



President's Bulletin

President's Report by Leyton Schnellert

www.bctela.ca - September 2009



Over the past 12 months the BCTELA Executive has reflected on BCTELA and its role. We identified our current "tent poles": our journal (*English Practice*), our annual conference, and our student writing journal (*Voices Visible*). We also realized that we needed to re-think our website to better reflect 21st century literacies.

Based on our goal setting and planning, we hired a web design company and spent 12 months developing our website with them. We see our website, journal and conference as key mechanisms to ground BCTELA and focus our energies.

We used our Fall 2008 conference as an opportunity to explicitly draw attention to our professional development and student learning focus. We now highlight

teacher inquiry and theory-informed practice as a critical components of conference sessions, journal submissions and work with keynote speakers to integrate our organization's direction within their presentations.

We have spent time looking at the structure and sustainability of the Executive. Based on our reflections we have committed to and participate in yearly retreats where we reflect on the past 12 months, continue to build our collective vision, and focus our efforts on no more than 4 organizational goals at a time. BCTELA's executive structure is now based on partners within portfolios.

The Executive met this past month for our 2009 retreat and identified four goals for the coming year:

- ◆ increase connection and communication between members

- ◆ promote and support teacher and student learning
- ◆ continue to build capacity and sustainability within the Executive
- ◆ continue to build and sustain relationships with other groups

Central to the accomplishment of these goals is connecting with teachers around our province. Some strategies that we have identified include: partnering with school districts outside the Lower Mainland to offer regional conferences, adding a position/portfolio to the BCTELA Executive that focuses on regional conferences and Local Specialist Associations, and making our website and journal more interactive. To help us achieve these goals we intend to develop a new journal format and link journal articles to an interactive forum on our website. Stay tuned for further updates!

"An Ever-Changing Practice"

by Matt Rosati

This month, we are excited to be releasing the Fall 2009 edition of *English Practice*. But don't wait by the mailbox for this one because instead you will find it in your email inbox. Last June, the BCTELA executive voted unanimously to follow the lead of so many other PSA journals and move to an exclusively online format. This new format will have lots of benefits for all of us. For the executive, an online format will be much less expensive to produce and will be a huge reduction in our eco-footprint.

The best part of our new journal, however, is how well we hope it will serve English

teachers in British Columbia. Though the first online journal will look very similar to our traditional version, we have big plans! In future editions, we hope to take full advantage of a virtual community and include functions that bring teachers into conversations about the articles we publish in *English Practice*.

We have such a great website (www.bctela.ca), and we want to use its full capabilities. We will begin archiving and indexing articles and editions of *English Practice* online so that educators can have access to our rich repository of research-based practices. We will also use the flexibility of our new format to allow our

editors to make connections for readers to previous articles and editions. We'll point out that a particular article about assessment may have a strong relationship to a previous article or that a contributor has also written past articles for *English Practice*. But our most exciting feature will involve . . . you!

Too many great ideas and insights are only shared among school-based colleagues and friends. Soon, we will plan to tap into your perspectives through online forums. These forums will allow readers to post feedback to articles in *English Practice*, to query contributors, and to participate in online dialogs

about teaching and learning.

As you know, our fall conference is all about engagement and "Asking the Right Questions." We are pleased to be able to make such important pedagogical foundations part of our PSA journal. We hope that you will find our new format and the opportunity to better engage with our content, and with other professionals, helpful tools in your teaching. We look forward to enhancing our service to you, and, as always, hope to support your learning and learning.

Warm Regards,
Matt Rosati for Joanne Panas
and the entire BCTELA
Executive Committee

BCTELA & ERAC: An Exchange

by Leyton Schnellert, Joan Kloss and Linda Bennie, Learning Resource Evaluation Services, Educational Resource Acquisition Consortium (ERAC)

1. The ERAC website

BCTELA approves of the revised wording for ERAC's *Recommended Novel Catalogue* and for ERAC's "Not Selected" Novels. It was suggested that some members might not know who their district contact is and not realize that the name can be found under "contacts" in the drop down menu.

District contacts are easily found under "Contacts". When formally requested by the ERAC District Contact, ERAC will provide the evaluation data for a specific "Not Selected" novel to address an issue with the use of the novel in the district. As noted, ERAC has received only one formal request in the last twelve months.

2. Teacher submissions of titles

BCTELA does not have the time/resources to act as a filter for teacher submissions. The current process of completing the required submission form and submitting it to a district contact for approval discourages busy teachers from submitting. It is likely that many district contacts are equally busy. We agreed to take forward to ERAC the idea of a link on the website where teachers could submit.

There is a novel submission form on the ERAC website that teachers can use and we are getting some teacher submissions from around the province. ERAC encourages BCTELA to promote this novel identification opportunity to its members to address their interests and needs.

3. The "Not Selected" list

This is still a concern. Although the preamble is much clearer as to intent, the idea of a "Not Selected" list still carries the connotation of something being hidden. We agreed to take forward to ERAC the suggestion that there be *no* "Not Selected" list. Reasons for removing it included the notion that books that don't even make it to review because they are "vetted" are in a better position than

those that made "the first cut" and then were not selected. It was also pointed out that there is no publicly accessible "not selected" list for any other kind of learning resource. It was acknowledged that ERAC would need to keep such a list for their own use so that books are not re-reviewed without good reason.

There is an explanatory piece on the website clarifying that not all novels evaluated by reviewers end up on the recommended list and "non selection" does not mean the novel should not be used. Teachers use their professional judgment to make decisions for their situation.

4. Evaluator training

The concern was raised that some evaluators may allow personal beliefs to cloud their objectivity. We mentioned that ERAC has included a section on evaluator bias in the new on-line training course in order to try to address this. We also discussed the option of giving a novel to another pair of evaluators if one pair can't reach agreement. Currently we recommend not selecting the title in these instances.

ERAC has moved to online training of evaluators and the training includes a piece on evaluator bias. Occasionally we have pairs who can't reach agreement and Linda or I facilitate discussion between the evaluators. If we can't reach agreement the novel is not selected at that time and may be sent out to another pair of evaluators.

5. Changes to the call for evaluators

Teacher-Librarians have lobbied successfully to be a part of all BCTF committees. BCTELA and ERAC agreed to amending the criteria in the call for evaluators to reflect the requirement that those applying state how they are currently choosing and using novels in a classroom situation (the pedagogical piece). This would then allow Teacher-Librarians who meet the criteria to be eligible to be chosen.

In conjunction with the BCTF we added wording to the call that more clearly identified the kind of classroom experience and expertise we

were looking for in novel evaluators. The wording is such that it includes Teacher-Librarians.

6. The evaluation form

BCTELA would like to see the "Possible Uses" descriptor boxes removed and a section added to the annotation called "Suggestions for Classroom Use".

This is no longer in the checklist "descriptors" section. There is a now a separate section in the annotation called "Suggestions for Classroom Use".

7. Future directions

BCTELA recommends that ERAC pursue the evaluation of graphic novels. Members of the executive are willing/able to provide expertise in developing additional criteria to address the visual components. BCTELA extended an invitation to ERAC to be involved in the Fall PSA day.

A most enjoyable experience!

Both parties agreed that, funding permitting, we would like to meet again in 6 months.

ERAC met with BCTELA members with expertise in graphic novels to learn more about this format. A BCTELA member was contracted to write a report on choosing and evaluating graphic novels and this report has been used to develop evaluation criteria and training on graphic novels evaluation. At our meeting BCTELA expressed concern that a call had not gone out, with specific criteria, for graphic novel evaluators. At this time ERAC has simply asked currently trained novel evaluators to self-identify if they have used graphic novels and/or feel comfortable evaluating them. We plan to send out a small number of graphic novels (approximately 12 -14) in the upcoming Feb. - May 2009 review cycle. The evaluation results will be reviewed by the graphic novels focus group to ensure that the criteria and process are meeting our needs. We will use the results to review training and for quality control in terms of evaluating graphic novels.

Conference at a glance

Thursday

9:00-3:00 pm

Choice of 9 sessions

Buffet lunch

Our expanded conference format includes a full day of research presentations by leading academics.

7:00-9:00 pm

Wine & cheese

Featured speaker—

Jeff Wilhelm

Kick off your conference with an after-dinner wine & cheese event, followed by a presentation from one of today's most inspiring and accessible literacy educators, Jeff Wilhelm.

Friday

9:00-3:15 pm

Choice of 18 sessions

Plated lunch with

NCTE President-Elect

Carol Jago or spoken word poet Shane Koyczan

Friday features a choice of eighteen engaging two-hour sessions with presenters from BC and beyond. Lunch-time speakers will inform, provoke, and inspire you during your plated lunch.

Saturday

9:00-3:00 pm

Choice of 3 full-day

institutes

Buffet lunch

Saturday offers three full-day institutes with some of the biggest names in literacy education. This is your opportunity to immerse yourself in a specific topic and come away with a deeper understanding of language arts education.

Asking the right questions: Engaging today's learners

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Northwest Regional Conference, October 22-24, 2009

THURSDAY Research Pre-Conference

Morning
2 90-minute sessions

Lunch
Buffet

Afternoon
90-minute session

Evening
Wine and cheese
Featured speaker
Jeff Wilhelm

FRIDAY Breakout Sessions

Morning
2-hour breakout sessions

Lunch
Plated lunch with
featured speaker

Afternoon
2-hour breakout sessions

SATURDAY Full-Day Institutes

Morning
3 themed institutes

Lunch
Buffet

Afternoon
Institutes continue

Fee schedule

THURSDAY Research Pre-Conference

THURSDAY EVENING Wine & Cheese*

FRIDAY Breakout Sessions

SATURDAY Full-Day Institutes

\$125

\$195

\$275

\$125

Reduced rate for pre-service teachers only:

\$95

\$150

\$200

\$95

*Thursday Evening Wine & Cheese with Jeff Wilhelm included with Thursday Research Pre-Conference or Friday registration. Seating is limited, so register early to take advantage of this special event!

Conference fee includes a one-year membership to BCTELA.

Our cancellation policy:

Cancellations may be made until Thursday, October 15th, 2009, 11pm. After that date, a \$60 non-refundable cancellation fee will be levied. The fee will be applied against membership in the BCTELA for 2009-2010.

To register, go to
www.bctela.ca

Registration will
open May 1, 2009.

Delta Burnaby Hotel and Conference Centre
4331 Dominion Street, Burnaby, BC V5G 1C7

Reservations www.deltaburnabyhotel.com/gfbcte • Phone 1-604-453-0750

Ask for the BCTELA conference room rate of \$138 (available until September 22, 2009).

Ample free parking across from the hotel.

Asking the right questions: Engaging today's learners

BC TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS—AN AFFILIATE OF THE BC TEACHERS' FEDERATION

**BCTELA presents
the 2009
Northwest
Regional
Conference
of the National
Council of Teachers
of English (NCTE)**

October 22-24



The NCTE Northwest Regional Conference brings together educators who are committed to teaching practices that respect and engage diverse learners. Come join the conversation with teachers, thinkers and scholars from British Columbia, Oregon, Alberta, Montana, Saskatchewan, Washington, Wyoming, Idaho, Yukon and Northwest Territories, Alaska and beyond!

Featuring:



**Jeff
Wilhelm**



**John
Golden**



**David
Booth**



**Carol
Jago**



**Shelly Stagg
Peterson**



**Beverly Ann
Chin**



**Sharon
Jeroski**



**Susan
Close**



**Kathleen
Gregory**



**Carl
Leggo**



**Faye
Brownlie**



**Sue
Montabello**

To register, go to
www.bctela.ca
Registration will
open May 1,
2009.