



Annual NEATE Conference, 2015

The theme of the conference was ***Empowered Teachers, Engaged Students: Building Our Capacity to Reach All Learners*** and took place on October 30-31. We were lucky enough to have Dr. Sonia Nieto and Dr. Tom Newkirk as our keynote speakers.

Friday's luncheon speaker, **Sonia Nieto**, spoke passionately about meeting students where they are, giving them opportunities to expand their worlds, and advocating on their behalf. Sonia also talked about the importance of educators challenging labels and social constructs that can often impede student success. She reminded the audience of the value in remaining hopeful for our students and providing them with unwavering love, support, and continuity. Sonia speaks and writes on multicultural education, teacher preparation, the education of Latinos, and other culturally and linguistically diverse student populations. Her book *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education* is widely used in teacher preparation and in-service courses around the country. Other books include *The Light in Their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities*, *Why We Teach*, and her newest work, *Why We Teach Now*.



Dr. Sonia Nieto

Saturday's speaker, **Thomas Newkirk** had a strong message for the audience, stating that narrative writing is essential to all forms of writing including informational and persuasive writing. With a new emphasis in the Common Core on informational reading and writing, Newkirk is concerned that narrative writing is getting lost. He noted that humans want to create stories to explain the world around them, and that even the best science writers include narrative elements in their writing to help create meaning and a bond with the reader. Empathy, he told the audience, is the moral voice of a story and is also essential in persuasive forms of writing. His latest book is the focus of this concern. *Minds Made for Stories: How We Really Read and Write with Informational Texts*, recently published by Heinemann, promotes narrative writing through all grades as the "primary way to understand our world and ourselves." Following the presentation, he signed copies of his books, but not before reminding us that his first published article appeared in none other than NEATE's own academic journal, *The Leaflet*.

Annual NEATE Conference 2016



The annual NEATE conference will be held **October 21-22, 2016**, at the Holiday Inn Mansfield, MA. The conference theme is

Celebrating Authentic Teaching and Learning.

Saturday's keynote speaker is **Penny Kittle**, author of *Write Beside Them: Risk, Voice, and Clarity in High School Writing* and *Book Love: Developing Depth, Stamina, and Passion in Adolescent Readers*.



Penny Kittle

This year's conference will

celebrate teachers as learners, and conference sessions will help teachers to continue engaging students each and every day in authentic learning experiences. Individuals or groups are welcome to submit proposals that will help to answer questions like these:

- What are you reading for pleasure and for professional advancement? Are you willing to share your favorite titles and strategies for making time to read and talk about books with others? How do you find time to keep your own interests and reading active and alive?
- What work do we ourselves do that "matters?" What kind of writing do we do for pleasure and to make a difference in our community and society?
- What assignments with "real purposes and audiences" have you found to be successful in your classroom?
- What strategies, titles, and approaches do you use to appreciate how the skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening extend beyond the classroom and the school?

Deadline for proposals is June 1, 2016.

See the NEATE website www.neate.org for more detailed information.

NEATE Award Winners



Elizabeth Stagis

Elizabeth Stagis of East Hartford High School was this year's **Ann Garland West Excellence in Teaching Award** recipient. This award is presented annually to a teacher who exhibits extensive knowledge in his or her discipline, interest in and concern for students, and the ability to challenge and motivate

them as well as involvement in professional organizations or professional development. She is a member of an interdisciplinary team, which services the academic, social and emotional needs of an urban, remedial, transient population in an alternative academic program. Given the praise from her colleagues, supervisors, and former students, it is clear that Elizabeth is dedicated to the success of her entire community.

Elizabeth is considered an expert in her school regarding reading strategies, and she has achieved the greatest school-wide gains in reading levels in the past several years. Former student Jesus Aguilar remembers her as "somebody that, no matter what the situation was or what was happening in life, would find something to make a positive mark on my day... (she) showed me that anyone can come from a low point in any part of their life ... and will succeed; as long as you have a little bit of effort and a willing heart."

The Charles Swain Thomas Award for distinguished service to the New England Associate of Teachers of English was awarded to **Lynne Leschke**.



Lynne Leschke

Now in her 26th year at Wachusett Regional High School in Massachusetts, she has taught over 3,000 students, who have shared her love of learning. Two of her nominators said, "Lynne is an undisputed leader in her department because of

her professionalism, commitment to her students and colleagues, and determination to grow as an educator through meaningful professional development. Lynn gives back to the profession as a cooperating teacher for those working to enter the profession and as a mentor to new teachers. She is engaged with two other teacher-researchers in a longitudinal study of the rewards and difficulties new teachers have implementing and nurturing the writing process in their classrooms. Lynn has co-authored articles about the study and has presented at national and international conferences on her work." She is a welcome presenter at many schools, workshops, and conferences. Lynn has contributed so much to NEATE. She has served on the NEATE Executive Board since 1998 as Conference Chair, Registration Chair, presenter, Executive Secretary, Member at Large, and currently President-Elect. Thank you, Lynn, for this service.

New England Poet-of-the-Year Award



Michalene Hague and Barbara Wahlberg

Congratulations to the **2015 Poet-of-the-Year Michalene Hague**, English Department Chair at Peabody Veterans Memorial High School.

"Our department members could not be more proud," says colleague Lawrie Bertram of Hague's latest accolade. "The recognition is a well-deserved honor for an educator who has dedicated her life to the written word and to imparting the love of literature to her students."

NEATE's Poet-of-the-Year Competition is open to all teachers of English/language arts who are members of NEATE or one of its state affiliates. Only former Poets-of-the-Year are not eligible. Finalists will be chosen by a panel of judges and will be invited to read their poetry at a session at the annual NEATE Fall Conference on October 21 and 22, 2016 when the Poet-of-the-Year will be announced. It is highly recommended that finalist be prepared to attend the conference on Friday, October 21st in order to participate in the festivities associated with the Poet-of-the-Year Award. Poems of the finalists will be published and distributed at the reception. Finalists are expected to register for the conference at the discounted presenter's rate.

Guidelines:

1. Poets should submit five unpublished, original poems. Poems may be more than one page.
2. All poems must be submitted in English.
3. Each poem must be typed or word-processed; please send 3 hard copies (address below) IN ADDITION to an electronic version of each poem to: bwahlberg2@gmail.com
4. Submit copies of poems (from step 3): one with your name and address and three without either.
5. Poems will not be returned; poets should retain copies of their work.
6. All entries must be postmarked no later than July 15, 2016.
7. Send a 1-2 paragraph biography of yourself.

Poems must be accompanied by an entry form (www.neate.org) and your bio and sent to the following address: Barbara Wahlberg, 27 Kent Street, Cumberland, RI 02864.

Questions? Call/text Barbara directly at 401-529-5622.

Mini-Grant Winners

Thanks to the annual Conference Raffle of more than twenty-five prizes, two \$200 mini-grants were able to be awarded this year. Many excellent projects were submitted making the choices difficult for the judges. Any attendee may apply who is a teacher of English/Language Arts and a member of NEATE. The winners are required to submit articles for NEATE's academic journal, *The Leaflet*, after the project is complete.

This year, Joanne Del Greco from Elm Street Middle School in Nashua, NH will create a Literacy Walk on the Nashua River Rail Trail with her grant funding. Along the walk, pages from an 8th grade book project/writing contest of informational writing or historical fiction about the history of Nashua will be housed in Plexiglas frames atop wooden posts.

Joseph Spremulli from Norton Middle School in Norton, MA will take an interdisciplinary approach to Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, combining science with Victorian melodrama and modern Steampunk. He will use his funding for props, costumes and film materials to create characters for this sub-genre of science fiction.

Beyond 1984 — Friday Night at the NEATE Conference

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

A collection of white straight-back chairs, a white table and white podium provided the minimalist set of the adaptation of George Orwell's *1984* by the New Repertory Theatre's Classic Repertory Company at the Fall Conference.

On Friday evening, conference attendees enjoyed a wine and cheese reception sponsored by *Bedford, Freeman, and Worth*, then settled in to watch a 2015 stage version of Orwell's dystopian novel. The clever use of red smartphones and red headphones complimented by the all-knowing red laptop sitting on the podium reminded the audience that *1984* is timeless.

The riveting, fast-paced performance was followed by a question and answer session with the cast of recent college graduates/actors. Some of the discussion focused on the company's decision to cast the antagonist O'Brien, a member of the Thought Police, as a woman, leading to a lively discussion of gender roles on the effect of such a change on the relationship to Winston, the protagonist.

The New Repertory Theatre's Classic Repertory Company will be touring *1984* and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* until April 2016 and is accepting bookings for schools, libraries and other venues. Email education@newsrep.org for more information.

NEATE Member Accomplishments

Local Scholar & Educator Inducted as NCTE Vice President

Dr. Jocelyn Chadwick was inducted as NCTE Vice President in November at the NCTE Annual Conference. Dr. Chadwick has more than 30 years experience as a teacher, scholar, and author. Spending the first ten years of her career as a high school English teacher, Dr. Chadwick went on to inspire young minds at higher learning institutions in Texas. She recently served as Professor of English at Harvard University in the Graduate School of Education and is a nationally recognized Mark Twain scholar.



Dr. Jocelyn Chadwick

"As NCTE's Vice President, my goal is to see our organization recognized as a protean resource on which not only our members, but also their colleagues in other content areas, rely and view as a definitive and expert source of information," Chadwick said. "NCTE's declared commitment and vision now move us into an active context where we assert our voices; we assume responsibility for and commitment to our profession; we proactively make the recommendations for improvement and implementation of instruction, preparation, and accountability."

Congratulations to Dr. Chadwick!

NEATE Members Attend Lecture: *Race, Gender, Family and Poetry*

On December 16, 2015, NEATE members attended a lecture by Terrance Hayes at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Hayes is an award-winning poet, whom received the National Book Award in 2010 and was named a Macarthur Genius Fellow in 2014. In his lecture, he shared his visual art and discussed his devotion to the process of creation rather than the product, stressing the on-going need for practice.



NEATE members: Lynn Leschke, Kim Parker and Cathy Nicastro with poet, Terrance Hayes

Professional Development at Your Fingertips: Tapping into Blogs



by Marie Levey-Pabst

Marie is a high school English teacher, mother of two, and blogger at English Teachin' Vegan (etvegan.wordpress.com). She loves reading YA lit, finding mentor texts and co-planning with her awesome colleagues. She is also a NEATE board member. You can follow her on Twitter at @MarieLeveyPabst.

When I started teaching, I thought professional development meant workshops led by the education guru-of-the-month. I quickly learned that the bulk of my professional growth happened through personal relationships, side conversations, and other interactions with the colleagues around me. I learned to value those moments with other teachers as learning opportunities.

Now my life has changed in a way that makes it harder for me to just “hang out” with colleagues after students leave or have those informal interactions in my school. Luckily, I live in the time of social media, and I find much of the same inspiration and professional development through the amazing teachers who share their thoughts and tools on the internet. Although blogging sometimes seems to be passé in these days of Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat, I find that reading blogs is my favorite professional development activity. Blogs provide personal insight into real teachers doing real work. Blog posts are long enough to capture the nuances required to improve my teaching. Blog posts are basically free articles from some of the most insightful people in the teaching field.

Of course, getting professionally developed from blog reading only works if you actually read the blogs you subscribe to and take some time to think about them. For this, I recommend using a tool like Feedly or other “reader” apps. These tools allow you to subscribe to blogs of your choosing and read them right in the feed. You can also bookmark specific posts that you want to refer to later, or save them to Evernote (my personal favorite for storing all of my ideas, inspirations, tools, etc).

Here are my current favorite blogs that I always read when they end up in my feed. I hope you enjoy them as much as I do!

General Teaching Blogs:

Dave Stuart Jr. at www.davestuartjr.com. Stuart’s blog was formally called “Teaching the Core” before Dave rebranded. But the blog is still full of super useful teaching tips and real-world examples from Dave’s own classroom. Dave has a lot of great suggestions for helping students practice building arguments through discussion, and he also writes about how teachers can be more efficient and thoughtful with their time in order to save their energy for the people that really matter in their lives (both students and their own families).

Jose Vilson at thejosevilson.com. Jose Vilson is an powerful voice in the education field. He is a sought-after speaker, and his blog posts are incredibly thoughtful and poignant essays about the intersection of race, class, and education. I always learn something about the world, and myself, when I read his very important and timely posts.

ELA Specific Teaching Blogs:

Allison Marchetti and Rebekah O'Dell at movingwriters.org. Are you interested in the ideas of using mentor texts in the classroom, but you are not sure how to do it, or even where to *find* all those mentor texts? Look no further than this blog, the brainchild of the very talented Allison Marchetti and Rebekah O'Dell. In this blog, Allison and Rebekah guide you on how to use mentor texts in the classroom, complete with concrete examples, student work, etc. They also have a "Mentor Text Dropbox" page with loads of mentor texts for any teacher to use!

Timothy Shanahan at www.shanahanonliteracy.com. Dr. Timothy Shanahan is a renowned expert when it comes to reading instruction. While many of his posts focus on early reading (K-3), he also writes quiet a bit about struggling adolescent readers, which is a population I care deeply about. His posts are long, but incredibly informative and full of research-based conclusions and suggestions. This is a must read if you are interested in the science and art of teaching reading.

Nerdy Book Club at nerdybookclub.wordpress.com. This brainchild of Donalyn Miller and Colby Sharp includes posts from children's and young adult authors, teachers, and a host of other fantastic writers. You can also find lists of "Nerdy Book Award Winners" if you are looking for your next great children's or young adult read!

Of course, there are more blogs out there than the ones I've just highlighted, and I encourage you to search for the ones that interest you! One great way to find the best education bloggers (and develop a Twitter community) is to follow #edchat, #elachat and #neatechat on Twitter. These hashtags will share posts daily from educators, but go crazy when a scheduled "chat" is in session. It's beneficial to browse these hashags, and even add a tweet or two yourself, as you start to find the education bloggers and tweeters that most interest you.

Whether you follow these fantastic bloggers or start exploring to find even more thoughtful writers out in the blogosphere, take some time to comment on the blogs you read. Nothing makes a blogger happier than thoughtful and reflective comments on their content.

Happy blog reading!

NEATE Twitter Chats

Join us for Twitter chats at **#NEATEChat** on the *third Thursday in March, 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*
- *Teaching Issues Related to Social Justice*
- *Poetry*
- *Mentor Texts*

The following are upcoming dates and topics:

March 17: *Talking about Texts*

August 18: *Back-to-School*

June 16: *Summer Reading*

November 17: *Writing*

Assessing Diverse and Multicultural Texts

In 2015, the spring and fall NEATE newsletters highlighted and recommended a variety of multicultural and diverse books and resources to assist you in choosing books for your classroom library. Below is a tool to help you assess diverse texts. This is a one-page questionnaire that helps teachers include diverse voices in their day-to-day planning by answering 14 simple “yes or no” questions. This tool is ideal for busy teachers and anyone looking to assess a text’s diversity. You can locate this tool at: <http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/Reading%20Diversity%20Lite%E2%80%94Teacher%27s%20Edition2.pdf>



READING DIVERSITY LITE (TEACHER’S EDITION): A TOOL FOR SELECTING DIVERSE TEXTS

Use this checklist to enhance reading diversity in your classroom.

Title _____	Author _____	Grade level _____	Lexile score _____
1. What voices does this text include in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, ability, religion, place, immigration status or LGBT identity? Do the identities or experiences of the author(s), illustrator(s), character(s), speaker(s) or narrator(s) contribute to students’ diverse reading experiences?			
		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Does this text accurately reflect lived experiences in terms of setting, characters, speakers, events, language and illustrations?			
		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Consider the author’s attitudes, beliefs and point of view. Do they promote inclusion and equality?			
		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Does the content perpetuate or rely on stereotypes, generalizations or misrepresentations? (Note: A text may address a stereotype without relying on it.)			
		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Consider the gaps and silences.			
Are certain people or groups left out or given only a silent or insubstantial role?		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Are certain questions or issues related to the topic omitted?		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
6. Does this text pair well with other texts that students encounter at school, home, in the media and through cultural transmission?			
		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
7. Consider the historical, social and cultural context in which the text was written. Is the text relevant now?			
		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
8. Does this text mirror the identities and experiences of my students?			
		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
9. Might this text be a window into the identities and experiences of people whose lives are different than my students’ lives?			
		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
10. Does this text connect with the interests and concerns of my students?			
		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
11. Does this text relate to and build upon the knowledge my students bring with them?			
		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
12. Does this text work toward goals within the four domains of anti-bias education:			
Identity: Promote a healthy self-concept and exploration of identity		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Diversity: Foster intergroup understanding		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Justice: Raise awareness of prejudice and injustice		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Motivate students to act by highlighting individual and collective struggles against injustice		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
13. How might this text motivate, engage or enable my students?			
I will use this text in my instruction to [indicate task].			
I will not use this text in my instruction because [indicate reason].			

There is also an extended version of this tool available. The extended version supports a multi-dimensional approach to text selection, and includes considerations that help educators prioritize text complexity, critical literacy and cultural responsiveness. Reading Diversity (Extended Edition) considers four distinct—but interconnected—dimensions of text selection: complexity, diversity and representation, critical literacy, and reader and task. You can find the extended version at: http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/Reading%20Diversity--Extended%20Edition2016_VFF.pdf

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