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VICKI: Happy Wonderful Wednesday, today we're going to focus on Rachelle Dene Poth's [@rdene915](#) language classroom. She's in Pennsylvania. So Rachelle, when I look at your website and I do all that you do in the language classroom what would you say is a little bit different about your classroom versus most language classrooms?

DENE: I would say that – and this is partially something that probably my students have said so much that it kind of sticks with me is that I give a lot of choices in my classroom in terms of how they show what they've learned, what they can do with the material and over the last couple of years that came in the form of adding a lot of different tools in technology, giving them some choices depending on what we're working on. And I teach all four levels of Spanish as well as a STEAM course. So I think that what makes it unique is that with each level that they stay with me – and one student just actually said this the other night is that, they really enjoy having these choices and how they can show what they've learned, they can be creative, there's something out there for everyone and that they themselves can kind of look back over the past couple of years and see the growth that they've made from first level to second and moving forward.

So I think, overall, just the fact that I spend time learning about the tools that are available and I don't just teach from the text book or anything, I try and provide something that's diverse and engaging so that every student finds something that's meaningful and authentic to help them learn better.

VICKI: Okay. So, Rachelle, take me through an example assignment. I mean, we know most language teachers, you have 20 vocab words to learn by tomorrow. And you're either going to a matching, or you're going to fill 'em in. So tell me how you would do typical vocabulary.

DENE: In prior years, I was teaching as though I have been taught myself because it worked for me. And I did some reflection and I thought that there were a lot of better ways. And it didn't have to be the same homework assignment or homework every day for that matter. So what I started doing was offering some choices. For example using tools like Kahoot [www.getkahoot.com](http://www.getkahoot.com) or Quizlet <https://quizlet.com/> or Quizizz <https://quizizz.com/join/> or some of the other tool where you can input some vocabulary terms. And I've had students create their own games that we can then use in class which provides a lot of resources. One, for our class to have more resources available. I find that it's more personalized for each student because they're getting the practice that they need and then it's fun for everybody else and it's more engaging.

So that's one example where I might offer something differentiated in a sense. Other options might be I'll have students select a certain number of vocabulary words and

make up a story or I might give them some type of a prompt to get them started or some type of a them. And then I want them to create their own story based on what that theme is using the vocabulary or the verb structures that we've been using in class.

VICKI: So tell us – you've already mentioned Kahoot.

DENE: Uh-huh.

VICKI: What are your favorite tools, the ones you just keep going back to and kids keep choosing?

DENE: There's a lot. We've been using Kahoot – that was the first one, a couple of years ago where I actually had a student who gave me that idea for having students create them because he went to his class the day after he played it for history and he created a class for his classmates for the next day. So Kahoot, Quizizz, Quizlet – especially Quizlet Live <https://quizlet.com/live> is another one. Other tools that we like to use a lot are things like Buncee <https://www.edu.buncee.com/> for presentation, Storybird <https://storybird.com/> Visme <https://www.visme.co/> is another one that's popular because students can create a lot of presentations. We've been doing project-based learning more this year and so students are choosing how to present their information. And so Visme, Piktochart <https://piktochart.com/> has been popular.

And in terms of other interactive type activities, Nearpod <https://nearpod.com/> is something we use a lot, formative – just so that I can get that individual feedback from the students and get them involved and it frees me up to move around the classroom and take a look at what they're doing and then give them that feedback right away plus what different things you can add into those tools. It really does increase the engagement. And I've had student who have been kind of, in a sense, fearful of technology and trying these new things who've really flourished by using some of these different tools.

VICKI: Oh, but it sounds like so many tools. I could just see some language teachers going, "Oh my goodness." Give us one or two where most language teachers could start and you think it would be an easy win?

DENE: Probably Quizlet would be a really good one to start with for languages especially because you have so many different choices within it where you can have students create their own study sets, you can find some that are already available and take out some of the terms, add in your own terms. But within it, it offers different choices as far as games, practice test, you have the audio, in class you can play Quizlet Live so the students are on a team so it's interactive. You don't even have to be in the same classroom, we played it on a bus onetime going on a trip.

So that would be a great option for somebody to start with especially for practicing spelling and they could do all the four skills.

Another one I would recommend would be Nearpod depending on the level of language that you're teaching because you can incorporate a lot of different types of questions and activities within that. So if you're setting in culture you want to immerse students in that environment and let them really see and experience. You can put in some pictures, a YouTube video, you can have students conjugate verbs or different writing spaces, true and false, multiple choice, different questions you can embed in that as well.

VICKI: So, Rachelle, you've one tons of awards and you've got the results. But is there something that you struggle with that you're like, "Okay, this is what I'm trying to grow right now."

DENE: Absolutely. Every single day I take time to think, "What is it that I could have done better? Am I giving too many choices? Did I use the right tool with the right purpose?" And for me right now, my focus this year is something new that I've tried, has been project-based learning and it's something I thought I had been doing all along only to find out that no, I was really just assigning projects. And so it is a learning process for me as well as for my students and we've gone through it a few times this year where I'm letting them pick the topic. And I'm kind of facilitating it but in the process I'm also seeing areas that I definitely need to work on. But I'm learning from them.

So it's a really beneficial process, but it's also giving me an opportunity to see some areas where I as the instructor need to put some more attention to the detail or just really think about how I want to go about and proceed as far as timing moving forward, if not this year, then for next year for sure.

VICKI: Isn't Wednesday wonderful?

DENE: Yeah, it is a wonderful Wednesday. It actually was a really great Wednesday in class, we did a lot of fun things and the students were really excited about some of the new things we've been doing in class lately. So it's been a great week so far.

VICKI: What are some of those new things?

DENE: We have been working with Nearpod and they have a newer feature that is called "collaborate" <https://nearpod.com/collaborate> . You have different layouts where you can ask a question and it ends up looking like students are posting posted notes on a corkboard and they can have a discussion, brainstorm ideas. So some of the questions I posed within the lesson were, "What are some of the areas that you think are your strengths or areas that you need some help with in Spanish?" Talking about Ecuador or different countries in South American we're studying I asked them to do, kind of, a mini scavenger hunt and find information or some images to share with their classmates. And it's pretty neat because you can see everybody else's, you can like them, you can save that, you can share it with other people to transfer the information. So that's been a lot of fun for sure.

And also we're working with Cospaces <https://cospaces.io/> to create some 3D virtual spaces so the students will building their own environments and the once they've done that they're pairing them with the iPad or using a headset to actually walk through their own environment they've created. So it's been a lot of fun.

VICKI: So the environment they've created has Spanish words in it?

DENE: The course that did that one is the STEAM course so there weren't any yet. However, there will be one coming up for some of the Spanish classes to create an environment that I'm still kind of working with the idea in my mind but I do have some ideas of how they could definitely incorporate that into the languages.

VICKI: So remarkable teachers, I hope you'll follow some of these links and take a look. And it's just been a wonderful Wednesday.

DENE: It has been. Thank you so much.

A full transcript of this show and the show notes are available at [www.coolcatteacher.com/podcast](http://www.coolcatteacher.com/podcast) as well as details on entering this month's giveaway contests.

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