

BCTELA President's Newsletter

January 2014



Greetings and Salutations!

It has been a few years since we have put out a president's newsletter but I thought it might be a good way to continue the connection we start building each year at the October conference. My goal is to assemble a newsletter a few times a year, to complement our journal, *English Practice*, and the provincial conference. I hope that you find something of interest in these pages and that you share parts with your colleagues. I hope, too, that you feel part of the BC Teachers of English Language Arts community; we are here together to share the struggles and joys of our professional lives and I believe that our joined work is richer than our work alone.

-Celia Brogan

Draft Curriculum Update

Have you checked out the draft curriculum? The English Language Arts K-9 IRP is up online and the Ministry of Education is soliciting feedback from teachers now. There are some fairly big changes to the way our curriculum is being represented on 'paper' but not necessarily to how we as teachers understand the what, how, and why of teaching and learning. In many ways, the draft curriculum is a reflection of the wonderful work currently being done in BC classrooms by BC teachers. Share your thoughts with the writing teams via the feedback pages on the Ministry site.

If you feel like you don't have enough time to look through all the documents and pages at once, try starting with the Cross-Curricular Competencies. The three competency strands will connect all subject areas and all grade-levels. What do you think? What do you think is missing? How might we take these up in ELA? Start a conversation at your school.

Find the draft curricula here: <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/>

www.bctela.ca

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What I've been Reading

Counting by Sevens by Holly Goldberg Sloan
Gr. 6-10

Willow Chance is very, very smart. She has just started middle school when her life is turned upside down: she is accused of cheating on a state test, forced to start counselling, and then something terrible happens to her parents. Now she has to figure out how she is going to continue to go on living when nothing seems that important anymore. Luckily, hope comes from the oddest places.

The book jacket gives us seven good reasons to read this novel – and I agree: Friendship, Oddballs, Hobbies, Laughing and Crying, Miracles, Family, and Willow Chance.

Unwanted by McMann Gr. 5-8

The blurb on the cover says *The Unwanted* is *Harry Potter* meets *The Hunger Games*. If you're thinking, "Whoa! That's a pretty big claim!" I would agree. I thought the same thing. *The Unwanted* is not, in my opinion, as good as those two best-sellers. It is, however, plotted confidently between the two and quite an enjoyable read.

We meet our group of main characters in an intentional and repressive community, reminiscent of North Korea, as they are deemed "unwanted" for having displayed creative impulses and sentenced to death in the Purge. Yet instead of their expectation of a lake of boiling oil, they are welcomed into Artime, a magical enclosure where they learn to use their creative talents in combat.

The series centers on twins who have been separated by the Purge. Alex is destined to take on the leadership of Artime, while Aaron will stop at nothing to assume the mantle of High Priest of Quill. The story explores the choices leaders must make and the consequences of different courses of action. Friendship, self-confidence, and power over others are also obvious elements.

Upcoming Dates and Events

- February 15th, 2014
Submission deadline for *English Practice* spring 2014 issue: *Starting a Circle: Exploring Aboriginal Education*
- February 21st, 2014
workshop proposals due for 2014 BCTELA October conference: *Cultivating Inquiring Minds*
- February 28th, 2014
Submission deadline for *English Practice* summer 2014 issue: *Multiple Pathways: Diverse Texts*
- February 28th – March 1st, 2014
BCTF New Teachers Conference
Radisson, Richmond
- March 1st-3rd, 2014
NCTE NW Regional Conference, hosted by Oregon Council Teachers of English
- April 30th, 2014
Deadline to submit student writing to the *Voices Visible* contest. Teachers must be a member of BCTELA for students to be eligible.
- May 1, 2014
Applications due for this year's BCTELA professional book club. (Title(s) TBA, stay tuned)

see www.bctela.ca for more information on upcoming important dates

THEMATIC LIT CIRCLE IDEA: LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS

- *ESCAPE FROM ME. LEMONCELLO'S LIBRARY,*
- *FROM THE MIXED UP FILES OF MRS. BASIL E. FRANKWEILER,*
- *HELP! I'M A PRISONER IN THE LIBRARY!*
- *THE LEGEND OF SPUD MURPHY*
- *CHASING VERMEER*
AND MORE...

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Community Building

A few years ago the BCTELA executive started dedicating the beginning of our meetings to a sharing activity. The topics range from work-related resources and ideas to our thoughts on personal-professional balance and they have been a meaningful activity which has built our collective capacity and resilience.

This past meeting it was my turn to set the sharing topic. I posed the following question: "If you were to join (and participate significantly) in another PSA, which would it be, and why?" I would like to share some of the executive's responses with you.

Don Blazeovich (gr 2, SD41): "BC Math Teachers Assn, for the different ways to creatively approach thinking."

Belinda Chi (gr2-3, SD41): "BC Teacher-Librarians Assn. Because I value collaborating with other teachers, I would love to work with all the students, and I think school community as a whole is so important."

Pamela Smith (Secondary ELA, SD41): "BC Art Teachers Assn. I already collaborate with my art teacher a lot. I love that a student's artist statement can give me such different access to their experience."



Leyton Schnellert (UBCO): "BC Co-operative Teachers because it spans curricular areas. BC Social Studies Teachers Assn, because I am passionate about humanities in general. BC Science Teachers Assn, because science is a personal passion as a content area. BC Special Educators Assn, for their excellent Cross-Currents conference in the spring."

Kelley Inden (Secondary humanities, SD91): BC Social Studies Teachers Assn because I have a degree in history; I love the humanities – it is such a rich and powerful place to hang out."

Celia Brogan (Teacher-librarian, SD39): "BCTLA, since that *is* my job. Environmental Educators' PSA because I have a passion for place-based everything."

Pamela Richardson (UBCO): "I should say Association for Educators of Gifted, Talented and Creative Children in BC, as that's my area of expertise but I'm going to say Peace and Global Ed. I think that education should be largely about social justice and social change. Really, I don't care which PSA; I will follow the people who mean something to me – this collegial atmosphere is what's most important."

Kim Dunnigan (SD38, seconded to SFU): "Peace and Global Ed. I would work to bring a primary-years focus into it, developing supports for teachers who want to do more in-depth peace education with their children."

"THIS COLLEGIAL ATMOSPHERE IS WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT"

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English Practice Call for Articles 2014

English Practice, is a peer-reviewed, open access, online publication published twice annually. We are passionate about sharing the powerful practices of BC English Language Arts educators, and creating a vibrant conversation about teaching and learning in the English Language Arts in BC and beyond.

Please see our **Submission Guidelines** for details about the different categories, criteria and guidelines:

<http://bctela.ca/call-for-articles-2014/>

We are now accepting submissions for two upcoming issues:

Spring 2014. Theme: *Starting a Circle: Exploring Aboriginal Education*

This issue is devoted to exploring the vital importance as well as challenges of integrating First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives, voices, texts, curricula and teaching and learning practices within English Language Arts. We invite educators and scholars from British Columbia and beyond to explore significant issues arising from landmark events and curricular shifts in BC, which reflect larger questions related to the future of Aboriginal Education and ELA.

Closing date: February 15th, 2014.

Summer 2014. Theme: *Multiple Pathways: Diverse Texts*

This issue is devoted to teaching practices that welcome and engage all learners in the English Language Arts classroom with an emphasis on writing instruction, new literacies, early literacy, inquiry, social justice, differentiation, oral language and assessment. We are interested in an exploration of questions such as: How do we welcome and respond to the diversity of students in our classrooms? How does responding to diversity shape and benefit our teaching practices? How do we engage students through multiple forms of assessment and help them find their best pathways into learning? How do we invite students to engage deeply with diverse texts, and what happens when we do?

Closing date: February 28th, 2014.

Submit writing to Pamela Richardson: pamela.richardson@ubc.ca

The BCTELA Executive

President (on leave)

Susan McLean

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Celia Brogan

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Cindy Miller

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Kim Dunnigan

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English Practice Journal Editor

Pamela Richardson

Web coordinator

Kelley Inden

Voices Visible Editors

Don Blazeovich
Pamela Smith
Belinda Chi

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