

## OCTE Chalkboard

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE  
OREGON COUNCIL OF  
TEACHERS OF ENGLISH



Volume 41, No. 1,  
Winter 2019



# Please Post



**Conference Details**  
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*Chalkboard* is the newsletter of the Oregon Council of Teachers of English, an organization that has existed for over 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 OCTE 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.

### OCTE

P.O. Box 9126  
Portland, OR 97207-9126

**Early-bird registration prices apply until Feb. 28, 2019:**

**OCTE Members \$60**  
**Non-Members \$85**  
**Students/Retirees \$30**

### SPRING 2019 CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

8:15 - 8:45  
Registration & continental breakfast  
8:45 - 9:30 - Keynote Speaker  
George Estreich  
9:30 - 9:40 - Book signing  
9:40 - 10:40 - Session 1  
10:50 - 11:50 - Session 2  
11:50 - 12:30  
Catered lunch, book signing, and professional conversation  
12:40-1:40 - Session 3  
1:50-2:50 - Session 4  
3:00 - PDU/Closing/Raffle

## 2018 Year in Review, by Laurie Dougherty, OCTE President Reflecting Back and Looking Forward



Dear OCTE Members and Friends,

As I write this, I'm spending a rare "snow day" at home. Despite many cool days with lots of precipitation here on the north coast of Oregon, we rarely have snow. Our little dog is delightfully bunny-hopping through the strange white grass and I am torn between being outdoors and staying by a warm fire. However, this is a good time to reflect on what we've accomplished over the past year before heading out.

2018 brought some exciting new things for OCTE, along with some great events. One big change is our brand new website, thanks to our outstanding new webmaster, Jean Mittelstaedt. We have launched our new website using Wild Apricot as our web-hosting platform. In addition to a fresh new look, Wild Apricot gives us great new tools for managing membership lists, conference registrations, and newsletters. We're still learning about all its features and I encourage you to check it out.

Our new *Oregon English Journal* Editor, Kimberly Campbell, and *Chalkboard* Editor, Lynette Gottlieb, have each published outstanding editions with contributions from a variety of OCTE members. When my newest OEJ arrived, I immediately sat down to read it cover to cover. The *Chalkboard* is coming four times yearly, with two print issues and two digital issues. As you can see, this issue is packed with interesting features.

We also hosted two outstanding conferences last year. The spring conference at Ashland High School featured Rebecca Clark Carey, head of voice and text at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, as our keynote speaker. Her interactive presentation, along with the retreat-style workshops, were the perfect complement for evenings at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Fall conference saw us at the brand new Mountainside High School in Beaverton, where we were encouraged and challenged by Linda Christensen of Rethinking Schools. Oregon Spirit Book Award Winners were recognized and on hand for an author panel and book signing.

The Oregon Writing Festival brought close to 900 students converging on the Portland State University campus. Writing workshops, meeting and hearing from favorite authors, and of course sharing their writing were highlights for these young writers. May 4th will be here before we know it with the 35th annual Oregon Writing Festival.

Our spring conference is right around the corner too. Conference Chair Mariko Walsh, along with Lynette Gottlieb and their committee, have been busy planning an outstanding event for April 13th at Ashbrook Independent School in Corvallis. Our conference speaker is George Estreich, whose newest book *Fables and Futures* will be hot off the press.

I'm also excited for us to launch our first OCTE Reads Facebook group at the spring conference. Together, we'll be studying Linda Christensen's book *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up* as an online community. Books will be available for purchase at the conference. If you haven't registered for the conference yet, you have a few more days for the discounted registration.

It's been quite a year for OCTE and 2019 promises to bring more exciting opportunities. I know OCTE will continue to be a source of inspiration. We'll forge new friendships, extend professional networks, find ourselves challenged, and grow as educators. I'm looking forward to the year ahead and to seeing you in April!

Yours,  
Laurie Dougherty, President



## Book Reviews by Paul Gregorio

**Karbo, Karen.** *In Praise of Difficult Women. Life Lessons From 29 Heroines Who Dared to Break the Rules*, National Geographic, 2018.

**McCann, Michelle Roehm.** *More Girls Who Rocked the World. Heroines From Ada Lovelace to Misty Copeland*, Simon & Schuster and Beyond Words, 2017.

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*I hope you choose not to be a lady. I hope you will find some way to break the rules and make a little trouble out there. And I also hope that you will choose to make some of that trouble on behalf of women.*

This phrase from Nora Ephron's Wellesley commencement speech, included in Cheryl Strayed's introduction, launches Karbo's exploration of the notion of difficult women. Such a woman insists on inhabiting the full range of her humanity, which sometimes means upsetting people and cultural norms. With this focus, Karbo selects presents 39 women, mostly contemporary American women from politics, the arts, and entertainment. The text emphasizes their struggles and their effects on society. Each woman is given an adjective: Helen Gurley Brown—Relentless; Rachel Maddow—Brainy; Margaret Cho—Unrestrained; Amy Poehler—Subversive. Karbo's descriptions include the struggles of the women and the difficulties in their lives, each illustrated with black and red art by Kimberly Glyder. Aimed at a high school or college audiences, *In Praise of Difficult Women* assumes the reader has a general knowledge of its inclusions, but celebrates women's stories by extending knowledge further to include background information.

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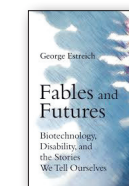
*We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back. We call upon our sisters around the world to be brave-- to embrace the strength within themselves and realize their full potential.*

These words from Malala Yousafzai, the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, introduce McCann's criteria for her biographies: girls and young women who rocked the world and made it a better place. McCann, who was awarded the Oregon Spirit Award for *Luba: the Angel of Bergen-Belsen*, here includes 45 women from Cleopatra, to Annie Oakley, to contemporary women like Selena and Emma Watson. Also included are entries on less well-known young women: rock climber Ashima Shiraishi, Nepalese author Jhamak Ghimire, and soccer star Nadia Nadim. Aimed at upper elementary and middle school readers, each entry offers high-interest facts.

Both *In Praise of Difficult Women* and *More Girls Who Rocked the World* would be welcome inclusions in classroom libraries and would be good resources for Women's History Month in March.

OREGON COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

**Spring Conference - Saturday, April 13, 2019**  
Ashbrook Independent School • 4045 SW Research Way • Corvallis, OR, 97333



**An Interview with George Estreich, author of *The Shape of the Eye* (2013) and *Fables and Futures: Biotechnology, Disability, and the Stories We Tell Ourselves* (2019), and our keynote speaker at the Spring OCTE Conference.**

*This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity. Quotations in the questions are from the introduction to Fables and Futures.*



**Lynette Gottlieb:** George, greetings on behalf of OCTE. As a dedicated Corvallisite and engaged community member, can you make a little plug for our college town in the heart of the valley? Maybe a suggestion for what a conference-goer might do after our 4-pm release time?

**George Estreich:** Let's see... am I allowed to mention my favorite bar, Squirrels Tavern? As someone who lives in Corvallis and loves it, I'd suggest walking around downtown. Corvallis has a thriving downtown. You could shop on 2nd Street, there's fine dining, lots of craft beer and coffee, and walking along the riverfront.

**LG:** I know you're an avid home renovator, guitarist with the band Mule on Fire, involved dad to a college grad and high school senior, but you are also an English teacher like us. What sort of classes do you teach and where?

**“Poetry is our native language. We begin with imaginative experiments as children, and lyric language can be a realm of discovery and delight throughout life.” – Kim Stafford, Oregon Poet Laureate**

*continued from page 1*

**GE:** Currently, I teach a graduate course in creative nonfiction at Oregon State University in the MFA program. I have extensive teaching experience as an adjunct, as well as summer teaching in a program that used to be called Prime, in Philadelphia, which was a minority enrichment program for students who were interested in math and engineering. There was also a writing/communication component, which was one of my favorite courses I ever taught. With respect to the book, *Fables and Futures*, I think of it as an act of teaching, of trying to engage someone, a reader, on an equal level. To try to get them to think about new things in new ways. With this book I felt like I was drawing on my teaching skills.

**LG:** Writing teachers and teachers who write, it's a neat...

**GE:** It's a neat circle. And one thing I think a lot of writers find is, how do you figure out how to draw on teaching? Because teaching can often feel like it takes away from, or drains, the same well.

**LG:** They're lucky to have you at OSU.

**GE:** I love teaching that course, those students are so talented, and I just like them.

**LG:** It's nice when you like the people that you have to teach. Sometimes people say to me, "Oh, middle school students..." and I say, "They're awesome, they're the best part!" As I read through the introduction of *Fable and Futures*, I was immediately struck with a remembrance of why I loved *The Shape of the Eye* so much. One image I think of often from that beautiful memoir is ranch dressing! [This was Laura's, his daughter with Down Syndrome, first food preference.] Your writing is gorgeously descriptive and draws the reader in. How did you learn to write like that?

**GE:** I started out as a poet, and I think that one reason I'm a poet, and not a fiction writer, is that I don't really think in terms of narrative. I gravitate much more towards image and metaphor. At least in the kind of writing that I did when I was first learning as an undergraduate, it was very short, lyrical poems where you're thinking about the precise framing and embodiment of each image and the precise sound of each line. So that's where I began, and when I moved into prose, I tried to take that along with it. I wanted to have prose that has kind of density of image and metaphor. That's all describing looking back, but in terms of *how* I did it, it's like anything else, just trying over and over and failing most of the time and revising a lot. When I teach writing I teach a great deal about revision.

**LG:** Do we get many other gorgeous images in *Fables and Futures* like the aurora borealis you describe in the introduction?

**GE:** The book interweaves personal things with other narrative and non-narrative material throughout. I talk about playing board games with Laura, I talk about a note she wrote me, so yes, I try and do that. The linking idea is "story," which is to say that one core idea of this book is that new technologies tend to be accompanied by persuasive stories. So just as teachers [where] we're teaching our students to be critical thinkers, I'm kind of advocating this idea that if new biotechnologies are accompanied by promises, and those promises are made appealing by the arts of stories, we should learn to see the stories critically. Not to reject them or reject technology out of hand—which would make no sense, because it has many benefits—but to look closely at the hype and the pitch. I'm alternating between telling my story and Laura's and analyzing the stories that come our way.

**LG:** And that's so much of what we're doing as language arts teachers, teaching these kids who are not all going to grow up to be writers or even necessarily readers, but they hopefully will be discerning consumers of writing and reading. With middle schoolers, we're transitioning into critical thinking. You mention the phrase "the shape of the standard story" in relation to learning what it may mean to parent a child with Down Syndrome. The considerations of "who gets a story, who gets to tell it, whose stories are credited, and the limits of the stories themselves" inform our work as language arts educators. Could you say more about how these considerations play out in your book?

**GE:** Students need a chance to see themselves reflected in the stories they read. Calls for diversity are often derided as political correctness, or ignoring quality, and I don't accept that. I think there's all kinds of literature from all kinds of sources. As a teacher, I try to choose things that reflect the diverse embodiments of human beings, the ways people identify themselves, and also literature that questions those very categories. With respect to *Fables and Futures*, one of the hardest categories to talk about is intellectual disability. People who have intellectual disabilities—which is an extremely wide category—may or may not be able to tell their stories, but because of our investment in the value of intellect, they have often been invisible or seen as non-persons. So I'm interested in the places where people can and do tell their stories, such as John Franklin Stephens, who has Down Syndrome and is a really effective

advocate, and an autobiography by Nigel Hunt [*The World of Nigel Hunt*], which is a fascinating book. These voices are there and they're worth listening to.

But it's also getting into the ethics of being a parent and [if] your child is less able to speak for herself in a conventional way, I think there is a world of ethical conundrums. There's a very great danger in using a child to speak for yourself, speaking over your child for your own purposes. So I simply want to raise those complications as well as just say, look, there's a whole invisible population here.

**LG:** Could you say a little more about how "questions about biotechnology are rapidly becoming questions for everyone?"

**GE:** The more powerful and ubiquitous biotechnology becomes, the more its reach extends into most of our lives. It's important for me to say I am not writing a book against biotechnology or warning about a dystopian future. A couple of areas in which biotechnologies are extending into our lives include direct-to-consumer ancestry testing. I just read a fantastic book by Alondra Nelson [*The Social Life of DNA*], and she writes about how African Americans have explored DNA ancestry testing as a way of understanding their identity and connection to Africa in a way that is more than just the horrors of the middle passage and chattel slavery. So that's one way in which DNA has a social life. The other big area is in terms of reproduction: we have more and more powerful, early DNA tests, so that we're able to tell more and more about future children. That raises a question of value: whom do we value and whom do we welcome, and for what reasons? This is not abstract, getting worked out on high, but something that every woman works out for herself.

**LG:** How might "our misconceptions about disability and our devotion to the often destructive idea of 'normal'" intersect with our lives as teachers?

**GE:** What I hope for as a parent from teachers is just an attitude of openness. What that means is that I found the best teachers either don't have a preconceived idea about Down Syndrome, or disability, or are just willing to just shelve it to see what Laura is like as an individual. With my books, I was not trying to say, ok, here are some narrative snippets of Laura, now you know what it's like to be the parent of a child with a disability. I wanted to say that here is one person, in the early 2000s, in the Pacific Northwest, with an identity who inhabits these categories but is not determined by them. We've been incredibly fortunate, especially at Corvallis High School, and we've seen the best of that. At the same time, we know that it's not easy. I have found that most people may not have had much contact with people with disabilities, but a little openness and goodwill go a really long way.

**LG:** I try to teach middle schoolers that noticing difference is ok, it's what you do with that in that moment that matters. Because they're so unsure, they want to get it right. We talk about trying to see *people* first... then a rapport maybe before you ask questions, or asking if you *can* ask a question. And they don't get a lot of opportunity to meet people who are different from them.

**GE:** There are people who are hostile, but the vast majority of people, in our experience, just don't know what to say and are terrified of saying the wrong thing. Typically, when I do presentations, I foreground that and say, "if you ask a question, we all in the room assume respect," so don't worry about using the slightly wrong word. My line on that is "no one was ever scolded into enlightenment."

**LG:** I feel like time spent counts for so much. If you could spend half an hour, eating a sandwich, with many different kinds of people...

**GE:** That's one reason for telling stories. I can't have Laura go and meet all these people individually, but stories at least bring a dimensional presence.

**LG:** Have I forgotten to ask you anything important?

**GE:** One thing that is relevant in April is that for better and worse, the book is timely. I don't know if you've read the news about the gene-edited babies in China... a lot of my book is focused on the possibility of germline enhancement. There's a new technology called CRISPR that makes it easier to edit the germline. Last November, a scientist named He Jiankui apparently went ahead and did it, and announced the birth of two children. This is a huge boundary line for the species to cross. So the fact that that's (probably) happened simply makes the stuff I'm talking about more urgent. The future is now. It brings me to my original point, which is if we're going to go ahead and do this, if we're going to be a species that in part engineers itself, that more of us need to be participating in the conversation. As English teachers we are uniquely positioned to foster the critical thinking habits and consider the possibilities from a narrative point of view.

**LG:** George, thank you. I can't wait to hear you speak on April 13.

**“A poignantly eloquent meditation on the genetics of belonging.”**  
– Kirkus Review on *The Shape of the Eye* by George Estreich

## Join us at the 35th Annual Oregon Writing Festival at PSU on May 4, 2019!

For more information, go to [octe.org](http://octe.org) and click on "Events." This year's authors include Roseanne Parry (grades 4-5), Graham Salisbury (grade 6-8), and Kim Stafford (grades 9-12).



The Oregon Writing Festival takes place annually each spring, co-sponsored by Portland State University Graduate School of Education and OCTE. The goals of the Writing Festival are to cultivate a love of writing in students and teachers, to honor the work of outstanding student writers, and to connect student writers with Oregon authors and other student writers.



You can be involved in this energizing event by serving as a **Day Group Leader**, escorting a group of 10 students throughout the day and facilitating the session where students read the writing sample they brought. Contact Janice Bahns at [grandmabahns@yahoo.com](mailto:grandmabahns@yahoo.com). Or, you can also engage as a **Workshop Leader**, preparing a writing activity for a group of 15 - 20 students that takes about 3 - 5 minutes to introduce; the students write for 30 - 35 minutes and then they share their work for 15 - 20 minutes (total session time: 1 hour). Workshop Leaders teach two one-hour workshops to two different groups of students at one of these grade levels: 4 - 5, 6 - 8, or 9 - 12. As a Workshop Leader, you'll earn a \$50 stipend, breakfast and lunch, an OWF coffee mug, and hear the keynote authors. You can access the Workshop Leader proposal form on the OCTE website or contact Jay Rishel at [rishelj@gmail.com](mailto:rishelj@gmail.com).



### Awards Opportunities to Note:

The Roland Bartel Early Career Scholarship, for teachers in their first three years of teaching.

The Oregon Excellence Awards in Teaching the Language Arts.

Nominate a colleague today! The deadline is April 6, 2019. For both of these awards, see [octe.org](http://octe.org) for details.

## Spring Conference Presenters



**Dr. Robert J. Bizjak, "Project-Based Learning and Assessment"**

Through this presentation, participants will learn about, collaborate on, and create curriculum and assessments that invite students to demonstrate their understanding through project-based assignments.

**Laura Daugherty, "Student-Teacher Relationships and Creating Equity vs Equality"**

This presentation focuses on high expectations for all students, culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy and relationship building.

**Patricia Emerson, "If I Knew Then What I Know Now: Teaching Climate Change in English Language Arts"**

This workshop revisits my 2017 project to study climate change issues with seventh- and eighth- graders in dystopian book clubs. It provides new direction for English teachers interested in addressing this challenging topic.

**Delana Heidrich and Lexi Smith, "The Rich Rewards of Poetry Recitation"**

Learn how the Poetry Out Loud contest and website content can address reading anchor standards while inspiring students to interact meaningfully with both long-loved and newly discovered poems. Student work will be displayed and an ideas packet provided.

**Deborah Hopkinson, "Encouraging Family Reading with Author Deborah Hopkinson"**

Teachers, librarians, and parents all want students to read. But how do we encourage family reading? Author Deborah Hopkinson will share her new books along with ideas for book pairings for adult-young reader exploration and discussions. The goal: #readwithyourkids!

**Joyce Kim and Carmen Moser, "We Are All One Book: The Power of a Whole School Novel Study"**

What are the educational and social implications during and after a whole school novel

## OREGON ENCYCLOPEDIA REPORT

by Ulrich Hardt ([www.oregonencyclopedia.org](http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org))

The Oregon Encyclopedia is a project of the Oregon Historical Society and supported by OCTE since 2008. It is an authoritative and free resource for all things Oregon.

Here are the latest 9-month statistics:

Total visits to website:	653,000
Total number of page views:	935,887
Number of countries:	211
Different languages:	188

Top Countries	Top Languages	Top States
U.S.	English	Oregon
Canada	Spanish	Washington
U.K.	Chinese	California
India	French	Texas
Australia	German	New York
Germany	Japanese	Illinois
Japan	Russian	Florida
France		Arizona
		Idaho
		Pennsylvania

### Top 20 Entries

Exclusion Laws	Ku Klux Klan	National Reclamation Act
Cascade Mountain Range	Bigfoot	Fur Trade in Oregon Country
"Animal House"	Umatilla Army Depot	Rajneeshes
Blacks in Oregon	Nutria	Muller v Oregon
Antelope/Muddy Ranch	Whitman Massacre	Chinese Americans in Oregon
Rattlesnakes in Oregon	Lewis and Clark Expedition	Vanport National Reclamation Act
Oregon Trail	Columbia River	

Join Us in Corvallis, April 13. Register at [octe.com](http://octe.com)