

## A Case for Text Complexity

A pedagogy focused only on “higher-order” or “critical” thinking is insufficient to ensure that students are ready for college and careers. What students can read, in terms of its complexity, is at least as important as what they can do with what they read.

A number of studies have shown a declining complexity of texts students are given in K–12 reading texts and in independent reading. To help redress this situation, the Common Core Standards define a three-part model for determining how easy or difficult a text is to read, as well as grade-by-grade specifications for increasing text complexity in successive years of schooling (see Reading Standard 10). The model considers

- Qualitative dimensions of text complexity—i.e., purpose, structure, language conventionality, and knowledge demands
- Quantitative dimensions of text complexity—i.e., word length and frequency, sentence length, and text cohesion
- Reader and text considerations—i.e., variables specific to particular readers and to particular tasks must also be considered when determining whether a text is appropriate to a given student.

The Standards presume that all three elements will come into play when text complexity and appropriateness are determined by teachers using their professional judgment, experiences, and knowledge of their students and the subject.

## CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS *Oregon English Journal*, Spring 2014

We invite you to submit articles and practical teaching ideas for the spring 2014 issue devoted to:

“Working with Reluctant Readers and Writers”

Manuscript submission deadline: **February 1, 2014**  
For details, visit our website: [octe.org](http://octe.org)



Join us on Facebook! This is the fastest way to stay in touch and see what the English community is doing across the state. “Like” us and share with a friend!

## 2012 Oregon Spirit Book Award Winners



Want to meet our 2012 Oregon Spirit Book Award winners, hear their wisdom, and get autographed copies of their books? Come to the Fall Conference, Wilsonville High School, October 5th! Books will be sold, courtesy of A Children’s Place bookstore.

**Picture Book Winner:** *Auntie Yang’s Great Soybean Picnic*, by Ginnie Lo; **Honor:** *Wild About You!*, by Judy Sierra.

**Middle Reader Winner:** *The Secret Chicken Society*, by Judy Cox.

**Young Adult Winner:** *The Raft*, by S. A. Bodeen; **Honor:** *The Night She Disappeared*, by April Henry.

**Non-Fiction Winner:** *The Mighty Mars Rovers*, by Elizabeth Rusch; **Honor:** *Titanic: Voices from the Disaster*, by Deborah Hopkinson, and *Those Rebels, John & Tom*, by Barbara Kerley.

**Graphic Novels Winner:** *Earthling!*, by Mark Fearing; **Honor:** *Hereville: How Mirka Met a Meteorite*, by Barry Deutsch, and *Squish: The Power of the Parasite*, by Jennifer L. and Matthew Holm.



OREGON COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH  
**OC TE Chalkboard**  
PO Box 9126  
Portland, OR 97207-9126

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WWW.OCTE.ORG

PETER THACKER, EDITOR

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*Chalkboard* is the newsletter of the Oregon Council of Teachers of English, an organization that has existed for 100 years to support teachers of English and the language arts in Oregon elementary and secondary schools, community colleges and universities.

*Chalkboard* is our way of keeping our many members and friends informed about OC TE activities, programs of the National Council of Teachers of English, conferences and learning opportunities for students, research tidbits, book recommendations, and more.

*Chalkboard* is a member of the NCTE Information Exchange.

For inquiries, please contact:

**OC TE**  
P.O. Box 9126  
Portland, OR 97207-9126

**Editor:**  
**Peter Thacker**  
[thacker@up.edu](mailto:thacker@up.edu)

## OC TE Fall Conference October 5, 2013 ~ Wilsonville



### Roland Smith, Keynote Speaker

The beloved, award-winning Oregon author will talk about “Writing Wild—Wild Writer.”

His popular books include *Peak*, *Cryptic Hunters*, *Storm Runners*, *Journey of the Red Wolf*, *Shatterproof*, *The Captain’s Dog*, and *I, Q*.



### Penny Plavala, Keynote Speaker

Language Arts Specialist Penny Plavala will talk about “Assessing the Common Core: How to Prepare Students for Success.”

Interactive and engaging session; participants will learn key details of Smarter Balanced Assessment.



## A Welcome Message from the President

Hello OC TE Members,



As your new President I want to introduce myself and update you about exciting things to look forward to in OC TE this special centennial year—yes we are 100 years old this year! Be watching for special celebration events.

It is also my pleasure to announce and welcome our new *Chalkboard* editor, Peter Thacker, Associate Professor at the University of Portland. You will know him from his active involvement with OC TE, especially as a popular presenter at our conferences. He’s the one surrounded by students.

If you do not yet know all the terrific things OC TE does, you should take some time to peruse the website at [octe.org](http://octe.org), because you will be proud of all the things your membership supports. Besides the upcoming Fall Conference, which promises to be excellent, this coming March we are hosting the Northwest Regional NCTE conference. OC TE offers teacher grants, and we co-sponsor the Oregon Writing Festival for students each May at Portland State University. We publish the award-winning *Oregon English Journal*, and we are a partner in the go-to authoritative online *Oregon Encyclopedia*. In order to keep up with all of this, please “like” us on Facebook, and check out our new Twitter account.

Membership in a professional organization is vitally important, especially during these challenging times. I serve as your president because I love the English language arts and teachers helping teachers. Together we are stronger!

Karen K. Johnson, President  
Tuality Middle School, Tigard

## OREGON COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH 2013 Fall Conference • October 5, 2013

WILSONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL • 6800 SW WILSONVILLE RD. • WILSONVILLE, OREGON



**PRE-REGISTRATION FORM**  
Pre-registration deadline: September 16, 2013

You may register on-line at  
**octe.org**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Street Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_  
E-Mail address(es) \_\_\_\_\_

### CONFERENCE REGISTRATION ~ INCLUDES MEALS

	Number	Amount
Non-OC TE member	_____	_____
OC TE member	_____	_____
Full-time student/retiree	_____	_____
<b>Total</b>	_____	\$ _____

**On-site registration will be \$115 for everyone.**  
**A group pre-registration for 5 or more OC TE members is available at \$60 each.**  
Must request a group form by email [octeorg@gmail.com](mailto:octeorg@gmail.com). Pre-registration deadline: September 16, 2013.  
**For information see octe.org**  
Make checks payable to **OC TE** and send to: Barbara Wiegale  
14867 SE Orchid Avenue • Milwaukie OR 97267-2454

### Conference Schedule:

7:30 a.m. - Registration/Free Book/  
Conti Breakfast/Exhibits  
8:20 a.m. - Concurrent Sessions  
9:30 a.m. - Concurrent Sessions  
10:40 a.m. - General Session, Roland Smith  
11:30 a.m. - General Session, OSBA Authors  
12:10 p.m. - Lunch/Autographing/Exhibits  
1:20 p.m. - Concurrent Sessions  
2:30 p.m. - General Session, Penny Plavala/  
Door Prizes

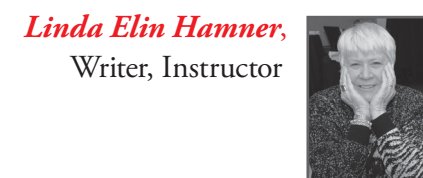


# READING / LANGUAGE ARTS CONFERENCE

There will be sessions on brain-based teaching strategies, vigorous learning in rigorous times, teaching plays as living texts, reading deeper to write better, update on children's and YA lit, discussion of Asperger's traits, the nonfiction mayhem of ELA CCSS, teach writing without making your eyes bleed, the short story approach to literacy, writing beyond the five-paragraph essay, handwriting instruction, using letters and diaries to connect today's kids to yesterday's writers, creating picture books with kids, teaching basic character development and story concepts while using humor, and many more.

OCTOBER 5, 2013 ~ WILSONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

## Among the Presenters Are:



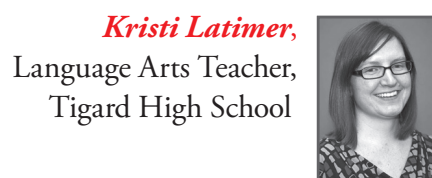
**Linda Elin Hamner,**  
Writer, Instructor

*"Bringing Out the Funny"*



**Kimberly Campbell,**  
Lewis & Clark College

*"Writing Beyond the Five Paragraph Essay"*

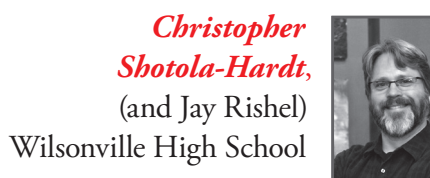


**Kristi Latimer,**  
Language Arts Teacher,  
Tigard High School



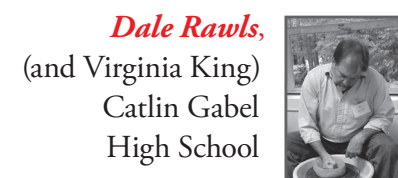
**Paulann Petersen,**  
Oregon Poet Laureate

*"Bill Stafford in Your Classroom"*

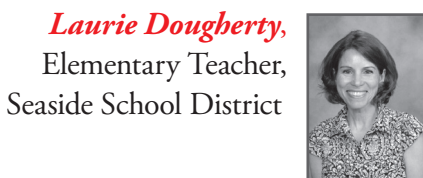


**Christopher Shotola-Hardt,**  
(and Jay Rishel)  
Wilsonville High School

*"Word & Hand Project"*



**Dale Rawls,**  
(and Virginia King)  
Catlin Gabel  
High School



**Laurie Dougherty,**  
Elementary Teacher,  
Seaside School District

*"CCSS for Elementary Teachers:  
Creating Conditions for Student Success"*



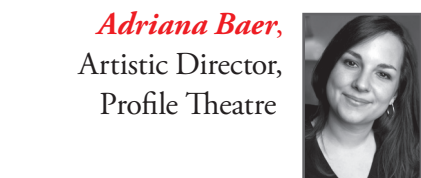
**Elaine Coughlin,**  
Pacific University

*"Coaching the Brain: From Brain  
Research to Classroom Practice"*



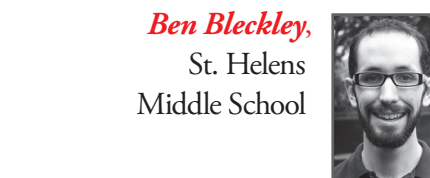
**Paul Gregorio,**  
Portland Community  
College

*"Update on Children's and  
Young Adult Literature"*



**Adriana Baer,**  
Artistic Director,  
Profile Theatre

*"Behind the Scenes:  
Teaching Plays as Living Texts"*



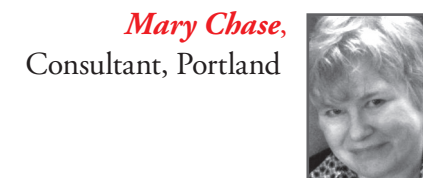
**Ben Bleckley,**  
St. Helens  
Middle School

*"The Short Story Approach to Literacy"*



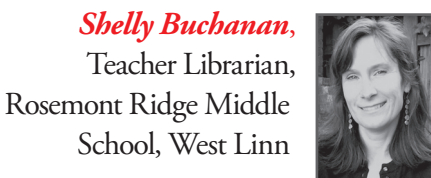
**Sarah Collinge,**  
Author and Consultant,  
Bothell, WA

*"Closing the Gap  
between Reader and Text"*



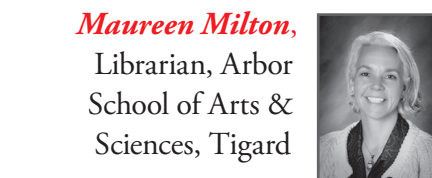
**Mary Chase,**  
Consultant, Portland

*"Thanking My Mentor:  
A Retrospective on Donald Graves and  
the Writing Process Movement"*



**Shelly Buchanan,**  
Teacher Librarian,  
Rosemont Ridge Middle  
School, West Linn

*"The Magic of the Independent Project"*



**Maureen Milton,**  
Librarian, Arbor  
School of Arts &  
Sciences, Tigard



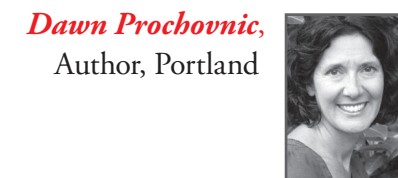
**Jonathan Ellingson,**  
Falls City  
High School

*"Ideas to Publication:  
A Conversation"*



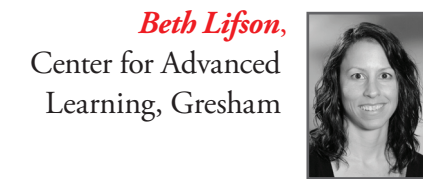
**Joanne Yatvin,**  
Writer,  
NCTE Past President

*"Vigorous Learning in Rigorous Times"*



**Dawn Prochovnic,**  
Author, Portland

*"Creating Picture Books with Kids"*



**Beth Lifson,**  
Center for Advanced  
Learning, Gresham

*"The Case for Kant:  
How and Why to Teach Philosophy  
in the English Classroom"*



**Brandon Monroe,**  
Eastern Oregon  
University at MHCC

*"Have You Thought about  
Handwriting Instruction?"*



**Lynette Gottlieb,**  
Ashbrook Independent  
School, Corvallis

*"She Could Have Been My Friend:  
Using Letters and Diaries to Connect  
Today's Kids to Yesterday's Writers."*



**Jan Priddy,**  
English Department  
Chair, Seaside  
High School

*"Teaching Writing without  
Making Your Eyes Bleed"*



**Peter Thacker,**  
University of Portland

*"Becoming Literate  
in Different Disciplines"*



**Justin Wilson Gabor,**  
Jervais High School

*"F.R.A.M.E.-ing Literacy"*

## OCTE OFFICERS

- Karen Johnson—President**
- Heidi Hanson—President-Elect**
- Jay Rishel—Vice President**
- Laurie Dougherty—Secretary**
- Ulrich H. Hardt—Treasurer**
- Dorothy Courtois—Executive Secretary**
- Manuel Mateo—Past-President**

## Editor's Welcome



I am excited to become the editor of *Chalkboard*. While the main function of our newsletter is to keep you aware of our conferences and other activities, I also want the newsletter to be a source of practical ideas for you to use. To this effect I am hoping to add on-going features into each edition. Perhaps we can enjoy reviews from your students of our Oregon Spirit Book Award winning books or of professional books or novels you find compelling. I would also love to highlight stellar language arts lesson plans for students of varied ages. After conferences, how about some short descriptions of ideas you loved and used successfully in your class? Don't be surprised if I contact you, asking for your words of wisdom. If I don't, contact me!

As you contemplate adding your voice to the *Chalkboard*, don't forget to register for our fall conference. Take a look at the incredibly wide range of workshops to whet your classroom self. Every time I hit these conferences (and 1977 was my first one), I walk away energized with great ideas for my classes. This year in my language arts methods class, I am adding two assignments learned in Ashland last spring: an inquiry assignment keyed by Shelly Buchanan and Maureen Milton's workshop and a haiku synopsis of a novel learned in an SOU student teacher presentation. Buchanan and Milton will repeat their workshop this fall. Of course, this is just one of twenty-three hands-on, teacher-friendly workshops October 5th at lovely Wilsonville High School. Join us!

Peter Thacker, University of Portland, Editor

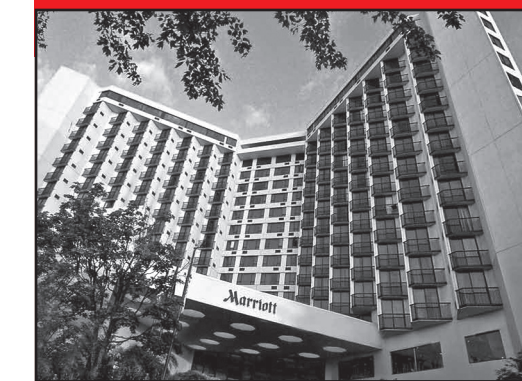
## GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

OCTE is offering grants to classroom teachers to develop curriculum, purchase materials, or for other uses that enhance instruction in language arts/literacy—\$250–\$500.

Deadlines for submitting grant proposals:  
July 1 and November 1

For details, see:  
[http://octe.org/awardsandprograms\\_grantopportunities.html](http://octe.org/awardsandprograms_grantopportunities.html)

## NW Regional NCTE Conference March 1–3, 2014 ~ Portland



What is happening on March 1st and 2nd? We thought you might like to rethink images of late morning bed rest to join other impassioned English teachers restive for new ideas and scintillating conversations.

You will be "Leading the Way" surrounded by cohorts from over twenty states. They will range from first grade to graduate school teachers, from AP instructors to ESL experts, from parents to researchers, from authors to critics.

You can sample strands from Rethinking Schools, the Writing Project, the American Library Association, and William Stafford's centennial celebration. You can hear national luminaries Chris Crutcher, Carol Jago, Jim Burke, Linda Christensen, and Joanne Yatvin, not to mention Kim Stafford, Allen Say, Virginia Euwer Wolff, Penny Plavala, John Golden, Linda Hoyt, and Tim Gillespie.

Sessions on CCSS abound as do those addressing literacy across the curriculum and social studies workshops to tickle the fancy of you middle school language arts/social studies aficionados. In other words, this is a dream conference for those who revel in the teaching of reading, writing, and discussion, those like you who love to engage with ideas and possibility. Join us in Portland at the Marriott Downtown Waterfront for gorgeous views and a community of engaged thinkers.



Jim Burke



Yong Zhao