

TEXAS VOICES

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

President's corner: Spend less time on checklists

By Kelly E. Tumy, TCTELA President

As I reflect on this last year as president of this incredible organization, I see so many fronts on which I am eternally proud, and I see so many people for whom I am forever grateful. Service in each elected position on the board has given me not only perspective but also depth in the knowledge of how each position works within the whole board. I highly recommend running for office and getting involved to see this organization grow and morph into what glorious entity it is supposed to become—you make this a great organization—our membership.

First, I am so pleased we have been able to put together a first-rate conference for the whole membership. Not only will you have luminaries such as Carol Jago and Jim Burke to lead you to new horizons in instruction, you will also have new voices like Kristin Ziemke and Colin Seale to show you how our discipline is ever-changing.

Second, I am proud of what PD2Teach has become. This digital look at the new standards has given the entire state a place to ground their conversations and a place for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to use as a platform to spur learning in the new standards. This platform will be available for a long time, and I hope you have taken the time to learn from your colleagues across the state. We all look forward to the next chapter of this tool. Stay tuned—there is much more to come!

Lastly, I am grateful to have served with the presidential team this year who has taught me when to pivot, when to look for new faces, and when to sit back and watch, learn, and listen. To Dr. Margaret Hale, Dr. Diane Miller, and Dr. Stephen Winton—thank you for making me better each and every day and for making this organization stronger through your leadership alongside me.

I hope our membership takes away from my year as president is that we are all #bettertogether. I use that hashtag in many tweets and Instagram posts, and it is a professional mantra that guides me each day. See you in Frisco as we endeavor to be better together not only for our conference in January, but also for the long run we all have before us in educating children.

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PD2Teach update

By Valerie Taylor, PD2Teach Liaison

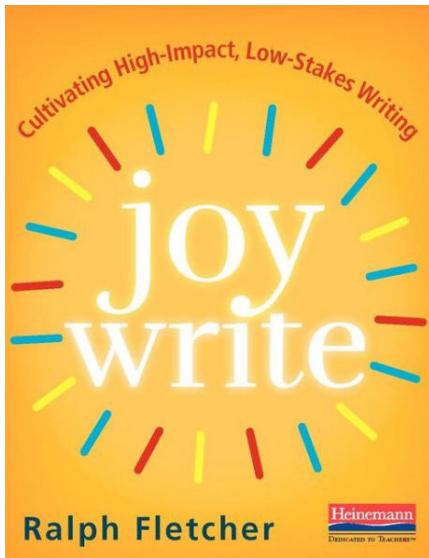


This fall, we have been filming in classrooms in Brownsville, Alvin, Houston, and Amarillo, and we will soon add Austin. We look forward to premiering these videos at the annual conference in Frisco, showcasing examples of the revised TEKS in action. Please join us on Saturday, January 25th from 4:00–5:00 to celebrate the students and teachers featured in these videos: Julia Puckett, Joel Guzman, Teddy Cumberworth, and Cindi Sierra from Brownsville Rivera Early College High School in Brownsville ISD; Barbara Wells from Manvel High School in Alvin ISD; Fiorella Corzo Brito from Corbitt Elementary in Houston ISD; Nikki Bass from Sanford-Fritch Middle School in Sanford-Fritch ISD; and Jennie George from Eanes Elementary in Eanes ISD. At that session, we will also issue the PD2Teach Challenge: share a specific lesson designing process, and encourage teachers to share with others the exciting work that they are doing with students as we implement these revised TEKS.

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Greenbelt writing: Notebooks in the wild

By Tracy Kriese, NCTE Liaison



In his book *Joy Write*, Ralph Fletcher reminds us all that the heart of writing workshop should be something he calls greenbelt writing: writing that is raw, unmanicured, and uncurated—free from the pressure of state assessments, curriculum standards, and lesson objectives (Fletcher, 2017).

This poem began in my notebook, where I am free to experiment with ideas, to play with language, to abandon drafts, or to return to them again and again. I give that same freedom to my students, allowing their notebooks to be places for what Fletcher calls low-stakes, high-yield writing, the kind of writing we all do when no one is looking over our shoulders (Fletcher, 2017). I long ago stopped requiring tables of contents, numbered pages, and titled entries in my students' notebooks—the things that made

assessment more convenient for me as a teacher, but that I myself would resent having to use in my own writer's notebook. If I need the room for creativity that a blank page offers, why would I deny that space to my students?

Here, then, is a poem for Chester, first drafted a few years ago as I sat on my back porch thinking about the death of our beloved pet. I took pleasure in revisiting the poem this month after sorting through a box of my son's old school papers that made me remember this notebook entry. Eric's literary analysis of William Cullen Bryant's "Thanatopsis" was an assignment he completed in eleventh grade, but he had first thrilled to the words of that classic poem when he was twelve years old on an afternoon when he and I sat on the couch reading it together just because I loved it and knew that he would, too.

After all, greenbelt reading is just as important as greenbelt writing.

Cicadas buzz the evening air
As twilight turns to dark.
Wind moves through the trees,
Stirring leaves and swaying branches,
Whispering an eternal lullaby
To Chester, who lies buried under a stand of oaks,
Content, perhaps, with his cat's Thanatopsis:

An orange tabby curled in his magnificent couch
A lifetime spent on these two acres of land

House cat
Barn cat
Porch cat

Our cat

Draping the evening's pleasant sounds about him as he sleeps

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Reference:

Fletcher, Ralph. (2017). *Joy write*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.



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

When identity becomes a problem: Using *Being the Change* to understand how who we are colors our world

By Josh Cooper, Recording Secretary

Over Thanksgiving break, I had the joy of spending time with my sisters-in-law and their adorable daughters who are both at the very fun age of two. My two nieces are firecrackers, bursting with energy and excitement while instilling just a dash of fear. One of their favorite activities is watching Disney's *Frozen* on repeat while also dancing around and singing along with every song. As I watched them, it reminded me of my childhood with my brother and how "Go, Go, Power Rangers" was the anthem of our household as we dashed around recreating every fight scene from our favorite Saturday morning show.

This personal connection that I made is something we as teachers wish students to do all the time while they are reading. With everything they read, we ask them to think about how it connects to their own life, how it reinforces their experience, or how it shows them new worlds that they have yet to experience. This skill that we want students to own is among the first steps to helping them make meaning of a text. Our new TEKS support this strategy, asking students to develop and deepen comprehension of texts by "mak[ing] connections to personal experiences, ideas in other texts, and society" (Texas Education Agency, 2017).

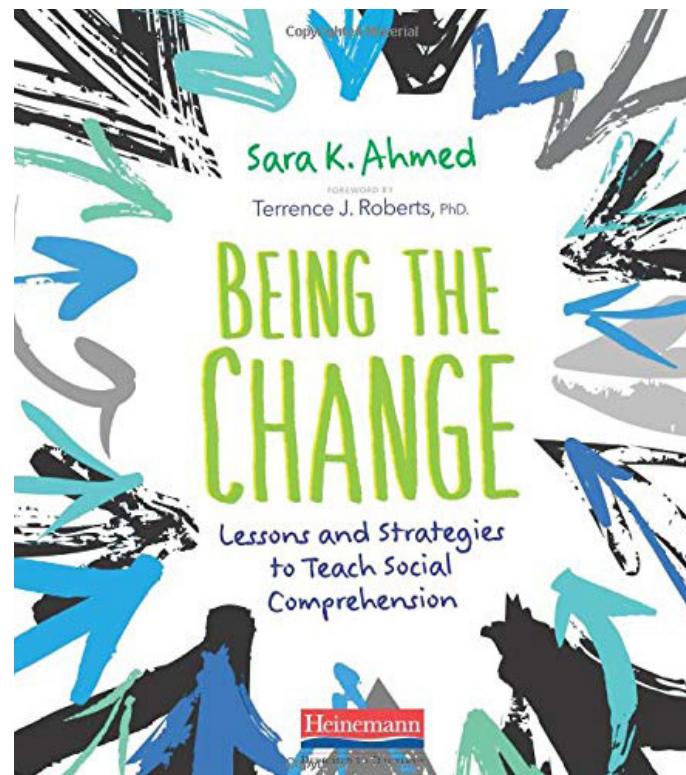
As students get older, this is a strategy that becomes innate. They own the strategy and quickly make connections to help build understanding of texts, but sometimes those connections to personal experiences do not extend very far. Rather, we have all run into the problem that when a student does not have a personal experience that connects to what is going on in the text (or they just cannot see the connection), they are quick to disengage from the text and only pay it cursory attention.

In situations such as these, a student's identity and personal experience can actually create an issue for building meaning. Students do not see the same value in the text we do because they lack the personal experience to connect, and most of the discussion or response to the text is done out of compliance rather than engagement.

This question is one that has stumped me while conferring with students about their reading. My initial reaction is that we do not have the "just right" text and to seek out a new one. Sarah K. Ahmed's new book *Being the Change* offers us another solution than simply finding a new text for a student or dragging them along with the whole class text that all kids are reading.

In her text, she offers numerous opportunities to build social comprehension and help kids both connect to texts through their own personal experiences while also entering into the treacherous waters of difficult conversations that we often seek to avoid in the classroom because of controversy. She invites us to "give ourselves permission to create learning conditions where kids can ask the questions they want to ask, muddle through how to say the things they are thinking, and have tough conversations" (2018, p. xxii).

She begins this journey by first having students reflect on their own identity and the experiences they associate with that identity. Having students build identity webs, examining their names, and looking into their family histories have students explore who they are. They are a great way to help build social capital in the classroom and foster relationships, but Ahmed goes beyond this



in later chapters.

Identity is always present when we read. Our experiences color the way we see the world and how we interpret a text. Sarah constantly has students come back to their identity and experiences to tackle tough conversations and make connections to texts. She does this by having students study the blind spots in their lives. The built in bias that they have because of their own personal experiences do not allow them to see beyond their own lives. Having students think about this before entering a text, or returning to reread an excerpt of a text, often brings about deeper understandings of text and can open doors into further inquiry for students.

That awareness about a text and why a student is having trouble making a personal connection is often as powerful as any personal experience that connects the student to the ideas or characters presented in the text. That conversation with the text and a student's own identity builds social comprehension and forces students to dig deeper to understand what is happening in the text.

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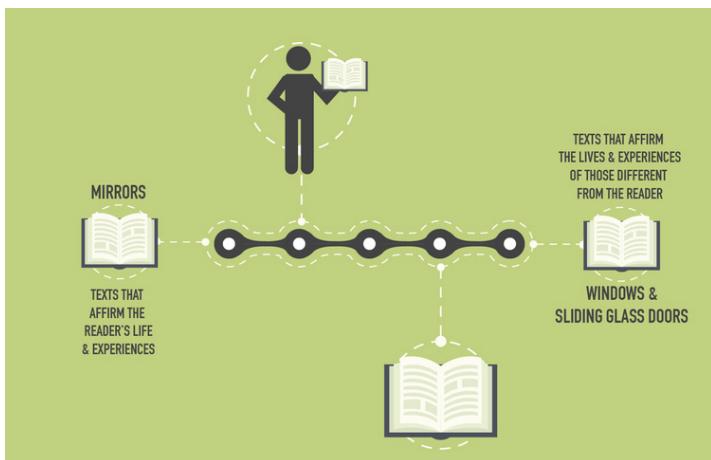
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Reexamining “diverse” books

By Caty Dearing, Teacher Development Section Chair

When I open up my Twitter feed, chances are excellent that one of the first tweets I will read will have something to do with diverse texts. Over the past few years, the term “diverse texts” has evolved into a recurring buzzword in Twitter chats, blog posts, conference sessions, etc. When I visit my local Barnes and Noble, I see an entire shelf of the young adult section dedicated to “diverse voices.” Even our new standards ask students to recognize and analyze “genre-specific characteristics, structures, and purposes within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse texts” (Texas Education Agency, 2017). As someone who aligns my literacy beliefs with the work of Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop in that every person deserves to see themselves in the books they read, I am thankful for so much of the work that has come from the “diverse text” movement. Classroom libraries are filling up with high quality texts that offer a wealth of characters and perspectives. However, I cannot help but examine some of the implications that this term carries regarding authentic representation and inclusivity—not only in ELAR classrooms, but in society itself. Does the use of “diverse texts” as an other, separate category negate the very inclusivity we are striving for?

Chad Everett wrote a blog post entitled [“There is no diverse book”](#) (2017) where it states that the way we have used this term “creates a binary—diverse or non-diverse.” The implication is that,



to simply put it, some books are diverse and some are not. Even in the language of our standards, listing diverse texts as one of many types of text seems to “other” the term. A single text cannot be “diverse.” Rather, when we examine all of the voices found within our text collections, are the same voices being heard? Silenced? Distorted? By definition, diversity is a word to describe multiple people, objects, ideas. Diversity can be found within a classroom library collection that truly offers mirrors and windows to all students. As such, diversity is truly dependent on the reader, not the text itself. As Everett states, “the power does not reside in the thing itself; the power is realized as the tool is used by an individual with expertise” (Everett, 2017). While it is exciting to see so much diversity of character and authorship on bookshelves across Texas classrooms, it is important to ask ourselves the question, “and then what?”

If I am being honest, I often feel confident in engaging in the academic discourse of diversifying texts in the classroom, yet when it comes to doing the work in my



own life, I am barraged with insecurity and fear. Tricia Ebarvia spoke on this very issue at ILA this year. She put it in very clear terms: “The internal work matters—a lot. You cannot disrupt if you do not understand how systems of oppression work. You cannot understand how systems of oppression work until you come to terms with how they have worked on you” (T. Ebarvia, lecture, October 12, 2019). If I am not seeking to understand the reasons why the need for diverse texts exists in the first place—how systems affect and privilege me, my family, my place in the world...well, my ability to utilize a varied collection of voices in my classroom will be limited to the most basic of reader response. I began by doing an inventory of sorts in my life: who are the people I consistently surround myself with? In my inner circles, whose voices are heard? Whose are silenced?

Ultimately, the need for diverse voices on our bookshelves is not just about the books themselves; it is also about supporting and building up the identities of each and every student in our classrooms. If the work stops with the instructional materials we order, we are missing out on the incredible identity work that will transform not only the lives in our classrooms, but our own lives and circles. For me, I want to be an educator that investigates my own personal prejudices and biases in the hopes of making small changes that lead to a large difference in our beautiful state.

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I have much to do and learn

By Valerie Taylor, PD2Teach Liaison

At NCTE in Baltimore, I attended a workshop titled “Inquiry, Identity, and Equity: Teaching Beyond our Biases” with Sara Ahmed, Tricia Ebavaria, Chad Everett, and Jess Lifshitz. Throughout the four hours, the presenters asked participants to examine our own identities and biases, guiding us to inquire about our own privileges and practices as educators. One of the most important questions they asked us to consider is “How can you accept that there is a whole lot you don’t know and do something about it?”

In acknowledging that there is much I do not know, I must think deeply about the relationship I have with my own identities. And to do that, I must be aware of my identities and in what ways those identities are ones of privilege. Tricia Ebavaria suggested Ijeoma Oluo’s book *So You Want to Talk about Race* as a text that can help us in this journey of understanding our identities. I plan to add this book to my stack that has recently been growing with titles such as *Letting Go of Literary Whiteness: Antiracists Literature Instruction for White Students* by Carlin Borsheim-Black and Sophia Tatiana Sarigianides, and *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* by Robin Diangelo, and will also soon include Sara Ahmed’s *Being the Change*.

I have much to learn and do.

For decades, authors such as Amy Tan, Maxine Hong Kingston, Zora Neale Hurston, Sandra Cisneros, Esmeralda Santiago, Luis Alberto Urrea, Julie Otsuka, Jamie Ford, Celeste Ng, Luis Rodríguez, Rudolfo Anaya, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Jason Reynolds, Elizabeth Acevedo, Tracy K. Smith, Claudia Rankine, Langston Hughes, Pat Mora, Carmen Tafolla, Trinidad Sanchez, Jr., and so many others have been a part of my own reading history as well as a part of my classroom either through full class study, book groups, or recommendations for independent reading for decades.

And still, I have much to learn and do.

In Baltimore, Chad Everett spoke of embracing discomfort, “the kind essential for growth, not the kind that is something that needs to be moved away from.” I have been working to embrace this kind of discomfort in my career and with my students through the literature I have shared and through the writing I have encouraged.

And yet, I have much to learn and do.

In Baltimore, Jess Lifshitz asked, “What do you want the world to know about you, and what stories from your life can show these things to the world?” and Sara Ahmed asked, “What is missing from your [identity] web?” These are questions that I must ponder both as I explore the literature that I read and share with others and as I write. They are also the questions I must ponder with the teachers and students I work with on a daily basis.

I have much to learn and do.

In Baltimore, Sara Ahmed led participants in creating personal timelines. Then Tricia Ebavaria asked us to examine these major events, important people and places, considering, “How does each of our identities impact the way we navigate the world? What is the role of privilege in our identities? Which dimensions of our identities has power? Which of our identities is the hardest to talk about?” These questions and many more throughout this workshop and the entire conference remind me...

I have much to learn and do.

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Reference:

Ahmed, S., Ebavaria, T., Everett, C., & Lifshitz, J. (Presenters). *Inquiry, identity, and equity: teaching beyond our biases*. Lecture presented at the National Council of Teachers of English, Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, MD.



Why the author's purpose and craft strand matters

By Kelly E. Tumy, President

For my day job, I conduct professional learning across Harris County and the Houston area. I have had the opportunity not only to share the new Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) with teachers from more than 15 districts, but also the thrill of getting to work with five districts on their curriculum design. And one of the biggest lessons I have learned in that extended work with districts is that Strand 5, author's purpose and craft, matters so much at the heart of what we are doing as English teachers.

This fifth strand is connected to other strands in very magnetic ways. When I was working in Cypress-Fairbanks ISD just north of Houston, the curriculum team even went so far as to call them magnet TEKS—since they attracted other TEKS to them. Then with more study, I have made even more connections among three specific strands.

To be successful in implementation of new standards, I think finding connections is at the forefront of our work. Starting with the comprehension skills strand (Strand 2), I then look for the attractant in author's purpose and craft (Strand 5), and then I look for the complementary standard in response skills (Strand 4). This is a system I have used in curriculum design, and it has served districts well for many reasons.

Examining these strands first keeps us away from genre. This is not to say that a genre-focused curriculum has any shortcomings. When I think of where we are seeing instruction grow and where students are developing and mastering skills, curriculum that can foster change is focused on honing skills, not on learning genre elements alone. Working within this system of matching those three strands

first has led teachers and teams to see that author's purpose and craft has been driving our instruction for a long time—we now have a name and standards to attach to that driving.

Author's purpose and craft also contains elements of higher-order thinking skills that were missing from the Figure 19 element of the

previous TEKS. This is a robust strand that, when applied to any genre, allows teachers to teach nuances that weren't named before.

We now get to teach with multiple texts to show both depth and complexity in several elements; we then get to combine 8.9B—analyze how the use of text structure contributes to the author's purpose, and 8.9F—analyze how the author's use of language contributes to the mood, voice, and tone¹ to create a lesson or a unit that challenges students to see and work with text differently. And, in true integrated fashion, students will then turn around and use the same skills in their own writing.

Our new TEKS are seven connected strands—we need to remember that. While I've taken the time to highlight a few of the nuances and depth of author's purpose and craft, it behooves us to remember that these new elements in the TEKS will take work and practice to master. Keep at this work—it is worth it as we grow students in the new standards.

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Reference:

¹Texas education agency. (2017). TEKS Chapter 110. 8th Grade English language arts and reading. Author's purpose and craft.



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Purposeful use of instructional strategies to integrate multiple TEKS

By Amanda Palmer, Vice President for Membership and Affiliates

The new English TEKS are quite a departure from the expectations that have been in place since 2009. Perhaps the greatest difference is the move from silos to integration. In the 2009 TEKS, reading, writing, speaking, and listening were separate and distinct. They could easily be taught in isolation; in fact, the way they were written, it appeared that was the expectation. Now, each knowledge statement begins with the clear statement that students are to engage in “listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking” (Texas Education Agency, 2017). With this expectation of integration, most of the TEKS are in use throughout the year. There are strategies that will make this transition easier allowing students to seamlessly flow through these modes all in the course of a class period. Below are a few suggestions using the 8th grade English TEKS.

Jigsaw with Expert Verification

The jigsaw strategy provides an efficient way for students to attack a longer text. Depending on the number of students per group, break the text into 4-6 parts. Each group member will choose or be assigned one text section. Set a timer for students to read their portion of the text and annotate as appropriate.



After reading, invite students to an opportunity for “expert verification” with others who read the same section of text. In order to help their discussion, provide the groups with sentence stems for speaking and listening. While students are discussing the text the teacher will quickly confer with each group making sure the groups are on the right path. Once complete, the students will return to their groups and share their section of the text.

Variation: Provide students with chart paper while they are in the expert verification phase. Ask students to create a representation of the most important parts of their assigned sections using visuals. Hang the posters around the room. Experts will go back to their original group and then take a gallery walk of the posters bringing the text with them. At each poster the student responsible for that section will present the information to the group.

TEKS Addressed: 1A, 1B, 1D, 3, 5, 6C, 6D, 6E

575 Quickwrite

This strategy can work with or without a writing prompt. It also works well following a whole class study of a passage. Students will write for five minutes, then discuss their writing in pairs or small groups for seven minutes, and then return to their seats to

continue writing on the topic for five additional minutes.

TEKS Addressed: 1A, 1D, 6, 10A, 10B (More are possible depending on the writing prompt.)



Think-Talk-Write

Give students a writing prompt and allow them a minute to think through their response. Students will then turn to their writing partner to share what they plan to write. After both students have an opportunity to share, students will then write their responses. Provide sentence stems and instructions of how to interact with writing partners before the activity.

TEKS Addressed: 1A, 1D, 6, 10A, 10B (More are possible depending on the writing prompt.)

Elevator Speeches

After reading a text or instruction on a skill or topic, give each student a notecard. Explain to students that an elevator speech is a concise 20-60 second speech on a topic. Then model creating an elevator speech for students before they write their own.

After students craft their elevator speech, ask them to stand and find a partner to share their speech. They will switch partners a couple of times. A fun variation on this activity is to have students take on personas as they share their speech such as speaking with the principal or talking to a friend. Students enjoy this extra layer, and it provides a teachable moment on importance of language registers.

TEKS Addressed: 1A, 5F, 5G, 5H, 6B, 6D, 6H, 10A, 11B (more are possible depending on the writing prompt)

Each of these activities can be adjusted to meet classroom needs. When students move seamlessly through all parts of literacy, the classroom establishes a rhythm where they become more comfortable sharing their thinking through reading, writing, and classroom discussion thereby meeting the expectations of the new TEKS.

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Reference:

Texas Education Agency. (2017). 19 TAC chapter 110. Texas essential knowledge and skills for English language arts and reading. Retrieved from <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter110/index.html>.

Research is advocacy

By Charles Moore, TCTELA High School Section Leader

Tell all the truth but tell it slant —Emily Dickinson

With the imminent arrival of new learning standards for English teachers across Texas, I find myself dreaming of a world where the delivery of reading and writing instruction forces the two together, crosses threads as loops of literacy. While I do not expect a seismic shift in the day-to-day operations of the reader-writer's workshop in my classes, others might. Several of the new TEKS strands encourage authentic reading and writing experiences far beyond the tentacles of standardized testing, but the strand that has me most excited is last on the list: inquiry and research.

I connect with authentic research writing on both a personal and professional level because that mode is one that I have found particularly vital to readers and writers within my experience as a teacher. Inquiry and research allow us to look at our futures as individuals and as members of society. I am an advocate for research writing because I am an advocate for learners.

When learners conduct research and articulate their findings, they discover a new voice and ideas deeply personal to them. They find their liberty. Their understanding of the world grows in complexity in a way that is matched by the way they grow in their understanding of themselves.

Far too many teachers believe that research writing is mostly about correct formatting, citing sources, synthesizing information, or taking advantage of some arbitrarily specific academic

structure. However, if we place restrictions on learners, leading them towards research writing that is dry and overly focused on academic tone, we miss the opportunity to allow them room to grow as writers. Certainly, those thoughts have their place in the conversation, but there exists far more territory to explore.

Furthermore, like most writing, research is argument. Whether they argue for a position that is supported by data or one supported by the voices of leaders they revere, research is about finding a thread of truth; building an identity around it. Hopefully, they will learn to build their own identity around threads of truth they discover within the process of examining themselves.

This writing territory is argument disguised as truth. Truth told slant. It is an opportunity to unearth our biases—placing them under a microscope—having them out on the dissecting table, organs laid bare prepared for intense examination. Looking into the mirror that our writing provides and examining ourselves as citizens of a complex world is as reflective as we can ask students to be. Research is the world laid out in front of us without restrictions.

Imagine what our world could be if we stepped out of our cave, and instead of seeing only what flashes in front us, stepped into the light, let it wash over our faces and illuminate our souls. That is the world that research allows us to discover; the one wherein we can most clearly examine our own soul.

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Literature circles for big kids

By Roni Burren, Vice President Elect

Teaching theme is arguably one of the most difficult tasks ELAR teachers have to tackle. Part of this is due to analyzing theme being rooted in students' ability to inference. Starting in 3rd grade students must infer theme, and by 10th grade they must be able to analyze theme in a variety of literary texts. One way to help students learn how to analyze theme between multiple texts is through literature circles.

Literature circles, as defined by litcircles.org, are small groups of students gather[ing] together to discuss a piece of literature in depth. The discussion is guided by students' response to what they have read (litcircles.org).

Because of the abundance of quality young adult literature, high school teachers can easily assemble literature circles around an assortment of themes. For example, a tenth grade teacher may want their students to examine the theme of resistance and would need to pull between four-six books that speak to that theme. Using this example, the following titles could work: *Children of Blood and Bone* (Tomi Adeyemi), *Internment* (Samira Ahmed), *The Poet X* (Elizabeth Acevedo) and *March: Book 1* (John Lewis and Andrew Aydin).

Using these titles as anchors, a teacher should build out literature circles with the goal of getting students to analyze the theme across these texts. High school teachers should make sure that the time allotted for literature circles be inclusive of each lit circle sharing out



what they've read or what ideas they've gleaned from their respective texts. This allows students to hear about other quality literature and begin to make connections across texts. The teacher should focus on text-to-self, text-to-world, and text-to-text types of questions during literature circle whole group sharing. Here again, students cannot only identify theme but also examine how those themes are developed in a variety of texts. The beauty of literature circles in the high school classroom is that they can be used as a scaffold to guide students in seeing themes, across different texts, while maintaining their independence in selecting their own texts.

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(N.d.) Overview of literature circles. Retrieved from <http://litcircles.org/Overview/overview.html>.

Thoughts on *Every Child a Super Reader: 7 Strengths to Open a World of Possible*

By Stephen Winton, President-Elect

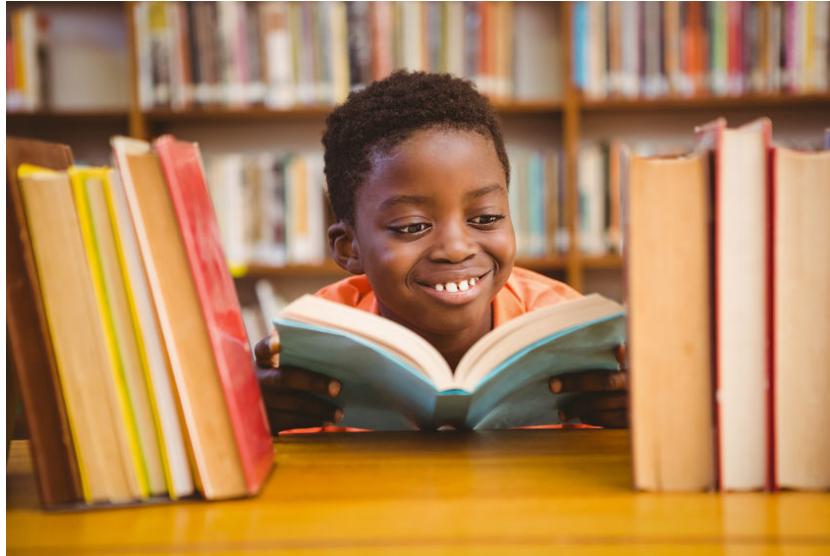
In *Every Child a Super Reader: 7 Strengths to Open a World of Possible*, Pam Allyn and Ernest Morrell identify seven strengths of super readers: belonging, curiosity, friendship, kindness, confidence, courage, and hope (2015). The authors suggest that reading develops these positive qualities.

Further, readers can find one or more of these strengths in any well-written text.

One picture book that demonstrates these qualities is in *Wings* by Christopher Myers where a boy with wings named Ikarus comes to a new school. Ikarus experiences challenges at the new school when the other kids point and laugh at him. In addition, his teacher sends him out of the classroom because his wings block

the blackboard. After being taunted, he loses the ability to fly. The narrator, a girl in Ikarus's class, defends him, and she saves Ikarus with the words, "Your flying is beautiful" (Myers, 2000, p. 1-32).

Here one sees several of Allyn and Morrell's seven strengths that could be used for classroom discussion. Belonging is a theme of the work, and Ikarus's treatment, both by the bullies and the narrator, could offer lessons on how we should make people belong in our community. It took bravery for the girl to speak up and defend Ikarus, and this could teach readers how to find the



bravery to do what is right in difficult situations. The words "Your flying is beautiful" are pure kindness, and readers might reflect on how simple acts of kindness might make a difference in people's lives.

One will not find words like belonging, bravery, and kindness in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills. Of course, the standards ask students to analyze the theme of a text, but too often Allyn and Morrell's seven strengths are absent in the literacy work at schools. Belonging, curiosity, friendship, kindness, confidence, courage, and hope are needed in the world today. Through reading, we as teachers might focus on Allyn and Morrell's seven strengths as ways to transform lives, heal communities, and build a better tomorrow.

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References:

- Ally, P. & Morrell, E. (2015). *Every child a super reader: 7 strengths to open a world of possible*. New York: Scholastic Professional.
Myers, C. (2000). *Wings*. New York: Scholastic Press.

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English in Texas, Vol. 50.1 (Spring/Summer 2020)

Theme: Vision and Voice: Raising the Literacy Volume in Texas

Manuscript Deadline: April 1, 2020

Column Deadline: May 1, 2020

Call for Submissions:

The 2020 conference theme is “Vision and Voice: Raising the Literacy Volume in Texas.” Many professionals have spoken of the need for a voice to lead us forward in the teaching profession. Don Graves served as one of those voices, but we lost him in 2010. Tom Newkirk, at a 2013 NCTE breakfast, called for voices to carry Graves’ wisdom forward.

In this issue of *English in Texas*, we want readers to see pieces that do just that: that create a Texas voice, a Texas vision, and carve a new path in teaching. We want you to show the state how our very best can change the world for the better. We know that Texas teachers are creative and innovative every day in every class, and we’d like you to submit manuscripts that let readers see you, hear you, and learn from you.

Think about how you see classrooms changing. How do we engage students with integrated standards and teach them to absorb a variety of texts? With new standards comes much responsibility to teach them well. How is your classroom changing to fit the new landscape of integration and fluency in reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking? How will we teach students to THINK? Finally, what is your promise to yourself as an educator?

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 “Vision and Voice: Raising the Literacy Volume in Texas.” Please refer to the *English in Texas* website for manuscript submission guidelines. Do not hesitate to contact the editorial team at Englishintx@hbu.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 “Voice and Vision: Raising the Literacy Volume in Texas.” 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 this issue include:

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 Englishintx@hbu.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 Englishintx@hbu.edu.