

# Chalkboard

Quarterly Newsletter for the Oregon Council of Teachers of English

[www.octe.org](http://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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## *Greetings from our OCTE President*



Dear OCTE Members and Friends,

We've had a wonderful fall this year. It was great to be back together and in person at Vose Elementary in Beaverton for our fall conference. Our conference organizers Trish Emerson and Bob Bizjak put together a fantastic program of excellent presenters. Keynote speaker, Kim Johnson's warmth and generous spirit made the day unforgettable. We were also thrilled to be able to recognize Margaret Perow with the English Language Arts Teacher of Excellence Award for her contributions to teaching and learning in Oregon. In addition to notes and new contacts, everyone in attendance left with a free Oregon Spirit Book Award winning book, signed by the author.

Spring Conference organizers, Trish Emerson, Lloyd Dollar, and Cameron Scott are already busy planning our next event. Based on your feedback, we are planning to try a half day virtual event on a Saturday in April. Our OCTE membership is made up of so many outstanding educators who are innovating and trying new things in their classrooms. So, in the spirit of "Voice and Choice" we are considering a participant driven un-conference. We would like to provide an opportunity for you to share your own experiences and learn from each other.

I hope you have noticed the fresh new look of our logo. Dharma Nicotera has updated our logo for us to represent the ways that OCTE members are leading the way. The torch has long been an emblem of light and hope. As we look ahead to the new year, we will find new ways to connect with our students and inspire them together.

Laurie

## *Fall 2022 Conference*



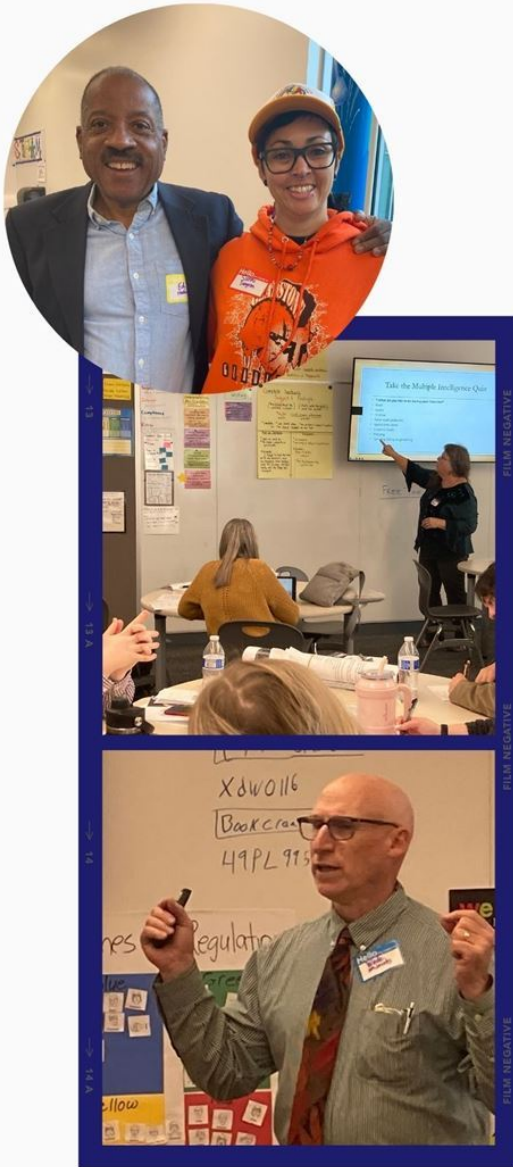
OCTE's 2022 Fall Conference lived up to its theme of transformation.

Keynote speaker Kim Johnson, social justice leader and author of the powerful novel *This is My America*, encouraged educators to recognize and support the "raw talent" in their students, and help them "bear witness" to the truth of their own stories. Four award-winning authors inspired us with tales of their trajectories into authoring books. Twelve workshop presenters challenged us to transform our own practices to better match the unique needs of each of our unique students.

Shelly Buchanan's workshop on Student-Driven Inquiry presented an approach to supporting children in becoming the classroom expert on topics of their own choosing.







A slideshow featuring projects from cookbooks to handcrafted masks excited participants with the range of possibilities when students are given the reins to their own learning. Step-by-step instructions on how to guide students in self-directed research made the idea of doing so approachable.

Dr. Ed Madison of the Journalistic Learning Initiative showed how encouraging students to follow their own interests can lead to deep and meaningful community interviews, real-world writing, and authentic websites based on their own journalism.

Margaret Williams Turner of Mt. Hood Community College introduced participants to a storytelling activity that diversifies instruction to reach the needs of multiple learning modalities.

In his inspiring presentation **Dare to Read**, Wade McJacobs shared his “Read through it” strategy, focusing on mindful reading. His mantra: confidence first, then comprehension focused us on changing the mindset to focusing on what students do understand rather than miscues and mistakes.

In their session on graphic novels, Coley Lehman shared not only multiple great new titles, but also strategies and opportunities for using graphic novels with students and colleagues. Who knows, perhaps this is the direction for our next OCTE Reads Book Club?

Posing the question, “Should we still teach Shakespeare?” Susan Elliott and Bob Bizjak stimulated a lively discussion in their session. Using *Othello* as an example of Shakespeare’s timeliness and relevance to today’s teens, participants resoundingly answered the question with “Yes we should!”

“Okay everyone, pick up your pens. We’re going to write whatever comes up for the next 10 minutes.” Jan Priddy led participants in a free writing exercise, just one strategy from her presentation, “Teaching Writing without Making Your Eyes Bleed.” In a fast-paced and hugely informative session, attendees experienced Priddy’s dynamic style and no-nonsense curriculum for keeping students writing and reading on a daily basis. In addition, she shared the wealth of resources available through her website to deliver the promise of clear-eyed writing instruction.



Eliza Canty-Jones and Diana Kruger conducted a wonderful session on the creation of an updated Portland history book that includes the histories of more women and people of color. They spoke to the need for students to see themselves reflected in the history that is taught in their classes.

Margaret Perrow and Kim Neiswanger shared a wonderful presentation on an enduring and evolving book publishing project at the Ruch Outdoor Community in Southern Oregon that made anyone in attendance want to take on a similar project in their own classroom. They brought along examples of student books spanning the time that they have been taking students through this project, demonstrating the power of getting students to believe that they have a story to tell.

"A picture is worth a thousand words" definitely applies to Michelle Schardt's presentation exploring the dynamic potential of wordless picture books in all classrooms but particularly for English language learners. The array of stunning color examples from texts such as *Zoom*, *The Red Book*, and *Chalk* and Schardt's anecdotes of how student creativity blossoms with each page, convinced attendees that text without words can be an invaluable classroom tool for all ages. Visit Michelle's padlet of resources.





Playing with poetry and personification, Trish Emerson explored strategies to enhance everyday vocabulary instruction in her presentation, "Transformation: The Power of Poetry". Working with the two mentor poems about kindness, attendees then brainstormed ways to turn abstract nouns into characters that breathe on the page. To be in a room doing a choral reading with fellow teachers felt like a perfect end to a day of celebrating being back together at a conference.





## NCTE Conference Back In Person

Perusing the program for this year's NCTE Convention, "Sueños Pursuing the Light," a return to an in-person event after two years in an exclusively virtual environment, was akin to receiving that holiday catalog full of those tempting items that shout, "Celebrate!"

The welcome from program chair María Fránquiz stated, "...we can share the ways our individual and collective pursuit of light...continues to assist us in imagining a new story...new dreams—for ourselves, our students, and our communities."

Anaheim buzzed with energy from Thursday, November 17th through the special workshop opportunities on Tuesday, November 22nd. From the very first sessions, themes emerged. NCTE manifested its commitment to expanding the range of voices, the breadth of ideas, and the hope of a more equitable and just world through presentations from dedicated, engaged, and highly skilled professionals.

"Oh, to be cloned," crossed attendees' minds as the array of learning opportunities made selecting one nearly impossible. Often teams of colleagues reluctantly divided to attend different concurrent sessions in order to multiply the wealth of resources they would be able to share—and bring back to their fellow teachers.

A special breakfast held on Sunday honored those affiliates that had received awards during the past year. The *Oregon English Journal* and editor Kimberly Campbell received an outstanding journal publication award as did OCTE's quarterly newsletter *Chalkboard* and editors Jeanne Sheets-Sagoo and Donna Sheets-Mathew.

The NCTE Convention proved, once again, that working together fosters growing together—and shined a beacon for all to follow.



# *The Oregon Spirit Book Awards*

The Oregon Spirit Book Award committee considered 70 children and young adult books written or illustrated by Oregonians and published last year.

The OSBAs went to:



## Picture Book

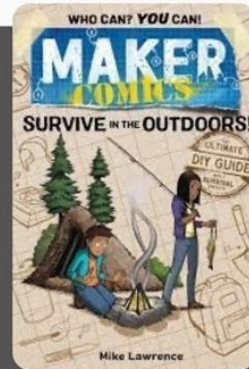
Fiona and the villagers of Handkerchief have been living next to the Baron Von Sneeze who lives in *Castle Gesundheit*. They have been putting up with the Baron's coughing and wheezing for as long as they could remember. People in the village have been afraid to visit the castle until brave Fiona ventures into the castle and meets the Baron and treats his ailment and saves her village.

The illustrations by Mark Fearing add a contemporary feel to what seems like medieval times. The book is filled with many sound effects for sneezing and dozens and dozens of cats.

## Nonfiction

*Maker Comics* is a series of DIY information presented in a graphic novel format. In, *Survive in the Outdoors!* author and illustrator Mike Lawrence relates the adventures of Alonzo and Sophia who take a trip into the woods with their knowledgeable abuelito. Drawing on his outdoor experiences in the Wallowa and Cascade mountains,

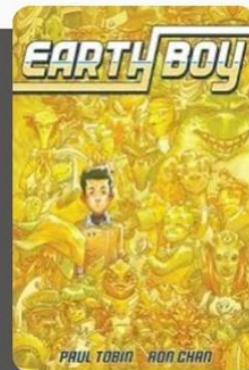
Lawrence presents detailed suggestions as the children learn the wonders of nature and how to adapt without their cell phones. Among the things Sophia and Alonzo learn is forest friendly skills like performing first aid, building a tent, starting a fire, catching and cooking a fish, and how to poop.

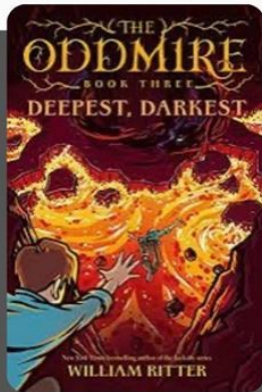


## Graphic Novel

From *Dark Horse Books*, *Earth Boy* is by Paul Tobin and Ron Chan. Benson is a young teen with dreams of venturing into space and becoming a Galactic Ranger. He applies to the Kayrus Academy and is the first earth boy accepted. His father offers some advice when he allows him to go.

Benson joins an elite academy full of strange characters and unusual alien classmates. Paul Tobin's text and Ron Chan's illustrations blend seamlessly to describe Benson's struggles to overcome cultural shock and bullying to prove that he belongs.





## Middle Reader

*The Oddmire. Book Three. Deepest, Darkest* is the concluding book in the trilogy by William Ritter. This high fantasy features two brothers, Tinn and Cole, one human and one a goblin changeling, in search of their father who disappeared at their birth. On the quest, they encounter several characters including Fable who is part human girl and part fairy. And because you can't trust hinkypunks as guides, the brothers have many adventures in The Wild Wood and in a magical forest on their way to Oddmire.

Readers can become involved in this fast paced novel without having read the first two books.

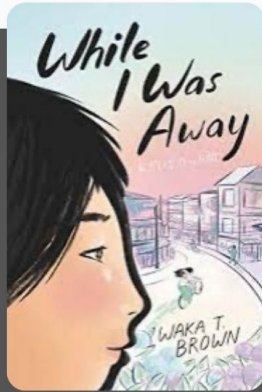
## Young Adult

*Playing With Fire*, like many novels by April Henry, seems inspired by recent events. A man made forest fire on a popular hiking trail in Oregon is the setting for this teen versus nature adventure. Natalie had barely survived a previous fire that took her younger brother; she is cautious and wants to become a doctor.

On a first date with Wyatt, who is a confident hiker, they drive from Portland and are caught in the fire. They and a diverse group of hikers work together to save lives. Included are many details about survival in this action packed mystery.







## Debut

Using her journal as a primary source, Waka T. Brown writes this memoir based on her experience when she was twelve. She didn't want to go, when in 1984 her Japanese-American immigrant parents sent her to Japan to become more involved with her roots. *While I was Away* details her experience living in Japan with a grandmother she hardly knows and who has her own problems.

The differences between school and friends in Japan and the U.S. are the focus and appeal of her memoir, and the differences between 1984 and the present are fascinating.

## *Teacher Grants*



OCTE offers annual grants to assist teachers in the classroom. Grants of \$150 - \$300 are available to develop curriculum, purchase materials, or otherwise enhance instruction in language arts/literacy. OCTE board members or members of their families are not eligible to apply. Submit grant application online. Grant submission deadline is February 15, and recipient decisions are made by March 15.

### **REQUIREMENTS:**

- Must be an OCTE member.
- Submit receipts.
- Present grant project at a Spring or Fall OCTE conference.
- Checks disbursed at Spring Conference.
- Conference registration covered by OCTE for Spring award presentation.



## Bookmarks

**Oregon Teacher Grants:** [apply here](#)

**Oregon Excellence Awards in Teaching the English Language Arts**

To recognize excellence in teaching, the Oregon Council of Teachers of English (OCTE) invites any Oregon school to nominate one outstanding English language arts educator. **The nomination deadline is April 6.** Find the [application form here](#).

**Resources from the Fall OCTE Conference:**

- Michelle Schardt's [padlet of resources](#).
- Jan Priddy's [wealth of resources available through her website](#)

**Save the date:** The Oregon Writing Festival will be held in person on the PSU campus on May 6th.

**Coming soon:** more information on the virtual 2023 OCTE Spring Conference in April!

**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](mailto:publications.octeorg@gmail.com).