

Chalkboard

Quarterly Newsletter for the Oregon Council of Teachers of English

www.octe.org



Chalkboard

The OCTE newsletter, *Chalkboard*, is a print and digital publication produced four times a year to communicate news from language arts teachers across Oregon, as well as book reviews, conference reflections, announcements, and more.

Chalkboard was awarded NCTE's Affiliate Newsletter Award of Excellence in 2021, 2020, 2019, 2017, and 2003 and won Honorable Mention in 2008.



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Message from the President



REIMAGINING OUR WORLD

How do you go about “Reimagining Our World?” I think it must be together. This spring, we’ve been reading, writing, speaking, and listening, giving voice to “reimagining our world.” The OCTE book club started us off by exploring two graphic novels, *Displacement* and *Victory Stand*. Together, we had fascinating discussions around these authors' visions of social justice.

We followed with “Let’s Talk” our spring conference/unconference. Molly Josephs shared how she created her podcast “This Teenage Life,” as a place for young people to share their voices. The incredible energy generated by Molly and her student podcasters carried us into our first unconference where participants engaged in conversations together about what matters most to them.

May 6th, 400 young writers came together along with nearly a hundred volunteers on the PSU campus to celebrate the 38th annual Oregon Writing Festival. Authors Mike Lawrence, Will Ritter, and Kylie Schacte shared their craft and day group leaders shepherded the young writers to workshops and sharing sessions where they were able to give voice to their hopes and visions, thoughts and ideas.

All of this has been building to our big event. If you haven’t heard the news yet, OCTE is excited to partner together with the Oregon Council for Social Studies and the Oregon State Literacy Association to bring you our first joint conference in several years. With author Penny Kittle and founder of the Book Love Foundation as our keynote speaker, we are coming together to look at the myriad ways of “Reimagining Our World Together.” I’m looking forward to being together with you on November 4th at Lincoln High School in Portland.

Laurie Dougherty
President, OCTE

The Oregon Writing Festival



Join the OCTE Fall Conference: *Reimagining Our World Together*

The Oregon Council of Teachers of English (OCTE) is excited to extend a formal invitation to you for the highly anticipated OCTE 2023 Fall Conference, which will be held at Lincoln High School in Portland, OR, on Saturday, November 4, 2023, 8:30 AM to 3:00 PM. Guided by the theme *Reimagining Our World Together*, this year's conference promises to be an exceptional event, and we are proud to announce that we are teaming up with the Oregon Council for the Social Studies (OCSS) and Oregon State Literacy Association (OSLA) to host it!

We are delighted to share that this year's keynote speaker is the highly regarded and inspirational visionary, Penny Kittle. Author of such award-winning books as *Micro Mentor Texts: Using Short Passages From Great Books to Teach Writer's Craft*, *4 Essential Studies: Beliefs and Practices to Reclaim Student Agency*, and *The Greatest Catch: A Life in Teaching*, Penny is known for her passionate advocacy of student-centered teaching, and we cannot wait to hear her insights, stories, and strategies for engaging and empowering students to become lifelong readers, writers, and learners.

Penny is just one of the many highlights of the conference. In fact, we have lined up a fantastic program of sessions, workshops, and activities that will explore the theme of *Reimagining Our World Together*. The conference will also offer a rich array of ideas, tools, and connections for English language and Social Studies teachers and professionals across Oregon and beyond.

Whether you are new to the profession or a seasoned veteran looking for fresh inspiration, the OCTE 2023 Fall Conference is the perfect place to network with peers and industry experts. Together, we will share cutting-edge pedagogical strategies, will stay current on education trends, and will connect with like-minded colleagues who share your passion for teaching and learning.

The OCTE 2023 Fall Conference will be held at Lincoln High School in downtown Portland, OR, on Saturday, November 4, 2023, 8:30 AM to 3:00 PM. For more information, kindly visit our website or contact us directing at OCTEorg@gmail.com

See you in November!
Dr. Bob Bizjak
Co-Chair, OCTE 2023 Fall Conference

2023 FALL CONFERENCE

REIMAGINING OUR WORLD TOGETHER

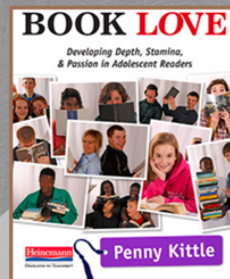


FOR ALL EDUCATORS
K-12 AND BEYOND

Discounted
Registration Fee: \$50

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Penny Kittle



Saturday, Nov. 4th, 2023

8:30 am -3:00 pm

Lincoln High School • Portland, OR

Co-Sponsored by:



OUR FEATURED SPEAKER

Penny Kittle teaches freshman composition at Plymouth State University in New Hampshire. She was a teacher and literacy coach in public schools for 34 years. She is the co-author (with Kelly Gallagher) of *Four Essential Studies: Beliefs and Practices to Reclaim Student Agency* as well as the bestselling *180 Days*.

Penny is the president of the Book Love Foundation and was given the Exemplary Leader Award from NCTE's Conference on English Leadership. She believes in curiosity, engagement, and deep thinking in schools for both students and their teachers. Penny stands on the shoulders of her mentors, the Dons (Murray & Graves), and the Toms (Newkirk & Romano), in her belief that intentional teaching in a reading and writing workshop brings the greatest student investment and learning in a classroom.

Learn more about Penny Kittle on her websites, pennykittle.net and booklovefoundation.org, or follow her on Twitter.

Meet Penny Kittle



REGISTER HERE



CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

- 8:30 am Breakfast and Exhibits
- 8:55 am Welcome
- 9:15 am **Concurrent Sessions 1**
- 10:15 am **Concurrent Sessions 2**
- 11:15 am **Keynote: Penny Kittle**
- 12:15 pm Awards
- 12:45 pm Lunch / Book Signing / Exhibits
- 1:45 pm **Concurrent Sessions 3**
- 2:45 pm Buzz Activity / Door Prizes
- 3:00 pm Event Ends

\$50 for all participants

**1 Year Complimentary
Membership is included
for OSLA, OCTE, & OCSS**

**PDU's & Graduate
Credit Available**

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The Science of Reading

by Michelle Schardt

After years of literacy instruction reform, reading test scores across the nation remain stubbornly low: a third of fourth graders read at a basic level. By now you have heard a lot about the science of reading and maybe have listened to *Sold a Story*, the podcast by Emily Hanford on American Public Media. If you haven't, add it to the top of your to-do list; this goes beyond the so-called reading wars. We cannot continue to blame our abysmal literacy results, especially for Black and brown children, on issues such as assessments, poverty and other outside school issues.

I'll admit that I was a whole language believer early in my career during the 90's. My university experience and professional development taught us that kids will learn how to read if they are surrounded by language via songs and read alouds, environmental print such as pocket charts, signs around the room, and by having enticing literature available with ample time to enjoy it during independent reading. Test scores remained low, so we updated our thinking with the balanced literacy approach which involved readers and writers workshops and what we called word work. Under this structure we created time to read, write, and discuss but supplemented those with teaching word families or spelling patterns.

I scoffed at teaching English phonics rules as did the vast majority of my colleagues. If we didn't know the rules and we were efficient, accurate readers, how could those nitty gritty details matter to the kids? I feel comfortable saying as a whole we were not good at teaching phonics nationwide because we didn't believe in the benefits, and because we didn't know how to do it. Both of those sentiments are well described in *Sold a Story* and by my 29 years of teaching experience. Universities have long favored the whole language and the balanced approach; as a result, those are what teachers knew. This is currently changing as we see more and more schools of education adding in science of reading components across the nation and here in Oregon.

Thanks to my district, Portland Public Schools, I have been able to do LETRS training, along with educators from other states.

The Science of Reading, cont.



LETRS, Language Essentials For Teachers of Reading and Spelling by Louisa Moates, Carol Tolman and Lucy Hart Paulson, focuses on the components of reading shown by Scarborough's reading rope. This training is an in-depth teaching of the simple approach to literacy: language comprehension + fluent word reading = reading comprehension.

Written English is an opaque language that can be decoded using rules. Some research says 97% of English words are decodable. Research shows 15%-20% of learners can pick up those skills by exposure or modeling alone. But another 30%-40% need direct instruction. The bottom 20% percentile needs direct cumulative instruction combined with ample opportunities to practice before they make those pathways to the right part of the brain automatic.

When you read or listen to folks discussing the science of reading, leveled readers used through guided reading will come up. Those early readers have an important place in early literacy. We cannot teach all the phonics rules, all the sound spellings, at once and we need young students to be engaging with text in the meanwhile. Reading short patterned texts with words or phrases that repeat and match an illustration help young students see and hear written language in action. They develop a coherence around the sound of written language and move along the continuum of understanding how reading works, as described in Ehri's Stages of Reading.

My plea here is to embrace the science of reading, teaching both language comprehension and decoding skills to empower students with fluent reading. Learn the phonology of our fascinating, complicated language so you can make it more transparent to students and they can arrive at a place where they can decode, and spell, fluently. We can give our readers and writers opportunities to engage with and create authentic texts while they think critically about language and ideas, both theirs and others'. When we know what is important, and what works, we can make better instructional choices so we can elevate all of our students to fluent reading they can learn from and enjoy.

“Let’s Talk: A Meeting of the Minds” Delivers

Trish Emerson

Equity and Inclusion, Motivation and Student Engagement, AI and the Future of ELA—these topics and others emerged as leading concerns for members and shaped OCTE’s first Unconference held on Zoom, Saturday April 8th.

Podcast creator of *This Teenage Life*, Molly Josephs was joined by two from the podcast team: Jayden Dial, a high school student from San Diego, and Evelyn McKenny, a college student from Rhode Island. Together this dynamic trio treated attendees to an introduction to podcasting as a way to build community, foster connection, and develop real-world skills and student agency, “using storytelling to amplify student voice.” (See the recording [here](#).)

Podcasting provided the perfect segue for the participant-led discussions that followed when inspired attendees chose [breakout rooms](#) based on their interests. After the opportunities to talk, participants returned to share their take-aways:

“How quickly a half-hour goes when it’s a topic that’s great. We really needed more time together.”

“Student motivation, student voice...all these themes flow together, all exist with each other, enhance each other.”

“Our conversation may not have given me a lot of answers yet, but these conversations really helped drive more of those questions [about what we value and why]. This gives me hope.”

“Teachers can drive their own professional development. Today we were driven by what we need—and want—to talk about.”

“We go through so much structured professional development. This is a break: like-minded people talking about what’s on our minds, some of our challenges. I thought it was a great conversation.”

You can visit the [conference Jamboard](#) for more.

This may have been OCTE’s first participant-led event, but it won’t be our last!



Check out *This Teenage Life*!

Watch the conference video [here](#)!

Listen to the This Teenage Life podcasts [here](#)!

You can visit the [conference Jamboard](#) for more.

OCTE Reads

OCTE Reads returns for another month of reading and connection this July!

We will connect on Instagram, via email, and on casual zoom get-togethers for discussions and connections. We are excited to connect with fellow educators around a book from this year's theme of "Windows around the World." Join moderators Trish Emerson and Marie LeJeune in exploring a title that grants insights into global understandings.

Which book should we choose to center our discussions? Please give us feedback by completing [this survey](#) by June 15, 2023. We will kick off the book discussions in July! We hope you will consider joining us...no requirement to make it to all of the zooms...just join when you can!



Please give us feedback by completing [this survey](#) by June 15, 2023.



Teacher of Excellence Award

Every year OCTE selects two English "Teachers of Excellence", from nominations across the state. These teachers represent a "particularly noteworthy record of teaching the English language arts" and we congratulate them on this recognition!

Jennifer Livingston is a 20-year veteran educator, currently serving as an English teacher at Newberg High School. Nominator Holly Miele, the coordinator of Teaching and Learning at Newberg Public Schools, says of Livingston, "She is part of the heart and soul of D Hall at Newberg High School. She creatively and skillfully engages everyone from our AP Language achievers, to our struggling students in our mainstream ELA courses. She consistently meets students where they are and challenges and supports them to move forward in their writing skills and reading comprehension. Her students are constantly empowered to speak up and contribute in meaningful ways. She is also a stellar teammate to her fellow teachers by developing authentic partnerships and powerful curriculum that gets everyone on the same page. She is a key reason that we create lifelong learners in our classrooms and she needs to be recognized for this outstanding work."

Michelle Fulsher teaches 8th grade language arts at Gordon Russell Middle School. Nominator Jeanne Sheets-Sagoo says Fulsher "pour[s] all of her energy, time, and compassion into her role as an 8th grade instructor. Michelle is an exemplary teacher. She serves as a teacher leader, both on her own LA team at Gordon Russell Middle School and for other district teachers. Michelle frequently steps up to share lessons and teaching strategies with other MS teachers at district trainings. She is a noteworthy presenter who keeps both student and adult learners engaged. Michelle most recently has helped to draft an 8th grade scope and sequence, lending her years of expertise and experience to a task centered in equity and access for all students. On her own time, Michelle has offered a teacher learning course to her colleagues in the district. Michelle also worked to earn her National Board Certification in 2011. Michelle Fulsher is a gifted educator that creates a classroom of rigor and engagement; she remarkably finds time to lift up her colleagues, as well."

A Letter of Thanks for *The Oregon Encyclopedia*

Dear Dr. Hardt, Treasurer, and Board Members of the Oregon Council of Teachers of English,

On behalf of the trustees, staff, and all the members of the Oregon Historical Society, I send our heartfelt gratitude for your annual financial support of The Oregon Encyclopedia.

For more than a decade, we've watched the growth of The Oregon Encyclopedia in number of entries and of visitors. In the past few years, especially during times of remote learning, we've seen just how important it is for all people, especially students and educators, to have online access to a fact-checked, authoritative, expansive resource about the people, places, and events that have shaped our state.

Every month, the talented Amy Platt shares the top ten most-read entries on The OE, and it's always a mix of entries that bring levity (like "Animal House") and that bring context to the present (like Exclusion Laws). More than one million visitors rely on The OE to gain knowledge, understanding, and perspective.

Thank you for putting the power of history into everyone's hands!

With gratitude and well-wishes,

Kerry Tymchuk

OHS Executive Director



Bookmarks

- **Does your school have a teacher book club?**

What are you reading with your colleagues? This could be a professional book study or just fun reading with your teacher friends. Share a photo of your group with us, and we will publish in an upcoming Chalkboard.

- **Have you ever explored the Oregon Encyclopedia?**

Summer is a great time to learn about these resources and do some planning for the fall.

- **Call for Ideas:**

Chalkboard would like to publish you! If you have lessons, strategies, or inspirations for the ELA classroom, please share them with us at publications.octeorg@gmail.com.