



NYSEC NEWS

2015 65th Annual Conference

Featured Speaker



A Writer of Young Adults, For Young Adults

“I am for anything that makes teens visible in an honest way... in other words, anything that represents them the way they are, positively or negatively.”

- Chris Crutcher

This may be the reason why Chris Crutcher’s books are so appealing to adolescents. They can see themselves – the good, the bad, and the ugly – and not feel so alone. That’s the real purpose of literature, and Crutcher gets it.

Although his books have been some of the most challenged and banned, they are *real*, depicting extraordinary teenagers in tough, but authentic situations. As a therapist and child protection advocate, Chris Crutcher writes with “heart-wrenching realism,” according to *People Magazine*. Crutcher is the author of over 13 books, including *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*, *Chinese Handcuffs*, *Ironman*, *Deadline* and *Period 8*.

The American Library Association has named eight of his young adult books, to date, “Best Books for Young Adults,” and four of his books appeared on *Booklist*’s Best 100 Books of the 20th Century, compiled in 2000 – more than

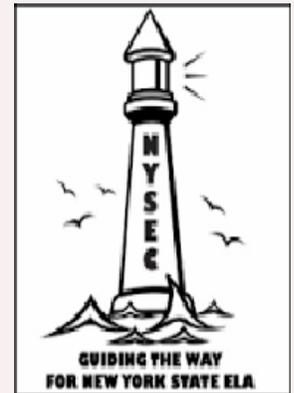
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A LOOK AHEAD...

SAVE THE DATES

October 14-16, 2015

Annual NYSEC Conference



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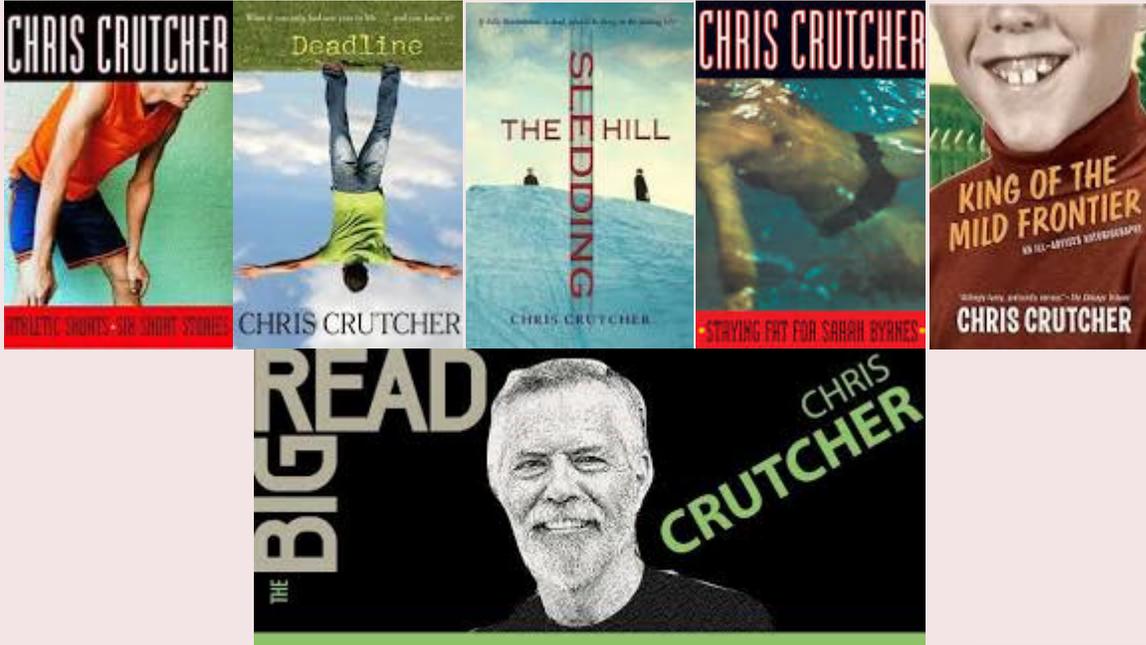


any other single author on the list. Crutcher received the ALAN Award in 1993, the NCTE SLATE Intellectual Freedom Award in 1998, the Margaret A. Edwards Lifetime Achievement Award in 2000, and Writer Magazine's Writers Who Made a Difference Award in 2004.

Please join us on Thursday, October 14, 2015, as we welcome Chris Crutcher as a keynote speaker to kick off our annual conference. You can also visit Chris' website at www.chriscrutcher.com.

Christine Zandstra

NYSEC President



NEW THIS YEAR: COLLABORATORS OF EXCELLENCE AWARD



The New York State English Council wants to recognize excellence in team teaching by presenting awards at its annual conference to two educators, one of whom is an English Language Arts teacher, nominated by their schools and then selected by the Council. The team must teach at least one course together for which they share instructional responsibility equally. Forms can be found online at our website; www.nysecteach.org under the awards tab.



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President's Message

~Christine Zandstra

Dear Members:

Here's a fact about me: I like to be in control. Of everything. Some people (well, everyone who knows me) would even say I'm a control "freak." I like to be the driver when there's somewhere to go. I plan my travel with Mapquest, GPS *and* Google. Lists are my friends. I am *not* a go-with-the-flow, fly-by-the-seat-of-my-pants kind of person. Helplessness and powerlessness make me all sorts of anxious. Perhaps that's why I became a teacher. I, for the most part, could make the decisions for what is best for my students. I could help my kids become better readers and writers, using the practices and protocols that were grounded in research, aligned with standards, and engaging all learners. At least that's how I thought it was.



Unfortunately, in school as in life, no one is always in control. Just as we are at the mercy of Mother Nature and all of her dreaded snow and have no control over whether spring break will be eaten up with make-up days, some teachers are told what to teach and when to teach it, all the way down to what to have on classroom walls. And I am sure many educators are feeling quite helpless, especially after Governor Cuomo's recent State of the State Address, where he proposed such radical changes. It isn't bad enough that we've had to adapt to new standards and assessments at a breakneck speed. It isn't enough that our evaluation system has been tied to these questionable assessments. Now, tenure is being challenged, student test scores will make up an even higher percentage of our APPR, and the Governor sees absolutely no connection between dollars spent and the success of students. So what *can* we do? How can we exert some control over our profession?

Of course, we should keep abreast of what is happening politically, both statewide and in our local districts and work with our local unions. We should attend rallies and write to our legislators.

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However, at the end of the day, we can only exert control over our own lives. So, we must practice what we preach to our students. Knowledge is power. This means making sure we are always reading and learning ourselves. Our biggest professional obligation is to constantly seek to improve our craft. We need to read journals, take courses, attend workshops, explore technology and try new things. A colleague and I were recently having a conversation about the differences in teachers' professional development. She used the analogy of a surgeon who did not know the latest procedures. Although teachers are not in "life or death" situations, we do have the job of developing young minds – a responsibility that cannot be taken lightly. Staying connected is another way we can restore a feeling of power. NYSEC is here to help on both fronts. What can members expect from us? A community of professionals committed to sharing best practices. As a member, you have access to an amazing network of educators from the elementary, secondary and college communities dedicated to the literacy of students. There are many ways to get involved. "Like" us on Facebook. Follow us on Twitter. Another way to get our voices heard is to write and share. Have something to say? Have a great method that worked in your classroom? Write an article for *The English Record*. But the best professional development in the state takes place at our annual conference. Every October I leave the NYSEC conference with renewed inspiration and excitement to get back to my classroom to implement all the great ideas that I learned. Our nationally-known keynote speakers give us the opportunity to learn from experts in the field. I hope you will join us October 14-16 in Albany for our 65th conference. If you have friends and colleagues who have never attended a NYSEC conference, bring them along. The fulfillment I get from being with creative, innovative, professionals each year is unparalleled. Now **that's** power.

Who's Who on the NYSEC Board?

To check out our Board of Directors, click on the following link:

<http://www.nysecteach.org/about-the-nysec-executive-board.html>



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NYSEC is a 501c3 organization and all donations are tax deductible.

Friends of Excellence

The Friends of Excellence campaign helps pay for many of the wonderful programs which NYSEC supports. Some of the programs included in this fund are the Educator of Excellence Award, Programs of Excellence Award and the Mini Grants. In order for these programs to continue to function, Friends of Excellence asks for your assistance through a monetary donation. If you already were planning to give to Friends of Excellence, thank you. Your contribution will be added to the fund and is greatly appreciated.

If you have not already decided to give to the fund, please consider doing so. This will give you a chance to give back and assist others in your field. NYSEC offers many opportunities for English teachers. At some point in time you may have been recognized by NYSEC, assisted with a conference session, found an article you loved in *The English Record*, or simply discovered a connection with another teacher of English at the annual conference. All of these services are provided to help us grow in our profession. The Friends of Excellence campaign also stimulates growth and encourages new ideas.

Friends of Excellence are those members and businesses who contribute. Twenty-five dollars is the suggested amount, but it by no means is the limit or minimum donation. Please consider adding your support to this campaign. You can make your check payable to NYSEC and can send it with your information to me at the address below. We will acknowledge your gift through our Annual Conference Program. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Please include the following information with your donation.

Please mail to:
Janet Matthews
Friends of Excellence Chair
jlmatthews@optonline.net
358 Church Street
White Plains, NY 10603

Name (as you would like it to appear in the program)
Educational Institution
Amount donated
Check Number
Mailing Address/Zip

<http://www.nysecteach.org/friends-of-excellence.html>

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The English Record -Call for Manuscripts

Aims

The English Record publishes original peer reviewed contributions that focus on the field of English education. *The English Record* features articles on pedagogy, essays, commentaries, program descriptions, reflective narratives, book reviews and occasional student work. Please check the website, the newsletter and the journal calls page for more information regarding upcoming calls for manuscripts.

Submissions

Manuscripts and inquiries should be submitted electronically to Dr. Kjersti VanSlyke-Briggs via e-mail at Kjersti.VanSlyke-Briggs@oneonta.edu

Manuscripts should be prepared using MS Word. All parts of the manuscript should be double spaced. Please number all pages consecutively. Each manuscript should include a cover sheet with the author's name, affiliation, position, a brief two or three line author bio, preferred mailing address, telephone and e-mail address.

Identifying information should not appear elsewhere in the manuscript. Please include an abstract on the cover page of no more than 100 words. Manuscripts must conform to APA standards. Manuscripts that do not utilize APA will be returned.

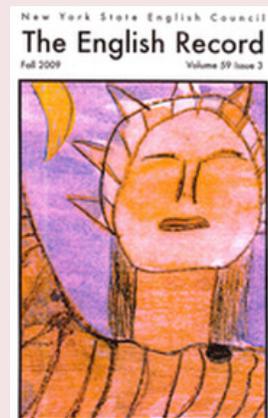
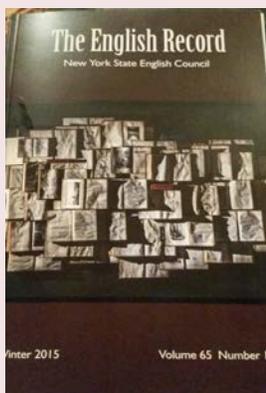
All images, tables, figures and additional materials should be sent as separate files with a figure heading and notation within the manuscript for preferred placement.

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Proofs and Complimentary Copies

A proof will be sent for accepted manuscripts to the author for review. Each corresponding author will receive a copy of the issue after publication.





NYSEC NEWS



October 14-16, 2015

65th Annual NYSEC Conference
Reading is the Core: Building Skill
and Nurturing Will

The Albany Marriott Hotel
Albany, New York



Presenters for NYSEC must register and pay for the NYSEC conference. NYSEC cannot pay presenters. Accepted proposals will be based on the decision of the NYSEC Conference Committee. *Please note: All sessions are one hour.*

Title of Proposal: _____

Name of Presenter(s): _____

School District/Organization name: _____

School Address: _____ Zip Code: _____

County: _____ Business Phone: _____ E-Mail address: _____

Summer/Non-business address and phone where Presenter(s) can be reached: (Please include ALL appropriate zip codes.)

Write a brief program description (100 words) as it would appear in the conference program booklet. You may attach up to one page of additional information for the committee to consider in planning the conference.

Audience for session (please circle one): K-2 3-5 6-8 9-12 College General Other: _____

Internet access may be available but is not guaranteed. All other audio-visual materials **must be** supplied by the presenter.

Return your form no later than April 30, 2015 to:

Marilyn Norton

50 Forest Drive

Poughquag, NY 12570

Any questions or concerns please e-mail: ela.norton@gmail.com

CLICK BELOW FOR DIRECT LINK TO THE CONFERENCE PAGE AND WORKSHOP PROPOSAL FORM.

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



VP Administration

What's Wrong With the Common Core? Or Does Alliteration Really Make a Title More Interesting?

Since I retired and began my new life as an educational consultant, most of the work I have done has been in school districts that are promoting common core literacy in all subject areas. When I introduce myself to people I am meeting for the first time, either at the dog park, or at a friend's home, in a faculty room, or even at the university where I adjunct, I get some interesting pushback. I have developed a few responses to the questions or comments:

Teachers *You really try to get teachers to "do the common core."*



Yes. Why, you don't like it?

Teachers ***NO.***



Why not?

Teachers ***Well, the curriculum is too difficult.***



What curriculum? There isn't a curriculum.

Teachers ***The books the common core requires are too difficult.***



The common core doesn't require books.

Teachers ***The standards ask too much of our children?***



Which standards?

Teachers ***There's too much testing in the common core.***



Actually, I agree with you. There is way too much testing. But the common core does not advocate testing; as a matter of fact it promotes performance based and project based assessment.

Teachers ***Then why is there so much testing?***

I don't really know the answer to that question. I do know that in Finland and other countries that have raised standards, there is not as much testing. And in some countries where they have raised standards, there is a great deal of testing. My own take is that we need to figure out ways to promote performance based assessment and project based learning in order to promote higher standards. There are ways of doing this.

Teachers sometimes say:

The common core advocates using excerpts instead of full length texts: Really, where does it say that in the common core?



In the curriculum modules that the State wrote



Well, the curriculum modules were not written by the State; they may have the endorsement of the State, but they are not the common core. The modules are curricula developed by three different vendors, depending on the grade level. They are not required, and as a matter of fact, in many districts, teachers and/or departments are adapting the modules, using them as a tremendous resource for curriculum development. Just so you are aware, many of us believe that there are many ways of using the modules: as a guide in developing curriculum, as a resource of some pedagogies or best practices that you may or may not have been using in your classroom, or as a guide for developing some performance and formative assessments. The modules are not perfect; but they do provide a way of seeing how others are getting to and teaching to the standards.



What about the fact that all this is being tested in the English classroom on the Regents

and Teachers of English have to do it all?



Well, you are correct there. However, if you look at the new Social Studies Framework, you will see that we are on course to get all departments and subjects. Last year there were about 21 multiple choice questions on the US Regents that called for more reading. Four years earlier, there were 11 such questions. The biology AP exam is no longer a one sentence prompt with 4 or 5 choices. It is a paragraph or two, and sometimes a chart, that must be read before you even get to the prompt. The physics and chemistry tests are looking that way as well. So the bottom line is: everyone will eventually be held accountable for literacy.



We're already doing that.



Already doing what? Teaching students to synthesize, analyze, have collaborative, structured conversations in which they must produce text to support their conclusions? Or we are already basing our research on inquiry rather than on defense of a hypothesis? I am sure you are correct. I too see many teachers addressing much of the common core. I see art teachers using a painting as text; Phys. Ed. teachers having students keep records of their heart rate as they promote aerobic exercises; and science teachers having kids base their reasoning on research after asking a question. But I also see teachers struggling to figure out how to move from content to process and back again. I see little discussion of the similarities between math and reading and writing: constructivist learning and problem -solving.

I think it is an exciting time in education. I think we should celebrate the desire to raise the rigor in our classrooms and in our schools of education. And if you are interested in seeing how we got to where we are, I have a suggestion: Read Amanda Ripley's book, *The Smartest Kids in the World and How They Got that Way*. It gave me some real insight into what we need to do to succeed in a world that requires educated, thinking people.

Respectfully Submitted,

Victor Jaccarino, VP Administration



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VP College

Writing, Writing, Writing!



Dear English and ELA Teachers,

Please, please help our struggling students with writing! We all love the little ones who understand that composing is “talk written down” and the older students who can easily mimic the style of the authors whom they read. But what about those with writing-related disabilities or those whose primary language is not English? What about those aliterate type students?

We all know that one of the purposes of the Common Core is to help produce College and Career ready students. And we know that the CCLS have not been in existence long enough for our current college and graduate students to have been exposed to the Standards beginning in Pre-K. But the impact on our current post-high school population may be more profound than you realize.

For example, consider the new New York State Teacher Certification exams. Looking at the format of the questions on the Content Specialty Tests, for example, one could be perusing the test blueprint for the 3-8 ELA exams. For instance, the constructed response item (20% of the total score) is an analysis, synthesis, and application essay. On the Literacy exam, for example, the candidate analyzes, synthesizes, and evaluates information from professional literature, interprets and discusses findings, draws conclusions and identifies appropriate instructional applications, and explains the likely benefits of specific instructional/ intervention activities in a first draft essay completed under timed conditions.

If the candidate fails the edTPA exam, another step on the teacher certification ladder, which involves a video of parts of lessons and multiple essays dealing with such topics as classroom environment, guess what the safety net is. The ATS-W, another writing based exam.

The exam with which our students are experiencing the most difficulty is the ALST, the Academic Literacy Skills Test, which is composed of 40% reading and 60% writing to sources: two focused response questions and one extended response prompt. The performance indicators for the test framework read like a mini-version of the Common Core – from making logical inferences based on textual evidence to assessing how point of view and purpose shape the content and style of a passage. The essays are claim/counter claim based arguments with data emanating from multiple texts.

So, what are colleges doing to prepare our students for these career related exams? Initially, our university established a no credit, mandatory, semester long class for those students taking the edTPA when it first started because the content of the exam had not been covered in the students’ other classes. By now, we have had multiple department and college level meetings, have curriculum mapped our courses to the exam’s



performance expectations and indicators, have modified our course objectives and assignments, and will be eliminating the edTPA seminar class in favor of embedded instruction related to all four of the teacher certification exams. We have developed and posted an on-line writing handbook. We have met with the Continuing Education department in an attempt to offer test prep seminars, similar to those available prior to the bar exam and other high stakes licensing procedures. We are also in discussion with the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences faculty, especially related to our secondary level students who struggle with the teacher certification exams and take few education courses -- a gigantic feat for a university, which, traditionally, is much more departmentalized than any immense regional high school that you can imagine.

Now I grant you that if our new teachers are supposed to be preparing their own students for Common Core based exams they should be able to respond themselves in a corresponding manner on their own level of expertise. But, guess what? Our struggling writers are still struggling, and even though they may have learned and practiced sound content and pedagogy, unless they can write adequately enough that they can pass these exams, get certified, and become your New York State teaching colleagues, who will be our next crop of educators?

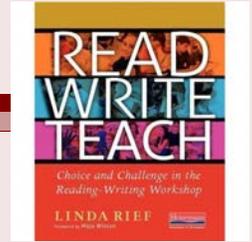
So, as I began this essay, please continue to work with your struggling writers. Writing arguments and informative/explanatory texts really are components of their career readiness, especially in terms of teacher preparation programs. Our college and graduate students also need narrative writing skills to succeed on their edTPA essays. On all of the teacher certification exams the candidates need to use technology to produce clear and coherent writing. They need to quickly gather relevant information from multiple sources and use evidence to support their analysis and reflection. The next crop of New York State teachers, ELA-based or not, need you to help them succeed. Of course, all potential teachers are not struggling writers, but those who are need to master the writing standards to begin their careers.

Sincerely,

Louisa Kramer-Vida, Ed. D.
VP- College



NYSEC NEWS



NYSEC to Welcome



Linda Rief

Inspiration to Adolescents and Educators

Linda Rief teaches 8th graders at Oyster River Middle School in Durham, NH and is an instructor at the University of New Hampshire's Summer Literacy Institute. She is a national and international presenter on issues of adolescent literacy.

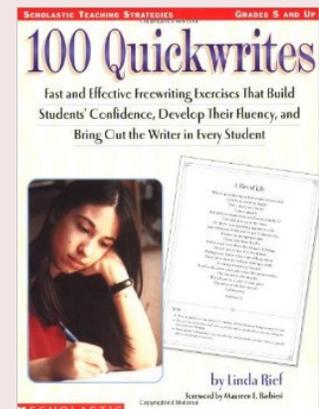
She is the author of *ReadWriteTeach: Choice and Challenge in the Reading-Writing Workshop* (2014), *Inside the Writer's-Reader's Notebook* (2007), *Vision and Voice* (1999), and *Seeking Diversity* (1992), and co-editor (Beers, Probst, and Rief) of *Adolescent Literacy* (2007). For five years, she co-edited with Maureen Barbieri *Voices from the Middle*, a journal for middle school teachers published by the National Council of Teachers of English. She is the author of *100 Quickwrites* (2003) and co-author with Roger Essley of *Visual Tools* (2008), both published by Scholastic.

A recipient of NCTE's Edwin A. Hoey Award for Outstanding Middle School Educator in the English Language Arts, her classroom was featured in the series *Making Meaning in Literature* produced by Maryland Public Television for Annenberg/CPB. For three years she chaired the first Early Adolescence English/Language Arts Standards Committee of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. We look forward to welcoming her as a conference speaker.

Christine Zandstra, NYSEC President

Encourage your colleagues to become a member of NYSEC today!

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



Editor's Notes



Mindfulness in Education... Maximizing Potential

An emerging body of research indicates that mindfulness helps maintain cognitive focus and emotional well-being of both students and the adults who work with them. Whether it's taking 2 minutes for deep breathing or a quick memory game at the start of the period, the most important part of it all is the interpersonal dynamic and the connections that evolve. Shifting student attention from wants and desires and instant gratification to gratitude can open their minds. Let's educate ourselves on this trend, which, though it is not new, has become a household word in 2015. How might mindfulness have a place in your classroom?

~Michelle Kaprinski

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For access to more of what our organization has to offer, go to the website and use your member password, nysec.org.

