



**PENNSYLVANIA
COUNCIL OF
TEACHERS OF
ENGLISH AND
LANGUAGE ARTS**

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THE PCTELA NEWSLETTER

Winter 2012

Coming Full Circle

Jane Blystone
Mercyhurst College

Attending PCTELA state convention is always a highlight every fall. Over the past twenty-five years I have met many great teachers and gathered new ideas from presenters to use in the classroom and to share with my pre-service graduate students.

Last year was no exception. I attended a session on digital story telling, because I love the power technology gives to students to learn about their writing voice. The speakers presented a collaborative project that they were doing between a college professor and a school. One of the presenters was a high school creative writing teacher and the other was a college professor of computer engineering who shared with the students at the high school how to use digital story telling tools to frame their stories. As a former high school English teacher I was in-

trigued by the collaborative nature of their project because I rarely collaborated in the high school setting. That changed when I became a college professor. One of my colleagues, a biochemist, teamed up with me to collaborate in a number of venues. Her vision to promote STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) careers to female students, who are the most underserved population in these career areas, spurred me to write several grants to help fund her vision. Thus began our own collaboration to integrate PA standards into an after school project at a local urban school to promote STEM careers.

How did that bring us to present at PCTELA? As a member of PCTELA, I was very excited about the convention theme "Building Community Through Collaboration," because that is exactly what we were doing in our after school program, building community with a

local school, a college and the Pennsylvania Career-Links Work Force department. We used PA language arts, math, science, technology and career to work standards to frame our work. I sent in the proposal knowing that the session selection is very competitive since I had been on the board during the 1990s and had helped select session proposals.

After our session, I listened to Linda Christensen speak about how she motivated urban students to use writing to help students rise up as she says in her recent book: *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up: Teaching about Social Justice and the Power of the Written Word*. I knew then, that this was exactly what my colleague, Dr. Karen Evans and I were doing with our project at a local urban school with sixth grade girls. I also knew that the collaborative session I had attended the previous year had now come full circle.

Writing Across The Curriculum

Marlow Ediger

Too often, classroom teachers wish to separate writing into a separate component part from the rest of the curriculum. Thus, little emphasis is placed upon assisting pupils to integrate written work into science, mathematics, social studies, and literature, as well as its use in society. Writing is an

essential skill which cuts across daily activities performed by individuals. Much effort, time, and practice must be put into written work and its saliency. Well planned lessons consisting of vital objectives, learning experiences, and appraisal procedures need to be in the offing. Learners need to be motivated to be whole-

heartedly involved in writing across the curriculum.



Book Review

Jane Blystone
Mercyhurst College

Daniels, Harvey, and Nancy Steineke. *Texts and Lessons for Content-Area Reading*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2011. Print.

Harvey "Smokey" Daniels and Nancy Steinke get it. Their new book, *Texts and Lessons for Content-Area Reading* ISBN: 13:978-0-325-03087-6 or ISBN: 10:0-325-0387-1 is a great book for any secondary teacher. It is framed around two big ideas: (1) Strategy Lessons and (2) Text Test Lessons. The first section frames what we do every day as language arts teachers, reading teach-

ers and literacy coaches. Part one includes six major contexts for reading:

- Thinking together
- Capturing Reading Responses
- Collaborative Conversations
- Toward Deeper Thinking
- Moving Conversations
- Preparing for Text Sets

Under each heading there are numerous strategies for teaching reading in the content areas, which will give you tools to work with teachers in other content areas when they need a way to use current media to help their students learn new content. The second

part of the book provides more than 75 articles from The New York Times, The Washington Post, Rolling Stone, Car and Driver and Chicago Tribune with topics like Video Gaming, Texting, Eye Scan Technology in Schools and many more. This is a must have for teachers in Pennsylvania because much of the reading portion of the PSSA exams is nonfiction. The material is here to help you infuse nonfiction texts into your classroom.



Book Review

Newsletter Submissions:
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Author Visit

Alyce Baker
Lock Haven University

Pennsylvania, Young Adult Author, Beth Fantaskey, Visits Schools in Keystone Central School District

From October 24-26, 2011, Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania had the privilege of hosting young adult author Beth Fantaskey. As part of the English Department's Reading Series Committee's Write Now: Community Conversations with Contemporary Authors project, Ms. Fantaskey visited some Lock Haven University English courses and read from her works; addressed the community and Lock Haven University students, staff, and faculty at Lock Haven University as a speaker and panelist; was the featured speaker at Annie Halenbake Ross Library's Booked for Lunch program; and spoke in several formats at Central Mountain Middle and High Schools, respectively.

On October 25, 2011, Ms. Fantaskey, writer of young adult vampire fiction and revisionist of Gothic literature for a young adult audience, spoke to an assembly of students at Central Mountain High School and at Central Mountain Middle School. Introduced as a Pennsylvania author who lives in Pennsylvania and sets her stories in Pennsylvania, Beth Fantaskey talked about her passion for writing and her writing processes. To do so, Ms. Fantaskey brought her bag of tricks which helps her with writing

ideas and writers block, including a rough-looking sock, a clearly worn out thesaurus, a running shoe, and a journal. A major focus of Fantaskey's presentation concerned revision and constructive criticism. Ms. Fantaskey emphasized to students that teachers provide feedback to help them improve and that revision is a necessary part of the writing process. She even divulged that after three major revisions to her first novel, *Jessica's Guide to Dating on the Dark Side*, that only one original sentence remained.

Students and faculty seemed to appreciate Fantaskey's personable nature and speaking style. In fact, they asked her questions regarding her favorite authors and personal inspirations, why she writes young adult vampire fiction, the level of research she does, and the extent to which she promotes her writing. And of course, one student asked if she began writing after the notoriety of Stephanie Meyers' *Twilight*, to which she responded that she has never read the series and that she began writing her first book before *Twilight* was even published. And even after Fantaskey answered a multitude of questions during the assembly, a barrage of students flocked to get her autograph and ask questions about fiction writing and reading. After talking with the group of students, Ms. Fantaskey was interviewed by two student journalists who also take a media course at the high school. The interview was then shown to the student

body during the following morning's school announcement programming.

Needless to say, Ms. Fantaskey confirmed what many English teachers—and other teachers—tell their students: it is important to read; it is important to recognize the importance of the writing process and to engage in it in a thoughtful and positive manner; and it is important to be dedicated to something one is passionate about. Whether students were motivated by Ms. Fantaskey's message, her status, her personable nature, her style of writing, or her genre of writing, it does not matter. What matters is that many students were requesting that their English teachers purchase copies of Ms. Fantaskey's works for their classroom libraries, that one copy had been checked out of the library before Ms. Fantaskey's arrival, that there were murmurs among students to have a book club, and that students received one-to-one advice for their creative writing endeavors.

For additional information about Beth Fantaskey and her works, Fantaskey maintains a website (<http://www.bethfantaskey.com/>) that includes excerpts from her books, book trailers, promotional giveaways, author's notes, critical reviews, means of contacting her, and more.



**Become a fan
of PCTELA on
Facebook! Find
the link through
our website at
[www.pctela.org!](http://www.pctela.org)**



**PCTELA
Conference
2012**

Conference 2012 - Call For Proposals

Voice of Literacy: A Celebration of Reading and Writing

October 26 and 27, 2012

Marriott Lancaster at Penn Square - Lancaster, PA

PCTELA Conference 2011 was a resounding success with over 175 educators meeting in Western Pennsylvania to hear outstanding nationally-known speakers such as Carol Jago, Linda Christensen, Gareth Hinds, and Chris Crutcher and educators and authors from throughout the Keystone State. Our 2012 Conference Chairs, Jen Brown and Marci Stover, are already moving forward with plans for an exciting program of concur-

rent sessions and outstanding speakers from throughout Pennsylvania and the nation.

You are cordially invited to become part of next year's exciting event.

If you would like to be part of this program, the "Call for Proposals" is now posted at <http://www.pctela.org/AnnualConferences.htm>. We know you're doing outstanding work and we hope you'll consider availing yourself of this opportunity to share your knowledge and expertise.

All directions for submitting a proposal along with basic conference information can be found there.

In the weeks to come, you'll be receiving emails and regular mailings about the wonderful speakers and authors who are being lined up for next year's state event. Many of you will begin the budget process for the 2012 - 2013 school year very soon and we're hoping that when you hear about the Conference 2012 offerings, you'll request or set aside funds to join us on October 26 and 27, 2012 in Lancaster, PA.

Please make every effort to be part of this outstanding professional development opportunity.

Upcoming Events - Mark Your Calendar

PCTELA State Conference 2012 – "Voices of Literacy: A Celebration of Reading and Writing" - October 26 and 27, 2012 Marriott Lancaster at Penn Square, Lancaster, PA

PCTELA State Conference 2013 – October 25 and 26, 2013 Penn Stater Conference Center, State College, PA

NCTE Annual Convention 2012 – "Dream, Connect, Ignite" – Las Vegas, NV – November 15 – 18, 2012

PCTELA Executive Council Meeting – Lancaster, PA – March 24, 2012

NCTE Leadership Meeting – July 13 – 15, 2012 – St. Louis, MO



NCTE Teaching Award - Nominations Requested

WE'RE LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD TEACHERS!

NOMINATE AN OUTSTANDING COLLEAGUE FOR AN NCTE TEACHING AWARD

Over the past years, PCTELA has been active and honored to recognize through NCTE outstanding educators from our organization and state. We need to do so again and are asking your help in identifying educators for recognition. These awards include

-High School Teacher of Excellence Award

This award is given to high school teachers who are nominated by their state affiliates. All state, provincial, regional, and local affiliates can participate.

-Donald H. Graves Writing Award

Recognizes teachers in grades K-6 who demonstrate an understanding of student improvement in the teaching of writing.

-Edwin A. Hoey Award

This award 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.

-Media Literacy Award

This award showcases NCTE members who have developed innovative approaches for integrating media analysis and composition into their instruction.

-Outstanding Educator Award

Recognizes a distinguished educator who has made major contributions to the field of elementary English language arts education.

-Richard W. Halle Award

This award honors a junior high/middle level educator who has worked to promote understanding of the developmental needs and characteristics of young adolescents, espe-

cially in the English language arts.

If YOU could put forth a name and contact information to PCTELA Executive Director, Bob Dandoy or President Jan Spohn, we will then proceed (with your help) to see if that individual is inclined to participate in the award process. We recommend that you make some sort of preliminary contact with that educator to make sure they are willing to move forward with their nomination.

In the event that we receive numerous nominees, any educator who is not chosen for an award this year will be immediately considered for future awards.

There are too many outstanding educators in our state and organization for there not to be someone representing us. We hope you'll seriously consider our request.



Become a fan of PCTELA on Facebook! Find the link through our website at www.pctela.org!

www.pctela.org

Writing Together

Melissa Donner
Charter HS for Architecture+Design



Writing Together

I write to make myself believe everything will be all right,
I write when I think of him,
 I write when I have that moment, that feeling,
 I write to get my ideas out,
 I write to get anger out of my system; I write to make myself happy,
 I write to unveil worlds unknown,
 I write because it eases my mind,
 I write to remember but still forget,
 I WRITE TO SILENCE THE PAIN AND I WRITE TO BRING OUT THE BEAUTY,
 I write because I want to,
I write because I can,
 I write because I have to,
I write to see my feelings in my own words, from the heart,
 I write because it helps me express myself and others can either understand or see a different side of me,
 I write to write, I write to gossip, I write to remember,
 I write to give others a sense of how I see things,
I write to acknowledge what I've learned and what I will become,
 I write to save memories, to create adventures,
 I write because it's a part of me, it's a part of our culture,
 I write to sooth my mind, heart, and soul,
I write unnecessary things.

PCTELA
Conference
2012

The statements above come from my 2nd block. After reading some of Terry Tempest Williams, we decided to write our own "why I write" poems and then create one poem out of our favorite lines. What stood out to me in this activity and in putting the poster together was how much greater the whole was than the parts. The parts are essential and, in this case, they are high quality, but when they all ended up on one piece of paper they said so much more. This is a theme I keep coming across and one that seems almost intuitive to young people: writing does not happen in isolation.

I have seen this most keenly in the Creative Writing Club that I supervise. Since I have been working at The Charter High School for Architecture and Design (CHAD) in Philadelphia, I have been hosting a creative writing club in my room on Tuesday afternoons. The club started out small but has grown to include 15-25 kids and we now meet twice a week. Even when it was small, it was clearly a powerful forum for students. I facilitated the forum, but I was not the one who made it a place of inspiration and empowerment; the students led the way and they still do. The impact of the club comes from the students themselves and the ways that they respect and support each other as writers and as people. Certain students extend themselves as leaders, mentors, and enthusiasts and one of those students has been working with me from Day One.

Keith was a Freshman when I first arrived at CHAD. I taught on a different floor than the ninth grade, so Keith was not familiar with me as a teacher, but as soon as I hosted the first Creative Writing Club meeting, he came. He has come almost every week since then. During his first year, the core of the group included him and three tenth grade girls. Whenever Keith arrived, he made an entrance like Kramer in old episodes of *Seinfeld*. Keith would burst through the door and yell, "I'm here!" Barely able to contain his energy, he would get up and sit back down regularly, and he would shout out witty comments and outlandish ideas. It took effort to coax him into quiet writing time. As he has grown older, Keith has mellowed out some, but his wit and imagination have only grown with the increased focus he has developed. A side note: Keith is also the first student I have known since his Freshman year through his Senior year, and, as you all know, that is something a teacher never forgets.

Writing Together

...continued from last page

Keith started out as a science fiction writer and graphic novelist. Somewhere during the end of 10th grade, he turned to short stories and in 11th grade his philosophical side took over. These days, he is writing prose poetry and taking on themes of social justice and identity. Below is an excerpt from one of the pieces he wrote this fall, titled “The Truth,” in which he challenges authority.

The human mind makes every decision on its own: that’s the raw truth. Most people are too naïve to question their fathers and mothers, teachers and bosses. They’ve gotten too used to obeying every command and so they just assume commands are inevitable. But there are some who ignore the impulse; they know the meaning of “doing what they want, when they want.” And for taking advantage of their God-given freedom, they’re labeled delinquents, troublemakers, and the bottom of their generation. And they’re ok with that, because though their individuality brings fewer friends and less attention, it gives them power, admiration, and the strength to step over alienation and hatred.

“The Truth” is a short narrative piece inspired by a prompt I gave Keith last year during one of our Tuesday afternoon meetings. He explains the origin of the story within the frame of the story itself.

It was finally Tuesday. I was able to end the day with Creative Writing Club. I came in and sat down with the most creative people in the school. The head of the club, Ms. Donner, gave a separate writing prompt to each member. After everyone was done and 11 students had read their pieces, it was my turn. The prompt was: find a way to express what you think of as ‘the truth.’ I wrote, I prepared, I stood in front and I waited...

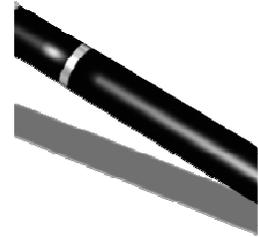
From here, a fictional dialogue ensues between Keith and me. In his story, I ask him, “well, aren’t you going to read?” And he says, “why should I?” He then goes into an impassioned rant about how adults are always telling kids what to do when often, adults don’t know any more than children do, and sometimes, they know even less. The point he is making shows that he sees strength in those individuals who break free of societal expectations. The fact that he nested these ideas in the gathering of “the most creative people in the school” also shows that he admires those who work together rather than those who only listen to an outside source of authority. This attitude towards togetherness strikes me during every creative writing meeting I have hosted.

The way that students respect each other as artists and the way that they appreciate, and even love, each other’s words is eye-opening. Students go out of their way to stay after school first and foremost because they want to hear each other, because they want to be inspired by each other. Many of them come to meetings just to listen; reading their own work is secondary to listening to their peers. One student said just yesterday, “It’s really cool how we’re all friends; that’s what makes this work so well,” and I was thinking, “yeah, but you weren’t all friends until you started coming here.” It was the act of writing and sharing writing that bonded students and that made this student feel as if she had been friends with everyone else in the room long before she ever walked in.

Keith continues to burst through the door, now twice a week. He usually bursts in late because he checks in with the college counselor after school to work on his college applications. In the first few minutes of club I ask the students who wants to read aloud. There’s always this humming tension while people look around wondering, “who is going to read today?” The electricity that this simple question generates is a testament to the power of a writing community. The fact that students come back each week is also a sign that coming together is an important, perhaps essential, factor in students’ development as writers and as people.

So I end with one more *Why I Write* statement. It’s circular reasoning, but there is reason to it nonetheless.

“I write because I want to be with others who want to write.”



***“...In short,
national,
authorized
programs are not
what has invoked
the public’s
demand for
earmark reform
and should not be
classified as such.”***



NCTE's 2012 Literacy Education Advocacy Day

Make plans now to join members of NCTE, including members of PCTELA and NCTE's Executive Committee, on Capitol Hill on **Thursday, April 19, 2012**, for Literacy Education Advocacy Day. In addition to learning the latest about literacy education issues at the federal level, you'll have the opportunity to meet with legislators and their staff members and to share your personal stories and experiences from your classroom with them.

Thank You for Helping to Make NCTE's 2011 Literacy Education Advocacy Day a Success!

More than 50 NCTE members **including Bob Dandoy and Tim Shea of PCTELA**, took part in the 2011 Literacy Education Advocacy Day on **Thursday, April 28, 2011** in Washington DC. They had the opportunity to learn the latest about literacy education issues at the federal level, to interact with people highly involved with those issues, and to meet with legislators and their staff members.

Can't Make It to DC for Advocacy Day?

No worries, see our list of **Literacy Education Advocacy Activities** for op-

portunities to show your support for literacy education through activities you can do right at home during Literacy Education Advocacy Month, March-April 2011. Last year hundreds of NCTE members sent nearly **1,000 letters** to their representatives on Literacy Education Advocacy Day and we'll soon let you know how to share your voice and expertise with policy-makers this year. For more information or if you would like to become involved contact PCTELA Executive Director, Bob Dandoy, at bdandoy@zbzoom.net

**2012 Literacy
Education
Advocacy Day -
Thursday,
April 19th**

Want To Get Published?

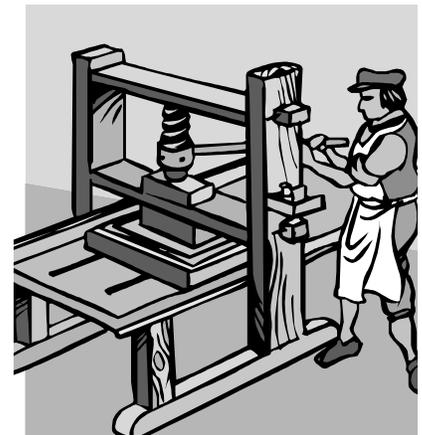
PCTELA is always looking at creative ways to bring the membership the information it needs through our newsletter. We sincerely hope that you will consider a submission.

Specifically, we are looking for:

- Reflective essays and commentaries about teaching and issues in education
- Teaching ideas
- Book reviews (both professional and otherwise)
- Web reviews and suggestions

-Manuscript versions of conference presentations

If you have any questions or need more information, contact newsletter editor, Jonathan DeBor at pctelaneews@gmail.com. Pieces may also be submitted through that email address.



Get Involved!

PCTELA is always looking for members who wish to become more involved in the organization. There are multiple areas of service including board positions, committees reflecting various interests of our members and projects of the council, editors of our newsletter and website, and conference volunteers.

We are especially interested in members interested in serving as annual conference chairs. The experience is demanding but highly rewarding .

Members who more actively work with the council find great professional fulfillment and personal satisfaction

with more intensified opportunities to meet and network with educators and authors from throughout the commonwealth and nation.

If you are interested in exploring any of these positions, please see President Jan Spohn or Bob Dandoy, Executive Director sometime during the conference.



PCTELA In Chicago!

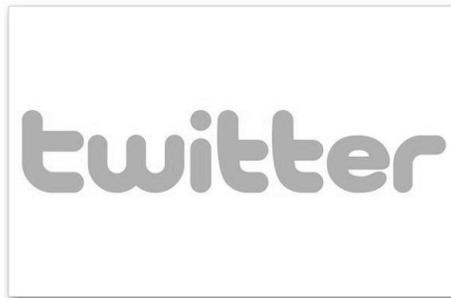


Pictured at the Scholastic Dinner @ NCTE 2011 in Chicago are PCTELA members (l-r): Julie Dandoy, Tom Crochunis, Bob Dandoy, Amy Baverso, Jonathan DeBor, Lynn Ann DeBor, & Glenda Daulerio

PCTELA
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Butler, PA 16003-2327

PCTELA is on TWITTER!

In a continued effort to reach our members in the most efficient ways possible, PCTELA is proud to launch our own Twitter account! To follow the latest information concerning PCTELA and the issues that matter most to our members, follow us under the username **PCTELANews**. Together, we can grow our online community and presence! Look for updates and Tweets to begin rolling out at the start of the school year in the fall!



pctela.org

NOTICE

Moving forward, as long as we have your current e-mail address on file, we will send you the newsletter issues electronically. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE TO RECEIVE A PAPER COPY OF THE NEWSLETTER, send your name and address to PCTELA, PO Box 2327, Butler, PA 16033-2327

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