



NEWSLETTER

SERVING FLORIDA ENGLISH TEACHERS SINCE 1924

COPING WITH THE FCAT! IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR!

Dorothy
Fletcher
staff writer

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We can see it in the knitted brow of our principals, once jovial leaders now very short and curt with their colleagues. We can sense it in the growing restlessness of our students who are tired of all our "preparations." We can also feel it in the growing tension in our necks and shoulders and hearts as we relive our fears of final exam week of years gone by.

We Florida teachers can attest to the fact that test anxiety is running high. In north Florida, we do not feel much support; especially when the local newspaper runs a headline like, "FCAT grading changes could mean more failing schools (The Florida Times Union, January 16, 2006)." Before the first bubble has been filled in on any answer sheet, the perception is that we have failed already.

This lack of community confidence is not helpful. It tends to increase stress levels, and it sends students into the testing situation with a feeling of futility. This in turn makes teachers work harder at "cramming" the last piece off knowledge into students so that they will feel capable, and the principals scurry about being sure that teachers are all on the same page and have "their eyes on the prize."

One day recently, it hit me, however. We have it all wrong. We have become so focused on the outcome (FCAT) that we have forgotten what is needed to get there—solid, teaching principles, gentle persistence, continuity and caring. As New Jersey Judge Marianne Espinosa Murphy said "Often the best way to win is to stop keeping score."

I am not suggesting that we do away with the FCAT. We all know that it is not going away. What I am suggesting is that we put

more emphasis on test anxiety management so that our children will not enter the testing situation as though they were going to an execution. We must find ways to help our children cope with the stress, because I believe most children have been adequately prepared, and they can do what needs to be done. If a student is not pressured to perform, then the student's knowledge will come to the surface quite naturally.

Teachers might want to consider "Google-ing" the term "Test Anxiety," where there are approximately 10 Internet sites that list ways in which to minimize test anxiety. All of the sites seem to have the basics covered—eat breakfast the day of the test, or get a good night's sleep the night before a test. Some, to be sure, are selling products; but all sites seem to offer stress management activities. I think that using some of these activities might provide some real benefits.

I would recommend that teachers periodically teach lessons on how to prepare emotionally for the testing situation, using the information provided at these sites. I would even recommend that students be allowed to openly discuss their fears and how each handles the discomfort of test stress. Most importantly of all, I feel that we need to remind our children often that no matter what, they are still valuable to us—that our students are still loved by those who care about them even if they do poorly on the test. Sometimes I think this important message gets lost in all the hype that surrounds the FCAT, and it does a terrible disservice to the children we have in our classes.

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The Nibelungenlied: A Review

Penguin Classics

291 pp.

Classical German literature is not a big favorite of most high school students, although there is really no reason that this should be so. The *Nibelungenlied* has all the elements typically found in movies aimed at teens: Violence, murder, magic, revenge, obsession, and enough macho hubris to fuel the football team for months. This classic tale also has many interesting applications for the study of English. Insightful students can compare the Scandinavian oral tradition with our own, as the origin of the book, and the language used in it, parallel that of *Beowulf* and other Old English stories in many ways. The *Nibelungenlied* is set in Medieval Burgundy, and Siegfried, the errant knight, is the chivalric ideal, as well as a perfect representation of Joseph Campbell's cyclical hero. Finally, students may enjoy finding the probable source for many of Tolkien's ideas for his books. The most powerful element of the *Nibelungenlied*, however, is the characters that draw our attention and force us to confront great questions and their implications, such as what it means to be loyal, or to what extent is revenge justifiable. Even with all these great reasons to read and use the *Nibelungenlied*, it probably will never become a teen staple or a standard in an English class, but it does not deserve to languish in anonymity.

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DEAR, DROP, FVR, SSR-

Throughout your teaching career, you may have engaged your students in independent or silent sustained reading in which students read any magazines or books that they choose for a designated time in class by themselves. Whatever the moniker, according to Pilgreen, silent sustained reading (SSR) has been a practice in classrooms since the early 1950's. Through a review of studies about SSR programs, Pilgreen has identified eight factors that were integral for student academic achievement in reading when SSR was in place.

Once she identified these factors, she tested them in a pilot study. Then she tested them in a more comprehensive study with second language learners. The eight factors that she identified include access, appeal, a conducive environment, encouragement, distributed time to read, nonaccountability, follow-up activities, and staff training. Although many of the factors are easily recognizable to teachers such as providing students with access to books that are appealing, some of the factors seem in opposition to each other, such as nonaccountability and follow-up activities. These two factors deserve further consideration. Pilgreen found that silent sustained reading brought results in several areas when these eight factors were in place. These results include improved reading comprehension, an increased frequency of outside reading, more enjoyment and self-confidence as readers, and using wider resources to engage in pleasure reading.

As a classroom teacher, I use Atwell's status of the class strategy to note what students are reading as well as how much they are reading after they finish SSR. This record helps me identify students who are struggling and need help choosing books, but it is an informal evaluation of students. I also have my students demonstrate what they have read weekly during independent reading by having them do a T-Chart or writing a summary afterwards. According to Pilgreen, I should not continue these practices after SSR, because I am holding my students accountable for their reading and therefore am attaching an evaluation to SSR. These processes are violating the factor of nonaccountability. Nonaccountability, according to Pilgreen, is when teachers do not evaluate or make students engage in evaluative activities after SSR. I'm not sure if I agree with this idea, but might consider

Review

trying it.

Another factor that she describes is the use of follow-up activities. She explains that follow-up activities are different from nonaccountability because follow-up activities are mostly social in nature and rely on peer interaction to promote the books that students are reading. Follow-up activities may include opportunities to collaborate such as five minutes to tell a friend about a book or reading passages aloud. Follow-up activities differ from activities that hold students accountable because students have a range of activities to choose from in order to share what they are reading with peers. This factor is a practice that I use and one that other teachers probably already use with their SSR program. But it is an interesting factor to consider in juxtaposition to the factor of nonaccountability.

The other factor that stands out is the idea that SSR should be distributed over time during the week rather than a longer session once a week. Pilgreen says, "Daily sessions of SSR are the most effective because in order for reading to become habitual, it must be done on a regular and "distributed" basis" (p 69). Most of my colleagues, including me, tend to build SSR into our lessons, once a week for a longer chunk of time rather than for daily, shorter, periods of time as Pilgreen suggests. She says, it avoids the "party-atmosphere" that engaging in SSR once a week might lend itself.

Aside from considering the different factors that hinder or improve SSR programs, her final chapter entitled "Problems, Perspective, and Places to Go" is valuable resource for teachers who have implemented SSR and are struggling with various issues with their students. Her book is definitely worth a read because some of her findings about the factors may challenge your assumptions about SSR. Reading Pilgreen's book would benefit both teachers who are new to using SSR and to those who regularly use this strategy with their students. It will definitely make you examine how you implement SSR and possibly make you rethink how you organize SSR in your classroom in the future.

Pilgreen, J. (2000). The SSR Handbook: How to Organize and Manage a Sustained Silent Reading Program. Boynton/Cook ISBN 0867094621 P. 160

Teaching: The Heart of Learning

The 2007 FCTE Conference

October 18 - 20, 2007, FCTE will host its annual conference at the Hilton in Altamonte Springs. With the theme of "Teaching: The Heart of Learning," Laura Robb and Janet Allen will kick-off the conference with a pre-conference workshop on Thursday, October 18. Highlights of the conference will consist of presentations by Kylene Beers and Doug Fisher. The upcoming year is a reading adoption year. Reading coaches from across the state will want to attend this conference to see what the publishers have to offer for Intensive Reading classes. Plan now to attend!

2006 FCTE Conference Highlights

Dear FCTE Colleagues,

The 2006 FCTE Professional Development Institute, October 12-14, certainly lived up to its promise—it provided a wonderful learning experience while promoting new friendships and getting us all reinvigorated for our important work with students. I believe the worst part of the conference was deciding which session to attend, especially with all of the first-rate presenters and the many varied presentations.

In this recap of the conference, I have provided a list of featured speakers with one summative comment to jog your memories. The sessions were simply too numerous to list, but were amazing, as the following comments will show.

Our featured academic leaders included

- **Janet Allen** who inspired us in spite of a broken hip
- **Kylene Beers** who gave us the best strategies for reading
- **Beverly Chin** who reminded us about the importance of diversity and professional memberships
- **Doug Fisher** who showed how one person can make a huge impact
- **Barry Lane** who reminded us to laugh
- **Robert Probst** who taught us about the power of responding

Spotlight

Jane Feber
Conference
Chair 2007

Dr. Joan
Kaywell

Conference
Chair 2006

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to literature

Our featured authors of young adult literature included

- **Brod Bagert** entertained us by performing his poetry ([Hormone Jungle](#))
- **Ed Bloor**, a Floridian, talked about writing mysteries ([London Calling](#))
- **Michael Cart** shared the history and growth of young adult literature featuring gay and lesbian protagonists ([Rush Hour: Volume Three-Face](#))
- **Lynne Cox** told us about her swimming, breaking world records, and helping to promote peace ([Swimming to Antarctica](#))
- **Lois Duncan** grabbed our hearts with her heart-wrenching story about her daughter's murder ([Who Killed My Daughter?](#)); she's currently helping others who's suffered similarly.
- **Adrian Fogelin**, another Florida author, reminded us of choices and consequences ([The Real Question](#))
- **Patricia Hermes** outlined what it takes to be a writer ([Emma Dilemma: The New Nanny](#))
- **Linda Oatman High** wowed us with her poetry ([Cool Bopper's Choppers](#))
- **Robert Lipsyte** made us all aware of the potential steroid abuses for teen athletes ([Raiders Night](#))
- **Ben Mikaelson** shared parts of his troubled childhood; he is living proof that teachers do make an incredible difference in students' lives ([Tree Girl](#))
- **Donna Jo Napoli** gave "wanna-be writers" sage advice: write a book in six weeks and then revise it for a year or two! ([Fire in the Hills](#))
- **Marilyn Reynolds**, former teacher now writer, encouraged us to reach reluctant readers through young adult literature ([I Won't Read and You Can't Make Me](#))
- **John H. Ritter** moved us through the importance of story ([Under the Baseball Moon](#))
- **Neal Shusterman** inspired us all to be the teachers we can be ([Everlost](#)) through story
- **William Sleator** shared stories of his life outside of the United States and the need for multicultural literature ([The Last Universe](#))
- **Eleanora E. Tate** gave us the REAL story of why the bat sleeps upside down ([Retold African Myths](#))
- **Rita Williams-Garcia** reminded all teachers of their importance ([Like Sisters on the Homefront](#))

2006
Conference
Highlights
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As your chair, I want to thank all of the people who attended and made the 2006 FCTE Institute for Professional Development a huge success. I also want to thank the people who sent notes of thanks by sharing what was said to me to the wonderful people who comprise the Florida Council of Teachers of English—YOU!

See you next year for another amazing professional development opportunity under the direction of teacher and writer Jane Feber. The theme is "Teaching: The Heart of Learning," and the dates are October 18–20, 2007.

Joan Kaywell

Saving Our Students with Literature and Laughter:

PERSPECTIVES ON THE 2006 CONFERENCE:

Teachers' Voices

*From **Marya Ann Beggs** (Palm Bay High):*

I was able to attend Friday all day and had a great time—what a wonderful lunch and speaker. The authors were fantastic and I have been talking about their books all week to my students. I took back so many ideas as I always do. I just wish I could get more people to attend . . . Our new teachers and veterans just do not know what they are missing. Thank you for an outstanding array of speakers and workshops.

*From **Linda Eastlake** (Atlantic High School):*

Congratulations on the BEST conference EVER! I brought in my big bag of books this morning; they were gone by third block!

*From **Angela Miller**:*

I really enjoyed myself this year! Perhaps you saw me walking around in utter awe. There was so much fantastic information

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Perspectives

and some of the best workshops I have ever had the privilege of attending.

From **Linda Peters** (Newsome High School):

I've been meaning to let you know that this was best state conference I've attended (and I've been going a long time). You did a fantastic job of bringing high caliber speakers and a variety of teaching strategies. I've bragged to everyone who didn't go about all they missed.

From: **Judi Robson** (Sarasota Middle School)

First of all, let me tell you that that was the best conference I have ever attended. It was awe inspiring to listen to authors tell their stories and thank a teacher.

Authors' Voices

From **Linda Oatman High**:

Just wanted to compliment you on a GREAT conference! I really enjoyed it, and thank you for having me. Hope our paths cross again!

From **Adrian Fogelin**:

I know it wasn't your goal to inspire authors but your conference certainly inspired me. I heard every one of the authors you invited and each one confirmed what I feel is true or gave me some new truth to think about.

From **Patricia Hermes**:

What a wonderful program and conference you sponsored. It was a privilege to find myself among such talented, committed teachers, librarians, and of course, authors.

From **Marilyn Reynolds**:

The conference was a great combination of people—thought provoking, renewing, entertaining, plus really good food and drink at both author events. I consistently heard good things about the conference, and you, wherever I went.

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From *Eleanora Tate*:

The FCTE Professional Development Conference was simply splendid, so well organized, so much fun, and I had such a great time. The authors' reception and the Friday night gathering was so comfortable for me. I usually don't attend such events, but everyone – especially you – were so gracious and friendly.

Professors' Voices

From *Dr. Janet Allen*:

It was a great conference. Lots of people came up to me and talked about the high quality of sessions and the great time with authors. . . . I particularly liked that you always referred to it as a professional development time.

From *Dr. Pamela Sissi Carroll (FSU)*:

FIRST, let me say a huge and hearty CONGRATS on the best FCTE I have ever attended!!! Thanks for your joie de vivre; it IS contagious—our students came back from FCTE fully infected with F C T E f e v e r !

From *Dr. Barbara Pace (UF)*:

I just wanted to thank all of you for a great conference. I received the note below from one of my students. They were so impressed and this was a wonderful way for them to become involved in FCTE! Thanks.

From *Dr. Candace Roberts (St. Leo)*:

Congratulations on putting together an amazing conference. It truly was the best state conference I've ever attended. Success breeds success, and I can only imagine how the organization will benefit from all your hard work.

From *Dr. Patricia Wachholz (FGCU)*:

Congratulations on a job well done! This was one of the best state conferences (maybe THE best) I have ever attended, and that includes the conferences in Michigan and Tennessee, as well as Florida. I was very pleased that I had convinced two of my colleagues to attend with me, and they haven't stopped talking about it. What a great couple of days!

Recipes for Classroom Success

Teaching Voice and Character Using a Mock Myspace Page

Allen J. Gorney

Grade Levels: 9-12

SSS: LA.D.1.4, LA.E.1.4

Skills taught: Understanding Voice, Understanding Character

Objectives:

To develop an understanding of voice and character using a mock myspace page.

Steps:

1. The student should pick a character from a literary text.
2. The student should determine the stylistic aspects of that character's voice and style from both dialogue and description
3. The student should fill out the required sections of the myspace template.
4. The basic myspace template should include a place for a picture, a section for a short biography of the character, and a section for blogs.

This myspace page should allow the student the opportunity

to explore a character and the elements of voice while also providing them the opportunity to be creative. The picture can match the description of the character in the literary text. The blog should comment, in the character's voice, on an episode in the plot. The short "about me" biography should also be written in the voice of the character. It helps for the teacher to visit a myspace page to understand the purpose of the assignment better as well as to tweak the assignment to fit his or her needs. Please note that the assignment in no way requires students to create an real myspace page online.

Increasing the rigor of the lesson: If the literary text is not contemporary, have the students do research on the time period to create a friends list, a general interests section, and even fake advertisements. For example, if the student has chosen Nick from *The Great Gatsby*, the student could research various titles of literature that were published during the 1920's that Nick may have read. This assignment could also work as a cross-curricular assignment with a History class and could be used to understand a historical figure.

We're looking for your "recipes for classroom success." Please send an original lesson idea to Allen Gorney at gorneva@ocps.net. Be sure to include the following information: grade and skill level, corresponding Sunshine State Standard, objective, steps and assessment.

classroom

Reflections on FCTE

Wendy Hauver
Staff Writer

When I attended my first FCTE conference, it was as a student at USF. I went because **Dr. Kaywell** told me I was going (it definitely was not just a suggestion). Anyone who knows Dr. Kaywell also knows that she only ‘suggests’ you do things because they are in your best interest. Her passion for wanting only the best for her students and colleagues was gloriously evident at this year’s conference.

During the opening session, **Dr. Kylene Beers** spoke about the changing literacy demands that adolescents will face in the future. She put a face on that student who struggles to be literate, and offered real-world suggestions for helping our students to become productive and competitive in today’s global economy.

Dr. Beers’ presentation was followed by a “Meet the Author’s Reception,” sponsored by **McDougal Littell**. This was a wonderful opportunity to meet the authors presenting at the conference. I especially enjoyed the opportunity to get to ‘know’ them a little before their respective presentations.

On Friday, floating back and forth between the breakout sessions and the author presentations, I learned more from this year’s conference than I ever thought possible (my mind is still reeling with all of the information I gained). The presentations offered by the Florida Writing Project at FSU were fun, and so creative, that I came home and changed my second quarter lesson plans!

The highlight of the conference for me was having the opportunity to sit next to author **Ben Mikaelson** during the FCTE Luncheon. If you didn’t go, you truly missed out on a rare and delightful experience. Mr. Mikaelson moved us from laughter to tears... and back again with his Keynote Address: **Finding the Heart of a Story**. He captured the hearts of his audience, that day--and I don’t think any of us will ever look at a bear the same.

Thank you to everyone who toiled so diligently on our behalf to produce one of the best conferences I have ever had the pleasure to attend. We as teachers understand completely the value of a good education--and we definitely got more than our money’s worth.

Wendy Hauver teaches seventh grade language arts in Pasco County.

Knowing Your Numbers: A Look at Current Florida Statistics

Antonia
Lewandowski
Staff Writer

As Mark Twain famously observed, statistics can lie. At the same time, it's helpful to acknowledge that measurement and assessment can help us clarify problems and assist us in building support for new solutions. Now at the start of a new year, let us look at some of the descriptors for Florida's children, and by implication, Florida's schools.

Recently, Education Week published its special report "From Cradle to Career: American Education from Birth through Adulthood." Part of its Quality Counts series 2007, the report supported by the Pew Center on the States and other sources, assembled numerous indices about children and families which are of interest to all those who work in schools.

For us in Language Arts, it is useful to know some positive Florida descriptors. For instance, according to the report, 82% of children in Florida have parents who are fluent English speakers. Also, the state also ranks higher than the national average in the percentage of children (43.1%) who have at least one parent with a post-secondary degree. Child health insurance covers 81.4% of Florida's children and 72% of children have at least one parent working full time and year round.

Other indices offer room for improvement. On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in elementary reading, 30% of Florida's children achieved proficiency, compared to 38% in a northeastern state such as Connecticut or 25% in South Carolina. Also, 45.4% of public high school students graduate with a diploma, compared with a national average of 69%.

Some early childhood indicators point to future success in our classrooms. Florida appears slightly above average in the number of 3 to 4-year olds in preschool, with 50% in 2005. Seventy-nine percent of Florida children are enrolled in kindergarten.

Conversely, only 58% of children come from families with income at least 200% of the poverty level. In terms of annual income, 45% of adults have income at or above the national median. Clearly, education and economics contribute closely to child welfare.

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Regarding assessments and accountability, Florida most recently updated its English language arts standards in 2005-06. It is one of 35 states that has a regular timeline for revising standards. In addition, Florida is one of only 18 states that have reading interventions and one of 13 states that has a formal definition of school readiness.

Always a point of strong debate, Florida is one of only nine states that uses measures of individual student growth to rate schools. But, Florida does not turn over school management of troubled schools to state agencies as do twenty other states such as Massachusetts, California and Tennessee.

In a society growing increasingly more "flat" because of the high value placed on technological skills, Florida, like other states, must consider not only its own local profile but also measure outcomes by national standards and international achievement. Statistical information in reports such as Education Week may help inform discussions about success in a wider context than the individual school or district provides. We owe it to ourselves and our profession to frame and debate essential questions about schooling in broad as well as closely focused perspectives.



Messages

A Message from the FCTE Historian

We wish to be notified of the deaths of any former FCTE Board Members or Affiliate Officers so that we may honor those who have passed at our annual conventions. If anyone has information concerning the deaths of such members, please contact Historian Dorothy Fletcher at dotief@comcast.net. *Thank you.*

FLORIDA ENGLISH JOURNAL Call for Manuscripts

The next issue of FEJ will be available in the summer of 2007 and will preview the Annual Conference. This year the theme for the conference is "Teaching: The Heart of Learning." Please send us your manuscript in relation to the theme and/or any departments listed below.

SUBMISSIONS DUE JUNE 1st

GUIDELINES

Send manuscripts with cd/disc to:

Tamara Doehring, Managing Editor
Florida English Journal
Melbourne High School
2781 Michigan Street
Melbourne, FL 32904

OR send manuscript via email to

Tamaradoe@aol.com

Receipt of manuscript will be acknowledged.

Manuscripts should be in Microsoft Word. If you have a picture or graphic in the text, please also include the original picture(s) in a separate file.

MLA format preferred.

Manuscripts generally should be no longer than 8 typed pages.

Include your school affiliation, work and home telephone numbers, and email address on a cover sheet.

Multiple submissions of a manuscript are permissible, but writers must notify FEJ if the article is accepted for publication elsewhere.

Provide release statements for all copyrighted materials.

The FEJ accepts ideas and/or manuscripts for the following monthly sections:

Guest editorial/letters to the editor. Comment on any aspect of the FEJ. We may edit your comments as required by space constraints.

Features

Send us essays that reflect what you teach and why you teach (with an emphasis on how being a teacher in Florida affects you). How do you adjust your classroom to meet current educational requirements?

Original artwork/cartoons/poetry.

Send us your best artwork, cartoons, and poetry. Submit drawings on unlined paper or via email. The artist should sign drawings.

Book Reviews

Tell us about a practitioner's book that has been especially helpful to you in the classroom, or tell us about the best contemporary young adult literature you have encountered. If possible, include student comments about the book.

Contest and Publishing Opportunities

Include any worthy contests or publishing opportunities for students and/or teachers.

Teacher to Teacher

Share with your fellow teachers a pearl of wisdom you have learned from the teaching life. Humor, personal essay, and prose all appropriate for this section.

Copy This

Simply send us one of your favorite original assignments. Include background information on yourself and guidelines for the assignment (appropriate grade level and time management).

Online Information.

Send any new relevant online sources. Include who and what the site could be geared for and how you have used it.

News and Views

Provide information on any new state or national legislation that is relevant to our profession; you may state your opinion on it, or simply relay the facts.

Writing prompt

Each issue a writing prompt will be included to use with your students as well as to write yourself. Send your best of either or both.

This publication is reviewed by several English professionals across the state of Florida. Submission does not guarantee publication.

ACEI Conference

Founded in 1892, the **Association for Childhood Education International** is the oldest professional organization dedicated to the inherent rights, education, and well-being of all children in the home, school, and community. ACEI members work diligently to defend the right of children to a child-centered education through professional development conferences, journals, position statements, and more. One of our primary purposes is to focus the public's attention on the rights and needs of children, from infancy through middle childhood, and on the ways that educational programs must be adjusted to fit those needs.

ACEI will hold its Annual International Conference & Exhibition, Education for Transformation: Impact on the Children of the World, May 2 – 5, 2007, in Tampa, Florida. The conference may provide beneficial sharing and networking opportunities to members of the FCTE.

The conference will be held at the beautiful Hyatt Regency Tampa where you can immerse yourself in the endless activity in Downtown Tampa. This luxury hotel places you within minutes of the convention center, Ybor City, Florida Aquarium and Busch Gardens. This is an ideal setting for learning, networking, relaxing, or recharging your batteries as you and your peers consider how best to inspire our children to achieve their highest potential. Plans are well underway as we prepare to greet over 800 early and middle childhood educators from such countries as Canada, China, Ghana, Jamaica, Korea, Mali and the U. S.

Conference highlights will include more than 225 workshops, research sessions, and panel discussions led by internationally and nationally renowned experts in the fields of early and middle childhood education. Sessions will cover such topics as:

- a) Transformation through Global Perspectives (educating children for global understanding; character and peace education; international teaching models from PreK – college);
- b) Education and Changes in Social Realities (family and children's social welfare; education and care for children at risk; urban and rural education);
- c) Transformative Learning: Responses of Body, Mind, Emotions, and Spirit (the role of play; curricular approaches; creative and expressive arts; inclusive education; approaches for children with special needs; working with linguistically and culturally diverse learners and families)
- d) Civic Responsibility and Engagement for Promoting Children's Well-being (family and community involvement in schools; interagency collaboration);
- d) Critical Insights into Professional Growth (reflective teacher education; educational research; professional involvement for the world's children)

Keynote speakers include award-winning author, activist and educator Jonathan Kozol, and 2006 National Teacher of the Year, Kimberly Oliver.

Contact: Lisa Wenger, Director of Conferences, at conference@acei.org, (301) 570-2111, (800) 423-3563. Visit the Web site at <http://acei.org>.

Assessment

Frequently Asked Questions about Assessment

What makes an assessment “high-stakes”?

A single test determines the outcome of an important event such as passing a grade/course, graduating from high school, or changing the funding for a school.

Are high stakes assessments required by law?

Yes. No Child Left Behind mandates that every state test children in reading or language arts and math every year between grades 3 and 8 and once between grades 10 and 12. Beginning in the 2005-2006 school year, science assessments also became mandatory. Federal law does not mandate the testing of any other subjects (including writing); however, states can assess these other subjects at their own discretion.

What is AYP and how does it relate to assessments?

AYP stands for adequate yearly progress. All students in a school must make a certain (state determined) progress each year for the school to make AYP. Progress is determined by performance on the high-stakes assessments. If the school does not make AYP, they may suffer serious sanctions including the complete restructuring of the school. The progress students make each year must be such that all students (including all disaggregated subgroups) will be proficient, as measured by the state assessments, by the 2013-1014 school year.

After consulting state and local leaders, the U.S. Department of Education issued a letter in July, 2002 clarifying the definition of adequate yearly progress, a provision of the No Child Left Behind Act. [The letter is available here.](#)

What is disaggregation and why is it important?

All test scores are not just judged by the full school but also by small subgroups of students. The subgroups represent minorities, learning disabilities, socioeconomic status, English language learners, etc. All subgroups must make AYP for the whole school to make AYP.

High stakes assessment-High stakes assessments determine the outcome of an important event such as passing a grade/course, graduating from high school, or changing the funding for a school.

Disaggregation- All test scores are not just judged by the full school but also by small subgroups of students, such as minority, disabled, or ELL students.

Summative vs. Formative Assessments-With summative assessments, students are evaluated upon completion of the work and the focus is on the final product. With formative assessments, students are evaluated during the work process and the focus is on improving the process. For example, a summative assessment would be a state achievement test and a formative assessment would be a teacher response to journal entries.

Holistic Evaluation-Holistic evaluations are assessments that focus on overall quality of the work and not just the correctness of a single answer. Holistic tests are generally considered more comprehensive than multiple choice tests and better measure deep understanding. In assessments of writing, holistic evaluation is a “general impression” of the entire piece.

Performance Assessment-A performance assessment required students to perform a task instead of simply answering a question with given set of answers. The task may be writing an essay or solving an open-ended math problem.

Criterion Referenced Tests-Assessments that have one, fixed performance standard for all students and student groups.

Norm Referenced Tests-Assessments that measure each child’s performance against the performance of other test takers so that the standard is the median performance of all test takers. Thus, half the population is expected to perform below average while the other half is expected to perform above average.

Saving Students

with Literature and Laughter!!!

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**E-mail is required in order to receive FCTE correspondences such as the newsletter and Newsbox

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FCTE

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A N N U A L

C A L E N D A R

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issue e-mailed
Announcement of finalists for
Beginning Teacher of the Year
and English Teacher of the
Year

September
NCTE Achievement Awards in
Writing - Coordinators submit
the names of judges, winners
and teachers to *Florida English
Journal* by 9.30

October
FCTE Membership Renewal by
10.1
FCTE Fall Conference
Fall Board Meeting at FCTE
Conference

November
Florida English Journal fall issue
mailed

December
FCTE Newsletter deadline for
post conference issue - 12.1
All treasurer requests should
reach treasurer before 12.10
for end of fiscal year

*The FCTE fiscal year coincides with the
normal calendar year: January 1-Decem-
ber 31; The membership year is from Octo-
ber 1-September 30.*

January
Winter Board Meeting
FCTE Newsletter mailed

February
FCTE Newsletter deadline for
spring issue - 2.1
Florida English Journal deadline
for submissions for spring issue
- 2.28

March
N/A

April
FCTE Newsletter spring issue
mailed, includes items for:
*Beginning Teacher of the
Year
*English Teacher of the

Year
*Writing Awards Competition
*FCTE Honor Award
*NCTE Literary Maga-
zine Awards Application

May
Spring Board Meeting
Florida English Journal spring
issue mailed

DEADLINE OF 5.31

*Writing Awards
NOMINATIONS FOR:
*Beginning Teacher of the
Year
*English Teacher of the
Year
*FCTE Honor Award
*Nancy McGee Scholar

ship applications mailed to
English teacher
preparation programs
throughout Florida

June
FCTE Beginning Teacher of the
Year and Teacher of the Year
materials mailed to FCTE board
members for judging

July
FCTE Newsletter deadline for pre-
conference issue - 7.1
NCTE Literary Magazine
Contest deadline - 7.1

August
FCTE Newsletter pre-conference

NCTE Supports English Language Learners

All English language learners face the obvious challenge of learning academic content in a language that is not their native language. What strategies and instructional writings are most helpful to English Language Learners?

- **Extend language development** to daily literacy activities that benefit ELL's and that use an English speaking genre.
- **Cultural is essential** among genres in regard to ELL's day-to-day struggle with learning a new language.
- **Clear is built and constructed** by understanding the process of student language use within the school and classroom setting.
- **For which more effective learning models** are by acknowledging the value of students' home languages and cultural experiences.
- **Help students build on their own learning** by closely examining the classroom practices of teachers and how they use students' languages, lived experiences, and culture as pedagogical tools to legitimize new social relationships of power.



ELL/ESL/ENL is an on-line professional development program created to meet the needs of today's multilingual classroom.

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