and programs in many languages. These women display that special ability to thoroughly understanding theory and research in world language education; then put theories into practice; and the ability to inspire others to do the same. They combine disciplined analysis with an amazing understanding of learner needs and human nature. They are insightful, kind, caring, idealistic, *practical*, and *very hard working*. *Their successful collaboration is a model to which we can only aspire.*

As educators, consultants, and guest speakers they have made significant contributions to our system of language education. They have advised numerous schools, districts, states, publishers, community colleges, and universities. They help implement FLES programs, immersion programs, distance learning, and other uses of technology. Their workshops focusing on the power of story-telling, target language teaching, and thematic planning have converted doubters to believers. Their models for curriculum and lesson planning are as rigorous as they are useful.

For several years attending Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages meant taking in at least one session or workshop presented by Helena and Carol Ann. For years, their workshops and sessions were the fundamental reason that CSCTFL was highlighted on my calendar. These two leaders have enriched the language educators within the Central States Conference through their own teaching in the region, their professional contributions to their state organizations, and consultant work throughout the Central States region. With deep roots in Central States and dedicated service to the region’s language organizations, Helena and Carol Ann have also made an impact that reaches across the nation and around the world, all the while staying connected to local projects and requests to present and serve. Carol Ann and Concordia Language Villages are synonymous in the minds of language educators, just as Helena and Wisconsin’s FLES Fest are forever connected. What a privilege to live in the Central States region and have even more direct contact with these two leaders!