

# The English Pub: ACTELA Newsletter

Arkansas Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts



## Letter from the Editor

ACTELA Board members were recently asked to consider the following writing prompt:

*We go to conferences to share ideas and to grow professionally, but we can never anticipate all the benefits we will receive. What unexpected benefits did you find at ACC and how will you share them with others?*

Some of their answers are highlighted on page two. Tell us if you have additional ideas about the future of ACC and how it can serve the teachers and students in your school.

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### Dear ACTELA Members,

December brings changes to ACTELA this year. Our president, Cindy Green, steps back into a past president position on the board. Our past president, Dixie Keyes, steps off the board and back into membership. Our vice-president, Sunny Styles-Foster, prepares to step up and take charge in January 2018—exciting times!

As your newsletter editor, I see the completion of a fall semester, students finishing college courses and completing degrees. I don my regalia and walk in the commencement parade thinking, as I do each time, how proud I am to be such a colorful part of the ceremony which honors the



accomplishment of our work.

The year rushes to a close. Final exams usher in Christmas break, and we while away our days with our families and friends, reading more directions for assembling presents than fiction, writing season's greeting cards instead of scholarship.

As English teachers, we still read and write and think and speak and teach, though, whether we are in school or out, in front of classrooms or in our own parlors. Write and tell us what you've been reading and writing, but first enjoy your break. Refresh yourself, and let us know what you are doing to prepare for the spring term.

Merry Christmas and happy holidays to all!

**Dr. Kay J. Walter**  
Editor, *The English Pub*

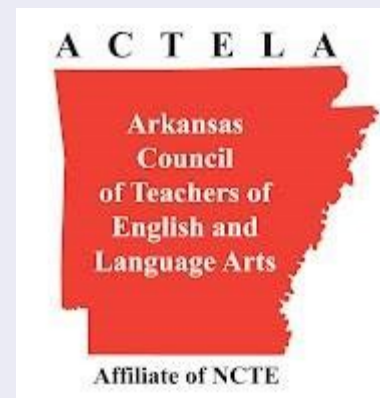
## Choose your connections!

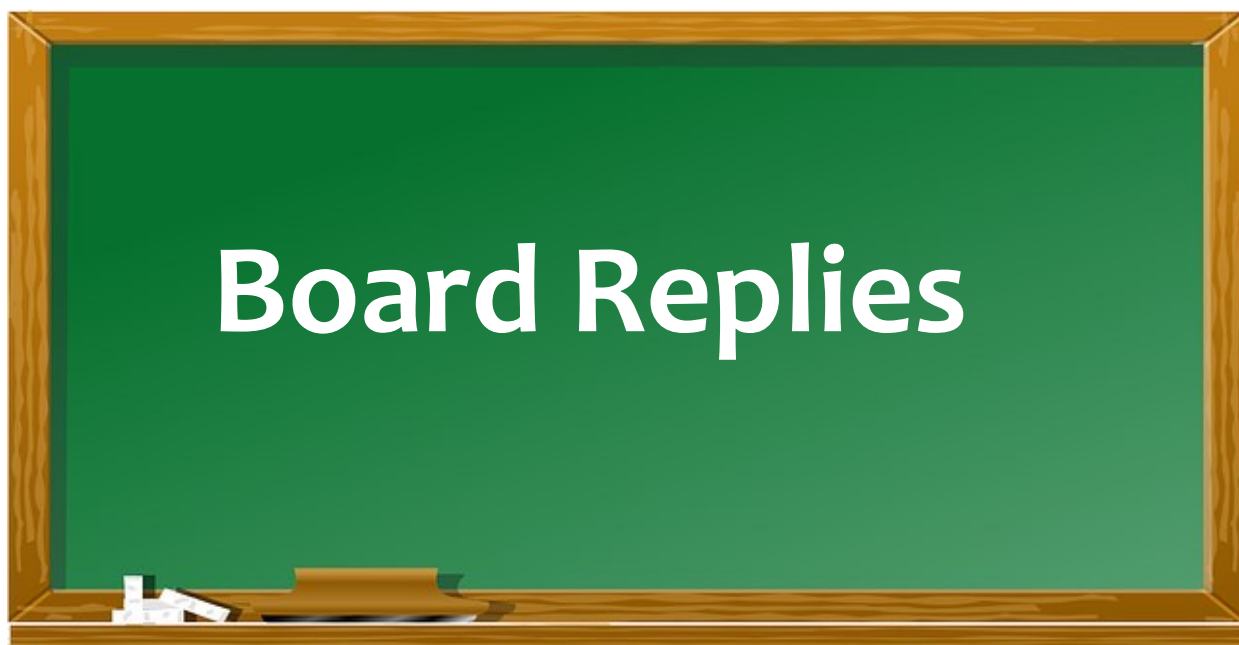
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Arkansas Council of Teachers of  
English Language Arts





- ACC 2017 was our final year at the Marriott Hotel and Statehouse Convention Center in Little Rock. I was happy to have institutional support to allow six students to accompany me and make Preservice Roundtable presentations of their ongoing research for the term papers they are writing for British Literature and Shakespeare courses. My own presentation on Editing an Award-Winning Newsletter was attended by an engaged audience, and two of my other former students, now classroom teachers, also presented sessions on their work. I was honored to be the co-recipient of a grant from ACTELA established by my friend, Linda Arnold. With my collaborator, Tiffany Steen, I presented a session, Reading Points Me in the Right Direction, about grant-writing and our efforts to establish a library of minority literature for her Alternative Classroom in McGehee. I returned to my own classrooms reinvigorated for the term's end with a new awareness of the urgency of mentoring our preservice and early-career colleagues and an enhanced appreciation for the power of collaboration. I will act upon these gifts by seeking out new opportunities to join my own efforts with those of my junior colleagues and students to create and promote ideas which forward and encourage us all by highlighting our successes for all to see. *Kay J. Walter, University of Arkansas at Monticello*
- Arkansas Curriculum Conference offers teachers a great opportunity to lead professional teacher-to-teacher instruction. This year's conference offered some of the best outside professional development opportunities. I was able to attend a session on social justice in the English classroom that provided insightful new approaches to meeting the needs of my students. I was also able to lead two sessions and practice my professional chops. As a member of the technology committee I was able to facilitate countless teachers' learning. An unexpected side effect of professional conferences like ACC is the opportunity to meet teachers from across the state who

have struggles similar to my own in the classroom. This year I was able to get great advice on my own professional issues from teachers with real experience and knowledge. The friendships I made with these teachers have continued on past the conference and add to my professional support system. *Grover Welch, Newport Special*

- I always come away from the ACC having gained some new "nugget" of nerdy goodness to share with my teachers, but one thing I did not anticipate this year was the number of pre-service teachers/students and the number of first-time attendees who were all so enthusiastic about the conference. While that may seem like a minor thing to notice, it caused me to pause and re-experience the conference through that novice lens. I approached my own session with the thought that many--possibly all--of the attendees were hearing the information for the first time. The fact that I had 15 participants (even though it was the last session of the day and located at the end of the convention center) solidified my resolve to do a better job when working with my teachers, regardless of their experience. I cannot make assumptions about what teachers already know or what they are excited to hear. My plan for the remainder of the year is to reach out and draw energy from our novice teachers and share that enthusiasm with the experienced teachers. We can all gain so much from one another! *Dawn Bessee, Crowley's Ridge Education Cooperative*
- I enjoy the collegial relationships I have developed over the years of ACC and conferences like it. Wonderful sessions, exciting new ideas and methods, and a general energetic insurgence of my teaching in the classroom. It is just a wonderful experience! *Cindy Green, Virtual Arkansas*



**If you are looking for a way to help your students master the plot points of a complex text, try this link to Overly Sarcastic Videos. The tone is amusing, and the story lines are clear:**

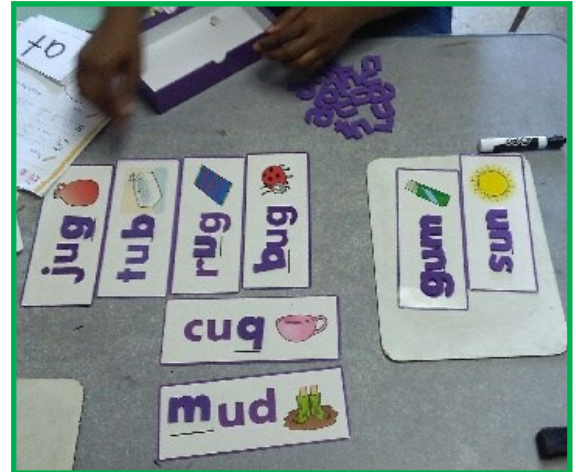
**<https://www.youtube.com/user/RedEyesTakeWarning/videos>**

# Little Learning

by Brycial Williams

Spark the Nation Learning Academy, Wynne

This academy was held in Wynne, AR at New St. James Missionary Baptist Church. Since I was a little boy, I have always wanted to teach and help those in need. In school, I struggled with reading and writing. I received tutoring to help me make progress in my lessons. My mother worked hard every day to make sure we had the best education possible. Upon being selected as Arkansas's Teacher for the Dream 2015, I wanted to help students who were struggling in reading and writing just as I did. As one of my projects, I started my own summer learning academy. It was called Spark the Nation Learning Academy. This academy was for students in Pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The program met for two months



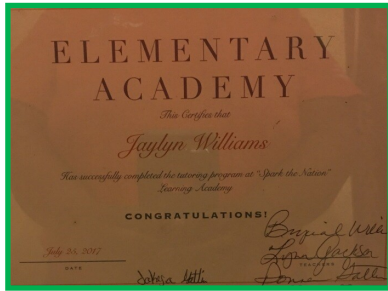
Words provide many challenges for reluctant readers. Help to master them makes learning fun and forges a path toward academic success.



through the summer on Mondays through Thursdays. I had two aides working with me and several volunteers. I wanted to help struggling children become successful in school and know that all things are possible if they would just believe in themselves as achievers. We served fifteen students in the Learning Academy. Various donations were made for food, supplies, and even

Focused attention on lessons over the summer months gives students a head start on overcoming the obstacles that will face them in the fall

a field trip to Incredible Pizza. I thank God for the opportunity to make my dreams a reality which promotes the success of our children.



Each student received a certificate.



Aides and volunteers help the students complete the lessons Brycail develops to strengthen the literacy skills of his students.



Brycail helps students see success for themselves as small groups work to accomplish their goals each day.



Brycail Williams motivates all his students to learn. He is a strong male role model of professional integrity for the children of Wynne to look up to.



The eager engagement of the children in the lesson about letters and their sounds is obvious. They are clearly proud and excited about what they are learning from Brycial.



These students are hard at work learning to become productive scholars.



A little effort on the part of a teacher makes Brycial's young scholars capable of learning experiences that will enhance their success in school.

# Learning from Learning: How Students with Children Affect Their Literacy Development

by Christa McDaniel, English major  
University of Arkansas at Monticello

When I first found out I was going to be a mother prior to completing my education, friends and teachers alike immediately bombarded me with the question of what I would do with my life. When I answered that my plans to attend college had not changed, they met me, perhaps still with the best of intentions, with outrage:

“Being a mother and a student just aren’t compatible!”

“You won’t have any time to do your reading AND spend time with your son! It’s just not fair to him!”

“Go to college AND put a small child through school? How ever will you manage?”

Amid all of these grievances, I still stood steadfast in my future plans.



**Christa and Gavin enjoy storytelling time together.**

Surely being a parent and being a student could complement each other, after all. There had to be some benefit to studying literature while my child hovered over my books, happily observing the pictures while I drew meaning from the rows upon rows of words. Well, both to my surprise and to the shock of my past teachers and crowd of doubters, being a student mother to a student affected my child's literacy in ways I could never have imagined.

My son Gavin is learning to read this year, having just started kindergarten and turning six in a few months. I'm sure any parent can attest to the challenges of getting a small child interested in literacy. Gavin would gladly choose baseball or videogames over sitting down and practicing letters any day. His nightly bedtime stories hardly do anything to give him a competitive edge in school, either. My unique situation as an English major in college gave me a bit of an advantage over most parents in solving this conundrum.

It isn't uncommon for me to find myself wondering how I can include my experiences as a mother in my academics, namely as I begin the research portion of my undergraduate courses. One fateful afternoon, during a particularly interesting unit in a creative writing course, my professor informed us that our next project would involve taking one project we had completed and turning the work into a new project by changing the medium. I had previously written a short story for an adult audience revolving around a seed's haunting journey to germinate before death and how it ended up in a burned forest, germinating to find



**They talk over details of the stories they create.**



itself becoming a poisonous foxglove. Thinking of Gavin, I tweaked this story to be a simple, motivating journey of a seed learning to love himself despite being unconventional. With a quick search in the creative commons, I found illustrations, and before I knew it, I had put together a children's book that still rests on Gavin's bookshelf to this very day. I used my obligations as a student to find a way to promote Gavin's success as he learns, given his journey in school this year.

Being an English student requires, as any English major can attest, an abhorrent amount of reading. Getting off work at the same time my son gets out of school means I have to find creative ways to do reading homework while keeping a spritely six year old entertained. The only fix to this looming issue came with inclusion of my son in my studies. He, as a kindergartener, might not be able to offer much critical analysis on Sherman Alexie, but our reading sessions do capture his attention and provoke questions on his end. After a Thursday night reading at our newly designated reading table, he colored a picture of Alexie and promptly asked me about Native American children's stories, inquiring if his storybook had "more stories."

Not only had my assigned reading allowed him to turn off the videogames and listen to literature, it drove a desire to read more deeply into his mind. In turn, it made an otherwise daunting reading more enjoyable for me. Little moments like these proved wrong all of the people who claimed being a mother and being a student would never go hand in hand because being a mother and



**Sometimes Christa helps compose the stories.**

student allowed me to promote literacy in another student while finding ways to make my own continued educational journey simpler.

This curiosity started quickly coming home with him every week in the form of a note from his teacher. She gushed and gushed about Gavin's constant demands for new books, more intensive reading lessons, and his mind-blowing progress at learning to recognize letters. Even without me present, Gavin's love for reading flourished.

It might be some years before Gavin picks up a book of Alexie's on his own, or thumbs through a Victorian anthology with real intent, but the trickle of thought promoting these actions will grow because his own literacy started early. When parents are students, parents and children are able to take advantage of the extra incentive to read, whether it be from cleaned up versions of Alexie's work or from their own inspired storytelling.



**Sometimes Gavin likes to compose the stories all by himself.**



# NCTE

## Comments on the St. Louis Convention from Kay Walter:

From the Wednesday evening registration through the Sunday sessions, the national conference was packed with inspirational and rewarding experiences. Thursday's general session was a conversation which included students, educators, NCTE officials, and Peggy O'Brien and Michael LoMonico from the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC. For Friday's general session, Jimmy Santiago Baca



Jocelyn A. Chadwick, NCTE President, with Lynn Novick, documentary filmmaker, and Tim O'Brien, author of *The Things They Carried*, discuss the Vietnam War and the Power of Storytelling in a session which teased the ten-part eighteen hour PBS documentary film series directed by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, *The Vietnam War*.

NCTE is a time to get close to authors, shake hands, get an autograph, and chat.



spoke with students and the audience about the power of poetry to change lives. Saturday offered a conversation with Tim O'Brien. A timely visit to the Exhibit Hall provided opportunities to get him to autograph copies of his book, *The Things They Carried*, and a little patience resulted in autographs of many other authors including Kate Messner and Jimmy Baca. Friday night festivities included a Shakespeare Flash Mob reading the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*. Over three hundred enthusiastic and non-gender-restrictive voices asked and answered "O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?" This event was followed by a Happy Hour with Folger Shakespeare Library representatives.

Sunday morning offered the NCTE Affiliate Roundtable Breakfast, at which ACTELA was well-represented. We were honored with three Affiliate Awards—Newsletter of Excellence, Website of Excellence, and Kent D. Williamson Affiliate Membership Recruitment.

If you missed your chance to take part, start planning for next year in Houston!



**Dr. Kay J. Walter (L) and Pamela Jones (R) pose for a photo with Dr. Peggy O'Brien (Center) , Director of Education at the Folger Shakespeare Library.**

### Comments from Dixie Keyes:

This year, I was honored to participate in a Presidential Session organized by NCTE President Jocelyn Chadwick. I benefited so much from exploring her book *Teaching Literature in the Context of Literacy Instruction* (Chadwick & Grassie, 2016) as I explored a new way to develop text sets across time and place. From networking with educator friends across the country to attending sessions with authors like Laurie Halse Anderson and Jason Reynolds, NCTE 2017 was an extraordinary professional development event for me. It is so refreshing to see such active and engaged teachers learning so much from one another. I can't wait for next year in Houston!



**NCTE works hard at being inclusive and diverse.**

### Comments from Dawn Bessee:

I loved being able to drive to the conference this year be-



**In St Louis, fun was everywhere.**

cause I knew I could maximize on the "free book" extravaganza in the exhibit hall! Of course, that also resulted in daily trips walking back to the hotel with two or more bags of books on my arms, but it was completely worth it. The conference itself was incredible. There were so many amazing sessions that I couldn't possibly get to all of them. While there, I did come to the realization that as much as I adore listening to my favorite presenters speak (Kelly Gallagher, Penny Kittle, Kylene

Beers, etc.), I have almost reached a point of saturation with the kind of information they can share in a 20-minute snippet. This year, I stepped away from some of my standard fixations and explored sessions with authors of diverse books and topics about which I have limited knowledge. It was a bit unnerving to be surrounded by others who were more familiar with these new (to me) authors and their bodies of work because I, a 28-year veteran teacher, was yet the novice among the group. The experience inspired me to work with my teachers to expand their knowledge of diverse authors, cultures, and experiences.



**Lactation Rooms are provided for mothers.**



**Even the Shakespeare Flash Mob was gender neutral. We chose to recite Juliet's lines from the balcony while others recited Romeo's from the rotunda below.**



## St. Louis was an amazing start, and Houston will write the next chapter!

Now is the time to start planning to join your colleagues for 2018 NCTE Convention in Houston. The call for proposals is already open here:

<http://convention.ncte.org/2017-convention/2018-proposal/>

### **Comments from Pamela Jones:**

Having gone to the NCTE Conventions in Atlanta 2016 and St. Louis 2017 has been a wonderful experience, and I want to return to each NCTE conference in the future! It is exciting to see the sessions and meet English teachers from all over the United States. Participating in the Folger Shakespeare sessions and the flash mob was amazing! I'm grateful to all those who presented as well as those who were in the exhibit hall with their free books, totes, pens, note pads and much more. I can't wait for Houston 2018!

# Conference Highlights



Arkansas poet Bryan Borland was our featured author at the ACTELA Luncheon.

Visiting the Exhibit Hall to make professional connections and to gather swag is always a fun adventure.



# ACC Responses

**Conferences are opportunities for sharing ideas and drawing strength from a network of professionals who support our efforts and sympathize with our passions. Our preservice members from ASU and UAM are just learning how much fun this can be. Those who took part in the Preservice Roundtable session this year share excited reflections on the conference and its benefits to their professional development. For them, ACC often represents an initial introduction to the life of a professional educator. Some of them have more experience with conference going, and they compare our state conference with others they have attended. None of them realizes yet the sacrifices we working teachers make to take part in conferences or the joys we find in reanimating our enthusiasm for the classroom through professional development, but these are things they will learn in time.**

**If you have memories or photos from ACC 2017, share them. We'd like to hear from classroom instructors too, and we are always looking for ways to make our affiliate and our conference more relevant and supportive for our members. Dr. Kay J. Walter, UAM Professor of English**

## **Comments from our newest members about this year's state conference:**

- As a student who frequents academic conferences, my presentation experiences range quite extensively. ACC met my idea of a full conference experience with flying colors. While most conferences I attend have a strict focus area, ACC offered an array of presentations in every subject. Teachers discussed everything from the natural minerals found in Arkansas to publishing in the medical field. The focus on teachers doing the presentations makes ACC particularly unique. My presentation covered Edmund Spencer's *The Faerie Queene*, focusing on the theme of justice and how Spencer compensates justice and violence. Conference attendees seemed particularly interested in the ambiguous nature of my thesis and questioned what research I had planned for the future. The best part about ACC is that I can use the feedback to expand my presentation and further my research. My fellow preservice presenters from UAM covered just about everything I could imagine about early British





Preservice teachers share their curricular and research projects in the Preservice Roundtable session.

literature. Their presentations were confident and thorough. Conference presentations, like the Preservice Roundtable session I took part in, give future teachers experience in public speaking and preparing material to teach others. I think going to conferences like ACC is an incredibly important educational experience.

*CHRISTA MCDANIEL, UAM STUDENT*

- I sadly was unable to attend the ACC this year. I heard from all my classmates that ACC was phenomenal. I know my peers made outstanding presentations because I got to see their posters and listen to them practice for the conference. If you attended the

Preservice Roundtable, you might have caught a glimpse of my fabulous cat painting on my friend's poster about Thomas Gray. I am envious of those who were able to attend the conference. They all talked about how informative the presentations of the other scholars were, as well as their growing confidence in being scholars presenting their own work in professional settings. I wish I could have attended and presented a poster to gain valuable experience and join my peers as developing scholars. I am appreciative of Dr. Walter's extending this opportunity because I know graduate schools desire students with practice at making professional presentations. *Will Leggett, UAM student*

- The conference was way more than I could imagine. I had no idea there would be so many people! Meeting new people with different stories and backgrounds who have the same common interest was wonderful. My eyes have been open to something new. I am totally grateful and I know my children will benefit for years to come. *Tiffany Steen, McGehee Elementary School Alternative Classroom teacher*
- Since the ACC was my first conference trip, I had little knowledge prior to attending from which I could imagine the experience. However, I have to say that after the weekend was over, I have high praise for the conference and everyone associated with organizing it. The ACC was a



Each student who takes part in the Preservice Roundtable receives a certificate of appreciation celebrating their presentation.

perfect balance of social and educational knowledge exchange. The real strength was brought in the form of phenomenal speakers and presenters like Arkansas poets Bryan Borland and Theresa Davis. After walking out of their session having shed two tears, I was looking at poetry in a whole new way. The variety in subject matter at the conference was astounding. Teachers from all levels would be able to find something to pique their interest. I thoroughly enjoyed the conference and have high hopes for any future conferences I will attend.

*Stephanie Clark, UAM student*

- While I did not attend ACC I heard many wonderful stories from my fellow classmates who attended. They discussed the fun they had in each other's company, the enjoyment of presenting, and all the people they heard speak at the conference. Though I was not there I am going to implement many of the things my professor discussed about the conference into a service learning project. One of the main things my professor emphasized was understanding how to teach literature to varying age groups. I intend to apply this in my project in different



Spoken-Word Poet Theresa Davis, a surprise guest speaker in Borland's breakout session, was an audience favorite.

ways, to find the best method in which to teach British literature to young children. *Emily Smith, U@N student*



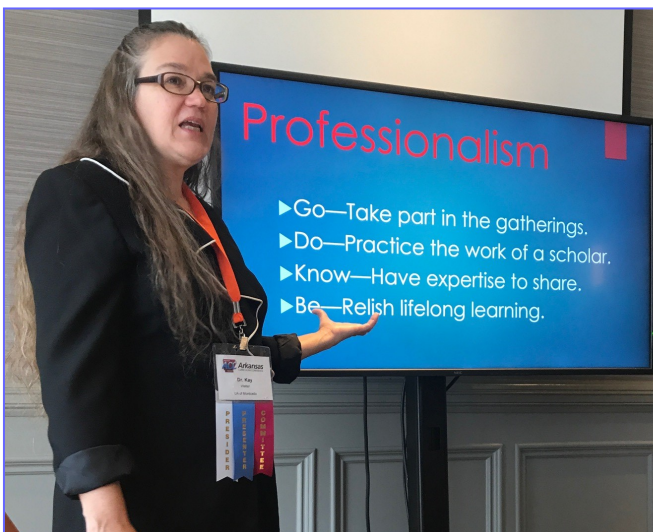
- The ACTELA conference was the highlight of my Fall 2017 semester. Along with making wonderful memories with my classmates, I also attended sessions that pertained to my future career. I got to meet many new people and learned skills I will use in my future classroom. I have no regrets on attending and wish I could attend again. Little Rock was a perfect host; we got to eat fantastic food and tour an art museum with unique pieces. It was wonderfully put together and ran smoothly. I wish it was longer so I could've soaked up more information and attended more sessions to continue bettering myself. *Grace Nash, UAM student*

- It was an honor and a privilege to go to the 2017 ACC Conference. It was the first time I have ever attended an ACC Conference and I'm so glad I went! Not only did I get to experience the talent of writers such as Theresa Davis and Bryan Borland, but I enjoyed the time I spent with my peers and my professor, Dr. Kay Walter. I also presented for the Preservice Roundtable on



**UAM sponsored the attendance of its students at the ACTELA Luncheon.**

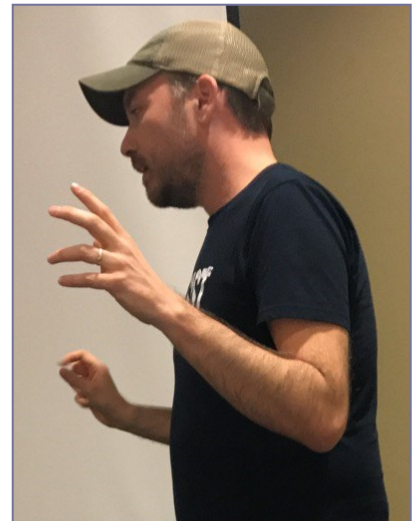
the topic of memory in the works of Samuel Pepys. It was an enjoyable experience and I learned so much from all the presentations I attended. I wish there were more conferences like this for students and teachers to enjoy. I'm saddened that this was the last ACC Conference at the Marriott because I would have loved to go back. It was definitely the most fun I've had this semester! *Ana Rodriguez-Mesa, UAM student*



**Dr. Kay J. Walter presents her session on Editing an Award-Winning Newsletter.**

- The value of service learning and other real-world experiences like presenting at professional conferences cannot be overstated. Dr. Kay Walter provides students with an array of opportunities to expand their learning beyond the classroom. I'm very proud of her for fostering academic growth and professionalism among UAM students. *Mark Spencer, UAM Dean of Arts and Humanities*
- As a student, anytime I am presented with an opportunity to pursue endeavors that both fall within the scope of my interests and behoove me; I jump at the offer. With a feeling of vigor and

terror, I was anxious to add the ACC to the list of conferences I've attended. While I have been to a number of conferences, I have only been to one literary-themed conference before the ACC. So, naturally, I had no idea what to expect. Another thing I had to consider was the fact that no two conferences are the same. Each conference is customized with its own set of challenges and rewards. The challenges all appear to be similar enough. Each has the following qualities: time constraints, public audience, and encroaching anxieties. The former two difficulties are easy enough to work around; I can work well under pressure, and I can manage a crowd with some practice. The one obstacle that remains is my nerves. No matter how much I prepare, I can dream up my own disaster before I ever open my mouth. *What if I didn't put enough time into my research? What if my presentation is not pleasing? What if I say the wrong things or get tongue tied?* I can find something wrong with anything, but I persist. Why? I suppose I go to these events for much the same reason we do anything in academia. We as scholars have a duty to uphold. If we have information, ideas, stories, or successful strategies; we share. One of the biggest desires in learning is having a fellowship to discuss your findings. Everyone needs a place where he feels appreciated and his thoughts are understood. This is not our only cause, though. The support system we gain fuels the minds and souls of those out trying to change the world with literature. After all, we face the all-important task of protecting one of the true forms of magic in this world. With the knowledge we obtain and bestow on others, we are able to change their hearts and minds forever. I believe this is the reason why we go through all the hassles that accompany professional presentations. The reward is greater than any toil. This notion holds true with my experiences at the ACC. I was blessed by this experience in many ways. I was able to meet Bryan Borland and Teresa Davis. I forged and strengthened friendships with the classmates who accompanied me. I had the pleasure of watching Dr. Walter and Mrs. Tiffany Steen give an inspiring presentation about children from my home town. I presented over a topic that deeply interests me (the life of Thomas Gray), and I had an extremely enjoyable time doing it all. I feel that this is the basis of what reading and writing are about, the root of their value. Without all of the connections we make with one another, our studies would be null. *Caleb Hayes, UAM student*



**Bryan Borland shared the joy of poetry with ACTELA over our luncheon.**



**Dr. Kay J. Walter of UAM and Mrs. Tiffany Steen of McGehee Elementary School collaborated to write a Linda Arnold Mini-grant which provided books for the Alternative Classroom.**

- As an Exercise Science Major, I approached ACTELA as an outsider looking in.

With the positive and very welcoming energy presented by everyone attending the conference, it wasn't long before I lost myself in this incredible event. I will be forever thankful for the opportunity to attend ACTELA and learn so much about literature and the life of its professionals. *Houston Wynn, UAM student*

- It was an honor serving as Teacher for the Dream 2016! This year I presented a session at the ACC conference as part of that initiative. I had a co-presenter, Brycial Williams, who was the 2015 Teacher for the Dream. Unfortunately, he couldn't be there, and we sent him well wishes and prayers for his family while I took control of the presentation myself. Our presentation was on The Importance of Dramatic Play/Retelling in Early Childhood Education. This was a collaboration between Brycial's kindergarten class and my preschool class. The main focus was that we all participate in dramatic play on a daily basis from infancy throughout adulthood. This presentation made those that were present think about that fact in an eye-opening way. After the presentation, I had the opportunity to go to the exhibit hall with other UAM students to take in the many exhibitor ready to show their wares and hand out totes, pens, USB drives, and books as well as provide information about their services. To those, I say thank you for being there! *Pamela Jones, UAM student and Drew Central Preschool teacher*

**Individual and group projects are illustrated with posters and slideshows to help the audience understand the concepts students have been exploring.**



- The grant provided to Dr. Walter and Tiffany Steen of the McGehee Elementary School ISS Classroom for reading materials affords students in a rural setting more opportunities to support the statewide reading campaign. Steen identified a need and created a partnership with Dr. Walter to locate funding to provide classroom-reading materials on different reading levels for students who spend time in ISS. The UAM/ Southeast Education Renewal Zone provided support funds for Tiffany Steen to attend the Arkansas Curriculum Conference to share how a partnership between a university professor and a classroom para-professional can support the Arkansas Reading Campaign. *Tracie Jones, UAM/ Southeast Educational Renewal Zone Director*



**Poets Bryan Borland and Theresa Davis of Arkansas's Sibling Rivalry Press presented a breakout session after the luncheon which focused on the power of poetry.**



The following authors were selected from among *Arkansas Anthology 2017* contributors for Editor's Choice Awards:

**Mackenzie Hodge**—*Lady in Waiting* drawing  
**Kensley Soffos**—"Life as a Slave" poem  
**Francesca Redditt**—"Rain" poem  
**Jasmine O'Neal**—"Peace" poem  
**Jerry McDoniel**—"Keys to Paradise" poem

# 2017 Linda Arnold Mini-grant

## Reading Points Me in the Right Direction

by Dr. Kay J. Walter and Tiffany Steen  
UAM and McGehee Elementary School



### Statement of Need:

I am the ISS teacher at McGehee Elementary School. My class consists of students ranging from kindergarten through sixth grade. A majority of my students are African Americans and reluctant readers. Many of them are recurring students throughout the year. The school does not provide extra funding for books for this classroom. What books I do have are purchased by myself or donated. A Linda Arnold Mini-grant would provide funding for books for my classroom which would encourage the literacy development of the students. This grant will be beneficial and greatly appreciated by me and my students.



TIFFANY STEEN'S  
ALTERNATIVE  
CLASSROOM AT  
MCGEHEE  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
IS A PLACE WHERE IN-  
SCHOOL SUSPENSION  
BECOMES A  
PRODUCTIVE RATHER  
THAN A SHAMEFUL  
EXPERIENCE.

TIFFANY ARRANGES THE GRANT-  
PROVIDED BOOKS INTO A LIBRARY  
CELEBRATING THE DIVERSITY OF HER  
STUDENTS.

As a native of McGehee, I understand the important role McGehee Elementary School plays in the education of children with diverse backgrounds. And as a librarian, I recognize how important it is to have books that accurately represent this diversity. For these reasons, I am so happy to hear that Dr. Kay Walter and Ms. Tiffany Steen have been awarded the Linda Arnold Mini-grant to purchase books that feature African Americans as main characters for the Alternative Classroom at MES. I look forward to working with them on future grant proposals to continue building this important collection of diverse books.

**Adam Clemons, African and African American Studies Librarian, UC Berkeley**



**Like many great ideas, it all started by sharing a book. *Spirited Minds: African American Books for Our Sons and Our Brothers* is an annotated bibliography of African American literature edited by Archie Givens and endorsed by the Givens Foundation.**

**Response from the Givens Foundation:**

Thanks for your message and for recommending our *Spirited Minds* as a resource for teachers in Arkansas. We very much appreciated it.

I will visit your link to read the review. We will keep you updated if a new edition is released.

Congratulations on your recent award from the NCTE! We will stay in touch.

Best Regards,

Herman J. Milligan., Jr., Ph.D.

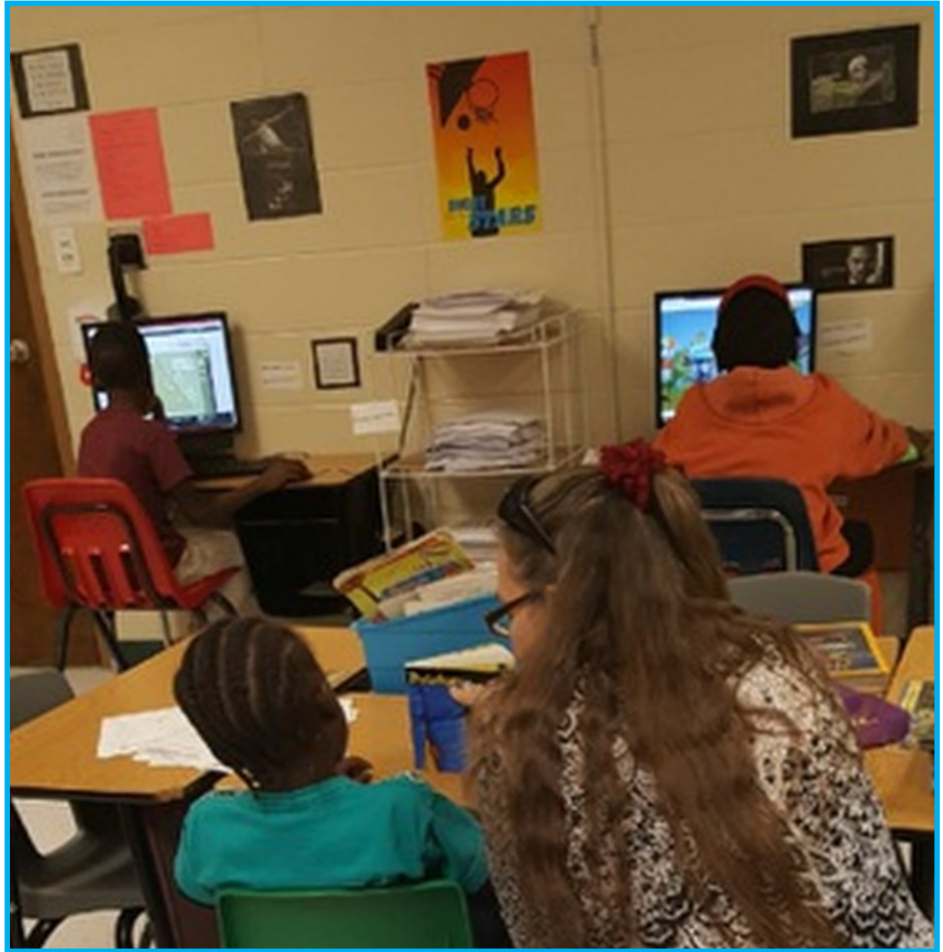
Chair, Board of Directors



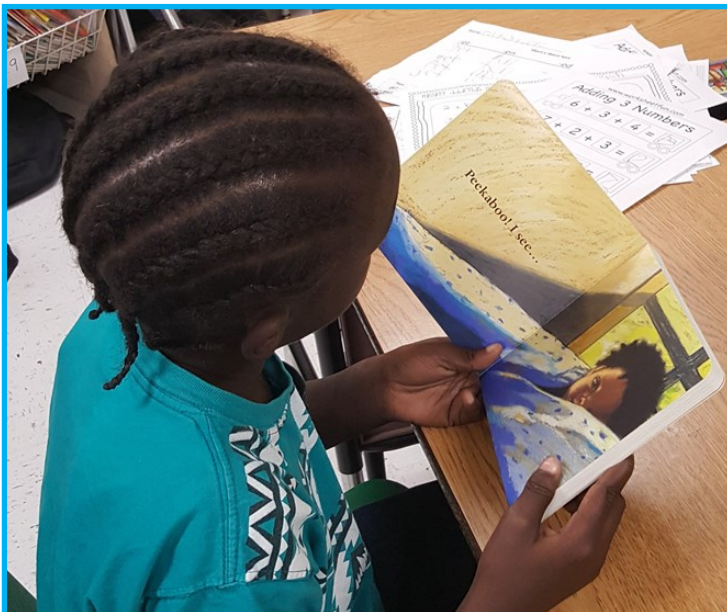
## Session

### Description:

Attendees will gain an understanding of how culturally relevant books can provide an escape for students who are in an ISS environment. Having books that reflect students' cultures in a positive light will allow them to see life, and its challenges, through the eyes of someone who looks like they do. Attendees will also gain an awareness of the Linda Arnold Mini-grant and how this grant helped this ISS teacher provide a much needed classroom library for her students.



**TIFFANY'S YOUNG LEARNERS NEED PATIENT ATTENTION TO DEVELOP THE LITERACY SKILLS REQUIRED TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THEIR CLASSROOMS.**



### Response from Linda Arnold:

Thank you so much for thinking of me and for sharing your proposal. I am so proud to have this mini-grant named for me. It is an honor to have my name associated with fine projects like the one you and Tiffany have proposed. Best wishes at the conference and for the year ahead. Sending love,  
Linda

**FINDING THEMSELVES REFLECTED IN THEIR BOOKS MOTIVATES THE STUDENTS TO READ.**

# Award Winners at ACC

Outgoing ACTELA President, Cindy Green, presents the **2017 Linda Arnold Mini-grant** to collaborators Dr. Kay J. Walter of UAM and Tiffany Steen of McGehee Elementary School.



## Response from Superintendent Chris Ferrell:

McGehee School District is very proud of Tiffany and her dedication to the success of our students. She is a perfect example of what a quality educator should be.



Gina Andrews was our Pre-service Teacher of the Year.



Darnell Rancifer was our Secondary Teacher of the Year.



*Arkansas Anthology 2017*  
Editor's Choice Winner

# ACTELA TOYS

# ANNOUNCEMENTS, AWARDS, NEWS, AND NOTES

- **Dr. Kay J. Walter** received the UAM Alumni Merit and Achievement Award for 2017. For an inspirational view of what teaching means to her, see her video here: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/gsdv98zlbv4xdu0/walter.mp4?dl=0>
- A review of *All Great Art is Praise: Art and Religion in John Ruskin* by Aidan Nichols, OP authored by **Dr. Kay Walter** is available in *The Companion* here: <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/shop/journal-publications/>
- *The Companion* also includes another article by **Dr. Kay Walter** about a service learning project her students completed in England, and an article by Paul Dawson describes his visits to her classrooms and the influence Arkansas is having on Ruskin scholars.
- An article co-authored by **Dr. Kay Walter** and Kathy Anderson appears in the current issue of *AEJ* <http://arkansas-english-journal.weebly.com/current-aej-issue.html>
- **ACTELA** collected three affiliate awards at the NCTE Affiliate Roundtable Breakfast in St. Louis this year: Newsletter of Excellence Award, Website of Excellence Award, and Kent D. Williamson Affiliate Membership Recruitment Award.
- ACTELA welcomes our newest student members who presented at ACC's Pre-service Roundtable: **Caleb Hayes, Ana Rodriguez-Mesa, Stephanie Clark, Houston Wynn,** and **Grace Nash** from UAM and **Bri Brown, Brooke Beaver, Hali Pratt,** and **Laureal Risner** from ASU. Read their comments about the conference experience starting on page fifteen.
- NCTE Region Five has a new representative. **Dixie Keyes**, our former representative, stepped down in St. Louis, and Lawrence Baines from University of Oklahoma took up the mantle. He's a Professor of English Education there.

- **Lynne H. Hehr** also retired as ACC director following this year's gathering in Little Rock. Stay tuned to hear what the presidents of the co-sponsoring groups decide to do for the future of ACC.



Lynne Hehr received gifts from the co-sponsoring organizations.

- **Ana Rodriguez-Mesa** completed her Associate of Arts degree in December and will take part in UAM's Fall Commencement ceremony.
- **Dr. Kay J. Walter** took part in the inaugural Conference on Sermon Studies at Marshall University in West Virginia, presenting her paper, "Inherited Inspiration and Literary Leanings: The Sermons of Robert Stephen Hawker."
- **Dr. Kay J. Walter** and Kathy Anderson took part in CONNECTIONS 5: A Conference of Critical Thinking, co-presenting their collaborative paper, "Critical Thinking, Mammalian Learning Rituals, and Remedial College Reading."
- **Dr. Kay J. Walter** and **Tiffany Steen** co-wrote a Linda Arnold Mini-grant, Reading Points Me in the Right Direction, which was awarded at the ACTELA Luncheon at ACC 2017. The grant provides a library of African American children's books for the Alternative Classroom at McGehee Elementary School.



• ACTELA's Teachers of the Year for 2017 are **Darnell Rancifer**, Secondary, and **Gina Andrews**, Preservice. Congratulations to our TOYs!

- **Houston Wynn** completed his Bachelor of General Studies degree in December and will take part in UAM's Fall Commencement ceremony.



# Arkansas Anthology 2017

ACTELA was proud to host readings from Editor's Choice Award winners published in *Arkansas Anthology 2017* at our reception in Butler Center. This issue is completely interactive and also available as a downloadable pdf here:

[http://actela.weebly.com/uploads/2/4/7/4/24748280/2017\\_arkansas\\_anthology.pdf](http://actela.weebly.com/uploads/2/4/7/4/24748280/2017_arkansas_anthology.pdf)

The call for submissions for *Arkansas Anthology 2018* is available here:

[http://actela.weebly.com/uploads/2/4/7/4/24748280/call\\_for\\_submissions.jpg](http://actela.weebly.com/uploads/2/4/7/4/24748280/call_for_submissions.jpg)

Contact Aaron Hall for further information about access or submissions.

**[ARAnthology@gmail.com](mailto:ARAnthology@gmail.com)**



# AEJ

## Turning the Digital Page

AEJ Volume 3.1 is now available online here:

<http://arkansas-english-journal.weebly.com/current-aej-issue.html>

The call for manuscripts for upcoming issues is available here:

<http://arkansas-english-journal.weebly.com/call-for-manuscript-submission.html>

You can support our journal by sending us your scholarship and encouraging your friends and colleagues to submit theirs for review too. Send them to

**[ACTELA123@gmail.com](mailto:ACTELA123@gmail.com)**.

# Why We Must Mentor

by Dr. Kay J. Walter

University of Arkansas at Monticello

I know no greater joy as a teacher than finding a new reason to brag about the success of my students. Their accomplishments are the surest evidence that I am fulfilling my responsibilities as an instructor, and their abilities to articulate their stories clearly and compellingly justify my continued employment teaching English.

I can't take much credit for the adventures represented in this issue, but I still feel great pride in the fact that I taught many of the authors published here. It was only an accident of fate that Krista Petit found her way into my Freshman Composition class at the University of Central Arkansas in Conway as a teenager, and I'm sure she felt as deeply as I (then an early career teacher) the miracle of our both surviving. A teenager no longer, these days she is known as Dr. Krista Nelson.

Now that she is a practiced, effective, credentialed Doctor of Psychology, we meet one another as peers. Knowing her now and respecting her expertise shapes the way I view my current freshmen. As an alumna of the university where I teach, I feel deeply the need to mentor not just my graduating upperclassmen but even the teenagers in my freshmen writing classes.

When we read "Graduation" by Maya Angelou, I always remind my students "This is non-fiction. There really was a man who had the narrowness of view to look at an auditorium of eager young children and imagine none of them really mattered to him." One of them would grow to be a world-renown author with a voice and a motivation to tell his story.

I'm from around here, and my students and I know what it means to have family connections. I ask them "What would it feel like to be related to this man?" We must never forget, as Mr. Donleavy clearly did, that every child counts, every one of our students, and the bitterest truth of Angelou's story is that even she was not the most promising child in the room that night. Did you ever wonder what became of Henry Reed?

How often do you wonder what will become of your own students? I look at them and wonder which of them will become my colleagues or Krista's, and I wonder what stories I want them to tell about the classrooms we shared when they were too intellectually young to see far along their path. Krista's story of teaching and learning from her students, as I once taught and learned from her, provides our Global Perspective in this issue. Read it and see that, through our students, our reach really is global, extending beyond the space and time we occupy. Our effect is powerful, and our audience is vast. We are shaping the future of our world one classroom at a time.

# Global Perspective

## Knowledge Breeds Compassion

by Krista Nelson

Southern Arkansas University

Maybe it was a mid-life crisis, but I learned a tremendous amount about myself and other cultures when I ran away to work and reside in the



Island sunset on Nevis, West Indies

Caribbean. At age 43, I resigned from a com-

fortable, and predominantly secure, career as an assistant professor at a small rural college in southeast Arkansas. I moved to a diminutive Caribbean island, Nevis, in the West Indies to accept employment as a Medical Psychologist teaching mental health disorders and treatment to future physicians. My youngest daughter travelled with me to dwell on the island. Meanwhile, my oldest daughter and husband stayed behind for her freshman year in college and to continue his career as an attorney.

While living in Nevis, I was a minority. I was a Caucasian, middle-aged woman who had grown up comfortably and





Wild monkeys on Nevis

American South is Christian. When you meet new people in the southern part of the country, it is not uncommon to be asked what church you attend before the speakers ever introduce themselves or announce their own names. The South is commonly identified as the Bible belt; however, my background could be categorized as life within the Buckle of the Bible belt!

Diversity can be such a controversial topic. Too frequently, I have heard

with some privileges. Nevis is small and lacked many modern amenities. The community of the medical school was welcoming, kind, and friendly. But, where were the Starbucks and movie theatres, right?

My colleagues were predominantly of Indian and Middle Eastern descent. The majority of my students were from the United States and Canada, but these students were quite different from me. To begin with, these students were of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. The bulk of my new medical students were also of Middle Eastern or Indian background. These new students represent a large ingredient in our melting pot of the United States. These future doctors were primarily Islamic or Hindu in their religious faith. Being from the South, I had minimal experiences to observe diversity of religion or cultural experiences. For the most part, the



Krista (in aqua, fifth from left) with her students



derogatory comments about how ethnic minorities are responsible for our lack of jobs, increased taxes, and poor healthcare. As a teaching psychologist, practicing therapist, and racial activist, I had always considered myself to be open-minded and cognizant of the benefits of ethnic diversity. However, as a new islander and minority myself, I came to recognize how my beliefs and values could profit from enriching experiences with my new students. Moreover, I believed that my daughter would gain valuable insights from interactions with diversity. She often ran free at the medical school while there, and befriended several of the studying medical students. In particular, she developed two friendships: one with a young, newly married female future physician and the other with a young male upcoming doctor, who told me regularly how much she reminded him of his baby sister. Both were Muslim Americans who were raised in the Islamic faith and were from Middle Eastern ancestry, though they had been born in the United States.

During our time living on the island, there



Krista shows off her henna tattoos.



Krista's daughter enjoys the tattooing too!

were many opportunities to acquire experiences that are simply not available in Arkansas. Almost daily, my daughter and I would eat at the seaside or walk alone on a deserted beach. The medical school property adjoined a rocky coastline that frequently harbored sea urchins, starfish, sea fans, and large chunks of coral. The island cultivated beautiful vegetation and blooming tropical flowers,

trees, and shrubs. The temperature stayed between 80-82 degrees Fahrenheit almost year round. There were wild monkeys in the forest that would creep furtively closer if you shared your cookies with them. Sheep, goats, and donkeys frequently created traffic jams on the highway because they refused to move out of the roadway. Mango trees came into season, and fruit lay rotting in household yards, beside roads, and even on the medical school property.

Even with such luscious and stimulating physical experiences, I am most grateful for the opportunities to have met and interacted with my diverse colleagues and student population. The most enlightening event occurred when my daughter and I were invited to attend the faculty and student's celebration of Ramadan. The day before the Ramadan celebration, the female students gathered in the evening to

prepare by tattooing their arms, wrists, and faces with henna. My daughter and I were invited to join and partake in the henna tattooing. On the night of Ramadan, the students held a banquet at one of the local plantations on the island. The meal and celebration were held poolside on the beach at the Nisbet Plantation. As guests of the evening, we were able to watch as the men prayed as a group on their knees. The females were adorned with henna tattoos from the evening before. Their clothing was flamboyant, vivid, with many having exotic floral patterns. The students had fasted all day in preparation for the feast. Food was abundant, rich, and flavorful.

This evening exemplified to me that differences in culture are beautiful gifts to be cherished as opposed to feared. While I considered myself schooled in diversity because of my education and psychological training, I came to recognize that I still needed further education in how diverse differ-

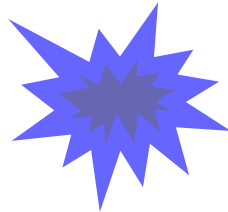


**A stormy sky seaside on Nevis**

ences in our cultural backgrounds can improve our lives. Learning and gaining knowledge about other cultures will encourage communication and understanding. Open-mindedness breeds tolerance. Tolerance generates the development of consideration and compassion.

While I will always relish that I was given an opportunity to live abroad on a Caribbean island, I believe that I will most cherish the growth and friendships that I gathered while living there. Personally, I feel as though I grew as an individual because I was given the experience of meeting new people who live vastly different lives with distinctively diverse belief systems. I think it enhanced my understanding and acceptance of the various differences in others. And that, in my opinion, was the greatest treasure of living abroad in the West Indies.

**KRISTA AND HER  
DAUGHTER LEARNED TO  
BE HAPPY ISLANDERS IN  
THE WEST INDIES.**



Questions and comments for the author of this Global Perspective may be addressed to Krista via the newsletter editor: [walter@uamont.edu](mailto:walter@uamont.edu)

# Growing Connections



Literacy and NCTE is the official blog of the National Council of Teachers of English:

<http://blog.ncte.org/>

What places would you like to learn more about? Do you dream of teaching English or Language Arts in other parts of the world? Write and tell us about these places!

Send your ideas to the newsletter editor here: [walter@uamont.edu](mailto:walter@uamont.edu)

## Email Contacts for Ideas and Input

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Teacher Initiatives	<a href="mailto:oliverc@conwayschools.net">oliverc@conwayschools.net</a>
Newsletter	<a href="mailto:walter@uamont.edu">walter@uamont.edu</a>

Have questions you'd like to see answered in our newsletter?

Send them to our newsletter editor at [walter@uamont.edu](mailto:walter@uamont.edu)