

# Leila Christenbury Receives Two Awards

July 2008

## **2008 NCTE JAMES N. BRITTON AWARD**

*Retracing the Journey: Teaching and Learning in an American High School* by Leila Christenbury has been chosen to receive the 2008 James N. Britton Award. The award is sponsored by the Conference on English Education (CEE) of the National Council of Teachers of English.

The James N. Britton Award is given to encourage English Language teacher development, consistent with the major goal of CEE, by promoting reflective inquiry in which teachers raise questions about teaching and learning in their own teaching/learning settings. It is given annually to exemplary studies published in any format.

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## **2008 NCTE DAVID H. RUSSELL AWARD FOR DISTINGUISHED RESEARCH IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH**

*Retracing the Journey: Teaching and Learning in an American High School* by Leila Christenbury, published in 2007 by Teachers College Press, has been chosen to receive the David H. Russell Award for Distinguished Research in Teaching for 2008. This award, among the most prestigious of National Council of Teachers of English awards, is made annually to “published research in English and the teaching of English” during the 5 years prior to January 1st of the award.

The Russell Committee noted that: A longtime English educator and author of an influential methods text, *Making the Journey*, Christenbury boldly returned to the high school classroom to practice what she has preached. Placing her experience in a historical context, she unflinchingly records her struggles-reporting as many failures as successes. Among the new difficulties she found since she had last taught high school were the pernicious influences of the culture of testing which have either created or reinforced a disconnect between schooling and learning. She found too many of her students unwilling to connect to her carefully chosen material even before the state test, and, then, following it, it was clear that most were finished for the year with any effort at all despite the fact that the material on offer was even more engaging and the assignments potentially more involving. She also had some wonderful moments, but this is not the kind of hero narrative that people make movies about.

Her reflections on her experience and their implications for teachers and teacher educators make this an exemplary example of the Distinguished Research in the Teaching of English that the Russell Award seeks to honor.