

## How to get the most out of your TCTELA membership

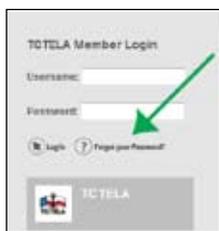
By Krista Eaton, Electronic Communications' Manager

Did you know there are different membership options offered to get involved in TCTELA? We listened to our membership feedback and are now providing each member with options that best fit their financial and educational needs. Current members should simply log on with your established user name and password. You can make changes to your selection as your needs and interests change each year upon renewal.

Most Frequently Asked Questions...

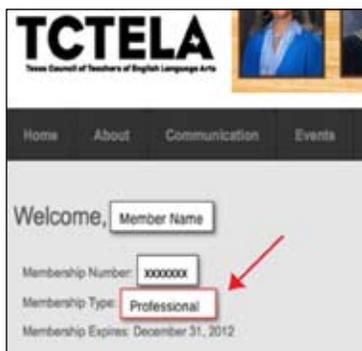
### How do I log on to access my selected TCTELA membership benefits?

- Start with accessing the TCTELA website at: [www.tctela.org](http://www.tctela.org).
- Log on with your user name and password.



### What do I do if I forgot my user name or password?

- Go to the TCTELA home page and click on "Forgot your Password?"



### If I am already a TCTELA member, but I don't know what my current membership level is, how do I find out?

- When you log on, the membership profile will provide your current membership level.

### What is included in the different Membership levels?

- **Professional membership is \$35 annually and includes:** [[Register Online](#)]

- print issues of *English in Texas* (2/year)
- digital issues of *English in Texas*
- *Texas Voices*, quarterly online newsletter
- participation in online special interest committees
- access to TCTELA online membership directory and community forum
- updates on issues that impact education professionals
- discounts to professional development opportunities

- **Student membership (full-time pre-service teacher) is \$15 annually and includes:** [[Register Online](#)]

- digital copies of *English in Texas*
- *Texas Voices*, quarterly online newsletter
- access to TCTELA online membership directory and community forum
- discount to events

- **Online membership is FREE and includes:**

- TCTELA community forum
- *Texas Voices*, quarterly online newsletter

- **Parent membership (for parents with students in K-12) is \$15 annually and includes:**

- digital copies of *English in Texas*
- *Texas Voices*, quarterly online newsletter
- access to TCTELA online membership directory and community forum
- discount to events

- **Retired membership is \$15 annually and includes:**

- digital copies of *English in Texas*
- *Texas Voices*, quarterly online newsletter
- access to TCTELA online membership directory and community forum
- discount to events

### NEW August 2012

- **Supporting membership (for individuals in companies that support education) is \$50 annually and includes:**

- digital copies of *English in Texas*
- *Texas Voices*, quarterly online newsletter
- access to TCTELA online membership directory and community forum
- preferred booth space at professional development events and ad placement

President's  
Corner

## Take a walk on the other side

By Katrina Gonzales, President

As a child, one of my favorite books was a Little Golden Book called *Clip, Clop* by Nancy Hoag and Florence Sarah Winship. The story appealed to two of my loves: shoes and horses. Forty-five years later, I'm still fascinated by a new pair of shoes and a buckskin horse.

I know that, somehow, my mom reading *Clip, Clop* to me every night influenced my thoughts for our 2013 conference theme, *2 Walk in My Shoes*. I remember the pages and pages of shoes in that book serving different purposes, different needs, and various professions. It both fascinated me and filled me with curiosity.

Each day, when we enter our schools, in order to adequately meet the needs of every student, we consider where our students have "walked." It is that quest for empathy that drives us to begin first with the individuals in our classrooms and to move outward in order to foster empathy in every student.

In an ELA classroom, students, in turn, find themselves "walking" in others' shoes as they read novels containing experiences far removed from their own. Writing workshop further plunges our students into empathetic experiences as they conference with other students and learn first-hand that each individual brings his and her own experiences to the classroom community.

At our 2013 TCTELA Conference in Dallas, Texas, we will all experience a piece of what it means *2 Walk in My Shoes* as we listen and learn with three young adult authors. We will hear Chris Crutcher tell of the young adults in his counseling practice who inspired his YA novels. We will marvel at the inquisitive and imaginative nature that drives Neal Shusterman to delve into places into which we have only tentatively peeked. We will listen carefully with several of our own students in mind as Matt de la Peña explains the importance of sports in literacy.

Discovery Learning and the Apple Corporation play key roles in our upcoming conference as they enhance our technology strand. Plan to be dazzled by ways we can link technology, ELA, science, and social studies through their student-centered educational tools.

As we head back into our classrooms, let's find ways to keep ourselves recharged and relevant. One way is to mark your calendar now for the next TCTELA Conference.

From authors, to student presentations, to the amazing speaker line-up, and our engaging vendors, every conference participant will have multiple opportunities to discover what it means *2 Walk in My Shoes* in January 2013! Plan now to attend!

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*Texas Voices*, published four times per year, is a member of the National Council of Teachers of English Affiliate Information Exchange Agreement.

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- Classroom-ready interactive tools for students

“My favorite part of writing for ReadWriteThink is the opportunity to explicitly link theory and practice. It is exciting to create material that use wonderful technology resources and that make connections for classroom teachers between literacy research and theory.”

*Maureen Carroll, Teacher Educator*

ReadWriteThink brings a community of the nation’s best English teachers to my computer desktop with just a click of the mouse.”

*Junius Wright, Secondary Teacher*

The online interactive activities on your site are AWESOME! They allow me to reinforce what the students are learning in the classroom while at the same time learning how to use the computer.”

*Julianna Elguicze, Elementary Teacher*

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ReadWriteThink.org is a nonprofit website maintained by the National Council of Teachers and English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association (IRA), with support from the Verizon Foundation. The site provides free lesson plans, interactive student materials, web resources, and ELA standards to classroom teachers.

# Eldorado school awash in authors

By Laurel L. Scott, San Angelo Standard Times staff writer

*Reprinted with permission from the San Angelo Standard Times*

Kaitlyn Lindsey, the author of “Beyond My Mistakes,” says she is working on the second book of a futuristic trilogy.

Jaxon Sheppard, author of “Pete,” says writing the novel about student bullying was “life-changing.”

Aaron Santellano says his novel, “Entering, Exiting,” was influenced by “The Hunger Games” but then took a surprising direction.

Sasha Sanchez, author of “You and Me,” says her book is autobiographical and deeply personal.

In the wider world, these four have accomplished something rare: They are published authors.

At Eldorado Middle School, the 14-year-old students are just four of more than 45 eighth-graders who wrote their own novels, thanks to Katrina Gonzales, their English language arts teacher, and an online program known as NaNoWriMo, for National Novel Writing Month.

“I heard about NaNoWriMo several years ago,” Gonzales said. “I did not think I could give up a whole month, which I thought it would take. But I think they were able to learn so much more than shorter kinds of writing.”

Kaitlyn said her trilogy was inspired by the movie “2012,” based on purported Mayan predictions of the end of the world. She starts her story “4,100 years since the great flood of 2012.”

To come up with the idea, she said, she had to “think a lot, a very lot. I had to do a lot of research, too.”

Jaxon’s first book, realistic fiction about a high school student befriending a neighbor boy with Asperger’s syndrome and experiencing bullying for the first time, was a surprise.

“I thought it was kind of weird that I wanted to write a realistic fiction book,” he said. “I’m usually into fantasy and science fiction, stuff like that.”

He said it was not only hard to write about bullying, it also was hard to survive the vagaries of technology.

“One time on the computer it got deleted and I had to start all over,” Jaxon said.

He discovered something most writers learn. The second try can be an improvement.

“I had a chance to edit stuff, rewrite stuff, fix stuff that wasn’t working,” he said. “It would be cool to write another book but probably, if I ever do it, it will be science fiction or fantasy.”

Aaron called his novel “sort of a thriller but leaning more toward giant science fiction,” inspired by “The Hunger Games” by Suzanne Collins, recently released as a movie.

“I’ve read the book like three times, but it didn’t come out to be anything like it,” he said. “It felt like it was being reborn. It started out in one direction and took off in another that I kind of like but I’m not fully in love with.”



## Financial Update

By Alana Morris, Executive Secretary

The Executive Committee of the TCTELA board met June 8, 2012 in Dallas for the annual budget meeting. Committee members present included Alana Morris, Executive Secretary; Martha Medlock, Past President; Katrina Gonzales, President; Kay Shurtleff, President-Elect; and Amy Blakely, Executive Director.

As part of TCTELA’s five-year plan, we have been charged with making our processes as “green” as possible. This goal was a large part of our budget discussion. As more technology is included in the organization’s structure, more financial resources must be allocated for website administration, web-based fees, and online credit card fees. TCTELA can no longer utilize extensive funds for both the digital and paper paradigms.

This year we will house the conference program online. The program can be printed in advance or accessed digitally throughout the weekend. In addition, QR (quick response) codes will appear on the website and in the conference packet that will link attendees to the program when the codes are scanned. Attendees choosing to use the digital program will receive a \$5 discount (the price of printing the program). At this time, the printed program will still be available for members who prefer a hard copy. Conference planning guides will still be printed for members who want to plan their conference sessions and see their choices “at a glance.”

TCTELA is also cutting costs by asking keynote speakers to post presentations online rather than printing out thick packets. We are requesting that only documents to be used during the presentation be printed for the conference sessions.

The 2012-2013 budget is a balanced budget based on at least 600 attendees registering for the 2013 conference. The conference registration fee will be \$210 for keynote speakers and all concurrent sessions. The luncheon, featuring Neal Shusterman, popular and successful American author, will require a separate ticket at \$25.

The budget year for non-profit organizations runs from July 1 to June 30. The year-end statement for 2011-2012 closed out with a net gain of \$21,915.94. The TCTELA board strives to ensure that we continue to have available resources to bring in leading literacy experts and authors to our annual conference.

I invite each of you to be part of our member financial audit, which takes place each year during the conference. Through this process, the TCTELA financial statements and supporting documents are transparent for our members.

I look forward to seeing everyone in Dallas!

[Alana.Morris@springbranchisd.com](mailto:Alana.Morris@springbranchisd.com)

## October 20, 2012 marks fourth annual National Day on Writing; join the celebration

By Kay Shurtleff, President-Elect

October brings the promise of cooler Texas weather, Columbus Day, the State Fair, and Halloween. For those of us in the world of language arts, though, October also ushers in the National Day on Writing. Spurred by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), on October 8, 2009, the United States Congress passed a resolution expressing support for the designation of October 20 as the National Day on Writing.

Why all the fanfare? Because writing is an integral part of the human experience. Because writing is thinking. Because a piece of writing is as unique as the writer. NCTE states it this way on its web site: "In light of the significance of writing in our national life, to draw attention to the remarkable variety of writing we engage in, and to help writers from all walks of life recognize how important writing is to their lives, NCTE established October 20 as The National Day on Writing."

We celebrate cooler weather with apple cider, Columbus Day with a day off, the Fair

with corn dogs, and Halloween with candy. But how do we commemorate a day for writing? There are several possibilities.

**Just write!** Take the opportunity to re-discover your own writing process. If lesson plans, curriculum documents, data analysis, and committee meetings have crowded into your writing life, this is the time to reestablish your writing habit. Set aside regular writing time for yourself each week, and hold yourself accountable by telling someone else about your plan. Look to October 20 as a benchmark date. What do you want to have written by then? Maybe it's time to finally submit that article to *English in Texas*, or to write that children's book, or to chronicle the family history for your children. Whatever your purpose is, just write.

**Celebrate with students.** Make the National Day on Writing part of your curriculum, and let it be a reason for students to write for authentic audiences. Schedule a "coffee house" style reading for October, and feature student writing. Have your students write and illustrate picture books, and

showcase them at an October Author's Fair. Set October as the deadline for students to submit a piece of writing of their choice to be published in a class anthology. Include a piece by every person in the class in the anthology, and distribute it on Friday, October 19. If none of that seems feasible, ask students for their input in how to celebrate the National Day on Writing and plan to mark the day based upon their ideas.

**Make your voice heard.** Use your Facebook page to advertise your National Day on Writing activities. If you haven't started a class blog, this is the time to do it. Share your ideas, pictures, and links to your blog on the **TCTELA Facebook page**, as well. Publish your students' writing on your school or class web site. And don't forget to tweet about your activities. Use **#dayonwriting** as the hash tag so others can find you.

**Collaborate.** Contact your school and local libraries about the possibility of scheduling writing events. Join forces with other teachers, and turn your classroom activities into school wide activities. Have your students

*continued page 12*

### CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

**Publication:** English in Texas, Volume 42.2 (Fall/Winter 2012)

**Theme:** Informational Texts of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**Deadline:** September 1, 2012

**Call for Submissions:** Because the majority of the sources on the Internet are expository (Kamil & Lane, 1998), it appears that the 21st Century student has the opportunity to be engaged in the reading and writing of informational and nonfiction texts at a much higher rate than students of the past (Kamil & Lane, 1998). However, exposure to these types of texts and ability to understand them and write them may very well be at different ends of the spectrum. Does ease of access to these text resources equal ease of understanding about them? What do our students know about reading and writing informational and nonfiction texts? Think about ways that you have increased classroom instruction on the reading and writing of 21st Century informational and nonfiction texts. How do you define informational and nonfiction texts? Are they the same? What instructional methods and activities have been most effective in teaching your students to successfully navigate and evaluate these texts? How can teachers effectively link the academics of the classroom with the texts of the Internet? What are both digital and nondigital informational and nonfiction text resources that you have used in your classroom?

- *Think about ways that you have increased classroom instruction on the reading and writing of 21st Century informational and nonfiction texts.*
- *How do you define informational and nonfiction texts? Are they the same?*
- *What instructional methods and activities have been most effective in teaching your students to successfully navigate and evaluate these texts?*
- *How can teachers effectively link the academics of the classroom with the texts of the Internet?*
- *What are both digital and non-digital informational and nonfiction text resources that you have used in your classroom?*

**Call for Student Submissions (Student Submission Deadline is October 15, 2012):** Share some of your favorite Internet-based informational and nonfiction texts and/or topics. Why do you read and/or write about these texts? How do they inform your life in a way that is different from a fictional text?

Submission guidelines available on <http://www.tctela.org/journal/>.

# Prepare now for the upcoming elections

By Valerie Taylor, SLATE Representative

This fall, please take time to vote. Before you do, take time to educate yourself about the views and previous votes of the candidates in your area of the state, particularly in relation to education. The upcoming legislative session, beginning in January, 2013, will be another difficult one for our representatives as they work with shortfalls in money.

Let your voice be heard by contacting the candidates or your current representatives if yours is not up for reelection. You can find your current representatives by visiting [www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us](http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us). You can also find a list of candidates at <http://enr.sos.state.tx.us/enr/> where you can search by party, and then within the party you can select all races by county or by the position being elected. In particular, you may want to check out the candidates seeking positions on the State Board of Education since all 15 districts of this board will be newly elected in November.

Below are some important dates to remember for the November elections. [staylor@sbcglobal.net](mailto:staylor@sbcglobal.net)

## First Day to Apply for Ballot by Mail

September 7, 2012

## Last Day to Register to Vote

October 9, 2012 (Tuesday, which is next business day after Columbus Day)

## First Day of Early Voting

October 22, 2012 (Monday, which is next business day after statutory deadline)

## Last Day to Apply for Ballot by Mail

October 30, 2012 (Received, not Postmarked)

## Last Day of Early Voting

November 2, 2012

# Spot reading and journaling: Literacy in the biology classroom

By Polly Vaughan, State of the Profession Committee Chair

At the beginning of last year I was thrust into a biology classroom as an inclusion teacher. I am a behavior intervention classroom teacher not a biology teacher. I work with special needs students every day and love it. I like to think that I know how to meet the needs of my students in regards to English language arts, but I was scared to death to walk into a biology classroom. The kids would know that I didn't know what I was talking about and would take advantage of that. How could I turn this situation to my advantage? How could I take what I love and pair that with something that scared me to death?

I decided to have a conversation with the classroom teacher and tell her that I didn't know anything about biology and discuss with her how we could work together to enhance the learning in her classes. Her very first comment to me was, "These kids can't write. They can't take an idea that they can express out loud and get it down on paper effectively. Can you help with that?"

The answer to that question came in the form of spot reading and journaling. I realized as I read a section of the amazing book *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* that the story I was reading at home directly related to a topic that we were going to teach at school. Not the whole book, but a short one and a half page section spoke directly about and gave an example of cell regeneration, which was our next topic in Biology class. Thus spot reading was born.

Each day I would enter the classroom with a spot reading selection, and as I would read, the students would settle into their desks and listen. At the end of each spot reading selection the students would be asked to make predictions in their journals about the topic to be taught based on the content of the spot reading. This short but effective activity was followed by labs, research, group work and direct instruction each day. At the end of each class period the student would be asked to revisit their journal entry for the day and determine if their predictions were correct. A second journaling

opportunity each day provided a chance for students to express their understanding through prompted questions or free response.

Contrary to popular belief, young adults enjoy reading and journaling. Literature, both fiction and non-fiction, has been written that explores a wide range of scientific concepts that are covered in high school biology. An inclusion of course-related fiction into the biology classroom offers a chance to tie abstract scientific ideas and concepts to real life situations through characters that students can relate to. Spot reading allows the instructor an opportunity to integrate short selections of text, both fiction and non-fiction, into the content curriculum.

Journaling is a way for students to record personal thoughts, daily experiences, scientific observances, responses to read texts, and developing theories. The process of journaling often evokes conversations with others and self that can help clarify information and prompt new directions of inquiry. Working through an explanation with writing also helps students explain their ideas in a way that others will comprehend (Azimioara, Bletterman, & Romero, n.d.). Journaling also provides for progressive understanding of material when students review and reflect on previous entries.

About two weeks into the implementation of spot reading and journaling, we decided to track student progress through formal and informal assessment to determine the effectiveness of these two practices in the biology classroom. Our assessments consisted of journal checks, student questionnaires, test scores, daily grades and teacher observations. The journal checks always consisted of the two of us sitting down and reading and responding to journal entries. We would respond to journal entries with a question that would help the students clarify their writing for better understanding. Students showed improvement across the board in their lab and research grades, and their test scores improved by 15%.

*continued page 13*

Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts

# 2 WALK THE SHOES

48th Annual Conference & Exposition  
Sheraton Dallas • Dallas, Texas  
January 18-20, 2013



Georgia Heard



William Kist



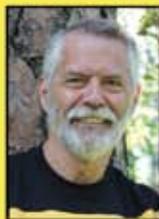
Melanie Mayer



Neal Shusterman



Victoria Young



Chris Crutcher



Matt de la Peña



Karin Miller



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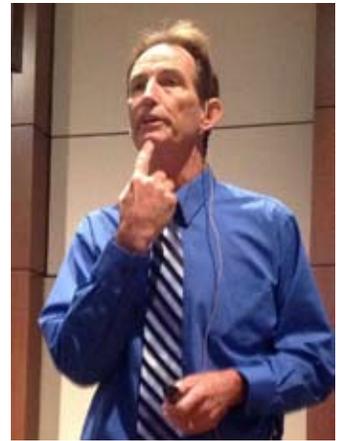


Sarah Ressler Wright



Register online  
[tctela.org](http://tctela.org)

# Affiliates in Action



Left: Representatives from NCTE affiliates around the country convened in St. Louis July 13-15 to discuss ways to strengthen their organizations.

Above: North Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts hosted educational neuroscience expert Eric Jensen at its regional affiliate conference in June.



Left: Concho Valley Teachers of English offered a wide variety of professional development at their annual summer conference in July in San Angelo. Make plans to attend their conference next year on July 22 at the Region 15 ESC.

Above: Ernest Morrell, NCTE vice president, Jennifer Engle, CVTE president, and Jean Boreen, member of the Standing Committee on Affiliates, collaborated at the NCTE Affiliate Conference on strategies to help affiliates grow.



Above Left: Molly Adams presented her project-based learning workshop at the CVTE conference in San Angelo in July.  
Above Right: Jim Burke, educator and author, provided teachers at NCTELA's annual conference with ideas to develop critical thinking skills in high school students.



NCTELA recognized elementary teachers from regional districts (above) and honored the Secondary High School Teacher of Excellence (left) at the annual one-day conference in Hurst. Next year's event is scheduled for June 14 at the Hurst Conference Center. Make plans to attend!

# Invigorating the new school year with *English in Texas*

By Kim J. Pinkerton, Editor, *English in Texas*

As editor of *English in Texas*, I have been diligently working toward the publication of the Spring/Summer 2012 issue. The latest installment will arrive in the mailboxes of TCTELA members all over the state just in time for the start of the 2012-2013 school year. Because I have spent so much time reading each article for this issue, I have already begun to develop plans for how to implement some of the ideas brought forth by the talented education professionals who are authoring articles. In order to peak your curiosity about the teaching possibilities that can be discovered by reading this issue of *English in Texas*, I would like to share just a few of my new teaching plans that have originated from my careful readings of the journal.

As I read “A Human Activity That’s Important: Peer and Author Written Feedback in an Electronic Literary Salon” by Robert Kohls, Jennifer Shade Wilson and Shelley Stagg Peterson, I was reminded that I should be talking more with my preservice teachers about how writers write, as opposed to spending a majority of course focus on assessments and teaching methods for writing instruction. While I do spend some time in *A Writer’s Notebook: Unlocking the Writer Within You* by Ralph Fletcher, I was struck by the fact that my students still may not have a true grasp of what it means to be a writer, especially a young writer; therefore, my efforts to address assessment and teaching methods may be in vain without these foundational understandings. I jotted this thought down on a piece of paper and kept reading articles.

When I read “Driving Language Arts Instruction with Inquiry” by Tracy Scholz, it occurred to me that the best way to approach understanding how writers write might be to allow my preservice teachers to explore this idea through a unit of inquiry. My plan includes engaging the preservice teachers and elementary school staff members in discussions about how writers write, as both adults and children, and the issues related to schools acknowledging the stages that writers go through and even invent. From these discussions, my students can then begin to explore and analyze some of the topics, problems and questions that emerge, helping them to come to their own supported conclusions about the teaching of writing.

I am so excited about this project and cannot wait to try it out this year. These two articles, while they were not specifically directed at teacher educators, opened my eyes to some areas of my teaching that were one-dimensional. I can see better now how my students need to hear from professionals outside of our university classroom and how they need to have the freedom to explore their understandings about difficult topics that face public school educators. I am certain that their explorations will fill them with knowledge that will deepen and broaden their understandings of what it is to be a teacher of writing. And, this impetus for change arose from the reading of just two articles in this issue of *English in Texas*.

Of course, I am always inspired by the book reviews and text talks in *English in Texas*. In a course on children’s and young adult literature that I teach, I have the students read from a list of

selected multimodal texts. Joshua S. Roberts, in his “Book Review Column: Texts, Talk, and Tips” recommends the multimodal text, *Free Thaddeus*. Jennifer Crispin and Karin Perry in the “Text of Note Column” recommend *Chopsticks* as a multimodal reading selection. Both columns offer a great summary of these books and some engaging ideas for classroom integration. Because of these authors, I have had some personally enjoyable reading experiences with these books and am expanding my multimodal list to include both of these fascinating selections.

Finally, the Technology Column in *English in Texas* always inspires me to move forward in my thinking about how to integrate technology into my literacy teaching. In this issue, Arden McLean introduces readers to Voki, a tool she uses to allow her students to create avatars to conduct book talks. As a teacher who is still hanging on pretty tightly to PowerPoint, Photo Story, and Movie Maker, I realize now, thanks to McLean, that there are simple programs out there that can take digital book talks to another level, a level that meets the students in a place of familiarity...digitally animated characters that resemble those in the virtual gaming world. In the past, I have had my students list topics of interest to children at a grade level they want to teach, research both fictional and informational books that address the topic, and then present a movie-based book talk about their discoveries. So, this semester, I will have my teacher candidates create their book talks with Voki as an option. I have even been working on my own Voki for a book talk that I just created for *Divergent* by Veronica Roth. I cannot wait to share this with my students.

So, as you all prepare for this new school year, I would encourage you to take the time to read *English in Texas*. In addition to the topics that were very relevant to me, you will also find a wonderful “Feature Article” about teaching writing written by Katie Wood Ray, an inspirational “Legislative Column” written by Liz Stephens that reminds us to be dogged when times get tough, and many other wonderful articles that will motivate you and inspire your teaching. I wish you happy reading and all of the best in your upcoming school year. And, remember, the editors of *English in Texas* always welcome your stories about how the articles have contributed to your teaching, your own articles about literacy teaching and learning, and your students’ contributions. All can be sent to my email address at pinkertonk@uhd.edu.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 6, 2012

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## **National Council of Teachers of English Announces 2012 Affiliate Newsletter Award Winner**

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has awarded the 2012 Affiliate Newsletter Award to the *Texas Voices* newsletter, edited by Jennifer Lilly of San Angelo, Texas and Emily Faulk of Friendswood, Texas and published by the Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts.

Established in 1992, this award recognizes outstanding newsletters of any NCTE affiliate that has published a minimum of three newsletters from May 2011 through the program deadline on May 1, 2012.

Newsletter submissions are judged on: content (particularly the inclusion of current, pertinent information with a good balance between theory, practice, and professional growth information), quality of writing, a clear and accurately defined purpose for the publication, a format which aids the reader in locating information and is easy to read, and the use of graphics to aid the overall effectiveness of the newsletter.

Awards will be presented at the 2012 NCTE Annual Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, during the Affiliate Roundtable Breakfast on Sunday, November 18, 2012.

This year's honorable mentions went to *Scribbles 'n Bits*, edited by Dr. Jean Copland of Fortson, Georgia, published by the Georgia Council of Teachers of English, and to the *OCTELA Voices*, edited by Karla Hiatt-Bisig of Wilmington, Ohio, published by the Ohio Council Teachers of English Language Arts.

For more information about the NCTE Affiliate Newsletter Award, see

<http://www.ncte.org/affiliates/awards/newsletter>.

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*The National Council of Teachers of English, with 33,000 individual and institutional members worldwide, is dedicated to improving the teaching and learning of English and the language arts at all levels of education. For more information, please visit <http://www.ncte.org>.*

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## Book Reviews

### Mentor texts for lifelong writers

By Jennifer Engle, Co-Editor, *Texas Voices*



Kelly Gallagher has done it again. The newest book by the high school teacher, consultant, presenter, and adjunct professor came out last September and was well-received by Gallagher's faithful followers.

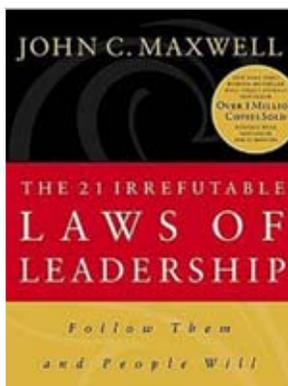
*Write Like This* (Stenhouse 2011) features more of Gallagher's popular activities and student samples enabling teachers to easily implement in their current curriculum plans. The book focuses on two hot ideas: mentor texts and real-world writing.

These current trends in educational research have proven to engage even the most challenging students and provide authentic activities that assist all students. Gallagher includes professional models and those that he wrote himself in teaching his own students, something he encourages all teachers to do.

Gallagher separated the book into chapters on different, authentic writing purposes: express and reflect; inform and explain; evaluate and judge; enquire and explore; analyze and interpret; and take a stand/propose a solution. The author explains that teachers should want their students to see writing as more than just a school activity that prepares them to pass a state test; the students should be "literate, lifelong writers [and see] that the ability to write well serves as the cornerstone of a literate adult life" (7-8).  
[jennifer.engle@scisd.net](mailto:jennifer.engle@scisd.net)

### Targeting growth for teacher leaders

By Martha Medlock, Past President



As the summer comes to a close and teachers begin to look at professional books again, one must-read title stands out: *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You* by John C. Maxwell.

Maxwell's book provides a plethora of evidence that every person has the ability to learn to become a leader or to become a better leader. Each chapter, or "Law," explains one main idea and is followed by a short

anecdote either from his own experience or from the business or educational realm.

"Rather than an esoteric examination of leadership, this book is more like a foundational instruction manual" (Covey, xiii).

Teacher leaders are imperative to the growth of the campus as well as the growth of the students. As teachers take on more and more responsibilities on their campus, it is important to have the tools to be good communicators so that they are effective. Teachers need to learn the skills they need to have people follow them.

Maxwell's book is a conversation between the reader and the author. "With each chapter, you will get to know individuals who did-or some who didn't- obey the law in question" (xiii). More important than providing examples of how each law works, Maxwell also provides specific steps to apply in order to acquire said "law."

At the end of the 21 chapters, the book offers a "Leadership Evaluation" that readers can take to determine which skills of leadership are in the "strength zone," which are "targets for growth," and which are just a "weakness," (276). The area of weakness indicates one should "hire staff with this strength or partner with others in this area" (276).

The book ends with a list of additional resources a person can get to learn more about the laws that are "targets for growth" (277).

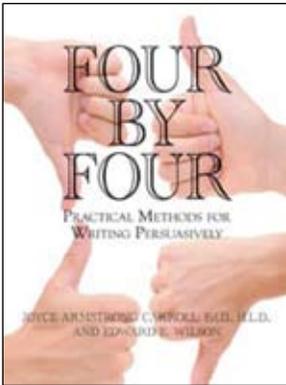
Maxwell's book is an easy read and informative for anyone who works with other people. Communication is a pivotal key to leaders in the teaching profession; Maxwell's advice makes it easier.  
[marthamedlock@austin.rr.com](mailto:marthamedlock@austin.rr.com)




 Book Reviews

## Writing gurus give sound advice on persuasive writing

By Kay Shurtleff, President-Elect



As English II teachers in Texas are under the gun this year with STAAR end-of-course requirements, it's nice to have a reliable source of information on teaching persuasive writing. Co-directors of the Abydos Learning International (formerly the New Jersey Writing Project in Texas), Dr. Joyce Armstrong Carroll and Edward Wilson, tackle the topic in a 2012 book published by Libraries Unlimited, *Four by Four: Practical Methods for Writing Persuasively*. In

their cut-to-the-chase approach, Armstrong and Wilson outline the history of rhetoric before offering practical guidelines and patterns for teaching persuasion. They include a 14-day model for teaching persuasive writing and then close with four appendices that give readers added support for teaching rhetoric, language registers, theses, and logical fallacies.

Perhaps my favorite aspect of this book is the authors' approach to writing a persuasive thesis statement. They give readers a quick working knowledge of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Kenneth Burke, and other great thinkers as groundwork. As students begin to formulate their own theses, they learn to analyze their own approaches and determine where they fit into the historical context of rhetoric. Students determine which of the rhetoricians' approaches their own theses most closely resembles. Giving students this tangible way to think metacognitively all but ensures a more authentic writing experience. Along with context, the book offers plenty of tips for writing an effective thesis.

On the touchy topic of formula writing, the authors say, "it doesn't foster clear thinking, and it certainly destroys any logic" (22). They offer a solution: teach patterns. In keeping with their

motif of four, the authors explain and illustrate Kenneth Bruffee's four different persuasive patterns: equal arguments, strawman (and strawman plus), concession, and Nestorian order. Herein lies the real muscle of this book. Carroll and Wilson endorse teaching these patterns by looking closely at mentor texts, having students think through their own topics, and choosing the pattern they believe will be most effective, and then asking students to defend that choice of pattern. Here is where we often fall short as teachers of writing. As professional "helpers," we want to shortcut that labor intensive thinking process by giving students step-by-step instructions rather than a way to think deeply about their own ideas. This book steers us away from that by offering practical alternatives.

Also key to this book is the concept that a writer must "become an insider" (28). Writers of persuasive texts must demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the topic in order to be effective. In chapter three—*Four Guides for Writing Persuasively*—readers will find ways to help students become those insiders. By assuming this stance, the authors are able to dissuade students from writing empty claims or writing without having done the necessary thinking.

Readers familiar with Armstrong and Wilson's seminal work *Acts of Teaching* will recognize the authors' trademarks here: a practical approach combined with sound research, theory, and historical context. This is a book for anyone looking for a way to improve a student's ability to write persuasively. In other words, it's a book for every teacher. In the authors' words, "Studying persuasion in order to write convincing papers in school and for tests is a noble purpose, but knowing the reasonableness of argument, recognizing the power of facts, and understanding the credentials of the person or persons persuading rises up as a necessary life skill" (p. 11). [kay.shurtleff@gmail.com](mailto:kay.shurtleff@gmail.com)

*Four by Four: Practical Methods for Writing Persuasively*. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2012.

## October 20, 2012 marks fourth annual National Day on Writing; join the celebration

*continued from page 5*

sponsor a writing contest, a write-a-thon, or an open mic night for the community. Enthusiasm is infectious, so start talking early!

**Visit the online National Gallery of Writing.** This huge online gallery features writers from every walk of life, including students. The gallery is searchable and includes more than 3000 partner galleries where you'll find everything from six-word memoirs from a middle school class in Ohio to the writing of healthcare providers at the Medical University of South Carolina. The gallery is beautiful and is housed here: [http://galleryofwriting.org/about\\_national\\_gallery.php](http://galleryofwriting.org/about_national_gallery.php)

While you're online, visit the NCTE web site to see what other teachers are doing to mark the day: <http://www.ncte.org/dayonwriting>

Finally, let us know how you and your students are celebrating writing! Share news on our **TCTELA Facebook**, **Twitter @TCTELA**, **the NCTE web site**, or via e-mail at [kay@TCTELA.org](mailto:kay@TCTELA.org). Give your ideas a chance to inspire others!

T.A. Barron said, "Writing is a wonderful invitation to live more fully." This year, as October rolls around and the sweaters and pumpkins come out, accept that invitation, and help nurture the writer in all of us. [kay.shurtleff@gmail.com](mailto:kay.shurtleff@gmail.com)


 Book Reviews

## An appetite for fiction

By Cynthia Alaniz, Recording Secretary



Sometimes summer reads are fleeting—books we feed on like cotton candy, bringing us short term happiness, but not helpful in keeping a ravenous hunger at bay, and disappearing all too quickly to enjoy. As avid readers, we indulge in fun books for the summer because we deserve them; we've made wise food choices for all (or most) of the year. During my summer break, my book appetite proved to be temperamental. Although I do enjoy "sweet treats" (salted caramel milkshake, anyone?), I

found myself choosing books that provided as much richness and nutritional value as a balanced meal approved by expert dietitians. *Chained* was one such nourishing book.

**Title:** *Chained*

**Author:** Lynne Kelly

**Publisher:** Farrar Straus Giroux

**Published:** 5/8/2012

**Pages:** 256

**Age range (from School Library Journal):** Gr. 4-6

**No-Spoiler Summary:** In this middle grade novel, the main character is a 10-year boy named Hastin. Hastin lives in India, and his sister is very sick. To help his mother pay for her medical care, he works far away from his family to care for a circus elephant named Nandita. As Hastin narrates his story, readers see the cruelty and hardship that follow them both. Nandita and Hastin form a bond that nurtures them both in their harsh life. Lynne Kelly tells the story with such care, and Nandita's survival becomes Hastin's great cause. Hastin uses talent and hard work to care for Nandita alive,

while struggling to also care for himself. Hastin is surrounded by adults coping with their own challenges. Does Hastin ever return to his family? Does his sister recover from her illness? Does Nandita survive?

**Themes:** This book covers several themes including: family, determination, loyalty, hope, strength, and challenge.

**Writing:** As a tool for Writer's Workshop, this book would provide worthy examples of narration, conflict, sensory language, suspense, and dialogue. There are many sentences here to pull from as examples of writer's craft including:

"Calls of animals in the distance echo in a jumble of hoots, chirps, whirrs, and screeches. Something skitters across the roof of the stable, its nails clicking against the wood" (p. 55).

**Connections:** As I read this book, and after I finished it, two other books came to mind:

- *Small as an Elephant* by Jennifer Richard Jacobson
- *The One and Only Ivan* by Katherine Applegate

I highly recommend these as well.

**My reflections:** I was completely engaged in the story. Hastin's narration allows us to walk through his life tenderly, almost as if we are living it with him. This story takes place in an area I've never visited, but its story is universal: survival, family, and strength. The book is also an example of how even in the midst of chaos, we try to create routine or order that makes sense for us at the time. Lynne Kelly's debut novel is powerful and rich. It took my heart on sad journeys while at the same time filling it with a deep appreciation for life. It's become that book that I continually find myself recommending to any teacher I meet, both stranger and friend alike. Curious about what type of book would cause this action? Then go to your library or favorite bookseller, and treat yourself to a copy of *Chained*. [calaniz@coppellisd.com](mailto:calaniz@coppellisd.com)

Literature cited:

Applegate, K. (2012). *The one and only Ivan*. NY: HarperCollins.

Kelly, L. (2012). *Chained*. NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Jacobson, J.R. (2011). *Small as an elephant*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.

## Spot reading and journaling: Literacy in the biology classroom

*continued from page 6*

The lessons learned in this very impromptu research for me were: students will write when given a purpose for writing and students can and must connect the reading with writing in all areas of the curriculum. Journaling allowed all the students, especially the special needs students, to respond without reprisal and/or embarrassment. More research is needed to test the effectiveness in other core curriculum subjects, and more research is scheduled. We as English language arts teachers tend to stay where we are comfortable. It took being thrown into an uncomfortable place for me to open my eyes and see the potential for the inclusion of literary practices in all classrooms. This was an amazing experience, and if you told me today that I would have to go back into the biology classroom, I would be ok with that. [vaughanp@lisd.net](mailto:vaughanp@lisd.net)

Biology based literature:

Bande, R. (2009). *Evolution, Me and Other Freaks of Nature*. New York: Random House.

Bryson, B. (2003). *A Short History of Nearly Everything*. USA: Broadway Books.

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Cervetti, G., Pearson, P.D., Bravo, M. A., & Barger, J. (2006). *Reading and writing in the service of inquiry-based science*. In Linking R. Douglas, M. Kenstschy, and Worth, K. (EDS.). New York, Guilford.

Croxton, C. A., & Berger, R. C. (1996). *Journal Writing: Does it Promote Long Term Retention of Course Concepts?* National Teaching and Learning Forum. Washington D. C.: National Academic Press.

# Eldorado school awash in authors

continued from page 4

Time was an issue, Gonzales said.

"We had a limited amount of time," she said. "We started Nov. 1 and they had to finish right on Nov. 30. That's NaNoWriMo, National Novel Writing Month. I did not realize I needed to start in October to get ready to start writing. We were doing lessons and writing at the same time."

Sasha wrote about friendship and loss in "You and Me."

"It's a realistic autobiography about me, my aunt and my friend, Jorge Medrano, a boy who passed away after a car accident June 15," she said, tears rising to her eyes. "It brought it all back. Sometimes, I wish I hadn't written about it, it's bringing my personal life out here."

The Eldorado teenager was hit by a vehicle while jogging along a main road in town.

Sasha said she gave a copy of her book to Jorge's mother.

"She was happy but sad at the same time," Sasha said. "I learned you have to learn to let go."

NaNoWriMo, "the world's largest writing challenge and nonprofit literary crusade," was launched in 1999 as a challenge to writers to break through their creative blocks.

According to the website, participants pledge to write 50,000 words in a month, starting from scratch and reaching "The End" by Nov. 30.

"The 50,000-word challenge has a wonderful way of opening up your imagination and unleashing creativity," NaNoWriMo founder and executive director Chris Baty says on the website. "When you write for quantity instead of quality, you end up getting both. Also, it's a great excuse for not doing any dishes for a month."

The Office of Letters and Light, a California-based nonprofit organization that runs NaNoWriMo, has launched the Young Writers Program, which is tailored for children and teenagers.

More than 2,000 elementary and secondary schools participated in the program in 2011.

"I've heard of whole grades doing the program, but more often, one teacher will just do it with his/her classes," Chris Angotti, director of the Young Writers Program, said in an email. "Our educator surveys indicate that NaNoWriMo positively affects students' self-confidence, general writing skills, creative writing skills, and time management."

Gonzales said she thought the experience helped prepare the students for challenges such as the expanded writing requirements of Texas' new STAAR statewide assessments.

"I didn't see it as getting in the way of the STAAR test," she said. "I told them, you've been reading a whole lot of books and doing a whole lot of writing."

Her students were also required to read 40 books during their eighth-grade school year.

"I think, when you're a writer, you pay attention to how books are written," she said. "The really cool thing is they have educators who have researched curriculum and I don't usually

like ready-made curriculum but it was perfect, everything fell into place."

The program included production of high-quality paperback books of the students' work through a self-publishing company called CreateSpace. Each student got five copies, which arrived in big boxes after spring break.

"Mrs. Gonzales made us feel like something bad had happened, then said our books are here," Aaron said.

The books also can be ordered from Amazon.com.

"My dad, he lives on a reservation in Canada, he bought one," Jaxon said. "We were talking on Facebook and he said he really liked it and he was proud of me."

Gonzales said her students didn't stop at novel writing. For their spring semester, they did the ScriptFrenzy program by the same nonprofit group.

"It's not as huge as NaNoWriMo, but it's gathering some steam," she said. "I can't believe we've done both this year but it's a good group to do this with. They need a lot of hands-on. It doesn't work to stand at the head of the class and lecture. They need to be more involved, interested in something. The NaNoWriMo site has more of a social networking feel."

Gonzales said the program brought out her students' competitive nature.

"They could see who had the highest word count and strive to beat it," she said. "I started my novel, too, and I think it's sitting at six pages because after they got started they needed help."

Gonzales, who is president of the Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts, said she wasn't aware of any other schools in the Concho Valley doing the Office of Letters and Lights programs.

"We're really fortunate as teachers here, that they trust that we know what to do," she said. "I knew this was something that would work well in the classroom."

Aaron said if he ever writes another book, he wants to "take longer, make it longer."

Gonzales sees that as a sign of the program's effectiveness.

"I think most of the students would say there are things they'd like to change or do better," she said. "I tell them that's the mark of a good writer." [www.gosanangelo.com](http://www.gosanangelo.com)



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