

# News & Notes

The Newsletter of the Greater San Diego  
Council of Teachers of English (aka SD CATE)

## CATE Creative Writing Contest

Now is the time to get your students working on their submissions for the 2016-2017 CATE Creative Writing Contest. Submissions are due November 1. See contest flyer for details.

See Page 6



## Sign Up to Attend Promising Practices Conference on October 8

The Greater San Diego Council of Teachers of English (aka SD CATE) will host its annual Promising Practices Conference on October 8, 2016 (8:00 to noon). This year's conference is titled "Cracking the Code: Digital Tools and Best Practices in the Common Core ELA Classroom." The conference will be held at the Point Loma Nazarene University Conference Center at Liberty Station.

Teachers are encouraged to sign up for the conference as soon as possible as space is limited.

The Promising Practices conference provides an outstanding local professional development opportunity, as well as a chance to meet new colleagues and build your professional network. Additional information regarding the conference can be found on page 3 of this newsletter. Teacher can register for the conference at

<http://cateweb.org/promising-practices-registration/>

## Upcoming Events

- Oct 8 GSDCTE Promising Practices, PLNU Conf. Center, Liberty Station, 8:00 am to Noon
- Nov 1 CATE Creative Writing Contest Submission Deadline
- Jan 24 GSDCTE Nachos and Novelists social event at On the Border, Mira Mesa, 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm
- Feb 19 Deadline for submitting entries for the NCTE Achievement in Writing Awards (11<sup>th</sup> graders) and Promising Young Writers ((8<sup>th</sup> graders) program
- Feb 17-19 Annual CATE Conference, Hyatt Regency and Convention Center, Santa Clara, CA

Not yet a member of the California Association of Teachers of English (CATE)? Go to [cateweb.org](http://cateweb.org) for all the details on CATE and to sign up for membership.

## The President's Corner

CATE's 2017 Convention theme is titled "Text and Tech: Blending Tradition with Innovation."

This timely title brings to mind pressing questions? When do we stick with what we have always done? Should we still use that writing prompt or that novel? How do we know when it's time to explore new curricular and learning opportunities? Is digital always better? These philosophical questions compel teachers to seek research, to explore best practices, and to engage with other educators in discussion. Where can teachers locate needed research, best practices, and like-minded educators?

The California Association of Teachers of English and the Greater San Diego Council of Teachers of English (SD CATE) are non-profit teacher-led organizations supporting teachers of English Language Arts. Our state organization, CATE, sponsors an annual convention each February or March alternating between northern and southern California.

This year's CATE convention will be held February 17-19, 2017 in Santa Clara with the following exciting speakers: Troy Hicks, Catlin Tucker, Doreen Rappaport, Sarah Kay, Robin Sloan, Kwame Alexander, and Penny Kittle. Friday and Saturday will also be filled with six sets of engaging workshops. You can find out more and register at [CATEweb.org](http://CATEweb.org).

SD CATE offers its own half-day conference on Saturday, October 8, 2016 titled, "Cracking the Code: Digital Tools and Best Practices in the Common Core ELA Classroom" featuring teacher leaders Alice Chen and Jen Roberts. Information and registration can also be found on [CATEweb.org](http://CATEweb.org).

CATE and SD CATE are YOUR organizations. Follow [CATE](#) and [SD CATE](#) on Facebook.

If you have questions, if you want to learn more about your organization, if you have suggestions, please contact me at [jugalde@powayusd.com](mailto:jugalde@powayusd.com).

Always learning; Always growing,

Jeannine Ugalde

President, SD CATE



Jeannine Ugalde, GSDCTE  
President

### **GSDCTE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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### It's Time to Go Digital!

*Have your skills or learn new ones from two experts on using tech in the classroom!*

**Learn:**

- Easy Tech Tips
- Successful Units
- Digital Workflows
- Close Reading Ideas
- Formative Assessments



**Alice Chen** @WonderTechEd

Want to learn more about tech in the classroom? Learn ways to collaborate, assess, give feedback? Attend #PP2016. #SDCATE



**Jen Roberts** @JenRoberts1

Want to learn more about how to use tech with close reading? Work flow solutions? Amazing classroom applications? Sign up today for...

# PROMISING PRACTICES

**Saturday, October 8, 2016**  
**8:00 a.m. - noon**  
**at PLNU Liberty Station Conference Center**

presented by the  
 San Diego County Office of Teachers of English  
 a local chapter of CATE  
 California Association of Teachers of English

The center is near the small retail mall where Message Ewe, Starbucks, and the USS Never Sail are located, past the airport on the way to Point Loma. The address is 2000 Lanning Road San Diego, CA 92106.

## Cracking the Code: Digital Tools and Best Practices in the Common Core ELA Classroom

Presenters Alice Chen and Jen Roberts will share the best classroom-tested units and strategies from their digital ELA classrooms. From tips and tools for faster formative assessments to standards-based units that engage students in research and writing, Alice and Jen have ideas you can use right away and suggestions for improving classroom workflow. Not just gadgets and gizmos, this session is designed around pedagogy and practical classroom practice. Learn to leverage digital resources for efficiency, engagement, and learning.

\*Bring your laptop (preferred) or tablet for hands-on practice.

**Alice Chen**



Twitter @wonderchedu  
 and on her blog at wonderchedu.blogspot.com  
 English Teacher | Technology Coach | Google for Education Certified Innovator | 2014 Lead PBS Digital Innovator | Speaker | Trainer | Consultant | Freelance Writer

**Jen Roberts**



Twitter @JenRoberts1  
 and on her blog at LitandTech.com  
 English Teacher | Co-author of *PowerUp: Making the Shift to 1:1 Teaching & Learning* | Google for Education Certified Innovator | Consultant | Presenter

**To register online, go to [www.CATEweb.org](http://www.CATEweb.org)**

**REGISTRATION FORM for Promising Practices Fall 2016**

Pre-registration deadline is 9/30/2016.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
 School: \_\_\_\_\_ District: \_\_\_\_\_  
 e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_  
 If you're renewing or paying for membership, then include:  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Conference Registration (Member).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ 55
Conference Registration (Non/Member or Renewing Member if membership expires by 10/24/16).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ 85
☑ Check here if you do NOT want to become a member of GSDCTE/CATE.		
Student Teacher Registration (this includes one-year student teacher membership in GSDCTE/CATE).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ 30
Late Registration Fee (after September 30 / space available).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ 15

No refunds after September 30.

Total Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Methods of Payment:**

- Online personal credit card or school credit card at [www.CATEweb.org](http://www.CATEweb.org) on our secure website.
- Check (Payable to GSDCTE • Enclosed with mailed registration form)

**Mail to: Registrar, Promising Practices**  
 Carole LeCren • 4285 Asher St. #29 • San Diego, CA 92110 • FAX: 858-459-2188  
 Questions about registration? e-mail: [clecren@sandi.net](mailto:clecren@sandi.net) or call 619-276-7868 to leave a message

## *Author Spotlight*

# Marlene Wagman-Geller: English Teacher and Author



Teacher/Author  
Marlene Wagman-Geller

*Editor's note:* Author Spotlight is a new feature of *News and Notes*. In this column we will interview and shine the spotlight on local authors, especially those who also happen to be teachers. Marlene Wagman-Geller teaches English at Sweetwater High School in National City. She is the author of the following books: (1) *Behind Every Great Man; The Forgotten Women Behind the World's Famous and Infamous*; (2) *And the Rest is History: The Famous (and Infamous) First Meetings of the World's Most Passionate Couples*; (3) *Once Again to Zelda: The Stories Behind Literature's Most Intriguing Dedications* (4) *Eureka: The Surprising Stories Behind the Ideas that Shaped the World*.

### **-Who were some of your favorite writers when growing up?**

One of my favorite writers growing up--and she is still one of my favorites--is Dorothy Parker. I loved her wit and wisdom. In seventh grade I went on a classic spree and devoured *Les Miserables*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *Wuthering Heights*. I grew up in Canada and reading was my favorite indoor hobby and it left me a life-long bibliophile.

### **-Describe your typical daily routine as a writer? When do you find time to write as a teacher?**

One of the greatest challenges for me is to combine my full-time teaching job with writing. Although daunting, it can be done. On the commute to and from work I think of what to write about in my current chapter. When I return home, as soon as I can (in other words, after I give my husband a dinner which comes in a Styrofoam box), I sit in front of my computer until 9:00 p.m. Similarly, most of my weekends and vacations are devoted to my books. To get something, oftentimes we have to give up something else--which is what I have chosen to do. No regrets.

### **-Who are your favorite contemporary writers?**

When I take a break from writing it is generally to read. While diamonds may have been Marilyn's best friend, mine is my mini lap top which holds my Kindle. I generally read historic fiction and mysteries. I generally choose my books through plot rather than author and so I can't really name my favorite contemporary authors. Some of my recent favorites have been *The Nightingale*, *The Light Between Oceans*, and *The Girl on the Train*.

### **-While growing up, did any of your English teachers inspire you to pursue writing beyond the classroom? How did they inspire you?**

Alas, I had no 'Anne Sullivan.' My desire to write came from my love of novels and the dream one day my name would grace the spine of a book. My mantra is, "Dreams don't just have to be for sleeping."

**-What advice would you give to students who want to develop their writing skills?**

My advice to aspiring students who want to be writers is to read. My parents' first language was not English and they had very little in the way of formal schooling. My vocabulary acquisition came from the pages of books. My other advice is to pursue their dreams and to be deaf to the naysayers.

**-Are there one or two books about writing that you would recommend?**

My literary agent recommended *Self Editing for Fiction Writers*. I purchased it but found that writing comes from the heart more so than a how-to manual.

**-What advice would you give to teachers who want to nurture the creative writing skills of their students?**

My advice to teachers who want to nurture their students' creative writing skills is to expose them to literature which whets their interest. I would also expose them to the tools of the trade: vocabulary.

**-What advice would you give to novice adult writers (i.e. teachers) who want to pursue writing?**

My advice to novice adult writers is to give reign to their dream. When they have written they should actively seek representation and not be deterred by rejection notices. The 99 no's do not matter--just the one yes. I also recommend attending writers conferences. During the break I am giving a workshop at the Southern California's Writing Conference in Irvine. There is one coming up in San Diego this winter where I hope to be a guest speaker as I was last year. These are wonderful opportunities to meet literary agents, editors, and fellow writers which can segue into publication. I would also tell them that publishing has been one of my life's greatest joys. It has allowed me to have wonderful experiences such as TV, book, radio and magazine interviews and to travel to new places. It has also allowed me to cross paths with wonderful people who I otherwise would not have met. In addition, the money is manna from heaven, though monetary benefits are secondary to the emotional satisfaction and sense of accomplishing my ultimate bucket-list desire.

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## National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

**Get your students to participate in the following  
writing awards programs:**

**[Achievement Awards in Writing Program \(11<sup>th</sup>  
graders\)](#)**

**or**

**[Promising Writers Program \(8<sup>th</sup> graders\)](#)**

**DUE: Nov. 1**

California Association of Teachers of English

# TEXT AND TECH:

## BLENDING TRADITION WITH INNOVATION

*Innovation is about trying something new while tradition is about honoring the past. Usually innovation and tradition are seen as pulling in opposing directions. Write about a time when innovation and tradition came together. You can write a personal essay, an expository piece, a work of fiction, or a poem that explores this blend of the old and the new.*

**AWARD CATEGORIES:**

Awards will be given in the following divisions:

- Grades 3-4
- Grades 5-6
- Grades 7-8
- Grades 9-10
- Grades 11-12
- College

**AWARDS:**

Statewide winners in each category will be published in *California English*.

**TO ENTER:**

Entries must be sent to and judged in the local council where the teacher's school is located (see counties below) before they are eligible for statewide consideration. See local contacts below.

**DEADLINE: November 1, 2016**

*Local Council Contacts and their Counties*

**RULES FOR THE WRITER:**

1. Submit your entry to your teacher.
2. You may submit one of the types of writing listed in the prompt above.
3. Your entry must be typed or neatly written and then scanned.
4. Your entry cannot exceed three pages, doublespaced, 12 pt. font, with one-inch margins.
5. Create a cover sheet that includes: your full name, address, phone number, and grade level in school; and your teacher's full name, school name and address, phone number, school district, and e-mail address.
6. Your entry must be original work from this school year.
7. Your entry must be edited, proofread, and ready for publication.

**RULES FOR THE TEACHER SUBMITTING THE ENTRY:**

1. There is a limit of three student entries per teacher.
2. Each entry must be an original work from the current school year.
3. The cover sheet must include: entrant's full name, address, phone number, and grade level in school; and teacher's full name, school name and address, phone number, school district, and e-mail address.
4. If an entry is handwritten or drawn graphically, scan it as a digital file in order to submit it electronically.
5. **Electronic versions (sent via e-mail) are required. E-mail addresses are listed below. Please write in the subject: CATE 2016-2017 Creative Writing Contest Entry.**

Greater SAN DIEGO	Steve.Rodriguez@sweetwaterschools.org	• Counties: San Diego, Imperial
TUCATE	surabian.carol7@gmail.com	• Counties: Tulare and Kings
CENTRAL	franniell@hotmail.com	• Counties: Sonoma, Napa, Solano, Marin, Alameda, San Francisco, Contra Costa, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Merced, and San Benito
KERN	katie_mcnamara@kernhigh.org	• Counties: Kern and Inyo
SOUTHLAND	joannefahey@mac.com	• Counties: Orange, Los Angeles, Ventura, Santa Barbara, Riverside, and San Bernardino
REDWOOD	merrill@saintbernards.us	• Counties: Humboldt, Del Norte, Siskiyou, Mendocino, and Trinity
CAPITOL	angus.dunstan@gmail.com	• Counties: Placer, El Dorado, Yolo, Amador, Sacramento, Nevada, Calaveras, Alpine, Tuolumne, Mono
FACET	janinaschulz@sbcglobal.net	• Counties: Fresno, Mariposa, and Madera
UPPER	gcole@sutterhigh.k12.ca.us	• Counties: Modoc, Shasta, Sierra, Lassen, Tehama, Plumas, Glenn, Butte, Lake, Colusa, Sutter, Yuba

## Commentary

# Making Room for Creative Writing

By Steve Rodriguez

As an AP English Literature teacher, I emphasize the use of templates, outlines and sentence starters to help my students grasp the essential moves essay writers must make when responding to AP exam essay prompts. I want my students' essays to exhibit the structure/organization that allows them to express themselves in a logical manner. I also want them to be able to effectively respond when under the pressure of demanding time constraints imposed by the AP exam essay requirements. The use of templates/outlines helps them achieve these objectives. The recommended sentence stems I offer also assist them to smoothly incorporate the all-important ingredient of elaboration. Students constantly practice how to use these framework concepts until such time they are internalized.

In the past I worried such repeated practice of the same writer moves might discourage my more creative students from fully enjoying the art of writing. A comment I received from one of my students in a post-AP exam survey a couple years ago noted that we had practiced writing essays (that adhered to my recommended outline and sentence starters) so often that he felt he had merely written the same essay over and over again. I was, on the one hand, satisfied that he had obviously internalized the suggested essay outline and sentence starters—he could indeed repeatedly write quality AP essays, no matter the prompt. However, I was also concerned that encouraging my students to adhere to a certain (albeit successful) formula for AP essays might dampen their overall enthusiasm for writing and inhibit any spirit of creativity.

Accordingly, last year I made it a goal to ensure my students periodically tackled writing assignments that allowed them to demonstrate their understanding of literature **AND** practice their creative writing skills. I have since incorporated creative writing assignments into my lesson plans. For example, while reading *The Catcher in the Rye* students write their observations of Olympian High using the sarcastic persona of Holden Caulfield; after reading *Frankenstein*, they write an epilogue to the novel, using Mary Shelly's writing style; in October they submit an entry for the CATE Creative Writing Contest. I've since learned a few things. First, most students enjoy these opportunities to express their wit and unique perspectives, and they appreciate the challenge of attempting different writing formats. Second, without these special writing opportunities I run the risk of never recognizing the distinctive creativity that some of my students possess. Finally, ensuring students get to practice their creativity requires me to plan ahead—to look strategically at how my creative writing assignments can best support my AP exam preparation effort. Without this planning, I tend to skip over these types of assignments in favor of satisfying the exigencies of standard essay writing. I need to take the time to find the time for creative writing exercises—the kind of writing that may not pay off on the AP exam, but that will pay off in terms of developing student enthusiasm as well as providing those much needed opportunities for student self-expression. I've further learned the planning is definitely worth the effort!

*Bio: Steve Rodriguez teaches English at Olympian High School in the Sweetwater Union High School District. He is a National Board Certified teacher.*

## Commentary

# The African American Teacher: One Perspective

By Carol Battle

It's said that with age comes wisdom. I actually believe age brings experiences. The decision to "voice" what you've learned from those experiences is my true definition of wisdom. After finding my "voice" at the San Marcos Writing Project a few summers ago, I had the opportunity to share my wisdom on a broader scale this summer as a panelist at the National Black and Hispanic Journalists Conference in Washington, DC.

The topic of our panel was to discuss issues unique to African-American educators. We (African-Americans) are entering teaching at historically low rates while the number of African-American students is increasing. We are also leaving the profession at an alarming rate leaving a void where our voices and experiences should be represented. The following are key points that came out of our conference panel discussion:

- All students benefit from having highly qualified African-American teachers on campus. Our presence on campus comforts students who look like us and allows for unspoken cultural norms to be understood and even welcomed. We also show non-African-American students that we are professional, caring and knowledgeable, often the opposite of the way we are presented in the media.
- African-American teachers pay an additional "Black Teacher Tax" causing many of us to leave the profession sooner than our non-African-American peers. We are often the only adult with our skin tone on campus, are put on the spot as we are asked to be the spokesperson for an entire race of people and many times, have our ideas belittled or ignored. Not to mention, the times we have to explain our hair texture, food choices, history, views on current events and stave off having our natural hair be pet like a dog.
- There is a stigma that African-American teachers can only teach African-American students. This is reflected in the lack of recruitment at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's). African-American undergraduates are shying away from credential programs after all the negative press teachers have received. America has made it difficult to be an educator and an African-American. While both have unique challenges, together, they can make for a daunting career path.

I've recently realized I have far too long been quiet about unique issues I face as an African-American teacher. Choosing to blend in or stay quiet, particularly in a school and district where African-American teachers are sparse has come at the price of sharing wisdom in the hope of a better future for those that follow behind me. It is my job to share concerns, propose solutions and ensure a legacy of teachers of color when it's my turn to hang up my lesson plans.

*Bio: Carol Battle is currently a 7th grade Humanities teacher at Oak Valley Middle School in San Diego, CA where she was recently recognized as the 2015-16 Teacher of the Year. She has been teaching for seventeen years.*



Last year was Tequila and a Text.  
The year before was Beer and a Book.  
In keeping with our developing tradition,  
this year's social meetup for San Diego teachers of English language arts will be...

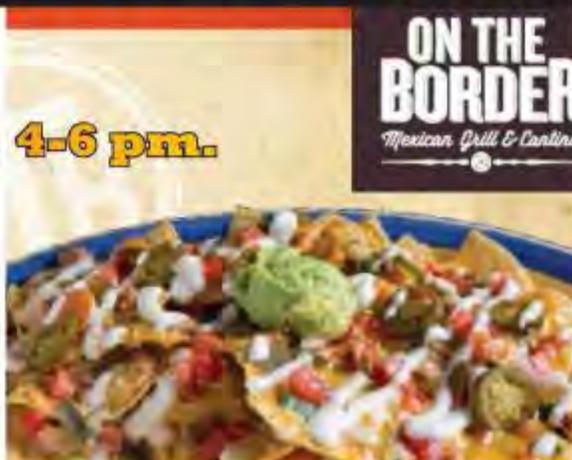
# Nachos & Novelists

Drop by On the Border in Mira Mesa  
(10789 Westview Parkway, near Edwards Cinema)

**Tuesday, January 24, 2017, 4-6 pm.**

Share some nachos (and whatever) with some exciting authors from the San Diego area.

Meet and greet local authors, ask about their craft, and return to your classroom with some great insights to share with your students about writing, reading, and life!



**No Cost Social Event for English Language Arts Teachers**

presented by San Diego CATE

[www.GSDCTE.org](http://www.GSDCTE.org)



## GREATER SAN DIEGO COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

The Greater San Diego Council of Teachers of English (aka SD CATE) is the local council of teachers of English and language arts for the San Diego and Imperial Counties. Membership in SD CATE entitles teachers to participate in local professional development events (by and for teachers), social activities, and resources and ideas for the English/language arts classroom. Visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/greatersandiegocouncil> and our website at <http://www.gsdcte.org/>