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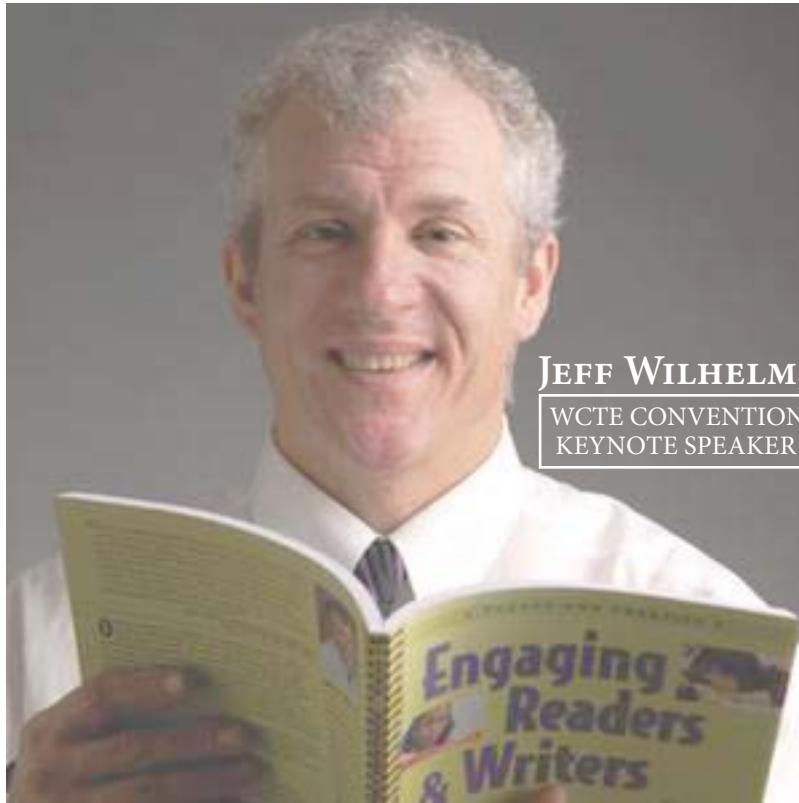
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What we're reading



**JEFF WILHELM, PhD**

WCTE CONVENTION  
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

OCT. 15-16, 2015  
MILWAUKEE

### Inquiring Minds Learn to Read, Write, and Meet the CCSS

**D**r. Jeff Wilhelm's interactive keynote on Friday, Oct. 16, will explore how inquiry is THE model of instruction for developing deep conceptual and procedural understanding that leads to transfer and application of learning in the real world.

It will also explore how inquiry is uniquely suited to assist students to meet the Common Core State Standards and upcoming assessments modeled on the NAEP and PISA assessments of student knowledge and expertise.

We are seeking proposals for convention presentations that help teachers and students explore areas of the Common Core.

Presentations that do any of the following are especially welcome:

- Present techniques for quality ELA instruction.
- Illustrate methods of helping our students understand themselves as readers, writers, thinkers, and citizens.
- Demonstrate successful strategies in literature, language study, writing, speaking, and listening for today's students.
- Share collaborative efforts across disciplines and grade levels.
- Engage colleagues across all instructional levels in professional reflection and dialogue, perhaps by sharing original research.
- Showcase innovative teaching of English, language arts, and speech at any grade level, in any setting where learning takes place.

Submit proposals by June 30, 2015, via the form on the next page or at <http://www.wcteonline.org>.

# CALL FOR PROPOSALS, OCT. 16 BREAKOUT SESSIONS >> from Denise Meyer

Program Proposal  
 2015 Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English Annual Convention  
**Inquiring Minds Learn to Read, Write, and Meet the CCSS**  
 October 15-16, 2015: Milwaukee

E-mail form by June 30, 2015 WCTE Vice President, [meyerd@westernctc.edu](mailto:meyerd@westernctc.edu)

## Service to the Profession

Are you willing to work at the conference or become active on a WCTE committee whether or not you present at the conference? (check all that apply)

- Sectional Introducer     Registration Desk     Membership Desk     Convention Planning  
 Multicultural     District Representative     Awards & Honors     Advocacy     Social Media  
 Strategic Planning     Publications     English Education     Website Management

### Program Proposal (all sessions are 50 minutes):

Name	
School/Institutional Affiliation	
Contact Information Address, City, State, Zip	Check one: ( ) home ( ) work
Contact Information Phone	Check one: ( ) home ( ) work ( ) cell
Contact Information Email	Check one: ( ) personal ( ) work
Session Title (This should reveal the content of your session.)	
Abstract (A brief description of your session that will appear in the conference program. (Approximately 50 words)	
Target Audience (check all that apply)	( ) Elementary                      ( ) Middle                      ( ) Secondary ( ) College                      ( ) Pre-Service Teachers ( ) First-Year Teachers    ( ) General
AV Equipment (Specify if audiovisual equipment is needed. Computers and projectors supplied by presenters.)	
Description: Please attach a page to describe the format of the session, including topics to be covered and methods/activities to be used.	

# 2015 WCTE Convention Registration Form

55<sup>th</sup> Annual State Convention of the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English

*Inquiring Minds Learn to Read, Write, and Meet the CCSS*

UW-M School of Continuing Education

*Conference Center*

7th Floor of the historic Plankinton Building

161 Wisconsin Ave. Suite 6000; Milwaukee WI 53203

Thursday afternoon, Oct. 15, at 12:30 and Friday, Oct. 16, 2015 (registration 8:30)

**Pre-Registration Deadline: Oct. 1, 2015**

To register online and for more information, please visit [www.wcteonline.org](http://www.wcteonline.org).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

School/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Purchase Order # (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

## Convention Registration Fees:

	Thursday Workshop	Friday Convention	Both
WCTE members	\$100	\$100	\$175
Non-members	\$150	\$150	\$280
Students/Retirees	\$40	\$40	\$75

To register for the convention by check or purchase order, complete this form and mail to:

WCTE 2015 Conference Registration

Dept. of Curriculum & Instruction

Enderis 310

UW-Milwaukee

P.O. Box 413

Milwaukee, WI 53201

Keep a copy for your records!

- **Thursday's workshop fees** include snacks.
- **Friday's convention fees** include continental breakfast and a buffet lunch featuring a choice of three entrées (Chicken Stir Fry, BBQ Pulled Pork, and Penne Pasta with Marinara) soup, salad, beverage (cola, diet cola, iced tea, milk, coffee, or tea), and a cookie bar.

Convention Fees: Make Checks Payable to WCTE

Registration: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Membership Dues: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(If time to renew, see membership form on next page)

### Hotel Rooms

A limited block of rooms has been reserved at the  
**Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott Milwaukee Downtown**

To receive the group rate of \$80, you must reserve a room by September 25, 2015.  
To make a reservation call: direct 414-224-8400 or toll free Marriott 1-877-699-1495  
Identify yourself as WCTE 2015 State Convention Group.

### Parking

The School of Continuing Education provides a parking discount for participants in its classes/ programs who park in the Grand Avenue structure. Please bring your parking gate ticket to the 7th floor reception desk to have it validated. The validation entitles you to the special UWM daytime rate of \$6 regardless of week, time of day, or length of stay.

### WCTE Membership Information

This form represents a  New Membership  Renewal

WCTE District (CESA): \_\_\_\_\_ (1 - 12; if you do not know your CESA, please check one of the options below)

Please look up my CESA for me based on my **school** address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please look up my CESA for me based on my **home** address: \_\_\_\_\_

**What grades do you teach (circle)?**

Elementary          Middle          Secondary          Post-secondary

**Are you an administrator or specialist (circle)?**

Dept. Chair      Elem. Admin.      Middle/Secondary Admin.      Reading/Language Arts Specialist

**What sort of member would you like to become (circle)?**

Standard .....	\$30	New Teacher .....	\$20
		(1-2 yrs in profession)	
Contributing .....	\$40	Retiree .....	\$15
Sustaining .....	\$50	Student .....	\$ 5

### Thursday Workshop

**Inquiring Minds Want to Read and Write: Framing curriculum and instruction as inquiry**

**This interactive workshop will pursue 4 strands:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. What is inquiry and why does this structure engage and assist learners?   | 3. How can we use backwards planning to teach towards meaningful culminating projects and compositions?                       |
| 2. How can we reframe units we already teach into inquiry-oriented pursuits through the use of "Big" or "Essential" Questions? | 4. How can we effectively design assignment sequences framed by inquiry through using frontloading and sequencing techniques? |

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE >> from John Pruitt



All teachers should learn how to teach students to read and write in the ways distinct to their own content areas.

✍️ WCTE President John Pruitt

In the last issue of Update, I wrote enthusiastically about my honor students who take the academy into the community. I'll balance this now by addressing the other end of the spectrum. I'm going to spend my summer break learning better how to teach college-level reading to my first-year students.

This semester, in my three sections of Critical Writing, Reading, and Research — the core transfer-level composition course for the UW System that fulfills the writing requirement for the University of Wisconsin Colleges Associate Degree — more than a third of my students struggle to unpack an argument, identify an author's purpose, define unfamiliar words in context and effectively synthesize information. If they're struggling with Steven Pinker's "Words Don't Mean What They Mean," which appeared in Time, or Christopher Fairman's "The Case against Banning the Word 'Retard,'" an op-ed in the Washington Post, I fear for what will happen in a few weeks when I introduce them to scholarly sources written for subject-area specialists.

I hear plenty of blame shifting, which only disappoints me. I also hear that English instructors obviously aren't working hard enough, which also disappoints me. At my own campus, faculty in various disciplines turn to us because of weak writing and reading skills among their students: research papers read simply like regurgitated encyclopedia entries, essay exams lack structure, textbook chapters are skimmed and forgotten. From what I gather through discussions with English and language arts teachers at all levels, this situation prevails at multiple institutions.

So I'll make a modest proposal: Those who require reading and writing should teach reading and writing in their content area.

I provide my composition students with strategies for writing thesis statements, connecting paragraphs,

crafting introductions and conclusions, rummaging through library databases, mapping concepts, annotating readings, and so on. I don't teach them how to write the historiographic essay required for their course on Twentieth Century Europe, the field report for Contemporary Social Problems or the book review for Nutrition and Weight Control. I have to leave that for instructors in those disciplines.

When I approached a concerned chemist with this idea, I discovered that there's just no time because her courses are too content heavy. I understand the weight of coverage, especially for courses in a sequence, but without fully grasping the concepts in General Chemistry I, students will flail in General Chemistry II. Without the skill of reading a science textbook effectively, those concepts will remain unmastered.

I feel that I'm stating the obvious, but let's not presume that our students have already mastered these skills when they enter college, for these competencies require practice. The idea that completing the required sequence of college-level writing courses should solve these problems is ludicrous. All teachers should learn how to provide effective vocabulary instruction in their subject areas; all teachers should learn how to provide instruction in reading comprehension strategies that can help students make sense of content-area texts; all teachers should learn how to design reading and writing assignments likely to motivate less-engaged students; and all teachers should learn how to teach students to read and write in the ways distinct to their own content areas.

The hard part is convincing them to try it.

*John Pruitt*

President, Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English

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## Statement includes details, rationale; resources support teacher decisions

WCTE board members voted in February to adopt the NCTE's Academic Freedom position statement as our own. [See the statement on the next page.]

**This statement is especially important to our organization because it shows our support of intellectual freedom for all of the students in our state. Supporting this idea reaffirms the fact that all students should have access to educational materials and experiences that promote open inquiry.**

Of course, this right is not always easily given. Sometimes, a piece of literature is challenged because certain individuals do not agree with a specific aspect of the writing. None of us ever expect something we teach to become the object of scrutiny, but each year in Wisconsin, challenges arise. Because we believe in the importance of academic freedom, we wish to share some resources to help teachers or librarians who are dealing with an academic freedom challenge:



John Schad

**The National Council of Teachers of English** offers many resources for teachers and librarians facing a book challenge. One may talk to a person at the national level to help guide oneself through the process, find rationale for teaching often-challenged literature, and even assist filling out a form to report a censorship incident. <http://www.ncte.org/action/anti-censorship>

**The Cooperative Children's Book Center** offers further help to anyone facing censorship issues. The CCBC offers a forum, which focuses on past questions and answers regarding issues of censorship and provides a list of steps to take when materials are challenged. In addition, the organization can offer assistance in compiling a list of awards the book has received as well as help in compiling professional reviews of the literature to help one defend the book. <http://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/freedom/default.asp>

### **RELATED AWARD >> WCTE**

#### **WCTE Lee Burriss Intellectual Freedom Award**

##### **PURPOSE OF THE AWARD**

This award recognizes an educator who has been an advocate for expression free from censorship and for humane communication. It is designed to acknowledge the work done by educators who teach and extol the tenets of free speech and who urge responsible, humane and caring communication. Such work may be demonstrated in particular lessons, special projects and the ongoing style and goals set by an educator.

##### **BACKGROUND OF THE AWARD**

It was begun in honor of Lee Burriss, a long time educator at UW-Stevens Point, who exemplified these attributes in his life as well as his teaching.

##### **AWARD SPECIFICS:**

The award winner will be acknowledged at the WCTE Convention during the Friday luncheon. The winner will receive complimentary convention registration and will be mentioned in the WCTE Update in fall.

##### **DIRECTIONS FOR NOMINATING PERSON OR GROUP:**

Those wishing to nominate a possible recipient for this award should write a letter of nomination, describing the qualifications of the nominee. This letter should be sent to John Pruitt, Department of English, UW-Rock County, 2909 Kellogg Avenue, Janesville WI 53546 or via e-mail to [john.pruitt@uwc.edu](mailto:john.pruitt@uwc.edu). Please include any supporting materials you believe would strengthen the nomination.

**DEADLINE:** May 1

## NCTE POSITION STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM >> from John Schad, WCTE Intellectual Freedom chair

*Approved by the NCTE Executive Committee, November 2014*

*Approved by the WCTE Executive Board, February 2015*

In its support of intellectual freedom, NCTE maintains that students have the right to materials and educational experiences that promote open inquiry, critical thinking, diversity in thought and expression, and respect for others (NCTE Position Statement on Intellectual Freedom, 2014). Academic freedom is intellectual freedom in academic contexts, though it may encompass a wider spectrum of rights, freedoms, interests, and responsibilities. The protection of academic freedom, required at all levels of education, not only serves the common good but also enhances academic integrity and the overall quality of education while protecting students from indoctrination.

Inherent in academic freedom is both a moral and educational obligation to uphold the ethics of respect and protect the values of inquiry necessary for all teaching and learning. Because situations involving academic freedom differ according to circumstances and grade level, NCTE encourages the discussion of the principles of academic freedom, listed below, within faculties and institutions for the purpose of developing policies and procedures that will protect such freedoms.

### **Freedom of Belief and Identity**

- Educational institutions may present alternative views and values, but may not impose or require belief or commitment.

### **Freedom of Expression and Discussion**

- In academic contexts, students and teachers have a right to express their views on any matter relevant to the curriculum.

### **Freedom of Inquiry**

- Inquiry must not be suppressed by restricting access to particular authors, topics, or viewpoints or by hindering the formulation of objectionable conclusions.

### **Freedom from Indoctrination**

- Educators and educational institutions must not require or coerce students to modify their beliefs or values. Efforts to convince students to modify their beliefs or values must be academically justifiable.
- Curriculum must be determined by teachers and other professionals on the basis of academic considerations. Suggested modifications of the curriculum should go through a process in place by the school or district.

### **Equality, Privacy, and Due Process**

- All students and faculty have an equal right to academic freedom.
- Educators and educational institutions must refrain from academically unjustified inquiries into beliefs, values, interests, or affiliations of students and faculty.
- Academic institutions must ensure that their formal and informal procedures provide sufficient due process to protect intellectual freedom.

These principles are adapted from "Liberty and Learning: Academic Freedom for Teachers and Students" (Heinemann, 2009) by David Moshman.

## RELATED AWARD >> NCTE

### NCTE Intellectual Freedom Award

The purpose of the NCTE Intellectual Freedom Awards is to honor individuals, groups, or institutions that merit recognition for advancing the cause of intellectual freedom. Award categories are (1) a national award and (2) NCTE affiliate-based award. Any member of the National Council of Teachers of English may make a nomination for the national award by following the specifications below.

#### FREQUENCY/NUMBER OF AWARDS:

One national award will be given each year, with up to two honorable mentions.

#### AWARD SPECIFICS:

The national award winner will receive a plaque from NCTE; honorable mention winners will receive certificates. Awardees will be acknowledged at the NCTE Annual Convention during the Thursday General Session. The winner will receive complimentary convention registration and will be mentioned in appropriate Council publications.

#### AWARD CRITERIA AND JUDGING:

The eligibility criteria for the national NCTE Intellectual Freedom Awards are as follows:

- the awardee has shown courage in advancing the cause of intellectual freedom or fighting censorship;
- the awardee can be an educator or noneducator;
- the awardee can be an individual, group, or institution;
- the awardee's activity can be related to particular recent events (e.g., as in a censorship dispute) or it can be ongoing (e.g., as in leadership demonstrated over a period of years);
- the same awardee may not be named for two years in succession.

DEADLINE: May 1

For more information, see  
<http://www.ncte.org/awards/slate>

## PEOPLE >> from Jackie Mabon, WCTE Awards chair

# Deserving teachers will win only if you nominate them

Each year the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English (WCTE) gathers in the fall to learn from and recognize greatness in our field. Right now, during this hectic time of quarters ending, spring breaks happening and planning for the next year, we ask you take time to recognize those colleagues around you who embody the ideals we strive for in English Language Arts. **All award nominations are due by May 1, 2015**, except for the **NCTE High School Teacher of Excellence, which is due by April 15, 2015**.

Each year WCTE selects two senior English education students to receive the Outstanding Student Teacher Award. Winners will be honored with a certificate and a one-year membership in WCTE. Individuals who student taught or were interns in the Fall 2014 or the Spring 2015 semesters are eligible. Each institution can nominate one candidate.

The **Nancy Hoefs Memorial Award for Outstanding First Year Teacher** recognizes an outstanding first-year teacher of the English language arts. Full-time teachers in their first permanent position are eligible to be nominated. Eligible

first-year teachers will have taught during the 2014-2015 school year.

The **Lee Burress Intellectual Freedom Award** is described on the bottom of page 5.

**NCTE Program to Recognize Excellence in Student Literary Magazines** is described below. Although it is a national award, it is administered locally.

Another national award is the **NCTE High School Teacher of Excellence**. The applicants from each district should be recognized for their excellent practices and contributions in the classroom. Each district in the state can nominate teachers by **April 15, 2015** to the WCTE district director (listed on page 4). At that time, one finalist from each district is sent to the state coordinator and the finalist from the state is sent on to the NCTE by May 1, 2015.

To nominate a teacher for any of the awards above, please follow the link: <http://www.wcteonline.org/awards-and-grants/>

## WCTE congratulates English teachers winning Kohl Fellowships

### CESA 1

**Angelina Cicero** - Homestead High School, Mequon

**Susan Gattoni** - Steffen Middle School, Mequon

**Trina Jackson** - Riverside University High School, Milwaukee

- Donna Bender - Longfellow Middle School, Wauwatosa

**Lee Schedler** - Whitefish Bay Middle School, Whitefish Bay

### CESA 2

**Elizabeth L. Evans** - Delavan-Darien High School, Delavan

### CESA 4

**Jeanne Halderson** - Longfellow Middle School, La Crosse

### CESA 6

**Gina Munig** - Menasha High School, Menasha

**Trent Scott** - Oshkosh West High School, Oshkosh

**Robyn Skaar** - Waupun Area Jr./Sr. High School, Waupun

### CESA 9

**Karie Blemke** - James Williams Middle School, Rhineland

## PEOPLE >> from NCTE

# State literary magazines rated in NCTE contest

NCTE's Program to Recognize Excellence in Student Literary Magazines (PRESLM) recognizes students, teachers, and schools for producing excellent literary magazines. The program's mission is to encourage all schools to develop literary magazines and seek excellence in writing and school-wide participation in production.

## SUPERIOR

### NOMINATED FOR HIGHEST AWARD

**Edgewood High School**, Madison  
"The Wayfarer," adviser: *Diane Mertens*

**Lincoln High School**, Wisconsin Rapids  
"Bloodstone," advisers: *Kurt Jensen, Nicole Reetz, Dana Rice, Jermaine Kleman*

**Marquette University High School**, Milwaukee  
"Signatures," adviser: *Ginny Schauble*

Participation in the program serves as an inducement for improving the quality of school literary magazines. Judges evaluate and rank middle school, junior high, and high school literary magazines.

WCTE is proud of this year's Wisconsin winners for their 2014 magazines.

## SUPERIOR

**McFarland High School**, Mc Farland  
"Driftwood," advisers: *Deborah Gadian, Jeff Kunkle*

**State Coordinator:** *Kathy Nelson, Arrowhead High School, [nelson@arrowheadschoools.org](mailto:nelson@arrowheadschoools.org)*



# Call for submissions for Wisconsin English Journal

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As the written forum in which Wisconsin English teachers share their ideas, the Wisconsin English Journal, published twice per year since 1959 by the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English, welcomes all types of materials related to the teaching of English. We provide readers with thoughtful and timely articles on a variety of topics related to the improvement of instruction in all the English language arts at all grade levels, elementary through college, and welcome the submission of articles of interest to literacy educators in Wisconsin, including:

To submit articles to the Wisconsin English Journal, log on to the website at <http://journals.library.wisc.edu/index.php/wej> and follow the prompts. The deadline for submissions for the spring issue is Sept. 1, 2015.

- Reports of language and literacy research
- Critical reflections on teaching
- Descriptions of effective teaching methods and instructional tools
- Profiles of and interviews with outstanding English teachers, researchers, teacher educators, policy makers, or others involved in the field of English language arts who do interesting work
- Lesson studies
- Outstanding lesson plans and original assignments
- Vignettes from the classroom
- Reviews of books, media, software, web sites, workshops, conferences, institutes, or learning communities
- Annotated bibliographies and literature reviews
- Policy statements
- Conference proceedings
- Information about new state or national legislation relevant to the profession
- Columns related to literacy, diversity, technology, and scholarship

Feature articles (typically 2,500-4,500 words) will report a completed research investigation or offer a critical review of a number of investigations that share a

common theme or topic. We welcome research that addresses making literacy learning a more motivating, intriguing, and

successful venture for students at all grade levels.

Shorter articles (about 400-1000 words) might describe a research project in progress, raise issues arising from such work, or discuss general issues related to methodologies, ethics, collaboration, etc. Shorter pieces also could detail a new teaching practice that is effective, how students responded to this, and how it increased achievement in a course.

To encourage broader participation from readership, we also offer a Reader's Forum, designed as a "letters to the editor" section focusing on ideas related to articles published in the journal, featured themes, reader responses, or ideas in the field of English language arts teaching in general. These opinion pieces must be author signed, free of libel, and in good taste. Such material may be edited for length at the discretion of the editors.

When you're ready to share your work with your colleagues across the state, consult the submission guidelines. Submissions must be original, previously unpublished work. If you have questions or suggestions for the editor, please contact John Pruitt at [john.pruitt@uwc.edu](mailto:john.pruitt@uwc.edu)

## MASA approved by NCTE, involved in activities, WCTE

MASA, the Milwaukee-Area Student Affiliate of NCTE, began with a student-teacher conversation. It was spring 2012, and Maggie Jordan was a sophomore enrolled in my section of advanced composition. In class we had been studying authorship, the idea of "remixing" and intellectual property, and Maggie wanted to know more about the group that sponsored the CCCC IP Annuals, which we had been reading. As we connected the dots between the 4Cs (the Conference on College Composition and Communication), NCTE and becoming an English educator, the idea for our group was born.

Fast forward to summer 2014. As a newly tenured professor, I was looking for new avenues for campus and community engagement, and I was eager to connect with local students and colleagues who also care about teaching writing. Remembering my conversation with Maggie, I got in touch with her, and we contacted everyone listed on the WCTE webpage. It seemed like only moments later, Kathy Nelson was introducing us to the WCTE board and helping us take our first steps toward becoming MASA.



MASA logo

Unique among current NCTE student affiliates, MASA is a multi-institutional effort. Rather than belonging to a single campus, the MASA serves students from more than a half-dozen colleges and universities along with faculty and staff from multiple schools, alumni and interested community members. To date, participating schools include Cardinal Stritch University, Carroll University, Marquette University, Mount Mary University, UW-Milwaukee, UW-Whitewater, and the UW Colleges.

The founding purpose of the group is fourfold. To start, MASA complements students' formal academic training through a variety of events, including MASA Chats, which take place the third Wednesday of each month this semester. Through

face-to-face activities as well as growing online resources, MASA also promotes community across campuses and the greater Milwaukee area. To that end last December Bedford/St. Martin's sponsored a happy hour for teachers involved in college composition, and Rachel Kenison, the Director for Marketing and Outreach at Rethinking Schools, joined us for our January Chat.

As a pre-professional group, MASA works to connect pre-service and in-service educators, and chat participants have involved high school students and teachers as well as undergraduates, graduate students, faculty and staff from both education and English departments. In addition, MASA members connect with both WCTE and NCTE. This fall, WCTE sponsored up to 25 MASA volunteers at the October Convention, and on Saturday, April 25, MASA and WCTE will team up for a New Teacher Job Fair (details TBA).

Our first year, then, has been a great one — and it's not over yet. In mid-March NCTE's Millie Davis sent good news: the NCTE Executive Committee approved MASA as an official student affiliate, and we are waiting to learn if our proposal for the annual convention will be accepted. We are also eager for new members, whether students, faculty and staff, area alumni, or area teachers and community members. Joining is as easy as subscribing to our listserv; in lieu of paying us dues, we ask you to become a member of WCTE.



Jenn Fishman from Marquette University organized MASA and is the go-to person for information.

### Quick Facts

For listserv information, contact Jenn Fishman at [jennfishman.phd@gmail.com](mailto:jennfishman.phd@gmail.com).

Read more about us online: <http://tinyurl.com/MASAconstitution2015>.

Like MASA on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MASANCTE>.

Volunteer to share expertise at the New Teacher Job Fair on April 25 via Kathy Nelson at [nelson@arrowheadschoools.org](mailto:nelson@arrowheadschoools.org).

#### MASA Leadership

##### Student Executive Board

Nathan Bayer, Cardinal Stritch University  
Matt Cekanor, Marquette University  
Maggie Jordan, Marquette University  
Heidi Williams, Cardinal Stritch University  
Shannon Venegas, Mount Mary University

##### Faculty Advisory Board

Sharon Chubbuck, Marquette University  
Jenn Fishman, Marquette University  
Stacey Floyd, Cardinal Stritch University  
Jen Heinert, UW Colleges  
Lara Karpenko, Carroll University  
Cassie Phillips, UW-Waukesha  
Tom Scott, UW-Milwaukee  
John Zbikowski, UW-Whitewater

## GEEQ helps teachers explore the world

Understanding the world today has never been more important to America's future. For most of us, that understanding begins at an early age, in thousands of classrooms across the United States. Students look to their teachers for knowledge about a world that is not yet part of their own lived experience. By spending time abroad teachers gain fresh perspectives that deeply enrich their students' learning and global awareness.

Global Exploration for Educators Organization (GEEQ) is a 501c3 non-profit organization that runs summer professional development travel programs designed for teachers.

GEEQ is offering **23 different travel programs** for the summer of 2015:

- India/Nepal
- Sri Lanka
- Bali/Lombok
- China
- Vietnam/Cambodia
- Thailand/Laos
- Italy
- Eastern Europe
- Portugal/Spain
- Greece
- Uzbekistan
- Morocco
- The Baltics
- Eastern Turkey
- Western Turkey,
- Zambia/Botswana/  
Namibia/South Africa
- New Zealand
- Belize/Guatemala
- Costa Rica
- Peruvian Andes  
(summer and spring),
- Peruvian Amazon
- The Galapagos Islands

**The registration deadline is June 1**, but space is limited and many programs will be full well before the deadline.



Educators have the **option to earn graduate school credit** and professional development credit while seeing the world. The trips are 8 to 24 days in length and are designed and discounted to be interesting and affordable for teachers. GEEQ provides teachers educational materials and the structure to help them bring their experiences into the classroom. The trips are open to all nationalities of K-12 and university educators and administrators, as well as retired educators. Educators are also permitted to bring along a non-educator guest.

Detailed information about each trip, including itineraries, costs, travel dates, and more can be found at [www.geeo.org](http://www.geeo.org). GEEQ can be reached 7 days a week, toll free at 1-877-600-0105 between 9AM-9PM EST.

Happy summer travels!

*Natasha Weisz*

Outreach Coordinator

Global Exploration for Educators Organization (GEEQ)

Call us toll-free at 1-877-600-0105

[natasha@geeo.org](mailto:natasha@geeo.org)    [www.geeo.org](http://www.geeo.org)

Check out our resource boards on Pinterest:

<http://pinterest.com/geeo/>



Marci Glaus, DPI

## What You Need to Know

People really enjoy reading about the things they *want* to know about. Just like our students, we're not as motivated to dig into those articles that tell us what we *need* to know, even when they cover information that we *should* know.

That's where we English teachers in Wisconsin are in luck. Our DPI liaison in Madison is right at the epicenter of education initiatives, education legislation and education policy. Even better, she lets us know how this affects us in our classrooms and our professional lives.

You can reach Marci at [marci.glaus@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:marci.glaus@dpi.wi.gov).

## Common Core State Standards

The literacy and English language arts consultants are currently developing a professional learning module on speaking and listening. It includes research, instructional strategies, and assessment techniques related to listening, collaborative conversations/discussions, and presentation of knowledge and ideas. We would like to thank WCTE member Lynn Aprill for working with a small team of educators in the state who provided feedback as part of our vetting process. The finalized module can be found here:

[http://ela.dpi.wi.gov/ela\\_speaking-and-listening](http://ela.dpi.wi.gov/ela_speaking-and-listening).

A professional learning module for writing is also currently under development. This professional resource includes research and resources on the production and distribution of writing in a range of print and digital texts of various lengths and formats. Information regarding 21st century expectations, task, purpose, and audience, characteristics of effective writing instruction, and the writing process are specifically addressed. The following link provides a brief peek into a small section of the writing process portion of the module:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXCpGb-9NSM&list=PL847175E344269EA2&index=30>

Details for a vetting process and final release date to follow.

The WI DPI English Language Arts website is in the process of receiving a “face lift.” Your visit/s to the website in the coming weeks should be a much more user-friendly experience:

<http://ela.dpi.wi.gov/>

## State Assessment

Assessments scheduled for spring include the ACT Plus Writing and ACT Work Keys for grade 11, the ACT Aspire for early high school grades 9-10, and the Badger, Wisconsin's Smarter Balanced Assessment for grades 3-8. Find more information here:

<http://oea.dpi.wi.gov/assessment/Smarter>

For resources regarding the ACT tests: <http://oea.dpi.wi.gov/assessment/ACT>

## Fair Funding for Our Future

State Superintendent Tony Evers outlines his school finance reform plan in a newly released video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjvxZRT8kgI>

For more information on Dr. Evers's budget plans: <http://dpi.wi.gov/budget/fairfunding>

*Continued on next page*

## Literacy Updates

Literacy consultants Barb Novak and Laura Adams are focusing on assessment for this season's Literacy Live Webinar Series. The latest episode and supplemental videos provide ideas for reviewing a literacy assessment system for the purpose of identifying redundancies, gaps, and strengthening a school or district's overall literacy assessment system. The supplemental videos offer perspectives from practitioners sharing their experiences going through an assessment review process. Access the Literacy Live Webinar Series here: <https://sites.google.com/a/dpi.wi.gov/lit-live-assessment/home>

## Teacher Education, PD, Licensing

Educator licensing online (ELO) is fully operational. See <http://tepd1.dpi.wi.gov/licensing/elo> for information regarding initial application for an educator license, license renewal, or other licensing needs/questions online.

## Special Education

The following link provides information and resources on current special education programs and initiatives: [http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped\\_hmprograms](http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped_hmprograms)  
Guidance for implementing criteria for Specific Learning Disability and programming for students with specific learning disabilities can be found here: [http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped\\_ld](http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped_ld)

## Bilingual/ESL Program

Access <http://ell.dpi.wi.gov/> for information regarding effective practices and resources for working with English Language Learners.

# Meet Kara Nelson-Sommerfeldt, District 4 director

**Education:** BA in English with an emphasis in Creative Writing, Carthage College, 1999; Masters in Education-Professional Development, UW-La Crosse, 2003

**Location:** Arcadia High School, Arcadia (half-way between La Crosse & Eau Claire)

**Current Assignments:** English I, English IV, Alternative English

**Past & Future Assignments:** English II, Creative Writing, AP Language, AP Literature

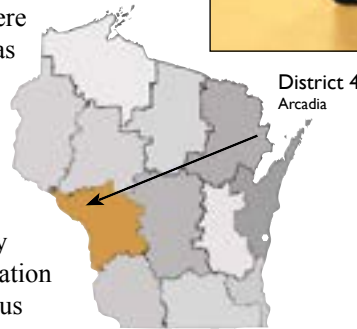
**Extra-curriculars:** Forensics Coach, National Honor Society Advisor

**Theme Song:** "Beautiful Day" by U2

**Fun challenge:** Read the article below to find all of Mrs. Sommerfeldt's hyperboles and clichés!



Last year I had the worst year ever of my 10-year teaching career. My guess is most of you have been there in one form or another. It was a perfect storm: there was that freshmen class; that group of senior boys; those kinds of personal issues that hang out in the back of your mind during every engaging grammar lesson. By February, I was sure it was my last year teaching; there was no way I was coming back. If I didn't have so much respect for my building principal and my fellow department members, I'd have put in my resignation yesterday! After all, I could always return to the glorious world of retail management.



District 4  
Arcadia

You see, teaching is actually my second career. As a young, liberal arts undergrad, I had some vague notions of my future career. After working for a few years, I'd eventually matriculate into a reputable graduate program in English – you know, one where they appreciate words like "matriculate." I'd spend my days studying the notions of gender and equality in Shakespeare's plays, and eventually set the world on fire after writing the definitive thesis on the meaning of "The Tempest." I could envision myself in the tweed coat, ensconced in the ivory tower. Instead, I took a job in retail management; I didn't love it, but it paid the bills, and it actually prepared me to become a teacher, just as much as any college course I took ever did. After all, what is teaching if not customer service? My problem, last year, was that there was a disconnect somewhere between my customers and my product, and I had become too tired to sell it anymore. (I'd use a clever "Death of a Salesman" analogy here, but I've never actually taught that play!)

And then the year ended. I had survived. Summer came, and with it the chance to renew, rejuvenate, rethink. I didn't quit. And fall came again, and I was back: new classroom, new students, new schedule, and – most importantly – new attitude. I wasn't going to let the worst year ever

define me and my career. No way would I go out like that. This year is going to be different, I decided last September. This is the year I recommit myself to the teaching profession. I will seek out every opportunity to better myself at my craft: read professional books and blogs, seek out conferences and workshops, collaborate with any colleague in the building who will work with me. And, in contrast, this year has been one of my best years ever.

And, that, dear colleagues, is how I became the District 4 representative on the WCTE board. What better way to reconnect with my profession than to actually connect with my professional peers? To network with those who are right there with me, doing the dirty work? Whether you teach in a large urban sprawl, a rich suburb, a small town, or a small, rural community with a growing ELL population, your school is more than likely the heart of your community. And you – as a dedicated English teacher – are the heart of your school. Take care of your heart; rededicate yourself to your craft; surround yourself with committed professionals; transform your worst year ever into your best one yet.

If I could do it, so can you.

**Contact Info**

**Kara Nelson-Sommerfeldt**  
Arcadia High School  
Arcadia  
[sommerfeldtk@arcadia.k12.wi.us](mailto:sommerfeldtk@arcadia.k12.wi.us)

# Looking for a good book? Check out these titles, shared by the WCTE Board



**Shelly Moore**  
Ellsworth HS, secretary

## **The President and the Assassin: McKinley, Terror, and Empire at the Dawn of the American Century**

by Scott Miller

In 1901, as America tallied its gains from a period of unprecedented imperial expansion, an assassin's bullet shattered the nation's confidence. The shocking murder of President William McKinley threw into stark relief the emerging new world order of what would come to be known as the American Century.

The President and the Assassin is the story of the momentous years leading up to that event, and of the very different paths that brought together two of the most compelling figures of the era: President William McKinley and Leon Czolgosz, the anarchist who murdered him. ~**Goodreads**



**Kathy Nelson**  
Arrowhead HS, Hartland  
CEL Liaison

## **Where'd You Go, Bernadette?**

by Maria Semple

Bernadette Fox is notorious. To her Microsoft-guru husband, she's a fearlessly opinionated partner; to fellow private-school mothers in Seattle, she's a disgrace; to design mavens, she's a revolutionary architect, and to 15-year-old Bee, she is a best friend and, simply, Mom. Then Bernadette disappears. It began when Bee aced her report card and claimed her promised reward: a family trip to Antarctica. But Bernadette's intensifying allergy to Seattle

— and people in general — has made her so agoraphobic that a virtual assistant in India now runs her most basic errands. A trip to the end of the earth is problematic. To find her mother, Bee compiles email messages, official documents, secret correspondence — creating a compulsively readable and touching novel about misplaced genius and a mother and daughter's role in an absurd world. ~**Goodreads**



**Kelly Seefeldt**  
Stevens Point, District 5

## **A Game of Thrones**

by George R.R. Martin

Summers span decades. Winter can last a lifetime. And the struggle for the Iron Throne has begun. As Warden of the north, Lord Eddard Stark counts it a curse when King Robert bestows on him the office of the Hand. His honour weighs him down at court where a true man does what he will, not what he must . . . and a dead enemy is a thing of beauty.

The old gods have no power in the south, Stark's family is split and there is treachery at court. Worse, the vengeance-mad heir of the deposed Dragon King has grown to maturity in exile in the Free Cities. He claims the Iron Throne. Thus begins the first book in the series. ~**Goodreads**



**Erin Schwane**  
New Berlin West HS, Dist. 1

## **Caleb's Crossing**

by Gwendolyn Brooks

Once again, Geraldine Brooks takes a remarkable shard of history and brings it to vivid life. In 1665, a young man from Martha's Vineyard became the first Native American to graduate from Harvard College. Upon this slender factual scaffold, Brooks has created a luminous tale of love and faith, magic and adventure.

The narrator of "Caleb's Crossing" is Bethia Mayfield, growing up in the tiny settlement of Great Harbor amid a small band of pioneers and Puritans. Restless and curious, she yearns after an education that is closed to her by her sex. As often as she can, she slips away to explore the island's glistening beaches and observe its native Wampanoag inhabitants. At twelve, she encounters Caleb, the young son of a chieftain, and the two forge a tentative secret friendship that draws each into the alien world of the other. Bethia's minister father tries to convert the Wampanoag, awakening the wrath of the tribe's shaman, against whose magic he must test his own beliefs. One of his projects becomes the education of Caleb, and a year later, Caleb is in Cambridge, studying Latin and Greek among the colonial elite. There, Bethia finds herself reluctantly indentured as a housekeeper and can closely observe Caleb's crossing of cultures. Like Brooks's beloved narrator Anna in "Year of Wonders," Bethia proves an emotionally irresistible guide to the wilds of Martha's Vineyard and the intimate spaces of the human heart. Evocative and utterly absorbing, Caleb's Crossing further establishes Brooks's place as one of our most acclaimed novelists. ~**Goodreads**



**Katie Herrmann**  
Hartford Union HS, Dist. 6

## **They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky: The Story of Three Lost Boys from Sudan**

by Benjamin Ajak

Benjamin, Alepho, and Benson were raised among the Dinka tribe of Sudan. Their world was an insulated, close-knit community of grass-roofed cottages, cattle herders, and tribal councils. The lions and pythons that prowled beyond the village fences were the greatest threat they knew. All that changed the night the government-armed Murahiliin began attacking their villages. Amid the chaos, screams, conflagration, and gunfire, five-year-old Benson and seven-year-old Benjamin fled into the dark night. Two years later, Alepho, age seven, was forced to do the same. Across the Southern Sudan, over the next five years, thousands of other boys did likewise, joining this stream of child refugees that became known as the Lost Boys. Their journey would take them over one thousand miles across a war-ravaged country, through landmine-sown paths, crocodile-infested waters, and grotesque extremes of hunger, thirst, and disease. The refugee camps they eventually filtered through offered little respite from the brutality they were fleeing. ~**Goodreads**

Look for more good book recommendations in the next WCTE Update at the end of August.

## Wisconsin English Teachers' Calendar of Events and Deadlines

### April

**April 15** Deadline for state nomination for NCTE High School Teacher of Excellence Award  
<http://www.wcteonline.org/awards-and-grants/ncte-high-school-teacher-of-excellence-award/>

**April 16-19** Journalism Education Association/National Scholastic Press Association High School Journalism Convention, Denver.  
<http://www.jea.org>

### May

**May 1** Deadline for nominating a student teacher for the Outstanding Student Teacher Award.  
<http://www.wcteonline.org/awards-and-grants/outstanding-student-teacher-awards/>

**May 1** Deadline for nominating a first year teacher for the Nancy Hoefs Memorial Award for Outstanding First-Year Teacher  
<http://www.wcteonline.org/awards-and-grants/nancy-hoefs-memorial-award/>

**May 1** Deadline for WCTE's Lee Burress Intellectual Freedom Award. More information: <http://www.wcteonline.org/awards-and-grants/lee-burress-intellectual-freedom-award/>

**May 1** Registration opens for NCTE Annual Convention: Responsibility, Creativity, and the Arts of Language, Nov. 19-22, in Minneapolis

### June

### July

**July 2** Mailing deadline for Program to Recognize Excellence in Student Literary Magazines (PRESLM): This program for middle schools, junior high and high schools recognizes students, teachers, and schools for producing excellent literary magazines and encourages all schools to develop literary magazines, seeking excellence in writing and school-wide participation in production. Submit to Kathy Nelson at [nelson@arrowheadschoools.org](mailto:nelson@arrowheadschoools.org). More information at NCTE website: <http://www.ncte.org/awards/student/PRESLM>

**July TBD** WCTE Summer Board Meeting in Madison

**July 23** Muhammad Ali Award for Writing on Ethics. The competition is open to full-time undergraduate students and to first- and second-year full-time students enrolled in community, junior, and technical colleges. \$10,000 cash prize. To enter, visit <http://www.ncte.org/awards/student/ali>

#### WCTE Update March 2015

<b>President</b> John Pruitt	<b>Secretary</b> Shelly Moore
<b>1st Vice-President</b> Denise Meyer	<b>Treasurer</b> Tom Scott
<b>2nd Vice-President</b> Marianne Potter	<b>Update Editor</b> Linda Barrington



## Classroom Tech and Test Prep

As 2015 has rolled in, the push in our school has been to develop activities supporting the academic and technology demands of the Badger 38 exam, that dreaded 38 which up until a week ago was still in flux. A team of English language arts and math teachers got together to develop templates and examples of assessments that mirrored the computerized adaptive testing and the performance tasks that make up the 38. These materials were then demonstrated and distributed to the rest of our staff in order to provide a system for structuring questions and online class assignments that would enhance students' skills and familiarize them with the Badger 38 testing format.

Our focus is not to teach to the test, but rather to prepare students for the high level critical thinking demanded by the standards using the lessons we already teach. We also recognized the need to give our students the access to technology and tasks that would prepare them for the discrete skills that would bog down an unmotivated or unfamiliar student. Essentially, we wanted to take the testing format out of the anxiety equation for students, so that they are able to focus on demonstrating their skills instead of navigating the test itself.

### Technology

For the technology portion, we realized the most beneficial tool would be to have students getting used to dual screens. To achieve this, we used Dualless, an extension for Google Chrome that students can add to their browsers for free. After installing, students can use the Dualless icon to view two tabs simultaneously on a split screen, which mimics the left-side text and right-side questions of the 38.

For the questions, we favored the versatility and ease that Google Forms provided. Teachers utilized the same tools as the test, such as selecting the sentence from the text, with cutting and pasting into a form of their own design.

For the texts, Google Docs also provided a convenient and easy way for students to highlight and show critical thinking skills by annotating the text. They can make a copy of the articles and link them into the form when completed. There are also other extensions, such as Clearly from Evernote, that make online texts simple and easy to read in a digital format.

### Content

What made these test prep lessons different from many others, is that the content was driven by what our school was already teaching, instead of the random sample questions provided by the testing companies. Questions focused on students' abilities to determine a main idea, find supporting details, use context clues, determine author's purpose and determine why the text is organized in a specific way. The team provided teachers with sample skill-based questions that followed the Common Core and were worded similarly to the questions from the 38 practice materials. Teachers then wrote questions using their own texts.



Jaclyn Mabon is a District 5 director and the Awards chairperson for WCTE. She teaches at PJ Jacobs Junior High School in Stevens Point. Contact her at [jmabon@pointschools.net](mailto:jmabon@pointschools.net). Kelly Seefeldt is pictured on the next page.

# Alternative Discussion Formats

## Silent Discussion

Small group and whole class discussions are a great way to formatively assess your students, but they present a few problems both for teachers and students when it comes to accurately assessing. For example, it is counterintuitive to stifle a robust discussion so you, as the assessor, can take accurate notes on who said what during the conversation, and of course, there is always the core group of willing speakers who do all the talking in a discussion and their more reserved counterparts who rarely share their ideas, even if they had deep insights related to the topic or text.

Seeking alternative discussion formats allows you to create an inclusive classroom that allows all students, even those with an aversion to speaking up, the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding through discussion. I've experimented with a few alternative discussion formats, and the one of my favorite and most successful was a "silent discussion" on *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton using Today'sMeet.com. This discussion format was easy to facilitate, engaged even my students prone to shyness, and left me with a transcript of everyone's comments that I could go back to and accurately assess after the discussion had ended.



Kelly Seefeldt is an at-large director for WCTE. She teaches at PJ Jacobs Junior High School in Stevens Point. Contact her at [kseefeld@pointsschools.net](mailto:kseefeld@pointsschools.net)

### 1 Getting Started

Today'sMeet is incredibly easy to set up and share with students. Without even signing in, you can create a "room," where the discussion will take place, and generate a direct link that can be shared with students. I simply posted the link to our class website to make it available on discussion day. Today'sMeet also gives you the option to create a QR code link to your room, and if you students will be participating with mobile devices, this would be an easy way to get them all to your room.

While you may have an established procedure for traditional classroom discussions, it will be important to clearly lay out expectations for the silent discussion before you get students in the room and discussing. Your expectations may vary depending on your classroom environment and the standards you are trying to assess.

Before we got started, I verbally explained the following expectations to my students and distributed a half-page handout, so they had a reference during the discussion.

- All students signing in to Today'sMeet.com will use their first name and last initial as their "nickname."
- Students should refrain from speaking during this silent discussion. Express your comments and thoughts in the discussion forum.
- Students are to maintain our classroom's respectful environment online and respond to each other's comments and questions in a thoughtful and responsible way.
- Students will be assessed on their ability to come to the discussion prepared, respond to questions and ideas posed by classmates, and ask their own questions that generate meaningful discussion. Posts to the discussion forum should not only demonstrate knowledge of the book (*The Outsiders*), but also an ability to engage in productive discussion with your classmates.

I also assigned a point value to meaningful student responses, as well as deep questions that generated further discussion, and gave students a total earned points available for the discussion. For our class, this was a formative assessment that would be in the grade book, so it had to have some point value associated with it. You could also assess students on a check +/- scale as well.

Finally, I explained how this silent discussion would work, and showed students Today'sMeet before they took out their devices. I demonstrated where to find the link on our website and how to join the room. I also explained that I would be monitoring the discussion from my computer, but the students would be responsible for keeping the "conversation" going in the forum.

*Continued on next page*

## 2 Facilitating the Discussion

Another helpful feature of Today'sMeet is the Projector View, located under Room Tools on the room creator's screen. Projector View shows only the discussion feed, removing the text box that allows you to contribute to the discussion. I used the dual screen setup connected to my SMART Board to show students the Projector View on the board while I maintained my ability to contribute to the discussion on my second screen. If you don't have a dual screen, you could always accomplish this by joining your room on a second device, like a laptop, Chromebook, or iPad.

Periodically throughout the discussion, I froze the Projector View screen after a good question was posed, so that students who need more time to think or type could continue to see the question they were responding to even after the scrolling feed of classmates' responses had pushed that question off their screen. If you choose to freeze on certain questions, explain to your students why and when you will be freezing. Even after explaining that they should look to the SMART Board if the discussion feed is moving too quickly for them, I still had students tell me in the debrief that they found it difficult to keep up with the feed on their Chromebooks because they weren't referring back to the frozen screen.

To kick things off, I posed a few questions that students had submitted via exit slips the day before. This gave students examples of the types of questions that would generate discussion, and gave them a starting point for their initial comments.

I wanted my students to focus on elaborating and responding to each other's comments and questions, as stated in the first speaking and listening standard for seventh grade, and in the beginning, I noticed students replying to one question at a time, and then moving on to an unrelated question posed by someone else. To facilitate more back-and-forth among students, I began posing secondary questions to specific students. For example, when a student responded to a question about why Johnny and Ponyboy enter the burning church to save children they didn't know with "Because they actually care although it may not seem like it, especially after the 'Bob incident.'" I followed up with "Jacob, good point. What does that say about Johnny and Pony's moral character?" Eventually, the students caught on and were interacting with each other in the forum on their own.

## 3 Debrief and Assessment

After wrapping up our silent discussion, I asked my students to respond to several questions about the discussion. First, I asked them to recall the most interesting point raised in the discussion. Next, I asked them about the format of the silent discussion and Today'sMeet; what did they like about it and what did they not like about it. Finally, I asked them if they preferred our traditional discussion format or the silent discussion and to explain the reasons behind their preference.

This debrief gave me very useful feedback from students on how to improve our next silent discussion, and an overwhelming majority of students said they enjoyed this type of discussion. Not surprisingly, many students who normally don't speak up during our whole class discussions, liked sharing their ideas silently in the forum.

During the debrief, one student was disappointed his question did not generate as much discussion, and he feared his grade would suffer. Luckily, Today'sMeet allows you to print a transcript of the discussion which is what I used to assess students. When I looked back in the transcript, I could see this student did ask a great question, it was just posted at the same time as two other questions and many responses, but because I had a written record of this student demonstrating the questioning and responding skills I was assessing, he earned full credit. The transcript of any room discussion can be printed, but only before the room is closed. Make sure you open up the Room Tools and click the Transcript link before you close your rooms.

*Continued on next page*

# 4

## Final Tips

Finally, it should be noted that TodaysMeet offers a paid subscription service specifically for teachers, but I found that all I need to do can be done with the free version if you follow a few simple tips.

- Create an account for yourself, even though you can start a room without signing up.
- Create a new room for each class or group discussion.
- Distribute the direct link to your students via email, class website, or QR code.
- Set clear expectations and rules for nicknames, so students' skills can be easily assessed.
- Use the projector view and freeze on questions if possible.
- Print or save the transcripts BEFORE you close your room.

The last tip is probably the most important when assessing students, but if you accidentally close a room before you've saved your transcripts, there is a way to get them back. If you're signed in to your account (see the first tip) you can sign up for Teacher Tools with a credit card, open your closed rooms, and print the transcripts. I had to do this after my first silent discussion, and it was a huge relief. An added bonus was that TodaysMeet refunds any unused portion of the \$5 monthly subscription, so I was only charged 13 cents for the time it took me to print the transcripts from my closed rooms and cancel my subscription.

I hope you try out the silent discussion format with your students. Please feel free to share your ideas and feedback with me via Google Plus.