

TEXAS VOICES

A NEWSLETTER OF THE TEXAS COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

President's Corner

by Diane M. Miller, Ph.D., TCTELA President

Welcome to the first issue of Texas Voices for 2018! More than 20 years ago, TCTELA was there for me as a beginning teacher. I owe so much of my professional growth to the literacy educators who worked to make this organization such a vibrant, powerful resource. I am both humbled and thrilled to continue that work as your President for you, the 21st-century Texas ELAR teachers, and our students. My email address is at the bottom of this article. Please reach out to me with your ideas, concerns, dreams, and needs throughout this upcoming year. I promise to work hard in meeting your expectations. Our students deserve our very best, and your TCTELA board is committed to providing the resources you need to be an awesome ELAR teacher!

During the last weekend of January, the Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts met in Galveston for their Annual Conference, "Fueling Our Fires to Thrive as Teachers: An Energy Exploration." Past-President Margaret Hale's vision of us meeting on the island to refuel and reenergize came into sharp focus. Nearly 850 literacy teachers from all regions of the state gathered to learn more about their craft and glean inspiration from nationally-recognized educational leaders and notable authors.

We soaked up instructional wisdom via workshops and keynotes from Anne Goudvis, Leah Ames, Alfred W. Tatum, Gravity Goldberg, Jocelyn Chadwick, Pernille Ripp, Jan Burkins, and Chris Lehman. We reveled in the beauty of story and language with authors Guadalupe Garcia McCall, Kathi Appelt, Cynthia Leitich Smith, and Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton. We shared innovative ideas with our colleagues in concurrent sessions and roundtable conversations. We celebrated the achievements of award-winning fellow educators Donalyn Miller, the Edmund J. Farrell Lifetime Service Award winner, and Richard Carranza, Houston ISD Superintendent and Mercedes Bonner Award winner. And we cheered for our own celebrities as we recognized the Teachers of the Year: Kathryn Mills (Elementary, Katy ISD), Kulsoom Rizvi (Middle School, Fort Bend ISD), and Monica Sifuentes (High School, Weslaco ISD).

Indeed, I believe that we all left Galveston Island refueled and reenergized to continue the worthy work of literacy education for the students of Texas. With this tremendous beginning, we return to our students and our work. The TCTELA board is focused on two major initiatives for 2018.

First, we will continue developing resources for the PD2Teach program, which you'll find on the bulb platform. This project's aim is to support teachers in the implementation of the new ELAR/SLAR TEKS for K-8 beginning in 2019-2020 and continuing with high school TEKS in 2020-2021. Visit the bulb app regularly to stay informed about this critical effort. Additionally, the terms of our partnership with bulb digital

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portfolios enables TCTELA members to create complimentary portfolios for personal and professional use.

Secondly, the TCTELA board will be revisiting our Strategic Plan. The plan was last revised in 2012, and this year is the pre-scheduled time to review the plan and consider any changes. Please take a moment to read the Strategic Plan 2012-2018 and send your suggestions to me before the board meets again in March. We value your input!

I am so excited to see how you take that energy that was refueled in Galveston to thrive with your students this year. For further inspiration, read the Call for Proposals for the 2019 Annual Conference and consider sharing your triumphs and challenges with other TCTELA members. It is my hope that the conference theme prompts you to consider how you approach your students, reading, writing, literacy, and your work in a manner that goes BEYOND the typical. Your TCTELA board is looking forward to seeing you on the San Antonio Riverwalk for the 2019 Annual Conference, "Beyond Boots, Borders, & Books: The Many Faces of Literacy in Texas."

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Executive secretary report

by Kim Pinkerton, Executive Secretary

In thinking of the messages from our past TCTELA Executive Secretaries, I was reminded of Alana Morris who wrote her Executive Secretary message from the Gringotts vault. Her column marked the first time that TCTELA offered Texas Voices readers transparent insight into “relevant financial information” (p. 4). Wisely, TCTELA has continued to open the door for members to see the financial workings of the organization. In honor of that first wise move from Alana Morris (and because I am a rabid Harry Potter fan), I wanted to write my first column as Executive Secretary from the Gringotts vault. Join me on this financial, yet magical, adventure.

Walk into the marble hall, past the rows of busy goblins, and through the massive door where Griphook is waiting to take us to the TCTELA vault. Hold on tight as our cart propels us on the winding maze of track to the depths of Gringotts where only the most valuable vaults are kept.

After Griphook turns the shiny, new key labeled PD2Teach and the smoke resembling sea spray from Galveston clears, we see a new pile of galleons recently collected at the 2018 TCTELA Annual Conference. An initial count of the golden coins yields 260,000 galleons collected from 832 attendees and 35,000 galleons collected from vendors. And, Griphook tells us that there are still 72,000 galleons yet to be collected before Gringotts can finalize the earnings. We are filled with elation at the healthy financial return from a successful and invigorating conference. Griphook shakes our hands and congratulates us on the success.

As we make the dizzying ascent back to the great marble hall, we marvel at the fact that TCTELA originally budgeted to receive 211,000 galleons from attendees and 24,000 galleons from vendors. As we exit the cart, Griphook calls out, “Don’t forget to thank your TCTELA members for this exceptional conference and remind them that any profit made will help fund TCTELA projects, like the important PD2Teach work.” We smile to each other and stroll out of Gringott’s with that famous John Williams tune playing in our ears.

May 2018 be the year that TCTELA helps teachers and students of Texas in more impactful ways! Thank you, members, for helping support such a wonderful conference and exceptional organization.

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References

- Morris, A. (2010). Gringotts vault (financial update). *Texas Voices*, 23(16), p. 4.
 Rowling, J.K. (1997). *Harry Potter and the sorcerer’s stone*. New York: Scholastic Press.



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Giving and Receiving: The Fuel for Our Teaching Fires

by Margaret Hale, TCTELA Past President, English in Texas Editor

In one of our 2018 conference general sessions, I said to the attendees that a goal of mine for the 2018 conference was for participants to not only leave feeling energized but also to leave having energized others. Based upon what I saw over the course of the weekend, I believe we met that goal!

Giving

Managing a conference for 800+ teachers takes a lot of work. No one person, and not even a board, can do it without the help of others. At this year's conference, we had so many volunteers step up and help make the conference a success. I saw participants on social media, like folks from Clear Creek ISD, Dickinson ISD, and Houston ISD posting about how much they enjoyed the conference, both volunteering and attending workshops, general sessions, and concurrent sessions. They not only fueled their own fires, but by helping manage the conference, they fueled the fires of all those teachers who attended. When we give energy, we get energy, and this showed up time after time in Galveston.

Receiving

Watching the social media posts throughout the conference, I also saw how people were receiving energy from the speakers. Many of our general session and workshop speakers shared their personal stories, and those stories evoked all kinds of emotions in the participants. We know that emotion energizes memory, and attendees will long remember what they learned in these various sessions. That energy will continue to fuel our teaching fires.

Adding More Fuel to Our Fires

Our concurrent session presenters shared outstanding ideas with attendees—ideas that we can all take back to our classrooms



and implement. When the spring semester hits, many of us feel like we need some new ideas. These sessions added fuel to our fires to help us make it throughout the remaining days of winter as well as the rest of the spring semester.

We hope you all had the opportunity to connect with others and fuel your fires; we now urge you to spread that energy by sharing your experiences with those who weren't able to join us!

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SLAR/ELAR TEKS update from the Texas Education Agency

by Tracy Kriese, NCTE Affiliate Liaison

In his remarks to the Texas State Board of Education on January 30, Commissioner Mike Morath summarized Texas Education Agency plans for supporting the implementation of the revised SLAR/ELAR TEKS, which go into effect school year 2019-2020 for K-8 and school year 2020-2021 for English I-IV.

Morath observed that the process of understanding all of the student expectations in the revised standards is a complex one, so TEA is preparing TEKS guides in order to limit confusion. Described by the commissioner as “a compendium of all the SEs [including] a wealth of unpacking resources” tied to those SEs, the guides will include explication of key words used in the student expectations; examples of rigorous, grade-level student work for each of those expectations; samples of assessment questions K-12 that correspond to the new standards, and documents that show both vertical and horizontal alignment of the standards.

Morath cautioned that such an ambitious undertaking cannot all be completed by the fall of 2019, so the guides will be issued on a rolling basis beginning with SLAR K-8.

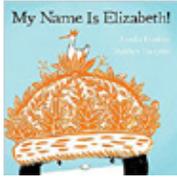
Morath also reported on plans for TEA's instructional materials portal, the creation of which was required by the 85th Texas legislature. In addition to housing instructional materials, this portal will offer educators and curriculum experts the ability to post evaluations of those materials with regard to their quality and efficacy. The commissioner cautioned that such a bank of resources will take time to build and will likely not be available until the fall of 2019. Reading academies will be updated with these materials as they become available.

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Early childhood/elementary spotlight: What's in a name?

by Amelia Hewitt, Ed.D., Elementary Section Chair

Learning one's name is one of the most meaningful activities for young children. A name is the thing that identifies who we are as a person. As a great catalyst for early literacy skills that is natural and authentic. Below are a few books to motivate children to think about the significance of names.



My Name is Elizabeth!

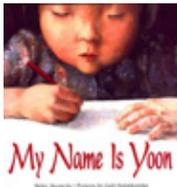
By: Annika Dunklee

Illustrated by: Matthew Forsythe

ISBN: 978-1-5543-560-6

Ages: 3-7

Elizabeth loves her name. She's named after a queen. Elizabeth does not like to be called by nicknames like "Lizzy" or "Beth," but she stays silent. Then one day, she discovers the power to change things. Elizabeth learns about communication and respect while building better relationships with her family and friends.



My Name is Yoon

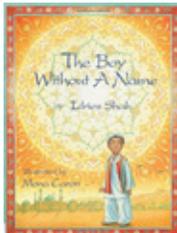
By: Helen Recorvits

Illustrated by: Gabi Swiatkowska

ISBN: 978-0-374-35114-4

Ages: 3-7

Yoon is from Korea. She loves writing her name in Korean. It makes her happy. She is not happy about moving to America. She will have to write her name in English. She thinks she may try out other names like CAT, BIRD, or CUPCAKE.



The Boy Without a Name

By: Idries Shah

Illustrated by: Mona Caron

ISBN: 978-1-883536-20-6

Ages: 5-9

This is a great story that originates from a traditional tale from the Middle East and Central Asia. It is about a boy who is trying to find his own name. His parents named him "Nameless". The boy searches for his name and is led to the house of a wise man. He finds his name from the wise man and trades an old dream for a new dream.

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Language Arts



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Middle school spotlight: Calling all middle level voices to connect

by Donna Brown, Middle School Section Chair

TCTELA is reaching out to middle-level teachers to participate in an innovative forum designed to create new ways for middle-level teachers to network and share ideas. Launched at the January 2018 conference, the Middle-Level Section is designed to be a source of collegiality and support for teachers.

As we all know, middle school teachers have unique and bright students who need their own voice, their own literature, and their own forums for writing. Veronica Roth in *Divergent* wrote, "Sometimes, the best way to help someone is just to be near them." Middle school teachers will have the opportunity to connect once a month to receive support and be near each other in many different forums. These forums will focus on issues and areas of study to specifically support content with new TEKS, time for teaching the content, instructional approaches, book lists, and differentiation, including the AP classes.

The Middle-Level Section wants to reach out to all teachers in TCTELA to join in this pursuit. Teachers can join this section by completing the form at www.tinyurl.com/TCTELAMiddle. Once completed, teachers will receive updates and information regarding different pathways were they can connect.

A student's reading and writing world is not contained only in the ELAR classroom. The literate world extends into every classroom and outside of the school day. In developing support for our students, the Middle-Level Committee will share

strategies to connect with content teachers. Anne Goudvis, speaker at the TCTELA conference and co-author of *Strategies at Work*, discussed ways for students to have an inquiry into the mathematics, sciences, and social studies through English classes. She shared strategies to support the natural curiosity of students with inquiry workshop. Many middle-level students are having difficulty transferring reading and writing into the content areas. It is time for us as ELAR educators to connect with our content area teachers and share the strategies that students are learning to read and write with content colleagues. Laura Robb, in her book *Teaching Reading in Social Studies, Science and Math*, shares many of the roadblocks encountered with reading content textbooks. She states that students must be taught how to become the makers of meaning in the contents. This can only be done by a partnership with English teachers and content teachers.

As we come to the table of learning together, let's make a commitment to unite ourselves so that our students can also benefit. Only by connecting with one another, can we then help our students become the readers and writers they need to be for today's society. I look forward to hosting these meetings and learning with everyone at our Middle School table.

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Your free bulb account

by Shona Rose, Vice President of Membership and Affiliates, and Bria Jones; bulbapp.com

Every conference attendee received a complimentary three-year subscription to a digital portfolio through one of our PD2Teach sponsors. All TCTELA members should have received a welcome email from bulb with your username and a link to change your passwords. If it never got to you or you accidentally deleted it, not a problem: just email help@bulbapp.com, and we will get you access to your account.

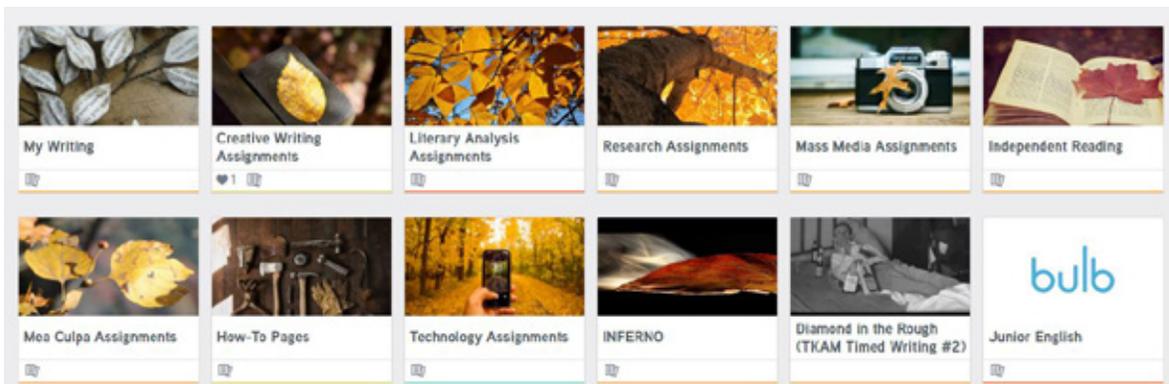
What can you do with your bulb? You can use it to post assignments and materials like. Brandon Coon does at this link: <http://at.bulb.re/pUC>. Or you can use it to house staff development and curriculum resources like the Writing

Notebook under construction at <http://at.bulb.re/pUD>. You can even use your bulb to curate your own writing, videos, blogs, and other contributions to the field of English.

PD2Teach uses the bulb account to share resources and activities associated with the new ELAR TEKS. Navigate to www.bulbapp.com/pd2teach to access TEA documents, the PD2Teach Challenge, and videos and resources for each strand.

Happy Writing and Planning!

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TEA writing pilot update

by Shona Rose, Vice President of Membership and Affiliates

The writing pilot established by HB1164 in the 85th legislative session is completing the second year of the pilot. Highlights from year two include the development of a 6-point analytic rubric and increased enrollment. In January, the commissioner opened participation to interested parties, exponentially increasing participation – from almost 4,000 to over 50,000 students representing 16 of the 20 Region Service Centers, and 79 districts. Spanish assessment materials are also being added to the pilot. A new pilot director, Kristina McCeig, has also been assigned to oversee the project.

In February, districts received training on the new rubric

and continued collecting portfolio requirements. TEA plans to release a background and guidance FAQ sheet for participating districts. An online system for uploading and scoring papers has been developed by ETS for pilot participants and students. During the summer, Region Service Centers will complete the last requirements of the pilot with blind scoring sessions, and then TEA will compile a report to send to the legislature. TEA and ETS are preparing for a third year in the pilot, but the legislature will make the final decision about continued pilot activities. shona.

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Ms. Hyten's classroom: The day after

by Sheryl Hyten

On February 14, 2018, bullets of brass and hatred shattered Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, leaving 17 without their lives and a nation without a sense of safety or peace. Educators, parents, and students were immediately faced with the altogether too familiar situation of grief and what-ifs and safety plan reviews. In the midst of our communal anguish, Sheryl Hyten shared her voice via info@tctela.org. What follows is the verbatim email. Thank you, Sheryl, for sharing your voice with our TCTELA members.

A friend of mine told me I need to publish this or at the very least send it to TCTELA. I wrote it at work today. I am not sure why she wants me to submit it or who to send it to, but here it is. Do with it what you will.

I'm sitting in a computer lab, listening to the light clacking of keys as twenty-four teenagers try to wrangle their thoughts and put them into words. They have read literature from around the globe. Many are stories about violence: war, genocide, imprisonment, and abuses. These stories take place in Cambodia, Lithuania, Russia, the former Czechoslovakia. The hope is that these young, teenage minds—so preoccupied with prom, Instagram followers, and dorm room deposits—will gain a deeper understanding of the world in which they live. We are creating global citizens, creating empathetic life-travelers. They may be inspired to change the world, or they may be inspired to be a little kinder. Mostly, I'm hoping their essays are relatively coherent and reveal that they actually read the book. Many of them have not had to think much about the world, and I will be lucky to get more than a SparkNotes epiphany. Many just want to get it done so they can concentrate on their All-State competition this weekend or study for the physics test they are certain they'll fail.

The keyboard clacking and whispered MLA format questions are broken by the squawk and static voice coming through a walkie-talkie behind me. My first thought is, "Police. The police are here. Why?"

My heart sinks and there's a tight grip on my diaphragm. I can't breathe.

"Oh God, please not here. God no, no, no. Please."

I turn to look behind me. Outside the window of the computer lab is an associate principal, with his radio, sauntering over to a librarian with a smirk. It seems they're chatting, joking about something. I can't hear what they're saying. I can only hear my heart pounding, the blood pumping through my body. In half a second, the moment is over. Everything is fine. Everything is fine. Everything is fine. Everything is fine.

Everything is not fine.

I have to get up and run to another room. I don't want my students to see me cry. I don't want them to know that for a split second I feared for their lives. For a split second I felt helpless, knowing there's so little I can do to protect them. They are someone's babies and I need to protect them. But I can't.

My students are looking up how to format a citation. I'm in the bathroom and I can't stop crying.

This is not Cambodia. This is not Lithuania. This is not Russia. This is not the former Czechoslovakia. This is the United States. This is the United States and here I sit, a school teacher, fearing a bullet will rip through my body. This is the United States, and here I sit, looking into my students' faces, praying I never have to stop the bleeding. This is the United States, and here I sit, wondering if I will have the courage.

This is my classroom, and here I sit, in tears.

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Sharing the magic

by Heather Echols, Pre-Service Teacher Committee Chair

In the fall of 2015, my professor, Dr. Diane Miller, told me about a volunteer opportunity at a conference especially for language arts educators. “It’s a wonderful experience,” she said. “It’s a great networking opportunity. It will be hard work, but you’ll learn so much and get tons of professional development hours.” My metaphorical bags were packed when she said we would get our required PD hours for the semester. I was excited to see what this TCTELA conference was all about. It was a wonderful experience; she was right. And the hard work she spoke of was right on target.

But after three years of volunteering for this conference I realized one thing she forgot to mention: the magic. The magic of getting goosebumps when hearing Jacqueline Woodson’s velvety smooth voice read from *Brown Girl Dreaming*, echoing over a hushed crowd hanging onto her every word. Hearing educators unselfishly and passionately share their research to better teachers and schools all across our state. And the magic of enjoying dinner with the Elementary Teacher of the Year, Kathryn Mills, hearing details of how the Hurricane Harvey Book Club came to be. The book club replaced my own children’s thoughts of their home they would never return to with the laughter and warmth that comes with listening to a good book. Networking is great, and hard work is something to be proud of, but nothing compares to the magic.

For three years, I went to the TCTELA conferences as a preservice teacher. Now, I am excited and grateful to experience the conference in 2019 in a new way. I will be making the transition from student volunteer to Pre-Service Teacher Committee Chair, which will allow me the privilege of introducing new pre-service teachers to the magic of TCTELA.

For this I want to say, “Thank you.” Thank you to Dr. Miller, for introducing me to TCTELA. Thank you to the wonderful educators who have ignited the fire inside me to advocate for my students and their right to learn the way they learn best. Thank you to the TCTELA members for continuing your support of the organization’s initiatives and to the Board for continuing to approve the preservice teacher conference grant each year, making it possible to volunteer for and attend these conferences at a minimal cost. And most importantly, thank you to the TCTELA Board members for investing in me over the past three years: for believing that I am capable of carrying on such an important task and for believing that I could even compare to those who came before me. Before we roll up our sleeves to begin the work of the 2019 conference, I just wanted to take a moment to express my gratitude for this unforgettable opportunity to give back to the organization that has given me so much.

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Growing with TCTELA

by Eve Zehavi, *English in Texas* Editor

As part of my job on the English in Texas editorial board, I attended every function at the TCTELA Conference “Fueling Our Fires to Thrive as Teachers: An Energy Exploration,” and I was struck by a different common theme in almost every General Session and Award Presentation. We had a truly amazing group of leaders, whether members of the TCTELA board or guest speakers, yet they all commented that they never imagined themselves in their current positions. I heard, “I used to look up to (insert board position here) and never dreamed I could do that, but here I am,” or “If you had told me 10 years ago I would be in this position, I wouldn’t have believed you,” or “I didn’t ever think that my experience would be valued and yet...” None felt ready or worthy but they all showed amazing leadership.

TCTELA is looking to harness your potential. Our board is actively focused on fostering leadership from among our ranks. We are in the process of developing avenues for recruitment and mentorship, but you don’t have to wait to get involved. Start small. Consider becoming active in one of our seven local [affiliates](#) that have smaller conferences across the state. Looking for a place to network and share your ideas? Join one of our four [Sections](#): Elementary Level, Middle Level, High School Level, and Teacher Development. On each of these committees you have the opportunity to meet online with colleagues across the state, discuss concerns related to your grade level, and publish in *Texas Voices*. Not ready to take on a title? Share your knowledge and

expertise by submitting a conference proposal, writing for *English in Texas* or submitting to [PD2Teach](#).

You too can be a leader beyond the classroom. If you aren’t convinced perhaps my personal journey will assuage your fears. When I joined the English in Texas editorial team, I did not know that I would simultaneously be serving on the TCTELA board. When my teacher, mentor, and senior editor told me I had to attend board meetings—well, I wasn’t excited. I didn’t know what I was supposed to do and besides that, no one looks forward to “dull” board meetings—reading the minutes, iterating old business and new, talking about the logistics of getting things done. But something happened to me in that space. I was with my people. I felt validated and understood in ways that just doesn’t happen in my everyday teaching life. Even more than that, over time, I have been truly energized and empowered by my colleagues and peers to do more than I ever thought I could do.

As teachers we are constantly advocating for our students, every day giving voice to them and their needs in small ways—in our planning, in our teaching, in our caring. Why not expand your influence to include our greater Texas ELA community? Start making a difference today! Contact us at [Volunteer with TCTELA](#).

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A D.E.E.P poetry experience

by Amanda Palmer, Vice President-Elect for Membership and Affiliates

Me Before TCTELA 2018

I don't do fan girl. You'll likely never catch me giddy, waiting in line for a picture with an author or any other star. In fact, I generally don't care for getting autographs unless it's for my kids (big thank you to Jewel Parker Rhodes at NCTE17 for making me the coolest mom in fourth grade). Frederick Douglass would be my only fan girl moment.. Mr. Douglass isn't signing anything for me, at least until the hereafter, so I state again: I am not a fan girl.

Also, poetry isn't really my thing. I shamefully admit this. As an English teacher, I have always hated this about me. I get the purpose and intent of poetry on a surface level. I can even tear it apart in an analysis that would satisfy an AP Lit reader. However, I've never willfully or joyfully read or listened to poetry. Maybe it's because I don't do touchy-feely, crying, fan girl moments. I constantly get side eye from my sister and mom over my apparent lack of emotion. Case in point: This is Us hasn't made me cry.

Me After TCTELA 2018

This year's conference had an undeniable vibe. Teachers came together to thrive. Maybe it was surviving Harvey and the opportunity for a collective exhale. Whatever caused it, the feels were high.

Saturday night, I attended the poetry reading with Houston Poet Laureate Deborah D.E.E.P Mouton. In full disclosure, I was there as a Board obligation. Remember, poetry isn't my thing. Except it was.

I came in a few minutes late and found a seat in a circle of approximately 40 other TCTELA conference attendees. Mouton is exuberant and unassuming. I think that's what caught me off guard. I had barely settled my belongings when she began to perform a piece she had written in response to the Charleston

church shooting. She embodied the mother in that chapel and made me feel her loss as she failed to protect her grown child.

I connected her words to the recent Sutherland Springs church shooting and fixated on the pain of these faceless women. I barely noticed my kind neighbor nudging me, offering a tissue. I had been oblivious to my tears. I was crying. Me. I don't do that. But, apparently I do. Mouton didn't let up. Her performance found our (my?) emotional soft spots and continued to jab. I say her performance was life altering for me without an ounce of hyperbole.

When Mouton finished her set, there was nothing left for me to do other than get into line, giddy like a fan girl, to have my picture taken with the poet who moved me and shifted my perception of poetry.

Amanda Palmer
@AmandaPalmer131

I never really got poetry (don't tell anyone) until @livelifedeep had me in pieces within 15 minutes of her starting her spoken word. Tonight was a touchstone in my life.
#TCTELA18



8:51 PM - 27 Jan 2018

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From the blogosphere...

Fill your tank with loads of instructional ideas at:
<http://twowritingteachers.org>

...to the website

Visit us online at: <http://www.tctela.org>

World read aloud day every day

by Kim Pinkerton, Executive Secretary



Wouldn't it be great if teachers and parents across the world read aloud to children every day? From Lucy Calkins to Jim Trelease, teachers have long known the value of the read aloud. In their national report on reading, Scholastic, Inc. and YouGov (2016) found that the percentage of parents who read aloud to their children (ages 0-5) increased from 2014-2016. This is definitely a step in the right direction; however, we have much more work to do because parents still view reading aloud as something for children in Pre-K.

The percentage of parents who read to their children drops dramatically as the children age. Sixty-two percent of parents surveyed read aloud to their children ages 3-5. However, only 38% of parents with children ages 6-8 and 17% of parents with children ages 9-11 read aloud (Scholastic, Inc. & YouGov, 2016).

It has been over 20 years since the publication of "Becoming a Nation of Readers" where educators learned that reading aloud is the best thing we can do to promote reading success. While much has changed in the world of reading, "experts still agree on this one point—that read alouds are beneficial for children of all ages" (Wadsworth, 2008, n.p.). If we believe this, then how can we help all teachers and parents make time for reading aloud?

First, educators need to promote reading aloud. World Read Aloud Day took place on February 1. I read aloud to my preservice teachers (like I do in each class), but this time, we Tweeted a picture of us with the book that we read. I was surprised to find that Twitter was not blowing up with Tweets about the day, a day I would consider to be a holiday for us literacy teachers. Why weren't we all Tweeting about our read alouds and celebrating the experience with the world?

Next, we have to work harder to educate parents about reading aloud, especially reading aloud to older children. We should share reports like the one from Scholastic, Inc. and YouGov (<http://www.scholastic.com/readingreport/files/Scholastic-KFRR-6ed-2017.pdf>). Perhaps we could even direct them to websites like Lit World, the host of the World Read Aloud Day, (<http://www.litworld.org/wrad/>) or Read Aloud 15 Minutes

(<http://www.readaloud.org/why.html>). These are easy steps that we can take in our classrooms, districts, and universities.

Finally, we have to know the best books for reading aloud. For World Read Aloud Day in my classroom, we read *Love* by Matt de la Peña (Thanks, Matt, for "hearting" our Tweet; my students now know that you rock) and *After the Fall* by Dan Sentat. What great conversations we had about both books. We talked about whether or not *Love* was too sad for kids, and I was able to share Matt de la Peña's article about "dark" reading (<http://time.com/5093669/why-we-shouldnt-shield-children-from-darkness/>). We also talked about the beautiful story behind Sentat's book and the idea of breaking out of a shell and sprouting the wings to fly. The conversations were inspiring and powerful for my preservice teachers. We have conversations like these each time we meet. I love books, and I share books that are great for reading aloud for a variety of purposes. I want my preservice teachers to do the same with their students.

If we all come together as literacy educators and work on these three, simple tasks, it is my hope that the next time Scholastic, Inc. and YouGov release a report on reading aloud that we see a dramatic rise in the read alouds that parents are doing with all children. It is my hope that we can make every day a read aloud day.

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Notes to a new teacher: Establishing tone and presence

by Shona Rose, Vice President of Membership and Affiliates

My Dear,

You are the actress and your classroom is a stage.

1. When you begin the class, establish your presence by going to the front of the room. One time, my mother talked to me about how a lady enters a room. It's quite dramatic. You enter the room, standing with confidence. Pause. Your eyes scan the room and you smile or make contact with others, your expression morphing to reflect understanding and connection to those you recognize or would like to know better. Select a place in the room and walk purposefully to that location.

2. Call the class to order with a greeting and a smile. This sets a friendly, but authoritative tone.

3. Then, give the beginning charge for the day—even if it is written on the board. Stand there and scan the room to see that everyone complies. Then go take attendance.

4. As you sweep the class to monitor each group, note that if you hear or see the same misconception more than two times, you are wasting your time to reteach the same concept to each group. Call the whole class together and reteach.

5. After each trip around the room, pause and eavesdrop over the whole class. This is a quick formative assessment for you about what you need to address behaviorally or instructionally. Capture the whole class's attention if there is a trend you are noticing that needs refinement. Catch and Release: Catch them quickly, make your comment, and then release them back to their collaborative work.



6. When you are working with a group, remember that you are always on stage. As such, point your body to the whole class (don't turn your back) and point your head to the group or individual.

With Love,
Your TCTELA Advocate

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Decision fatigue: teachers are especially at-risk

by Amanda Palmer, Vice President-Elect for Membership and Affiliates

“Our life is frittered away by detail... Simply, simplify.”
—Henry David Thoreau

There's a reason notable men such as Albert Einstein, President Barack Obama, Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg established personal uniforms for their daily lives. Wearing essentially the same clothing style each day with minimum variation not only saves time, it reduces decision-making. While time economy is valuable, these men recognized the far greater value of reducing the number of decisions they were required to make in a given day. Researchers have discovered that humans do not have an unlimited ability to make decisions. Decisions—both critical and unimportant—deplete will power. Gravity Goldberg shared this information with TCTELA conference attendees while providing a practical solution to decrease the decision fatigue that occurs when the brain is asked to make too many consecutive decisions.

Contrary to popular belief, good decision-making is not a character trait; it is a state of being that fluctuates. The number of decisions adults are required to make before leaving home each morning is incredible. Selecting clothing is just the beginning.

Do I have time for breakfast? Should I make it at home or hit a drive-thru? Am I eating healthy or indulging?

The list goes on and on. These decisions quickly become exhausting. Steve Tierney explains in an oft-cited *New York Times* article on decision fatigue, “Once you're mentally depleted, you become reluctant to make trade-offs, which involve a particularly advanced and taxing form of decision making.” Much like an electrical grid, the brain realizes it is heading toward a blackout and throttles high-energy activities such as the skills involved in weighing decisions. This is the onslaught of decision fatigue. Will power tanks. Suddenly, no cookie is safe and those papers that had to be graded remain bound and hidden in the trunk of the car.

When you are the leader of the free world, as in former President Obama's case, the next decision asked of you could literally save the planet. Allowing anything, especially a clothing choice, to unnecessarily deplete the energy needed for those decisions would be reckless. A simple solution is to automate as many of the unimportant decisions as possible such as what to wear, what to eat, what path to travel to work, etc. The role of the teacher is comparable on a slightly smaller scale. The next decision could greatly impact a child or multiple children. Teachers are the leaders of their classroom ecosystems. Researchers estimate teachers make somewhere between 1,500-2,000 decisions a day (not a typo). This

continued on next page



is why the thought of cooking or even picking a restaurant for dinner after work feels overwhelming.

Goldberg and Renee Houser noted in a recent Edutopia post that these decisions leave teachers in “a situation in which the brain is so exhausted and overloaded with decisions that it either looks for shortcuts or stops working altogether” (2017). When this occurs we make trade offs that can range from snap decisions we regret to decision paralysis. Goldberg’s new book *What do I Teach Readers Tomorrow?* also coauthored with Renee Houser addresses decision fatigue in education. Goldberg shared the basis for this book in her TCTELA presentation and echoes it in this [Corwin video](#): “We often think we need a lot of information, but really we only need a little information and to trust our intuition.”

During the TCTELA session, Goldberg provided background on decision fatigue and offered a solution from Malcolm Gladwell’s *Blink: thin-slicing*. “Thin-slicing’ refers to the ability of

our unconscious to find patterns in situations and behavior based on very narrow slices of experience (2007).” Goldberg highlighted in her session the seemingly paradoxical finding that “more information doesn’t always lead to better decisions.” In order to thwart decision fatigue, Goldberg provided the following five decisions where educators should focus their energy:

1. What books do I make sure to get into student hands?

Establish a way to rate books for students based on appeal, organization, content, and accessibility. Have students serve as the raters.

2. What kind of talk should students do about books?

Students engage in two types of talk regarding books: share and discuss. Sharing is providing personal ideas and knowledge. Discussion is more complex requiring sharing of ideas that leads to questioning those ideas and building new ideas collaboratively.

3. What kind of writing should I encourage students to do about reading? Consider the notion of reading notebook versus reader response journal. Use the definition of “entry” to guide decisions. Any writing should invite students to “come in” to the text.

4. What do I teach students tomorrow? There are four areas of comprehension to focus on: understanding character, interpreting theme, synthesizing information, and understanding perspectives.

5. What do I look for and listen for in student work? There are three types of thinking to look for: right now thinking, over time thinking, refining thinking.

Consider these five questions, Einstein’s khaki suits, or Job’s black turtleneck. Their intent is to simplify decisions and reserve energy for where it matters most: interactions with students. These questions rely on teachers thin-slicing interactions with students and then trusting their intuition and training to make the best decisions.

What do I teach readers tomorrow? Fiction and *What do I teach readers tomorrow? Nonfiction* is geared towards grades 3-8 and available through Corwin.

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Self-Care: Something educators forget

by Sharrisse Holloman, Electronic Communications Manager

Teaching has become one of the most stressful jobs in the world. Whether you are working in a high poverty or affluent area, toxic stress has consumed our profession. Because of the high levels of stress, we must be mindful of self-care.

I can admit that I am guilty of trying to pour from an empty cup, which makes for a very difficult time in my classroom. How often do you feel empty and go to work trying to give something you don't have? If your answer is more than once a week, then it's time to evaluate if you are taking proper care of yourself. Remember, everyone's self-care may look a little different, as there is no "one way" to take care of yourself. I've found a few methods that work best for me and could easily be modified to work for almost any educator.



1. Sit down to eat your lunch, and JUST EAT. No planning or work allowed.

It may not happen every day, but try your best to make it happen at least twice a week. Yes, we have a lot to do, but we deserve a break!

2. Reach out to others and chat.

Talk with your coworkers, family members, friends, or a therapist to release, vent, or spill your guts and make sure they hold you accountable to self-care. Just knowing that someone cares enough to listen goes a long way.

3. Get moving.

Even if you are not a person who exercises regularly, just 10 minutes of movement can help alleviate stress.

4. Step outside.

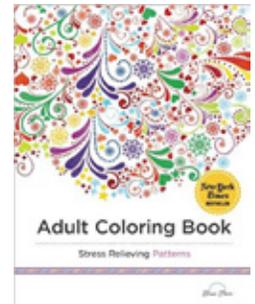
Teachers are not given the luxury of spending time outside because we have young minds to mold, and that only happens in a dark classroom. Vitamin D can reduce the effects of stress, so stop by the park after work and soak up some rays.

5. Pamper yourself.

Set aside some time during the hectic school year to spoil yourself. It could be reading a book that's been sitting on your nightstand for the past three years, taking a hot bath, having dinner out. Just do something for yourself. Oh, and there is nothing wrong with a spa day.

6. Find your inner Van Gogh.

I get it, this isn't for everyone, but have you seen those adult coloring books? I have been using coloring as a stress relief since college. You can draw, write, sing, or color. Honestly, just do something creative.



7. Disconnect...TURN OFF THE TECHNOLOGY.

Plan some non-tech time. Often, we look at social media and see what others are doing then compare our classrooms to theirs.

These are just a few of the things I use to destress, but you will have to try different strategies until you find what works. Remember you want things that energize you, help you unwind, and help you manage when you're having a hard time. Once you've developed your stress management "toolkit" you can encourage students to do the same. Let's take care of ourselves.

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Intentional and targeted teaching: *Are they the key to progress in student growth measures?*

by Tomasina Burkhardt, Teacher-Development Section Chair

The State of Teachers Today...

Across the state, teachers are dismayed with the teaching profession and the hyper-focus on state assessments and accountability as the main drive for how students are educated. Many feel powerless—with little voice and little choice. They do not control what they teach. They do not control the pacing of instruction. However, they do control the delivery of instruction. Although compliance issues and mandates paint a dismal picture regarding the state of education, there is plenty of hope just over the horizon.

instruction must be intentional—students' eyes stay glued to these actions— whether the actions come out through body language or verbal exchange.

Transformation to Intentional and Targeted Teaching Practices...

In *Intentional and Targeted Teaching: A Framework for Teacher and Growth and Leadership*, Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, and Stefanie Hite, lay out five components practiced when providing intentional and targeted teaching.



Reimagining Teaching...

In order to make urgent changes that have a strong impact on learning, teachers must regain their power and learn to focus attention on their circle of control. Impactful learning begins with teachers' intentionality and targeting specific goals when delivering learning to the students.

Intentional and Targeted Teaching...

Intentional and targeted teaching is not a new education buzz phrase. By definition, intentional is something “done by intention [a determination to act in a certain way] or design,” and targeted is “a goal to be achieved” (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). In reality, all teachers owe it to the students to provide them with intentional and targeted learning experiences. Oftentimes, clear goals, objectives, or learning targets have been set; however, there remains the inconsistency in planning and envisioning the intentional pathways to achieve that goal. Actions and delivery of

1. Planning with Purpose

Most often, experienced teachers fail to spend the quantity of time planning for the delivery of instruction as they did during their novice years. The likelihood of this occurrence is due to a growing confidence in content knowledge and the experience of delivering the lesson numerous times. Unfortunately, this confidence leads to a false sense of security in the effectiveness of instructional practices. Each school year, each class period, there are a new set of students with different learning needs and different learning gaps. In order to plan with intentionality, teachers must consistently revisit the practice of:

- analyzing the standards for grade level content,
- identifying learning targets,
- identifying measures of success; and
- sequentially planning how to deliver the learning.

2. Cultivating a Learning Climate

At the core of cultivating a learning climate is a positive classroom climate that requires continuous tending to in both the physical environment and the student-teacher relationship. The ultimate goal of cultivating a learning climate is for the students to feel their learning will occur in a safe space. Cultivation begins by:

- creating a welcoming classroom that allows students to experience the emotional and physical support needed for learning to occur;
- allowing for opportunities for growth in learning. The learning climate should consistently allow for students to build upon previously learned skills—providing levels of growth opportunities based on the students' needs; and
- creating efficiency in order for learners to continue to move forward in learning without disruption. Efficient classroom management practices allow for learning momentum to continue.

3. Instructing with Intention

The instructional processes teachers use to facilitate learning directly influence the experiences students have as they learn. To increase the positive learning experiences,

- focus the instruction so that clear and relevant learning intentions are established,
- provide guided instruction through the use of scaffold supports, and
- allow collaborative learning opportunities to take place using interactive learning routines and task complexity, along with language supports that provide benefits to different learners' needs.

4. Assessing with a System

With the use of formative assessments, teachers are able to better support learners by taking inventory of student

understanding, and then take the necessary actions to close learning gaps. When teaching is intentional and targeted, teachers assess to

- support learners by establishing comprehensible expectations through clear, expected learning outcomes, as well as methods for communicating those outcomes to students in a way understandable to them;
- monitor learning through ongoing checks for understanding. This allows for teachers to quickly correct errors in learning. And lastly,
- inform learning by providing various types of useful feedback. Using feedback and student responses provide opportunities for true needs-based instruction to occur.

5. Impacting Student Learning

Focusing on the short- and long-term outcomes from instruction quickly reveals whether students have learned anything. Analyzing different pieces of evidence drives instruction forward. Through examination,

- short-term evidence of learning provides evidence of progress towards periodic goals that are in place to guide learning, and
- long-term evidence of learning provides evidence of attainment of transfer goals.

Although teachers may feel they do not have the “teaching freedom” desired, the circle of control teachers do have holds the key to significant changes in both their perspective about educational regulations and student learning outcomes. True strides in learning and making significant gains in student progress towards learning goals is all within a teacher's control. By restructuring pedagogical practices through the integration of the five components of intentional and targeted teaching, transformation in student learning will occur.

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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Review the submission guidelines at <http://www.tctela.org/english-in-texas>

English in Texas, Vol. 48.1 (SPRING/SUMMER 2018)

Theme: Fueling Our Fires to Thrive as Teachers

Manuscript Deadline: April 1, 2018

Column Deadline: May 1, 2018

Call for Submissions: The 2018 conference theme is “Fueling Our Fires to Thrive as Teachers: An Energy Exploration.” Teaching is hard work, and every one of us knows that. We spend time trying to find just the right lesson for a standard we want to teach that will engage our students. We spend time trying to figure out which of those books in our classroom library will be the perfect fit for the one student who hasn’t engaged in reading yet. We spend time reading our students’ writing and giving them constructive feedback. And sometimes, there just doesn’t seem to be enough time to get it all done! Not only are we fighting to find the time to get it all done, we are also fighting to make sure that our voices are heard—in our schools, our districts, at the state level, and at the national level as well.

Don Graves, in his book *The Energy to Teach*, talks about the emotional roller coaster that teachers experience every day. He writes, “At times you will be second-guessed by parents, administrators, and pundits who have never taught. Laws will be passed that try to govern the teaching transactions you make with children” (p. 2). This emotional roller coaster he talks about drains our energy and makes it harder to be effective in our roles.

How do we combat the draining effect that all of this has upon our professional and personal lives? Graves would tell us that first we have to account for our time and energy and decide which activities gives us energy, which activities take energy away, and which activities are neutral. He would next instruct us to look at those things that take energy away and come up with a plan to make them into energy gains. Can we do this? Certainly we can! However, there are some strategies that might make this a little easier.

Networking and making connections across our schools, districts, and states is one way to make it easier. Broad connections help, but finding that one colleague, according to Graves, is also a benefit and a way to find more energy in your teaching. Meenoo Rami, in her book *Thrive*, provides many other ideas for helping to stay energized in your teaching, from finding connections, to listening to yourself, and even to keeping your work challenging! In her book *Conversations*, Regie Routman reminds us that in order to be professionals, we have to challenge ourselves not only in our professional lives, but in our personal lives. She writes that, “Without interests and time spent in activities and endeavors we love, our focus becomes pretty narrow.” We have to be more than one-dimensional for our students. If we aren’t interesting people, they aren’t going to be interested in our classrooms!

So we invite you to explore the ways in which you find the energy to be fully present in your teaching. What are your interests that enrich your teaching? What activities give you energy? How do you take activities that might be energy drains and turn them into energy gains? How do you find connections with colleagues, in your school and beyond the school walls? How do these connections impact your teaching?

We encourage you to think about these questions, and we invite interested individuals to submit manuscripts, conceptual, pedagogical, research-based, and theoretical, as related to this topic of “Fueling Our Fires to Thrive as Teachers.” Please refer to the *English in Texas* website for manuscript submission guidelines. Do not hesitate to contact the editorial team at EnglishinTexas@uh.edu should you have any questions.

Furthermore, we invite interested individuals to submit ideas for our Spring/Summer columns, “Putting It All Together” and “The Tech-Savvy Teacher” as related to the theme of “Fueling Our Fires to Thrive as Teachers.” The below descriptions detail each column as well as provide information for contacting the editorial team regarding your column idea. Please query the editorial team **BEFORE** submitting your full column.

The columns to be published in the Spring/Summer Issue:

Putting It All Together: This column focuses on opportunities teachers provide to integrate reading, writing, listening, and speaking. What are some successes you’ve had in integrating reading, writing, listening, and speaking? What resources have you consulted? How do your students respond to integrated lessons as opposed to isolated lessons? To submit a column for publication consideration, please contact the editorial team at EnglishinTexas@uh.edu.

The Tech-Savvy Teacher: This column focuses on ways to incorporate technology into your daily teaching. What are some technology tools you’ve found useful? How do these tools inform your instruction? How do students respond to these tools? What is required to use these tools? To submit a column for publication consideration, please contact the editorial team at EnglishinTexas@uh.edu.