



VATE VOICES

Reading Our Past, Writing Our Future

By Sarah L. Tanner-Anderson, VATE President

Greetings from Chicago!

Here at O'Hare, as I wait for my flight back to Richmond, I find myself reflecting on the events of the past few days. First, I must comment on how proud I am to be a part of VATE—I saw so many of our members at the NCTE Convention, and boy did we rock the Windy City!

After traveling in late on Thursday, Sandy Brodell, Tori Otstot, and I shared a room at the historic Palmer House—what a lovely hotel! On Friday, we attended incredibly dynamic sessions throughout the day. I had to participate in a mock defense of my dissertation proposal via Skype at the same time as an affiliate representative meeting; this was an epic adventure in itself, to be sure. Thankfully, Jan Suppa-Friedman represented VATE at that meeting. I hurried over to the Chicago Hilton for the director's business meeting—what an experience!—and was reinvigorated by the passion and fortitude with which my fellow English educators discussed NCTE resolutions on a number of pertinent policy issues.

After enjoying a delicious Chicago-style pizza and an episode of the new, hit show *Grimm*, we hit the hay early on Friday night. The next morning, I graciously accepted three of the four NCTE awards that Virginia won at the affiliate breakfast. In addition to Tori Otstot winning the Affiliate Leadership Development Award, we racked in the Multicultural Award, the Website Award, and were one of two winners of the Affiliate of Excellence Award! Hurrah for VATE! We enjoyed sessions throughout the day, including one detailing ways in which to cultivate young leaders, starting at the college level. For lunch, Sandy and I enjoyed (and then later regretted our enjoyment of) Al's Beef—Italian beef sandwiches—a true Chicago experience!

Saturday evening, we took in the beauty of the city; Chicago was decked out in holiday spirit, which left a smile on my face and warmth in my heart. I truly enjoyed my time in the Windy City, sharing a love for English/language arts with my fellow educators from all across this fabulous country!

Thank You For Reading

By Tori Otstot, VATE Voices Editor

Hi readers! First, thanks for reading VATE Voices, formerly known as The Needle's Eye. This is my first issue as editor, and I have some big shoes to fill, as Sara Zeek has been doing an incredible job for many years. As a Leadership Development Award winner at the most recent NCTE conference, my new role in the affiliate will be taking on this publication (with plenty of support from my fellow board members and Sara, of course). Throughout coming issues, you'll learn more about me and how I became involved in VATE. Please feel free to contact me with questions and submissions! And, again, thanks for reading!

American Shakespeare Center Teacher Seminar

The American Shakespeare Center's Teacher Seminar for February (covering *Much Ado* and *Richard III*) is fully funded by a grant, which means we can cover tuition (including two free study guides!) and travel cost for everyone. The Center would love to have as many VATE people attend as possible!

More information can be found here: <http://www.americanshakespearecenter.com/v.php?pg=353>

I Teach

E. Gilbert
June, 2011

I teach not only to be **R**ewarded,
But to see the **R**ewards.

I teach not only to be **S**uccessful,
But to see the **S**uccess.

I teach not only to be **D**ifferent,
But to make a **D**ifference.

I teach not only to be **C**hallenged,
But to be **C**hallenging

I teach not only to **E**ducate
But to be **E**ducated

I teach not only to be **B**lessed
But to be a **B**lessing

I teach not only because it is a calling of **G**od
But it is who I am.

I Teach.

Old Dominion University's Composition Program is pleased to announce a call for papers for our annual Spring Writing Conference (March 24-25, 2011). The conference will be held in Webb Center on campus here in Norfolk, Virginia and will be attended by writing teachers and scholars from both secondary and college-level writing classrooms. The complete call for papers can be found on our website at http://composition.digitalodu.com/writingconference/2012_CFP.pdf.

Also, general registration for conference attendees will begin on January 16th. Forms can be found on our web site (there will be a registration link on the home page beginning January 16th), and more information can be found at <http://composition.digitalodu.com/writingconference/information.html>.

Looking Ahead, Preparing for VATE's Tomorrow

By Kirk Dolson, VATE President-Elect

Although it's only been a few months since VATE's last annual conference, plans are well underway for the 2012 VATE Conference. Mark your calendars for October 26-28, 2012, for VATE's 98th Annual Conference. This year's conference will be held in Richmond, Virginia, at the Hilton Richmond Hotel and Spa located in Richmond's upscale Short Pump area. The hotel is modern, luxurious, and equipped with more than enough space for an extraordinary conference.

The theme for the conference is "Knowing, Nurturing, and Educating Students as Linguistically Diverse Learners." Consider how we as educators "know" the students with whom we interact daily. How do we "nurture" their learning as individual students, and finally, how does this "knowing" and "nurturing" help us in "educating" our students while meeting their diverse linguistic needs? Teachers within all curricular areas assist students in finding success, so maybe you know a teacher outside the English classroom whose students access difficult texts with ease or write while employing sharp analytic skills therefore modeling the concept of "teaching reading and writing across the curricula." Let's take time to celebrate the diversities within our students, ourselves, and our academic disciplines and recognize that our students' successes are a collaborative effort.

Thus far, we have a diverse lineup for the conference's speakers. Our luncheon speaker will be Dr. Teri Lesesne. Currently, Teri teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in young adult and children's literature at Sam Houston State University. Her latest book is *MAKING THE MATCH: THE RIGHT BOOK FOR THE RIGHT READER AT THE RIGHT TIME, GRADES 4-12*. A veteran middle school English teacher, Teri also has contributed to NCTE's *Voices in the Middle* and *English Journal*, as well as IRA's *The Reading Teacher* and *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*.

The banquet speaker will be internationally recognized author, speaker, and educator Rosalind Wiseman. Most notably known for her book *Queen Bees and Wannabes*, which was the basis for the 2004 film *Mean Girls*, Rosalind spends most of her time working with students, teachers, and parents on navigating through the social challenges of young adulthood. Much of her work centers on the effects of bullying and how social media has altered the social challenges students face in their daily lives. Rosalind can be seen frequently on CNN's *Anderson Cooper 360*, *Dateline NBC*, and *The Today Show* and is currently working on book geared towards helping male adolescents navigate through their young adult lives.

Finally, our brunch speaker will be author Meg Medina. Meg is a Latina author from Cuba who resides in VA. She has written both picture books and YA lit focusing on the Latino experience especially as it applies to biracial children. Her novel *MILAGROS: Girl from Away* and her picture book *Tia Isa Wants a Car* offer realistic representations of the diversity that makes up our commonwealth.

Of course one of the best parts of this conference will be its location. Richmond offers our commonwealth so much. Moreover, Richmond's newest area, Short Pump, offers upscale shopping and dining options. The conference hotel is within walking distance to the open-air Short Pump Town Center. This year's conference will also offer an opportunity to visit the Poe Museum as well as the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

Please plan on joining us this October. VATE looks forward to hosting you and your colleagues!

NCTE's Promising Young Writers

NCTE's Promising Young Writers Program is for students currently in the eighth grade. This year's theme is "Flash Back, Forge Ahead," and the deadline for submission is February 15, 2012. This year, submissions will be completed through an online program.

More information can be found here:

<http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/About/Awards/PYW/PYW2012/2012%20PYW%20Brochure.pdf>, or contact Virginia's Promising Young Writer's coordinator, Tori Otstot, at totstot@ycsd.york.va.us.

Last year, four Virginia students received Certificates of Recognition:

Isabella Ciambotti, Village School, Charlottesville
Caroline Heillbrun, Lake Braddock Middle School, Burke
Jacquelynn Powers, Woodbridge Middle School, Woodbridge
Sarah Rainey, Henley Middle School, Crozet

Annual VATE Conferences: "All About People and Always Will Be"

By Chuck Miller, VATE Executive Secretary

When our new **VATE Voices** editor Tori Otstot offered me the opportunity to write an article about the 2011 VATE conference for her inaugural issue, I was flattered, and I wanted very much to oblige. But, after a fun but hectic holiday season and returning to my classroom on January 2nd when much of the world was watching the Rose parade and various bowl games, I was feeling a bit drained of energy and inspiration. What could I write that might be meaningful to those who did not have the privilege of attending the conference, and what words did I have to offer those who had the experience of being with us in Staunton? Patricia Godbolt White of the Norfolk 17, the beautifully restored Stonewall Jackson Hotel, NCTE Past President Carol Jago, VATE's own National Book Award winner Kathryn Erskine, a night at American Shakespeare Center's Blackfriars Theater, New York Times best selling author Sharyn McCrumb...What would be my major take away from my participation in the 2011 conference and why should anyone care?

And then it came to me, and the answer was as simple as a slogan on the radio for the local bank at which my wife works, "It is all about people, and always will be." These words have always rung true for the VATE conference and the 2011 edition continued that tradition.

I will always remember that sunny and brisk autumn afternoon when a gregarious group of conference attendees boarded the Staunton Trolley for an afternoon at the Frontier Culture Museum. After touring the farms, we enjoyed wine, food, and fellowship, and we were all touched by Ms. White's story and her assertion that "No one is born a hero, but everyone is born to be a hero."

I will likewise always remember how VATE packed the playhouse for a performance of Henry V, and the look of enjoyment that was evident on everyone's face throughout the performance.

Sunday morning was especially rewarding. Even though I had to wake up at "0 dark thirty" (an especially daunting task after some late night post theater drinks) to drive Carol Jago to the Charlottesville airport for an early flight, I had a chance to "pick her brain" a bit as we discussed topics ranging from standardized testing to the television series, **The Wire**. When I returned to the Stonewall Jackson, I had the honor of hosting the brunch and spending some extra time with Sharyn McCrumb and her husband. I also enjoyed sharing conversation over waffles and omelettes with some VATE colleagues as well as my daughter and several friends from my community who are big Sharyn McCrumb fans.

Throughout the conference, in addition to the scheduled sessions and programs, lots of informal and impromptu professional networking was going on. Comparing lesson plans over a cup of coffee or exchanging classroom "war stories" at the hotel bar are as much a part of the VATE conference as any formal presentation. And, it is this personal connection that makes our conference unique and special. Sure, many of our school systems provide professional development opportunities and it is convenient to "surf the internet" for ideas, but none of those activities can begin to duplicate the feeling of camaraderie that one experiences at a VATE conference, the ultimate Professional Learning Community.

So, I invite and encourage you to join us at the Richmond Hilton Hotel and Spa the weekend of October 26-28 for the 2012 edition of the Virginia Association of Teachers of English annual conference. I look forward to seeing you there.



Virginia Association of Teachers of English Building Level Membership



The Virginia Association of Teachers of English is committed to enhancing the quality of the teaching of English and language arts in the Commonwealth. VATE encourages building principals and department chairs to “join our team” by purchasing a Building Level Membership for your English/Language Arts faculty. This saves teachers the individual yearly membership cost of \$25 each.

The benefits of a Building Level Membership are as follows:

- Full membership for all English faculty members (including eligibility for awards and mini-grants and voting privileges)
- A copy of each issue of **VATE Voices**, VATE’s quarterly newsletter, for each English faculty member
- All English faculty members may register for the annual conference at the member rate
- Two copies per building of each issue of **The Virginia English Bulletin**, VATE’s semi-annual juried professional journal that has relevant and timely teaching ideas with useful references written by educators
- School membership plaque



Virginia Association of Teachers of English Building Level Membership Application

School Name:

Contact Person:

Address:

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Building Level Membership: Only \$150!

Please send completed membership application, names and email addresses of department members, and a check made payable to: **VATE** to

Chuck Miller
VATE Executive Secretary
1417 Birchwood Drive
Crozet, VA 22932



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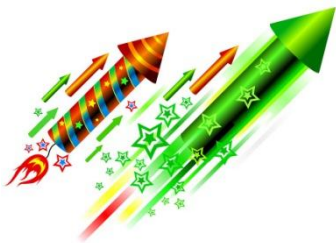


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My First NCTE Conference

By Tori Otstot

When our fearless leader, Sarah Tanner-Anderson, asked me to be VATE's nominee for NCTE's Leadership Development Award, I was excited and thankful for the opportunity to attend the conference.

Leading up to the conference, I spent time pouring over the online program, selecting as many sessions to attend as possible, and weighing the pros and cons of different sessions I wanted to attend that were offered at the same time. I arranged to stay with Sarah and another VATE member, Sandy Brodell, at the Palmer House, a gorgeous historical hotel near the "conference headquarters." I packed and re-packed, trying to leave as much room as possible for all the freebies I knew I could pick up at the conference. I wrote lesson plans and sub notes. On Thursday, November 17, I kissed my husband goodbye, taught a full day at school, and headed to the airport in the afternoon.

I arrived late on Thursday, so I didn't make it to pick up my packet and nametag until Friday morning. Sandy, Sarah, and I braved the frigid Chicago wind to walk several blocks to the Chicago Hilton Towers. Friday, I attended sessions on teaching non-fiction, getting kids moving with Shakespeare, and incorporating our students' literacies outside of the classroom into our classroom practices. In the evening, I attended the general session annual meeting with Sarah, which I understand now first-timers often skip. I would encourage you to attend; the meeting was inspirational for me as a new teacher. To see so many teachers gathered in one room who support the teaching of English literature and language and believe that teachers should be treated as professionals made me feel supported and gave me new vigor to finish the school year.

On Saturday morning, I attended the Affiliate Breakfast, where I was able to listen to a great keynote speaker and meet several other teachers from our affiliate region. What a great experience! I also received my award at this breakfast, and I was a witness to the recognition VATE received for being so effective at so many of things we do. On Sunday, I attended sessions on teaching poetry, expanding our students' thought processes through essay writing, and teaching reading across the curriculum to round out my conference experience.

While I know the conference falls right before the holidays and it might seem expensive, I really do encourage you to attend as many as possible! Your time will be jam-packed with useful presentations and tools to bring back to your classroom, and you will be re-energized as a teacher after spending time with people who know what you're going through on a daily basis and support you as a professional.



Virginia Association of Teachers of English

Please contact Chuck Miller at cmillercrz@roadrunner.com to update your email and post office address so that you will not miss a publication or announcement. Encourage others to join VATE online at www.vate.org.

VATE VOICES

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