

# TEXAS VOICES



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

## President's corner

By Roni Burren, TCTELA President

### 'Tis the season

Gingerbread houses. Candy canes. Colder weather. And holiday breaks.

It's the most wonderful time of the year.

This season is exciting for me for many reasons. But one of the main reasons is that the annual TCTELA conference is just around the corner.

Just like Santa makes his list and checks it twice, the TCTELA leadership and executive director are making conference lists and checking them twice.

We spent nearly one calendar year making sure we've chosen the right speakers, the right venue, and crafted an experience for teachers.

My hope is that as you enjoy your holiday break, you start gathering your friends and colleagues to register for the annual TCTELA conference in Denton, Texas.

The experience will be nothing short of amazing, informative, and fun. Our speakers, including the incomparable Ibi Zaboï, are preparing to equip, encourage, and empower teachers to embrace boldness.



### CONTENTS

- President's corner ..... 1
- Embracing boldness in elementary literacy ..... 2
- Enough ..... 3
- Embracing student voice..... 3
- Quiet bystander ..... 4
- Critical is not a four letter word ..... 5
- Lessons from the NCTE 2022 annual convention ..... 6
- Winners and losers of NCTE 2023 ..... 7
- Be bold: Reasons to write from your new *English in Texas* editors ..... 8
- Embracing boldness: Let's talk about manga ..... 10
- Reading STAAR prep personalized choice board ..... 13
- Why Must Progress be Penalized ..... 14
- Call for submissions ..... 15

## 58TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXPOSITION

FEBRUARY 3-5, 2023



EMBASSY SUITES BY HILTON  
DENTON CONVENTION CENTER



## Embracing Boldness

An Exploration of the Power of Language

## Embracing boldness in elementary literacy

By Markesha Tisby, Elementary Section Chair

Last February, I sat in awe as TCTELA President Dr. Roni Burren unveiled her theme for the 2023 conference. I typed frantically trying to get all of the information down. I was immediately intrigued and inspired by what I heard and the bits and pieces I recorded in my notes. After accessing her complete call for proposals on the TCTELA website, I felt that same energy all over again.



Now here I am several months later wondering how that moment in time impacted me. It is one thing to feel inspired. It is another to embrace boldness and take action. That has not always been my modus operandi. See, 5-year-old Markesha still lives deep inside. I was a mousy child that only spoke in a whisper when called upon by her teacher. I was the introvert who left the other children wondering if I had the ability to speak. Life has a way of growing you up, which also opened me up. My passions have led me to find my voice, specifically my voice for elementary literacy.

Elementary literacy is currently clouded with choices about left or right, balanced or structured, old or new, and scripted or unscripted. Being bold and innovative at this moment means opting out of a winnerless war and standing firm on my beliefs while giving myself the grace to learn and research in order to tweak the contents of my educator toolbox. Doing what is best for students is always the right choice even when it is not the easy or popular choice. That is why we all need to be courageous and to link arms with courageous colleagues who speak life into our pupils, passion, purpose, and pursuits.

I don't wake up each morning and ponder how I am going to be bold that day, but I feel like I am moving forward on what I am calling my personal boldness spectrum. As I look forward to attending the 2023 TCTELA Conference, I am ready to be inspired yet again by the bold individuals presenting and in attendance.

I just may be bold enough to walk up to you and start a conversation.

### TCTELA Board of Directors

#### President

Roni Dean-Burren, University of Houston

#### Past President

Amanda Palmer, Katy ISD

#### President-Elect

Charles Moore, Dickinson ISD

#### Recording Secretary

Isabel Tuliao, Independent Consultant

#### VP for Membership and Affiliates

Alissa Crabtree, Independent Consultant

#### VP-Elect for Membership and Affiliates

Eva Goins, Northwest ISD

#### Teacher-Development Section Chair

Shona Rose, Independent Consultant

#### NCTE Liaison

Lois Marshall-Barker, Independent Consultant

#### Digital Coordinator

Brandy Alexander, Region 4

#### PD2Teach Liaison

Valerie Taylor, University of Texas

#### Elementary Section Chair

Markesha Tisby, Independent Consultant

#### Middle School Section Chair

Donna Herrera, Mercedes ISD

#### High School Section Chair

Zainab Jabak, Alief ISD

#### Pre-Service Teacher Committee Chair

Jim Warren, UT-Arlington

#### Local Arrangements Co-chairs 2022

Calyha Brown, UT-Arlington

Temitoro Edun, UT-Arlington

#### Editor, *Texas Voices*

Meredith Lee, Independent Consultant

[merirwin@gmail.com](mailto:merirwin@gmail.com)

#### Editors, *English in Texas*

Kim Pinkerton, University of Houston-Downtown

Diane M. Miller, University of Houston-Downtown

Kelly Tummy, University of Houston-Downtown

Stephen Winton, University of Houston-Downtown

Janeth Cornejo, University of Houston-Downtown

Angela López Pedrana,

University of Houston-Downtown

#### Executive Director

Amy Laine, Venture Alliance Group

512-617-3200

#### TCTELA

919 Congress Avenue #1400

Austin, Texas 78701 • 512-617-3200

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

## Enough

By LaWanda Williams, Treasurer

Curious and excited about reading as a kid, I always had a book and crayons on hand. The books put on vinyl records had us waiting for the magical ding to turn the page for the next exciting adventure. Then there were also books on cassette where I could start and stop the reading at my leisure while also making sure my imaginary class was quiet and listening. This joy came to an abrupt halt in third grade.

I attended elementary school at a time when NASA was booming and being in the Clear Lake Area was the place to be. I felt as though I was on top of the world...until I entered class and asked how to spell “finna.” Immediately, Ms. H., with her reddened face and pursed lips, said to me in a condescending tone, “We don’t use finna here. We do not talk like that. That is not a word, like ain’t is not a word.”

This was the beginning of drawing back from school. I felt as though my color, my language, and just being me were no longer enough.

When junior high rolled around, I thought it would be different because now we could play sports. Well, the junior high in Clear Lake was worse, but that revelation led to me finding my place at a different junior high. Finally, I had teachers and students who looked like me. I was no longer the only person of color. My fears of this new school were quickly extinguished when Mr. Ward told me he was not letting me out of his class because I was a flower waiting to bud!

I was finally enough.

I was enough! Mr. Ward’s words and actions finally let me



know I was good enough in school. It took until college for me to completely reopen my mind and trust. Dr. J.J. let me know that my thinking was enough. I could write and prove anything so long as it was supported by text. Why did it take me to college to learn this? Mr. W and Dr. J were the first educators who let me know that I was enough. That my thoughts were valid and my words mattered.

Having a negative teacher experience at a young age led me to my career. I struggled through years of school because of a few actions by one teacher. But I also bloomed at school once I had the love of just a few teachers.

My WHY? I want students to know they are enough!

## Embracing student voice

By Roni Burren, President

I was the kid who had a lot to say. As a young child, my teachers would move my seat to keep me from talking. But it didn’t matter because I was going to talk to whoever I sat near.

As I got older, I didn’t just get in trouble for talking in school. I got in trouble for being “disrespectful.” They labeled me as disrespectful because I asked questions about rules that I found stifling, misogynistic, anti-Black, and flat-out racist.



This year at the National Council for Teachers of English conference in Anaheim, California, I was lucky enough to attend a session led by high school students.

The students were from Thornton Fractional South High School in Lansing, Illinois. The six student leaders prepped for their session by reading 10 books over the summer. Their presentation focused on the dissatisfaction they had with their literacy instruction and the lack of equity in their school.

Impressive does not even describe these students. They were unafraid to ask their school hard questions. Their school pushed back against some of their questions, but that’s not the point I want to make. The students had teachers who listened and embraced their boldness.

I believe many of us teachers can model this behavior. I encourage teachers to reevaluate those students who talk a lot or ask hard questions. Often those are the students who see the world as it can be, and not as it is. Try your very best not to label these students as disrespectful or troublemakers. Those words are loaded and often harmful to historically marginalized students.

Instead, uplift those student voices because you could have the next NCTE session leader sitting in your classroom.

# Quiet bystander

By Isabel Tuliao, Recording Secretary

There is an old saying that quiet water runs deep. Nowadays, it is a novelty to find people who operate the same way. It seems the louder you are, the more that you get out of a situation. But as a quiet bystander, I find myself constantly asking the question, Why?

There is a turmoil in literacy education. Assumptions are made and accusations are being taken as the truth, leading to misunderstanding and divisiveness. I have been quietly observing the arguments surrounding the Science of Reading. By no means do I claim that I am an expert, but I take particular interest in this conversation because, as a literacy leader, I firmly believe in the power of collaboration and have seen first hand the importance of building teams, harnessing an individual's strengths, and moving students towards progress.

There is loud criticism of existing methods and resources. Calls to do *this* and not *that* approach in the teaching of reading. This leads me to think of two things. One, if there is really one proven method in the teaching of reading, then why does the reading achievement gap continuously increase? Two, does that mean that we discredit the researchers and educators who found success in using different methods that led children to be successful readers?

Of particular interest are comments being posted on social media by teachers and parents saying they were told to teach to the script and follow everything as it is. It makes me wonder if the real problem is instead miscommunication, lack of instructional support, or uninformed leadership. It is dangerous to say, "They

made me do it." It sends out a message that no thinking was happening on the part of the teacher and that they were being held at gunpoint to do something that is against their will. It also

screams the message that lessons are not geared towards the best interest of students. So why do it if it doesn't make sense? Or perhaps we can also ask, how can I make good use of new thinking to grow myself as an educator?

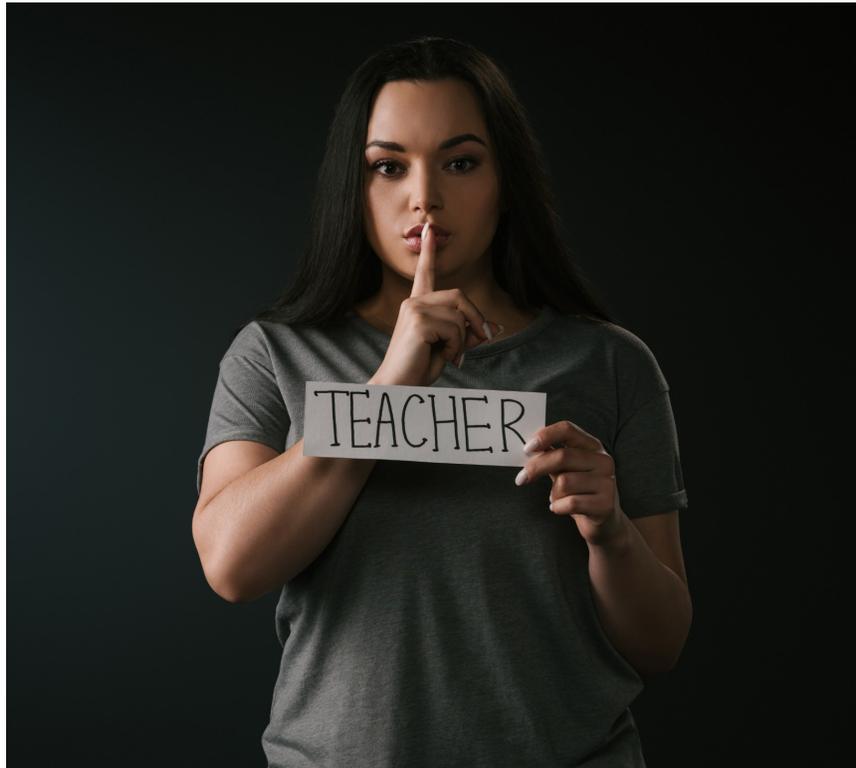
They say that it's hard to admit that we are wrong and that we need help. My take on the so-called "reading war" is that we are using our time and energy in working against each other and proving that one is right and the other one is wrong, all at the expense of students still not getting what they need to become successful readers.

I have not come across an educator who wakes up each day wanting to

do harm to their students. I know for sure each educator wants the best for their students. So why don't we take the approach of working together to better understand the needs of students first and foremost?

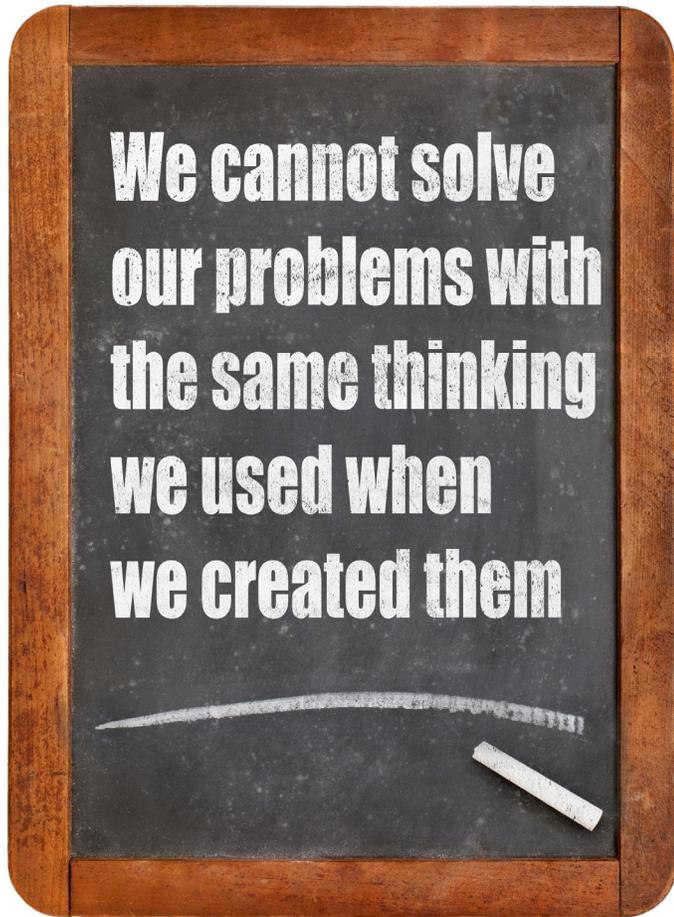
When we focus too much on what adults are doing or not doing, we tend to lose sight of the most important part of the equation—our students. We must learn to listen in order to understand and set aside biases and hidden agendas. And perhaps the most challenging part of the turmoil is allowing ourselves to be open and uncomfortable to fully understand what it really takes to make our children critical and literate members of society.

It starts with us, within us.



# Critical is not a four letter word

By Eva Goins, Vice President Elect



Add critical to any word and some of the world loses its mind. Don't believe me? By simply reading the phrase Critical Race Theory, a nervousness might have rushed through your body making you feel a little bit uneasy.

Adding critical to a word indicates you *must* be trying to indoctrinate or make a group of people feel bad about themselves.

Stop. Folks. Stop.

Critical is not a four letter word. It is just a word that swims in the ocean of negative connotation. Perhaps we need to switch critical to *crucial*.

There is nothing nefarious with having a critical lens when digesting information that is thrown at our faces daily. Equally, there is nothing wrong with teaching our students to use the same lenses when creating ideologies of their own while avoiding the beliefs others think they should know or believe in—that, folks, *IS* indoctrination.

During the 2022 annual NCTE convention last November, Dr. Gholdy Muhammad led a session about Historically Responsive Education. The room was packed with eager educator-allies that wanted to soak in the words of wisdom and reason that Dr. Muhammad was gifting.

We all know *Cultivating Genius* was, well in a word, “genius” thinking disseminated to us in 2020 before the world as we knew

it changed dramatically, making Dr. Muhammad’s message even that more dire two years later. It led us educators to understand the need to use culturally and historically responsive texts and lesson plans in our classrooms to bridge that gap of inequity among our marginalized students.

During her enlightening NCTE session, Dr. Muhammad explained that *Cultivating Genius* was her theory work and her new book due out in February 2023, *Unearthing Joy*, is the practice.

In a sneak peak of the important work from her new book that, according to the line wrapped around Scholastic where attendees were able to preorder the book, is already in high demand, Dr. Muhammad spoke of five learning pursuits that all lessons must possess when planning for students in order to lead to historically responsive teaching and learning.

- **Identity** – Advancing students’ knowledge and affirmation of self and others
- **Skills** – Advancing students’ content area skills and proficiencies
- **Intellect** – Advancing students’ knowledge put into action
- **Criticality** – Advancing students’ understanding of oppression, equity, and anti-racism
- **Joy** – Advancing students’ happiness by elevating beautiful and truthful images, representations, and narratives about self and others

Dr. Muhammad continued to share an example of what that could look like for a lesson plan about checking in with students during her presentation:

- **Identity: How’s your heart?** How are you feeling today? What emotions are you feeling? How do you see yourself affirmed in our school and class?
- **Skills:** How do you feel about previous skills learned in our class? **What areas do you need more support?** In what areas could you support another classmate?
- **Intellect: What topics or concepts would you like to learn more about?** What do you think about the knowledge you have been cultivating in class?
- **Criticality:** How are you reading the world? **What are you noticing about the state of humanity** and how it relates to whatever you are learning in class?
- **Joy:** What is your joy? **What has brought you joy?**

Regardless of which side of politics you reside on or what your own pedagogical ideologies are, most teachers will look at this framework and agree with 4 out of the 5 frameworks without a moment’s hesitation. Some might question the criticality framework.

Stop. Folks. Stop.

Dr. Muhammad said it best in her session that criticality is, “teaching students how to name, question, understand and disrupt any form of hurt, pain and harm in the world. Teaching & Learning is for social justice and equity.”

We teach kindness unceasingly in our classrooms; it’s crucial we start teaching them about equity, too.

Dr. Muhammad will be a keynote speaker at the 58th TCTELA Annual Conference and Exposition on February 3.

# Lessons from the NCTE 2022 annual convention

By Amanda Palmer, Past-President

This past November I had the privilege to attend the National Council of Teacher of English (NCTE) annual convention hosted this year in Anaheim, California. This was the first convention held in-person since the pandemic. With the excitement of being together with colleagues once again and embracing one more step towards normalcy, the theme *¡Suenos! Pursuing the Light* was apropos.

Flight schedules from Texas to Orange County dictated our arrival the afternoon before the convention began. This gave me an opportunity; I had never seen the Pacific Ocean. I really wanted to dip my toes in the surf. When we arrived there was just enough time to drop our bags at the hotel and catch an Uber to Huntington Beach twenty minutes away. The town was spectacular. It reminded me of the scenic descriptions in Taylor Jenkins Reid's *Malibu Rising*.

Back at the hotel that night we did what all teachers do at conferences, looked through the sessions and planned our attack. As I made my decisions, I noticed two themes emerge: sessions largely centered around either creative writing or equity and social justice.

The next morning I started in a creative writing session where we were asked to pull a recent picture from our cell phone and write about gratitude. I found myself staring at the surfers at sunset in Huntington Beach from the previous evening. Gratitude swelled for the opportunity to see God's glory from sea to shining sea because of a job that allows me to serve others and feed my passion of inspiring learners young and old. The session continued working with a variety of creative writing activities that highlighted the power of helping students own their personal voices and share their stories.

Later in the convention, I was able to attend a Build Your Stack session hosted by our own TCTELA member and High School Section Leader Zainab Jabak where she shared book recommendations that featured strong Arab Muslim women. Zainab's presentation was beautiful. After I frantically wrote down each of her eleven book recommendations, I contemplated Rudine Sims Bishop's often quoted statement that books should serve as windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors.

As a middle-aged white woman, my life has been filled with mirrors. I see myself everywhere. I need to build more book stacks that reflect choices such as those Zainab recommended so that I may look into and even slide over to other worlds. However, Arab Muslim women or Black males or LGBTQIA+ youth have lived much of their lives looking through windows and being forced through doors not of their choosing. Their book stacks are in desperate need of mirrors. It was thrilling to learn of the books Zainab was able to book talk at NCTE, but they aren't enough.

And, unfortunately, none of these books matter if they are not allowed a place in our libraries. This is where equity and social justice become critical. Lester Laminack, education expert and children's author, succinctly reduced the issue to this during a panel with Kylene Beers, "We need equity. In order to have equity, we must have diversity. In order to have diversity, we must have accessibility. Accessibility is being guarded by hate."

As an organization, we can do more by first being aware of our personal book stacks. Are these stacks offering a diverse view of



the world? Are the texts representing other cultures realistically? Reading and encouraging reading from a vast number of genres and cultural backgrounds will not only help build empathy, but it also builds background knowledge. This is an area that will help students with inferencing skills and to grow their critical thinking skills overall.

Another way we can do more for students is to increase opportunities for creative writing. Teach students to write their own narratives. Teach them to create their mirrors for each other when none are accessible. With the right classroom dynamic and safe social-emotional environment, they could also become the needed windows and sliding glass doors for their peers.

What I learned by the end of the NCTE annual conference was that creative writing and social justice/equity live together. Creative writing is where students find and hone their voice. Reading and choice in reading opens the world to the learner, and creative writing is where they begin to share themselves with the world.

## My Current Fiction Book Stack

- *Love from A to Z* by SK Ali (YA, Suggested by Zainab Jabak)
- *The Vibrant Years* by Sonali Dev (Adult Fiction)
- *Olga Dies Dreaming* by Xochitl Gonzalez (Adult Fiction)
- *My Mechanical Romance* by Alexene Farol Follmuth (YA)
- *Other Words from Home* by Jasmine Warga (YA, Suggested by Zainab Jabak)

## References:

Allyn, P., Beers, K., T. Charles., B. Collier., L. Laminack., E. Morrell., G. Muhammad. (2022, November 17-20). *The Light Is On in Our Souls for the Power of Story: Telling, Sharing, and Amplifying Why Story Matters in Today's World* [Conference Session]. National Council of Teachers of English, Anaheim, CA. United States. <https://convention.ncte.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/2022-AC-program-Friday.pdf>

REID, T. J. (2022) *Malibu Rising*. PENGUIN.

Zainab, Jabak. (2022, November 17-20). Build Your Stack : *YA Mirrors for Muslim Students* [Conference Session]. National Council of Teachers of English, Anaheim, CA. United States. <https://convention.ncte.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/2022-AC-program-Saturday.pdf>

# Winners and losers of NCTE 2023

By Charles Moore, President-Elect

**Spoiler Alert:** *There were only winners at the NCTE Conference in Anaheim, CA this year. If you were looking for losers, look somewhere else.*

## Winner: TCTELA

I couldn't be prouder of our organization's performance at the awards breakfast this year. TCTELA's name was called time after time as awards were handed out. We were recognized for our website, journal, and newsletter. All amazing accomplishments in their own right, but when we received the Dream Award things started feeling very serious. The moment we were announced as one of three states, along with Ohio and New York, as winners of the Affiliate of Excellence awards, the tenor shifted...

Awards applications are due during the summer time and fall under the responsibilities of the office of the President-Elect. As we entered the school year and progressed through the fall, we began to receive the notifications that our publications and website had been recognized. We celebrated the Dream Award, and our NCTE liaison, Dr. Lois Barker, began to put together her plan for how that grant would be distributed. Underlying all the success was the question about the Affiliate of Excellence recognition. It wasn't until the day before I boarded the plane to Anaheim that I received the email that we were to be recognized.

For an old football coach, I couldn't have been prouder to be a part of an organization whose service was deemed by our national organization as worthy of recognition. I like to win, but more importantly, I obsess over recognizing the amazing work of our leaders and membership. The list of contributors to our organization's success is too long for this space, but I hope every single member feels connected to this accomplishment.

## Winner: Leadership

Two of our board members were selected to present at NCTE. Congratulations to high school section chair Zainab Jabak who shared her experience as part of a panel presentation at NCTE proper and TCTELA Vice President Alissa Crabtree who presented at CEL. Our organization has so much to offer in terms of leadership, and that capacity will translate to our membership at our annual conference in February in Denton, TX.

I see an opportunity for Texas teachers to have a bigger

and louder voice in the national conversation and I'm already cooking on some ideas that I will submit as presentation proposals for NCTE '23 in Columbus, OH. I can't wait to see

what our friends from the Lone Star state can bring to our next national conference.

## Winner: Future TCTELA Conferences

NCTE is an amazing opportunity to experience voices from the field that might not find the social and political landscape of Texas welcoming. At NCTE, those voices are elevated and celebrated. The same is true for our TCTELA conferences, and national exposure presents an opportunity for authors and speakers to build the background that helps the transition to what some might consider a more polarized environment.

We understand the importance of diversity and representation.

Not only does NCTE inform our organization for potential speakers and conversational territories, but it helps us think hard about the mode that we ask our featured speakers to use to communicate. Several of the speakers at NCTE were invited to have a conversation with someone who functioned as an interviewer. Nic Stone, for instance, was incredibly engaging and provided learners with an insight into her work that a more formal one-way presentation could not have approached. We can do that down here in Texas as well, and it's something I'm looking forward to seeing at future TCTELA conferences.

## Winner: Attendees like Me!

NCTE is a chance to step outside the echo chamber of our districts and familiar networks. Attendees have the opportunity to meet people from all over the world. We are invited to collaborate with new friends and expand our frame of reference beyond our local or state organizations. Sometimes educational professionals find themselves living in their own echo chamber and what they need most is an opportunity to hear from prophets from other lands.

There is wisdom in hearing from those whose opinion might differ from our own. Oftentimes we benefit from forcing ourselves to see the world through different lenses. This refreshing reframing of a mindset is valuable when we return from a national conference like NCTE.

See you in Denton!!!



# Be bold: Reasons to write from your new *English in Texas* editors

By Kim Pinkerton, Diane M. Miller, Kelly Tumy, Stephen Winton, Janeth Cornejo, and Angela López Pedrana, Incoming *English in Texas* Editors



As we greet 2023, TCTELA welcomes a new team of editors for *English in Texas*. Our team will serve for three years and, in that time, hopes to embolden both experienced and novice writers to publish. It's about time that we introduce ourselves! In the following paragraphs, you will have the opportunity to “meet” each new editor while simultaneously embracing bold reasons to write for TCTELA’s award-winning journal.

## Reason #1: We are your biggest fans.

Have you ever wanted to write for an academic publication but were so afraid that your ideas were not good enough that you just never even typed that first word? If that is you, this team understands, as we have all been there at one time or another. There is nothing more crippling for a writer than worrying about how your work might be received. We want to take that worry away. Email us with your ideas as soon as you have them. We would love to give feedback on your ideas, help guide you on how the typical *English in Texas* reader might take interest in your topic, or even provide encouragement to take the next step. *Let us walk alongside you—take your next step with us!*

—Kim Pinkerton, [becauseofabook@gmail.com](mailto:becauseofabook@gmail.com).

## Reason #2: Teachers of writing NEED to write!

The philosophy that guides my university-level teaching is to abide by the mantra that you should never expect from students what you cannot expect even more of from yourself, a belief described in the educational research as the “Peter effect” (Applegate & Applegate, 2004). The Biblical allusion refers to the interchange between the Apostle Peter and a beggar. When the beggar asks Peter for money, the apostle responded, “I cannot give that which I do not have.” To my diverse group of students, I am constantly saying, “In order to teach writing, you must write,” or “In order to teach reading, you must read.” Our personal writing and reading fluency depends on this. Therefore, authentic experience is a core practice that provides maximum impact.

My students and I engage in writing and reading experiences both as students and as teachers. Writing engagements are followed by metacognitive discussions about translating their own writing experiences into learning experiences for their future students. Through it all, we work within the frame of a dual focus: when you hone your own skills in an area, you then become a better teacher of that subject. The moral of the story (that I continually have to remind myself of, by the way!) is a sort of “put your money where your mouth is” or “practice what you preach” or whatever overused colloquialism you’d like to insert here! *We want English in Texas to be a place where the Peter effect is in full effect.*

—Diane M. Miller, [petersond@uhd.edu](mailto:petersond@uhd.edu).

## Reason #3: Believe that your voice matters.

Whether you are a teacher, a coordinator, a literacy coach, an assistant principal, or even a superintendent, we believe in showcasing a variety of voices, opinions, and viewpoints in *English in Texas*. We do not want any member of TCTELA saying to themselves, “Well, someone else probably knows better, writes better, or thinks better than I do.” Your time is now, and we wholeheartedly encourage you to take the leap and let all of Texas hear your voice. You want to know why? Because each member of this editorial team did just that at one point in our careers. We ran for office, we wrote our first article, we submitted an application to the tenure committee—we LEAPT. We became lifetime advocates for all things TCTELA. We found our voices, and we took a leap to have them heard. We can’t wait to work with you to amplify those leaps for you. *You better believe your voice matters.*

—Kelly Tumy, [kellytumy@gmail.com](mailto:kellytumy@gmail.com).

## Reason #4: Teachers’ voices need to be heard because “Practice Makes Progress.”

I remember feeling overwhelmed in my first year of teaching. I had so many questions but didn’t know who or how to ask. What I did know was that I cared about my students and needed to

*Continued on next page*

**Be bold: Reasons to write from your new *English in Texas* editors (continued)**



work on my craft. That year, I connected with WHACTE, a local TCTELA affiliate, and immediately felt relief connecting with other educators who were also looking for opportunities to grow. A few years later, I attended my first TCTELA conference and returned to my classroom refreshed and ready to practice what I had learned from educators across the state of Texas. I continue to connect and learn from educators at our yearly conference and am a proud member of the 2020-2022 Rising Leaders Cohort. The TCTELA community’s endless support has given me a place to share my voice and gives all educators a platform to share ideas and build a network of cheerleaders. *Won’t you let us cheer you on?*  
—Janeth Cornejo, [cornejoj@uhd.edu](mailto:cornejoj@uhd.edu).

**Reason #5: District-based literacy leaders’ voices need to be heard.**

District-based literacy leaders have unique and valuable ideas and experiences to share. Having served as a curriculum manager, administrator, and literacy coach in three districts, much of my work has centered on professional development and implementing best-practice instruction. District-based literacy leaders might explore how current ideas in the field impact their stakeholders. Further, they might share thoughts on the challenges their students and teachers face. How might we support joyful and meaningful reading and writing in our schools and districts? How do we meet the needs of all learners? How might we support equity, celebrate diversity, and fight against racism? District-based literacy leaders might explore these ideas and more in writing for *English in Texas*. *Leadership is at the core of TCTELA, and we can’t wait to learn from you!*  
—Stephen Winton, [stephenjoelwinton@gmail.com](mailto:stephenjoelwinton@gmail.com).

**Reason #6: Words matter, but languages matter just as much.**

Since I grew up in the sink or swim era (yes, I *am* that old), I have learned that what I hear

may not be what was meant when said. The barrier is often the language. My recollection of how language nuances can impact a person’s image was when I was in my early 20s and was invited by our section chief for lunch. I worked in the City of Madison (Wisconsin) Emergency Help division. I was given a very high-paying job because I spoke Spanish, and during that time (70s), a large influx of Spanish speakers were moving into Madison.

During *that* lunch, I took a bite and stopped eating. After a bit, our chief Mrs. Muir asked in the kindest way possible, “Mareeah, how is your meal?” As bashful as I am, I was compelled to answer. What came out of my mouth was: “This food is *rotten*.” Needless to say, everyone nearly dropped their spoons or forks and stared at me. I was literally thinking “...*trágame tierra...*” (swallow me earth) because I realized what I had said did not seem to be just the *right thing*.

I will never forget how Mrs. Muir responded, “Oh child, you made me think of the first time I ate brussel sprouts, and I thought they were too stinky to eat...” and chuckled. This broke the tension and someone asked, “Is there any cabbage in there?” Another said something like, “That is why I always order meat, with meat...dah, dah.” Mrs. Muir led my group, all wonderful folk, to make this slip of the tongue seem so innocuous, and by the time we left the restaurant, I had new synonyms: spoiled, off putting, too aromatic... In short, the English I spoke still needed maturing because I had never had a chance to use it in situations such as this, and while I knew what I meant in Spanish, the nuances I knew in Spanish were not present in English.

Do I still make mistakes when I talk? Yes, I still do. But now, as a teacher educator, I use this experience as a springboard as to why it is essential to increase the depth and breadth of a student’s vocabulary...in any language. I am about to discover what *English in Texas* will teach me to become a stronger dual language speaker. More importantly, however, I wish to see dual language speakers (of any languages) to share *their* stories about language and words. How do we manage? What do we keep and what do we lose? What empowers us and what tries to keep us in *our place*? *Join us, fellow dual language speakers and writers!*  
—Angela López Pedrana, [pedranaa@uhd.edu](mailto:pedranaa@uhd.edu).

If these reasons (see Figure 1) have inspired you to write for *English in Texas*, get your keyboard ready because the 2023 calls

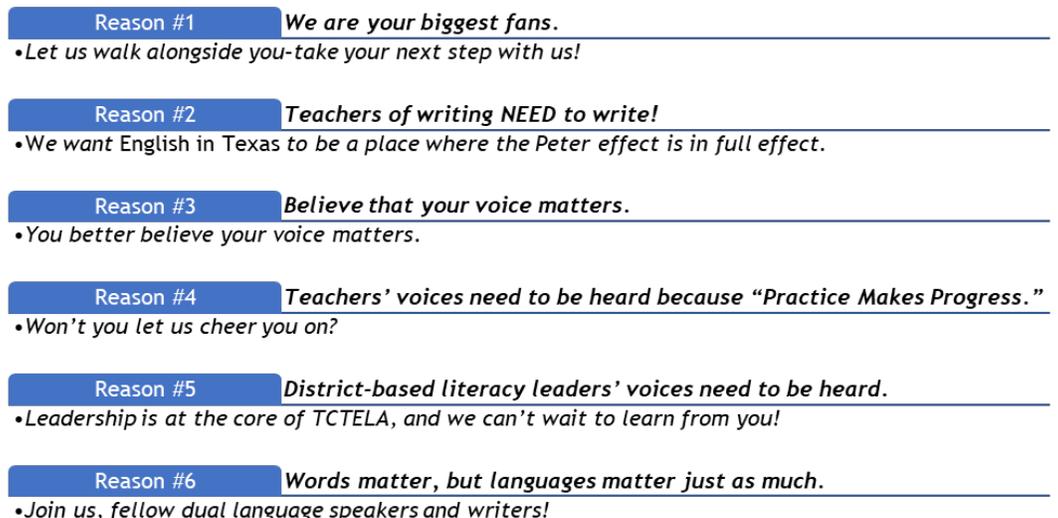


Figure 1. TL;DR

## Be bold: Reasons to write from your new *English in Texas* editors (continued)

are here. The spring call follows the upcoming conference theme of embracing boldness with powerful language. Think about how language and literacy impact teaching and learning in powerful ways. This call encompasses spoken language, how writers use language, the politics of language, and more. If you are looking beyond the use of language, explore the fall call that seeks a pandemic *deficit* panacea for teaching and learning. Consider what you have learned about meeting students where they are at the moment. Your remedies might be related to online/in-person learning, the expansion/shrinking of literacy, new student perspectives as a result of living in a pandemic, etc. Visit [https://www.tctela.org/english\\_in\\_texas](https://www.tctela.org/english_in_texas) to see the full calls and to find submission guidelines.

If writing a full article puts a damper on your sense of adventure, we have also added standing columns that might

rally you. These smaller submissions include columns about marginalized voices, teacher self care, and aha/uh-oh stories from the classroom. And, if you still are not sure about writing for *English in Texas*, come to the 58th Annual Conference & Exposition in Denton ([https://www.tctela.org/2023\\_conference](https://www.tctela.org/2023_conference)). Our editorial team will have an interactive, idea-generating session on writing for publication on Friday, February 3 from 1:15-2:15. We want to hear from you, and who wouldn't want to hear tips and tricks for becoming a published author? **We are here to help you be bold and write.**

### Reference:

Applegate, A. J., & Applegate, M. D. (2004). The Peter effect: Reading habits and attitudes of preservice teachers. *The Reading Teacher*, 57(6), 554-563.

## Embracing boldness: Let's talk about manga

By Cailyn N. Dougherty, Research Associate, Sam Houston State University, and Dr. Michelle Parker, Professor of Education, Sam Houston State University

When thinking back to our journey into literacy, many of the books we read were picture books such as *Strega Nona* by Tomie dePaola and *Stone Soup* by Ann McGovern. These vivid stories were essential for developing context clues, foundational language skills, response skills, authors' craft, and more. When did we move away from using multimodal literature to engage in TEKS and create lifelong readers?

Educators, myself included, want to teach what they are passionate about and what they love to read. There isn't anything like holding a book dear to your heart. However, we want to balance what our hearts desire and what our students need. Often this balance does not include manga, which is seen as unacademic or unapproachable due to uncertainties on how to incorporate it into the curriculum. The good news is by incorporating opportunities for students to engage with manga, we are providing them with choice and opportunities to engage within their communities. We also know that the more opportunities students have to engage in reading they are interested in, the more likely they will develop lifelong beneficial skills outside our classrooms (Dabrowski & Marshall, 2018; Dougherty et al., 2022; Patall et al., 2010). Graphic novels and Manga provide an excellent opportunity to do just this.



### What is Manga

Manga is the name given to Japanese graphic novels or comics. There is no physical difference between a manga and any other country's graphic novel or comics except for cultural themes and language (Lee, 2021). Schwartz and Rubinstein-Avila (2006)

reveal that “teachers and parents often undermine the ability to make meaning from the myriad of popular culture texts to which young people are exposed.” Such popular texts include comics, which are “often perceived as contributing to students’ short attention spans, passivity and lack of creativity” (p. 40).

However, despite these reservations, readers of all ages are engrossing themselves in the world of manga. This form of literature allows readers to engage in multimodality by “using image plus language in increasingly complex ways” and “are likely to attend to graphic information at the same hierarchical level as the printed text” (p. 41). Also, manga reflects Japan's communication, resulting in complex storytelling incorporating literary elements, culture, and history; these elements take on new forms when the writer composes it using a variety of font and script styles to create dimension within the storytelling.

*Continued on next page*

## Embracing boldness: Let's talk about manga (continued)

### But, Why Manga?

Schwartz and Rubinstein-Avila (2006) state that manga allows teachers to bring in something students sincerely enjoy, leading to engagement. Manga and graphic novels also force readers to incorporate more inferencing and comprehension than reading a picture or chapter book. A reader must be able to read between the lines, literally, as they connect image to image and panel to panel.

Schwartz and Rubinstein-Avila (2006) explain that it is not just the popularity of manga that makes it appealing to use within the classroom setting but also the unique multimodal skillset that emerges in manga readers. The authors go as far as to say that manga provides readers an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of self and “[b]y engaging with a wide range of manga characters, dynamic plots, and storyboards, children and young adults make connections between these popular texts and their own life experience (p. 42). An example of manga usage within the classroom can be found in a 2013 study evaluating narrative lessons. Aliyah (2013) conducted a quantitative study using two different tenth-grade classes where one remained the control group (received lessons with traditional novels) and another became the experimental group (received lessons using manga). The results of this study concluded that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group (p. 5).

One instance of this can be found in Lee, a 10-year-old boy. Leander and Boldt (2012) observed the levels of engagement Lee experienced as he immersed himself in the world of Inuyasha and Naruto, popular manga characters, representing literacy acquisition (p. 28). In those moments, Lee is experiencing an authentic love of reading; furthermore:

“Those movements and their accompanying sensations, emotions, and results are added to the mix, and Lee is, in some insignificant or significant way, different than he was before. Even this small sampling of activity makes evident how Lee’s experience of the world around him is enacted through his body; text—in this case, manga—joins the flow or movement of multiple sensations and experiences as he sits, reads, performs, later searches the Internet, looks at trading cards, and engages in swordplay” (p. 29).

Providing opportunities for our students to play with literacy is vital to creating life-long learners and engaging in content beyond our classrooms (Dougherty, 2022). Engaging in meaningful experiences creates stronger connections to our learning, building upon our literacy. By including these opportunities to engage in choice, we are providing opportunities to participate within the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). When students are in this zone, they can engage fully and authentically; Lee demonstrates this when he becomes animated while reading. Leander and Rowe (2006) explained, “By ‘animating’ we intend to indicate a way of taking up the complex and varied work of Deleuze and Guattari that responds to it—a way of ‘bending their work to [our] own project’ while at the same time allowing our work to be ‘reoriented’ by theirs” (p. 434).

Marshall (2018) adds that it is crucial to highlight that comics are a writing style, not a genre, as these types of literature can be found in almost every genre and include all the literary elements a traditional novel uses. When approaching it through this lens, manga, or any graphic novel for that matter, are technically no different from each other. However, a conventional book may

require multiple reads before the student can identify elements within a story. Marshall (2018) highlights a moment within her classroom where a student, who performed below level, informed her that they hated reading but had a lot of interest in Japan and anime (often the animated version of books and manga). After he engaged in reading his favorite anime in manga form, he went from never finishing a book to reading “all 74 books within a couple months, found another similar series, and started those” and by the end of the year “he read 184 books.” The best part, Marshall pointed out, is no matter what interest area her students have, she can always find a graphic novel that covers that interest. Similarly, this can be said about mangas, as they are equally vast.

To clarify, manga is not just for underperforming students. Students of all backgrounds, grade levels, classifications, gender, and reading level can benefit from the use of manga. Yes, even your PreAP and AP kiddos, too! The best part is there are several ways to teach with it.



### How to Use Manga

Incorporating manga within your classroom for student use can be as easy as having a small collection within your classroom library or discussing with the school librarian about purchasing a few copies for students to read. Moving beyond advocating for accessibility, it can also be used as a teaching tool in various ways, such as:

- Using manga as a source for reader’s theater
- Exploring the hero’s journey
- Discussing multiple viewpoints
- Understanding narratives
- Exploring new vocabulary and spelling
- Book clubs/book talks
- Infographic making
- Connection-making through thematic bundles
- Connection-making to self
- Inferencing from volume to volume

*Continued on next page*

## Embracing boldness: Let's talk about manga (continued)

- Graphic features lessons
- Author's purpose
- Journaling
- Literary analysis
- Character analysis

### Recommendations

As with any book, before selecting it for classroom use, it is highly recommended you consider your communities' viewpoints regarding censorship, violence, and any other topic areas.

For a quick guide to checking for age appropriateness, most manga uses an age rating process to show what is and is not appropriate for specific age groups. This can be found on the back of the book. Not all manga include violence or inappropriate storylines, but it is essential to consult your local bookstore, read reviews or reach out to someone who currently reads manga or graphic novels to double-check. Below are some recommendations:

### Intermediate & Below

- *Yotsuba&!* by Kiyohiko Azuma, Slice of Life (daily life)
- *Pokemon Adventures* by Hidenori Kusaka, Fantasy & Adventure
- *Yo-Kai Watch* by Noriyuki Konishi, Fantasy & Adventure
- *Yuzu the Pet Vet* by Mingo Ito, Slice of Life (daily life)

### Middle School

- *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* by Naoko Takeuchi, Fantasy & Adventure
- *Haikyuu!!* by Haruichi Furudate, Slice of Life (daily life) & Sports
- *My Hero Academia* by Kohei Horikoshi, Fantasy & Adventure
- *Little Witch Academia* by Trigger/Yoh Yoshinari, Fantasy & Adventure
- *Naruto* by Masashi Kishimoto, Fantasy & Adventure
- *Keep Your Hands off Eizouken!* by Sumito Owara, Fantasy & Adventure
- *Spy Family* by Tatsuya Endo, Fantasy & Adventure
- *One Piece* by Eiichiro Oda, Fantasy & Adventure

### High School

- *Fruits Basket* by Natsuki Takaya, Romance & Fantasy
- *Snow White with the Red Hair* by Sorata Akiduki, Romance & Fantasy
- *Blue Exorcist* by Kazu Kato, Fantasy & Adventure
- *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu No Yaiba* by Koyoharu Gotouge, Fantasy & Adventure
- *One Punch Man* by Yusuke Murata, Fantasy & Adventure

This is just a generalized list of manga you can include in your classroom. There are plenty of genres for you and your students to explore, including Slice of Life (everyday life situations), Romance, True Crime, and Superheroes! If you are overwhelmed, do not hesitate to reach out for ideas and suggestions. Many blogs, magazines, and libraries have recommended book lists for the age group you are specifically looking for, which can help remove any

uncertainty or feelings of being overwhelmed. Don't forget your kiddos are also a great source of information regarding their interests.

*Cailyn N. Dougherty is a current Ed.D student in the field of literacy and is passionate about student choice, graphic novels, and diversity. As an avid reader, recommendations and tips are essential to finding the best storytelling; to simplify this process, Cailyn created a blog to help readers quickly find new and upcoming books: <https://simplydougherty.wixsite.com/beyond-colored-pages>. You can reach out via email at [cnd011@shsu.edu](mailto:cnd011@shsu.edu).*

*Dr. Michelle Parker is a Clinical Assistant Professor at Sam Houston University. She received her Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction in Literacy from the University of Houston. Dr. Parker was a teacher/department head for 20 years before entering higher education. Her writing/research interests include engaging classrooms in secondary and higher education.*

### References:

- Aliyah, L. N. (2013). The use of manga to teach reading narrative text to tenth graders of sman 1 cerme. *e-Jurnal Unesa*, 01(01), 2–5.
- Dabrowski, J., & Marshall, T. R. (2018). Motivation and engagement in student assignments: The role of choice and relevancy. The Education Trust. <https://edtrust.org/resource/motivation-and-engagement-in-student-assignments>
- Dougherty, C. N., Parker, M., Nickson, L., & Creghan, C. (2022). The impact of student choice on reading. *English in Texas*, 52(1), 20–24.
- Dougherty, C.N. (2022) An analysis of learning through play [Unpublished manuscript]. Sam Houston State University.
- Leander, K. M., & Rowe, D. W. (2006). Mapping literacy spaces in motion: A rhizomatic analysis of a classroom literacy performance. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 41(4), 428–460. <https://doi.org/10.1598/rrq.41.4.2>
- Leander, K., & Boldt, G. (2012). Rereading “A pedagogy of multiliteracies.” *Journal of Literacy Research*, 45(1), 22–46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296x12468587>
- Lee, G. (2021, March 3). *An introduction to manga*. Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. Retrieved from <https://www.carnegielibrary.org/an-introduction-to-manga>
- Marshall, J. (2018). *The Power of Comics*. International Literacy Association. Retrieved from <https://www.literacyworldwide.org/blog/literacy-now/2018/12/20/the-power-of-comics>
- Patall, E.A., Cooper, H. & Wynn, S.R. (2010). The effectiveness and relative importance of choice in the classroom. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 102 (4), 896-915.
- Schwartz, A., & Rubinstein-Ávila, E. (2006). Understanding the Manga Hype: Uncovering the Multimodality of Comic-Book Literacies. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 50(1), 40–49. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40012306>
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2022). *Glossary: Literacy*. UNESCO UIS. Retrieved from <https://uis.unesco.org/node/3079547>
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

# Reading STAAR prep personalized choice board

By Miranda Armstrong, Elementary Teacher, Klein ISD

STAAR Scope and Sequence

Day	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
TEKS/Skill Focus	Pre- Assessment <a href="#">Link</a>			4.9.D.ii Text Features
Whole Group		Why should we review?	Choice Board Expectations and Procedures	Text Features Fix It <a href="#">Link</a>
Small Group		Where are you at?	The teacher monitors students working on the choice board and is available to answer questions or correct behaviors. Look at Anchor Chart in the Pictures section for example.	Look at your data for each TEKS and determine who needs a small group for each TEKS. Sort by most need. Each teacher will be different based on the students' needs. Here is the link for the lessons. <a href="#">Link</a>
Independent Work		Code choice board and make an action plan for yourself	First day of choice board	Personalized Choice Board
Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9
4.9D. E. and F Nonfiction Text	4.9.D.iii Text Structure	4.3 Vocabulary	4.1C and 4.7C	4.8.C Plot
Non-Fiction Reading Passage- Partner Practice <a href="#">Link</a>	Text Structure Match Up <a href="#">Link</a>	STAAR Vocabulary Sort- <a href="#">Link</a>	Fact and Opinion Game Show- <a href="#">Link</a>	Read Aloud: Mermaids are a Doko by Sequence - <a href="#">Link</a>
The teacher is available to provide support and check students reading passages. As students are being checked teacher can do a	Look at your data for each TEKS and determine who needs a small group for each TEKS. Sort by most need. Each teacher will be	Look at your data for each TEKS and determine who needs a small group for each TEKS. Sort by most need. Each teacher will be	Look at your data for each TEKS and determine who needs a small group for each TEKS. Sort by most need. Each teacher will be	Look at your data for each TEKS and determine who needs a small group for each TEKS. Sort by most need. Each teacher will be

To meet my students' needs, I developed a curriculum for Reading STAAR preparation that personalizes students' review through an individualized choice board. A personalized choice board attends to each one of my students' strengths and weaknesses. Why was I reviewing with the whole group every day and/or having students just take practice tests? Each student needs to focus on their weak areas and be given opportunities to practice or review independently and through small groups.

I want my students to grow and in whole-group review lessons and/or when asked to take a practice test, students were bored and disengaged. This time of year I need all students to be involved and engaged in the lessons. A choice-board review is engaging, hands-on, and interesting for students. Through choice boards,

students get to pick what topic they would like to focus on and what activity in that topic they would like to complete while also being exposed to whole-group review games and small-group intervention.

Choice boards also help students take ownership of their learning. First, I give them the percentage of success they have had throughout the year on each TEKS and we discuss their strengths and weaknesses. Then they take their learning into their own hands and decide what they need to work on to grow their own learning. They determine what they want to work on and for how long. It is completely up to them. This is preparing them for more than just the Reading STAAR; it is also preparing them for future educational experiences.

When implementing this, each day consists of three tasks. The first task is a 10-15 minute whole group review activity that is hands-on or interactive to target specific TEKS and how to approach the skill. The second task is for students to work on their personalized choice board independently. The third task is that, as the teacher, I pull two to three small groups to focus on a skill that students need intervention on and give them more guided help.

Throughout this entire process I constantly ask myself, "Is this going to motivate my students, is this going to grow their learning, and is this helping my students be successful?" If I cannot answer yes to all three questions, then I reimagine the lesson or activity so that it is best for my students.

I created a [scope and sequence](#) to be as user friendly as possible so that others can take what I've done and replicate it with their students!

Enjoy!

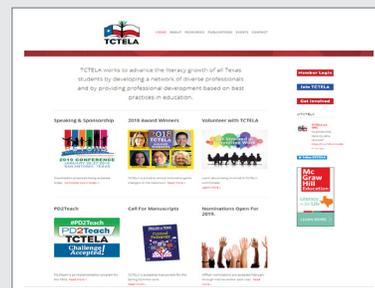
from the blogosphere...

Fill your tank with loads of instructional ideas at:

- <https://movingwriters.org>
- <http://twowritingteachers.org>
- <https://www.weareteachers.com>
- <https://pernillesripp.com>
- <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com>
- <https://blog.heinemann.com>
- <https://readingbyexample.com>

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

...to the website



## Why Must Progress be Penalized

By Donna Herrera, Middle School Section Chair

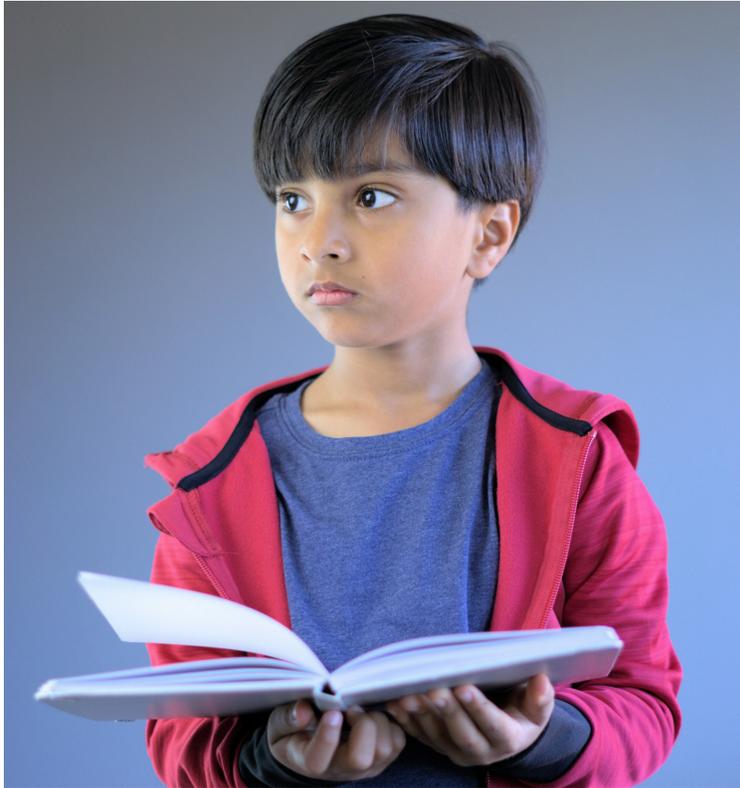
Learning gaps are always an agenda item to tackle, but post-pandemic life has only chipped away at the progress schools, teachers, and students have made.

*Reading, writing, listening, speaking, reading, writing, listening, speaking...* a constant in the back of any teacher's mind, regardless if their classroom is home to a native or non-native speaker.

Life after COVID now consists of catching students up to where they need to be, where they should have been, and what the pandemic took from them. South Texas comprises of 94% Hispanic/Latino heritage and fosters the world of bilingualism. Even so, COVID further isolated our emergent bilinguals online due to economic, technological, and linguistic barriers. All factors considered, some students entered their first year in the Fall of 2019, only to be quarantined and robbed of their linguistic journey. Regardless of the grade level, they missed out on community building and immersion in a foreign language. The most basic of those experiences was obstructed by the wearing of a facemask, in which EBs need to hear the pronunciation of words, but they also need to see it.

In the classroom, a student will have to relive the anxieties accompanied by learning a foreign language online, only to reexperience those same anxieties again in person. This is changing quarantine and isolation to academic trauma, with students even more hesitant to engage in the classroom. It is not uncommon to hear a student vent or mention, "*Es mi primer año aquí, pero me mudé de México hace 2 años*"; they feel it is their first year having moved to the United States a couple of years prior. Depending on the method of instruction, EB support or

a bilingual program in place, the student may not be able to understand instruction online, and they will also regress in the skills learned from their native language because it is not being practiced. A student that entered the Fall of 2019 as an EB first year is therefore at a more significant loss because not only must they have to be at grade level, but they must also navigate a language in which they were not able to experience.



In my classroom, a tableau of readers, all at different linguistic and academic levels, cheered for a student after he read his first sentence in English. That very same student shared with the class he *finally* had his first school year in the United States because his first two years seemed desolate and lacked the endless possibilities truly learning offers. It is our emergent bilinguals we must always take into consideration when monitoring STAAR, TELPAS, and lesson planning. They are not just another bolded white name over a black background on a zoom call, or *they have been here for X amount of years taking TELPAS; how are they still not getting it?* It is a disservice to discredit students' 2nd language abilities in the years following the pandemic and

instead prioritize community and dual language learning to give students back their voice and power.

### References:

Tamez-Robledo, N. (2022, April 14). *Pandemic learning was tough on everyone. bilingual students faced additional challenges.* EdSurge News. Retrieved December 21, 2022.

### FOCUS ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



TCTELA



@tctela



@tctela

#TCTELA2023

## Call for submissions

Review the submission guidelines at [https://www.tctela.org/english\\_in\\_texas](https://www.tctela.org/english_in_texas).

*English in Texas*, Vol. 53.1 (Spring/Summer 2023)

Theme: Embracing Boldness: An Exploration of the Power of Language

Manuscript Deadline: April 1, 2023

Column Deadline: April 15, 2023

*"Words are to be taken seriously. I try to take seriously the acts of language. Words set things in motion. I've seen them doing it. Words set up atmospheres, electrical fields, charges. I've felt them doing it. Words conjure. I try not to be careless about what I utter, write, sing. I'm careful about what I give voice to."*  
—Toni Cade Bambara

With this reference, TCTELA President Dr. Roni Burren announced the 2023 conference theme: **Embracing Boldness: An Exploration of the Power of Language**. Language has the ability to pull us apart, but it also has the profound power to name common understandings. Words can be politicized, divisive, and marginalizing, yet they can also be restorative, connective, and universal.

For the Spring/Summer 2023 issue of *English in Texas*, we invite you to consider the role language plays in every aspect of our classrooms. Some pedagogical questions to consider for manuscript submissions are any of the following, any fusion of the following, or any extension beyond the following:

- How does written and spoken language impact classroom instruction? How do we teach students about the intricacies of language?
- Which texts, characters, or real-life heroes exemplify what it means to use language in a profound way?
- How do we teach writers to write boldly and bravely?
- How has the language of the current political climate, nationally and/or in the state of Texas, positively or negatively impacted the ELAR classroom?
- How are we positioning multiple languages and dialects within our classrooms? Why does this matter?

**More broadly, you may also consider the following:**

- How can we cultivate more linguistically inclusive schools?
- How does language bring us together?
- What does it mean to teach literacy in a bold fashion?

**FOCUS ON THE THEME:** We invite interested individuals to submit manuscripts, conceptual, creative, reflective, student-authored, pedagogical, research-based, and/or theoretical, as related to this topic of Embracing Boldness: An Exploration of the Power of Language.

**INQUIRIES AND INNOVATIONS:** Additionally, we welcome educational research relevant to the work of ELAR educators.

### STANDING COLUMNS:

We also encourage brief contributions in the form of standing columns. These center on topics that interest you but do not necessarily align to an issue's theme or full-length manuscript requirements.

#### A Seat and a Voice at the Table

This column focuses on supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion to empower groups that are too often marginalized in the ELAR classroom.

What does your seat at the table look like day-to-day? How are you striving to bring diverse texts, methods, and instructional design to the forefront of 21st-century instruction?

*"Diversity is having a seat at the table, inclusion is having a voice, and belonging is having that voice be heard."* —Liz Fosslien

#### Keeping Your Wits About You

This column focuses on teacher self-care in today's often challenging educational environment.

How do you keep your wits while the world spins—often wildly!—on its axis each day? What are your personal and professional approaches to bringing hope and balance to the world of teaching?

*"If you can keep your wits about you while all others are losing theirs, and blaming you... The world will be yours and everything in it..."* —Rudyard Kipling

#### Teaching Outtakes

This column focuses on sharing the "aha" lessons from the "uh-oh" moments in your classroom.

As educators, we often talk about "what works," but how has the "not working" turned you into a more knowledgeable practitioner and a more streetwise professional? How did the "not working" inform you in your teaching and help you to grow?

*"Mistakes are a fact of life. It is the response to error that counts."* —Nikki Giovanni

To submit any of these standing columns for publication consideration, please contact the editorial team at [EnglishinTexas@uhd.edu](mailto:EnglishinTexas@uhd.edu) with a 100-150-word summary of your idea BEFORE submitting.

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.