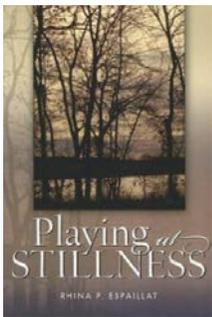




Annual NEATE Conference, 2016

The annual NEATE conference will be held **October 21-22, 2016**, at the Holiday Inn Mansfield, MA. The conference theme, **Celebrating Authentic Teaching and Learning**, will remind us why we became teachers and celebrate what we do. As educators, we aim to involve students in work that matters: work that not only captivates them, but inspires them to become lifelong learners. We engage students in work that embraces choice and interest, has real purposes and audiences, and extends beyond the classroom or school walls. This year's conference will celebrate teachers as learners, and conference sessions will help teachers to continue engaging students in authentic learning experiences each and every day.

2016 NEATE Conference Speakers



Friday's luncheon speaker, **Rhina P. Espaillet**, is a bilingual American poet and translator who has published thirteen books, comprising collections of poetry, essays, short stories and translations. She has collaborated with the founders of the Newburyport Literary Festival, and co-founded the Powow River Poets, a renowned local poetry society, as well as the Fresh Meadows Poets, a group in Queens, New York that has been active since 1986. As a writer, she emphasizes the importance of the relationship between the poet and the invisible reader, and the value of the poet's knowledge of and attention to the craft that makes the art of poetry possible. As



an experienced educator, she brings to her remarks a double perspective, blending teaching and writing.



Saturday's speaker will be **Penny Kittle**, a K-12 literacy coach who directs new-teacher mentoring for the North Conway, New Hampshire School District. In addition, she teaches writing at Conway's Kennett High School and in the Summer Literacy Institutes at the University of New Hampshire. Penny is the author and coauthor of numerous books with Heinemann including *Book Love: Developing Depth, Stamina, and Passion in Adolescent Readers*; *Children Want to Write* (coauthored with Thomas Newkirk); *Write Beside Them: Risk, Voice, and Clarity in High School Writing*, which won the 2009 James N. Britton Award from NCTE; *The Greatest Catch*, and *Public Teaching*. Penny coauthored two books with



Join us for Twitter chats at **#NEATEChat** on the *third Thursday in June, August, and November at 7pm*. Gain valuable insights and resources to bring back to your classroom and implement right away. Topics we've already covered during our chats:

- Young Adult Literature
- Poetry
- Teaching Issues Related to Social Justice
- Mentor Texts

The following are upcoming dates and topics:

June 16: *Summer Reading*

August 18: *Back-to-School*

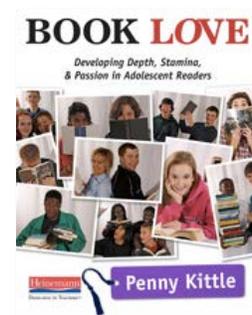
November 17: *Writing*

Free Professional Development and Resources for Teachers

On Saturday, March 19, English teachers were treated to professional development by Bedford St. Martin. Using fresh off the press copies of *Advanced Language & Literature: For Honors and Pre-AP English Courses*, Lance Balla discussed how to use images and text to deepen student thinking and writing about literature. Balla also modeled and discussed two strategies he found effective in his own practice, the OPTIC strategy and the Structured Academic Controversy strategy.

Donald H. Graves – *Inside Writing and Quick Writes*. Penny Kittle has been named the 2015 Exemplary Leader from the Conference on English Leadership for NCTE. In 2009, Penny received NCTE's prestigious Britton Award for *Write Beside Them*.

See the NEATE website neate.org for more detailed information on the Annual Conference.



A NEATE Opportunity: Teachers Supporting Teachers in Professional Practice

By Carrie Salvato,

Many teachers know that they can glean invaluable ideas and strategies from observing other teachers teach. However, demanding schedules and hectic work days can make this much needed practice difficult to schedule. The authentic nature of these observations make them truly useful - simply a practitioner visiting another practitioner, without the evaluative measures often attached to observations.

During the 2014 NEATE Conference, I had the opportunity to attend Marie Levey-Pabst's session on *Multiple Readings of Complex Texts: Classroom Methods That Work*. From her session, I knew Marie had an effective teaching pedagogy and practice. I wanted to see her in action, so I could see some of her teaching "secrets."

What I learned in two hours of observation was invaluable. I watched students actively learning in ways I had not tried in my own classroom. I noticed that Marie had systems in place that were effective, simple, and would help my own classroom management practices. For instance, students sat in table teams. On each table was a plastic standing picture frame that held the weekly schedule. Students could see what they were doing each day, and what they missed if they had been absent. Each table had a "captain" who managed getting handouts, turning in group work, etc. This organized system allowed students to be more active learners in their own education, thus in allowing more time on task for student learning.

Another great management idea Marie implemented was having handout binders arranged with the week's agenda in the front of each section. If a student was absent or lost a

handout, they could easily pick up the binder and find the materials. This all happened without stopping class or wasting instructional minutes.

I also witnessed an effective and seamless bathroom policy in which Marie used a weekly bathroom roster that students check off and sign-out/in on. Students can sign out once a week to use the facilities and the sheet is refreshed weekly. This simple management idea helped me in my own classroom to deal with the issue of daily “bathroom” wanderers.

Finally, and most importantly, I observed Marie having positive student interactions throughout the day.

Through observation, I was able to reflect on my own practice and then think about possible changes for greater success in my classroom. It is through this modeling and observation that teachers become stronger teachers. I am grateful for the NEATE community because it provides a space for educators to network and connect, thus improving their own teaching, which impacts the most important people in education – the students.

Assessing Assessment

by Nora Bicki, Ph.D., Retired Professor, Mass. Maritime Academy

I was recently asked to participate in a local university's online longitudinal writing assessment program. Sophomore students were required to meet in a designated classroom and were given one hour to compose an essay. Short excerpts from two sources were given and students were instructed to take a position and write an essay where they must cite both sources. Students who scored above 5 passed. Student essays that scored below 5 required that I fill out a rubric. Those students then had to attend the school's Writing Center.

While there were some excellent submissions, many contained several areas of general weakness. Often at conferences, I have been asked by middle and high school teachers, what college professors are looking for in writing abilities or where we see problems. Hopefully, the following examination of areas that need improvement in student writing will help teachers understand where their students might need the most help.

Considering that the students had one hour with no time for extensive revisions, they basically demonstrated good use of citations and transitions, along with a diverse vocabulary. Many students showed good summarization skills of the passages, even though that was not part of the assignment. Some students had clear thesis statements and provided examples from the text and from their own lives in support of their argument.

However, many students also had difficulties with the assignment. First, following instructions seemed to present a problem. Several different prompts were used throughout the testing sessions. Each prompt had a title followed by the instructions to take a stand on X, Y, or Z (from the title), and then write an essay citing both sources. Out of the 100 papers I graded, perhaps 10 included the key word from the title and the instructions in their essay. For example, one prompt instructed students to take a stand on “loneliness and social media” and provided two sources that discussed the topic. Students wrote essays about what was either good or bad about social media, but either never mentioned “loneliness” or mentioned it just in passing. Perhaps 5 or 6 out of 100 essays actually argued for or against the assigned topic. The faculty decided to grade the essays presented as writing samples even if they did not follow instructions since the school was testing for writing ability. But following instructions is an important skill for academic success.

The second area of concern, whether the student followed instructions or not, was the lack of a strong thesis statement. While many papers included a thesis statement, too many did not. If the prompt was about loneliness and social media, or coercion in steroid use, I would expect to see the main term “loneliness” or “coercion” in the thesis statement. Instead, students often took the middle ground without taking a stand. Supposed “positions” on the subject were more like summaries. An example would be: “Some people think taking steroids is bad while others think it is acceptable.” Whereas a strong thesis would have been, “Athletes take steroids of their own free will and not because they are coerced by other athletes or the coaches.” Consequently, helping students to form an opinion and then develop strong thesis statements using key terms that make clear what they will argue is crucial to college writing assignments or essay exams.

Another main area that students could improve upon is in the structure of their paragraphs. One topic, one paragraph is the rule, but students often wrote just one paragraph covering several points instead of a multi-paragraph essay. Other students wrote several paragraphs, but mixed topics and ideas in the bodies. Each paragraph needs a “mini-thesis” as a topic sentence to keep the paragraph unified and coherent. This follows from the main problem discussed in the previous paragraph. Thesis sentence/topic sentences need to be strong and clear throughout.

Finally, at the risk of sounding like a cranky old teacher who was taught the importance of spelling, without autocorrect on the test program, the spelling was a mixed bag. I won’t go into the “their/there, too, to” problems we all see regularly. Those are a given today. Some students did fairly well with their spelling, but others spelled words phonetically. I can’t even begin to approach how teachers can help their students improve spelling in this age of texting shorthand and autocorrect. So I offer no advice. All I can say is that at least for me, sitting at my computer for several hours at a time, the spelling “abnormalities” provided a good chuckle for this cross-eyed grader!!

I look forward to grading the junior class e-portfolios next to see whether students have improved, declined or remained the same in their writing efforts. Faculty from this university will receive the results and can structure future writing instruction accordingly. Assessment is clearly the key in helping our students to become the best writers they can be.

Walking the Walk: Five English Teachers Write Daily

by Michelle Li, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School

When my amazing colleague and friend, Dr. Kim Parker, invited me and several of our colleagues to join her on the 2016 Slice of Life Challenge (SOL), hosted by Two Writing Teachers (<https://twowritingteachers.org/challenges/>), my thoughts followed a familiar pattern: Who has time for this? I’m barely staying afloat. I’m a private person – why the need to publish my scribbles on a blog? And, March has 31 days.

As quickly as the thoughts formed, I chuckled and scolded myself. Every day I ask students to push past their comfort zones, to take risks, and to exert their best effort. I expect them to do the hard work. If I ask that of students, I had better start holding myself to the same standard. I told Kim, “I’m in!”

Thus began a monthlong journey into the writing life that I had let fall by the wayside shortly after I began teaching. The irony of this is not lost on me. An English teacher who teaches writing but doesn’t write on a regular basis? Bad, bad, bad. And yet, let’s face it, that’s the vast majority us. I found myself fantasizing about a world in which school leaders actively create working conditions that support the professional growth of teachers as readers, writers, and scholars.

Here's what I learned when we created a micro professional learning community (PLC) and took charge of our own professional development (PD).

"Show, don't tell" applies to the craft of teaching writing. As teachers, we are models of the work that we ask of our students. During the SOL challenge, I became disciplined in writing beside my students, participating in quick writes during notebook time, modeling my process in finding a subject, thinking aloud in writing workshop as I shared my work at different stages, and inviting students to practice giving feedback.

One particular moment stands out to me. After studying "On Being a Cripple" by Nancy Mairs, I invited students to write a short personal narrative on a term that reveals something important about them. I shared my sprint draft on the time someone scribbled "Chinese bitch" on my PTA sign-in sheet. Sure, we had an engaging discussion about specific craft moves I chose, where I could be clearer, where I could add more detail, but the best part came when quieter students volunteered to share their work with the class. Something about the rawness of my sprint draft broke the usual barriers in a classroom and we became a community of writers. In exit reflections, students noted that writer's workshop inspired them to delve deeper into finding a subject they cared about and motivated them to try moves they were not familiar with.

Timely and specific feedback is very motivating. Participants in the SOL challenge are asked to read and leave a minimum of three comments a day on other writers' blogs. I looked forward to reading comments as much as the writing itself. The feedback nourished me and challenged me to reach deeper.

Good writers write from the heart about stories that must be told. Choice matters. I reconnected to my writing territories and discovered new ones. I looked forward to reading my colleagues' entries to follow the stories that came pouring out of their heart space. In school assignments, though, so many students come to expect to be told not only exactly what to write, but how to write it. We all know what damage perfunctory writing does to engagement and motivation. If we want students to grow as writers, we must create the conditions that encourage them to explore ideas that matter to them.

Form microPLCs to engage in worthwhile PD. My colleagues are amazing. Five of us walked the walk together. I got to know my colleagues in ways that simply don't come up in our usual work routines. This experience was far more valuable than any required PD. I learned the power of taking matters into our own hands and running with it.

NEATE Board News

- Congratulation to Dr. Kim Parker, NEATE President, who was recently named **Heinemann Fellow** for 2016-2018. Kim will be a member of a distinguished and small group of educators who exhibit exceptional promise for concentrated, enhanced pedagogy. This talented fellowship of individuals will pursue the shared goal of advancing the teaching profession. Membership in this group is not a reward for past accomplishments but rather an investment in an educator's originality, insight, and potential impact on the teaching profession. To learn more about Heinemann Fellows, <http://www.heinemann.com/fellows/>.
- Dr. Beth Herman-Davis, NEATE Newsletter Editor and board member recently helped to found an education consulting group, *Mind the Gaps, Collaborative Education Partners*. This small group of educators specialize in curriculum and assessment creation and professional development across the content areas. Check out their blog and an extensive ELA resource page at: <http://www.mind-the-gaps.org/home.html>.

- Recently, members of the English Department of So. Burlington High School, Joyce Sheehey and Ed Darling (board member and former NEATE president), spoke to prospective English teachers at the University of Vermont. They discussed the profession in general and talked about highlights of their own experience. They also introduced the college students to the NEATE website, as well as to the on-line sites of NCTE and the National Writing Project. As we all know, knowledge about these organizations and sites is sadly lacking among prospective English teachers at the college level. This is also a gap we, as practicing English teachers, can do something to remedy. It required a call to the professor of the methods class, who was happy to find a time during a class for a presentation, which included a great Q/A.

Other NEATE News

Winners for the First Annual NEATE Writing Contest for Students

Middle School

Nonfiction:

Grace Castonguay "The Second Moment" - Oyster River Middle School, NH. Teacher: Susie Renner

Fiction:

Emily Dallaire "Through Copper Eyes" - Nottingham School, NH. Teacher: Erin Elwood

Poetry:

Elizabeth Engalichev "Moments" - Oyster River Middle School, NH. Teacher: Linda Rief

High School

Nonfiction:

Abdi Osman "My Bliss" - Medford Hight School, MA. *Teacher: Jody Liu*

Fiction:

Marry Ann Orfanos - untitled - Masconomet Regional High School, MA. Teacher: Ms. Murphy

Poetry:

Bridget MacNeill - "I Remember my Strength" - Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter, MA. Teacher: Karin Kayser

NEATE Archives On The Move

On March 19, 2016, Ed Darling, past NEATE president, drove from So. Burlington, VT, to Amston, CT, to load and transport the NEATE archive to Contocook, NH, near board members, Ann and Dick West's home. The archive is now in storage there.



David Olio with the NEATE archives

David Olio, also a NEATE past president, lives in Amston, and has been the custodian of the archive for 20 years. We are indebted to him for caring for our historic materials for so long. The archive contains decades of issues of *The Leaflet*, as well as other documents from our century-plus history. The Board is currently working on a plan to digitize the archive and make it available to the NEATE membership and beyond.

Thank you Ed for gathering the archives and securely moving the collection to its new home in NH.



Past NEATE presidents, David Olio and Ed Darling

NEATE Award Nominations

The deadline for nominating a colleague for the **Marion Gleason Promising New Teacher** and the **Ann Garland West Excellence in Teaching** awards has been extended to **July 1st**. Please go to neate.org for information and nomination forms.

NEATE Scholarships for Annual Conference

NEATE offers scholarships to attend the annual conference. Please visit neate.org for more information. Below, are reflections about the NEATE conference from last year's scholarship winners.

"I am the only English teacher at a very small private, independent school in rural Northeastern Vermont. The opportunity to spend time with others in my field is invaluable. I have learned so much from other adults who work in English Language Arts and in school settings that differ greatly from my own. I left this year's conference with specific practices to use in my classroom, especially relating to technology. This was my second NEATE conference and each of the conferences I attended felt like retreats. I left feeling rejuvenated and excited to return to the classroom!"

- *Rachel Kaech, English Teacher, East Burke School*

"The best session of the conference for me was the Friday morning presentation on written metacognitive reflection. While I have long understood and valued the importance of metacognition in learning, this session was packed with both research to augment the way I value the practice, and plenty of immediately useful suggestions and techniques. I will be using some of these techniques within the next week or two, and I think this is one of the greatest aspects of attending NEATE.

I would highly recommend the NEATE conference to other teachers (and I have). I think it is endlessly inspiring to coalesce with other motivated and engaged English professionals. I love to discuss ideas, to learn about current research, and especially to see how others are implementing all of it in the classroom. It is also important and valuable to step outside the bubble of your own school and district; it affords perspective, which is sometimes hard to get when you are working away in your own little world."

- *Ian Wilkins, English Teacher, Groton-Dunstable Regional High School*

"My main take away concerned the importance of multimodal modes in the classroom. I was fortunate that the presenters of the session were also teaching rhetoric, though they were teaching at the college level. I was able to see how they seamlessly had students do high level thinking through multimodal products. I will be using several of the approaches in my classroom and I think they will greatly help increase motivation and engagement, especially with the included learners and struggling readers."

- *Billye Toussiant, Boston*

Community Leadership Academy

To submit news and other items to the newsletter, please email:
buffy8671@gmail.com

