

IATE NEWSLETTER

Monthly Newsletter of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English

NEWS & FEATURES

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A Message From President Jennifer Gouin

Greetings! I hope all of you are doing well as we move into the final months of the school year. February is finally behind us, and although March has already shown us that it's a mercurial month, we can see glimmers of the spring that will eventually arrive. I am always grateful and happy when I see those first buds, reminding me that the hard times (and weather) don't last forever.

Like those early buds, I am also seeing glimmers of progress in our efforts to recover from the academic and emotional effects of the pandemic. This school year, we've been able to meet for our 2nd in-person fall conference since 2020, and we have had other in-person and virtual sessions around the state, including the first weekend of the month's 4th Quarter Matters mini-conference at Millikin University in Decatur. The comradery felt and information gained through these events are invaluable to our professional and personal development. No matter what stage of our career, we need one another to sustain us through the hard times and elevate us when the easy (easier) times arrive.

(Continued page 2)

A Message From Pres. Jennifer Gouin, cont.

To that end, we need YOU to sustain our organization. We need both your membership and your participation to continue our mission of learning and growing in our profession. Think of your personal skill set and personality to decide what that will look like for you. Have great lessons or ideas to share? You could send in a proposal for our fall conference [here](#), write an article for our newsletter and submit it to Michelle Ryan (myran@lchsrailers.org), or present at mini-conferences in your area. Enjoy writing? Pick from our available recurring columns for the newsletter and create a monthly entry (or designate someone else to do it if you can't at some point). Interested in joining our leadership? Please fill out [this form](#), and we'll be in touch.

Best wishes for a great last quarter, and we look forward to your participation.

Loving the List: What to do with the Abe Lincoln List

BY SHANNON RADCLIFFE

The day the new Abe Lincoln list is published is always an exciting day in our English department. We wait every year with great anticipation to see what 20 books will be chosen by the teachers and students on the committee. Our school is very generous and buys each classroom teacher a set of the books as well as copies for our library, but even if you don't have classroom sets of the books, there are a few things you can do to get your kids excited about the books on the list.



- 1. First Chapter Friday:** This has been a popular activity for a while for good reason. Reading the first chapter of any of these books aloud is a great way to get students interested in the books. After reading the first chapter, be amazed as students race to check it out. If you're short on time, you can even just read the first page. You can have students answer a question about the chapter on Google Classroom about their interest in the book.
- 2. Book Trailer Tuesday:** Most of the books on the list have either a book trailer or a short book review posted on Youtube. You can show the trailer to students and have them give a quick thumbs up or thumbs down indicating their interest level. (Continued page 3)

Loving the List: What to do with the Abe Lincoln List, cont.

3. Mini-Reviews: Give a quick 10 second review or book talk for each book. Try to make it as interesting as possible. For example, for the book *Girls I've Been* by Tessa Sharpe, I would say something like, "Former con-woman meets bank robbers." Say just enough to get students intrigued without giving too much away. I usually make Tik Toks of these reviews and share them on Google Classroom so students can watch them whenever they need a recommendation, but this would work just as well live and in person. You could also put the covers of the books on a slideshow and write your mini-review on the slide. Students could then look through them whenever they needed a new book.

4. Book Raffle: After introducing the books, consider having a book raffle for any of the copies you have in your classroom. Have students write their name on a small piece of paper and enter a drawing for the book they find the most interesting. Be really dramatic when you announce the winners. I like to play game show theme songs while I do it to make it even more cringey. The kids eat it up.

5. Match the First Line: Print out pictures of the covers and then print out the first lines of each of the books. See if students can match the first lines with the books based on their covers alone. This would be a fun activity if you have a little bit of extra class time.

6. Interactive Bulletin Boards: Create a bulletin board with the covers of all the books along with a QR code that will lead students to the Goodreads page, book trailer, or a short book review.

Abraham Lincoln Award Nominees 2024

[Clap When You Land](#) by Elizabeth Acevedo
[Kate in Waiting](#) by Becky Albertalli
[Huda F Are You?](#) by Huda Fahmy
[Dancing at the Pity Party](#) by Tyler Feder
[You Know I'm No Good](#) by Jessie Ann Foley
[You'd Be Home Now](#) by Kathleen Glasgow
[Heretics Anonymous](#) by Katie Henry
[The Weight of Blood](#) by Tiffany D. Jackson
[We Are Not Broken](#) by George M. Johnson
[Fat Chance, Charlie Vega](#) by Crystal Maldonado
[Be Not Far From Me](#) by Mindy McGinnis
[#Murdertrending](#) by Gretchen McNeil
[I Kissed Shara Wheeler](#) by Casey McQuiston
[I Must Betray You](#) by Ruta Sepetys
[The Girls I've Been](#) by Tess Sharpe
[All My Rage](#) by Sabaa Tahir
[Project Hail Mary](#) by Andy Weir
[The Assignment](#) by Liza M. Wiemer
[Dragon Hoops](#) by Gene Luen Yang
[In the Wild Light](#) by Jeff Zentner

*Books are linked to Amazon for purchase.

New English Teacher - 1967

By Dave McClure

I knew her as soon as the door opened. It was her eyes and her cheeks. I'd have known her anywhere.

When I was fifteen and Ms. Tambling twenty-four, she seemed much older than me. In 1967 she was the new and only English teacher at my small school. English was my favorite class. I had high hopes for her.

On her first day Ms. Tambling was gruff and demanding. You could hear a pin drop. "What are we in for?" I thought. Sitting on her couch in 2022 I asked about that.

She chuckled. "That may have been the only thing ISU taught me about classroom management. Establish control in the classroom early and relax it only if your students prove they can handle some measure of freedom. Sounds harsh, doesn't it?"

"Yeah. You scared us badly. Then it got better."

"I enjoyed your class. You were a good group to work with."

"So, Danvers was not your first school?"

"No, I taught in Cullom right out of undergrad. Then went back to ISU for my master's before joining the Olympia district. I taught there 29 years, until I retired."

Bette Tambling is now 80 and I am 71, still nine years apart but somehow much closer in age.

"I remember you taught us to diagram sentences. I could see parts of speech, phrases, and clauses, where they fit and how they affected meaning and tone. How the sentence itself made a difference. Not just the words. I could tell you liked it."

"I did like it. I had a high school teacher who was very good at diagraming. And when I took grammar at ISU the prof was surprised I had so much knowledge of it."

"You were a big part of why I majored in English. You made me a better writer. I want to thank you for that."

You taught for a short time, right?"

"Yes. One-year full time. But I use my English degree in everything I do."

Continued page 5

New English Teacher - 1967, cont.

"You gave up that job to travel if I recall. That's a choice I considered." Ms. Tambling reads my blog.

"So, you traveled?"

"I made good use of summers off after graduate school. Four trips to Europe; Great Britain, Greece, France, Ireland. I wish more Americans would do that. They might see America and the world differently."

"I agree."

"You were so good at directing the plays. But I have to ask, why did you put me in those roles? Mortimer Brewster in *Arsenic and Old Lace*? And Tommy Albright in *Brigadoon*? I couldn't read music. You gave me the lead in a musical."

Ms. Tambling laughed.

"You kept telling me you couldn't sing, and I said we would teach you. It worked. It was a small school, Dave. I chose actors by personality. I knew you would work hard."

"You taught me something about myself."

She smiled. "And now you sing in your church choir."

We talked for two hours, reacquainting in a new way, sharing views.

"I get tired of people equating education with earning money. Education is not about money. I'm afraid we're losing something important. Education is about learning to think. Who is going to teach Americans to think?"

Thanks, Ms. Tambling, and others like you for taking your job seriously. We all benefit.

Dave McClure lives in Ottawa in IATE's District 10. He is a long-retired director of a local private agency. He is also a blogger. You can read more of Dave at Daveintheshack.blogger.com.



Get to Know Your District Leaders

In the next several newsletters, we will be introducing some of the district leaders across the state. If you are part of these areas, take a minute to reachout and introduce yourself.

Andrew Rodbro, North Lakes IATE District 1

I am an English teacher at Warren Township High School. I started my career in 1997, after graduating from Bradley University, in Peoria, Illinois. My favorite authors include Stephen King and Arthur Conan Doyle, though I love all detective fiction, and anything of historical or cultural value. I currently live in Chicago with my husband, Tom, our cat, Lily, and our dog, Ellie.

My involvement in IATE began in 2018, when a colleague asked me to present at the fall conference. I enjoyed the camaraderie of the teachers and was excited to be included in a group of people who are energetic and passionate about educating young people. Soon afterward, I was asked to serve as the North Lakes District chairperson.

District 1 is comprised of Lake County.



Donna Binns, Eastern IATE District 17

This is my 20th year as an English professor at Eastern Illinois University. My areas of study include Composition, Rhetoric, English Language Arts Teacher Preparation, Disability Studies, Professional Writing, and Media Studies. My publications include an article about teaching reading and writing about video games in the classroom for the Illinois English Bulletin and an article titled "The Bionic Woman: Machine or Human?" in a book collection on Disability in Science Fiction: Representations of Technology as Cure.

District 17 is comprised of Clark, Coles, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Effingham, Fayette, Jasper, Moultrie, and Shelby Counties.



Get to Know Your District Leaders, Continued

Alyssa Staley, East Central IATE District 14

I am in my second year at Danville High School teaching English. Additionally, I tutor students enrolled in Project Success after school. I originally went to school to be a history teacher but found myself applying for an English teaching position. Aside from teaching English, I am the social committee director for my school, so I help fundraise for staff who are in need of financial assistance for meals after surgery, a death in their family, or some other unexpected emergency. I also arrange outings for the staff to hang-out together outside the workplace to get to know one another on a social level and not just from a workplace standpoint.



This summer I will start my second master's degree to obtain an administrative certificate and educational leadership degree.

I have one fur baby, a shelter rescue canine, Mona, who brings me joy and comfort. I watch movies and television shows on the weekends, and I like cooking, reading, writing, traveling, and puzzles.

District 14 is comprised of Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, Kankakee, Piatt, and Vermillion Counties.

District Leaders Wanted

The IATE Executive Board and District Leader Coordinator Delores Robinson are excited to find leaders for our open districts. If you would be interested in serving as a district leader or co-leader, please email kkotty@fenwickfriars.com. Next to each open district, you will see the counties it encompasses.

Open districts are as follows:

- Metro North & West: Boundaries 1-55 on S., Hwy 10 on N., Chicago on E., Kane Co line on W.
- Northeastern: Kane, Kendall, McHenry, Will
- Northwestern: Boone, Carroll, JoDaviess, Stephenson, Winnebago
- Rock River: DeKalb, Lee, Ogle, Whiteside
- Western: Fulton, Henderson, Knox, McDonough, Stark, Warren
- Peoria: Mason, Peoria, Tazwell, Woodford
- Mississippi Valley: Adams, Brown, Hancock, Pike, Schuyler
- Kaskaskia Valley: Clinton, Monroe, St. Claire, Washington
- Wabash Valley: Clay, Crawford, Edwards, Lawrence, Richland, Wabash, Wayne, White

Supporting Intellectual Freedom

1

Create a robust policy that is not under Title IX (Policy Examples)

2

Write Rationales for Materials

3

Update school mission statement to include Intellectual Freedom and Culturally Sustaining Teaching.

4

Ensure the library and classrooms are following diversity and equity State Standards

5

Do not allow people who live outside of the district to raise a challenge

6

Promote diverse texts to ALL students and show them the value of different ways of knowing

7

RESOURCES:

National Coalition Against Censorship

National Council of Teachers of English

American Library Association

Illinois Association of Teachers of English

Association of Illinois School Library

Educators

Randy Rambo Classroom Library Grant

The Randy Rambo Classroom Library Grant was established in 2022 upon the retirement of Professor Randy Rambo from the English Department of Illinois Valley Community College in Oglesby, Illinois.

This grant, established by Professor Rambo's colleagues in the English Department, recognizes Randy's many years of dedication to his students; his love of reading and writing; his brilliant teaching and leadership and his support of literacy; and his humor, intelligence, and unfailing kindness.



The Randy Rambo Classroom Library Grant is administered by the Executive Board of IATE, for the purpose of awarding classroom grants for Illinois English teachers to build their classroom libraries.

The joy of reading will be fostered throughout the state of Illinois, in part, because of Professor Rambo and his exemplary teaching career.

Members of IATE may contact the Executive Board of IATE for information about the classroom grant application process.

Seeking Minority Scholarship Nominees

IATE understands the importance of diversity in education and that both our schools and our organization would be enhanced by the addition of more diverse voices.

This year we will be offering two \$500 scholarships for graduating college seniors (December or May) who identify with a minority group and will be entering the English Education profession. These scholarships can be used for professional clothing, moving expenses, graduation expenses, or anything the new educator will need as they start their career.

If you are someone who has direct contact with a deserving graduate, please nominate them by completing the Google Form found here: [Minority Scholarship Nomination Form](#). If you have any questions, please email sradcliffe@lchsrailers.org.

Professional Development Opportunity

Illinois Valley Community College welcomes Dr. Jonah Mixon-Webster on April 5th at 12:00 PM in the Mary Margaret Weeg Cultural Centre. The event will be live streamed and recorded at <https://youtube.com/live/3Y4MWSyxk-w?feature=share>.

Mixon-Webster is the author of STEREO(TYPE), a "collection of poems about Blackness, the self, and the dismantling of corrupt powers in the fight for freedom. Stereo(TYPE), his debut collection of poetry, is a reckoning and a force, a revision of our most sacred mythologies, and a work of documentary reporting from Mixon-Webster's hometown of Flint, Michigan, where clean tap water remains an uncertainty and the aftermath of racist policies persist."

Jonah Mixon - Webster



Flint Water Crisis

Jacobs Library has created an informational guide about the Flint Water Crisis in expectation of Jonah's upcoming event: <https://libguides.ivcc.edu/obocflintwatercrisis>

More Information

If you have any questions about the event or would like additional information, please contact Jayna Leipart Guttilla or the One Book, One College group at onebook@ivcc.edu

Mixon-Webster is the founder of the Flint-based non-profit Center for Imaginative Freedoms and Economic Relief (C.I.F.E.R.) and serves as chapter leader of PEN America-Detroit.

His debut poetry collection, Stereo(TYPE), received the PEN America/Joyce Osterweil Award and was a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award for Gay Poetry. He is an alumnus of Eastern Michigan University and obtained a Ph.D. in Creative Writing from Illinois State University.

He is the inaugural Mellon Arts Postdoctoral Fellow in African American and African Diaspora Studies at Columbia University, the recipient of the Windham Campbell Prize for Poetry and fellowships from Vermont Studio Center, Center for African American Poetry and Poetics, Images & Voices of Hope, The Conversation Literary Festival, and the PEN Writing for Justice Program.

[Help us welcome Jonah on April 5th!](#)

OBOC
One Book One College



The Journey of Going Gradeless #ungrading

BY JENNIFER CONNOLLY, GRANITE CITY HIGH SCHOOL/MARQUETTE/KASKASKIA DISTRICT LEADER

Welcome to a recurring column focused on grading, or rather, going gradeless. You might have had an opportunity to attend a workshop at our IATE fall conference in 2022, or maybe this will be your first time delving into #ungrading. Jennifer will share her experience as she shifted and grown over the course of her career.

Column 1: Where It Started

So, I've been teaching for 23 years now (almost half as long as I've been alive) and I wouldn't trade my profession for anything. I mean, no other career could possibly fit me like this one. But as any of us who've been in the biz for long know, you have to shift and grow to stay the course here. Like Kelly Gallagher is always saying, you have to "teach for 20 years, not teach one year 20 times." And I think it was 2018 when one of my most profound shifts began.

The one before this was about 2012 when I established a classroom library and committed myself to helping kids find real reading lives—that is another story for another day, one some of you have already heard at conferences and in conversation. This one started with my passion for multi-genre projects* (research inspired by the work of Tom Romano).

Picture this: students created multi-genre research projects and they were varied and beautiful. I had, as usual, a detailed rubric to score this

writing. Students waited patiently, well, not all of them, for me to get them grades. . . . and time passed. . . and passed. . . and I just couldn't score them. Experience had taught me that some of the average papers would still check all the boxes, score A's and still be only mediocre, and some papers that were creative and innovative and brilliant would score only in the C range. Make it make sense.

I know, my rubric might have needed adjusting. In fact, I had adjusted it several times already. But I just couldn't reduce this amazing work to numbers, letters, something to be averaged and used to rank, sort, and categorize kids. So, we had a class conversation where I shared my misgivings and changed the assessment criteria. Result? No rubric—ditched it. Made a set of loose descriptions that would categorize each letter grade (I was required to put something in the LMS). Read the papers, enjoyed them, experienced immediate relief (and likely awarded higher grades overall on this project). That was it. The trigger. Next thing I know I am reading Grading for

The Journey of Going Gradeless #ungrading, continued

Equity by Joe Feldman and really thinking about why grades exist and if we need them at all.

P.S. If I seem obsessed with timelines, it's because I want to stress that this kind of change is not immediate; it takes time and slow moves, sometimes even steps back, always evolving.

*class of 2016.

ChatGPT - 4th Quarter Matters Session Recap

BY JENNIFER GOVIN

Our 4th Quarter Matters mini-conference started with a fascinating session on Chat GPT, a little-known subject to most of us. However, our presenters guaranteed that it's not new to our students; not only do they know about it, but it's likely some are using it. Three members of the University of Illinois at Springfield (UIS) faculty and staff—Dr. Layne Morsch, Emily Boles, and Sarah Collins—discussed what it is, how it's used, and how it could be beneficial to both students and teachers. If you're not familiar with ChatGPT, it is a predictive text model (artificial intelligence chatbot) that can be used in a variety of ethical and unethical ways. Since its release in November 2022, its popularity has skyrocketed. You can access the free version [here](#), but you will have to create a login to try it.

Morsch, Boles, and Collins demonstrated how ChatGPT creates text and how users can have it modify the text for a given level or a certain number of errors to make it more plausible as student writing. It was really eye-opening how easy it is to get a well-developed (or at least well-written) paragraph or paper in seconds. Attendees were amazed at the ease of use and specificity of style available. It's obvious that, if students choose to cheat, this is an easy way to do so.

So, how do we approach the subject of ChatGPT with our students? According to our presenters, one way to help prevent cheating via AI is to emphasize that “we write to learn; don't cheat yourself,” and remind them that it will be a double loss (cheating themselves now and in the future). We need to explain to them how and why our assignments matter - what will they do for the student beyond the current assignment's grade? (Continued page 14)

Recap, continued

We can reiterate that writing is a way to share information and be seen. We can also let them know its limitations: it is NOT a good source of information or citations; it will actually generate fake citations that look legitimate. Teachers can also curb ChatGPT abuse by having assignments center on narrow, obscure, local, or very recent (post-2021) information. Positioning assignments from the student's perspective will also make it difficult for Chat GPT to do the assignment for them. While there are AI detectors available, they are very easy to fool and often unreliable. Morsch, Boles, and Collins quoted a colleague who stated that ChatGPT is "a tool, not a solution" to help the student (the expert) enhance their writing. While the downside is that it can be used to plagiarize homework and papers, there are also many ways in which it can be beneficial to students, including the following:

- Starting points (outlines, research questions, etc.)
- Refining ideas (review)
- Remixing ideas (review)
- Have it write, then have students critique

How can we as teachers utilize this program? The presentation mentioned a video on YouTube entitled "Teachers: Treat Chat GPT as Your Assistant, Not Your Enemy," which we've linked here for your convenience. Our presenters also spoke of many beneficial ways for teachers to use ChatGPT, including the following:

1. Letters of recommendation
2. Quiz questions
3. Lesson plan outlines
4. Assignments
5. Parent newsletters
6. Elaboration & proofreading of writing

Other upcoming live and recorded sessions on a variety of topics can be found at the website for UIS's Center for Faculty Excellence (CFE) at www.uis.edu/cfe.

IATEONLINE.ORG

IATE 2023

Conference



CATHERINE ADEL WEST
special guest speaker



October 20-21, 2023 • Millikin University • Decatur, Illinois

iate fall conference 2023

Special Guest Speaker

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For You

DISTRICT LEADERS

How-To Organize Small District Events

Monday, April 17th, 2023 • Virtual • 6:00pm – 7:30pm



Brainstorming

What can I do? When should I do it? Who should be involved?



Planning and Organization

What happens next? Making your ideas a reality.



CPDU Requirements and Paperwork

Understand the ISBE CPDU paperwork and what needs to be completed before, during, and after the event.



Promoting

Learn about the avenues of promotion that can be utilized and who to enlist for help.



Questions and Answers

Time to answer questions, facilitate ideas.

CPDUs will be provided for attending this event.