

TEXAS VOICES



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

President's corner: New testing standards are on the horizon

By Kelly E. Tumy, TCTELA President

Spring is a great season—it brings renewal, brings new life, launches new beginnings. That's what happens in the world outside of our classrooms; in our classrooms in the spring we don't necessarily see renewal—we see testing, and lots of it. But let this reminder serve as a path to renewal. The new standards are on the horizon for grades K-8 next school year, and grades 9-12 for 2020-2021. Author's purpose and craft, response skills, multiple genres—all new strands with interconnected skills and new pathways of teaching available to teachers. Great changes for all classrooms.

Gone is the instructional model that relegates reading and writing to separate classes in any grade. Gone are the classrooms that use only whole class novel instruction with little to no choice in student reading and writing.

The new standards encourage us to embrace the melded nature of reading and writing and to find new pathways for students. Teachers will see more students self-selecting texts at each grade level; teachers will be creating more opportunities for students not only to self-select a topic to write about but also the genre in which to write.

This is a wonderful time to be a language arts teacher in Texas. When I think back to the years of essential elements (EE's) and all the specific and stringent standards that guided my early years of teaching, I am thankful for the work of each literacy group in Texas, as well as the groups and teams of teachers who endeavored, and succeeded, to craft standards we will use to reimagine ELA instruction in Texas.

But we must keep an eye on the horizon. Our legislature is in session in Austin. State representatives and senators are making decisions for education. Be informed, talk to your representatives and senators, and help make the best decisions for students in the coming years. We have a legislative liaison, Tracy Kriese, who keeps an eye on bills that we would like to support or even challenge. She works with our executive director, Amy Laine, to be sure our voices are heard, and we take time out of our day jobs, like Dr. Diane Miller did, to testify before legislative committees to represent you—our membership.

I'm honored to serve as your president for such a time as this—a time not only of new beginnings but of launching a new teacher and a reimagined learner. Go forth with the new standards, embrace the change, and let us all bloom where we are planted—new standards in hand, ready for our future.

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TCTELA Literacy Education Day 2019

By Tracy Kriese, NCTE Liaison

Each year that the Texas Legislature is in session, TCTELA monitors bills related to literacy education and works to advocate for students and educators in the field of English Language Arts and Reading. This spring, TCTELA focused its support in three areas: the need for an independent evaluation of STAAR test readability, the importance of removing high stakes measures associated with state assessment, and the continuation of the Texas Writing Pilot Program as a more authentic alternative to the STAAR writing test.

On Wednesday, March 27, TCTELA members from Houston,

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TCTELA Literacy Education Day 2019 (continued)

San Antonio, and Austin gathered at the capitol to meet with legislators and their aides to discuss TCTELA's support for several assessment-related bills. These office visits provide lawmakers with valuable perspectives from those most affected by education policy: the teachers and students in our Texas classrooms. TCTELA members unable to make the trip to Austin participated in Literacy Education Day by contacting and visiting the congressional district offices of their state representatives and senators.

TCTELA's outreach followed weeks of news coverage regarding the STAAR test. Recent articles in *Texas Monthly* and the *New York Times* had reported on research studies indicating that the readability of STAAR passages was out of alignment with the grade level being assessed, with some passages two to three years above grade level. At a March 5 hearing of the House of Representatives Committee on Public Education, legislators heard expert testimony regarding the significant consequences to students, schools, and districts if this misalignment between STAAR and enrolled grade level continued.

Among those testifying was TCTELA Past President Diane Miller, an Assistant Professor of Literacy at the University of Houston Downtown, who cautioned lawmakers that "the current misaligned assessment results give us a disconnected and inauthentic one-day snapshot of our students' growth." Within days of the hearing, bills were drafted in the House and Senate calling for an independent investigation of STAAR readability and a moratorium against any interventions or sanctions that might be imposed as a result of the 2018-19 STAAR test should that instrument be found to be out of alignment with regard to grade level readability. Dr. Miller returned to Austin on April 16 to testify on behalf of TCTELA in support of House Bill 4242, which in addition to the above provisions required that future STAAR test passages undergo independent verification of readability before being considered by STAAR teacher review committees.

In a further effort to improve assessment, TCTELA also supported HB 2824, which would extend the Texas Writing Pilot Program through 2023. Established in 2015 by HB 1164, the writing portfolio pilot was conceived as a more authentic alternative to STAAR writing. In its fall 2018 report on the program, the Texas Education Agency noted that "teachers reported more intentional and focused writing instruction because of the Texas Writing Pilot. Further, teachers generally felt that the prompts were a more authentic assessment tool than the current version of STAAR...TEA should continue to explore options for what authentic writing assessment could look like, and the impact of strong reading and writing instruction when paired with authentic writing assessments" (TEA, 2018). Tracy Kriese, NCTE Liaison for TCTELA, testified on behalf of TCTELA in support of HB2824 at the April 16 hearing.

Both HB 4242 and HB 2824 were passed out of committee with unanimous support, but only HB 4242 was passed by the full House of Representatives. The next issue of *Texas Voices* will include an update on the bill's progress in the 86th Texas Legislature, along with news about the fate of other STAAR-related legislation. Updates on legislative news related to literacy education can also be found on the Literacy Education Day page at tctela.org.

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Reference:

Texas Education Agency. (2018). *House Bill 1164 Texas Writing Pilot Program*. Retrieved from https://tea.texas.gov/Reports_and_Data/Legislative_Reports/Legislative_Reports/

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Teachers deserve the best instructional materials

By Kristen Dobson, Texas Education Agency

Top performers in any field will tell you one of the best ways to increase productivity is to improve your tools. It's true for doctors and engineers, and it's true for teachers. For Texas School Districts and schools, this makes the selection of high quality instructional materials critical to improving student achievement. Our districts find that identifying materials that are the best fit for their students, and determining the quality of those materials, is often time-intensive and difficult. This leaves many districts asking, "How can we give our classrooms better tools?" In 2017, the Texas Legislature instructed the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to evaluate the quality of instructional materials. As a result, TEA developed the Instructional Materials Quality Evaluation, or IMQE. The goal? To empower local school districts to make better-informed decisions about the tools their teachers use. One Texas educator and quality reviewer commented, "Time is every educator's arch enemy. There simply isn't enough of it. This is why I wanted to be part of this quality review process—to lift some of the burden from classroom teachers and supply schools with well-thought-out reviews of materials that most teachers do not have the time to complete themselves."

How does it work?

First, TEA works with an independent third-party to develop a Texas-specific rubric to evaluate instructional materials. The rubric, built on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, and reviewed by Texas educators, keeps the TEKS as the centerpiece of Texas education. In addition to identifying the percentage of TEKS covered in the materials, the English language arts and reading (ELAR) rubric also includes quality indicators such as ease of use for teachers, how well diverse learners are supported, and how well students are prepared to read, write and speak. One Texas educator serving as a quality reviewer commented, "Determining the percent of TEKS covered definitely has to be step 1, but once a district knows that the TEKS are being addressed in the materials, they need to take a much closer look to make sure the content reaches the depth and specificity of the standards."

Once the rubric is developed, the materials are reviewed by specially trained Texas educators who understand what matters

most in the classroom. These educators identify specific examples directly from the materials to demonstrate whether or not the product meets quality indicators in the rubric. Each set of materials receives a quality score to go with its TEKS coverage percentage. All products and their evaluations will be included on a public-facing, user-friendly website providing easy access to a wealth of information.

Finally, Texas school districts and schools will continue to have full autonomy to choose the instructional materials that are best for their students. The evaluations and the website are designed to provide reliable information and help simplify a complex local choice—not to dictate what that choice should be. A Texas ELAR quality reviewer and district curriculum director commented, "As a district administrator charged with making the decision about instructional materials with the assistance of my committee, this resource enhances my ability to make an informed decision based on actual evidence and data." TEA is excited about this project because we believe—and Texas teachers agree—that if we empower our teachers with the best possible instructional materials, Texas students will benefit.

What's next?

In November 2019, TEA will share the reviews of English I–IV instructional materials on the online portal, available to the public. Reviews of K–2 and 3–8 ELAR materials will be posted in winter 2019. TEA will facilitate the independent review of additional content areas and grade levels, including supplemental materials, in future cycles.

Want to get involved?

Educator feedback is a crucial step in the rubric development process. In fall 2018, TEA incorporated feedback on the [3–8 ELAR pilot rubric](#) from hundreds of Texas educators ELAR educators across the state. This spring, hundreds more provided feedback on the [English I–IV rubric](#). Texas teachers are encouraged to provide feedback on the [K–2 ELAR rubric](#) by May 14th. If you'd like to learn more about this project, please contact specialprojects@tea.texas.gov.

PD2Teach discussions: Author's purpose and craft, part 2

By Shona Rose, Region 16

In the last issue, we shared part 1 of the transcript of the PD2Teach team discussing the knowledge and skills statements from the Author's Purpose and Craft strand of our new ELAR standards. Discussions continued at Paetow High School with the PD2Teach team about the verbs and rigor implied by the learning progressions throughout the grades. The discussion confirmed our best hopes for this strand and the rich opportunities it brings to our students. See the video and other resources at www.bulbapp.com/pd2teach.

Kelly: In talking about the knowledge and skills statement, a lot of us referenced how the 2009 standards were almost a checkbox. Taught characterization, check. Taught point of view, check. The strand goes deeper than that: it gives us a lot more room to work with. So, keep that in mind.

Let's pull out a standard and let's look at that standard K to 12. We don't have time or energy to do it with every single standard, but I'd like us to look at B. And I'd like us to look at the verbs and reference how the cognitive demand is changing in these

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PD2Teach discussions: Author's purpose and craft, part 2 (continued)

standards. B begins with “discuss with adult assistance” in kinder. The verb “discussed” continues through grade 2. That verb then becomes “explain” in 3rd and 4th grades. In grades 5 through English II, the rigor shifts to “analyze” and finally to “evaluate.” We have to be cognizant of what comes before us in the grade level. We must also consider that in the first years of adoption, there are gaps to fill. I’ve said this before, and I’ll say it again. I say it wherever I go: the five most dangerous words in education are: they, should, be, able, to.

We can’t keep saying, “Kids should be able to do this.” First, we have all new standards, so we have to fill gaps that weren’t filled before. But also, my challenge all the time is: our job title is teacher. *Teach them how.* Don’t complain about the fact that there is a gap, fill the bucket. Be a bucket filler. How do we explain this to teachers? How do we get to “evaluate” by twelfth grade when we start with discuss in kinder.

I thought about a good example for this. I love everything to do with the zoo. I would spend a lot of time there if I could. If I start with “discuss,” I can ask a kindergarten student: “Has anybody here been to the zoo? Let’s discuss what you did at the zoo.” That becomes the beginning point for conversations about the zoo. I change the narrative and rigor to “explain” when I say, “Explain to me what you liked about going on that field trip to the zoo.” If I ask you to analyze the difference between the giraffe habitat and the elephant habitat, now I’m piling on more rigorous cognitive tasks. If I finally ask students to evaluate how society views a zoo, then I’m at the top of the ladder for this standard for the topic of zoos. If I just start with that conversation, we can look at what that standard B does all the way across. We are changing the cognitive discourse when it comes to looking at a text. Look at your grade level. I want you to think about—and it doesn’t just have to be the B standard—how the cognitive differences are changing with these new standards.

Barbara: As Xandria said earlier, the changes can rest in the questions we are asking of our kids. If you ask a discussion question when your kids are supposed to be analyzing or evaluating, they’re just going to discuss. The progression of these standards in the Author’s Purpose and Craft strand as well as the other strands requires all of our teachers to closely examine the intentionality of our classroom practices. We’ve discussed how authors make purposeful writing moves. Teachers must address the verbs in their grade levels *on purpose*. The days of having an epiphany in the shower, coming to school, and flying by the seat of our pants may be gone. I’m very excited that I get to look ahead,

know what my students are missing, and be able to fill that gap.

Shona: Whenever I look at “discuss,” one of the things that I would do in designing the lesson on purpose is to choose from certain lesson structures that lead themselves to discussion: a Socratic Seminar. There are other lesson structures that lead to analysis as well. Using TPCASTT for poetry is a good example. These verbs can guide us to look for instructional lesson design features that can achieve the goals implied by the verbs. Perhaps our next steps should focus on building our repertoire of lesson design features that are most suited for the verbs present in the standards.

Laura: One of the things we’ve talked a whole lot about with the knowledge and skills statement is that every single one of the standards is a reading TEKS and a writing TEKS. But they also include listening, speaking, and thinking. When we start with those discussions at the lower levels, we’re teaching students how to have conversations, how to listen, how to think, in a lower risk way before they are asked to explain and analyze. We are starting at that lower level where students are having those discussions, but we’re training them how to *have* those conversations. We might use sentence stems to get students started with those conversations so that they can communicate with each other effectively.

Xandria: When I look at student expectation B, I see it leading into that inquiry piece—the strands are tied together. A discussion can take you so many places. Just from a question, you can get a thirty-minute conversation with

students. Then you get to see into their eyes and their world. Who’s had that experience? Who can carry that skill over to another idea? Who can help someone else? The standards all tie together as the complexity of the text changes. If we build that foundation with discussion, that competency opens the door for our 12th graders, our 9th graders, our 7th graders, even our 5th graders to be able to *master* these standards. And that’s where we are trying to get them: mastery. We will never be able to do that if we don’t discuss it first. It has to be said out loud, talked about, looked at. We have to write about it. We have to read about it. We need to have multiple sources for that. The texts stimulate the discussion. If I ask the right question, what opportunities for student learning and application can I get from that?

John: You guys bring up a lot of good points, and we’re looking at this from a perspective of what can we learn, or what can we challenge a child to do. This is going to require us to do a lot more thinking as a teacher about how effectively we can *evaluate* what a kid is saying—to see what they understand and what they do



PD2Teach discussions: Author's purpose and craft, part 2 (continued)

not understand. You do have to have discussion so that they can have a clear understanding of meaning... so that we can analyze and we can go forward. And as a teacher, if you're not listening carefully for how completely a child is understanding a topic, then he can't analyze, he can't evaluate. And so a teacher has to dissect more. These strands are just as challenging for a teacher. They require the teacher to evaluate and understand what a kid is understanding and where they miss it. Then, we can pick it back up when it comes to closing gaps.

Kelly: I heard a speaker the other day say, "It's not about coverage, It's about comprehension." It can't be about, I have to do this, and this, and I have to make sure they read *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, I have to make sure they read *Five to One*, I have to make sure they read *How Soccer Changed the World*, I have to make sure...it's not about coverage. It is about comprehension. So I want you to look at this strand as a whole. How do all the moving parts in this strand change how we talk about text with students? What formative assessment opportunities do you see here that help you gage where students are, and how they're learning? Because this strand changes how we talk about text.

Laura: One of the things that I've probably noticed the most is that if I'm using a mentor text that we are reading, then I need to be able to use that same mentor text in writing. I've got to have the knowledge of what we're doing as readers to be able to inform what we are going to be doing as writers. And I also see that this really ties to those response skills, which we've already covered before. This is another example of how all these strands all intermingle together. Because it really does change the way we think about this, and it integrates so many pieces of literacy together. It takes away all of the segmentation that we have done for so long, to where we're reading this, we're writing this, and the kids aren't seeing the cohesion. They're not seeing the connection. This is going to cause teachers to really think about, how do I make that connection for students? How do I help them apply this when they read and when they write?

Norma: So in the Author's Purpose and Craft, each one of these standards, each one of these student expectations I believe lends itself for a very holistic approach to text. So where you're looking at the author's purpose and message, that's really driven by all the other things that the author has done. What choice of words has the author selected? And what structure, what organizational pattern has the author chosen to use? What are those graphic and print features? And once and for all this interconnectedness will lead us to realize what voice really is. And how all of that helps voice and mood come through. I was thinking about the cognitive demand and how that increases, and John, you talked about the implications that it has for the teacher. And so as we deconstruct these standards, and we see mainly in the intermediate grades where we go in fourth grade from explain to fifth and sixth grade to analyze, that has implications for how we are going to teach it. How we ourselves understand the text. Are we as teachers able to identify that text structure that the author has chosen? Shona, you talked about the tools then that we would use, or the lesson delivery method we would use. In addition, what supports are we providing students, especially our most fragile children. Are we using specific graphic organizers that will help them understand the specific text structure of that piece that we are going to talk about? The holistic interconnected piece is so powerful. This strand is amazing now that we're analyzing all those pieces. If

we allow children to just discuss a piece of text, if we allow them to have discussions holistically, and the teacher drops in, very consciously, and he or she is very aware of what they are listening for, then that could easily be taken as information to say: my children understand this particular type of text or this genre.

Xandrea: I love what you just said. It will force us as educators—when I think about my teachers, and asking them: how do you know what your kids know? Is it because it's an assessment, or is it because you have been listening to them? Is it because you've had that discussion with them? Is it because you've facilitated? We have to be more careful about how we know what they know. This strand specifically will take us there. It's not just about: can you answer a multiple choice or short answer? Listening and always being aware of how we're going to assess is the next step. I need to know—in the moment—do you know it, or are you struggling with that? A great way to do that is through that discussion and being that facilitator of a conversation, and then listening to see who's getting it, who's not, and where did I drop the ball, where do I need to go back and reteach? What other questions do I need to ask to teach you, or to pull it out of you?

Perla: We talk to the teachers about how do you know what they know? To do that, we need to be able to determine ourselves: what does scaffold mean? In the lower grades, when we are talking about discussion, we—as teachers—need to know what discussion really means. So what are the instructional tools I'm going to use to make that effective? What does discussion sound like and look like in my classroom? What do I expect my kids to know and do? I need to be able to model. As teachers, we need to be able to explain to our students: what does discuss mean? Let me model it for you. I see it as a stage of development. We give the kiddos tools to be *able* to discuss. I need to be able to feel confident enough to be able to move in to discussion myself so I can move students into a more independent level so they can explain effectively on their own. From there, if students are able to explain it, and then they can analyze. The verbs show us the stages and reveal: what is the end in mind? Where do I need to take them? I need to model the rigor of the verb. I need to know the meaning of how the verb plays out in instruction. I need to transfer that meaning for my students so they will be able to do it. Then our work doesn't become a checklist. Then I take opportunities across content areas and standards.

Fiorella: I agree with every part that you all have been discussing. I feel like this is more of a mind shift. We truly have to change the way that we have been taught to teach, and how to teach. Laura mentioned earlier that we need to slow down. I believe that instead of rushing through this one great story saying, "Oh the kids are bored. I'm going to stop reading this text after one week and stop teaching characterization." There is so much more that the author did in this story and in this book for the child to learn from. I feel that if we can just use that and grow from that as teachers and educators. Take out the checkbox like you mentioned earlier, and truly dive in. I feel like a book isn't just words. There can also be true meaning behind it. I look at it as, teachers are more of life changers *using* a book. The child isn't just looking at the words; the child must connect with the book. If they become one with the book, then they are able to express themselves through this standard of author's purpose and craft. They are able to show their voice. When they find the voice within the author, then they are able to find their own voice. Listening

PD2Teach discussions: Author's purpose and craft, part 2 (continued)

to all of you—the teaching aspect—we're not just teachers of TEKS and content...this is where I got to the point of...we are *life changers*. We're teachers of how to be able to express yourself through text, through books, and I feel like we can build so many relationships with this. I feel like these can change the mind process that has to shift. Our approach to literacy has to become more meaningful. And with that we can truly change and see a huge difference in the generations to come.

Kelly: Jonathan, think about what you said earlier and what Fiorela just said: that third grader becomes that sophomore who then has the tools. Who has more to say, and a better way to say it?

Johnathan: That's exactly what we are gearing towards. Norma just said something that really struck me. She said we're going to have to do a lot of modeling. And I may become a little preachy right now, but...we teachers are going to have to become readers and writers ourselves. We can not wait until we hit that classroom and decide we are going to write with our kids. We can not wait for that classroom to decide, "Oh, the kids are going to read this," and we aren't participating as readers with them. I know life gets crazy, but we have to be readers and writers or else we're not going to be able to model for them effectively. Are we just going to sit around and talk about a book for a while? That's not going to do

anything for them. We have to be making those solid connections with them.

Laura: It also takes me back to the introduction statements to where it talks about authentic texts. Being in several classrooms, I know we tend to get into the STAAR mode of practicing passages. But think about how that authentic text enriches student learning! We start that with students who are picking really great books for themselves. I think we kind of get into a rut a lot of times as teachers, we have always used this text or say, "This is the text I've always used to teach context clues." We've got to broaden our view and our inquiry into looking in different authors, different texts, and different genres. It's very easy for us to get into a rut using the same tired texts. If we're able to expose kids to texts that we find new and fresh, when students do get to those specific test type genres, they will be able to access those because they have such authentic texts presented to them as well.

Stay tuned for Part 3 of Author's Purpose and Craft on www.bulbapp.com/pd2teach and check out the new posts for Collaboration and Multimodal and Digital Texts.

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TCTELA announces 2019 Rising Leaders

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

In May, TCTELA reviewed submitted applications and selected the 2019 cohort of Rising Leaders. These individuals will work closely with TCTELA leadership over the next two years learning about TCTELA and various leadership opportunities within the organization. The four individuals selected as 2019 TCTELA Rising Leaders are:

Eva Goins serves as a classroom teacher at Leo Adams Middle School in Haslet, Texas outside San Antonio.

Adrienne Parlow serves as a classroom teacher from Tascosa High School in Amarillo, Texas.

Isabel Tuliao serves as an elementary literacy program coordinator in Klein ISD in Klein, Texas near Houston.

Lawanda Williams serves as an instructional coach at Lobit Middle School in Dickinson, Texas.

Throughout the program, Rising Leaders will have opportunities to participate in group and individual video conferences designed to support leadership development that is relevant to each individual's needs, interests, and aspirations. Individuals selected as Rising Leaders will amplify TCTELA's voice and assist in developing future TCTELA leadership.

Applications for the 2020 cohort of Rising Leaders will open in August 2019.

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Eva Goins



Adrienne Parlow



Isabel Tuliao



Lawanda Williams

Education needs teachers leading from the classroom; TCTELA can assist

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

Teacher leader is a redundant term. While all leaders are not teachers, all teachers are some form of leader. Learning environments are predicated on the teacher as the lead facilitator of learning. Despite the redundancy of the term, “teacher leader” generally describes teachers willing to take on responsibilities outside of their assigned teaching duties. In *Start. Right. Now.*

(2017), Whitaker, Zoul, and Casas describe teacher leaders as “experts at teaching their students and experts at leading their students, as well as others, in their school communities”.

The very essence of our profession is leadership, yet many teachers do not see themselves as leaders beyond the classroom setting. There is often an erroneous assumption that a move to administration is necessary to pursue leadership. It is critical to our profession that strong teachers remain in the classroom. To do this, opportunities to grow and contribute to the profession *outside of administration* must be identified and promoted.

TCTELA is committed to assisting teachers’ development as leaders, especially from the classroom. Below are a few ways to get involved and grow as a literacy leader.

Join a section

The organization offers sections where educators can get involved to support literacy education across multiple grade spans. Members may participate in one or more sections. The sections meet virtually with members participating from across the state to discuss grade-level successes, address concerns for the grade band, and develop solutions as appropriate.

- Elementary-Level Section, chaired by Dr. Amelia Hewitt, University of Houston-Downtown
- Middle-Level Section, chaired by Liz Henson, Santa Fe ISD
- High School-Level Section, chaired by Charles Moore, Clear Creek ISD
- Teacher Development Section, chaired by Tomasina Burkhardt, Region 10

Complete the form at bit.ly/TCTELASections to express interest in joining a section.

Apply to become a Rising Leader

The TCTELA Rising Leaders program is designed to prepare

diverse educators for leadership roles in TCTELA and its constituent groups. By the conclusion of their participation in this two-year program, rising leaders will develop an understanding of TCTELA’s mission and goals, explore TCTELA leadership pathways through formal and informal roles, network with a variety of diverse educators from across Texas, and encourage others to get involved in TCTELA.

Throughout the program, Rising Leaders will have opportunities to participate in group and individual video conferences designed to support leadership development in the field that is relevant to each individual’s needs, interests, and aspirations. Individuals selected as Rising Leaders will amplify TCTELA’s voice and assist in developing future TCTELA leadership. All rising leaders attend the TCTELA Annual Conference. Applications for the 2020 class of Rising Leaders will open August 1, 2019. The application can be accessed at bit.ly/TCTELARLApp.

At the conclusion of the two-year program, Rising Leaders will be invited to present evidence of their growth and future plans at the Rising Leader Saturday event at the annual conference and receive a certificate of completion and letter of congratulations from TCTELA. Rising Leader alumni are encouraged to remain involved with TCTELA and continue their leadership and influence through formal and informal leadership roles.

Run for office

Consider nominating yourself for one of the following TCTELA Board positions: Recording Secretary (one-year term), Vice President-Elect for Membership and Affiliates (two-year position including Vice President for Membership and Affiliates), or President-Elect (three-year position including president and past president). While no experience is required to run for any office, the position of Recording Secretary generally provides the best opportunity to ease into board responsibilities without being overwhelmed. Officer nominations are accepted February through mid-November each year. Contact any board member to discuss the role and responsibilities of any board position.

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The New ELAR TEKS and the rainbow connection

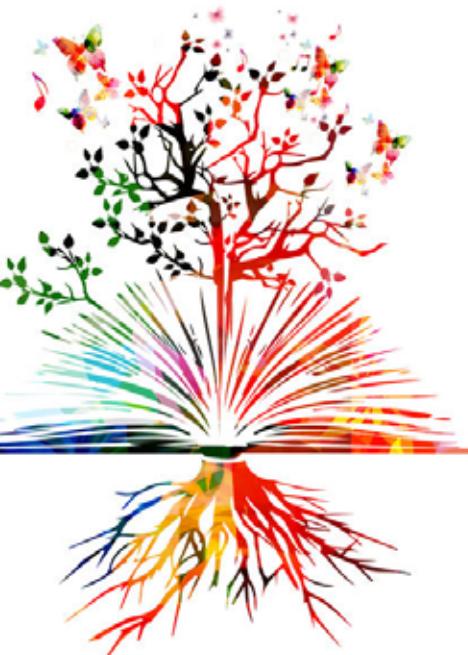
By Stephen Winton, Ed.D., President-Elect

While working on elementary curriculum, my colleagues and I decided to color-code the seven strands of the ELAR TEKS. Thinking of what colors might be best, a thought occurred.

There are seven strands.

There are seven colors of the rainbow.

Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.



Each of the seven strands of the ELAR TEKS connects to the others. It's like a rainbow, where each color connects to the others to make something beautiful.

The idea that we should connect literacy skills is not new to best-practice research. Through the gradual release of responsibilities model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983), the teacher models metacognitive skills in read-alouds (I DO) to be applied in students' shared and small-group reading (WE DO) and independent reading (YOU DO). There should be plenty of talk and writing about reading along the way (Johnston, 2004, p. 8-10, Calkins, 2006, p. 1).

We see the gradual release of responsibilities model in the TEKS. Students apply their learning of metacognitive skills (Strand 2: Comprehension Skills) through discussion and written responses (Strand 3: Response Skills) and self-sustained reading of self-selected texts (Strand 1: Foundational Language Skills).

Avoiding summer learning loss

By Roni Burren, Vice-President Elect

As an elementary student, the end of the school year was always a wonderful time of year for me. Not because summer held the promise of copious amounts of my daddy's barbecue, all day swimming, and the best sun-kissed skin in the history of ever, but because my teachers gave us a "playing school" kit for the summer. This kit was full of worksheets, activities, and games we could use over the summer to "play school" with our friends. In retrospect I'm sure that one of the reasons teachers gave each student a huge packet of papers was because they needed to clean out their classrooms. But they also knew a hidden danger of summer – summer learning loss.

Summer learning loss is defined as the loss of skills or academic ground as a result of not being in school. Also called summer

Similarly, Katie Wood Ray argues that to support composition, we read like writers (1999, p. 5-24). In the TEKS, students apply what they learn in their reading about genre (Strand 4: Multiple Genres) and craft (Strand 5: Author's Purpose and Craft) to their writing (Strand 6: Composition).

The connections between the strands create something greater than the sum of the parts, like seeing the colors of the rainbow together. And rainbows are joyful, just like many of the classrooms where I have had the privilege to experience integrated literacy instruction.

Anyway, we chose somewhat muted hues of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet to represent the strands. And when I see teachers and students exploring integrated literacy instruction with these wonderful standards, I believe it will be like a rainbow shining!

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slide, this loss is often more pronounced with students who began the school year below grade level and student populations that are less likely to be engaged in enriching summer activities. As teachers, this should be of great concern for us. Those 187 days go by so quickly and I'm sure we'd all like to avoid spending days making up for summer learning.

I'd like to offer a few suggestions on what teachers can do to slow down and possibly avoid summer learning loss.

Summer Reading: Encouraging students to read books over summer is probably the easiest way to slow down summer learning loss. Go over the books and stories that students loved most and use that information to help them build a summer reading list. Make sure your students and their families know

Continued on next page

Avoiding summer learning loss (continued)

where the local public library is, and that they know how to get a library card. A word of caution: do your level best to not attach a



quiz a test to summer reading.

Summer Writing: Have students create a summer writing journal as a part of your end of the year activities. They can date each page with the corresponding day of summer, and the class can come up with prompts. Make sure there are plenty of pages designated for free writing. Summer writing keeps them in the habit of writing and removes the pressure we've had to add because of testing. Essentially, summer writing makes writing fun.

Summer Web Quests: This option takes the most planning but can have a profound impact on students. I suggest doing this with a team of teachers. Using data as a guide, build web activities (research, games, videos) for students to complete. These can be centered around one essential question like: why is climate changing? Our students are web savvy and this can be a way to capitalize on that and have them learn in the process.

These activities only scratch the surface of possibilities for summer learning activities. I encourage teachers to start here, but also go beyond these ideas. While we want our students to de-stress and enjoy their time off, we also want to make sure they stay prepared. Moreover, we want to teach students that learning is always a fun activity.

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Encouraging an inclusive classroom community

By Tomasina Burkhardt, Assistant Director, Region 10 ESC

Creating a classroom community where all students are presumed competent and welcomed as valued members of the classroom can pose a challenging task for a number of educators because of their personal blindspots and hidden biases. Although challenging, creating an inclusive classroom community is not impossible.

To begin, teachers can create a classroom vision statement. This vision statement is separate from the campus and/or district's vision statements. For the classroom vision statement, the focus is on that of the classroom community. Important groups to consider and include during the development phase are the students and the parents.

Another consideration is that the vision statement must be something all student members recognize as a common direction of growth. This statement announces to the students and parents where the classroom community is headed and why this is the right direction. Without a vision statement, the inclusiveness of the classroom community may lack a clear direction as well as true follow-through efforts of the individual members. A common understanding of the classroom destination allows all community members to align their efforts to ensure that an inclusive classroom for learning is taking place. Those efforts must include continuous revisits of the vision statement. The vision statement must be kept alive throughout the school year in order for true meaning and value to take effect in the classroom community. Revisits are not always an easy task, but it is one of

significance and integral to encountering potential barriers the classroom community may face.

In order to eliminate potential barriers, have the classroom community brainstorm and discuss the following:

- What are your fears about having an inclusive classroom community?
- What is the need for an inclusive classroom vision statement?
- How can I support an inclusive classroom community?
- What will the vision statement expect of me?
- Will I be able to continue doing what I have always done? Why or why not?
- Do I believe in my classroom community's ability to achieve the vision?

With the ever-evolving landscape of our classroom communities, it is important to begin the development process of a classroom vision statement that focuses on inclusiveness. Our goal, as educators, is not only to provide academic guidance and support to our students, but also to provide social and emotional guidance and support to our students. A vision statement is the first step in providing the necessary support to ensure our students are successful.

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Scaffold and release: How to implement new strategies when coaching, part 1

By Josh Cooper, Recording Secretary

My first year of teaching, I knew nothing. I didn't know how to run a classroom. I didn't know how to teach students to be independent writers. I didn't know how to teach them anything beyond the way my English/Language Arts experience was in High School.

That lack of knowledge was often stressful, maybe slightly terrifying, but also a great motivator. It pushed me to get out there and learn how to do all of this and to do it well. I attended countless trainings, read an endless amount of professional development books, and annoyed as many colleagues as I could to try and improve my situation. But learning all these great new theories and ideas could only take me so far. I was quickly gaining knowledge, but the application of that knowledge was often messy and dysfunctional.

Now in my role as an instructional coach, I want to make the experience the best possible for any teacher that I work with and, hopefully, far more efficient than mine was.

There are multiple ways to support teachers in making what they learn from professional development into a reality in their classroom. The best way I have found to net long-lasting change is the same principle that we use in classrooms with students: scaffold and release. The great thing about partnering with teachers in this way is that scaffolding can be differentiated depending on the strategy or the teacher.

Checklists

Sometimes a teacher may want to utilize a strategy they are already aware of or possibly even use, but they want to improve the way it is used. Or maybe the strategy is something that is quick and easily implemented. Say, for instance, the ubiquitous "Think-Pair-Share." This is a strategy that often improves student engagement and performance without taking too long to implement. However, results may vary depending on a variety of factors.

A tool that coaches can use to implement a strategy like "Think-Pair-Share" is a checklist. In his book *The Impact Cycle*, Jim Knight describes how coaches can use checklists to scaffold the implementation of a strategy by helping a coach explain the most important characteristics of the strategy. Knight (2018) shares that "explaining teaching strategies is deceptively complex," and that sometimes coaches run into the problem of explaining the strategy in a way that is too complex and disorganized (p. 107).

What a checklist does is concisely lay out what teachers need to consider and do when implementing the strategy. It's a "simple way to communicate the essential elements of teaching strategies," and forces a coach to go line by line through the checklist in a way that organizes the information being given to the teacher (Knight, 2018, p. 108). It's also a tool that teachers can keep with them to help them "process and remember [strategies] better" in the long term.

So, a checklist for a "Think-Pair-Share" may look like this:

STUDENTS KNOW:	✓
Who their learning partner will be before they start.	
Exactly what the thinking prompt is to which they are responding.	
How much time they will have to write their response.	
That they are to use all the time they are given to think and write about their response.	
The outcome they need to produce for the class (e.g., a written product, a comment to share with the class, thumbs up) at the end of the conversation.	
How they should communicate with each other (in particular, how they should listen and talk).	

The Process

Checklists are useful in a variety of ways for instructional coaches to scaffold and release the implementation of new strategies. The first way a coach can scaffold the use of the strategy is to meet with the teacher to talk about the characteristics of the strategy and what it looks like in actual practice when it is successful. The checklist helps build this understanding for teachers.

The coach and teacher can then review, adjust, or build lessons that incorporate the strategy with the characteristics in mind. The coach can recommend when and where to use the strategy and help the teacher think through what this looks like in the context of a lesson.

The next step would be to then implement the strategy, and depending on the teacher, this can happen in a variety of ways.

Modeling

One way we can scaffold is to actually model the strategy if this is something new to the teacher. This allows them to see the strategy live before they give it a try. What I like to do when I am asked to model is to give the teacher I am partnering with this checklist and ask them to observe me and check when they notice this characteristic present.

Eventually, I turn this practice over to them as the day continues and we try it a few more times. Each time we try it, we briefly reflect with the use of the checklist in hand to pinpoint areas of strength and think about tweaks we may make to the

Continued on next page

Scaffold and release: How to implement new strategies when coaching—Part 1 (continued)

strategy to help the teacher be successful in their classroom.

Verbal rehearsals

Sometimes, teachers are familiar enough with the strategy that they don't need a coach to model, but to just be there for feedback. The checklist is still useful in this situation to scaffold and release the teacher. Before actually implementing the strategy, the coach may ask the teacher to walk them through the process of using the strategy and verbally tell them what each characteristic looks like. This oral practice allows teachers a verbal rehearsal before they go live with the strategy. Then the coach can stay in the classroom with the teacher while they implement and offer feedback based on the characteristics for the checklist, thus releasing them to use the strategy on their own and adjust accordingly with the help

from a coach.

There are few things more frustrating to a teacher than going to a great professional development and learning about new ways of teaching only to get back onto campus and find out the struggle is real. Coaches can use checklists to help teachers find success by scaffolding the learning and implementation of a new strategy and then releasing the teacher to perfect it based on their own timeline, so that classroom life isn't quite so messy.

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Notes to a new teacher: Be cliché

By Eve Zehavi, Co-editor *English in Texas*

As I started to think about writing notes to a new teacher, all I could think of were clichés: put your best foot forward, only time will tell, a diamond in the rough. How is it possible that after 20+ years of teaching, my thoughts could be so unoriginal? Then I began to think about what a cliché really is. The Oxford Living Dictionary defines it as “a phrase or opinion that is overused and betrays a lack of original thought.” Though clichés may be hackneyed and overused in writing, it is because they reflect a common sentiment and familiar circumstances with which we all can identify. And if I am going to impart advice to new, exhausted, and overworked teachers, I want it to be something easy to learn and remember. So here are my *two cents!*

Things are not always as they seem. You may—no, you will—have a recalcitrant student, one who doesn't seem to want to learn, one who seems set on defying you or distracting others. It is important to remember, even when it is hard, that you don't always know what is going on in the life of a child. Take time to get to know your students personally, develop relationships, give them the benefit of the doubt even when it's tough. You may be the only person in a student's life who gives them structure, who demands excellence, or who shows affection and caring.

There's more than one way to skin a cat. We all learn in our teaching programs that children learn differently, but you never really know what that means until you are actually teaching. Sometimes we have the tools to teach a variety of strategies that will get students to the same place. Some kids get exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, denouement; some kids respond to someone, wanted, but, so, then. Either way they come to understand plot structure, but often teaching requires more than just strategies. Be open to approaches like supporting family literacy or in class peer tutoring. Sometimes, being a great facilitator is the best way to be a great teacher.

The course of true love never runs smoothly. Teaching is a calling and a labor of love even though it may be fraught with challenges. There is a never ending fight to support and teach our students and do what is best for them, in addition to (and sometimes in spite of) mandates, standards, and prescriptive



curricula that may not fit our kids; but in the end, the fight is worth it and the struggle makes it all the more poignant. One day you will have the blessing of having a former student say, “Thank you,” or “You were the best teacher I ever had,” or maybe even, “I became a teacher because of you.” And you won't remember the troubles, you will only feel the love.

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Summer recharge

By Liz Henson, Middle School Section Chair

Another school year is coming to a close, and you know what that means for teachers...well, nothing because for many teachers it usually means a summer of professional development, lesson planning for next year or a new subject, or reorganizing classrooms and class libraries, and before you know it you're sitting in back-to-school meetings wondering where the summer went. But it's also time for teachers to take a cue from their students and take a break from school and differentiated instruction, text complexity, collaborative learning, rigor, and workshop mini-lessons, if even for a short while.

Take an actual break after the last day of school

As state legislators, districts, and parents continue to ask more and more from teachers, teachers need their own brain break to fully recharge their teaching batteries and teaching spirits, teachers need to spend some time not thinking about school or doing anything school related.

Read books that feed your spirit

Happy Teachers Change the World: A Guide to Mindfulness in Education by Thich Nhat Hanh. This book stresses that educators need to first establish their own mindfulness practices. It includes easy techniques and stories of the ways teachers have brought mindfulness into their personal lives and into their classrooms.

Present Over Perfect by Shauna Niequist, a collection of essays, focuses leaving behind busyness and frantic living and rediscovering the person you were made to be.

Girl Wash Your Face by Rachel Hollis is an entertaining look at several misconceptions that can hold us back

from living joyfully and productively

Tap into your inner artist

So, you may not actually be able to escape to an island paradise, but you can create an island getaway on paper with several adult coloring books, like *Island Dreams* by Julia Rivers, and digital paint-by-number coloring apps like Happy Color—Color by Number available on iTunes and GooglePlay

Take a tech break

For God's sake, step away from Pinterest for a few weeks. We all love spending time on Pinterest looking at summer meal ideas, house décor, and summer fashion, but we all know where teachers invariably end up—lesson ideas, classroom decorating ideas, and classroom management plans.

The book was better

Read a book that was a movie—before it's turned into a movie or after it was a movie. Revisit an old favorite or one that's in the works. Who knew *Crazy Rich Asians* by Kevin Kwan was a series?

Binge watch

Make Netflix, Hulu, YouTube, Amazon Prime or your DVR your new best friend. The Crown, Victoria, Game of Thrones, Downton Abbey, Jack Ryan, The Ozarks, Friends, The Office—pour your favorite beverage, make your favorite snack and settle in.

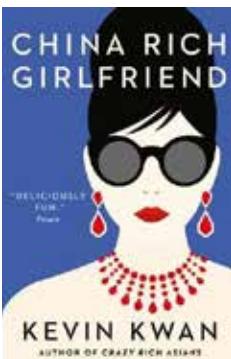
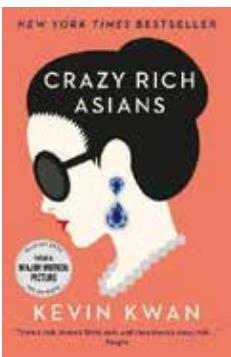
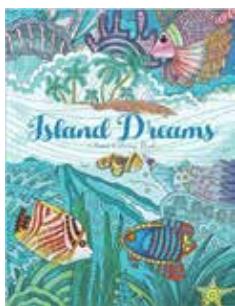
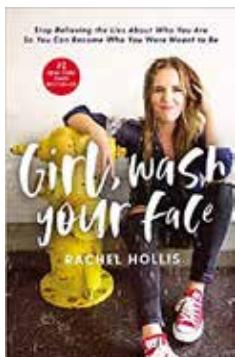
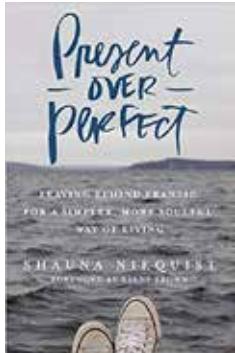
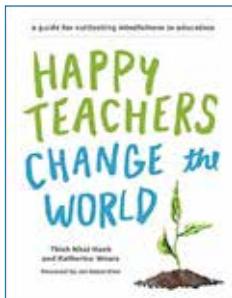
Nurture your friendships

Meet your friends for lunch, not a 20-minute school cafeteria lunch, but an actual sit down and have a waiter serve your food lunch. Take a Goat Yoga class together. Go to a baseball game, or walk the mall together. You can't go wrong with Mani/Pedi day.

End summer on your terms and recharge the tired teacher battery.



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The *Naturals* series by Jennifer Lynn Barnes

By Kelly E. Tumy, President

Jennifer Lynn Barnes is a treat—in person and in her writing. This college professor of both creative writing and psychology has managed to craft four very different yet interconnected narratives in her series featuring the *Naturals*—five young adults who possess uncanny crime-solving abilities. But are the skills more detrimental than helpful? Are people defined by nature vs. nurture, or are some able to change how they come up in the world? These are just a few of the psychological struggles readers do battle with in this engaging series.

All five of the *Naturals* live in a house maintained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and their house parent is a retired Marine named Judd. Each has come to the program through a different avenue: some were forced, others recruited, and one remained a mystery until the last book in the series.

Each book takes readers through a different crime focusing on one character's back-story. Barnes crafts not only an incredibly

believable world for these five orphan-like teens, but a relatable one. Authors live both in the world they create and in the minds and actions of their characters. They create characters readers have to be willing to spend time with, and each character in *The Naturals* series fits that description. Not only does Barnes reveal just enough to keep readers moving from book to book in the series, she leaves holes she will magically fill with the next book, unbeknownst to even the most skilled reader.

While each book can be read independent of each other, it is the joy of reading a series that keeps readers moving through the books in order and wanting more. Fans of Robert Ludlum, James Patterson, and Steve Berry will enjoy this series and the intriguing nature of both the criminal minds and those who pursue them.

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From the blogosphere...

Fill your tank with loads of instructional ideas at:

<http://twowritingteachers.org>

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<https://blog.heinemann.com>

<https://readingbyexample.com>

...to the website

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



Summer reads for high school

By Charles Moore, High School Section Chair

On the Come Up by Angie Thomas

An amazing follow up to *The Hate U Give*, Thomas weaves heart-breaking story-telling, compelling characters, and an internal and external tug-of-war to create one of the greatest young adult novels ever. Thomas gives the reader a complex and authentic voice in her main character, Bri, a young woman who fights to overcome the obstacles that keep her from finding success and herself.

Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens

This heartbreaking ode to our natural world, written by an author whose travels have taken her across the globe, examines an untamed wilderness in our own backyard, marshy North Carolina. A compelling mystery, intertwined with a love story, engages young adults as deeply as it does their teachers. While the reader explores the book's mystery, he or she learns about how Kya, a tragically heroic protagonist, finds her way in the world.

The Poet X by Elizabeth Acevedo

Performing slam poetry is Xiomara's only escape from her mother's extreme religious beliefs and the troubles of her neighborhood. She has always used her fists to express herself, but now, with a notebook and microphone, she has found a new way to share her voice. Elizabeth Acevedo moves her readers through rhythm and truth in this beautiful story of triumph and finding oneself.

Home Fire by Kamila Shamsie

Shamsie's *Home Fire*, long-listed for the Man Booker Prize in 2017, explores what it means to be a British Muslim. Shamsie tells the complex (and perhaps even familiar, if you read/saw *Antigone*) tale of Isma, her sister Aneeka, her brother Parvaiz, and the jihadist father she never knew. Eventually, Aneeka falls in love with Eamonn, the son of the British Home Secretary. Shamsie's tale touches on the meaning of loyalty and what it means to sacrifice.

Americanah by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Adichie weaves a tale of love and identity through the characters of Ifemelu and Obinze, who leave an oppressive Nigerian government in search of a better life. While Ifemelu makes it to America, Obinze encounters post 9/11 barriers and can only make it as far as England. Both find their way back to Nigeria fifteen years later, where they reunite with each other. Not to spoil the ending...this novel is about so much more than romance.

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Section Chairs

Looking for a way to get involved in TCTELA? Sections gather in person and virtually to discuss grade-level successes and concerns, generate summer reading lists, focus on literacy needs, and support teachers. If you are interested in joining a section, contact the appropriate section chair.

Elementary School Section

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Middle School Section

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High School Section

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Continued on next page

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

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

English in Texas, Vol. 49.2 (Fall/Winter 2019)

Theme: Teachers as Readers and Writers

Manuscript Deadline: September 1, 2019

Column Deadline: September 1, 2019

Call for Submissions:

The Fall/Winter issue of English in Texas is focused on teachers as readers and writers. Language diversity in the classroom is growing at a rapid pace. Standards for English Language Arts teachers from professional organizations such as the National Council for Teachers of English, the International Literacy Association, and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards all include standards calling for English teachers to possess an enthusiasm for both reading and writing.

As English language arts teachers, our goal is to not only teach the standards, but to promote lifelong reading and writing. In order to accomplish that, we must be positive models of reading and writing for our students. As Katherine Paterson wrote in her book *Gates of Excellence: On Reading and Writing Books for Children* (1981), “We cannot give them what we do not have. We cannot share what we do not care for deeply for ourselves. If we prescribe books as medicine, our children have a perfect right to refuse the nasty-tasting spoon.”

How do you see yourself as a reader? As a writer? How does your reading impact your instruction? How does your writing impact your instruction? How do you share your literacy with your students? What impact does this sharing have on them? How do you work to, as NCTE says, build your stack of to-read books? In what kinds of writing do you engage?

We encourage you to think about yourself as a reader and writer, and we invite interested individuals to submit manuscripts, conceptual, pedagogical, research-based, and theoretical related to teachers as readers and writers. 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 Fall/Winter columns, “Putting it all Together” and “The Tech-Savvy Teacher” as related to the theme of teachers as readers and writers. The below descriptions detail each column as well as provide information for contacting the column editor regarding your column idea. Please query the column editor BEFORE submitting your full column.

The columns to be published in the Fall/Winter Issues:

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.