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Upcoming publication deadlines:

MEJ 2014: June 1
 Fall UPDATE: Sept. 1
 Winter UPDATE: Dec. 1
 Spring UPDATE: March 1

Send Submissions to: Curt Bobbitt cbobbitt@ugf.edu

All submissions must be in RTF format, no columns or extra spaces between paragraphs, and without embedded graphics or photos. Include a byline with your name the way you would like it to appear at the beginning of your copy.



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UPDATE

A newsletter of the Montana Association of Teachers of English Language Arts
www.opi.mt.gov/matela

MONTANA DIGITAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NETWORK:

Professional Development Aimed at MCCS

By Curtis Biggs



New to our state, the Montana Digital Professional Learning Network (MDPLN) is actively providing the delivery platform for Montana Common Core State Standards (MCCS) professional development (PD). Montana's adoption of the Common Core brings our educators a set of mathematics and English language arts standards to outline the learning objectives and skills a student will have attained at each grade level.

Along with opportunity, this effort to ensure college- and career-ready Montana students also brings an increased need for teacher access to training in MCCS.

From regional groups such as Regional Educational Service Areas (RESA) and Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) to statewide MATELA and Montana Council of Teachers of Mathematics, many organizations have developed exceptional MCCS PD content, in both face-to-face and online formats.

The time and travel investment for this MCCS PD can be as immense as the state of Montana itself, creating challenges and roadblocks for schedules and pocketbooks.

MEA/MFT, Montana Digital Academy (MTDA) and OPI recognized this MCCS PD available across the state and the need to create accessibility to it.

Using the successful MTDA online high-school credit model as an example for MCCS professional development, MEA/MFT, MTDA, and OPI conceptualized the Montana Digital Professional Network (MDPLN).

Awarded the esteemed AFT Innovation Fund (through June 2014, with a possibility of up to three total years), the MDPLN concept became a reality and is now making tracks as an online platform for MCCS professional development. The following is a sampling of current and prospective MDPLN PD offerings for Montana K12 educators:

Digital Media Blasts. Live and broadcasting weekly is the small but mighty Digital Media Blast. School Administrators of Montana (SAM) and Montana Educational Technologists Association (META) are responsible. The Blasts are weekly 20-minute online radio shows offering quick expertise for Smarter Balanced test preparation.

Essentials of the Common Core for Montana Administrators. Three-part webinar series reviewing the MCCS basics.

Heartlines: Engaging Students in Tribal Materials and Common Core Skills. Late Spring and Summer 2014. Ten-week MCCS in Indian Education for All. Graduate credit and renewal units.

STREAM. Standards-based Teaching Renewing Educators Across Montana. Four-week K-9th grade mathematics modules. April 2014. College credit and renewal units.

PASS. Paraprofessionals Achieving Standards Successfully. Summer 2014. Two-day Highly-Qualified

status training.

Other developments. Including MCCS in assessment, science, and career and technical education. Summer 2014.

MDPLN offers a variety in delivery methods as well. Most MDPLN offerings will be through the Moodle LMS (mdpln.org). Support for development and facilitation in Moodle is available.

See MDPLN Page 6



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- Cross Curricular Lesson: p 11
- Call for Poetry: p 7



AHEAD OF THE CURVE AND RIDING THE WAVE:

Engaging in Career- and College-Ready Standards

OPI Press Release

The Montana Office of Public Instruction’s Content Standards and Instruction Division is bringing together a group of educators to align high quality assessment items to Montana’s Common Core Standards (MCCS) and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

This item-analysis will illustrate the interconnected nature of the career- and college-ready standards, specifically giving teachers hands-on experience with the focus, rigor and coherence of these new standards. This alignment process will ultimately provide a deeper understanding of the standards.

The Workshop – Thirty teachers (10 math, 10 English language arts, and 10 science) will work with the OPI instructional coordinators in Helena, MT.

This study will take place in July 2014 over the course of three days.

During the workshop, educators will align high quality released items to the MCCS and the NGSS. The Item Classification Study provides teachers with a unique opportunity for item-to-standards alignment.

This work gives teachers an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the cognitive demands of the MCCS and the NGSS. The work performed in this study will serve the needs of schools/districts as they transition to career- and college-ready

standards.

What to Expect – Successful applicants will participate in a three-day workshop. On day one, applicants will receive the purpose of the study and the breadth and depth of the standards for their specified content area.

On days two and three of the workshop, teachers will review rich item sets with rigor and complexity similar to the MCCS and the NGSS.

The Item Classification Study will take place on Monday, July 14 through Wednesday, July 16 at the Helena College. Selected applicants will work from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on July 14, 8a.m.-5:15 p.m. on July 15 and 8 a.m.-5:15 p.m. on July 16.

The work requires reviewing individual items for their alignment to the standards, degree of alignment to the standards, their level of difficulty, grade-level relevancy, their appropriateness for Montana, and the required knowledge, skills and abilities.

Requirements & Stipend – Teachers will align math, English language arts, and science items to the MCCS and NGSS. All participants will be compensated with a \$500 stipend, and reimbursed by the state for their meals and travel expenses.

The application will be open from **March 17 to March 31**. Application screening begins **April 1** & selections will be made by **April 18**.

For further information contact, Colet Bartow (cbartow@mt.gov) or Ashley McGrath (amcgrath@mt.gov). □

MATELA Membership Form for 2013-2014

Please join/renew by filling out this form, making out a check, and mailing both to MATELA’s treasurer at the address on the bottom of this form. Our membership year begins Oct.1 and ends Sept. 30.

Name _____

Street/Box _____

City _____ Zip Code _____

E-mail Address _____

School _____

Grade Level _____

Phone (w) _____ (h) _____

(c) _____

PLEASE CHECK:

Student membership: \$10 ____

Retired membership: \$10 ____

Regular yearly membership: \$25 ____

Special 3-year membership: \$65 ____

New member: ____

Renewal: ____

Mail your check and this form to:

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MATELA Website:

www.opi.mt.gov/matela

Secretary Wanted Needed

MATELA seeks a secretary for the remainder of the current administrative year. The duties involve attending three remaining meetings and composing minutes for each one: April 26 in Helena, and October 17 in Missoula (two meetings at the MEA/AFT Educators’ Conference).

Salary: \$ zero
Health Care: \$ zero
Camaraderie: Immeasurable

Volunteer by emailing (cbobbitt@ugf.edu) or telephoning (406-791-5354) Curt Bobbitt, current president.

FROM PAGE 13: RUBRIC

Dappled Things: Watercolor Rubric

Rating ►	5	4	3	2
Criteria ▼	Effectively	Adequately	Somewhat	Little Evidence
Composition: The shape doesn't simply float on the paper. The painting includes a horizon line or the artist uses the entire paper to its fullest potential				
Intensity: Hues have light, middle, and dark values				
Value: Student uses value to create the illusion of form; shading and highlights emphasize shape or area				
Shape: Artwork features a shape illustrating pied beauty as a center of interest				
Harmony/Balance: Elements combine to create an aesthetically pleasing, balanced composition				
Effort: The artwork demonstrates creativity and effort. Student utilized class period(s) designated for painting. Artwork is not wrinkled, ripped, or creased.				

OPI INITIATIVES:

Prepare Pre-Service Teachers in Common Core; plan MCCS K-20 Summit

By Adam Mastandrea



In May 2013, I quit my teaching job in Honolulu, sold everything I owned that wouldn't fit into a suitcase, and moved back to Montana.

In November, I was hired as the ELA/Literacy instructional coordinator in the Content Standards and Instruction (CSI) Division of the MT OPI in Helena. I had been told prior to accepting the position, in addition to my duties as the ELA specialist, I would also be working on implementing the Montana Common Core Standards (MCCS).

I was excited to work with the new standards and in general I support any effort to increase the quality of education in Montana. I also understand that increasing student achievement is easier said than done and that higher standards require increased support for students, teachers and administrators.

On my first day at OPI, I was assigned an office, introduced to everyone, and then whisked away to six hours of meetings with consultants from the U.S. Education Delivery Institute (EDI) and Superintendent Denise Juneau's staff.

It was a hard day, but I was assured it was just unfortunate timing and not the norm. The process of writing a strategic plan for implementing the MCCS had begun in 2013, and EDI had been brought on-board to structure our planning using the "delivery" approach. For those who aren't familiar, as I wasn't until my first day on the job, "delivery" is a framework for planning and assessing progress toward your institution's goals (check out the website for more information: www.deliveryinstitute.org/delivery-approach).

Because MCCS implementation is such a large project, the CSI team had divided the work into several different strategies focusing on professional learning for teachers and administrators, assessment readiness, external communication and educator preparation programs.

I was assigned to be the lead on the Educator Prep. strategy, the purpose of which is to integrate the MCCS into all Montana

Educator Prep. programs so they are part of the foundational knowledge and instructional skill set of every pre-service teacher and administrator.

If you think about it, it's much more efficient to train pre-service teachers on the MCCS instructional shifts than re-train in-service teachers. Over the past four months, together with Education department deans, faculty and other stakeholders, we have identified two main areas of planning: instructional leadership and interaction with K-12 practitioners.

Strengthening the role of principals as instructional leaders and encouraging a more collaborative style of work in their schools is an important part of successful MCCS implementation. Teachers can innovate all they want, but without the support of their peers and a school culture that is conducive to trying new things, it's hard to make progress.

On March 31, CSI will be hosting an effective principal panel to give educational leadership program faculty the opportunity to hear the needs of in-service principals from around the state and discuss how those needs can be addressed in pre-service programs and through innovative professional development opportunities.

CSI is also planning a MCCS K-20 summit for summer 2014. The summit will give K-20 educators an opportunity to share ideas,

teaching strategies and materials and work together to address some of the challenges of preparing all students for career and college readiness. Stay tuned for more details!

In other news, MATELA membership coordinator and Capital High English Teacher Brenda Lamb has organized a "wine and cheese" event for Helena-area English teachers April 4.

If you aren't in Helena then, I would recommend organizing a similar event in your area. Socializing with your colleagues is a great way to make connections, share ideas and learn about what others are doing in their classrooms.

Also, check out the new Montana Digital Professional Learning Network (mdpln.mrooms.net), a Moodle-based site that will be the place to go for online professional

learning materials for teachers and administrators. MDPLN Project Manager Curtis Biggs just launched the site this week, and I am planning on uploading several webinars on the Smarter Balanced ELA Performance Tasks and an Overview of MCCS ELA Instructional Shifts as soon as I can.

Also, be sure to visit OPI's new MCCS professional learning opportunities site (opi.mt.gov/groups/mtprofessionallearning). On the site you will find an updated MCCS professional learning calendar as well as the Spring-Summer 2014 MCCS Professional Learning Catalog. Many of the resources are free and available online! □

"If you think about it, it's much more efficient to train pre-service teachers on the MCCS instructional shifts than re-train in-service teachers."

REVIEW OF THE NORTHWEST
REGIONAL CONFERENCE:

Four MATELA Members Present Sessions; Key-note Speakers Inspire

By Curt Bobbitt

As MATELA members you received at least one invitation in the mail to the Northwest Regional NCTE Conference in Portland. MATELA provided seed money to become a co-sponsor of the event.

The board also agreed to send our membership list to the organizers so that everyone would know of the opportunity for professional development. At least six members attended during the first weekend in March, most of us presenting sessions and helping to lead the way (the conference theme).

As indirect investors in the conference, you may wonder about the dividends. More than 600 people registered. Four general keynote sessions brought participants presentations from nationally-recognized teachers and reflections about the 100-year history of the Oregon Council of Teachers of English (OCTE), the conference's host. Concurrent sessions offered participants eight more chances for collaboration, as did two lunches with writers, three day-long workshops, and a centennial celebration complete with birthday cake.

At the first general session, Jack Berckemeyer set the informal, energetic, enthusiastic tone of the conference with his humorous performance. When the chairperson of the session introduced Berckemeyer as one of the people at the head table, Jack shouted, "I love that guy!" He cast himself as the Ruler of Education, listing the first six despotic acts he would impose, including a stimulus package for "reading recovery." He warned against using the "shield of standards" to strip our teaching of creativity and joy.

Carol Jago used quotations from e. e. cummings, Harold Bloom, and Annie Murphy Paul to call for "Closer Reading for Deeper Learning." Citing Bloom's three qualifications for literary value, she also cross-referenced the "Habits of Mind" from the *Framework for Success in*



LOUD AND CLEAR Conference speaker Jim Burke amplifies a point while Conference Director Rick Hardt and MATELA President Curt Bobbitt enjoy his antics

Postsecondary Writing (NCTE/CWPA/NWP, wpacouncil.org/framework). To that list she added spontaneity as a trait of great teachers. When teachers select deserv-ing texts for study, we render worthwhile students' practice of curiosity, persistence, flexibility, and other habits.

She urged teachers to apply Bloom's criteria of aesthetic splendor, cognitive power, and wisdom in our choice of material. She had the audience read "maggie and milly and molly and may" from a screen display and handout, then played a recording of Natalie Merchant singing the poem to show how to reinforce the habits of skillful close readers.

Jim Burke embodied inspired teaching in his talk, "Academic Essentials: Reading, Writing, and Discussing Arguments." Describing a unit with *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer as the primary text, he used his three children's experience with writing to argue the importance of helping students analyze written and oral arguments as well requiring them to produce persuasive ones. He displayed a checklist he uses to align assignments in the unit with the common core standards www.octe.org/uploads/1/7/8/6/17860185/jimburke_handouts_octe_workshop_3.2014.pdf

Yong Zhao urged listeners to recast the current educational paradigm. Zhao touted a global, entrepreneurial focus to

education at all age and ability levels. His TEDx talk online covers many of the same claims and evidence: www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOXAJzqm2Rw

MATELA members Jan Clinard, Beverly Chin, Jean O'Connor, and I offered separate sessions. Carolyn Lott, retired UM professor and former MATELA board member, parodied "Weekend Update" from *Saturday Night Live* with her husband Johnny (retired professor of mathematics) to an appreciative group. Alison Kriess used her professional development scholarship from MATELA to take part in the meeting. Three other members had earned places on the program but could not attend because of the blizzard in western Montana: Caitlin Chiller, Jeff Ross, and Dottie Susag.

Co-sponsorship of regional conferences through seed money generally means sharing in the financial profits, as well. OCTE as the sponsoring affiliate will handle the necessary accounting and notify the three co-sponsoring affiliates later this spring.

The intellectual and social dividends, fortunately, have already accumulated for those of us who attended. Perhaps the links and other references above can extend the effects for you, as well.

See NCTE Conference Page 6

FROM PAGE 12

Lesson Includes Differentiation, Formative Assessment

Exploration:

TTW direct students to sketch a plan for a watercolor illustrating pied beauty. TTW list the objectives on the whiteboard and explain that students will be creating a watercolor that exhibits not only pied beauty but also demonstrates intensity, value, contrast, shape, and balance

Materials:

Sketch pads and pencils

Classroom Management:

For any student who has forgotten his/her sketchpad, paper will be available for sketching a plan.

During this otherwise quiet thinking time, TTW play serene music, like Pachelbel's Canon in D Major with Ocean Sounds.

Explanation/Concept Development:

Students will transfer their sketch pad designs to their 12x18 paper "canvases." We will review the techniques of wet-on-wet (often used for skies and water), graduated washes (to create value separation), stippling (for rocks or other landscape detail, as well as creating dots), glazing (for intensity), and dry brush (for grass or fur or hair). Students will begin to paint, with the center of interest being the dappled item/shape.

Materials:

12 x 18 inch watercolor or white construction paper, brushes, two containers of water for each table--one for clean water and one for dirty water, watercolors, paint shirts

Classroom Management:

TTW monitor for engagement/participation, using proximity to manage the activity. While walking around, TTW sometimes hold up and discuss the work of a student who has used a technique especially effectively or who has found an unusual solution to an obstacle.

If anyone is missing a paint shirt, TTW have several spares on hand, purchased from the Salvation Army or salvaged from the lost and found bin

Expansion of the Idea:

Once the artist has painted the shape, we will discuss how to

darken around the edges to show form (roundness/three-dimensional effect) and how to use drybrush technique to create the appearance of hair or fur or feathers.

Students will be instructed to "frame" their pictures with plants or landscape elements to include a foreground, middle ground, and background if that is called for or to paint to the edge of the page, "to bump the edges" if that is the effect desired. For those painting a sky, TTW explain that to show depth in the sky, it is usually darkest toward the top of the page, lighter as it nears the horizon.

Classroom Management:

TTW model and assist students with one-on-one help and demonstrations. These will occur with the teacher putting her/his hand on the hand of the student as a guide or by drawing on another sheet of paper to demonstrate the technique.

For my student with autism, I will have an abbreviated set of these instructions on a list with numbers.

Evaluation:

Formative assessment will occur throughout the lesson, but summative assessment will not occur until the paintings are complete. TTW use the attached rubric which she/he will have shared with students prior to the lesson's commencement. Paintings, once finished, can be matted and displayed on a bulletin board entitled: Pied Beauty

Materials:

Scoring Rubric (See page 14)

When the end of class is about to occur, TTW announce clean-up time, explaining that students need to be sure to clean their work spaces and color pans and lids so that paints are ready for the next person.

The table helper for the day will check for clean tables/work spaces, ensuring that all brushes are clean and all supplies are stored. All paintings will go to the drying rack.

Materials:

Wet rags for hands, dry rags for tables

Classroom Management:

For my student with autism, I will tap the table when 10 minutes until clean-up so that the transition will occur more smoothly.



See RUBRIC Page 14

FROM page 11

Literacy Sample Lesson Integrates Language with Art Standards

Vocabulary 'pied,' 'dappled' among definitions explored through searched pictures

Lesson Title: Dappled Things

Grade Level: 6

Content Area: Art and Literacy

Common Core and/or State Standard:

Art Standard 3.1: Students develop and refine arts skills and techniques to express ideas, pose and solve problems, and discover meaning. Students will use art materials techniques, technologies, and processes to create specific responses.

Literacy Standard L.4.4c:

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

Lesson Objective:

Using the images search on Google, TSW locate a picture that illustrates pied beauty

Assessment for Learning:

Each student who brings in at least ONE image from Google that illustrates pied, dappled, or spotted beauty will earn participation credit.

Lesson Objective:

TSW sketch a plan for a picture that illustrates pied beauty

Assessment for Learning:

As a form of "pre-writing" that will be formatively assessed, students will sketch in a sketch book or on a piece of plain, white paper. This illustrates a way to plan an art creation, like a rough draft.

Lesson Objective:

Using watercolors, TSW paint an aesthetically pleasing, harmonious picture that illustrates pied beauty

Assessment for Learning:

Formative assessment observations will ensure that students are using watercolor techniques and being mindful of principles of design and elements of art.

Lesson Objective:

TSW control intensity

Assessment of Learning:

Artwork will be assessed for lighter and darker values, evident in the picture if the student controlled the amount of water added to dilute the pigment.

Lesson Objective:

TSW demonstrate value and contrast to give depth (form) to a shape and balance to a composition

Assessment of Learning:

Artwork will be assessed for a center of interest, in this case a discernable shape featuring pied beauty, as well as for shadows and highlights to emphasize shape or area, and for balance--whether symmetrical, asymmetrical, or radial.

Lesson Objective:

Define the term "pied" and apply its meaning

Assessment of Learning:

With the shape featuring pied beauty, completed artwork will reveal understanding of this term.

Engagement:

After hearing the poem in language arts class, the teacher has invited students to find an image, using the Google search engine, illustrating one of the synonyms of "pied."

As a beginning to art class, one student will reread the poem "Pied Beauty," while students hold up their pictures to illustrate the poem when the corresponding line is read. If a picture doesn't depict a particular line, the student will hold the picture aloft at the poem's conclusion, along with all students, in a sign of praise.

Materials:

Copy of "Pied Beauty" by Gerald Manley Hopkins and various images to illustrate the poem.

Classroom Management:

For students who may not have searched for and printed pictures, the teacher will make some available.

IEFA:

Among the images, TTW will share a ceremonial dress dappled with elk teeth and one with a freckled American Indian. These images will not only suggest inclusion and diversity but offer an opportunity to talk about Crow Indian art and dance regalia.

See LESSON Page 13

MATELA Co-Sponsors MEA-MFT Non-Fiction Keynote Speakers

Blumenthal, Author of Eight Non-Fiction Books; Mihara, Second-Generation Japanese Internment Prison Camp Survivor

By Caitlin Chiller

MATELA will co-sponsor two keynote speakers at MEA-MFT Educators' Conference October 17-18 in Missoula. MATELA chose the theme for this year's sectionals: "What Is a Story?--Focusing on Nonfiction Texts in the Classroom".

Non-fiction has the potential to inspire and impact students' lives, but it can be

daunting to choose the right informational texts.

Karen Blumenthal, the author of eight nonfiction books, will take conference attendees on the real-life adventure of nonfiction books, demonstrating how informational texts can share similar elements with fiction including character development, plot, and narrative, and how nonfiction can open a world of possibility for our students.

Blumenthal is a co-sponsored speaker with Montana Library Association, and will speak on Thursday October 17.

MATELA is also co-sponsoring Sam Mihara with MCHCE. Mihara is a second-generation Japanese American, who, along with his family, was interned at a prison camp in Northern Wyoming.

In addition to Mihara's keynote address on Thursday afternoon, he will be part of a day-long institute on Japanese-

American internments of WWII and the teaching of this subject. The institute will take place at Fort Missoula. For more information about Mihara, see sammihara.com/about-sam.

Kristjana Eyjolfsson of the Fort Missoula staff will also lead a tour of the site of the internment camp there.

MATELA is looking for quality proposals from educators around the state sharing ideas and tips for incorporating Common Core based non-fiction into K-12 classrooms.

Don't limit yourself to presentations about nonfiction. Share any great teaching idea that worked well this year. Be sure to sign up to present at the conference in Missoula October 17-18 before the deadline of April 30. The application form appears on the MEA-MFT site www.mea-mft.org/educators_conference.aspx

Chiller Participates in NEA Master Teacher Project

By Caitlin Chiller

This year, I'm part of an NEA-sponsored project called BetterLesson: Master Teacher Project. BetterLesson is a lesson sharing website which launched in 2008.

Through a grant from the NEA, the Master Teacher Project brings the knowledge and expertise of 95 K-12 math and ELA teachers from across the country who have been specifically tasked with providing high-quality lessons, one for each day they teach.

Each lesson is more than the steps in the process, but provides detailed reflections from the teachers about what worked, what didn't, and what they would do differently.

There are student artifacts, embedded videos, and attached resources to each lesson. In addition Master Teachers are filmed at various points along the school year, giving website visitors specific glimpses into classrooms across the country.

I am excited about participating in a project of this magnitude as it has connected me with some amazing ELA teachers. Better than that, it has offered fresh ideas and insights into the complex job I do every day.

BetterLesson aspires to capture the essence of teaching: showing us the day-in day-out realities of a fourth-grade math classroom



in Helena, MT, a 10th-grade ELA classroom in Michigan, and a 6th grade ELA classroom in New York City.

It is a great reminder that even with the unifying standards we are all trying to implement, an infinity of approaches allows teachers to implement Common Core Standards.

If one needs a reminder that Common Core are standards and not curriculum, merely browse the various lessons in one grade strand to find unique classroom-center approaches to the same standards. See cc.betterlesson.com/common_core?from=landing

“Master Teachers are filmed at various points along the school year, giving website visitors specific glimpses into classrooms across the country.”

FROM PAGE 4:
**OCTE Conference
 Photo Memories**



Nationally known presenter Jack Berckemeyer entertains at OCTE.



Jan Clinard and Johnny Lott at OCTE



FEATURED SPEAKER Dr. Carol Jago talks to attendees after her session.

FROM PAGE 1:
MDPLN offers Professional Development at no charge

Looking for connective energy in remote meetings with colleagues across the state? Reserve live trainings and meetings through the MDPLN GoToMeeting Suite. To date, hundreds of Montana educators have benefited from the weekly MDPLN Digital Media Blasts launched by GoToWebinar, along with quick and user-friendly video conferencing meetings through GoToMeeting. Through this year's AFT Innovation fund, all of these MDPLN services are provided at no charge to all Montana K12

educators. What's the catch? You must get involved with the Montana common core effort. Connect to the Montana Digital Professional Learning Network at mdpln.mrooms.net to browse the current menu. Check back shortly at the site to register. For more Montana Digital Professional Learning Network information, contact curtis.biggs@montanadigitalacademy.org, 406.552.0750. A video preview is also available: www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUqOZb7jVog

**MAKING THE CORE MEANINGFUL
 'Literacy Exists in Every Discipline'**

By Donna Miller



Montana's school teachers, as well as the general population, might benefit from greater clarity in the naming of the standards. Although the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are called English standards in several places, they are in fact standards for English language arts and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. To call them English standards suggests to some teachers that they are being asked to identify as English teachers, when they see themselves as members of other curriculum groups.

At a Montana Writing Project professional seminar I conducted this past summer at Billings Skyview--an open institute program on the CCSS and the Indian Education For All (IEFA) mandate--many of the teachers resisted what they called "doing the English teacher's job," so I know this sentiment is in the trenches and of concern. I clarified by explaining that the CCSS are better called literacy standards; that today literacy encompasses more than just reading and writing.

In fact, with my college students, I explain that when they write in college, they are writing as members of the academic community, developing what is called academic literacy. By questioning, researching, and writing in this discourse community, they come both to understand scholarly material and to demonstrate their knowledge of it.

The notion of literacy exists in every discipline—allied health, American Indian studies, early childhood education, liberal arts, psychology, or business management, for example. Professionals in each of these disciplines talk, act, think about, and value their disciplines in a unique way—comprising what is called a discourse community or a vernacular.

Each community employs its own methods, resources, evidence, language, style, and formatting conventions that differ from those used in other disciplines. These idiosyncrasies contribute to the discourse or language of that academic community.

An individual's credibility as a writer/thinker in a given discipline, as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of his/her communication, will depend on an adherence to these conventions, on an ability to speak the language of that discipline, and on becoming literate in that field of study or in that workplace vernacular.

It is these aptitudes and these ways of talking, acting, and thinking that the CCSS hope to impart. Reading a math textbook or a professional journal like *Science News* and writing for those audiences will require literacies unique to those disciplines. Content area teachers, with their specialized knowledge of the discipline, are poised to share those literacies. As readers and writers in their peculiar discourse communities, they know the methods, resources, evidence, language, style, and formatting conventions that are used in that discipline.

That content areas like music and art are branded by the CCSS as technical subjects is another area of concern for teachers who

work in the humanities, but I will not take up that topic here. Instead, I wish to demonstrate how seamlessly a teacher can incorporate the literacy component of the CCSS into lessons they value and already do. Consider the following scenario.

In language arts, while reading the poem "Pied Beauty" by Gerald Manley Hopkins, students asked questions about some of the vocabulary (i.e. What is a brindled cow? What is pied beauty? What's a rose-mole? What is a dappled thing?)

These questions led not only to definitions and to synonyms (spotted, mottled, dappled, speckled, flecked, freckled, dotted, stippled), but also to an idea for an art lesson. Understanding vocabulary not only enhances comprehension but also expands a student's speaking and writing vocabulary.

Because many students are also visual/spatial learners, displaying/using a pictorial version balances the kinds of activities, teaching strategies, and materials children work with to promote optimal development and to ensure that all children use their strengths and engage in activities that develop less preferred ways of thinking.

If students are aware of the elements of art and the principles of design and have painted with watercolors before, practicing the techniques wet-on-wet, graduated wash, stippling, glazing, and dry brush, they are ready to apply their understanding of vocabulary by painting a picture that gives meaning to an unfamiliar term: pied beauty. Such a scenario might lead to lesson plan development (TTW and TSW are abbreviations for *the teacher will* and *the student will*).

“Many of the teachers resisted what they called ‘doing the English teacher’s job,’ so I know this sentiment is in the trenches and of concern.”

FROM PAGE 9

Student Voices Shine in 'Between Shades of Gray'

Two-Voice Poetry	
Lina	Andrius
Taken in the night	Put on trains
Treated like dirt	Treated like dirt
Looking for our fathers	Wishing
Watching	Hope
Escape	Beaten to a pulp
Dirty	Filthy
Food	Water
Starving	Starving
Jolt of a stop	Fresh air
Sunlight	Dreaming of escape
Dreaming of escape	Living in another's home
Living in another's home	Treated as outsiders
Forced to steal	Luxury at my mother's cost
Suspicion	Secrets of a son
Itchy straw	Soviet bed
Boarded onto boats	Freezing cold
Freezing cold	Life
Sentence	Why me?
Why me?	
by Anna C. and Brie B.	

Tritina

(notice the pattern of end words in each line)

It was night when they came, but the darkness
Offered me and my family
No protection. We were taken,
And crammed in a truck. Others were taken,
Too, but in the darkness,
We were alone, me and my family.
In my family,
I found strength to live. The NKVD had taken
A lot of things, but not that. Not my only light in the darkness.
In the darkness were we taken to, I still had my family.

by Ava S.

Series of Haiku

Onward I look to
The sky, where no shades of gray
Could conceal my faith

Day after day, we
Die more, more of us on this
Cold patch of ice

We can not be seen.
On this train to our home land,
Seal a call of faith.

by Carina G.

Life

Beautiful Precious
Creating Acting Living
Wonderful Magical Sorrow Darkness
Killing Crying Fading
Tragic Hopeless
Death

Sources:

Delisle, Jim, and Delisle, Deb. "Poems for Shared Voices." from *Building Strong Writers in Middle School*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2011.

Frost, Helen. "Tritina." www.helenfrost.net.

Sepetys, Ruta. *Between Shades of Gray*. New York: Penguin, 2011.

MATELA Receives Generous Donation from Featured Speaker

Carolyn Lott, retired University of Montana professor, donated \$400 to MATELA. A featured speaker at the Northwest Regional NCTE Conference in Portland on March 1 and 2, Lott donated her honorarium.

She and her husband Johnny showed conference-goers how Saturday Night Live's "Weekend Update" anchors might handle the Common Core State Standards.

Carolyn served as a MATELA board member for many years. She also served as the region 7 representative to NCTE's Standing Committee on Affiliates.

Carolyn and Johnny still maintain a residence in Missoula though they live in Mississippi.

If you see her this summer, thank her for her continued support of MATELA's projects, such as the enrichment grants (MEG) and professional development scholarships. □



MATELA SUPPORTER: Carolyn Lott visits with a conference attendee during the NCTE Conference.

Call for Original Poems by Teachers, Professors, Instructors

The Founder and Executive Director of the International Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association invites submissions of high quality poems and creative works for an forthcoming collection entitled, *Teaching as a Human Experience: An Anthology of Contemporary Poems*. Patrick Blessinger and co-editor Karen Head are interested in poems by teachers (e.g., professors, instructors, lecturers, teachers, faculty) as well as other practitioners in the field of teaching and learning.

"The poems in this collection will deal with the real life-worlds of professors, instructors, teachers, and others working in education and it will cover contemporary teaching experiences in education. The poems will be written mainly by professors, instructors, lecturers, teachers, and others in the field of education, and will cover the many roles teachers play, including instructing, lecturing, mentoring, facilitating, coaching, guiding, and leading. This volume will cover the manifold life experiences and perspectives of being and working as a teacher in education and the epiphanies (experiences of deep realization) experienced in that role."

"You may submit up to two poems or creative works per person. Any poetic form is accepted, but **each poem should be limited to 300 words**, unless the poem of longer length is exceptional in quality and highly unique in insight or style and appropriate to the poetic form used. Thus, poems and creative works expressed in a pure economy of words and that are able to distill the human experience down to its bare essence are highly valued as are creative use of voice, passion, imagery and the interplay of intellect and emotions."

Submission Deadline: June 20, 2014

For more information or to submit creative work, visit: goo.gl/rzq2ew or www.hetl.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/HETL-CALL-FOR-POEMS1.pdf

ILLUMINATING BALTIC VOICES: Seventh Graders Shed Light on Hidden Past

By Sue Stolp



Between *Shades of Gray*, a highly acclaimed young adult novel by author Ruta Sepetys, has been inspiring my seventh graders with its frank and compelling story of a young girl in 1940s Lithuania, whose family is taken from their home in the night and transported to Siberia in a cattle car.

The book's themes of resilience, forgiveness, and hope fueled students' creative juices this past spring as they crafted resonating responses to the novel, following an in-depth critical reading. More recently, a group of students conducted extensive research about the Baltic people, constructing a cardboard cattle car in which they presented their findings about this time period and people, who, according to Sepetys, were "forgotten by the world." The author's intent in writing the novel is to convey the story of the Lithuanian people's struggle; she is a descendant of survivors of the genocide imposed by Josef Stalin during his reign of terror.

Voices of these survivors were silenced for years, but with *Between Shades of Gray*, Sepetys creates heartfelt fictional characters with whom the adolescent reader can readily identify. Lina is a strong and confident 15 year old, an aspiring artist who is not afraid to stand up for her family and herself. Her mother, Elena, is a wise and caring parent who refuses to let hate control her. Andrius, Lina's eventual love interest, is a patient, committed son and citizen. Even the despised antagonist, Kretzsky, is seen as human, sensitive, and eventually compassionate as the story evolves.

Art is a consistent theme throughout. As Sepetys says of the Lithuanian refugees, "Many channeled emotion and fear into art and music, the only way they could express themselves, keeping their nation alive in their hearts" (Sepetys 340). However, these paintings and drawings were private possessions, not meant for an audience. Lina's talent is turned inward throughout her family's plight, yet she still uses her art in an attempt to communicate with her father who is in another camp.

Myah K., one of my current seventh graders, identified six detailed sections from the text where Lina is shaped by art including her attraction to the work of Munch, her use of the handkerchief to document her family's struggles, and her eventual connection to Andrius through his handwriting. The works of painter Edvard Munch haunt yet inspire Lina, as she contemplates his theory that "pain, love, and despair were links in an endless chain" (Sepetys 178).

Students responded critically to the novel, citing textual evidence to support claims about the author's intent in character development, revelation of universal themes, and use of language to affect meaning.

Over a period of several weeks and several meetings, they structured their reading and discussed their findings, rotating roles within a literature circle of four students.

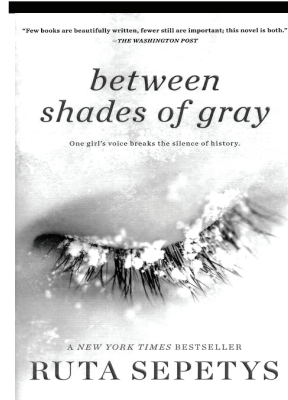
Following the in-depth reading and analysis, students were each responsible for creating two pieces using two different options from a menu: Diamante, two-voice poem, haiku, and tritina were popular choices.

The pieces were then presented in a collaborative, artistic display. "Paint as you see it," artist Edvard Munch had said during his lifetime. "Even if it's a sunny day but you see darkness and shadows. Paint it as you see

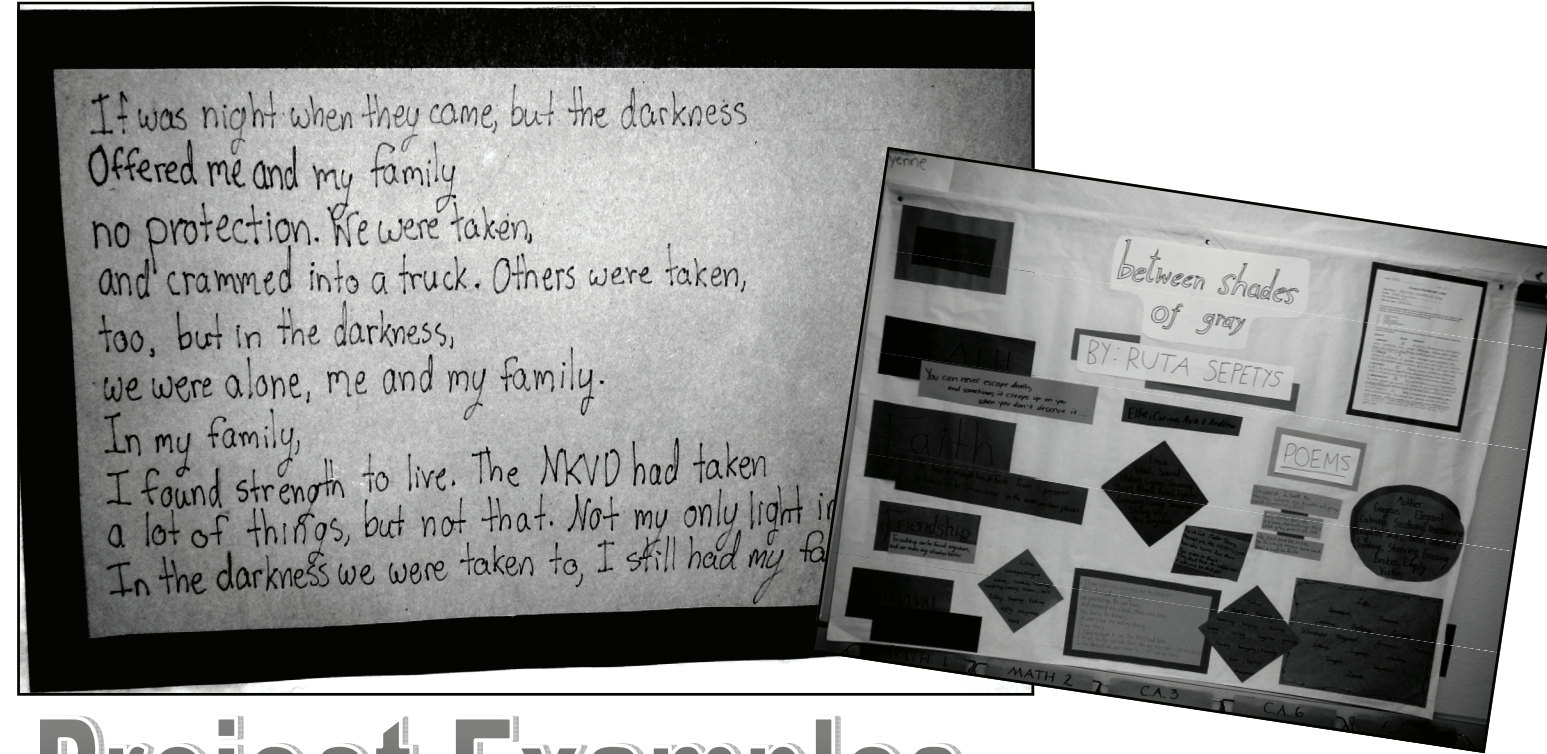
it" (Sepetys 215). Through their imaginative examination, students more fully embraced the novel's beauty and purpose.

Students who studied the book this past fall were struck by the use of "gray" in the title, noting that many situations depicted by the author were neither black nor white, but instead a "shade of gray." Kylie B. came away with the message that "no one is just good or bad...there were a few NKVD that showed kindness, or helped the prisoners, while others were completely awful toward them. This proves that although they worked for Stalin, they were not completely on board with his ideas, nor were they his robots."

Research on Josef Stalin, Lithuania, the NKVD, Krasnoyarsk, Edvard Munch, and the real Dr. Samodurov educated students about a period of history with which they were unfamiliar. The cattle car they created from a refrigerator box houses their research findings and is on display in my classroom as a mini-museum for others to view. A headlamp hangs by the entrance to the car as a beacon to illuminate their findings.



"But that's what inspired Edvard Munch's art. He saw these (ghastly) images not as death, but as birth... He said, 'From my rotting body flowers shall grow, and I am in them and that is eternity.' Isn't that beautiful? Papa smiled at me. 'You're beautiful because you see it that way.'"
(Sepetys 309)



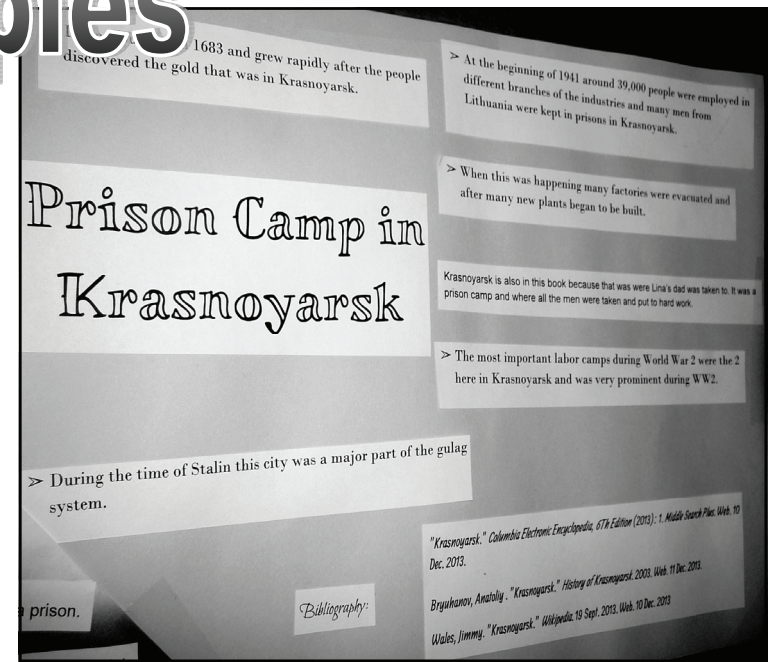
Project Examples

STUDENT PROJECTS: The book's themes of resilience, forgiveness, and hope fueled students' creative juices this past spring as they crafted resonating responses to the novel, following an in-depth critical reading.

Diamantes
(diamond-shaped structure shaped by descriptive words in specific parts of speech)

Mother
Gorgeous Elegant
Calming Soothing Reassuring
Laughter Smiles Taken Arrested
Sobbing Starving Freezing
Broken Empty
Victim

Theme Statements
To keep a straight line of **faith** from present to future is to strive even in the most perilous places.
Friendship can be found anywhere and can make any situation better.
Survival is not easy, but if you push through, it's always worth it.
You can never escape **death**, and sometimes it creeps up on you when you don't deserve it.
Andrew M., Ava S., Carina G., Ellie J.



Photos by Sue Stolp

See **STUDENT PROJECTS** Page 10