Coming Home to CEE-GS
by Christy McDowell
Western Michigan University

CEE-GS is a place for graduate students to connect with each other, share ideas and grow together as professionals.

My first CEE conference was in New York City in 2010. Not only was this my first solo conference, this was my first solo trip, period. Go big or go home, right? I was already feeling nervous and apprehensive as I was making the transition from being a full time eighth grade teacher to a full time graduate student. As such, I was struggling to find my new home. I needn’t have worried, for instantly I was welcomed into the CEE-GS community. I made connections with other graduate students from across the country and realized that none of us is in this program alone. Though sometimes our work may feel isolating, we return to each other each year to connect, to collaborate, to inspire. I clearly remember my first social dinner with the CEE-GS. I looked around the table and realized that I was sitting among the very people that I would be working with for the rest of my career. It was such a surreal moment in which I could clearly envision collaborating on future workshops and articles with my new English Education family. In that moment, all of my insecurities evaporated. I knew I had found my new home.

Each year our community continues to grow. I am still marveling that we all packed into Bilbo Baggins for dinner in DC last month! As membership grows, so do our opportunities to both collaborate and commiserate along each step of our unique journey that is graduate school, celebrating each other through each step of the process and growing as a family.

This summer CEE will once again meet in New York City at Fordham University. I am excited to return to where, for me, it all started and to meet new members. We will have a graduate student day on Thursday, July 9 in which we will offer workshops specifically catered towards the needs of our CEE-GS members. Please make plans to attend. In my opinion, while NCTE is a great conference, CEE is takes that same commitment to education and camaraderie and magnifies it by 100. On behalf of the leadership team, we look forward to reconnecting or meeting with you!
CCSS and ELA Teacher Identity

by Kyle Jones
Kennesaw State University

As a preservice teacher, I took for granted the changing tides rippling across the field I was being apprenticed to. In a form of innocent ignorance, I soaked in my English courses in the early years of college giving no thought to the greater pedagogical implications these classes may have on me moving into my major courses. Even as I entered methods classes that sought to marry pedagogy with teaching English as a specific and specialized subject, I took my professors lectures and projects at face value and worked my way through the program--hoop after proverbial hoop. When I finally entered the field devoid of the university’s support systems with my own classroom, I believed in my abilities and always trusted that the university had prepared me for that moment. This is a belief I maintained: I never found myself questioning my training or assimilation into the field of English education. I was also blind to a standardization movement that had begun just before I became a teacher and had slowly crept its way into the national spotlight. After years in the classroom, two more diplomas, and the pursuit of a doctorate, now is the time that I can read Brass’s (2014) “Reading Standards as Curriculum: The Curricular and Cultural Politics of the Common Core,” Luke’s (2004) “At Last: The Trouble with English,” and *Pasternak, Caughlan, Hallman, Renzi, and Rush’s (2014) “Teaching English Language Arts Methods in the United States: A Review of the Literature” reflexively and take up a position that is no longer ignorant but is also far more complex than I could have imagined in 2007 when I first graduated and entered the classroom.

I am not anti-Common Core. On the contrary, I see a value in having a shared narrative and vocabulary to discuss English language arts classroom practices. The issue has always been the designers and puppetmasters of the Common Core. Brass (2014) nicely frames the issue stating, “Much of [the stimulus] federal money has worked directly and indirectly to subsidize entrepreneurs, testing companies, and the educational technology sector to displace the curricular and pedagogical leadership of elected public representatives...at the public’s expense” (p. 25). While not an immediate issue of my classroom practice, the money exchanging hands between private entities and government bodies have direct and indirect implications for my students and colleagues. Directly, I am faced with the politicization of my profession--forced to take sides or chose stances for or against political figureheads and companies invested in reaping financial rewards from the political turmoil embedded in current education policy. The dilemma of political schisms in my profession is indeed cancerous. I spend more time than I care to admit being concerned with the choices Georgia’s next governor will make in conjunction with my profession and which companies will be awarded the next round of monies dedicated to test, curriculum, and “support” resources generation. All I know for sure is that they will not be asking me to participate in those choices in any meaningful way: “states have written and rewritten English content standards (often with very little input from English teachers and teacher educators), distributed curriculum frameworks and established regimes of test taking” (Pasternak et al., 2014, p. 4). The result is a distraction that pulls me away from my primary concerns of aiding my students in becoming literate, free-thinking, empathetic, and democratic citizens. Indirectly, I see the forces these political and money decisions place on my colleagues of English education and our students. English teacher and student alike are filled with perplexing anxiety over high-stakes testing, college admissions, and future economic stability. I have matured to understand that some of the complexity of my occupation is based at least in part to political contexts that I have little control over, nor do I feel empowered to rally against outside of my classroom. Teaching English is more complex than ever, not only due to globalization and technology, but because of political stratification and stigmas rampant in the Common Core era.

The most insightful of the three pieces mentioned above is easily Luke’s (2004) introspective look at the shifting nature of what it means to teach literacy in an age of standardization and globalization. While the piece is ten years old now, Luke’s words ring as true as ever considering the challenges facing an English language arts teacher. Luke writes:

Our trainings, histories, and own linguistic biographies are blended and complex, as are those of our students. Far from being seamless, linear and coherent, our field, then, is utterly troubled by diversity - that of our students, of our own disciplinary and trans-disciplinary trainings, and of the very historical dynamics of English as living cultural and social, political and economic entity. (p. 87)

I love this. Running the risk of being too informal as I reflect on Luke’s words, they ring terribly and wonderfully true to me. The complexity he shares above is the complexity I readily embrace, and a complexity that I think makes teaching currently so interesting and purposeful. We do not teach in an age of whitewashed, shared experiences where each pupil is of the same complexion, background, and creed, nor in a time when the canon of white privileged authors of yore can inexplicably cut across cultural identities and satisfy a diverse student body’s need for their voices to be reflected in a standardized curriculum. Rather, we are, as Luke pointed out many years ago, “troubled by diversity” and by a collision of identities that force all English teachers to consider the implications of their own practice. Teaching English language arts today is more exciting and terrifying than ever. While the threat of standardization exists by way of the Common Core, an
English teachers are still left with the choice of how to take up those standards in his or her classroom. Certainly, many English teachers, both young and old in their careers, will feel cornered, stuck, maybe even disenfranchised by standardization, but I posit that perception and identity as an English teacher is most important in combating such feelings of hopelessness. Rather than fretting over finding a common, sustaining method for teaching all children (an impossible task I assure you), Luke offers, “teachers [need] to develop flexible repertoires of field-, discourse-, and text-specific pedagogies, suited to particular textual artifacts, technologies, social and linguistic/interactional outcomes, and adaptable for students of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds” (p. 90). A practice such as the one Luke describes is the one worth fretting over, worth losing sleep over. A concentration on flexibility in the English classroom—a type of elasticity on the part of teacher and student—may be the best combatant against the fears of the politicisation of curriculum. For instance, allow the Common Core to provide a common language across a diverse field, but allow the approach and the methods taken up in the English classroom to remain diverse. How could we as English teachers ever expect a single-narrative approach to instructing reading and writing to be successful for us or our students? Common Core or no Common Core, the English language arts teacher must embrace diversity both in students and in pedagogical practice.

The Pasternak et al. (2014) research review provides one particular comment I find myself currently grappling with at this point in my doctoral pursuit:

Because standards are political documents written by committees largely composed of non-educators, standards can work to maintain status quo assumptions about literature and writing and may not reflect recent scholarship on literary study, writing pedagogy and K-12 student engagement. (p. 24)

A stagnation of innovative teaching is being reinforced through Common Core. While I stand by my statement earlier that I do not have an inherent problem with Common Core standards, I do recognize the wider consequence these standards are having on many of my colleagues. Many with whom I work alongside fear the consequence of not maintaining the status quo. I have a guttural reaction to such a mindset that easily dismisses these fears and I openly scoff at the notion of my alternative teaching techniques being admonished and repressed by administrators or higher-ups. I need to acknowledge, however, that my mindset is unique in many regards. Instead of rudely scoffing, I need to continue to build confidence in my colleagues that they can try different approaches to teaching and experiencing reading and writing. The end of the quote above also reminds me that I need to find ways to get digestible research in the hands of my English language arts colleagues as well. A teacher leadership approach I had not considered really before this year has started to unfold; I see a need for beleaguered teachers to have renewed support for trying dynamic approaches to teaching English, which are often times messy and don’t readily translate into quantifiable results. Research assures us our current techniques are outdated and many times culturally irrelevant and insensitive, yet many of us continue to teach the same way we were taught—it’s a consistent model that is easy to embrace because it appears to work for the mass majority. The issue is that mass majority is shifting and along with it the identity of the English language arts classroom. My students rarely look like me, but it is my duty to them to try and look like them—to embrace and recognize their backgrounds as genuine sources of literacy practices. Literacy practices that can and should be co-opted into the emergent English classroom. Because while the need to apprentice students to writing that is valid for an assessment exists (and the larger power structure in place), the need to pursue literacy as acts of creativity and a way to broker understanding across peoples and places remains greater.

References


*This article was only available in a PDF scan and did not provide volume, edition, and page number range. The original journal was not available to me either.
Become-A-Professor Brew
by Shelly Shaffer
Arizona State University

PURPOSE: To complete your dissertation and get a job as a professor.

INGREDIENTS:
- 1 graduate student
- At least 3 years’ teaching experience
- 1 Master’s degree
- 1 heart filled with inspiration
- 1 dissertation committee
  - 4 dissertation committee members
- 1 comprehensive exam defense:
  - 3 publishable articles required for ASU
  - 45 revisions to said publishable articles
- 1 great question that needs to be researched
- 6 participants
- 6 individual interviews
- 1 focus group
- 1 survey
- 30 hours to transcribe interviews
- 100s of hours to analyze data
- 1 brain on overload
- 5 completed chapters
- 112 hours per week of work
- 5 years of school
- 85 credits (or more)
- 5 conference presentations
- 5 hours per week searching job sites and writing cover letters
- 3 letters of recommendation
- 20 or more job applications
- Several phone interviews
- 1 (or more) campus visits

DIRECTIONS:
1. Start with 1 graduate student with at least 3 years’ teaching experience and 1 Master’s degree.
2. Whip in 1 heart filled with inspiration.
3. Mix in 1 dissertation committee containing 4 members.
4. Slowly add 1 comprehensive exam defense containing 3 publishable articles and 45 revisions.
5. Next, sift 1 great question that needs to be researched, 6 participants, 6 individual interviews, 1 focus group, and 1 survey in a separate bowl.
6. Fold in 30 hours to transcribe interviews and 100s of hours to analyze data.
7. Fry one brain until it overloads.
8. Purée 5 completed chapters and 112 hours per week of work until smooth and manageable.
9. Slowly beat this into the graduate student.
10. Let simmer for 5 years of school and 85 credits (or more).
11. Put the entire mixture into an airplane and roast at a roundtable for 5 presentations.
12. Top with 5 hours per week of searching job sites and writing cover letters.
13. Stack on top of 3 letters of recommendation.
14. Complete 20 or more job applications, and whip these until powdery.
15. Sprinkle on several phone interviews and at least 1 campus visit.
16. Stir this into the student teacher mixture and serve.

In the end, you will have one life changed forever, and if you mixed it correctly, the person is ready to become an effective university professor.
Tips for Collaboration at NCTE
by Katie Caprino
North Carolina at Chapel Hill

I went to Boston in 2013 for my first NCTE and must admit the Conference on English Education (CEE) business meeting was a bit overwhelming. I did not know many people and really was not sure what networking really meant.

But a meeting that started out a bit overwhelming took a change for the better when a friend introduced me to Meghan Barnes, a graduate student at the University of Georgia. We started talking and realized that we shared a research interest in service learning. I told her I had been working on a course paper about reflection in service-learning and learned she was collecting data on a service-learning course. We decided that we would chat after the conference and see if we could collaborate on an article. One year – and a few Skype chats, emails, and phone calls – later, we have submitted a paper for publication.

For this installment of the CEE newsletter, I thought I would provide fellow graduate students with tips for how to use our annual NCTE meeting as a space for potential collaboration.

Before NCTE

(1) Post on the CEE Facebook or Twitter page to share projects on which you would like to collaborate. Think about in what areas of these projects you might need collaborative partners.

(2) Think about ways that your research interests or specific skills (e.g. writing literature reviews, analyzing data, etc.) could contribute to others’ projects. This will help you articulate what you can bring to a collaborative project.

(3) Ask your advisor if he or she has colleagues in the field who have graduate students who share your research interests. Reach out to these graduate students via email and make arrangements to chat at NCTE.

During NCTE

(1) Use the CEE dinner meeting and graduate student business meeting as spaces to share your research ideas or current projects.

(2) Socialize with graduate students from other institutions to generate collaborative research projects. The CEE dinner is a great way to meet graduate students from all over the country.

(3) Attend sessions of graduate students whose work aligns with yours. If you think their work might fit with a project you have started, send them an email.

(4) Ask fellow graduate students what course(s) they are teaching and agree to share syllabi. Knowing what other graduate students are doing in a methods course, for example, can be really helpful.

After NCTE

(1) If you decide to collaborate with a graduate student you meet at NCTE on an article for publication, be up front about expectations (e.g. author order, expected project completion date, etc.) and obligations at your institution (e.g. comprehensive exams, teaching load, etc.) so that your new partner knows what to expect.

(2) Identify target journals early on in the writing process so that you know journal expectations, such as article length or type of articles accepted.

(3) Share the results of collaborative efforts on the CEE’s Facebook and Twitter sites or in the CEE newsletter.

(4) Submit a proposal to future NCTE or CEE conferences to showcase collaborative work.

CEE-GS as the “Landscape of Knowing” NCTE
by Nicole Sieben, Ed.D
SUNY College at Old Westbury

“The best-kept secret in American education is the daily genius of the teachers in our classrooms.”

—Ernest Morrell, Presidential Address, NCTE Annual Convention 2014

On Thursday, November 21, 2014 many undergraduate and graduate students across the United States traveled to Washington, D.C. to attend the 104th National Council of Teachers of English Annual Convention, “Story as the Landscape of Knowing,” at which over 7,000 K-16 English teachers met to “examine the power of story as the landscape within which we map the significance of experience and build towers of knowledge.” As NCTE has said, “Stories saturate our lives, woven so tightly into the fabric of the everyday that it’s easy to overlook their value as a way of knowing the world. They are the glue that creates community and binds us together around common purposes and values.” For many of us, CEE-GS has become a vital part of the glue that creates professional community and binds us together in this quest to teach, research, and write for social justice. For many of us, CEE-GS has become a vital part of our stories.

As an English educator at SUNY College at Old Westbury and an active member of the CEE-GS first as doctoral student and now as a faculty member, one of the highlights of my NCTE 2014 Annual Convention experience was getting to see my graduate students present their work during the CEE-GS sponsored session, “The Future is Now: Exploring 21st Century Teaching Ideas with the Next Generation of English Teachers,” co-chaired by Dr. Alan Brown and Dr. Luke Rodesiler. During this Saturday session, forty-four undergraduate and graduate students from fifteen colleges and universities across the United States presented to an audience of over 130 attendees. At SUNY College at Old Westbury, our students also create community through story telling by analyzing great works of literature, writing critical reflection and research papers, and creating innovative curricula. At the 2014 NCTE Annual Convention, three of our SUNY College at Old Westbury students had the opportunity to share their stories with the national professional community of English teachers in “The Future is Now” session and were extremely grateful to have this opportunity to do so.

As NCTE president and Columbia University professor, Dr. Ernest Morrell, shared in his presidential keynote address at the annual convention,
NCTE is the oldest, most historic literacy organization in this country. This November, our NCTE undergraduate and graduate students became a part of NCTE’s history and undoubtedly, its future. After working hard to prepare their presentations under the guidance of their English education professors, the students arrived at the conference eager to share their work and network with other undergraduate and graduate students, English teachers, and scholars in the field.

In the spirit of the conference theme, our English teacher candidates represented the stories of their colleges and universities and the schools in which they observe and student teach. For example, during their presentations SUNY Old Westbury graduate education students represented the stories of English majors and secondary English education majors as well as the stories of the students in the secondary English language arts classrooms in which they are observing. Jennifer Rollo’s presentation titled, “The Search for Identity through Inner Conflict in Hamlet” described the literary significance of this Shakespearean work and provided strategies for teaching the play to secondary school students in engaging ways. Lindsey Johnston’s presentation, “Writing Connections: The Importance of Cross-Curricular Literacy,” detailed the importance of teaching writing across the curriculum in all school subjects in conjunction with teaching writing in English language arts classes. In Griselda Ureña’s presentation, “The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian: A Pairing of Young Adult Literature with Canonical Classics to Promote Student Engagement,” Griselda shared strategies for pairing influential works of Young Adult literature with critical canonical texts in order to engage students’ literacy interests, motivations, and fluencies. During their session, the students also had the opportunity to engage in important conversations with other graduate students and notable scholars in English education whose work they have studied this semester. For example, my students particularly noted their appreciation for having the opportunity to engage in conversation with Dr. Robert Petrone, former CEE Chair and author of many of the scholarly articles they have studied this semester.

From the invaluable influence this session has had on the professional development and academic growth of my graduate students, it is clear that this session is a vital component of the NCTE program as we continue to support the acculturation of passionate teachers in our profession.

In addition to this session, CEE-GS chair Dr. Lindy Johnson organized another CEE-GS sponsored session during which doctoral students had the opportunity to share their research and receive feedback on their research projects, many of which were at different stages of completion. From this session, which has also become a staple in the NCTE program annually, many doctoral students have reported receiving feedback on their research projects that has led to successful dissertation defenses, important perspective shifts, publication opportunities, grant awards, and informal and formal mentoring relationships.

Throughout the conference, the undergraduate and graduate students (from both CEE-GS sponsored sessions) attended sessions that explored “the many dimensions of story as the landscape of knowing—story as literary and informational text, story as cross-disciplinary collaborations, story as multiple literacies and genres, story as memory and identity, story as teacher knowledge and research, story as community and culture, story as marginalization, and story as resistance.” As future secondary English language arts teachers, our teacher candidates at SUNY College at Old Westbury felt that it was an extremely eye-opening and important conference for all future and current English teachers to attend; it is an influential step in their acculturation process as teachers of English and as life-long learners. As one SUNY College at Old Westbury student noted after the conference, “It’s a place to talk about English and literature and writing where everyone is speaking your language. Everyone there is really interested in what we are doing because they are all doing it too. It’s a really great feeling of community.” That NCTE has given my students this gift of community and inspiration is the greatest gift of hope I could receive during this conference season.

To close the convention, NCTE President Dr. Ernest Morrell echoed our students’ sentiments. He encouraged all teachers of English to stand collectively as a group for social justice, and he inspired us to walk together to teach critical, activist literacy for and with all students. He reassured us, “It is much easier when you are walking with people. NCTE should be the place to say ‘if you are about literacy and social justice, you don’t have to walk alone.’ And, you do not have to walk alone.” CEE-GS has made it possible for our undergraduate and graduate students to know that they do not have to walk alone as they enter their classrooms for the first time. Our SUNY College at Old Westbury students are among those English teachers who are about literacy and social justice, and it is clear they are eager to be a part of the activist literacy movement to which Dr. Morrell refers. Being a part of the CEE-GS session, “The Future is Now,” gave my students the chance to attend and participate in the NCTE Annual Convention for the first time and in doing so gave them the motivation and the inspiration to be active members of NCTE and continue along their academic and professional journeys as English teachers for social justice. As Dr. Morrell said, "The best-kept secret in American education is the daily genius of the teachers in our classrooms." CEE-GS makes it possible to share the secret of the “daily genius… in our classrooms” for and with our students.

Pictured below from Left to Right are SUNY College at Old Westbury graduate students Griselda Ureña, Jennifer Rollo, & Lindsey Johnston with their professor, Dr. Nicole Sieben, at the 2014 NCTE Annual Convention
CEE MENTORING

CEE AND CEE-GS offer a number of programs and events to support graduate students and early career scholars in English education.

Apply to participate in the CEE-GS sponsored roundtable sessions at NCTE. Look for a call for participants in early January 2014.

Apply to the L. Ramon Veal Research Roundtables Session at NCTE. Look for a call in CEE’s Connected Community in Summer, 2015.

Apply to the Mentoring Program for Early Career Scholars in English Education.

CEE sponsors an online mentoring program for early career scholars—from advanced graduate students to pre-tenured faculty members—whose teaching and/or research pertains to English education the opportunity to be paired with an experienced CEE faculty member who will serve as an online mentor. Matches have been made for 2014-2015. If you are interested in the program for 2015-2016, look for the call in CEE’s Connected Community in Summer 2015.
Letter from the Chair

2014 was another year of growth and renewal for CEE-GS. The inaugural CEE-GS business meeting took place on November 21, 2014 where elections for the new leadership team took place. We are pleased to welcome the new CEE-GS leadership team members for 2015-2017. They will begin their official duties July 1, 2015.

Chair: Meghan E. Barnes, The University of Georgia

Conference Director: Amy Piotrowski, Florida State University

Newsletter Editors: Shelly Shaffer, Arizona State University, and Alice Hays, Arizona State University

Social Media Director: Margaret Robbins, The University of Georgia

Membership Director: Eileen Buescher, The Ohio State University

I am excited about this new team and want to thank everyone who came to the business meeting and voted.

CEE-GS also sponsored two sessions at NCTE 2014. The Future Is Now: Exploring 21st Century Teaching Ideas with the Next Generation of English Teachers, was Co-Chaired by Alan Brown, Wake Forest University, and Luke Rodesiler University of South Florida, Tampa. In this session, undergraduate and master’s level pre-service English teachers from across the nation led roundtables exploring 21st century teaching ideas and best practices. During the roundtable session Sharing our Stories: The Research and Practice of English Education, CEE-GS Roundtable Session, Chaired by Lindy Johnson, English Education doctoral students shared their research and were given feedback by established scholars in the field. These roundtable sessions continue to be a source of renewal and inspiration for me, and I invite you to take part in the CEE-GS roundtables at the 2015 NCTE Annual Convention in Minneapolis. To participate, please complete the Google form here: http://goo.gl/forms/r3WnkEU9xS by Monday January 5th.

Please mark you calendars for the IFTE/CEE summer conference at Fordham University July 6-9, 2015. The CEE-GS will be sponsoring a day of mentoring workshops for graduate students on July 9, 2015. I would like to invite you to complete a very brief survey that will help us determine the focus of the mentoring sessions. You can complete the survey here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YGDFK85

And finally, I want to thank the outgoing leadership team members for all their hard work and commitment to CEE-GS. Thank you to Kelli Sowerbrower for being an incredibly welcoming, energetic, and positive force in her role as Social Media Director; thank you to Christy McDowell for producing a fabulous newsletter each and every year; thank you to Meghan Barnes for helping to organize a great CEE-GS dinner this year, and to Amy Piotrowski for taking on the onerous task of organizing our membership records. It has been my pleasure and privilege to work with each of you!

Sincerely,

Lindy Johnson

The College of William and Mary

Don’t forget to submit your proposal for NCTE 2015! Next year the convention will be in Minneapolis with the theme of RESPONSIBILITY, CREATIVITY, AND THE ARTS OF LANGUAGE. Submissions are due Wednesday, January 14, 2015 by 11:59 PST. All proposals must be submitted online at http://www.ncte.org/annual /call.
CEE-GS Dinner
Friday, November 21st 2014
Fresh Fruit and Cheese Platter
Appetizer
greens with carrots to
Entrees