

TEXAS VOICES



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

President's corner: Teachers answer the call

By Stephen Winton, Ed.D., President

At a TCTELA board meeting a few months ago, we discussed this quote: “The people I love the best / jump into work head first / without dallying in the shallows / and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight” (Piercy, 1982). Little did we know the field of education would dive headfirst into distance learning, amid a pandemic that disrupted life worldwide.

We see teachers dive into Zoom conferences, often for the first time, and reimagine learning. We see curriculum teams rewrite at-home lessons week by week. We see principals lead by example, building community through understanding and kindness. We see teaching, already much more than a nine-to-five job, extended to all hours of the day. We see parents balancing working full time and helping their kids learn.

In short, educators and families have shown the goodness of humanity in this crisis. The Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts thanks all who are working so hard for our students.

TCTELA has created a page of distance learning resources available here: <https://www.bulbapp.com/u/tctela-distance-learning-resources>. Thanks to Alissa Crabtree who helped organize this and all who contributed.

Also, we invite TCTELA members to post on social media the wonderful work they are doing with the hashtag #TCTELAteachanywhere.

At some point, life will go on as it did before. But we will return changed. Perhaps something positive will be that we remember and value those who answered the call during the COVID-19 outbreak: doctors, nurses, pharmacists, grocery store workers, bank tellers, the list goes on and on. And of course, teachers. These truly essential workers deserve the respect and gratitude of all.

stephenjoelwinton@gmail.com

Reference:

Piercy, M. (1982). To be of use. *Poetry Foundation*, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57673/to-be-of-use>. Accessed 24 April 2020.



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PD2Teach update

By Valerie Taylor, PD2Teach Liaison



Classroom Videos: We are pleased to announce that we have posted videos featuring teachers and students in classrooms from Brownsville, Alvin, Houston, and Austin on our [PD2Teach Bulb](#) site. You will find these videos and some discussion questions in the Challenge tile under [TEKS in Action: Classroom Videos](#). These videos show us how teachers and students are integrating all the domains of literacy: reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking. From Brownsville ISD's Rivera Early College High School, we feature ninth grade teachers Joel Guzman and Cindi Sierra, and tenth grade teachers Teddy Cumberworth and Julia Puckett, and their students. From Alvin ISD's Manvel High School, Barbara Wells and her tenth grade students show us how reading and writing conferences play a crucial role in teaching and learning. From Houston ISD's Condit Elementary School, Fiorella Brito and her dual

Continued on next page

PD2Teach update (continued)

language third graders show us how they study poetry and other aspects of language and texts. From Eanes ISD's Eanes Elementary School in Austin, Jennie George and her first graders also study language, reading and writing together. And finally, from Sanford-Fritch ISD's Sanford-Fritch Junior High School, Nikki Bass and her seventh graders demonstrate how engaged they are with their literacy learning. We appreciate all of these teachers and students for allowing us to film their learning experiences and for sharing those experiences with the state of Texas through our PD2Teach project. We hope these videos will serve as inspiration for you as you begin or continue to implement these newly revised TEKS for English Language Arts.

PD2Teach Challenge: We also hope you will use these videos as models for creating your own video for the PD2Teach Challenge. We have revised the dates for the Challenge to begin in September and run through the beginning of November. On the PD2Teach Bulb site, you will find other resources as well to help you with designing a learning experience featuring the newly revised TEKS. Please plan to film in your classrooms in the fall and submit your video to TCTELA through [this Google Form](#).

Distance Learning Resources: One more resource you will now find on our PD2Teach Bulb site is a document with a plethora of resources to help you in this time of distance learning, including links/resources for Access to Texts, Instruction, Social Emotional Learning, and Professional Development. Please take a look, and if you have a resource you would like us to add, please let me know.

vfstaylor@sbcglobal.net

Reflecting, resetting, and re-energizing during mandated social distancing

By Alissa Crabtree, High School Section Chair

Eerily quiet is the only way I can think to describe it. Cars are permanently parked, causing neighborhood traffic to diminish, neighbors are no longer hosting parties for friends and family (except for digitally), and even the airplane traffic has reduced drastically. Walking out of my driveway is completely different today than what it was just a month ago. A simple act that I once took for granted has now turned into a surreal experience. This has quickly and unexpectedly become the "new normal".

The lack of social interaction has left many of us antsy and uncertain. Speaking with my colleagues, some have expressed feelings of high anxiety and depression, and with mandatory social distancing orders in place around the world, it is no wonder that there has been an increase in mental health-related crimes and hospital admittance. In the face of uncertainty, how can we, as educators, remain connected and supportive?

I have done a lot of thinking on this matter. As an instructional coach, I want to ensure that the teachers with whom I have the privilege of working with feel supported and successful; however, to do this, I need to fill my own cup. Because of this, I have centered my energy on three key practices:

- Reflecting
- Resetting
- Re-energizing



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stephenjoelwinton@gmail.com

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kellytummy@gmail.com

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yolandaclarke@katyisd.org

Teacher-Development Section Chair

Caty Deating
catydear@gmail.com

Editor, *Texas Voices*

Doug Frank, Rockwall ISD
douglaspfrank@gmail.com

Editors, *English in Texas*

Vicky Giles, Houston Baptist University
vgiles@hbu.edu

Angie Durand, Houston Baptist University
adurand@hbu.edu

Elizabeth Trevino, Houston Baptist University
etrevino@hbu.edu

Mary White, Houston Baptist University
mwhite@hbu.edu

Executive Director

Amy Laine, Venture Alliance Group
512-617-3200
amyblakely@ventureall.com

TCTELA

919 Congress Avenue #1400
Austin, Texas 78701
512-617-3200

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Reflecting, resetting, and re-energizing during mandated social distancing (continued)

Reflecting

“If you do not emerge from this pandemic having learned something new with all of your extra time at home, then you truly weren’t motivated in the first place.” I have seen similar statements like this posted all over social media. When I first read it, I was frustrated. On top of writing a new curriculum for distance learning, attending one-hundred Zoom meetings a day, and recording instructional videos, I am also a parent trying my best to facilitate learning for my own child. On some days, it feels impossible, and on days that I am able to balance it all (which has probably been a whopping total of 2 days since this has all started), I feel like Wonder Woman proudly standing in the middle of the living room. I could not possibly add something else to my plate, yet someone has the nerve to say that I am not motivated. I stewed on this for a while and reflected. Maybe there is some truth to this statement after all. Not necessarily that I need to add additional items to my agenda each day, but maybe I need to reconsider where I am placing my energy and time? Are the things that I am spending the majority of my day stressing over really worth it, or could I replace it with something of more significance?

Reflecting on my own habits, stressors, and values has been essential for my wellbeing in the last few weeks. What I have come to realize is that I was placing value on things that were out of my control. I would become frustrated at the smallest decision others were making about distance learning, but there was not anything I could do about it. It became a waste of my time; time that I could have been using to learn something new or creating something useful. Because of this, I now end my day in complete reflection. I ask myself, (1) *Today, did I do all that I could possibly do to support those around me?* (2) *Where did I focus my energy? Was it in my control?* (3) *Did I do something today that would improve my craft?* And (4) *Tomorrow, how can I better support educators?* Not only do I ask myself these questions, but I have started writing down the answers to them each evening. It has helped me to pinpoint commonalities between my great days and my “I wanna crawl back in bed and start over” days. I urge each of you to create your own reflection questions and try this yourself. You might find that it helps you to discover your own sense of peace during this unique time in our world.

Resetting

Taking time to reflect was actually the easy part. I can answer reflection questions honestly, but just like data, it is what is done with the information that is important. Once I began finding opportunities for growth in my day-to-day, I found time to reset. What will make tomorrow more successful than today? I started by creating a schedule for myself each day. It is easy to lose track of structure because of social distancing, but it can also be detrimental to our mental health. Humans crave structure by nature, and when we lose it, we often find ourselves in a mountain of unproductivity. I get up, and I get dressed as though I were going into work. There is something to be said about how our appearance often impacts the way we feel. If I work in my pajamas all day, I tend to take less pride in my work and in my worth. Some of you may be thinking that this is vanity at its finest, but for many, the act of getting professionally dressed has a positive impact on pride and productivity.

Learning something new can also help us to reset. I get it. We are busy. There is not much more that I could add to my day that would not end up a complete disaster; however, I could

forfeit something and replace it with a new PD book or podcast. For instance, instead of listening to music during my morning workout, I have replaced it with Heinemann podcasts or TCTELA podcasts. I have also replaced my Netflix nighttime binge with Lucy Calkins newest release, *Teaching Writing*. This allows me to reset my behaviors and improve my own craft. Remember, one of my questions is, “*Tomorrow, how can I better support educators?*” If I am not continually learning, how will I be of value?

Re-Energizing

I grew up in a small farm community just outside of Corsicana, Texas. The new docu-series on Netflix, *Cheer*, takes place at Navarro College in this same town. When it aired, I was ecstatic to see childhood friends on the screen and familiar hangouts. Monica Aldama, the Navarro College cheer coach, rallies her squad by chanting, “*We can! We will! We must!*” My family members and high school friends post pictures of this rally cry painted in store windows, scribbled in driveways, and accentuated on road signs. How fitting for the world in which we live today. It energizes me, and when I reflect at night, I think to myself, “*We can! We will! We must!*”



As we move forward with distance learning, I am eager to see how our approach to instruction will evolve from this. After reflecting and resetting, I am now looking forward to tackling the work that is ahead. We have much to do. We have come together as educators, not just across the state, but across the nation and globe. I am proud to be a part of this community. The question is, how can we re-energize other teachers, administrators, and students? What avenues can we find that will support all learners, of all ages? Collaborating with professionals regarding teaching and learning boosts our capacity for instruction. It is what we do. Utilizing platforms, such as social media, Zoom, and YouTube can enhance our own learning, and I am looking forward to generating some of my own “meeting of the minds”. I am calling upon you, as a member of the TCTELA community, to participate. Let’s join together to support others around us who are searching for answers, ideas, and peace of mind.

I am planning on interviewing teachers, counselors, instructional coaches, and administrators to share ideas with our TCTELA family in the upcoming months. I want to open conversations regarding plans for supporting our learners as they acclimate to this “new normal” and generate ideas for supporting them when they return to our campuses. It energizes me to think of taking on this adventure with you all. *We can* get through this together. *We will*, as a result, strengthen support for educators and students. *We must* take care of ourselves so that we can take care of others.

crabtreea1013@gmail.com

Writing through crisis

By Margaret Hale, Executive Secretary

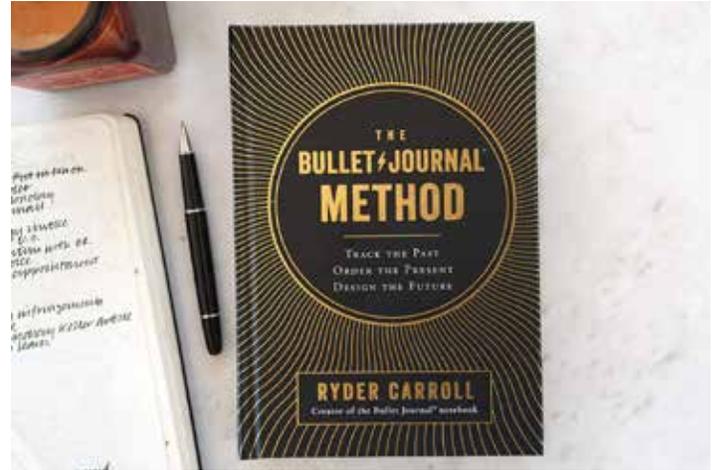
A year or so ago, I ordered and read Ryder Carroll's *The Bullet Journal Method: Track the Past, Order the Present, and Design the Future* (2018) and began using some of his strategies to organize my thinking and synthesize my journaling in one place. The strategies have helped keep me on track, but with lists rather than writing. Then, once I had to begin working from home because of COVID-19, I noticed that Carroll was hosting some sessions on his Instagram account, @bulletjournal, and thought I would give them a try.

I was late beginning, a few days after his first video, but it didn't matter. I sat down at my desk first thing in the morning, found the first video in the series on Instagram, opened my journal, and waited to see what would happen. There sat Ryder Carroll at his home desk with his journal and pen in front of him.

His focus in the first episode was the simple question, "How are you." He talked for a few minutes about the different ways we might answer that question, and then he said he was going to set a timer for 10 minutes, and we could begin writing. He wrote at the same time! He was modeling writing for me (and thousands of others) just like I encourage my teacher candidates to do!

During the next 10 minutes, I wrote with him. Periodically, Carroll stopped and looked directly into the camera and talked about what he was doing in his journal. Now he was doing a think-aloud! His think-aloud gave me ideas for ways to expand my thinking as I wrote about how I was. When the 10-minute timer went off, he spoke for a couple of minutes about the process and how it helped him in dealing with the crisis situation, and then ended the episode.

I was so excited about the cathartic feeling of writing in response to his prompt that I engaged with the series again the next day. Once again, he asked a thought-provoking question and invited viewers to write in response. He again modeled and



shared his thinking as I wrote, furthering my own thinking.

With my teacher brain, I immediately thought about what a great model this series can be for teachers working to teach writing in the current virtual environment/crisis teaching mode. I encourage you to check out the series. Just log on to Instagram, search for @bulletjournal, and then click on the TV icon to find the series. Not only will you get ideas for what you might do with your students, but you'll also enjoy joining in the writing with him.

grithale@aol.com

Reference:

Carroll, Ryder. (2018). *The bullet journal method: Track the past, order the present, and design the future*. New York, NY: Portfolio Publishing.

Clinging to the connection: serving our students in a world of distance learning

By Charles Moore, VP-Elect TCTELA

Each morning, as I sit at the desk in my home office, I look out onto the front porch and watch a pair of cardinals feast on the June bugs that collect overnight. Their routine is regular, almost like they are showing up for their scheduled class time; this pair seeking sustenance of a scarabaeidaen sort.

Feeling the effects of this substantial change in our educational placement has me reflecting on the work we've accomplished and the work that still lays ahead. Looking back, I'm thankful for the willingness to learn and the diligence shown by my students. They responded when challenged, and we relied on our strength as a group during the rough patches that took us out our comfort zones. I think about how lucky I am to have enjoyed such a gifted group of sophomores and juniors this year. They embodied the concept of productive struggle and accepted my invitation that we enter into the work this year together and walk beside each other



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Clinging to the connection: serving our students in a world of distance learning (continued)

as we explore the boundaries of our reading and writing and grow in our literacy.

After COVID-19 closed our campuses, but before my district provided instructions on how to proceed, I sent out a FlipGrid link asking my students to respond to a few simple questions about their safety and their circumstances. Reeling from our spring break shock, I thought back to the last time nature shuttered our schools – the devastation unleashed by Hurricane Harvey—and I remembered how important it was to re-establish our connection as quickly as possible.

The response that I received was both relieving and revealing. Most of the kids talked about how they missed their classes and their friends, and that they hoped my family was safe and healthy. However, while most didn't come right out and say it, I detected a clear undercurrent of anxiety in their voices. Their fear about grades, classwork, and standardized tests—whether STAAR or AP—revealed the unease they felt as they looked towards a future filled with uncertainty. This almost universal tone of worry led me to the conclusion, one I shared with those whom I most trust, that nearly all of the work that lay ahead of us would be in the social/emotional realm rather than in literacy content.

Listening to teachers, I've detected in their words the difficulty they experience as they weigh the need to deliver instruction with the need to care for and nurture their learners. This is the contradiction that we conquer daily in our classrooms but struggle to balance when proximity becomes a problem.

We've lost our most precious instrument. We've been stripped of the connections that we employ to nudge students further in their literacy. I cannot imagine any data set that would lead someone to conclude that traditional thinking about instruction would lead to any productive learning outcomes for students. Simply placing assignments in an online location and then scoring those assignments without teachers and students seeing each other's faces and hearing each other's voices is, to me, unthinkable. In the face of what is undoubtedly a traumatic situation, fostering a culture of connectivity is crucial.

Lucky for our students, teachers are nothing if not adaptable. We know how important it is for us to rewire the severed links



and revamp the exchange of social/emotional energy that must flow back and forth between us if we ever wish to move students forward in their understanding of their literacy and their place in the world. We cannot hope to be successful if we allow a screen to come between us anymore than is necessary.

With this in mind, I want to encourage each and every teacher to pay close attention to how those relationships are maintained. For many, screen casting software allows students to see our faces and hear our voices as much as possible. We dig through mentor texts, recording our thoughts, marking what we notice, leaving

some of the thinking to the students like we would in our classrooms.

I ask them to record a book talk every week as they examine their self-selected reading within the context of our current conditions. This serves to inform me of their progression in their reading lives, but it also lets me maintain some of my own sanity and reassure the anxious thoughts I have about their safety.

Pause for a second and imagine me piecing my brain back together after one of my

students examined the connection between Poe's "Fall of the House of Usher" and her quarantine experience. Reading her thoughts would have allowed me to gather formative feedback on her current state of argument understanding. However, seeing her "in situ", wet hair and face free of makeup, as she sat at her dining room table cut through the digital divide. Witnessing her making connections that would confound many adults, helps me feel at ease as I know that this one is going to be okay.

Every time a student emails me with a question - which happens surprisingly less often than I would have predicted before any of this happened - part of my reply is that I miss their class and that I hope they are healthy and safe. If I've ever communicated with their parents, I ask them to send along my greetings. I almost always receive an email back telling me they will. It is in those moments that I rest most comfortably, hoping that when our physical distance is reduced, we can celebrate the work the kids undertook and know that it was our connection to each other that kept us linked in this time of separation.

mooreliteracy1@gmail.com



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The vision, voice and practice of social and emotional learning

By Mary White, Ed.D. and Polly Treviño, Ph.D., Co-Editors, *English in Texas*

Several of the attendees at this year's TCTELA Vision and Voice Conference left with a renewed vow to not just write but also to read more. To expand their professional bookshelves with more genres and authors. Weeks later, we continued to engage in conversations with our colleagues through the virtual section meetings and found a new society in which to engage in our adult higher order thinking. Little did we know that within less than two months this virtual engagement would turn into a new normal across our Nation, albeit world.

Social distancing as a result of a pandemic dubbed Corona or COVID-19 has closed the face-to-face classroom and opened one of distance learning for all. However, let us enter a word of caution at this juncture. Social distancing relates to physical proximity at least 6 feet apart. But we can remain socially and



The Diary of Anne Frank is a classic that was borne out of the horrific experiences of a teenager. The COVID-19 pandemic provides an opportunity for us to hear students' voices as they write their own social and emotional experiences. Reflective writing, editorials based on the political stance of the day, and hip-hop lyrics built upon the mandated shelter in place are all ways for students to document their experiences and express their emotions. Even creating memes could be an expressive digital art assignment.

Literacy instruction taught remotely should continue to ask students to read, to write about their reading, to speak about their reading and to listen to (or read) what others have to say about their own reading. These activities foster the expression and understanding critical to SEL competencies. Web tools abound for creating literacy opportunities (e.g., Padlet, Mentimeter, Flipgrid, Google Classroom, discussion forums in learning management systems, social media, or similar), depending upon what is comfortable for and available to students. Relationships can be developed through paired or small-group learning strategies, enhancing social and emotional competence even at a distance. These can be accomplished through GroupMe chat rooms, Microsoft Teams meetings, Google Classrooms, and even Zoom environments.

Regardless of the tools used, the "how" of your literacy instruction keeps SEL at the forefront of your instructional design. As teachers of reading and writing, we are uniquely positioned to help our students develop social and emotional competence, even during a time of collective emotional distress and social disruption.

mwhite@hbu.edu etrevino@hbu.edu

Reference:

Schlund, J. (2019). The literacy connection. *Literacy Today*, 37(2), 18-20.



emotionally present. Moreover, social and emotional learning (SEL) is more important than ever in our distance learning classrooms. As adult learners let us first gauge our own social and emotional health. Then, using the I Do-We Do-You Do strategy, let us work to elicit the voices of all learners as they develop socially and emotionally.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) lists five core competencies SEL: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Justina Schlund of CASEL argues for integrating SEL and literacy instruction: "When leveraged intentionally, SEL and literacy instruction can promote better understanding of different cultures and power dynamics, foster positive ethnic/racial identity, and support students and adults in developing relationships and interacting with others across diverse backgrounds" (Schlund, 2019, p. 20). Reading and writing inherently engage emotions and relationships, as writers express and readers understand.

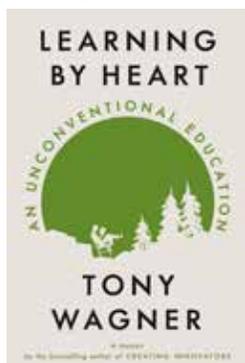
NCTE 2020 leadership and advocacy summit highlights

By Yolanda Clarke, NCTE Liaison

During a typical year, the NCTE Leadership & Advocacy Summit is a time for action-minded educators to descend on Washington, looking for inspiration through a series of speakers and opportunities that galvanize them to become or to continue as everyday activists who use their voices to shape literacy education. It is no accident that the event is held in our nation's capital, a short distance away from the policymakers who steer the direction of public education, often without the in-depth knowledge educators possess about best practices for our students.

This past spring, COVID-19 threatened to dampen the spirit of activism this conference is meant to fuel, to shut down our ability to advocate for our students in much the same way that primaries were delayed and legislative sessions were abandoned.

Thankfully, activism on behalf of our students cannot be quarantined, and so on April 7, 2020, NCTE hosted the first session of the 2020 Online Leadership & Advocacy Summit, transforming its in-person attendance to a series of Zoom webinars featuring Tony Wagner of Harvard's Graduate School of Education and The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and later on April 27, Dr. Ernest Morrell, Coyle Professor of Literacy Education and Inaugural Director of the Center for Literacy Education at the University of Notre Dame. In a time when we felt cut off from one another and the privilege of gathering together to raise our voices to advocate for our students, these speakers shared their unique experiences and leadership in an uncertain time, energizing a spirit of "at-home advocacy" and challenging us to continue efforts to bring the needs of our students to the forefront of legislative priorities and decision-making.



In his hour-long Q & A, Tony Wagner alludes to his recently-published memoir *Learning by Heart: An Unconventional Education*, a beautifully-scripted reminder of the need to advocate for all students, especially those who do not fit traditional definitions of academic success. Though the disillusionment of passing from one unfulfilling learning environment to the next leaves a young Wagner resentful of time spent in public schooling, he never loses his innate curiosity for subjects that were most

personal and passionate for him as a boy, and on the backdrop of his academic failings, his literacy grows—the reading of a complicated technical manual that led to a trial-and-error construction of a transistor radio, his growing interest in the world outside his family's farm inspired by the distances his transistor radio is able to reach, his devouring of history books, not for class, but for himself. However, it is under the trap this disappointment and an emotionally-violent childhood that

Wagner lands in the worst sort of school for the "worst" kind of kids, but is rescued by the best kind of teacher who changes the trajectory of his story when his answer is, "I'd be delighted" to Wagner's question, "Will you teach me to write?" (Wagner, 2020).

Later, his life's work as a classroom teacher, researcher, and activist would stem from these deeply personal experiences with education—from the negativity of mindlessly memorizing uninteresting facts to a joyful sense of discovery through

completing Mr. Edwards' creative writing assignments:

Each week, Mr. Edwards gave me a new writing assignment, and then we'd meet and talk about it. One week, it was a childhood reminiscence. The next week, a description of nature. Then a monologue. Then a humorous story. He encouraged me to write about things that I knew or had experienced rather than try to invent things entirely in my head. I spent more time on these "assignments" than I did on all of my real classes combined. (Wagner, 2020)

Always beginning his writing conferences with portions he liked most—and there was always something to like—Mr. Edwards then moved on to areas where lessons on author's craft could create more exact and vivid writing.

His mentor's influence becomes Wagner's model for delivering instruction and building rapport with students in his own ELA classroom, and remembering the limitations of his own early education, he has spent a lifetime developing that authentic voice. Wagner's brand of activism argues for legislation that sees students as "young innovators" who begin life with a healthy curiosity. Cultivating this curiosity can make all the difference for young minds, much like Mr. Edwards did for him. Structuring the classroom to support investigation of student-directed inquiry molds activists who later combat disparity and defend social justice. His impetus to "encourage and nurture students to be

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NCTE 2020 leadership and advocacy summit highlights (continued)

great citizens” is the reason our role as educators should result in activism. In this light, advocacy becomes an easy extension of our passion for literacy, a way to transform our experiences about what we know is in students’ best interests into legislation and school policy that honors their diversity and personal voice through literacy instruction.

Still living under the shadow of the Coronavirus’ ubiquitous repercussions and media coverage, it would be easily justifiable to turn our thoughts, time, and attention away from student advocacy, to dismiss activism under the financial strain COVID-19 has placed on Texas’ and the nation’s economies. Dangerous things happen when no one is looking, and Wagner’s call to action relabels this time as the perfect moment to “reaffirm truth in thought and action.”

With school vouchers still on the table, budget cuts inevitably biting into school funding, and the Texas Legislature still working to find a permanent revenue source for public school funding,



now is the time when Everyday Activists have an opportunity to help shape the future of literary education.

Here is a perfect time to write or call our senators and representatives to remind them of the importance of minimizing the current emphasis on state testing, to remind them of the danger of reducing students’ skills, talents, and potential for success to a single assessment style, to diversify modes of

assessment that more authentically allow students to demonstrate what they know in the unique ways they communicate what is important to them.



Here is a time we can campaign for prioritizing funds to support the essence of literacy education—classroom libraries that accurately reflect the diversity of our students and promote inclusivity, social justice, and global connectivity.

Here is a time we can highlight that no matter how great the curriculum or standards, it is teachers—the bonds, expectations, and classroom cultures we foster—who bring students to learning. We can advocate for our profession, asking legislators to support the recruitment, training, and retention of quality teachers.

Here is a time, as millions of shell-shocked students hopefully head back to school buildings in August, we can crusade for programs, resources, and materials that will support their social-emotional needs as social media and performance pressures mount.

Here is a perfect time to remind lawmakers of the multifaceted capabilities of our students rather than to ignore their “astonishing insights” and simply “brush them off because they are young.”

yolandaklarke@katyisd.org

Reference:

Wagner, Tony. (2020). *Learning by heart: An unconventional education*. New York: Viking.

From the blogosphere...

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Engaging more student voices: Creating Peardeck interactive presentations

By Josh Cooper, Recording Secretary



“Are all students being heard?” I was attending an online training recently and the facilitator of the training popped this question on the participants and ever since, I haven’t been able to get it out of my head.

This question is something we grapple with when we live in a normal world where daily routines are already established. We strive to reach all of

our students and seek to engage them in learning and hear their voices and their thoughts. We check in on them. We learn how they are growing as readers and writers. We notice when obstacles are in their way. But, even in the familiar world of the classroom, we also are aware that some students’ voices get lost in the hustle and bustle of everything we have to accomplish during the day. Some of those students seek to hide their voices for various reasons.

But we no longer live in this normal, familiar world. We are in the midst of a global pandemic that has reshaped the way we educate our students. In an effort to stop the spread, we have begun social distancing, and this also means that we teach through distance learning. Now, more than ever, it has become easier for those voices to remain hidden or unheard as students have physically escaped the four walls of our classrooms. So, when the question was asked, “Are all students being heard,” I began to wonder about not only the answer to this question, but another question of “how do we ensure that all students’ voices are heard in the time of Corona?”

There is no single answer to this question, and we are lucky to live in a world that happens to be more connected than any other time in history thanks to the internet and social media. By now, many of us have utilized our online learning platforms to deliver instruction and engage with them the best we can with what that particular platform can offer.

I’ve seen many of the teachers I work with film themselves giving mini-lessons to post in their platforms that model for students how to do the reading and writing work we ask of them. They create games, make polls, host daily office hours to meet face-to-face with their students thanks to power of Zoom online meetings, and when Wi-Fi is not an option for some students, I’ve seen teachers make a plan to make calls home at least once a week to touch base with them.

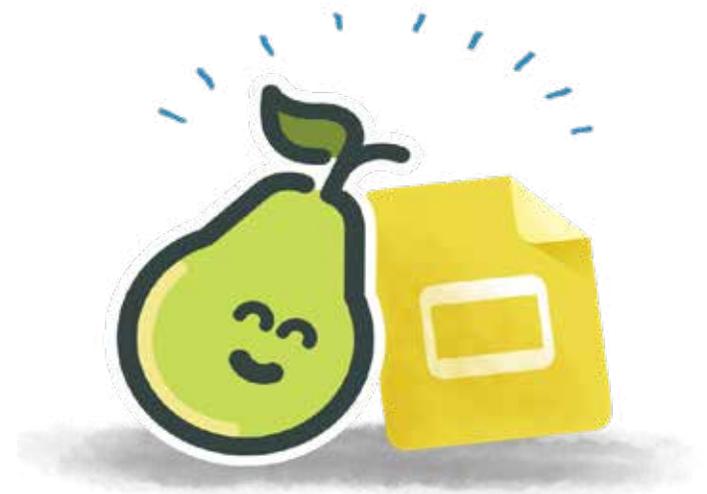
With this shift into delivering instruction online, a number of different websites, apps, and other sources of content for education have made themselves available to us. In fact, so much has been made available to educators that it’s almost overwhelming as we discover all these new tools to support us in teaching our students to be better readers and writers.

All of these digital resources have given us a pathway to hear all of our students as best we can while not physically being with them, but one that I want to share today is called [Peardeck](#).

Peardeck isn’t the newest digital resource available to us, but lately, I’ve been discovering how to use this tool to hear more of my students’ voices. If you have a Google Drive account and access to Google Slides, then you have access to Peardeck. It is an add-on to Google Slides and works in tandem with the software to make

presentations more interactive. You can get Peardeck by opening a new Slides presentation and clicking “Add-ons” on the toolbar and in the dropdown menu for “get add-ons,” Peardeck will appear as an option.

What’s great about adding Peardeck to your Google Slides presentation is that it allows the viewers of the presentation to interact with you. Peardeck has created slide templates to add to your



presentation that are editable. You can add polls that viewers vote on, questions that they can type answers to, scales to rate content, drawing abilities to the slides, and they even have a drag and drop option where students can move an icon over an area of a slide to answer a question or identify content. All of this can be added to presentations and edited by users to suit their needs.

What you, as the teacher, see on your end is a dashboard that shows you all the responses that are added from your students. If you add a drag and drop feature to one of your slides, then on your teacher dashboard for that slide, it will show you each student’s icon and where they dropped it. I’ve created a Peardeck to show an example of just what the software can do. Within the example I’ve shown how a scale, a drag and drop slide, and interactive question and answer slide can be used to allow students to interact with your content. You can find the example here: <https://app.peardeck.com/student/tviwobwvr>

And to top it all off, Peardeck has made their software free to educators that have Google Drive accounts through their districts. All you have to do is download the add-on and login with your school Google account, and they give you access to the full suite of tools to use.

Does using Peardeck answer my question and allow me to hear all my student voices? I’m not sure that it’s the answer, but it is part of an answer. Peardeck alone can’t fulfill all of our needs, but it can be a way to engage more voices in the classroom and allow for me to hear more of my student’s voices.

jscooper@conroeisd.net

The new TEKS will depend on SEL for success

By Amanda Palmer, President-Elect

As a language arts coordinator, I have spent much of the last year sharing the new language arts TEKS with teachers in my district. We start with examining the introduction before studying the strands and then moving more deeply into the document. Every group walks away with a realization: these standards, particularly at high school, are more about communication than literature. All agree—it's a game changer.

Significant work is happening in districts across Texas as curriculum teams and teachers work to learn more on integrating the domains of language as well as how to prioritize oral language proficiency. Listening and speaking has moved from the proverbial outhouse of being the final standards listed in the previous TEKS to now claiming first position among the seven strands. This isn't accidental. The new curriculum continually mentions the focus on the integration of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The new standards echo James Britton: "Reading and writing float on a sea of talk."

Talk in the classroom will not spontaneously occur, at least not the type of talk we want. Speaking and listening that values others and reflects deep, critical thinking takes time and significant scaffolding. It also requires bravery and trust. Bravery and trust will not occur in these classrooms without giving priority to social emotional learning (SEL) and the conscious construction of safe classroom environments that invite students to speak up and speak out, both verbally and in writing.

Communication is scary. Teachers, in their typically extroverted manner, sometimes forget this. Communication amongst peers is particularly terrifying (think about presenting to colleagues or speaking at a Parent Night). Before we can begin deep work with the new standards, we will have to dedicate significant time to building classroom relationships, structures, and behaviors that will allow our students to feel safe enough to engage in these conversations and writing exercises.

In training, I compare sharing my writing to the feeling of standing naked and exposed before others. Students are only younger, less confident versions of ourselves. If I feel this way after years of experience, I must expect that my students feel this at a magnified level. If we want our students to take compositional risks and try new skills, we must make sure they feel safe enough to do so. This is where social emotional learning becomes critical.

The first reference to social emotional learning in the new English TEKS comes in the second paragraph of the introduction where the need for integration of the seven strands with the four domains of language is explained "so that students develop high levels of social and academic language proficiency." Later, in the sixth paragraph, the curriculum writers conclude with a focus on oral language proficiency and its essential role in creating "thinkers and proficient speakers" across contents. In order to accomplish these goals, students will need a strong understanding of how to respectfully and confidently interact with peers.

A report released in 2019, *From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope*, explains that "learning and development happens in safe, relationship-based, and equitable learning settings." Our new English standards will require this setting for our students to gain the confidence needed to take the leaps described in the objectives. The research clearly indicates that SEL improves achievement by

an average of 11 percentile points while also increasing prosocial behaviors (Weissberg 2016). Additionally, 8 out of 10 employers consider social and emotional skills most important to work success (2019).

The argument in favor of including SEL in the classroom and larger school setting is sound, but it can also feel like one more expectation to be piled on teachers. It does not have to be like this, though. In language arts, most of the behaviors and expectations supporting SEL can be taught in the first two weeks of instruction. Those behaviors are then supported through anchor charts, gentle reminders, and reteaching when necessary.

Roger Weissberg noted five key areas to help students develop with SEL instruction. Those include: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. All five skill sets are invaluable for students working in the workshop climate that the new curriculum will demand. I have also added a "quick start list" of structures linked to SEL that I feel will be critical starting the year in language arts at the secondary level.

SEL Quick Start List:

- Partner Interaction Expectations
- Group Discussion Norms and Expectations
- Sharing Feedback (both written and verbal)
- Conference Behaviors (Teacher/Student and Student/Student)
- Writing Agreements

Students should play an active role in setting the agreements. Invite students to share what they feel the appropriate interactions might look like. Guide them until their list matches yours. Brainstorm a variety of sentence stems to help students interact when they are unsure. Create anchor charts together to remember your procedures and agreements. Once procedures and expectations are established, engage in role play with students to help them feel confident of appropriate behaviors. After these plans are established, continue to work with Weissberg's list to support student learning within your class workshop.

Humans are social creatures. We learn within relationships. A powerful learning opportunity in the classroom in how we will treat one another on our learning journey is important and worthy of discussion and compromise regardless of age. This is the first step in empowering students to become brave speakers and fearless writers.

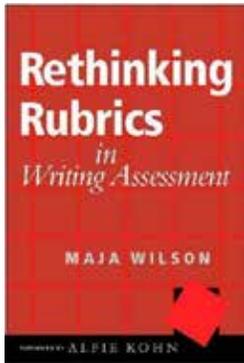
amandakpalmer13@gmail.com

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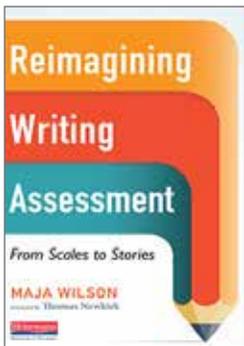
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A review: *Reimagining writing assessment: From scales to stories*

By Valerie Taylor, PD2Teach Liaison



Some of you may have read Maja Wilson's book *Rethinking Rubrics* and learned that rubrics were born in the early days of educational attempts to standardize admissions to universities and then became a norm of standardized exams. With those beginnings, rubrics moved into schools as a way to make assessing writing more efficient as well as a way for teachers to justify the grades they were assigning to students' writing. Rubrics are also touted by teachers as a way to help students better understand the requirements of a writing assignment.



Following this book, Maja Wilson published *Reimagining Writing Assessment: From Scales to Stories* in 2018. In this groundbreaking work, Wilson asks us to reimagine why and how we provide feedback to our students about their writing. She compares the work of scales (rubrics) with the work of stories to establish that scale-based assessment and story and growth-based assessment have different aims, uses, theoretical foundations and values, tools and techniques, understanding of growth, and ultimately then offer different ways of responding to writers. Wilson argues that scales "limit our perception," and are designed for the purposes of ranking and "to answer two central assessment questions: 'How good is this?' and 'How does this compare?'" On the other hand, stories expand our understanding, and are designed for an inclusive democracy and "to answer a radically different question: 'What's going on here?'" This question opens up assessment's possibilities."

Throughout the book, Maja Wilson grounds her argument in John Dewey's philosophy of experience and the lens of "growth in the right direction." She reminds us that "what matters most are the consequences the assessment has in the child's experience of writing," that we need to approach our students and their writing as readers and help students know their teacher also as "a thinker, teacher, writer, and human being."

In addition to this philosophical grounding, Wilson offers specific guidance for the kinds of questions we need to be asking and the kinds of work we need to be doing with student writers if we choose to assess through a story-based approach rather than a scale-based approach. Her inclusion of student work and the stories of their journeys as writers illustrate how we can do this work. These tools "put a writer's growth at the center of our thinking about assessment."

Overall, Maja Wilson's *Reimagining Writing Assessment: From Scales to Stories* offers us an opportunity to reassess our approaches and clear guidance for this important work with student writers, helping them understand the decisions they must make and the processes they can use to help them make those decisions. Ultimately, Wilson argues that "At the heart of assessment for growth is the understanding that it's the *person* who grows."

vfstaylor@sbcglobal.net

Reference:

Wilson, M. (2018). *Reimagining writing assessment: from scales to stories*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

- **Examples of the kinds of questions we might ask for "growth in the right direction":**
 - ▶ "How are the writer's intentions engaged throughout the writing process?"
 - ▶ What motivated the act of writing?
 - ▶ What was the interplay between internal and external (and intrinsic and extrinsic) motivations?
 - ▶ What influenced the writer's intentions as she wrote?
 - ▶ How were big and small decisions influenced by the writer's intentions?
- **How does the writer use her sense of audience (self and others, real and imagined) to make decisions throughout the writing process?**
 - ▶ What is the author's relationship with readers—and her understanding of them?
 - ▶ How does the writer's relationship with her audience (self and others, real and imagined) to solve problems, push forward, or revise?
- **What's the writer's relationship with the medium—its nature, characteristics, limitations, and possibilities?**
 - ▶ In what ways does the writer notice and respond to the nature of the medium?
 - ▶ How does the writer struggle with the limitations of the medium—and what results from that struggle?
 - ▶ How does the writer let the medium's limitations and possibilities shape her intentions and decisions as she writes?

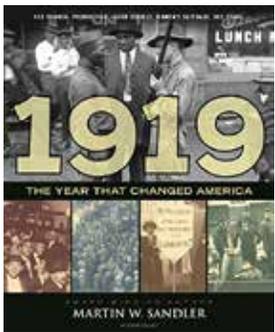
How well do you know the past?

By Kelly E. Tummy, Past President



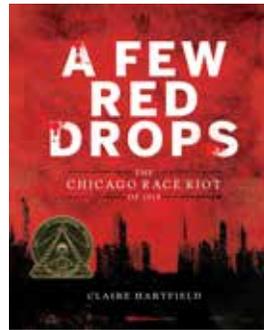
Text sets have intrigued me as an educator for quite a while. I knew long ago that I never wanted to present story after story or poem after poem with no unifying factor among them. In the late 90s and early 2000s, I switched to more thematic teaching than genre teaching, and this gave me a foothold in the kind of teaching that would propel me more towards a workshop model where I put learning into students' hands. So my love of text sets began.

Then I became a county curriculum director, serving both language arts and social studies professionals. Standing with one foot in each world, I knew immediately that I would have a steep learning curve for the social studies content. Admitting repeatedly that I was not a content expert began to weigh heavily—almost daily. A stunning group of social studies directors pulled me aside one day and said, “Quit saying you aren’t a content expert! It diminishes what you can bring to us. Make your ELA side work for us. Help us make that connection.” And so my love of nonfiction, informational, and persuasive texts was rekindled by a talented group of social studies professionals who challenged me to dig into parts of history, citizenship, geography, and economics to help support social studies teachers.

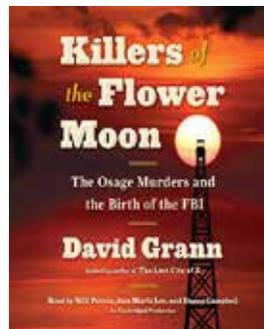


Last year I spent many hours in the works of Martin W. Sandler. His newest book, *1919: The Year that Changed America* won the national book award for young people in 2019. After learning more about how the Civil Rights Movement had its seeds sown as early as 1919, I knew that this book would be an invaluable one to help me not only learn more about history but learn how history isn’t just facts and

topics; history is about concepts, too. Women getting the vote was not about an amendment to the constitution—it was about economics, prosperity, federal election changes, just to name a few. Sandler writes with such accessibility and the primary sources do well to supply the needed backmatter to make history come alive. While *1919* is not Sandler’s first book on my shelf, it has been a book I turned to more and more as the school year progressed.



This book then steered me to Claire Hartfield’s *A Few Red Drops: The Chicago Race Riot of 1919*. Sandler’s book had a chapter on the “Red Summer,” but I desperately wanted to know more. In Hartfield’s book, she not only has eye witness accounts, but her almost literary nonfiction-feel throughout takes the reader through the events in a much different way than Sandler’s *1919*. Both books are incredibly accessible for young learners (grades 5-8), and both books have myriad craft moves to be compared and contrasted. Both served me well on my quest not only to know more, but also to connect what I know how to do—literacy instruction—to what social studies teachers need support with: how to teach reading better.



My last book in this text set came at me in reverse. About two years ago I read *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI*. As I was finishing *A Few Red Drops*, it dawned on me that the similarities between those attacks, often in broad daylight, were contrary to the murders of the native Osage in Oklahoma in the 1920s, all of which were done in secret with little to no knowledge for many years. This book, even though I read it before the other two, created seeds of a text set in the back of my mind—waiting for just the right book to make a connection. Reading these books has started me on a quest to include texts like them in different teacher workshops I conduct. These books, and all books, can teach us something about our individual pasts as well as our collective past. In a recent Facebook Live session, author Kate DiCamillo reminded me of something profound. The interviewer asked Kate about the themes she has in her books. DiCamillo replied, “The story is something I tell, and once it leaves me it becomes yours.” The messages we glean from what we read are based on our narrative, our experiences. Get to know the past—really get to know it.

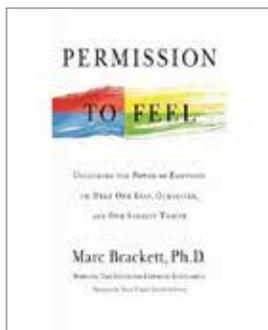
kellytummy@gmail.com

Summer stack: Reading recommendations for summer 2020

By Abby Rayburn, Digital Coordinator



Summer is here, and hopefully you have a blank space on your bedside table for some great reads! Stay up late or tote these to the pool; either way, after reading these books, you will find yourself with new perspectives and the sweet satisfaction of adding to your “Books Read” list. Enjoy!

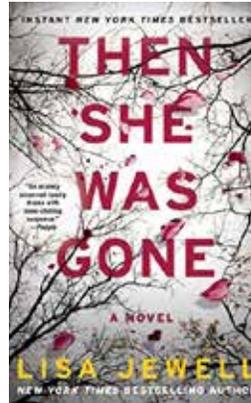


Reflection and Growth:

The book *Permission to Feel: Unlocking the Power of Emotions to Help Our Kids, Ourselves, and Our Society Thrive*, is a brand new look at what feelings are and how to acknowledge them, embrace them, and empower ourselves and others to identify and work through them. Many people suffer because we are not aware of our feelings or are unable to articulate where they come from

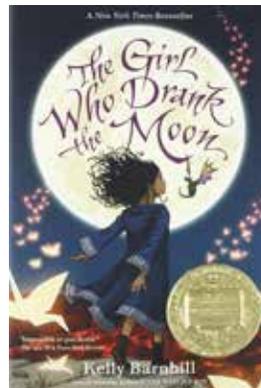
and how to cope with them. In this book that addresses the crux of social-emotional learning, the author Marc Brackett explores a unique approach to helping ourselves and others improve our own relationships with our emotions and increase the effectiveness of our interactions and societal systems. Every teacher, administrator, leader, and human with feelings will get something out of experiencing this book.

Adult Fiction:



Then She Was Gone by Lisa Jewell is a page-turner that will have you up all night. This book flip-flops through a span of ten years to tell the story of the disappearance of a young girl and how her absence affects her family as they continue their lives. Jewell is a master at leaving you hanging so that you just have to finish that “one more chapter.” The mystery of the disappearance and the mother’s attempt to move on form a spiral that may have you yelling at the pages before you are done. If you are into suspense and drama, this is it.

With the Kids:



If you are looking for a book to read along with your kids, *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* by Kelly Barnhill is a wonderful fantasy story about a town that sacrifices a child to the forest witch every year to appease her. Little do they know that the witch has a completely different perspective on this tradition. This book is an emotional journey through relationships between children and their parents, and the magic we can make when we acknowledge and appreciate who we are. This is appropriate for ages 11 and up.

Whatever pages you turn this summer, we hope they keep you entertained, refreshed, and enlightened!

abby.rayburn@gmail.com

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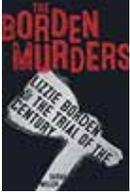
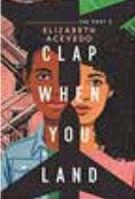
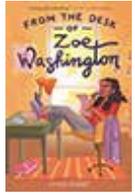
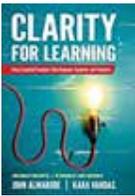
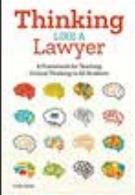
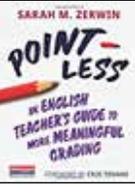
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Summer reading recommendations

By Liz Henson, Middle School Section Chair

That summer feeling came a little early this year with distance learning giving us a new outlook on teaching and learning. Here's a few ideas for some summer reading to escape and refresh

your soul, plan for the coming school year, or make-up some professional development that you may have missed during quarantine.

Fiction & Nonfiction			
	The Borden Murders by Sarah Miller		Clap When You Land by Elizabeth Acevedo
	Prairie Lotus by Linda Sue Park		Once Upon an Eid by S.K. Ali and Aisha Saeed
	Sal and Gabby Break the Universe by Carlos Hernandez		From the Desk of Zoe Washington by Janae Marks
		Professional Reading	
	One of Us is Lying and One of Us is Next by Karen M. McManus		Clarity for Learning by John Almarode and Karen Vandas
	Apple in the Middle by Dawn Quigley		Thinking Like a Lawyer: A Framework for Teaching Critical Thinking to All Students by Colin E. Seale
	Wink by Rob Harrell		Point-less: An English Teacher's Guide to More Meaningful Grading by Sarah M. Zerwin
	Clean Getaway by Nic Stone		Student-Centered Coaching by Diane Sweeney and Leanna Harris

Using books to reach a student's heart

By Danika Jaster, Elementary Section Chair



Every year, students enter our schools with pencils, pens, and notebooks loaded into backpacks. Increasingly, we are also finding the backpacks of even our youngest achievers overflowing with unnecessary stress. Our new reality is that a five year old is no longer immune to circumstances which can have a direct effect on their overall well-being. As educators, we must recognize the support our students need. We must help our students develop social and emotional skills. We **MUST** teach beyond our core subject areas.

To best support the well-being of the child, many teachers are incorporating Social Emotional Learning (SEL) into their classrooms. According to CASEL, SEL is “how children and adults learn to understand and manage emotions, set goals, show empathy for others, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (“What is SEL”). Research has shown that the teaching of social and emotional skills leads to improved attitudes of self, others, and school, as well as a decrease in conduct problems and emotional distress (Durlack et al., 2011). Additionally, incorporating SEL into the classroom has shown an 11% gain on standardized test scores (Durlack et al., 2011). Overall, SEL plays a crucial role in the academic and life success of students.

As literacy educators, we have the resources at our fingertips to develop social and emotional support in each student. We can use the power of literature as a springboard for teaching specific SEL skills while facilitating important discussions. Sarah Ellis, a second grade teacher from Cole Elementary in San Antonio, states, “Books have allowed me to do more in the classroom while working less. For instance, I can use a book to teach a lesson in science, reading, math, or social studies and also reference an SEL lesson we’ve talked about.”

Finding the right books can be overwhelming at times. Below is a list of picture books that will guide the teaching of social and

emotional skills in the classroom. Use this literature to provide students with the necessary tools to manage undue stress and ensure school supplies are the only contents loaded in their backpacks this fall.

danika.jaster@gmail.com

Empathy

- *The Invisible Boy* by Trudy Ludwig
- *Can I Be Your Dog* by Troy Cummings
- *Tight Times* by Barbara Shook Hazen
- *Manana Iguana* by Ann Whitford Paul

Positivity

- *Hair Love* by Matthew A. Cherry
- *What Do You Do With a Problem* by Kobi Yamada
- *Malala's Magic Pencil* by Malala Yousafzai
- *My Brave Year of First Tries, Sighs, and High Fives* by Jamie Lee Curtis
- *The Cow Who Climbed a Tree* by Gemma Merino

Perseverance

- *Shark Lady The True Story of How Eugenie Clark Became the Ocean's Most Fearless Scientist* by Jess Keating
- *The Crayon Man The True Story of the Invention of Crayola Crayons* by Natascha Biebow
- *Whoosh! Lonnie Johnson's Super-Soaking Stream of Inventions* by Chris Barton
- *One Word from Sophia* by Jim Averbeck and Yasmeen Ismail

Worry

- *Ruby Finds a Worry* by Tom Percival
- *The Koala Who Could* by Rachel Bright
- *Jabari Jumps* by Gaia Cornwall

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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Review the submission guidelines at https://www.tctela.org/english_in_texas.

English in Texas, Vol. 50.2 (Fall/Winter 2020)

Theme: Academic Language in an Emoji World

Manuscript Deadline: September 1, 2020

Column Deadline: September 15, 2020

Call for Submissions:

The theme for this call is “Academic Language in an Emoji World.” This theme will focus on the importance of academic language in this culture of emojis rather than words. Bailey (2007) states that “Academic language proficiency is knowing and being able to use general and content-specific vocabulary, specialized or complex grammatical structures—all for the purpose of acquiring new knowledge and skills, interacting about a topic, or imparting information to others.”

In this issue of *English in Texas*, we want readers to see how teachers design academic language instruction. How do you validate and build on students’ conversational/social language proficiency to develop their academic language fluency? Students are well versed in communicating through emojis, Instagram, and abbreviated texts. What approaches do you use to help them translate to both oral and written academic language for instruction and learning? What instructional choices do you make to help develop students’ listening, speaking, reading, writing, and visual literacy for academic purposes?

We welcome you to share your voice through articles that are practical, research-based, and/or theoretical, as related to this topic of “Academic Language in an Emoji World.” 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 Fall/Winter columns, “Putting It All Together” and “The Tech-Savvy Teacher” as related to the theme of “Academic Language in an Emoji World.” 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 how teachers differentiate for special populations, including gifted/talented, English learners, struggling readers, and other students with special needs. What experiences have you had in integrating reading, writing, listening, and speaking with these populations? What resources have you consulted? What challenges have you faced and how did you address them? 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.

The Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts neither endorses nor opposes political candidates or parties. TCTELA encourages a free and open exchange of ideas. For this reason, the content of conference presentations or articles in *English in Texas* and *Texas Voices* may not necessarily reflect the views of TCTELA or its members.