

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2016 VOLUME 53 NUMBER 2

3 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Kimberly Musolf

4 EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S MESSAGE

Janice Neuleib

4 NEWS FROM YOUR DISTRICT LEADERS

Carol M. Medrano

5 GIVING STUDENTS A VOICE

RESISTING TEACHER CONTROL AND MAKING LEARNING STICK

Rebecca Holdsworth

iate

Illinois Association of Teachers of English

ASSOCIATION INFORMATION

IATE is a professional organization for teachers of English/language arts. IATE publishes the *IATE Newsletter* and the *Illinois English Bulletin* and hosts an annual fall conference. IATE is organized by districts throughout the state, each district having a district leader and providing local activities to members throughout the year.

IATE also maintains standing committees that address a number of professional interests and works with other professional organizations to further the interests of teachers. Composed of nearly 1,000 teachers throughout the state, IATE provides a working network for the exchange of teaching tips, current research, and professional development as well as enduring friendships.

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

The *IATE Newsletter* is an official publication of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English, Inc. Published two times a year by IATE. Member: NCTE Information Exchange Agreement.

The *IATE Newsletter* and the *Illinois English Bulletin* are produced at the Publications Unit of Illinois State University's Department of English.

Newsletter Editor: Cris Embree

Publications Unit Director: Steve Halle

Production Director: Holms Troelstrup

Intern: Forrest Cheatwood

Please send all *Newsletter* correspondence to Cris Embree at cechris@ilstu.edu or at the following address:

Illinois State University, Campus Box 5150, Normal, IL 61790-5150

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Manuscripts should usually range in length from 500 to 2500 words (roughly two to ten typed, double-spaced pages). Query about longer manuscripts before you submit them.

If possible, submit your article electronically in Rich Text Format (.rtf) as an e-mail attachment. Alternatively, you may submit your article in hard copy (x3) to the editor's address (see above). Follow current MLA style—including documentation of references and using internal citations wherever possible.

Avoid lengthy notes and references.

Follow the NCTE guidelines for nonsexist use of language.

Include a separate title page with the following information: title of submission, author's name, author's professional affiliation, author's address, and author's telephone number.

Include a cover letter summarizing the article and stating that the work has neither been published nor submitted elsewhere.

The editors will acknowledge receipt of your manuscript and may make minor changes (for clarity, length, or language) in the manuscript without notifying you.

IATE OFFICERS

Kimberly Musolf	President
Mark Sujak	1st Vice President
Barb Chidley	2nd Vice President
Jennifer Gouin	Secretary
Tarrie Dullum	Treasurer
Janice Neuleib	Executive Secretary
Carol Medrano	District Leader Coordinator

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



The theme for our Fall Conference is “Close to Home: Creating Authentic Contexts for Reading and Writing.” School is a unique home for our students. Whether you teach in a school of three hundred or three thousand, we all strive to make our classrooms into safe havens for our students—places they can

come to be challenged, enriched, and supported. In the English classroom, we ask students to read and interact with texts and with each other, often in ways that reveal vulnerability and insecurities. We entice them with texts that exist within the context of larger life questions and skills of reading and writing that serve them beyond our walls. And although we bring them together in a single space for fifty minutes, what we often value most is not the singular meaning we can all craft together but the nuances that each student brings with him or her from his own home and her own experiences. It feels unfair sometimes that I’m the only adult in the room getting to witness these moments of risk-taking and learning. Most days, I leave the class invigorated by something a student brought up that invited other students to look at a passage in a new way or concede a point only to come back with new evidence and a revised stance. Teaching in today’s English classroom is an ever-changing challenge, one that pushes us to tears of frustration and celebration, sometimes within a single class period. But the rewards of that journey are worth the struggle.

What I love about all of IATE’s mini-conferences and

KIMBERLY MUSOLF

our big Fall Conference is that they provide us with the opportunities to share these experiences with our colleagues. Those moments that matter so much to us in any given day? They matter within the larger landscape of education. The work of teachers and students on a daily basis is what the educational conversations need to be about. How do we know if our students are learning and growing? We look at how they are discussing and reading and writing every day. How can the state be sure that teachers are doing what they need to do in order to meet standards? They can come into our classrooms and into our conferences and watch the transformations that take place. When you come to IATE, you get professional development that matters because you, the teachers in the classrooms, craft it. You are doing amazing things with your students and are bursting to share those things because that means that all of our students win.

For me, IATE is a selfish commitment; it’s my guilty pleasure. I could never give back enough to equal everything I get from the people in this organization. I think about our upcoming conference and I get a little giddy with the thought of both refueling with old friends and being invigorated by new ones. Barb Chidley and her local committee have put together an array of sessions that speak to all the great things we do in our individual classrooms across the state. Although we will bring our little pieces of our schools with us, sharing with our colleagues what something “close to home” looks like in Rockton or Momence, Carbondale or Effingham, Ottawa or Beardstown, my guess is that you will leave that weekend feeling like your home has expanded to include the classrooms and the towns across the state. I hope you’ll join us in Normal on October 21 and 22. ✍

More Ways to Connect with IATE

Follow us on  @IATENow, or Like us on 

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S MESSAGE



As I sit here in my office gazing at my Narnia map and contemplating my forty-first AP English Language reading (I thought seven years was the limit; I keep being surprised), I think about a conversation I had yesterday with a doctoral candidate here in the Department of English. He was at Illinois State University trying

to decide between what was “hot” in the field and what he really wanted to do. I told him that when I decided to write my dissertation on C. S. Lewis in 1971, my proposed advisor and committee told me that Lewis wasn’t much of anybody, and his pal Tolkien was even less. I said I didn’t care; I wanted to write on something and someone I was passionate about. And I wanted to write about their writing group as well. No one talked about writing groups in those days.

I told the young doctoral candidate to follow his passion and let the current chic conversation go by. Writing isn’t fun unless it’s passionate, and that advice goes double for a research topic. I hope you, dear readers, are smiling now. I got to do what I wanted and find topics (Lewis/Tolkien and writing groups) that were going to be superhot in the next thirty years. Even had that happy outcome not happened, I would still say, “follow your bliss” when you write. I’ve just finished reviewing the young writers’ poetry and essays for the *Illinois English Bulletin’s* Best Illinois Poetry and Prose issue. They definitely followed their passion.

JANICE NEULEIB

We have the opportunity to do the same at the IATE Conference here in Normal in September. Please register for the conference as soon as the form is available online. If you are an ISU grad, come home to us, but if you’re not, come and adopt ISU and Normal. I came to get my MA in 1969 and never left. I’m not suggesting that you move to Normal, but I do hope that you will be here in October to enjoy every moment of the Fall Conference.

The *Illinois English Bulletin* continues to thrive. Publications Unit director, Steve Halle, is now at work on final touches for the Fall issue featuring the best poetry and prose writing from K-12 students in Illinois. Sad for us but joyous for her, Julie Cheville, professor in the English Department, will not be taking over the editor’s task in 2017. She has moved to Maine and, alas, left ISU. We search for a new editor still.

One more note: I continue to coordinate the judging for the NCTE-sponsored Norman Mailer awards for high school teachers’ fiction writing. Any volunteers to review the high school teachers’ fiction pieces, please let me and Carrie Stewart (cstewart@ncte.org) know. We always need readers, and I thank those of you who are now a part of the team.

As always, we thank Department of English leaders Professors Chris De Santis, chair, and our associate chair, Katherine Ellison. And most of all, we thank Maegan Gaddis, who orders, arranges, and supports all our endeavors. My constant thanks go out to her for her devoted work with IATE. ISU’s Director of English Education is Lisa Thetard, former BHS English teacher. Stop by and say hello to her when you come to the conference. ✍

NEWS FROM YOUR DISTRICT LEADERS

From Southern District Leaders, **Jessie Anderson** and **Brandon Lukes**:

Your Southern District Leaders will host their **Fifth Annual Conference** on Thursday, September 15, at John A. Logan College.

There will be three main session speakers: **Dr. Janice Neuleib** and **Dr. Tara Lyons** will direct attending teachers in a “rehearsal” of a scene from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* using Shakespeare’s original practices, and **Bill Curtin** will share his experience on *The David Letterman Show*. There will also be eight breakout sessions. From “Writing in a Digital

CAROL M. MEDRANO

Age” and “A Little Drama Never Hurt Anybody” to a session for early career teachers called “Facing the Challenges,” there will be something for everyone, and, for the first time, there will be a strand for middle school and junior high teachers during every time slot. Continuing Professional Development Units will be available.

Be on the lookout for more details about this exciting event on our website at <http://iateonline.org>.

As always, if you are interested in becoming a district leader, please contact me, Carol Medrano, IATE District Leader Coordinator, at medrano@sxu.edu. ✍

GIVING STUDENTS A VOICE: RESISTING TEACHER CONTROL AND MAKING LEARNING STICK

REBECCA HOLDSWORTH

Early career teachers strive to make students fall in love with our content, and, understandably, we can become offended or protective of our subject when our students do not love it like we do. Thus begins my tale. I was in my first year of teaching and was horrified that my students were turning in essays without introductions, textual evidence, or elaboration. “That’s it!” I thought, fuming. I created these very specific outlines where they simply needed to delete the structural markers of the outline before handing in the essays. While this solved some issues, I would read the same essay sixty times. I was a bored reader, and I am certain they were bored writers. Several years later, my questions became: How do I frame my writing assignments so students take ownership of and put care into their writing? How do I untap the unique voice that will lead to powerful writing?

I turned to academic articles and books about writing with voice and teaching for transfer (I wanted a way to make my thinking as a writer transparent to my students). Peter Elbow’s book, *Writing with Power: Techniques to Master the Writing Process*, was instrumental in my thinking about helping students use voice. Elbow communicates how to create writing that impacts an audience; power comes from voice. Elbow uses the terms writing *without voice* and writing *with voice* to better define what he believes to be the most powerful of the three, writing with *real voice* (Elbow 299). He defined writing without voice as “wooden or dead because it lacks sound, rhythm, energy, or individuality” (299). In my experience, my students’ writing often seems to be without voice. Sometimes in our effort to teach our students correctness, we make them afraid to take risks. Elbow says: “The more criticism people get on their writing, the more they tend to use fake voices. To use real voice feels like bringing yourself into contact with the reader” (309). Alternatively, he suggests voice is “writing into which someone has breathed. It has that fluency, rhythm, and liveliness that exist naturally in the speech of most people who are enjoying a conversation” (299). *Real voice*, a step further, is more about conviction in the words versus the sound of the piece. Elbow defines it:

Writing with *real voice* has the power to make you pay attention and understand—the words go

deep...I want to say that it has *nothing* to do with the words on the page, only with the relationship of the words to the writer—and therefore that the same words could have real voice when written by one person and lack it when written by someone else (299).

Elbow suggests this exercise to practice conviction:

...simply... write about some belief you have—or even some experience or perception—but to get readers to give you this limited, peculiar, draft-board-like feedback: where do they really believe that you believe it, and where do they have doubts? (312).

I intended to do this exercise with my students to begin the unit.

With this understanding of voice, I turned to Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey’s book, *Better Learning through Structured Teaching* in order to design my instruction to be memorable. Fisher and Frey suggested four modes of instruction (Fisher and Frey 3):

- 1) Teachers begin the gradual release with *focused instruction* that demonstrates the expert practices of the teacher: a think aloud.
- 2) Teachers practice with their students using *guided instruction* (examples of skill done together).
- 3) Students practice together doing *collaborative work* (examples of skill done independent of the teacher).
- 4) The student completes works *independently* once a level of confidence has been built.

I moved between all of these components while teaching voice. The first component, which includes the teacher think aloud, intimidated me most, so I completed further research. Michelle Kelley and Nicki Clausen-Grace’s article,

Giving Students a Voice *continued on page 6*

Giving Students a Voice *continued from page 5*

“Ensuring Transfer of Strategies by Using a Metacognitive Teaching Framework,” further broke down the think aloud into four components: “Identify strategy components; explain and define components; notice and apply components in a variety of texts; clarify strategy’s purpose to promote acquisition” (25). In other words, I needed to identify key terms of writing with my students in greater depth, apply the terms in a variety of situations, and then explain how I use them as a writer. I organized my thinking into a unit plan (see below). They wrote their own opinion piece, and I chose the school genre of an academic persuasive paper. While my focus remained

on voice, I also wanted to delve into writing for an audience and crafting lead paragraphs.

To begin the unit, I assigned one page of writing. I was learning how to lessen my grip on my students’ authorship. I gave no instructions outside of this: “Write a one-page piece of opinion writing. You should write about something that you passionately believe or are passionate about doing.” I gave no outline, said nothing about lead paragraphs, etc. I wanted to see what they would produce. It would be due in one week. Meanwhile, I began teaching mini-lessons to define the writing terminology within the identified writing features.

Identified Writing Features	Define Writing Terminology	Apply in a Variety of Contexts	Teacher Think Aloud	Clarify, Student Practice
Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice • Real Voice • Fake Voice • Voiceless 	Comparison of cover songs. I used the song “Wagon Wheel.”	Think aloud identifying real voice in teacher sample.	Students write one page about something they were passionate about. We passed around the anonymous drafts and identified places with real voice.
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhetoric • Ethos • Pathos • Logos • Building Trust • Logical Fallacies 	Identify rhetorical appeals in mentor text.	Think aloud identifying writer’s awareness of audience in teacher sample.	Students first self-identify places where they believe they show audience awareness (organizer, journal). They then conference with classmates.
Hook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative lead • Quotation lead • Statistical lead • Mystery lead • Descriptive lead • Imagine lead • Direct lead 	Read examples of leads. Identify benefits and drawbacks of each one.	Think aloud in a writer’s choice and thought process of choosing a hook in the teacher sample.	Students pick a lead and provide a rationale to their choice. This rationale is presented on their final screencast.
Thesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis Statement • Research Question • Topic Sentences 	Identify in mentor texts.	Think aloud in identifying the main argument in the teacher’s sample.	Students use a thesis generator and then workshop their drafts. I used an Elmo projector to have the students share their drafts.

Giving Students a Voice *continued from page 6*

We began with voice. I brought in my guitar and performed a lively cover of a song. Afterwards, we talked through definitions of voice, and I asked them where they thought I felt. This was complicated. On one hand, I sang with power, but the words of the song didn't fit. Would someone else's cover of the song be better? Yes, we agreed. Someone else might have more connection with the lyrics than I did. A week later, I collected their pieces, removed names (previously I had told them to email me if they were concerned with sharing their writing with the class), and distributed the opinion writings. I asked them to identify the ones that seemed to have power behind them. The same pieces were consistently identified as powerful, and we began a list of commonalities the pieces had (This was developed with a lot of assistance. We were still working on naming some of the features we saw.)

- Details (not vague) the amount of knowledge showed passion
- Metaphor (makes you see something in a new way)
- Repetition (purposeful)
- Punctuate with purpose
- Theme
- Word choice
- Honesty

We continued drafting the pieces as we explored the rest of the writing features. Most of my mini-lessons contained think alouds as I shared my own writing. It was helpful for students to see our pieces in view of the writing terms. This entire process took about four weeks.

Their writing did not change overnight, but my writing instruction changed. I only give a student an outline as a last resort. Naming and defining writing features changed their writing for the better—our dialogues about writing are much richer. Generally, I saw an attitudinal change in students when they began to pay more attention to the craft of writing versus writing to “get it over with.” Students who traditionally appeared uninterested became very adamant that they turn in a good draft. Together, we discovered how powerful their voices can be. Too often we are worried about correctness before our students have a chance to get messy, explore, and become writers with something to say.

Works Cited

- Elbow, Peter. *Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981. Print.
- Fisher, Douglas and Nancy Frey. *Better Learning Through Structured Teaching: A Framework for the Gradual Release of Responsibility*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2013. EPUB file.
- Kelley, Michelle, Clausen-Grace, and Nicki. “Ensuring Transfer of Strategies by Using a Metacognitive Teaching Framework.” *Voices from the Middle* 15.4 (May 2008): 23–31. *ERIC*. Web. 07 Feb. 2015.

Rebecca Holdsworth teaches freshmen, sophomore, and junior level English at Fieldcrest High School, and her classroom focus has turned towards empowering young writers. She is currently a teacher consultant with the Illinois State Writing Project. ✍

Call for Papers

PUBLISH YOUR WORK IN THE *ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN*

Illinois English Bulletin is the written forum in which Illinois teachers of English share their ideas. Please see any recent issue of the Bulletin for a detailed “Call for Submissions.” The deadline to submit materials for possible inclusion in the spring issue is the previous **November 1** and the deadline for the summer issue is the previous **January 15**. If you need any further information—or encouragement—to complete a teacher-research project and submit it for possible publication, please contact Bulletin editor Janice Neuleib at jneuleib@ilstu.edu.

PUBLISH YOUR WORK IN THE *IATE NEWSLETTER*

The *IATE Newsletter* welcomes articles, reviews, reports, announcements, brief teaching narratives, calls for papers, and other material important to the professional lives of English teachers in the state of Illinois. IATE district leaders are especially encouraged to send reports of district events. The deadline for submitting material for the spring 2017 *Newsletter* is **November 15, 2016**. Please send inquiries or submissions via e-mail to Cris Embree at cechris@ilstu.edu.

iate

Illinois Association of Teachers of English

IATE homepage: <http://www.iateonline.org>

Illinois State University
Illinois Association of Teachers of English
Campus Box 4240
Normal, IL 61790-4240

PRESORTED STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ILLINOIS STATE
UNIVERSITY