



NYSEC NEWS

2015 65th Annual Conference

Featured Speaker

Laura Robb **Teaching from the Inside**

What makes Laura Robb an outstanding educator is the fact that she has dedicated her life to making other educators better. Her extensive writing about the world of teaching, including such books as *Smart Writing*, *Teaching Middle School Writers*, *Teaching Reading in Middle School*, and *Teaching Nonfiction Writing: a Practical Guide*, is grounded in her many years of teaching and close observation of how students learn. Those attending this year's NYSEC Conference will have the opportunity to listen to Laura speak about the world of teaching, particularly in middle schools, on the afternoon of October 15.

Speaking about her book *Teaching Middle School Writers*, Robb says she wanted to "come at the teaching of writing from the angle that matters most: students' perspective. They taught me what I needed to know to make this book live up to their passion for writing." Her transformative mentors in the 80s were Donald Graves, Lucy Calkins, and Donald Murray. Graves in *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work*, Calkins in *Lessons from a Child*, and Murray in *Writing to Learn* were keys for her in moving to the new paradigm that stressed the process of writing. Rather than simply give an assignment and expect that it be done well, teachers began to focus carefully on the craft of writing and how one puts a piece of writing together. As a result of this shift, professional development for teachers became more crucial than ever.

In her text *Teaching Reading in Middle School*, Robb makes the case that middle school is an ideal level for teaching because it is such a period of "significant academic, emotional, and social growth" and requires discovering what students know about reading so that proper mentoring can take place with strategies that really work.

Laura Robb has said that she "likes to live on the edge." For her, that is the cutting edge of the latest thinking in how to make students better readers and writers. Laura Robb's voice is welcomed at this year's NYSEC Conference: It is a voice that needs to be heard.

By Paul O'Brien, VP Middle

A LOOK AHEAD...

SAVE THE DATES

October 14-16, 2015

Annual NYSEC Conference



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President's Message



Reading is the Core

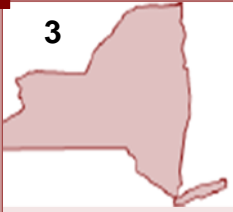
To begin to build a community of readers in my class, one of the first activities I do with my students each year is to share our reading histories so that we can



remember some favorite books or experiences from our pasts. I tell the kids about how

my mom used to read Dr. Seuss' *Are You My Mother?* to me at bedtime when I was young, how *Ramona the Pest* was never available in my elementary library because I used to renew it over and over, how Judy Blume's books taught me about growing up, and about the day I went to work late so I could finish *Memoir of a Geisha*. I show the kids these books when I talk about them, and my students are in disbelief that I still have these books and how old and worn some of them are. These are only a few of the milestones of my reading history. I can think of dozens more titles that have made me laugh out loud, question things I thought I believed, made me so angry I wanted to spit nails, or moved me to tears. Sadly, though, many students do not have such a rich reading past. Many of my 9th graders have to think all the way back to books like *Goodnight Moon* or *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* that someone read to them at home when they were little. Others, because they have no memory of being read to at home, remember being gathered in a circle on the "reading carpet" while a kindergarten teacher read to them. A large majority of these students have no pleasant reading experiences past the early school years. Unfortunately, once reading becomes a struggle, or ceases to be pleasurable because it's only a "school activity," kids lose their motivation for reading.

When they enter 9th grade, and I tell them my goal for the class is for them to return to reading, it's hard to convince them that this year in English won't be the same 'ole, same 'ole. Isn't it a shame, by 9th grade, when students are only 14 or 15 years old, that they have already decided that reading is hard, boring, stupid or useless? What is happening to kids that makes them go from looking forward to reading, or being read to by a loving family member or cherished teacher, to wanting to do anything else besides read? The answer to this question is two-fold.



President's Message (Continued)

First, once something becomes difficult, kids, like adults, are less likely to do it. As students begin to struggle with reading, they read less. Consider that one in six students who don't read at grade level by third grade will not graduate on time. That risk doubles for students from low-income households. These are quite telling statistics about the importance of the skill of reading on future academic success. This creates a vicious cycle; students who begin to struggle start to get frustrated. If students' skills are not adequate, texts gets harder and harder while their skill remains stagnant at best. Add on top of that, motivation wanes dramatically since the act of reading is so hard and frustrating. The equation looks like this: flat skills+ increased complexity + higher frustration = less reading and more apathy (best case) or hostility (worst case) toward reading. Skill drives will.

The second reason for this decline in reading is that the only reading most students are exposed to is academic reading, or books that teachers require them to read. These books are not usually of high interest to students, and are usually at the instructional, if not a frustration, level. Interest and difficulty aren't the only problems; at roughly 4-6 full-length texts in a school year, academic reading does not present enough volume to increase students' skills or motivation. Therefore, we are part of the problem as teachers are sending the message that only the books we require are meaningful, and those are unattainable, irrelevant, or boring. This creates a belief in students that, "Books are hard and don't have anything to do with me." While we can help kids appreciate the literature of F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Steinbeck and Ernest Hemingway, these books will probably not excite struggling or reluctant readers.

So what's the answer? Another formula: time + choice + access = improved skill and increase in will. That means allowing students time to read in class, allowing students to choose the books they will read, and access (ideally through a classroom library) to a large number of books. I also posit that teachers need to be knowledgeable about young adult literature. I can never read all the books my students choose; however, I can act as the reading expert. This means keeping current on the latest titles, authors, genres, award winners and the like in order to talk about books constantly. Immersing the students in an environment where books and reading are at the center, dare I say the core, increases dramatically the chances that students will read more.



President's Message (Continued)

Critics of this approach have told me, "Students won't read," or "They will just pretend to read." I counter with, "My students do read; I've seen it year after year."

I have seen in my own classroom the changes that choice in reading can make. I've never had kids ask me if they could read *Fahrenheit 451* silently for the whole period, but it happens frequently when students are reading what *they* choose. This is not to say that *Fahrenheit 451* should not be read in the classroom. In fact, I use that book in my classes virtually every year. The difference is, that's not the only book my students are reading. In addition to the classics, the canon or whatever other rigorous reading we're doing as a class, my students are also reading books of their choosing every day in class. This boosts the number of pages they read, makes them motivated to read, increases their reading skill because they are practicing the skill much more, and thus makes them even more motivated to read because they are finally unlocking the mystery to what has frustrated or bored them for years. Will drives skill.

When I began thinking about this year's conference theme and the speakers we would like to feature as our keynotes, I knew I wanted authors and professionals that had taught me so much about how and why students read and how to teach and encourage students to read more. **Chris Crutcher** is my favorite author to get reluctant teenagers, especially boys, to return to reading. His books like *Ironman*, *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes* and *Whaletalk* are so relatable to kids that they often are the "gateway books" that reel my students back in to reading. **Linda Rief**, author of *Read Write Teach* and *The Writer's-Reader's Notebook*, is an advocate of choice and the workshop approach and taught me how to have students respond to literature. **Laura Robb** is the author of over 18 books, including *Teaching Reading in Middle School*, a seminal text for me when I taught 8th grade, but is applicable at any grade level. And **Pam Allyn**, who is the author of many books on reading, the founding director of the global literacy initiative, LitWorld, and the creator of World Read Aloud Day. In addition to our esteemed keynote speakers, our conference will also feature two days of some of the best workshops delivered by creative and innovative educators. So please join us October 14-16 in Albany. Let's reignite a reading spark and carry that flame back to our students.

By Christine Zandstra

NYSEC President



NYSEC NEWS

Conference Overview

Wednesday

Oct. 14, 2015

**Early Registration
4:00-8:00 PM**

**Administrator/Supervisor
Networking Session
Victor Jaccarino
4:30-6:00 PM**

**The 2015 Conference
Committee is spearheaded by
Christine Zandstra, NYSEC
President, along with Marilyn
Norton, Conference Chair.**

**We would like to thank our
many hardworking
committee members.**

Thursday

Oct. 15, 2015

**Registration
7:00 a.m. - 12:30 PM
2:00-4:00 PM**

**Welcome and Opening
Remarks
Christine Zandstra
8:30-9:00 AM**

**Keynote Address
Chris Crutcher
9:00 - 10:00 AM**

**Workshop Sessions &
Publisher Exhibits
10:15 AM-12:30PM**

**Luncheon
12:45-1:45 PM**

**Keynote Address
Laura Robb
1:45-2:45 PM**

**Workshop Sessions &
Publisher Exhibits
3:00-4:00 PM**

**Keynote Address
Pam Allyn
4:15-5:15 PM**

**Cocktails and
Conversation
5:30-6:30 PM**

Dinner on your own

Friday

Oct. 16, 2015

**Registration
7:00 a.m. - 1:00 PM**

**NYSEC Annual President's Breakfast
and Business Meeting
7:30-8:30 AM**

**Keynote Address
Linda Rief
8:30-9:30 AM**

**Workshop Sessions
& Publisher Exhibits
9:45 AM-12:30 PM**

**Awards Luncheon
12:45 p.m.-3:00 PM**



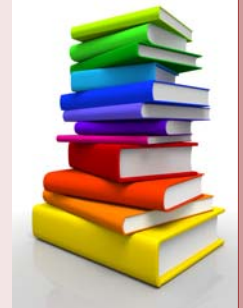
Program/Workshop Highlights

Graphic Novels: This Text is Not Yet Rated

Kjersti VanSlyke-Briggs, Rebecca Noreman and Larissa Orlando, SUNY Oneonta

Building Blocks to Support Google's 80/20 Philosophy in the Classroom

Kathleen Bellino, Julie Lee and Kathryn Nixon, Arlington CSD



Developing a One School-One Book Initiative

Edward Kemnitzer and Deja Berry, Massapequa Public Schools



Infusing Common Core Standards into Math

Michelle Osterhoudt, Oneonta Middle School

Getting to the Core of Argument Writing:

Using DBQs in Literature to Prepare for

The New Regents Exam in English

Molly Winter, The DBQ Project



I Hate Reading: Strategies Transforming Negative Self-Perceptions into Confidence

Justin Stygles, MSAD #17, Oxford Hills, ME



It's (Not Just) Elementary: Sharing Children's Literature with Adolescent Readers

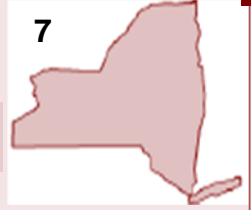
Patricia Rand, SUNY Albany

Using Survivor Testimony in Education:

The Past is Present

Christa Calkins, Campbell-Savona CSD





Program/Workshop Highlights

Build Skill-Nurture Will: Secondary Level Students Struggle with Common Core Reading Standards

Dr. Louisa Kramer-Vida, LIU Post

Pathways to “Writing Hope:” A Dispositional Approach to Teaching Writing in Secondary Schools

Nicole Sieben, SUNY Old Westbury

The Reading Crisis: Preparing Students for College Writing and Beyond

Gina Claywell, Murray State University



Reading Carefully With Creativity: Making Meaning While Making Art

Elizabeth Weiden-Philipbar, Yorktown CSD



Get Creative: Literature and the Mind Map

Daniel Weinstein, Great Neck South High School

English Class Transformed: How Writing Workshop Can Inform Reading Skills

Wendy Everard, Cazenovia High School

Engaging Student Writers through Poetry Out Loud

Dave Johnson, Teachers & Writers Collaborative

Reading U.S. History: Using Diverse Voices to Teach Core Literacy Skills

Aja LaDuke, Mary Lindner and Elizabeth Yanoff, The College of St. Rose





October 14-16, 2015
65th Annual NYSEC Conference
Reading is the Core: Building Skill

Reserve your room online today!



189 Wolf Road, Albany, NY 12205

Click on the link below for direct access to hotel reservation.

[http://www.marriott.com/meeting-event-hotels/group-corporate-travel/groupCorp.mi?
resLinkData=NYSEC](http://www.marriott.com/meeting-event-hotels/group-corporate-travel/groupCorp.mi?resLinkData=NYSEC)

NYSEC 2015 NYS English Council

Start date: 10/14/15

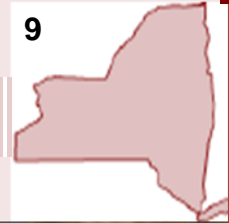
End date: 10/17/15

Last day to book: 10/5/15

Marriott hotel is offering a special group rate:

<http://www.nysecteach.org/2015-conference.html>





Light in the Darkness



When contention and confusion reign, it is good to go back to the heart of who we are and the potential that lies within. With testing and Common Core as front burner issues, it might be a good time to think about what we are capable of, even against great odds.

For a number of years when I was growing up, the O'Brien family would have a picnic on land that had been the homestead of my mother -- about 30 acres outside the village of Tomhannock. The old home gone, a small house had been built near the original site by family friends. The picnic took place on the lower land, which was separated from the house by a stream. There was no car bridge across the stream, just a small wooden walkway about three feet wide that traversed the 20-25 foot stream, which this day was flowing pretty well.

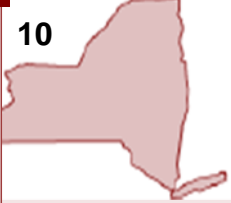
Shortly after we arrived to join the celebration -- my father had gone over early in the day to get everything set, I noticed my cousin Michael, maybe eleven at the time, who had been born blind, navigating around the uneven grounds with his walking guide cane. I approached his father and asked him if Michael would be safe. He laughed and said, "Michael will be fine-- don't worry about him."

And so day passed - good food and memorable stories and challenging games --into early evening and then many of the O'Briens walked up to the house for what was an Irish tradition - sitting around my brother's piano and singing Irish songs. And then it was almost ten, and people began to think of home. When the first person stepped out, she cried out, "Oh, my God, it is pitch dark out. Does anyone have a flashlight?" No one did, and as we headed down to the stream, there was only one thought on our minds -- how would we get across the water in the darkness?

When we reached the narrow walkway, we debated who would go first. From the other side came Michael's voice. "It's easy. Put your feet in the center, and walk straight. I will stand in the center at my end - just listen to my voice." And so, Michael, my blind cousin, who had mastered the walk during the day, guided those who could not see across the narrow bridge in the evening's darkness.

In the midst of so much intense educational debate, we need to keep our students in mind and realize that they have untapped power and ability that can bring light to our darkness.

By Paul O'Brien
V.P. Middle Level



A Noble Profession

By: Sally Ventura

Although we did not attend the NYSEC conference the year at which Taylor Mali was the keynote speaker, my husband and I attended his recent reading in Olean, NY, a reading made possible by a grant from the New York State Council of the Arts, and the efforts of the Olean Public Library and Jamestown Community College.

Not surprisingly, the auditorium was packed. Mali read his famous “What Teachers Make” and “The Impotence of Proofreading” along with several other poems, including “How Falling in Love is Like Having a Dog.” As he read each poem, the audience reacted with laughter, gasps, sighs and, at times, an awe-struck silence. The lyricism and sensitivity of his verse, along with his masterful performance skills so mesmerized the crowd that after the last word of each poem, the bursts of applause came after a delayed moment, a hesitation that made it obvious something great had happened.

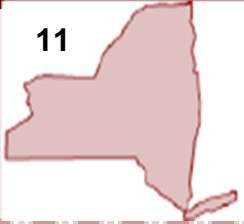
Mali’s mastery of the stage was highlighted when he mentioned that he would be the emcee this year for the national round of the Poetry Out Loud competition in Washington, DC. After someone informed him that there was student in the audience who went as far as the state level in Poetry Out Loud the previous year, Mali called the girl onto the stage, and she gave her recitation of the e e cummings poem, “i carry your heart” with stunning accuracy.

Not many celebrities would be willing to share the stage in the way that Mali did. It became clear then that the persona in his poetry are drawn from a real place. The voices in his work echo Mali’s celebration of poetry, teaching and humanity.

So too the applause at the end of his reading came from a real place, and I have never witnessed a more enthusiastic audience at a poetry reading. Anyone who is not familiar with his work can find “the most forwarded poem in the world” on YouTube. However, I would also suggest that you order a copy of his latest book, *The Bouquet of Red Flags*.

If the teaching profession had a poet laureate, there is no doubt that Taylor Mali would be named the first one. And there is no doubt, also, we’d let him keep that title throughout all of these challenging years.





NYSEC NEWS

Special Announcements

***Program Proposals have been extended
until June 30th, 2015***

<http://www.nysecteach.org/workshop-program-proposal.html>



Please note:

Our Business Address has changed!

18 Hidden Drive

Monroe, NY 10950

The NYSEC Board is pleased to announce Rachel Murray as our new Business Secretary! She comes to us with great experience and positive energy.

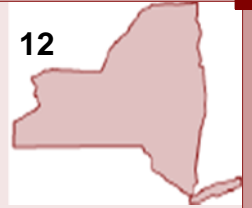
We would also like to thank Patti Rand, for her six years of service in this role. She will remain on the NYSEC Board and looks forward to taking on new roles in the organization.

Become a member of NYSEC today!

<http://www.nysecteach.org/membership.html>

Editor's Notes

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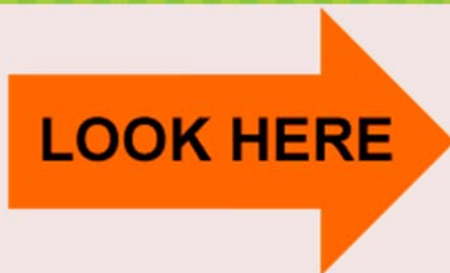


As the school-year comes to a close, it's the perfect time to consider the range of people in your life who are deserving of thanks. Perhaps it is a colleague who gave you courage or confidence, or one who maybe had a little extra patience one day.

Use social media as an avenue to promote the positive. Thank an educator in your area by sharing a photograph of a great classroom moment or by recognizing an achievement.

I recently heard newly-elected Regent, Judith Johnson speak at a local event " She stated, "The most important relationship you have is with yourself." She urged the audience to care for themselves and their colleagues, because "ailing bodies can't fight the good fight."

Michelle Kaprinski



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