

ENGLISH LEADERSHIP Quarterly

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▶ IN THIS ISSUE

Teaching, Learning, and Leadership Online

Bonita L. Wilcox, editor

In a recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Kate Wittenberg, director of the Electronic Publishing Initiative at Columbia, wrote, "Above all, we must be open-minded, flexible, and innovative professionals, willing to take on new roles and learn new skills, while still relying on our traditional strengths as publisher" (p. B 2). The article suggests that editors begin to see themselves as researchers, see authors as collaborators, think more creatively, educate themselves about digital technology, and learn how to operate in new environments (Wittenberg, 2003). This seems like especially good advice for teachers, too.

Many question the value and quality of online teaching and learning, knowing that teaching and learning at a distance may not be the *perfect* alternative. Others question the value and quality of online teaching and learning without knowing much about it at all. This is the reason that Wittenberg's advice is on target. We want to be open-minded, flexible, and innovative. We should be researchers, collaborators, and creative thinkers, and know how to find

our way around new environments for teaching and learning.

Personal experience tells me that most of us didn't start out on a technological landscape. In fact, in today's world, perhaps only the "fearless" and determined can ever hope to keep up with teaching and learning digitally. Okay, this may not be exactly true, but it is the way I see it. I started learning about computers in education on a Tandy TRS-80 in the late 60s. I was sure that everyone knew more about computers than I did. Since that time, I have taken many computer classes; some were just *about* computers, but others *used* computers as a tool for thinking and learning course content. The greatest challenge for me has been in acquiring the technological knowledge and skills necessary for online teaching and learning. I often asked for help from knowledgeable techies. Thirty years later, I can tell you that I have made progress. I can't imagine spending a day without my computer.

Generally speaking, the younger generation seems much more aware of and better adapted to technological advances. Still, even with excellent computer skills, the online environ-

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ment can be inhibiting to some learners. Focused academic research requires different strategies than surfing the Net. Imagine trying to participate in a *written* conversation on a discussion board or in a synchronous chat room without being able to type! In online courses, everyone participates. You can't sit passively in the back row!

I found it helpful to take an online course before attempting to teach

online. Then, I began with a few lessons to test the waters. "Online teaching is labor intensive" (Simon, 2000, p. 74), so proceed with caution. As Wittenberg suggests, be a researcher—Amazon lists about a dozen books scheduled for fall publication on online teaching and learning. Try to think of your students as collaborators—interaction is key, and "telling" as a teaching strategy isn't an option online. Think more creatively—develop a WebQuest activity. "WebQuest is an inquiry-oriented activity in which most or all of the information used by learners is drawn from the Web. WebQuests are designed to use learners' time well, to

focus on using information rather than looking for it, and to support learners' thinking at the levels of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation" (Dodge, 1995). Most cyber-savvy teachers take responsibility for their own learning, and it really shouldn't require *more* than 30 years.

In this issue, Marie Martin shares an experiential piece about learning online and at a distance, and Jason Brown offers some tips on technological literacy. Finally, Vivian Yenika-Agbaw suggests that teachers need to be more "culturally" literate. These pieces are followed by three book reviews, *The Tech-Savvy English Classroom*, *Because Writing Matters*,

and *Reading Reasons: Motivational Mini-Lessons for Middle and High School*. ●

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Reflections of a Novice Online Learner

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It has been the best of times and the worst of times, this year that I have spent as a first-time online learner. I have been on a roller coaster from exhilaration to exhaustion and back again. My life has been enriched beyond belief by the mind-

expanding experiences offered me within the online doctoral program in which I participated. My energy, both nervous and physical, has been frequently depleted by the constant stream of ever higher intellectual and technological challenges, only to be

immediately recharged by the euphoria of achievement and the ensuing urge to go further. Though occasionally tempted to stop this crazy world and try to get off, I have kept going. I have completed six online courses. I am just beginning to make some sense of it all.

Socrates tells us that the unreflected life is not worth living. This is certainly true of the life of a novice online learner. Indeed, no matter how long we spend in cyberspace, it is essentially an alien environment for human beings. To enter is to become disembodied, to function with only the intellectual and emotional parts of our being, to risk isolation or loneliness. To "boldly go" there, as I did, without due thought and preparation, is not to be recommended. Pauses for reflection, both before committing to an online course and at regular intervals during the experience, would go a long way towards making sense—and taking control—of cyberspace.

I have learned all this the hard way. I had spent a lifetime in traditional education as student, teacher, and teacher trainer, but I had no

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experience whatsoever with online teaching or learning. I had been keen to pursue doctoral studies and was attracted to an online program offered by an American university. I live 3000 miles from campus on the other side of the Atlantic and was excited by the prospect of defeating this distance through entering cyberspace. I had a vague idea that it would be a learner-friendly environment and that I could learn by doing. I was a quick learner. I felt sure I would soon master the process. Blithely unaware of the reality, I enrolled happily for two prerequisite courses.

On reflection, I could not have gotten off to a worse start. I hastily and impatiently filled in the various questionnaires aimed at encouraging a reflective online practitioner approach. I wanted to get to the hands-on part of the programme. I wanted to become a citizen of cyberspace. I wanted to begin my online learning. When I did so, I was immediately in trouble. I had plunged in knowing nothing of the online learning environment, and consequently was unable to navigate Blackboard, the platform that was being used for the first course. While I floundered around helplessly, the learning that I was so keen to experience was happening all round me—to others, but not to me. The disembodied human beings who made up the rest of the class all seemed to know what they were doing. I felt lost, lonely, and in a very unfriendly environment. Ironically, it was these same disembodied human beings who came to my rescue. With the support of my tutor and tales of struggle shared by other students, I began gradually to realize that we were in the process of forming a genuine community. Disembodied or not, there were real people out there, willing to reach out, to ask for and offer help. The incipient panic subsided. I relaxed. I began to enjoy cyberspace.

This helped me to settle happily into Blackboard and later WebCT. These platforms gradually became my

comfort zones. When the occasional technical or navigational problem arose, I was able unashamedly to ask for help and was always certain to get it. I found my way easily from the home page to the teacher input or lesson plans with hyperlinks and to the various forums and threads on the Bulletin Board—a simple step for experienced onliners, “a giant step” for the novice! This gave me the exhilarating experience of interacting with my tutors, my peers, and the online material. My self-confidence increased accordingly. I gradually overcame my inhibitions about sharing my thoughts and my work so publicly and greatly benefited from having access to the thinking and writing of my peers.

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I found the asynchronous discussions invariably stimulating and motivating and logged on eagerly each day at a time of my choosing to find out which direction a particular discussion was taking, or what, if anything, I could add to the inevitable and highly enjoyable battle of wits that often took place. The synchronous discussions were initially daunting. Not only was I completely new to this particular type of learning event, but my keyboard skills were at best mediocre. Initially, this hindered my participation. I was too slow. The discussion moved on too quickly for my response to be meaningful. How-

ever, my will to succeed was by now very strong, and I soon improved my keyboarding to the point where I could forget about it and concentrate on and contribute freely to the topic under discussion. Developing new skills and improving older ones became a regular feature of my online experience—clearly not ideal. It is obviously better to have the necessary skills in advance, but my experience would suggest that the motivated online learner can get up to speed fairly quickly.

What I found harder to come to terms with was the way in which my online learning began to take over my life. I had anticipated the heavy workload, the constant pressure of deadlines, and the serious commitment of time and energy—I had had this experience when doing my traditional master's degree. I had even anticipated to a certain extent the challenge of being in something akin to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development where, with a little help from my online friends and mentors, I would find myself constantly urged to take another step forward. In fact, I had been positively looking forward to that. What I had not anticipated was the extent to which my “real” life had to be fitted round my “virtual” life. The need to be constantly in touch with the asynchronous activity on the Bulletin Board, particularly when collaborative projects were ongoing, and the need to attend the synchronous sessions rather dramatically bound me to my computer for significant periods.

Regardless of what was happening in other areas of my life, I tried as far as was humanly possible to ensure I had access to cyberspace and time to spend there. For example, before accepting an invitation to spend a short spring vacation with some friends in a small town in Germany, I made sure I would have Internet access. They not only graciously accepted this requirement, they took a great interest in my online work. I have also turned down other invita-

tions because Internet access was not available. Obviously, one needs understanding friends and family in situations like this. The most amazing aspect of all this was that the compulsion to put cyberspace first was not so much externally imposed as it was inspired by my metamorphosis from an apprehensive novice—needing much hand-holding before taking even a tiny step—into an increasingly confident, highly motivated, self-regulating, independent online learner.

Inevitably, this commitment has led my online learning to take place at unusual times and in unexpected places. This is especially true of the synchronous discussions. Because I live in the GMT (Greenwich Mean Time) zone, which is five hours ahead of EST, I took part in some of the prerequisite course sessions from my workplace at 3 p.m., with appropriate permission and the full support of my interested colleagues. More recently, two of the doctoral courses had scheduled twice-weekly sessions from 5 p.m. until 7 p.m. EST. I was, therefore, actively engaged online from 10 p.m. until midnight or later, especially if we decided to hold a “project meeting” after the official session. Fortunately, I am a night bird, so that posed no real problem. I did, however, have one experience with a very early morning session that I think illustrates the priority we instinctively give to our online learning. I had travelled to Texas for my son’s wedding and moved on to San Francisco for a few days vacation after the big event. During my stay there, I attended a 7 a.m. synchronous discussion (10 a.m. on the East Coast). I did this from the hotel computer located in the foyer under the bemused eye of the janitor who was noisily vacuum-cleaning the area. On hearing of this unusual “classroom” from which I was operating, one of my colleagues exclaimed, “Isn’t online learning so cool!”

Online learning is indeed “cool” most of the time. It has, however, a downside. Most online learners have

had to carry at some stage the extra burden of falling behind because of other commitments that had to be met. Most know that sinking feeling when work is piling up despite their best efforts. Many have known the horror of losing a night’s work, either because fatigue has caused their fingers to falter on the keyboard or because of a problem with the computer or the server. All online learners become painfully aware that when viruses or storms strike or mysterious crashes occur, the virtual world just disappears, and its “citizens” are left almost unbearably isolated. Such was my experience very recently when a freak storm left me with only intermittent Internet access for a few days at a most crucial point in a collabora-

One feels one’s helplessness acutely, and is tempted to dwell on the not-so-cool aspects of online learning. On those days, it is hard to suppress the question, “Is it really worth all the effort?”

For me, the answer is ultimately positive. It is worth all the effort.

tive project. This meant that documents, the fruits of much effort and many late nights, could not be transmitted. At such times, one feels one’s helplessness acutely, and is tempted to dwell on the not-so-cool aspects of online learning. On those days, it is hard to suppress the question, “Is it really worth all the effort?”

For me, the answer is ultimately positive. It is worth all the effort. What makes it so are the quality of the learning that has occurred, the support of the online community, and the very real friendships formed there. In just a year, I have been exposed to a wide range of courses of superb quality, designed and deliv-

ered by gifted instructors. Each instructor had a different style. All were committed and supportive. They modelled best practice by acting as facilitators, coaches, and guides using the technology simply as a tool in the service of learning.

On reflection, I realize how very much I owe to each of my instructors and their courses. The prerequisite courses rid me of my latent and unsuspected technophobia. Without them, my sojourn in cyberspace would have been brief and inglorious. The first of the doctoral courses was on writing. It was one of the best learning experiences of my life. I was oblivious to the technology as the teacher drew from me work that I did not know I was capable of achieving. The action research course that followed initiated me into online collaborative work and student-led learning and helped me flex my intellectual muscles through a series of challenging asynchronous discussions and group exegesis. The learning that occurred in the next two courses, focused directly on instructional technologies, was phenomenal on both the theoretical and experiential levels. In-depth familiarization with the main learning theories and schools of educational psychology was accompanied by practice and collaborative research projects. These gave me an invaluable insight both into the potential impact of technology in the real world and the challenges and rewards of collaboration in the virtual world.

I also learned one other important lesson. Cyberspace, as I experienced it, is ultimately about people. I know I worked better and learned more because of the inspiration, the mentoring, and the support of our online community. In different ways, the various courses contributed to the building of this community from a large and disparate group of doctoral students. The writing course had a “buddies” component that encouraged us to act as critical friends to one another. We thus took responsibility not only for our own work but for

ensuring that as buddies, we were mutually supportive. The small-group scenarios of the action research course provided opportunities for bonding that led, in some cases, to solid friendships. The formal group investigation assignments in the instructional technologies courses helped us appreciate how working together enriched and enlivened our experience, and how the individual strengths of the class members supported the group effort. Learning together online, we gradually devel-

oped into a caring online community. One student commented, "I can't believe how much I care for these people I have never met."

Finally, I would like to share two reflective questions. First, is this a typical online community? I don't know. I can only speak from my experience with this particular course of study. Second, would I encourage anyone else to become an online learner? Having managed to make some sense of cyberspace, I would probably say yes, but with a note of

caution: Think long and hard about it. All programs and courses are not equal, student responsibilities increase online, and technological knowledge and skills add another dimension. Find out as much as you can about the program, online learning, and the technological expectations before you enroll. To quote a colleague, "It's not a walk in the park." If you decide it's for you, go for it with enthusiasm and commitment. Give it your very best. It's a worthwhile experience. ●

Eating the Technology Elephant One Byte at a Time

Jason Brown, Director of PowerLab, PowerSchool, A division of Apple, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

"Hello. Thank you for calling the help desk. What can I do for you?"

"Yes. I just brought my laptop home from the University and now when I try to send e-mail, it keeps saying something about 'relay denied' and 'unable to deliver message.' Can you help me?"

"Sure thing. This is actually really simple. You just need to adjust the outbound SMTP server in your mail client preferences to reference your ISP's SMTP gateway . . ."

Sound familiar? If you've used technology for any length of time, chances are you've been on one end or the other of that fictitious support call. If you were the end-user, you were thinking, "Simple? Simple for whom? Not me." And, if you were the user consultant, you were probably thinking, "I don't mind answering basic questions, but why don't people just get it? This stuff is easy."

Technology is here to stay. Like it or not, technology has found its way into nearly every aspect of education, business, and entertainment. Believe it or not, this isn't a new trend. As far back as the mid-80s, technology began its slow and steady march into our lives one application at a time. And, since that time, a digital divide has

appeared between those that "get it" (the technology know-it-alls) and those that don't (everyone else). Please note that in this sense, I am using the term "know-it-all" in a positive way—as in someone for whom technology always seems to stand up and salute.

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The appearance of this gap is especially important as it relates to the relatively new concept of information literacy.

The appearance of this gap is especially important as it relates to the relatively new concept of information literacy. Information literacy embodies current efforts to develop a standard inventory of technology skills as well as a means to measure one's proficiency. In fact, the very

term literacy by itself is being expanded into new dimensions that embody the technological nature of today's society—not just the academically accepted vernacular.

It is difficult, however, to view technology as one of the foundations of the current vernacular when it often seems so incomprehensible. In fact, the majority of technology documentation available today is presented solely as inventories of steps. Imagine trying to teach in a foreign language having simply been taught a set of the language's most common phrases with no understanding of how to create your own. Nevertheless, this is one of the most common approaches to both teaching and learning about technology.

So, what can be done? If you are not in the "know-it-all" category, read on to gain some insights into beginning to develop your own fluency with technology. If you are a technology support professional, however, this article will give you the opportunity to reflect on why things always work for you and why no one seems to "get" the easy stuff.

To begin with, just how does a "know-it-all" appear to know it all? The answer is two-fold. First, a know-it-all has to be able to make the first

time he does something not look like it's the first time. And second, he has to be able to see the application of technology as a sequence of discrete, conceptual steps that are assembled to accomplish more complex objectives.

The first phase is accomplished through a combination of experience (what he's done in the past), confidence (believing that a solution is out there), and an open mind (just because something isn't familiar doesn't mean he can't comprehend it). Let's explore these concepts in a practical illustration.

A musician who routinely picks up unfamiliar music and tries to play it gains experience by sampling new information, confidence by successfully playing the music, and an open mind by exposing himself to the unknown. Done regularly, this musician will eventually be able to play an unfamiliar piece and not have it sound like a first attempt. This act builds fluency in the medium, in this case music, by strengthening the performer's awareness of the patterns present in all music and making the unfamiliar more familiar.

For phase two, the musical analogy extends nicely to the need to view large and complex activities as a collection of discrete, conceptual steps. For instance, people who are not musicians would view a page of sheet music as a single mass of lines and markings. Seasoned musicians, however, see music as individual notes, perhaps sharp or flat, loud or quiet, staccato or legato, and with a known duration. Notes are assembled into measures, and measures into stanzas, and stanzas into pieces. This

stepwise deconstruction and reconstruction of a piece of music allows a musician to remove the complexity and get at the underlying patterns. No musician ever successfully performed a piece of music by processing it as a single entity.

One might correctly point out, however, that in the case of musicians, they are exploring subject matter that is of great personal interest. This same requirement holds true in becoming fluent in one's use of technology. Richard Ranker and Michael Clay (2002) discuss the need for focused training plans in their recent *EDUCAUSE Quarterly* article when they write, "we had slipped into a 'build it and they will come' approach" (p. 52). Ranker and Clay, in this instance, were addressing the fact that their training programs evolved around new and interesting technologies and not around the needs and interests of those who were receiving the training. Studying the application of technology through something personally meaningful will give you the drive and desire to achieve early successes. These early successes will in turn foster fluency that will remove barriers to further exploration.

At its most basic level, developing fluency in the application of technology is about looking past step-by-step recipes and instead developing a step-by-step conceptual model of what you are about to do. Does this imply that you will come to understand the inner workings of your PC with surgical precision? Quite the contrary, it means that on a semantic level, you will be able to envision the processes

whose physical implementation has been left to the engineers. Once you have the semantics (what to do) under control, the mechanics (how you do it) will become much more apparent.

On a more philosophical note, developing fluency with technology not only frees you from the constant race to keep up with change, but it allows you to create your own personal applications of technology without having to rely on the methods of others. This empowers you to use technology for the tasks that you know you want to do as well as tasks that simply haven't occurred to you yet.

Try this experiment the next time you find yourself in front of your computer. Instead of simply recalling the how-to you've memorized to accomplish a specific activity, stop and think about what you're about to do. Then, see if you can't replace at least some of the ready-made how-to steps with new steps of your own devising. Even if you only replace one step, you will nevertheless have enhanced your fluency by building your experience, confidence, and open mindedness. Continue this experiment, once per day, each time replacing additional steps until you have completely remade at least one step-by-step recipe that you have been taught. And, when that moment arrives, your use of technology will begin to be constrained only by your own imagination. ●

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Best *ELQ* Article Award

CEL's 2003 Best *ELQ* Article Award winners are James A. Salzman, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio; Don Mastrobuono, Charles F. Brush High School, Lyndhurst, Ohio; and Donna Snodgrass, South Euclid-Lyndhurst City Schools, Ohio, for their article: *Collaborative Action Research: Helping Teachers Find Their Own Realities in Data*.

Outside Teachers: Children's Literature and Cultural Tension

Vivian Yenika-Agbaw, Bloomsburg University, Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania

As the list of banned books continues to expand, teachers are perpetually faced with the challenge of selecting the “right” or “appropriate” piece of literature to share with children. They have to be careful because certain subjects explored in books supposedly go against the religious, ethnic, or cultural beliefs of some stakeholders who may feel that it is their duty as parents, politicians, and/or educators to determine what children actually read in schools (Herb, 2000). For some of these people, the content or language of the literary text may be too offensive; for others, it may not be the book they disapprove of so much as the decision to share it with children. No matter what or who is targeted, censorship has become a disturbing trend that must be addressed.

There are several reasons why we should be concerned. An obvious one is the frustration teachers may feel whenever they are unable to expand their literature curriculum to reflect our collective cultural experiences. Most often this means excluding literature about people and culture they know little about. Those who dare to include such books, overwhelmed with the pressure that comes from outside the classroom, may end up simply demanding that students retell the plot. This is a good survival strategy that allows students to demonstrate that they have read particular texts. However, it fails to encourage them to question these texts and authors, thereby failing to help them become critical readers/thinkers.

Outsiders Sharing Books with Children

While many have argued that only an insider can write knowledgeably about personal cultural experiences (McGuire-Raskin, 1996), others have

postulated that outsiders with “trained minds and hearts” can depict a cultural experience other than theirs with great sensitivity as well (Yokota, 1993; Yenika-Agbaw, 1996). In the case of readers, this simply means that a teacher who has a kind heart and the ability to empathize with people from different cultural backgrounds may be able, with appropriate professional training, to share books on any subject with children. This kind of holistic preparation is required if teachers are to be confident with the daily challenges of introducing books that explore our diversity. Nonetheless, tension is inevitable.

Like outsiders who write about cultural experiences they are not necessarily part of, readers sharing stories with children that deal with cultural experiences they are unfamiliar with must be wary of the possibility of misunderstandings, perhaps due to what I'll reluctantly term “cultural illiteracy.”

As Cai (1992) remarked in his article on acculturation, tension usually created by cultural differences “is not as a result of simply prejudice but of misunderstanding” (p. 116). This statement does not only apply to writers, but also to people who share books with other people's children. Depending on the purpose, reading cultural texts with children may require an inquiry into the practices of the cultural group in question. This is because, like outsiders who write about cultural experiences they are

not necessarily part of, readers sharing stories with children that deal with cultural experiences they are unfamiliar with must be wary of the possibility of misunderstandings, perhaps due to what I'll reluctantly term “cultural illiteracy.”

Literature, Culture, and Pedagogy

Although several scholars have done research on race, gender, literature, and culture over the past decade (Slapin & Seale, 1992; Zipes, 1993; Maddy & MacCann, 1996; Yenika-Agbaw, 1998; Trites, 1997), new and preservice student teachers I have worked with still feel paralyzed when sharing books that explore racial/ethnic and gender issues. Some white student teachers in particular have, at times, either felt disempowered because of their racial background or have been overly cautious when talking about race issues in a multiethnic classroom setting. Dealing with these issues continues to be a challenge that must be resolved in an organized manner by everyone involved with the education of our children.

Some multicultural literature experts have attempted to do so by suggesting possible activities teachers can use in the classroom when sharing literature from different cultures. Rudine Sims Bishop (1992) describes activities that could be used with specific genres, such as comparing and contrasting cultural experiences in folklore. Temple, Martinez, Yokota, and Naylor (2002) discuss the need to focus on cultural authenticity. Like other scholars, they emphasize the need to read a wide variety of books and “professional materials dealing with literature that reflects diversity” (p. 115). Activities/strategies found in these and other recommended professional resources have been helpful to college, secondary, and elementary

teachers alike. However, what most of the resources neglect to explore in substantial detail are ways to deal with culturally sensitive books that could stir controversy within particular cultural communities, especially when one is an outsider.

One children’s book I will use to illustrate my point is Carolivia Herron’s *Nappy Hair* (1996), a book about a black girl’s struggle to control her natural hair. I have decided on this book partly because of what happened to Ruth Sherman, a white, female teacher in a New York City School district. According to news reports, she used this book to teach her third-grade class of multiethnic children “a lesson in how to get along despite racial differences” (Press Enterprise, Dec. 1998). This gesture, however, elicited hostility from the local black community in New York City where she taught, and eventually led to her resignation. The way I perceive it, those African American parents perhaps felt that because of her outsider status, Ms. Sherman might not be capable of discussing the black cultural experience in regards to hair and beauty without hurting the children in her class.

Some of the issues explored in the picture book have deep political and ideological significance with social ramifications that stem from a racialized historical past (hooks, 1988/99). Some knowledge of this may have better prepared the young teacher for the cultural tension she experienced.

Easing Cultural Tension

Sharing literature from our diverse cultures will continue to pose challenges to teachers. This doesn’t necessarily mean that we give up and share only what we think society is comfortable with. That would exclude too many voices and experiences, hence depriving our children of the opportunity to understand facets of our humanity. The task, however, should not be left only to teachers. We have to work collaboratively with different groups of people within our respective

communities to help children become literate, socially responsible, culturally aware, and contributing citizens. Although they neglect to provide a list, Bargiel, Beck, Koblitz, O’Connor, Pierce, and Wolf (1997) recommend that educators “consider many criteria and perspectives” when selecting books to share with children (p. 489). They feel this process may help to minimize friction that usually occurs in this kind of inclusionary literary/literacy pedagogy.

Taking it a bit further, I will suggest that parents also become a crucial part of this decision-making process because they are members of our local communities and, *at times*,

The task, however, should not be left only to teachers. We have to work collaboratively with different groups of people within our respective communities to help children become literate, socially responsible, culturally aware, and contributing citizens.

understand their children a lot better than classroom teachers. This is exactly what Compton-Lilly (2000), a white teacher in a predominantly African American/Hispanic school, does:

“I taught in a nearby suburban school district. The change was difficult, and my first years at Rosa Parks were tumultuous. I struggled with defining my role as a white teacher of African-American and Hispanic children. . . . It was the parents of my students and some very wonderful staff members who helped me to understand the productive and positive role I could play in the classroom . . .” (p. 421).

Working together with parents could help to break down barriers that sometimes create cultural misun-

derstandings that affect the curriculum decision-making process. And yes, there are studies that have proven that most parents do care and would want their children to succeed (Compton-Lilly, 2000; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Nieto, 1996).

Other research conducted on the home-school connection prioritizes parents’ ability to help their children learn to read, as in decode or make sense of print (Lazar and Weisberg, 1996). This is a worthy endeavor, but parents need to understand that their input shouldn’t stop there; they are in a unique position to offer teachers an insider’s look at cultural concerns and to ensure that their child’s culture is understood and integrated into the teaching of basic literacy and critical thinking. One way to accomplish this is to establish “a review committee, made up of teachers, administrators and parents, which would read the books in question, consider the parental complaints and consult with experts within and outside the district, as needed” (Church, 1997). While relying on such a committee for guidance, teachers can also read detailed reviews on books they plan to use. Some examples of relevant resources are: *The Horn Book Magazine*, *The Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Literature*, *Children’s Literature Review*, *Kaleidoscope: Multicultural Booklist for Grades K–8*, and *Jewish Children’s Books: How to Choose Them, How to Use Them*.

When cultural issues are made public, they no longer belong only to a particular community. Children can then be guided on how to discuss life and literature openly in their attempt to liberate themselves from historical burdens that may have positioned them as “inferior.” To accomplish this, the outside facilitator should examine personal basic assumptions about the culture in question, the literary texts, and issues related to our diversity.

Teachers can begin this process by reading through the cultural survey I have developed and used to inform my teaching. I have included this in

the article with the hope that others find it as useful as I have. It is composed of two subcategories, each with a set of sample questions an educator could consider before engaging in the pedagogy of cultural empowerment and literacy. I recommend that this be done during the summer months in preparation for the new academic year.

The first strategy is one of self-examination/reflection. Responding honestly to these questions can help teachers to acknowledge their cultural biases and do something about it. This awareness will have a bearing on decisions about texts and children in the classroom.

Strategy 1: Teacher as a Cultural Being

- What do I know about these people and their customs?
- How do I relate to members of this cultural group in real-life situations?
- When in the company of my peers and people like me, how do I react when negative/positive comments are made about this cultural group?
- How do I respond to physical and cultural differences?
- What are my views on physical appearance/differences?
- Why do I feel that way?
- Do cultural differences shock, frighten, and /or embarrass me? Why/why not?
- What steps have I taken to begin to understand these differences?
- How do I respond to negative/positive images about this group as depicted by the media?
- Am I curious about other cultures? Why? What in particular do I know/would I like to know about other cultures?
- How do I respond when people from other cultures are curious about me? Why/why not?
- What do I have in common with people from my culture?
- What do I have in common with

people from other cultures?

- What do I make of these similarities? How should I use these to inform my pedagogy?
- How do I handle difference within my cultural group as well as from other groups? Why do I handle it that way?

After responding to these items, teachers can summarize their ideas in a paragraph and take time to reflect on what these ideas may say about their attitudes (conscious or unconscious) and views on cultural diversity. It is now time to examine their relationships with the students they nurture. The next set of questions is related to students' experiences within a teacher's classroom.

In the process of responding to these questions candidly, it is my hope that teachers of literature/literacy would be one step away from confronting their fears and anxieties as insiders/outsideers as they also realize that culture is not necessarily monolithic.

Strategy 2: Students as Cultural Beings

- Who are my students? What are their needs and expectations?
- What is my role in this classroom?
- What do I expect from them during a "literature" experience? Why?
- Do I have similar expectations for every child in my class? Explain.
- How do I extend the "literature" experience?
- How does/can this help them to become lovers of literature?
- Why should they love literature?
- What could they possibly know about some of the themes and/or issues being explored in the par-

ticular works of literature I plan to incorporate in my curriculum? How do I know this?

- Are some students more knowledgeable about the cultural experience being depicted in these works than me?
- How do I plan to update my knowledge about the culture in question?
- How then do I plan to deal with unanticipated meanings shared by children in my class or shared by children from an inside perspective?
- Do I have a list of parents or contacts that may be guest speakers if the need arises? Why/why not?
- Do I give students the option to write personal responses in journals? Why/why not?
- How can their private responses help me to revisit the book, address certain issues in greater detail, and develop meaningful or alternative activities that may generate more dialogue among the children?
- How can I help students celebrate our humanity as they also recognize our differences as strength?
- How can I help them pay attention to literary qualities of texts as well?

Responding to these questions could prepare the teacher for potential sources of controversy that may be generated from individual personal responses.

In the process of responding to these questions candidly, it is my hope that teachers of literature/literacy would be one step away from confronting their fears and anxieties as insiders/outsideers as they also realize that culture is not necessarily monolithic. As we reflect on these questions, the gnawing doubts that might have obliterated our goodwill as human beings and undermined our training as professionals and creativity as teachers of literature and literacy may gradually fade away, leaving us with a much-needed confidence to tackle the challenge of sharing literature from our diverse cultures.

Children's Books and Multiple Interpretations of Cultural Experience

One guideline about the selection process that several educators emphasize recommends that teachers know a variety of books from across many genres (Diamond & Moore, 1995; Freeman & Lehman, 2001). Bishop (1992) suggests that in addition to this, teachers should extensively read books written by insiders to get a good sense of what the culture is really about. These criteria notwithstanding, a well-intentioned teacher can still land in trouble. I would therefore advise teachers to read carefully whatever books they plan to share with children, making sure they identify and understand the issues that are addressed. During this process toward cultural awareness, they may want to investigate the sociopolitical implications of these issues. This can be accomplished through critical literacy, which has been defined as "disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action and promoting social justice" (Lewison, Flint, & Sluys, 2002, p. 382). Therefore, while reading these books, teachers should pay attention to power relationships as represented in the print and picture text. Some questions Lissa Paul (1998) has identified that could facilitate this process include the following:

- Whose story is this?
- Who is the reader?
- Who is named? Who is not?
- Who is on top?
- Who gets punished? Who is praised?
- Who speaks? Who is silenced?
- Who acts? Who is acted upon?
- Who owns property? Who is dependent?
- Who looks? Who is observed?
- Who fights for honor? Who suffers? (p. 16)

If teachers find the sociopolitical implications that they uncover

through this method to be too heavy or overwhelming to deal with at this point in their career, they may want to put the book aside and find an alternative.

For example, I sometimes advise preservice students who have mixed feelings about their ability to share books that address race issues to begin with folk literature and gradually work their way toward the contemporary books. This is safe and distant, although folk literature does not usually give a very up-to-date perspective on the cultural experience in question. To help balance this approach, I also provide a list of more current multicultural authors and their books.

A well-intentioned teacher can still land in trouble. I would therefore advise teachers read carefully whatever books they plan to share with children, making sure they identify and understand the issues that are addressed.

I have also had the good fortune of working with a local school librarian who was willing to let my students observe as she shared books from around the world and across cultures with first graders. Her candor and sensitivity in discussing cultural issues that were unfamiliar to her were fascinating. One day, she might pause to explain what she had learned through research about the culture. Other times, she would suggest that they work together to find out more information on the specific culture. As she read aloud, interjecting helpful comments every now and then or stopping to identify places on a map, the children listened carefully. This experience helped my

college students tremendously.

Selecting books that deal with our diverse experiences to share with students will continue to be a challenge. It is a necessary task, however, that should bring the home and school communities together in an effort to help children become "literate." As Wollman-Bonilla (1998) points out, teachers "seem to lack the courage to present non-mainstream perspectives and experiences, and they lack faith in children's ability to recognize and handle difficult issues" (p. 287). Continuing this pattern would not only short-change our children, it would also compromise our integrity as human beings and teachers. Our profession gives us the power to create possibilities for our children. We can't afford to let them down. ●

[Author's note: My thanks to librarian Barbara Fritz for welcoming my students to her book talk sessions.]

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Book Reviews

Because Writing Matters: Improving Student Writing in Our Schools

National Writing Project and Carl Nagin. 2003. Jossey-Bass (989 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94103-1741, USA). ISBN 0-7879-6562-6. Hardcover. 138 pp. \$24.95.

Reviewed by Bonita L. Wilcox

“One day in early June of 1986, at the start of summer vacation, I received a scholarship to attend the National Writing Project’s 5-week writing institute at a local college. . . . When the institute ended, I continued to read books about teaching, write in my journal, share my writing, and try new strategies. The writing institute had changed my teaching/learning life” (Wilcox, 2002, p. 3). Created nearly 30 years ago, the mission of the National Writing Project was to improve writing instruction by giving

teachers the opportunity to share their best practices with other teachers, to read and discuss current research on teaching writing, and to become writers themselves. *Because*

Created nearly 30 years ago, the mission of the National Writing Project was to improve writing instruction by giving teachers the opportunity to share their best practices with other teachers, to read and discuss current research on teaching writing, and to become writers themselves.

Writing Matters explains why we still need to improve student writing and shows us how it can be done effectively.

Beginning with an overview of how the National Writing Project came to be, Nagin explains the challenge and the importance of research in teaching and learning writing. Chapter 2, “Learning to Write,” brings readers up-to-date on teaching writing as a recursive process and on the reading/writing connection. Chapter 3 offers strategies and examples for teaching writing as inquiry. Chapter 4 suggests the importance of professional development on teaching and learning writing. Chapter 5 covers standards and assessments, and Chapter 6 is directed toward school administrators who can initiate change in writing programs. Overall, Nagin offers a review of research and practice on teaching writing.

If you want or need to know more about teaching writing, the bibliography is a comprehensive source. The great writing teachers and well-known researchers listed here have built a knowledge base for a discipline many of us have taken for granted. I

was introduced to many of these authors for the first time through the National Writing Project Institute. I read Peter Elbow's book, *Writing without Teachers*, and have been writing ever since. I read Donald Murray's book, *Write to Learn*, and immediately shared the "writing as a process" and "writing to learn" concepts with my students. I read Mina Shaughnessy's book, *Errors and Expectations*, and stopped using a red pen.

Researchers are well represented, also—Donald Graves, Gail Tompkins, Shelley Harwayne, Ann Lieberman, Linda Darling-Hammond, Grant Wiggins, Arthur Applebee, Judith Langer, and George Hillocks, to name a few. If you think research on writing is boring, you haven't been reading these writers' research. This book offers a synthesis of research on writing assessment, best practice, reading/writing connection, current practices, and sociocultural factors related to teaching and learning writing.

As English teachers-in-training, few of us had a writing course other than English composition, and I know very few English teachers who ever had a college course in "Teaching Writing." The fact is "composition pedagogy remains a neglected area of study at most of the nation's thirteen hundred schools of education" (p. 5). Unfortunately, the best place to learn how to teach writing is probably not on the job with Warriner's *English Composition and Grammar*. Furthermore, instruction in teaching writing would benefit teachers in *all* disciplines. As Toby Fulwiler told us years ago, "Writing Is Everybody's Business!" For this reason, the National Writing Project Summer Institutes are for all teachers at all grade levels.

If you have any interest in being a Writing Project Fellow, or in improving writing in your school, you will want to read this book. If you are a school administrator interested in improving writing in your district, this book was written for you. If you

want to learn more about the National Writing Project, check out their Web site at <http://www.writingproject.org/>.

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The Tech-Savvy English Classroom

Sara B. Kajder. 2003. Stenhouse Publishers (447 Congress Street, Suite 4B, Portland, ME 04101-3451, USA) ISBN 1-57110-361-9. Softcover. 150 pp. \$17.50.

Reviewed by Bonita L. Wilcox

This is an excellent book—informative, interesting, helpful, and well

learning are active. The focus is on knowledge constructions, not reproduction; conversation, not reception; articulation, not repetition; collaboration, not competition, and reflection, not prescription" (p. 9). As a long-time believer in the constructivist philosophy of teaching and learning, this quote really made an impression on me. While there are claims that integrating technology can have the opposite effect (Cuban, 2001), Kajder demonstrates the power of technology to prevent passive teaching and learning. She does point out one requirement—that *teachers* as well as their students must be "continual learners."

The middle section of the text, Chapters 4, 5, and 6, contains many ideas and activities anyone can try related to writing, presentations, research, etc. There are examples and suggestions to enable even beginners to practice the exercises online. All the ideas seem to have been thoughtfully tested and fine-tuned. There is also a chapter just on communication and information technology. The author suggests many Web activities for extending and enhancing student learning. She even explains how to construct a class Web site. The book ends with useful items in the appendices, such as a rubric for assessing Web pages and a form to evaluate your technological expertise.

The chapter I spent the most time reading was "Going on a WebQuest." If you have not tried this strategy with students, the explanation about how to do it is very clear. If you are totally unfamiliar with the concept, you will be amazed at the possibilities for your classroom. A recurrent theme in this book is that "student thinking is empowered when the right tool is joined with the right task and the right student" (p. 14). With WebQuests, teachers can ensure that this happens. To learn more about WebQuests, visit the WebQuest Page at <http://webquest.sdsu.edu/>.

You don't have to be an expert to benefit from reading this book. As a

In thinking about why I liked it so much, it occurred to me that the author answers many of the questions I wanted desperately to ask someone while struggling to integrate technology in my classroom.

written. In thinking about why I liked it so much, it occurred to me that the author answers many of the questions I wanted desperately to ask someone while struggling to integrate technology in my classroom. Another reason is that this book is about student-centered instruction, and it encourages exploration, discovery, thinking, and active learning. Finally, the book has links to a variety of useful Web sites that are sure to add new dimensions to your lessons.

Here is the best quotation—her paraphrase of text she read in *Learning with Technology* (Jonassen, Peck, & Wilson, 1998): "Teaching and

matter of fact, you don't even have to be an English teacher. The reading is easy, it covers a lot of territory, and you can contact the author directly with questions on her *Tech-Savvy* Web site.

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Reading Reasons: Motivational Mini-Lessons for Middle and High School

Kelly Gallagher. 2003. Stenhouse Publishers (447 Congress Street, Suite 4B, Portland, ME 04101-3451, USA). ISBN: 1-57110-356-2. Softcover. 180 pp. \$19.50.

Reviewed by Bonita L. Wilcox

I wasn't always a reader. Although as a young student I clearly understood the *purpose* of reading, apparently I was not convinced of the *value*. I cannot remember how old I was when I discovered that reading was worthwhile, and I could answer the question many young readers ask, "What's in it for me?" (p.13). In *Reading Reasons*, the author suggests that five building blocks are essential for adolescent readers—"allowing more access to reading, providing a time and place, modeling the value of reading, placing less emphasis on grading, and providing structure to measure progress" (p. 11). These building blocks are explained in the first chapter, so if your students need a nudge, this book offers good advice you can use right away.

In the second chapter, Gallagher writes, "The amount of information available to human beings doubles every six months, and in the last 400 weeks of human existence, 500 million computers worldwide have been

plugged in. We are in the infancy of an information age, and weak readers will be left behind" (p. 36). You may be thinking that even before computers and the information age, weak readers were left behind, but today it is more important than ever that adolescents understand the value of reading. They have to understand what's in it for them. Discussion of these nine reading reasons will surely elevate student awareness and help students to see that reading does have intrinsic value.

Over the next 100 pages, Gallagher presents 40 mini-lessons designed to show students the personal benefits of reading. He offers at least four lessons for each reason. This is really the most useful section of the book. "Brain Maintenance," for example (under Reason 4: Reading makes you smarter), gives students an opportunity to think about the long-term effects of reading on their mental health. The lesson asks questions, such as, "Do you read enough to keep your brain 'muscle' strong? Do you watch too much television?" and then provides answers: "TV puts your brain in 'neutral,'" and research

indicates that "how much you read between the ages of 6 and 18 are predictors of how well you'll think decades later" (p. 88). Although Gallagher doesn't mention the researchers by name, the idea certainly has impact. Each lesson ends with some suggestions to get kids started on their own brain maintenance.

In Chapter 4, Gallagher quotes Mark Twain, "A person who doesn't read is no better than a person who can't read" (p. 139). Gallagher writes, "If I want my students to become lifelong readers, then I, as their teacher, need to do something different. . . . The traditional reading approach . . . has little effect in lighting their reading fires" (p. 149). This chapter asks readers to think about their own reasons for reading, suggesting to me to look again at "Building Block 3: Teachers must model the value of reading" (p. 8). It seems to me, the first thing teachers could do to help students become lifelong readers is to be one. The second thing, of course, might be to follow through on some of these 40 mini-lessons to encourage reluctant readers in your class. ●

Call for Proposals: NCTE Theory and Research into Practice (TRIP) book series

The NCTE Books Program invites proposals for its TRIP series (Theory and Research into Practice). These books are single-authored and focus on a single topic, targeting a specified educational level (elementary, middle, or secondary). Each book will offer the following: solid theoretical foundation in a given subject area within English language arts; exposure to the pertinent research in that area; practice-oriented models designed to stimulate theory-based application in the reader's own classroom. The series has an extremely wide range of subject matter; past titles include *Creative Approaches to Sentence Combining*, *Unlocking Shakespeare's Language*, and *Enhancing Aesthetic Reading and Response*. For detailed submission guidelines, please visit the NCTE Web site at <http://www.ncte.org/books/submissionguidelines.shtml>. Proposals to be considered for the TRIP series should include a short review of the theory and research, as well as examples of classroom practices that can be adapted to the teaching level specified. Send proposals to Zarina Hock, Director of Book Publications & Senior Editor, or to Kurt Austin, Acquisitions Editor, NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096; e-mail: zhock@ncte.org or kaustin@ncte.org.

Call for Manuscripts on “Lessons on Grammar”

English Leadership Quarterly is seeking manuscripts for the August 2004 issue “Lessons on Grammar.” For over 40 years, the Warriner’s series (*English Grammar and Composition*) was the “trusted vehicle for dispensing language lore and processes,” yet “by the late 80s, the days of prescriptive, rule-driven, absolutist language study were numbered” (Flood, et al. [Eds.], 2003, *Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts*, p. 372). Recently, even though 50 years of research has failed to show that teaching grammar leads to improved language performance in students, teachers continue to question issues surrounding instruction and assessment of English grammar. What are your thoughts? What arguments can you share? What lessons have you taught? What lessons have you learned? **(Deadline: April 15, 2004)**

African American Read-In Scheduled for February, Black History Month

On Sunday and Monday, February 1 and 2, 2004, NCTE will join the NCTE Black Caucus in sponsoring the fifteenth national African American Read-In Chain. This year’s goal is to have at least one million Americans across the nation reading works by African American writers on Sunday, February 1. Monday, February 2, is the date designated for read-ins in schools.

For further information, write Jerrie C. Scott, National Coordinator, African American Read-In, College of Education, ICL-320-C Ball Hall, University of Memphis, Memphis, TN 38152; or Dr. Sandra E. Gibbs, NCTE Coordinator, Associate Executive Director, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096. Send e-mail requests to lwalters@ncte.org.

2003 CEL Election Slate

Candidates for Member-at-Large



Beverly Ann Chin, professor of English; director, English Teaching Program, University of Montana; board member, National Board for

Professional Teaching Standards; member, Educational Assessment Advisory Committee for Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Formerly: NCTE president; chair, Task Force on New Leadership; Resolutions Committee; Curriculum Commission; Fund Committee; Nominating Committee; secretary, CEE Executive Committee; chair, CEE Nominating Committee; CEE program chair, Spring Conference 2000; president, Montana Association of Teachers of English Language Arts; director, Montana Writing Project; teacher of high school English and adult education reading. **Member:** CEL, SLATE, CEE, MATELA, IRA. **Publications:** articles in *English Journal*, affiliate journals. **Awards:**

UM Distinguished Teacher Award; MATELA Distinguished Educator Award. **Program Participant:** NCTE, CCCC, IRA, NMSA, ASCD, NSBA, IFTE, World Congress on Reading.

Position Statement: CEL needs articulate, assertive leaders who represent the depth and diversity of literacy education. Our leaders must advocate policies that reflect best practices and current research and that promote professional development and lifelong learning. CEL is a vibrant, dynamic organization that develops leadership through its programs, publications, conferences, and conversations. To serve our members and fulfill our mission, CEL must collaborate with other constituencies within NCTE and build partnerships with others who share our commitment to education and democracy.

Paul C. Putnoki, 7th-grade language arts teacher at Torrington Middle School, Torrington, Connecti-



cut, assistant treasurer and Executive Board member of Connecticut Council of Teachers of English. **Formerly:** CEL hospitality chair,

conference chair (1999–2002); Connecticut Council of Teachers of English; B.E.S.T. portfolio assessor in language arts for the State of Connecticut, Department of Education; team leader of the Blue Cluster at the Torrington Middle School; associate chair of Middle School Mosaic, Nashville; associate chair, program chair, chair, and past chair of Junior High/Middle School Assembly of NCTE.

Member: CEL; NCTE; Emeritus Assembly, CCTE. **Publications:** “Teaching the Writing Process to Middle School Students” in *Idea Factory* (Junior High/Middle School Assembly publication). **Program Participant:** presenter at NCTE Annual Convention in Portland, Denver, and Atlanta.

2003 CEL Ballot

The CEL Bylaws permit members to vote either by mail or at the CEL business session of the NCTE Annual Convention. Each member mailing a ballot should mark it and mail it in an envelope with a **return name and address** to: Wanda Porter, CEL Ballots, Kamehameha High School, 210 Konia Circle, Honolulu, HI 96817.

Ballots must be postmarked **no later than November 3, 2003**. Members who prefer to vote at the Convention will be given a ballot and an envelope at the business session of CEL. An institution with membership may designate one individual as the representative to vote on its behalf. Please list the institution's name and address on the outside of the envelope.

Member-at-Large (vote for two)

- Beverly Ann Chin
- Paul C. Putnoki
- Gregory Van Nest
- Edie Weinthal

(write-in candidate)

Position Statement: CEL needs leaders who will develop dynamic and innovative programs that reach out to a wide expanse of English educators. Leaders must represent and respond to the needs of English educators on many levels to encourage membership and participation in CEL.



Gregory Van Nest, English teacher, Magna Vista High School, Virginia; adjunct instructor, Patrick Henry Community College, Virginia. **Member:**

NCTE; CEL; Virginia Association of Teachers of English; New Voices Panel, *English Journal*.

Position Statement: The needs of new teachers are different from the needs of established teachers. English language arts leaders need to help meet these needs to ensure that new teachers stay in the profession. Current licensure programs are different from licensure programs of a decade or two ago, emphasizing a shift towards student-centered and research-based teaching practices. At their teaching placements, beginning teachers may not find colleagues who can help them put these practices to work. This is especially true in com-

munities that do not have strong ties to universities and other sources of professional development and support. Leaders need to help new teachers implement knowledge learned in licensure programs and connect these new teachers with mentors and organizations to help them succeed.

As a third-year teacher in a rural community, I know the frustrations that new teachers may experience. As a member-at-large of CEL's executive committee, I can help the members of CEL understand the needs of new teachers and help them become better leaders for new teachers.



Edie Weinthal, District Humanities Supervisor, Pascack Valley Regional High School District, New Jersey; educational consultant, Smithsonian Museum

of the American Indian; *English Journal* reader/reviewer; *NEH* Speaker's Bureau; chair—essay writing, Academic Decathlon Steering Committee. **Formerly:** elementary and high school teacher; adjunct professor, Montclair State University; Supervisors' Committee, Principals' and Supervisors' Association (NJPSA). **Member:** CEL, NCTE,

NJCTE, ASCD, NJASCD, NJ PSA Editorial Board. **Publications:** *Preparing for the NJ HSPA in Language Arts*; *Anzia Yezierska: Words as Power*; articles, *Kentucky English Bulletin*, *Studies in American Jewish Fiction*, *Response Magazine*. **Awards:** Ph.D. Dean's Scholar, Drew University; Dodge grant recipient; 1st NJ S.E.E.D. (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) leadership program participant; 1st National Educator's Conference, U.S. Holocaust Museum. **Program Participant:** NCTE National and International Conferences; ASCD National Conference; NJ ASCD Annual Conference; NJ Writer's Conference; NJ Teacher Institute; guest on "Storyline" (public radio broadcast).

Position Statement: The infusion of different perspectives and new visions is the lifeblood of any organization. CEL must expand its membership base by re-envisioning English leadership roles in 21st-century schools. Recruiting and supporting these new leaders is essential. Meaningful, professional development programs to enrich our experienced leaders and inspire future ones should be a primary focus of CEL leadership.

Call for Manuscripts/ Future Issues

The *English Leadership Quarterly*, a publication of the NCTE Conference on English Leadership (CEL), seeks articles of 500–5,000 words on topics of interest to those in positions of leadership in departments (elementary, secondary, or college) where English is taught. Informal, firsthand accounts of successful teaching and learning activities are always welcome. Book reviews, software reviews, and Web site reviews related to the themes of upcoming issues are encouraged.

Surveys of our readers reveal a variety of topics of interest: leadership studies, class size/class load, support from the business community, at-risk student programs, integrated learning, problems of rural schools, and the whole language curriculum philosophy. Short articles on these and other concerns are published in every issue. In particular, upcoming issues will have these themes:

April 2004 (deadline December 15, 2003)

Character Education

August 2004 (deadline April 15, 2004)

Lessons on Grammar

(see call, p. 14)

Manuscripts may be sent on 3.5" floppy disks with IBM-compatible ASCII files, as traditional double-spaced typed copy, or as e-mail attachment. A decision about a manuscript will be reached within two months of submission. The *Quarterly* typically publishes one out of ten manuscripts it receives each year. Send articles and inquiries to Bonita L. Wilcox at P.O. Box 142, Cambridge Springs, PA 16403; e-mail: blwilcox@direcway.com; phone: (814) 398-2528. ●

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