



# Virginia Association of Teachers of English

## Winter 2003

The Newsletter  
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# The Needle's Eye

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### **From the editor**

In this last issue of 2003, we want to recognize all the hard work of individuals who have been supporting VATE during the past year and welcome our new officers. So this issue will introduce your new officers as well as highlight some of the sessions at the Fall conference.

Because VATE is a voluntary organization, it is sometimes difficult to get active participation on the board. Although the membership continues to remain stable, the participation in running the organization is sometimes not as robust as we would like. The membership runs from January to December of each year, with dues being \$15.00 for active teachers and \$5.00 for students. The Board meets every other month, and we try to rotate the location to encourage attendance as much as possible. The Board meetings are open to the entire membership, and we welcome anyone who is interested to come join in our discussions. You can get the exact dates, times, and locations from the website - <http://www.vate.org>

Although the annual conference is our main event of the year, we also sponsor a mini-grant and annual awards. Our Virginia Bulletin is a refereed journal that is held in high esteem by the national organization.

On a personal note, this is my introduction as the new editor of The Needle's Eye.



# VATE Officers for 2004

## President - Jan Suppa-Friedman

jdsfriedman@aol.com

**Janice Suppa-Friedman** is a retired teacher of secondary language arts and a reading specialist with 33 years of classroom experience. Currently working as an educational consultant, Janice calls herself a “retread” and continues to present at workshops and conferences in Virginia and throughout the U.S. Janice is the recipient of more than a dozen awards, fellowships, and grants. She has written articles for several publications, the most recent being the spring issue of the *Virginia English Bulletin*. “I became involved with VATE in 1990. The friendships, ties, and connections to positive professionalism motivated me to continue. Enjoying my work with the executive board, I moved from NATE, as local affiliate vice-president and president, to Secondary Member-at-Large, to NCTE Achievement in Writing Awards Va. State Coordinator for six years, to NCTE liaison, to Vice-President, and President-elect. Fellow board members continually encouraged me, and, generally, I came away from every board meeting invigorated to become better in my profession. Volunteering for VATE is ‘touching the future’ and helping and encouraging the next generation of English teachers. VATE has helped me see a connection between being a teacher and a leader. It has helped me to recognize the need for collaboration and the importance of collegiality. Teachers must continue to learn from and support one another in those things that will enrich our practices. I firmly believe the more we give to, the more we gain from our profession. I encourage all of you to become active in your local affiliates. You will find your work a rewarding experience!”



## President-Elect - unfilled position

The President-Elect plans this coming year’s conference and determines where next year’s conference will be held. (If you are interested, please contact Nancy Moskay-Vadersen).

## Vice-President - Hood Frazier

Chapman Hood Frazier is currently an Associate Professor of English Education at Longwood University and is a published poet and writer. His work has appeared in the *English Journal*, *College English*, *The Virginia Quarterly* and other small press publications. His students at Longwood University have participated in the “Poetry Hit Squad” which is a student organization that does innovative poetry workshops in area schools and has presented at NCTE. In addition, he has taught at Murray High School, a nontraditional public high school for “at risk” students, Southside Virginia Community College, and the University of Maine at Presque Isle.



## Past-President - Nancy Moskay-Vadersen

nsmoskwa@vbcps.k12.va.us

Nancy’s official job title is Mathematics & Science Academy Advisor at Ocean Lakes High School in Va. Beach. She employs her English teaching skills each day as she works with the Academy seniors on their written components and on their presentations to the faculty and students for their Academy senior project. After 30 years in the English classroom, she finds this a unique experience and one that challenges the left side of her brain!





## Technology in Language Arts

Our society is moving rapidly from an industrial or manufacturing-based society into an information or knowledge economy. Because the Internet is driving our new economy and our way of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, I think we would all agree that it is critical that our students be able to demonstrate technology proficiency. A stated goal of the NCLB program is "to assist every student in crossing the digital divide by ensuring that every student is technologically literate by the time the student finishes the eighth grade."

There is much anecdotal evidence to show that the maximum benefits of technology occur when there is a seamless integration of technology throughout the education process. Technology can help create a rich environment for learning, but this potential depends upon the teacher's ability to integrate the technology into every day classroom activities. Integration requires a great deal of effort by the teacher. However, a review of relevant research to justify strategies for effective technology integration shows mounting research that educational technology can have a positive effect on student achievement (Honey, 2002; Valdez et.al., 2000).

All existing Virginia Standards of Learning integrate basic technology skills with the standards within each of the core content areas. Until last year, students were tested to demonstrate their technology proficiency. Due to state fiscal constraints, the Computer/Technology test was deleted from the state assessment program. Consequently, there is no formal system for measuring whether or not students can demonstrate the use of technology skills or information literacy skills. The Virginia Department of Education is seeking input from school systems and content areas teachers and specialists on how we can best measure students' proficiency.

One way to begin looking at this topic in Language Arts is to develop a list of criteria for students to demonstrate information literacy and technology proficiency. If we could determine what naturally fits into the scope and sequence of our Virginia Standards of Learning, the list would help curriculum writers as well as divisions as they begin looking at portfolio adoption or other methods of measurement.

We would like to begin a dialogue (by email) of K-12+ language arts teachers who would be willing to look at their standards and their curriculum and make some suggestions about the integration of technology. If you are interested, please contact Sharon Hurwitz at [shurwitz@sbo.hampton.k12.va.us](mailto:shurwitz@sbo.hampton.k12.va.us)

### **Virginia English Bulletin: Call for Manuscripts Spring Deadline - April 1st**

The Virginia English Bulletin invites you to submit articles, essays, poems, or reviews for the magazine, which is fully refereed. Manuscripts should be typewritten, double-spaced, and submitted by email attachment when possible. Microsoft Word is preferred, but other programs are acceptable. Please include a short biographical sketch including the name of your school, position, and a brief statement about your professional life, as well as your mailing address. The editor reserves the right to modify manuscripts to fit length and language considerations.

Mailed manuscripts should be sent to  
Carolyn Mathews, Radford University, P.O. box 6935, Radford, VA 24142.  
email address: [cmathews@radford.edu](mailto:cmathews@radford.edu)

Poetry submission should be sent Attention: Poetry editor: B. Chelsea Adams or  
emailed to Chelsea at [bmadams@radford.edu](mailto:bmadams@radford.edu)



**McDougal Littell - Jo Eggers - (540) 254-1984**

jo\_eggers@hmco.com

Emphasizing reading comprehension, writing, and thinking skills, their 6-12 *Interactive Reader Plus* features a literature program that works with struggling readers.

**Newsweek - Barbara Lundberg - (888)639-8589**

barbara.lundberg@newsweek.com

Newsweek's English program allows students to use authentic non-fiction writing to become better readers and writers. The special program guide, *English: Using Newsweek to Improve Reading, Writing, and Vocabulary Skills* contains worksheets that can be used with any article in **Newsweek**, challenging students to hone their skills.

**Pearson Learning Group - Betty Amory - (757)491-9152 betty.**

amory@pearsonlearning.com

Featuring textbooks for grades 6-12 that are correlated to SOL remediation for NCLB sub-groups, Pearson also provides special education programs and SOL remediation programs. Their Pacemaker curriculum and *QuickReads* program are two of their most notable. Many schools in Virginia are eligible for reduced rates because of FEMA identification.

**Perfection Learning - Chris Blaum - (804) 368-0343**

cblaum@plconline.com

These 6-12 resources provide a literature anthology series and teacher resources that focus on Shakespeare, drama, and speech.

**Tests for High Standards - John Anderson - (804)355-5489**

ja@tfhs.net

This vendor features 3 different testing products to improve SOL achievement through diagnosis and remediation: Grade-Level Tests, Simulation Tests, and Student Achievement Booklets.

**Touchstones Discussion Project - (800) 456-6542**

www.touchstones.org

This non-profit organization provides a literature anthology that focuses on the Socratic method and provides teachers with a guide for leading the discussion. (The sessions on Socratic method were so crowded I couldn't get in the door!)

**Union Creek Communications - Mary Stiles - (828) 488-3596**

info@rookieguide.com

After teaching English for 30 years in North Carolina, Mary Stiles wrote the book, *A Rookie's Guide to Research* with Barbara Mills. Now in its third edition, it makes teaching the research paper easier than ever before!

**Chuck Miller- Executive Secretary**

cmillercrz@cs.com

Chuck has been teaching English in Virginia for 27 years, 24 of them at J.T. Henley Middle School in Albemarle County. He has been a member of the VATE executive board since 1988. He is a past president of VATE and now serves as the Executive Secretary. It is to Chuck you send any questions about membership.

**Treasurer - Dr. Leila Christenbury**

lchriste@vcu.edu

Leila is a former high school English teacher who began as a VATE affiliate leader in Roanoke, Virginia. She has been treasurer of VATE, on and off, since 1979. The former president of NCTE and former editor of English Journal, she teaches in the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond and just completed a spring semester teaching English 11 in a large suburban school district. The author of Making the Journey (second edition, 2000, Heinemann), she is currently on leave from VCU and teaching in the English Department, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.



## VATE Membership Update

### Have you renewed for 2004?

The VATE membership runs on the calendar schedule - from January to December. If your mailing label does not say 2004, then it is time for you to renew your membership.

Two ways to renew:

First, you can renew through your local affiliate. By joining your local affiliate, you support that organization and you automatically become a member of VATE. For more information on local affiliates, log onto [www.vate.org](http://www.vate.org).

Second, you can renew through VATE directly. Send the following information with a check for \$15.00 to the executive secretary, Chuck Miller.

Please include your Name, address, phone number, eMail, school address.

Chuck Miller,  
Executive Secretary  
1417 Birchwood Dr., Crozet, VA 22932



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# Conference 2003 Highlights

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The Virginia Association of Teachers of English held their 34<sup>th</sup> annual conference at the Virginia Beach Resort Hotel and Conference Center in sunny Virginia Beach on October 17-19, 2003. Almost 300 participants and presenters “Unit(ed) on the Challenging Shores.”

The challenges of state mandated tests, the federal “No Child Left Behind Act,” and the increasing accountability for us educators and our schools only compelled us to unite. If we are to maintain our passion for teaching and love for the classroom, teachers needed to encourage and learn from each other.

A total of 47 sessions were offered on Friday and Saturday. Model sessions such as “Differentiating Writing Instruction,” “Poetry in Progress: Mini Lessons and Management Tips for Writing and Reading Poetry,” “Reading Intervention in Middle School Classrooms,” “Written Expression: Revision Strategies That Work,” and “Balanced Literacy Instruction for Secondary Students” addressed the kinds of resources and ideas effective teachers draw upon in these challenging times. Sample sessions such as “Connecting Literature and Life: Literary Theory in the Secondary Classroom,” “Functions of Imagery,” “Improv Basics for Classroom and Beyond,” “Thinking Outside the Box: Writing on the Chair,” and the “Socratic Seminar” showed how teachers can maintain creativity in the classroom and still address mandated objectives. Some sessions such as the “Round Table Discussion on VA Sols,” “Weighing the Pros and Cons of Applying for National Board Certification,” and “Collaboration: A Lifeboat for Teachers and Students” exemplified how we can continue to nurture one another and offer insight and encouragement to teachers both experienced and new to our profession. These were some of the sessions teachers could attend and interact with one another.

Teri Lesesne, from Sam Houston State University, was our NCTE co-sponsored speaker. Teri spoke at the Friday opening session. She entertained us with “Making the Match: The Right Book for the Right Reader at the Right Time.” Drawing from the research of well knowns, such as Piaget, Maslow, and Kohlberg, Teri proved to us how one book doesn’t fit all readers. At the Saturday luncheon, Sara Holbrook amused us with her stories interwoven with poetry from her works as she hopped around the entertained audience of 154. Later that evening, the teachers were treated to the one act version of William Luce’s Tony-Award winning play, *The Belle of Amherst*, as Emily Dickinson came magically to life. Mary Wadkins, sponsored by Playwrights Performance Theatre, developed a dynamic character that was bright, mischievous, witty, compassionate, and loving. Mary as Emily was a delight for all the teachers of English who came away from the performance with newly discovered knowledge of one of America’s greatest poets. Finally, those teachers lucky enough to attend Sunday’s brunch howled as storyteller Una MacGillivray showed her deep connection to the fun and enchantment of this folk art.

In addition to learning, sharing, and being entertained, a handful of educators were honored for their special achievements. At the Saturday night banquet, Nancy Moskway received the heralded Foster Gresham Award for her achievements in the field of education. The Virginia English Bulletin gives awards every two years to outstanding articles written by classroom teachers. This year’s recipients were Hunt Lyman for Best Article, Jean Hamm for VEB Best Teaching Idea award, and Christopher Jones for VEB Honorable Mention award. VATE also recognizes educators who have given service to others. This year’s recipients of the VATE Service Award were Susan Kary and Karyn Stone.

The VATE 2003 conference was a weekend to remember. Teachers were encouraged to share their challenges and solutions to them. Keynote speakers taught and entertained us. Most of all, the conference brought us together in fellowship.

Janice Suppa-Friedman

VATE President-elect



## Conference Vendors

A conference just wouldn't be a conference without vendors. Not only do they help finance the conference, but their presence makes the conference more enjoyable and more informative. We can stroll in and out of the vendors' booths, see new materials, test new programs, ask questions, and make contacts. This year's conference vendors provided a welath of goodies and information, so we wanted to make sure you could all benefit from their information and connections. Feel free to contact them if you have questions.

**AMSCO School Publications, Inc.- Jack Butka - (800)875-4944**

[jjb6946@yahoo.com](mailto:jjb6946@yahoo.com)

AMSCO's materials are being used by the Virginia Department of Education to train teachers to teach Reading, Literature, and Research. Their Vocabulary books have been around forever!

**Casterbridge Tours -Pauline Green (800) 522-2398**

[pgreen@casterbridgetours.com](mailto:pgreen@casterbridgetours.com)

Bring Classroom Teaching Alive when you sponsor an educational travel trip for your students. Every group travels as its own independent entity and the group leaders can design their programs to incorporate material that is specifically being taught in the classroom.

**Great Source Education Group - Janet Shelly - (800) 289-4490**

[janet\\_shelly@hmco.com](mailto:janet_shelly@hmco.com)

Great Source provides supplementary programs and resource materials for grades K-12 as well as after school programs, summer school programs, and reading and writing programs. Some of their featured language arts materials include *Writers Inc.*, *Writers Express*, *All Write*, and *Write Source 2000*.

**Holt, Rinehart and Winston - Linwood Powers - (804) 740-1370**

[lpowers@hrw.com](mailto:lpowers@hrw.com)

The *Elements of Literature* and *Elements of Language* series, 6-12, continue to provide quality literature and exceptional teacher resources. Their accompanying website gives electronic resources correlated to their textbooks.

**Houghton Mifflin - AnnMarie Oakley - (757)564-3283**

[annmarie\\_oakley@hmco.com](mailto:annmarie_oakley@hmco.com)

This K-8 textbook company features reading and language arts programs. Their 3-8 reading intervention programs, *Soar to Success*, is a fully inclusive inservice program.

The Needle's Eye  
**Sharon Hurwitz, Editor**  
**7612 Bridgette Lane**  
**Norfolk, VA 23518**

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“The Needle’s Eye doth supply the thread that runs so true.”

**Call for News items**

If you have news items related to teaching English and language arts  
that you would like to share with fellow English teachers,  
please send them to  
[shurwitz@sbo.hampton.k12.va.us](mailto:shurwitz@sbo.hampton.k12.va.us)