

## Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts

### Cruising on the Turnpike in Search of PCTELA

Jan Spohn, PCTELA President, Reading Specialist for the North Allegheny School District

#### Cruising on the Turnpike in Search of PCTELA

Think time in the car. Mental draft, rehearsals, and revisions for a suitable welcome...

Beauty of this October day... general sense of wellbeing Searching for a metaphor for PCTELA at 65 mph (plus)

Light traffic – mid weekday afternoon Clusters of homes ‘pike side, backs turned to the action Rural views open up – anticipation- a lot like PCTELA

Just past Donegal – (appropriately) – a flock of sheep ... No, not PCTELA – but some others in education...

Then get passed by a multi-tasking yuppie in a beamer – talking, fiddling with his Sirius, Probably not PCTELA – but we do many things at once...

An impatient one, weaving in and out, risking the wrath of truckers We can sometimes feel impatient with our field; we aren't always fearful of others' wrath, but our tenacity doesn't make this PCTELA.

Those truckers lined up like a Steeler defense – tandem loads – reminding me of publishers' materials – with ancillary items offered for a 'few dollars' more – one size fitting all. The claims have been made – “good from Texas to the Appalachians – use these funds to purchase and raise your test scores...”

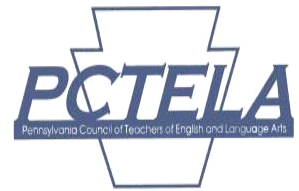
A flock of migratory birds – flitting over the highway – chattering to each other. ...Well, we do flock to our fall conventions and to hear wonderful speakers...but not PCTELA.

A group of predatory birds – hawks at the least – swooping high over the roadway. Not PCTELA – unless at the buffet table. More like those who reap the fiscal benefits of NCLB.

A tunnel – first of three – and while I drive these in stride – (I am from the “burg” after all...) I consider how PCTELA has been instrumental in delivering me from those dark times in my career – where no amount of illumination seems to help me from feeling that I am ‘off track’ – pressured from external “know it alls” or just feeling isolated. The tunnels are shorter with PCTELA colleagues to connect with – the light at the end of each tunnel.

Then around a graceful arc – there it was – the metaphor I was searching for! Stretched across the valley a serene whitewashed farm. Some fields lush and flourishing, others harvested or fallow. Resting, waiting – ready for a kernel of an idea to grow to fruition. Beyond that farmland, spreading across the horizon, a mountain blanketed in PA hardwoods. Their green a bit dusky in the autumn air, but here and there – scattered about were the sentries of fall. The scarlet, the russet, the cinnamon orange maple. Taproots thrust deep into the mountain to nourish and sustain this majesty. There is the metaphor for PCTELA – those who are not satisfied with the ways things are, rooted deeply in great pedagogy and knowledge of best practices, and not afraid to show their true colors with aplomb and some flash. The interesting thing was those other trees bordering those early harbingers of fall were just showing the tinges of color splattered among the edges.

Like PCTELA – great ideas spreading contagiously. So to all you mighty oaks, towering hickories, or branching maples – thanks for sharing your foliage. Thanks for being PCTELA. Thanks for being a part of it!



Spring 2009

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***“There it was—the metaphor I was searching for!”***

**-Jan Spohn, PCTELA President**





## NCTE 2009

As the host affiliate for the NCTE conference in Philadelphia in November 2009, PCTELA needs approximately 200 members to help staff this event.

Although we've reached our goal, we will no doubt have volunteers who for various reasons may be unable to serve. So we're looking for "back-ups"!

If helping at this national event in our own back yard seems like something you would like to do, simply send an email to Bob Dandoy as soon as possible at [bdandoy@zbzoom.net](mailto:bdandoy@zbzoom.net) or check out [pctela.org](http://pctela.org) for more information.

Members who work at the conference will receive free registration to the conference (a \$200+ value!). **SIGN UP NOW AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITY!**

## Conference 2008—A Wonderful Time Had by All

On an unusually warm, sunny October morning, over two hundred educators, presenters, and vendors converged at the Lancaster Host Inn in Lancaster, PA to learn, to share, to explore, and of course, to have fun. Conference 2008 was another successful gathering for PCTELA members. We were treated to sessions with nationally known authors as well as famous local authors who shared their love of the profession and words of wisdom for English teachers. As always, getting to meet and talk with the authors in a small groups or in a one-on-one setting is an experience many PCTELA members never forget.

Over a dozen presenters shared tips, lessons, and activities that help teachers to engage students in reading and writing. These sessions and workshops covered much of the gamut of what teachers do in the classroom: Shakespeare, vocabulary, creative writing, novels—

classic and new, technology, and much, much more.

At the PCTELA Marketplace, conference attendees were able to see the latest in educational information available to teachers. Everything from poetry to pedagogy was on display by vendors who were always eager to answer questions or help in any way.

Many PCTELA members took advantage of Lancaster County and all it has to offer by visiting many of the local shopping outlets and by experiencing what life is like for the Amish community so well known in the area.

The success of Conference 2008 has left many PCTELA members anxiously awaiting the next conference in 2010.



*Kathleen Blake Yancey*



**We are pleased to announce tentative arrangements for**

**CONFERENCE 2010!**

**OCTOBER 22 and 23**

**At THE PENN STATER Conference Center/Hotel**

**State College, PA**

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

**GET IT IN YOUR BUDGET!**

**TALK TO COLLEAGUES!**

**DO IT NOW!**

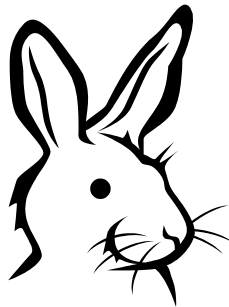
## The Rabbit Hole of Technology – An excerpt from the workshop with Patricia Bell

**Patricia Bell, Karns City High School**

*I asked each workshop participant to please name the greatest fear when dealing with the new thrust of technology. What each wrote is in fact, what we all fear. The technology won't work, we will look foolish, it will replace the teacher and values we hold dear.*

Be prepared, and assured, that all of the above will happen. The technology will not work all the time. No matter how prepared you are, at some point, the bulb will burn out, the slides won't work, the internet connection will go down, and the power point will not load correctly. The one thing that will not happen is that technology will never replace the soul and heart of the teacher.

I say, embrace these frailties of technology and of you the teacher! It keeps us earth bound and vulnerable, and therefore keeps us in tune with what our students face. Their fears get waterlogged after a time, and we forget the daunting task of a first essay, or a first reading assessment. We forget the nerve-splitting fear of having to speak in front of their peers, or the beads of sweat forming on a forehead because they have to analyze a passage. As



teachers, we cannot forget what it is to be a student and face failure. When we are learning new technology, we are students, once again, and we are thrust back into what it is like to look at the unknown. We are uncomfortable, and I say, that is a good thing. Uncomfortable reminds us to be human. We lose whatever robotic notions we have acquired over the years, and creativity and vitality have a chance to emerge.

As far as looking foolish, to me that is one of the greatest assets we have because it teaches to take risk for advancement. We want our students to "try," to take risks, and yet we are so afraid to take them ourselves. What message does that send? When our students see us work something new, and fail, and see us regroup and figure out how to get from point A to point B, they see the thought process of achievement. When faced with a problem to solve, they can recall, by demonstration that we, even teachers, must often work through the muck and the mire of disappointment.

Technology will never replace the heart and

soul of the teacher. A computer does not have the soothing voice that the rattled student needs. When Susan enters the classroom, no computer or power point can assess her mood, to see if learning is about to be circumvented by life. Wiki and emails cannot hug, listen, hold, and speak softly. Most importantly, no technology has eyes that see. As teachers, we look to the faces of our students and we see their distress and their achievement. With a glance, we can see what adjustments are needed so that learning can take place. No amount of technology can sit one on one with a student and guide them through a difficult process. Most importantly, when technology breaks down, we the teacher still have a voice, still have the capability to teach. If everything is taken out of the classroom, and only a teacher and a student stands, learning WILL continue.

Embrace technology as a tool. It is not the total. It is merely one part. And, although there might be machines to do it, someone still has to press the 'on' button.

**Technology  
will never  
replace the  
heart and soul  
of the  
teacher."**

**-Patricia Bell**



**CONGRATULATIONS!**

Zachary Hull

Kari Weaver

Dean Smith

John Gildea

Deborah Peters

**PCTELA Announces the 2008 NCTE Award Winners****2008 NCTE Leadership Development Award – PCTELA:**

Zachary Hull, Carson Middle School, North Allegheny School District, Pittsburgh, PA

Zachary was nominated by his former professors at LaRoche College. He had previously been student teaching with long-time PCTELA member, Brenda Barner, Shaler Area School District. Zachary will accept his award at the affiliate breakfast meeting at NCTE, San Antonio.

**2008 NCTE Leadership Development Award – WPCTE:**

Kari Weaver, Emory H. Markle Intermediate School, South Western School District, Hanover PA

**2008 Secondary Section High School Teacher of Excellence Award – PCTELA:**

Dean Smith, Big Spring High School, Big Spring School District, Newville PA

**2008 Secondary Section High School Teacher of Excellence Award – WPCTE:**

John Gildea, Springfield High School, Springfield, PA

**2008 Edwin A. Hoey Award for Middle School Education:**

Deborah is the eleventh recipient of the NCTE Edwin A. Hoey Award for Outstanding Educator in the English Language Arts. This award, cosponsored by the Weekly Reader Corporation, recognizes

exceptional English language arts teachers of grades 5-8 who have demonstrated excellence in teaching English language arts and inspired a spirit of inquiry and a love of learning in their students. The award will be presented at the Middle Level Luncheon at NCTE, San Antonio.

Deborah has been an educator with the North-western Lehigh School District for the past 30 years where she has taught middle level English Language Arts for 19 of those years inspiring her students to think critically, become lifelong readers, writers, and communicators.

Deborah also serves on PCTELA's board as Vice President for Middle Schools.



Our congratulations also go to Martina Fegan, PCTELA Vice President for Secondary Schools, on being named Greencastle-Antrim's Female Teacher of the Year for 2007-2008!

**PCTELA Considers NCTE Awards for 2009**

PCTELA will soon be considering nominations for the 2009 NCTE awards. Our Elementary, Middle, Secondary, and College Sections present several awards.

The NCTE Leadership Development Award is for teachers in their first years of teaching. This award nurtures the development of new leaders within state, regional, or provincial affiliates and the National Council

Other available awards include the NCTE Leadership Initiative: NCTE Early Career Teacher of Color Award of Distinction and the NCTE Leadership Initiative: NCTE Early Career Educator of Color Leadership Award.

Since we are hosting the national convention in Philadelphia in November 2009, we might wish to strive for the NCTE Affiliate Membership Recruitment Awards.

The purpose of this award is to recognize affiliates that have substantially increased their memberships or that have recruited new members for NCTE.

Details on all the criteria for these awards is available on the NCTE website at [www.ncte.org/about/awards/sect](http://www.ncte.org/about/awards/sect). Please forward names to PCTELA President, Jan Spohn for consideration .

## Our Corner of the Web

*David Long, PCTELA SLATE Representative, West Perry High School*

International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Educator Resource:

**[www.iste.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Educator\\_Resources](http://www.iste.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Educator_Resources)**

This site offers a wealth of information on using technology in the classroom, including assessment, curriculum, professional professional development, integrations, and research.

Discovery Education: **[www.discoveryeducation.com](http://www.discoveryeducation.com)**



From other websites, to clip art, to teacher ideas, this site guides the user to a multitude of lesson plan ideas, including accompanying videos for topics.



Blabberize: **[www.blabberize.com](http://www.blabberize.com)**

Pick an animal or person and have them say the words. A great way to introduce a topic or unit. Have an animal or fictional character give the information students are to hear. A fun way to get students to pay attention.

Flowgrams: **[www.flowgram.com](http://www.flowgram.com)**

Create interactive guided presentations by combining web pages, photos, Powerpoint, and more with your voice, notes, and highlights. Great for students to use to present information.

Photo Story: **[www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/digitalphotography/photostory/tips/firststory.msp](http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/digitalphotography/photostory/tips/firststory.msp)**

Photo Story 3 for Windows can be used to create visually compelling and fun stories using your pictures and music. The opening page explains in detail the basics of creating a photo story and how easy and fun it can be.

Wikispaces: **[www.wikispaces.com](http://www.wikispaces.com)**

This site allows the user to create simple web pages that groups, friends, and families can use to edit together. This site is free, although it requires the user to join.



The Folger is now on YouTube!

Log on to **[www.youtube.com/FolgerLibrary](http://www.youtube.com/FolgerLibrary)** to see videos posted by the Shakespeare Folger Library. The site has a number of videos related to performance-based teaching and teaching Shakespeare, as well as some clips regarding the current exhibition, all about armor, weapons, and the military in Shakespeare's day. Enjoy!



### SLATE

is

**“Support for the Learning and Teaching of English”**

**Do you have a great website for teachers?**

**We'd love to see more!**

Send to David Long at  
 <[david.long@westperry.k12.pa.us](mailto:david.long@westperry.k12.pa.us)>



## AUTHOR UPDATE

Steve McKee's *My Father's Heart* was officially released in paperback on February 9th.

Also check out Steve's "My Rowing Heart" blog. My ROWING Heart" blog at [www.stevemckee.com](http://www.stevemckee.com).

## Authors sighted at PCTELA Conference 2008

One of the top memorable experiences of this year's conference was getting to meet and speak to the authors who attended.

On Friday morning, the current president of NCTE,



David Long, Jeff Wilhem, and Jen Bryant

Kathleen Blake Yancey, inspired the audience by discussing the combining technology and traditional forms of writing and the importance of having these co-exist in today's classroom.

Friday afternoon brought local author Steve McKee to a Grade Level meeting where he discussed why he wrote his novel *My Father's Heart* and the impact it has had on his life. He also challenged his audience to help get his novel into every 11th and 12th grade classroom in Pennsylvania.

Jeff Wilhelm, internationally known author of *You Gotta Be the Book*, gave a motivating talk on how to

reach reluctant readers which had the audience laughing and working together on practical ideas to use with students in the classroom.

Also appearing at the day-

tors in western Pennsylvania.

At lunch on Saturday, Jen Bryant, local author of many books for children and teens, including one that made Oprah's book list, discussed her writing process and how many of her books came to be. She also showed the audience how her historical fiction books could be used to highlight interesting points of US history.

All of the authors and speakers were again this year gracious and willing to stay around for photo opportunities, book signings, and discussion about their books and the effect they have on readers. Many conference attendees took advantage of these opportunities and had a memorable keepsake and a good story or two to take back to their students.

end grade level meetings was PCTELA favorite, Patricia Harrison Easton. Pat is a well known Pennsylvania author with numerous children, young adult, and adult novels to her credit including *Davey's Blue Eyed Frog*, *To Heal the Heart's Eye*, and

*Summer's Chance*. She teaches children's book writing at the Institute for Children's Literature and serves as the regional adviser for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustra-



Martina Fegan and Steve McKee

## Powerpoint Postings On Line

### *Jan Spohn, PCTELA President, Reading Specialist for the North Allegheny School District*

Did you know you can post your PowerPoint on [www.slideshare.com](http://www.slideshare.com) so others can touch base with your thinking? This is where to place your own links for your slideshare, any voicethreads you try, your own wiki, blog, or technology projects.

Slideshare.com also allows FREE hosting of both PowerPoint or PowerPoint and narration and include good tutorials. I posted mine already (and found I was in the company of many talented folks including a few presentations by Kathleen Blake Yancey! My presentation contained so many wonderful links; I wanted participants to have easy access to

them, so I created a wiki over at [wetpaint.techpcte-la2008.wetpaint.com](http://wetpaint.techpcte-la2008.wetpaint.com)

This wiki contains fine examples, "how-to's" from YouTube, and suggestions from conference participants. If you would like to access this, just drop me a line at [jer-spohn@zoominternet.net](mailto:jer-spohn@zoominternet.net) and I will invite you! This helps to continue the conversation from implementation of many of these technology tools in our classrooms.

Some other great tools I learned about at the conference:

[www.animoto.com](http://www.animoto.com) – Download your photos and then select music from the site's copyrighted list and it will

craft a wonderful video from your photos with expert transitions. The thirty-second video is FREE and a great way to showcase student projects. Our librarians reported that this loads on the district website with no hitches! A reasonable cost is charged for longer videos - unlimited number and length for \$30.00 a year!

[www.voicethread.com](http://www.voicethread.com) – A wonderful site where you download a photo and then folks from either your classroom or the world can comment in either a dialogue bubble or by recording their voice! Great examples of educational use are provide on the site.

[www.audacity.com](http://www.audacity.com) – Want to know how to get started with podcasting? Go to audacity to fine tune your recordings.

### Did You Know...?

Philadelphia was founded by William Penn in 1682 and laid out in a simple grid pattern that included wide streets and five public squares. In that respect, Philadelphia was the first "planned city" in North America. Some of the other more interesting firsts for Philadelphia include:

- The nation's first public grammar

school, now known as the William Penn Charter School, founded in 1689.

- The nation's first public library - the Free Library of Philadelphia - founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1731
- The University of Pennsylvania, the first university in America, founded in 1779, traces its roots to a

tuition-free school founded in 1740

- The first art school and art museum in America, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, was founded in Philadelphia in 1805.
- The world's first computer, ENIAC, was built at the University of Pennsylvania in 1946.



**The 2008  
PCTELA  
Conference  
was great!  
So many  
wonderful  
resources!**

**-Jan Spohn**

## Stratford Tour 2009

### SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY'S 32<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL STRATFORD SUMMER PROGRAM

Would you like a great way to earn three college credits in just two weeks this summer? Would you like the opportunity to see a world-renowned company of actors perform Shakespeare and other great dramas in one of the four greatest theatres in the world? Well, you can. Sign up for one of the four courses offered this summer by Slippery Rock University and earn **THREE CREDITS** (graduate or undergraduate) and enjoy a week in a vibrant, international city.



The English Department of Slippery Rock University is sponsoring its annual Stratford Summer Program, taught this year by Dr. Erica Scott. This summer four courses are being offered. The classes will meet from Mon. July 13<sup>th</sup> through Fri. July 17<sup>th</sup> from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., followed by a week (July 21<sup>st</sup> to July 26<sup>th</sup>) in Canada where participants will see performances of the plays that we have studied.

#### THE PLAYS

- *Macbeth*
- *The Importance of Being Earnest*
- *Julius Caesar*
- *West Side Story*
- *Bartholomew Fair*

In addition, participants will also take part of a *Backstage Tour of the Festival Theatre*, a *Costume and Props Warehouse Tour*, as well as a *Pre-Show Lecture* about *Macbeth* and a *Post-Performance Discussion* about *West Side Story* with Stratford Festival members.

#### Tuition and Fees

In addition to tuition costs for three credit hours, the cost of the tour for SRU students will be \$600.00 and for all other participants, it will be \$750.00. The cost includes tickets to five productions, hotel accommodations (two people per room, separate beds), transportation to and from Stratford, Ontario, and continental breakfast each morning. There is a \$55.00 fee for non-credit participants. Applicants must also complete a Study Abroad Application (available on-line at: <http://www.sru.edu/pages/11920.asp>).

#### Deposit

A \$130.00 deposit must be sent as soon as possible. May 29, 2009 is the last day to register for the trip. All participants should make their checks payable to Slippery Rock University and send to: Mrs. Pamela Frigot, Director, Office of International Services, Slippery Rock University, Slippery Rock, PA 16057.



#### For More Information

Registration and payment for courses will be handled in the Office of International Services at (724) 738-2289, Fax: (724) 738-2959, or [e-mail pamela.frigot@sru.edu](mailto:pamela.frigot@sru.edu)

If you have further questions, please contact Dr. Erica Scott: (724) 738-2367 or [e-mail: erica.scott@sru.edu](mailto:erica.scott@sru.edu)

**A GREAT  
WAY TO  
EARN  
ACT 48  
CREDIT!**

“Certificate of Merit”  
for outstanding work in the  
English Language Arts by students in grades K – 12.



***As a service to our PCTELA members...***

The affiliate recognizes, through your input, the outstanding work in the English Language Arts that K-12 students in our state continually produce. To celebrate this outstanding work, PCTELA instituted the Certificate of Merit program.

Each PCTELA member will be eligible to request four (4) student certificates per school year. The certificate honors the student for outstanding effort in the English Language Arts. The member teacher selects the student(s) to receive the award and determines the reason for the honor.

Students in K-12 are eligible.

Request forms are available by contacting  
Barb Rahal, program coordinator.

Upon receipt of request forms, a beautiful, personalized certificate will be sent to the requesting teacher. The request period will be open from October 1 to May 1 of each school year.

For request forms or further information, contact:

Barbara F. Rahal  
110 Beau Drive  
Edinboro, PA 16412  
(814) 734 – 2723 (home)  
(814) 732 – 2953 (office)

**PCTELA Newsletter  
Publication Schedule To Change**

The PCTELA Newsletter will now be published three times a year,  
with regular issues  
(now expanded to 12 pages) once in the spring and once in the fall  
and a third “Conference Information Issue” in the summer.

**A GREAT WAY  
TO HONOR  
STUDENTS AT  
GRADUATION,  
AWARD  
BANQUETS,  
AND  
ASSEMBLIES!**





### PCTELA Vision Statement

The Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts (PCTELA), a professional organization committed to promoting literacy and lifelong learning, empowers and inspires educators through professional development and collegial communication.

### PCTELA Belief Statements

In order to realize the vision of the organization, PCTELA believes that it should. . .

- Serve literacy educators at all career phases (pre-service and practicing) and levels (elementary, middle, secondary, and college);
- provide opportunities for discussion, group study, and reflection on the teaching of English/ Language Arts;
- strengthen English/Language Arts instruction to meet students' needs;
- communicate relevant information, ideas, and research;
- coordinate and provide resources and support for lifelong learning;
- recognize contributions and accomplishments in the area of literacy education and lifelong learning; and
- collaborate with other organizations and institutions in related activities.

## PCTELA Executive Board, 2008-2009

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**Now is the  
time to  
become  
more  
involved in  
PCTELA!**

**We're  
always  
looking for  
volunteers!**

**Check out  
PCTELA.org  
or contact  
PCTELA  
President  
Jan Spohn.**

*It is with great sadness that PCTELA acknowledges the passing of Dr. Al Labriola, President of the Western PA Council of Teachers of English (WPCTE). We extend our sincere sympathy to his colleagues, friends, and family.*

**Pennsylvania Council  
of Teachers of English  
and Language Arts**

Bob Dandoy  
Executive Director  
PO Box 2327  
Butler, PA 16003-2327

**[www.pctela.org](http://www.pctela.org)**

**Reminders:**

- **NCTE National Convention**

**“Once and Future Classics:**

**Reading Between the Lines”**

**November 19—22, 2009**

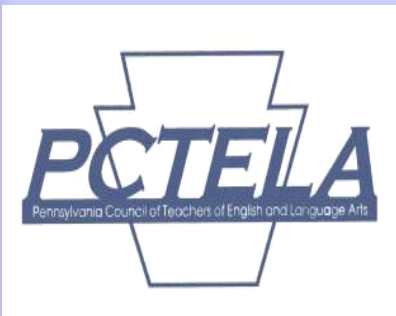
**Philadelphia, PA**

- **CONFERENCE 2010—**

**The Annual PCTELA Conference**

**October 22 and 23, 2010**

**Penn State**



**PCTELA  
PO Box 2327  
Butler, PA 16003-2327**

***Have a great summer!***