

Our History

AWLA was originally founded as the Alabama Association of Foreign Language Teachers (AAFLT) in 1969 by Joanna Breedlove Crane who was then vice president of the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages. After having taught French, history, and English at Sidney Lanier High School in Montgomery and chairing the Foreign Language Department at Robert E. Lee High School, she worked at the Alabama State Department of Education, primarily as a Foreign Language Specialist and a Curriculum Development Specialist for 36 years.

Mrs. Crane was a founding member of the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages in 1966 and served as an ACTFL Board Member from 1972 to 1975. During the early years of the Southern Conference on Language Teaching, following its incorporation in 1967, Mrs. Crane served as its chair. In the 1990s, she received the SCOLT Founders Award for Teaching.

When Mrs. Crane was recognized by ACTFL in 1999 with the Florence Steiner Award for Leadership in Foreign Language Education: K-12, she contributed a portion of her award to establish a scholarship for current or pre-service Alabama foreign language teachers wishing to study abroad. The scholarship is now administered through the Alabama World Languages Education Foundation which was incorporated as an Alabama Nonprofit Corporation in 2013. AWLEF also raises money for the Weekend Immersed in Language Development (WILD), a weekend immersion event held each November since the 1990s for Alabama high schoolers studying French, Spanish, or German. WILD is run by AWLA leadership and members.

In 2015, AAFLT changed its name to the Alabama World Languages Association (AWLA). The organization and its nonprofit sister, AWLEF, continue to work to support Alabama's current and pre-service world language professionals and their students with continuing education, networking events, as well as leadership and learning opportunities.

