

Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts Conference Program



61ST ANNUAL TCTELA CONFERENCE & EXPOSITION
KALAHARI RESORTS & CONVENTIONS
ROUND ROCK • JANUARY 30-FEBRUARY 1, 2026



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BLOG:



Storyshares



WELCOME TO THE 61ST ANNUAL TCTELA CONFERENCE!



Eva Goins
TCTELA President

Dear TCTELA Family,

There is a quiet truth I carry close to my heart: *we are made of stories*. Not just the ones we read or teach, but the ones whispered in hallways, scribbled in margins, spoken in home languages, tucked into our memories. Stories live within us and they shape who we are, how we see the world, and how we dare to dream. I am a dreamer, and that is why this year, our theme is “Historias: Literacy Living Within Us.” It is a celebration of every voice, every journey, every truth.

As we gather here in community, I want this conference to feel like an open page. A place where you belong. A place where your story is not only welcome, but *needed*. Because literacy is not just ink on paper. It is breath, soul, and lived experiences. It is the courage to say, “This is who I am. This is where I come from. This is where I am going.”

As you listen, learn, and connect, I hope you gather something to carry home to your students and colleagues. Perhaps a new strategy, a renewed belief, a conversation that reminds you why this work matters. May you leave not just with notes but with names of colleagues who become like family. Let this conference root you deeper as a teacher and grow you richer as a learner.

And while you’re here, I invite you to step fully into our community. Join us at the Membership Celebration on Friday evening, and Poetry Night. Come listen. Come laugh. Come speak. Bring a poem of your own on Saturday night because poetry night belongs to our voices. *Thank you, Roni!* You do not have to be a poet to belong there. You only have to be willing to share a piece of your truth.

So I extend this invitation to y’all: Before you leave this conference, find someone and share a piece of your story. A memory. A moment. A question still unfolding. And if you see me, please know I am ready to listen. I promise to hold your story with care.

May these days be filled with courage, connection, and the beautiful reminder that every language is a gift. Every voice is a home. Every story matters.

Welcome to TCTELA 2026.

Welcome to *Historias*.

Welcome home.

Con todo mi corazón,

Eva Goins
TCTELA President



Markesha Tisby
TCTELA President-Elect

Welcome to the 61st Annual TCTELA Conference and Exposition! Last year, our president, Eva Goins, challenged us to consider how our identities are influenced by storytelling and literacy. Upon deep reflection, I crafted a personal historia, which I invite you to read below:

Words were my first playground, guided by my mother’s patient hand. Together we traveled through pages before I knew roads and built schools from imagination before I stepped into classrooms. I can’t recall learning to read—the stories were always there, waiting, like old friends.

In primary classrooms, I found my purpose: nurturing young minds as they discovered the magic of letters becoming words becoming worlds. Their first tentative steps into literacy became my greatest joy; their foundations were my life’s work.

TCTELA arrived as both mirror and window—reflecting the educator I’d become while revealing the literacy leader I could be. In this community, my voice found harmony with others who understand that teaching language arts isn’t just instruction but invitation.

I continue this journey because nothing compares to witnessing the moment when helping an adult help a child transform into a lifelong reader and writer who cherishes the power of their own voice. This is the story I was meant to tell.

As you immerse yourself in all that TCTELA 2026 has to offer, I hope this time away from your daily routines provides space to pause and reflect on your story—the chapters already written and those you are still drafting. May our keynote speakers, concurrent sessions, our Teacher Panel, Poetry Night, and the energy of this gathering spark your creativity and affirm your influence as a literacy leader.

I look forward to meeting you, sharing stories, and connecting as we reveal the literacy living within each of us.

With gratitude and excitement,

Markesha Tisby
TCTELA President-Elect

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English in Texas, the premier journal of TCTELA with a readership of 1000+ throughout Texas and the U.S., invites submissions for the Spring/Summer 2026 issue.

English in Texas, Vol. 56.1—Spring/Summer 2026

THEME: Cultivating Critical Hope: Fostering Transformative and Nourishing Practices in ELAR Education

MANUSCRIPT DEADLINE: April 1, 2026

In a world where hope and action often find themselves at odds, we reflect on the words of Paulo Freire: “The idea that hope alone will transform the world, and action undertaken in that kind of naïveté, is an excellent route to hopelessness, pessimism, and fatalism” (1994, p. 2). Yet, as we navigate the complexities of our society and profession, we must also embrace the notion of critical hope. As Bishundat et al. (2018) articulate, critical hope allows us to assess our environment through a lens of equity and justice while envisioning a better future.

It is essential to differentiate critical hope from traditional concepts of hope, which often fail to incite the transformative change we desperately need. Traditional views can render hope a lofty, wishful notion, devoid of the necessary critique of inequities. Instead, we invite manuscripts that engage with the idea of hope as not merely an aspiration, but as a call to action—a praxis that intertwines reflection and action.

Critical hope serves as a conceptual meadow where diverse narratives converge, allowing for the coexistence of conflicting truths. This space fosters alternative possibilities and embraces complex pluralism, welcoming all learners to navigate their fragmented selves. As Grain (2022) beautifully puts it, critical hope offers permission to be both wounded and visionary, to feel anger while yearning for a better world.

For the Spring/Summer 2026 issue of *English in Texas*, we seek insightful and reflective contributions from educators, researchers, and practitioners that explore transformative practices in English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) education through the lens of critical hope. This theme emphasizes the importance of cultivating spaces that nourish critical thinking and foster resilience among students.

We encourage submissions that address the following questions:

- How do you define critical hope in your unique professional practice and context?
- How do you cultivate critical hope in your students to empower them as agents of change in their communities?
- In what ways can transformative practices in ELAR education support students’ socio-emotional development and academic success?
- How have you integrated critical hope into your teaching methodologies to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes?
- What role do culturally sustaining pedagogies play in fostering an environment of critical hope and transformation?

Additionally, you may consider broader inquiries such as:

- How do you celebrate and integrate students’ diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds into your curriculum?
- What innovative classroom practices are necessary for educators to nurture critical hope and resilience in their students?

- How can teacher development programs better prepare educators to implement transformative practices in their classrooms?

FOCUS ON THE THEME: We invite manuscripts that are conceptual, reflective, pedagogical, research-based, or theoretical as they relate to the theme of cultivating critical hope in ELAR education.

INQUIRIES AND INNOVATIONS: We also welcome educational research relevant to the work of ELAR educators, whether theme-dependent or generally applicable to the ELAR community.

STANDING COLUMNS: Brief contributions in the form of standing columns are encouraged. These can center on topics of interest that do not necessarily align with the issue’s theme.

- **Teaching on the Front Lines:** Texas ELAR teachers are facing unprecedented challenges to their professional judgment and students’ access to diverse texts. This column will share stories of navigating censorship in Texas schools, highlighting strategies for advocacy, collaboration, and text selection. We seek to empower educators to build resilient systems that ensure all Texas students can engage with a wide range of voices and stories.
- **Emerging Voices:** This column will highlight the vital inquiries of beginning Texas ELAR teachers (preservice or in-service with 1–5 years of experience) as they navigate the early stages of their professional journeys. Inspired by the “Future Is Now” roundtable sessions at NCTE, we provide a platform for merging scholars to share their questions, explorations, and insights.
- **Youth as Knowledge Generators:** This column will champion the power of youth as knowledge creators, challenging the traditional research paper and exploring how young people’s original research and creative scholarship can inform public policies and activism in Texas. We seek to publish accounts of innovative youth-led projects conducted in schools and communities across the state.

Submission Guidelines: For detailed manuscript submission guidelines, please refer to the Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts–*English in Texas* website. Feel free to contact the editorial team at EnglishinTexas@twu.edu with any questions.

Send manuscripts and inquiries regarding publication to:

TCTELA Headquarters/*English in Texas*
919 Congress Avenue, Suite 1400
Austin, Texas 78701
512.617.3200

Email: EnglishinTexas@twu.edu (subject line: “*English in Texas* Submission or Query”)

We look forward to your contributions!

References

- Bishundat, D., Phillip, D. V., & Gore, W. (2018). Cultivating critical hope: The too often forgotten dimension of critical leadership development. *New Directions for Student Leadership*, 118(159), 91–102.
- Freire, P. (1994). *Pedagogy of hope*. Bloomsbury.
- Grain, K. (2022). *Critical hope: How to grapple with complexity, lead with purpose, and cultivate transformative social change*. North Atlantic Books.

Continued on next page.

English in Texas, the premier journal of TCTELA with a readership of 1000+ throughout Texas and the U.S., invites submissions for the Fall/Winter 2026 issue, guest edited by Ángeles Muñoz and Esmeralda Cartagena Collazo.

English in Texas, Vol. 56.2—Fall/Winter 2026

THEME: *Testimonios* in Motion: The Intersections of Literacy, Language, Identity, and ELAR Teaching and Learning

MANUSCRIPT DEADLINE: September 1, 2026

In today's diverse educational landscape, recognizing that every student possesses a unique and valuable story is not merely an acknowledgment of individual difference; it is a fundamental cornerstone of effective pedagogy, particularly within English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR). These unique and valuable stories can take the form of *testimonio*: oral and literary first-person accounts blending individual and communal voices, often with a clear socio-political purpose (Anzaldúa, 1990; Cruz, 2006; Gutiérrez, 2008). When we embrace the myriad of languages, cultural backgrounds, and lived experiences represented within our classrooms, we honor the principle that every narrative deserves to be heard and understood. This commitment extends beyond simple tolerance, requiring educators to actively cultivate inclusive environments where students feel empowered to share their stories through reading, writing, and discussion.

Testimonio creates a safe space where people confront injustice both as an individual and as a community (Abril-Gonzalez, 2020; Myers, 2023). Creating space for these narratives allows ELAR educators to tap into students' prior knowledge, build bridges between home and school, and foster a sense of belonging that is essential for academic success and social-emotional well-being. Furthermore, when students see their own stories reflected in the literature they read and the writing they produce, they are more likely to develop a strong sense of self-identity and a belief in their own potential as learners, enhancing their engagement with the curriculum.

As educators, it is our responsibility to adapt our instructional approaches to ensure that all voices are not only heard but also valued and integrated into the learning process in ELAR contexts. This means moving beyond traditional, often monocultural, pedagogical models to embrace culturally responsive teaching practices that recognize and affirm the diverse backgrounds of our students. In the realm of ELAR, such practices might include incorporating multilingual texts and resources that reflect the students' cultural heritage, utilizing translanguaging strategies that leverage their full linguistic repertoires, and designing project-based learning experiences that allow students to explore topics relevant to their own lives and communities through creative writing, literature circles, and critical analysis. By creating opportunities for students to share their perspectives, challenge assumptions, and engage in critical dialogue about texts, we can foster empathy, promote social justice, and empower them to become active agents of change in their own lives and in the world around them. This approach not only enriches the learning experience for all students but also prepares them to navigate an increasingly interconnected and complex global society, making it especially relevant for preservice and practicing ELAR teachers who seek to inspire the next generation of readers and writers.

We welcome submissions on conceptual, reflective, pedagogical, research-based, or theoretical manuscripts that explore a diverse range of contributions, including but not limited to:

- Reflections on multilingual instructional strategies and their impact on literacy teaching and learning
- Personal narratives illustrating the power of story in enhancing literacy development
- Insights into culturally responsive teaching practices and their relevance to classroom dynamics
- Critical perspectives on literacy education, social justice themes, and students as agents of change
- Strategies for differentiated instruction to support diverse literacy learners
- Approaches to authentic assessment for storytelling and/or collaborative writing
- Community-building practices that foster a love for reading, writing, and other literacies
- Approaches to fostering biliteracy and supporting multilingual learners, including strategies for educators who don't speak their students' home languages
- Digital and multimodal literacies: how students compose testimonios across platforms and media
- Family and community literacies: partnering with families as co-educators and honoring out-of-school literacy practices

FOCUS ON THE THEME: We invite manuscripts that are conceptual, reflective, pedagogical, research-based, or theoretical as they relate to the theme of literacy and identity in ELAR education.

INQUIRIES AND INNOVATIONS: We also welcome educational research relevant to the work of ELAR educators, whether theme-dependent or generally applicable to the ELAR community.

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ENGLISH IN TEXAS – CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS (CONTINUED)

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Email: EnglishinTexas@twu.edu (subject line: “*English in Texas* Submission or Query”)

We look forward to your contributions!

Lead Editors: Dr. Gage Jeter and Dr. Aimée Myers

References

- Abril-Gonzalez, P. (2020). Accompanying a *nepantlera* border artist’s empathy: One Mexican teen’s *testimonios* of healing, empowerment, and transformation. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 64(3), 271–280. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.1108>
- Anzaldúa, G. (1990). *Making face, making soul: Haciendo caras: Creative and critical perspectives by feminists of color*. Aunt Lute Books.
- Cruz, C. (2006). Toward an epistemology of a brown body. In D. Delgado Bernal, C. A. Elenes, F. E. Godinez, & S. Villenas (Eds.), *Chicana/Latina education in everyday life: Feminista perspectives on pedagogy and epistemology* (pp. 59–75). SUNY Press.
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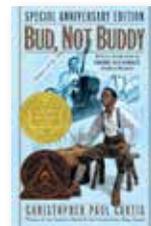
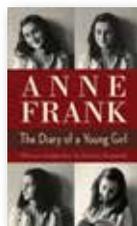
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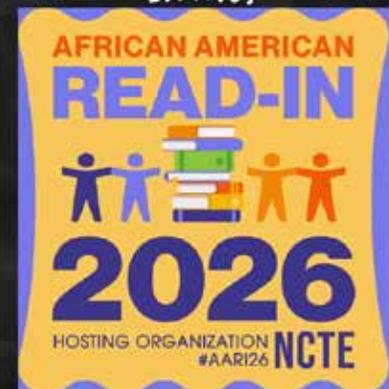
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JoLynn Meade-Ibarra
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Amanda Sanchez
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Austin ISD

Nestled in the heart of Central Texas, Round Rock welcomes you to a vibrant community that represents Central Texas flair and fun! Just as the land here carries the imprints of stories long ago—the Chisholm Trail cattle drive and the historic shoot-out that killed Sam Bass, to name a few—the world of literacy carries within it the echoes of countless lived experiences—layered, complex, and alive.

Our Local Arrangements Committee is proud to welcome you to the 2026 TCTELA Conference, where this year’s resonant theme, “Historias: Literacy Living Within Us,” invites us to honor the personal, cultural, and collective narratives that shape who we are as readers, writers, educators, and learners. Literacy is not found only on paper—it pulses through our memories, our families, and the everyday moments that define who we are.

Throughout this weekend, we gather to listen and to share, to learn, and to reflect. Much like the winding paths of stories passed down through generations, this year’s sessions promise to offer both inspiration and innovation—reminding us that every student, every classroom, and every educator is the beginning of a powerful historia.

As we learn from keynote speakers and breakout sessions, we also invite you to explore all that Round Rock and Kalahari Resorts have to offer. From indoor adventures to local flavor, there’s room for both educational collaboration and Texas fun! Downtown Round Rock offers a great time with local music, wineries and pubs, restaurants, and parks to gather and share tales with friends. Don’t forget to check out the Dell Diamond and take in a Round Rock Express baseball game! And just as our theme celebrates the stories living within us, we hope your time here adds another meaningful chapter to your own.

Our heartfelt thanks go to every educator, volunteer, and preservice teacher who helped bring this gathering to life, as well as our exceptional TCTELA Board. Your leadership and vision help us all thrive in the ELA world.

Welcome again to Round Rock, Texas, and the one-of-a-kind Kalahari Resort—a space where stories can stretch, grow, and be celebrated. We’re so glad you’re here. Let’s read, write, and live these historias—together.

The 2026 TCTELA Local Arrangements Team

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SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2026

6:00pm–9:00pm	Registration	Registration 4
6:00pm–9:00pm	Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (Novel Sponsor)	Registration 5



FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 2026

7:30am–5:15pm	Registration	Registration 4
7:30am–4:30pm	Exhibits, Conference Bookstore, Power Station/Between the Páginas Stage, Book Signings	Kilimanjaro 5
7:30am–5:15pm	TCTELA Connection	Registration 6
7:30am–8:30am	Visit El Mercado (Exhibits & Bookstore)	Kilimanjaro 5
8:00am–8:20am	Stories That Strengthen Us: Books About Courage, Resilience, & Identity – Between the Páginas Stage	Kilimanjaro 5
8:30am–10:45am	Welcome and Keynote: C. Thomas Howell & Awards	Kilimanjaro 6
10:45am–11:25am	Photos With C. Thomas Howell & Visit Exhibits	Kilimanjaro 5
10:45am–11:15am	Short & Sweet: Authentic Instruction for Real Classrooms – Power Station Stage	Kilimanjaro 5

AMSCO Measuring Up

11:30am–12:45pm	PD Luncheon With Anika Aldamuy Denise & Edmund J. Farrell Distinguished Service and Achievement Award (Ticketed Event)	Kilimanjaro 6
11:30am–11:50am	Finding Home and Building Comunidad – Between the Páginas Stage	Kilimanjaro 5
12:45pm–1:10pm	Book Signing With Anika Aldamuy Denise & Visit Exhibits	Kilimanjaro 5
12:45pm–1:15pm	Transforming Adolescent Literacy: From Stagnant to Limitless – Power Station Stage	Kilimanjaro 5

1:15pm–2:15pm	Concurrent Session A	
	Literature Under Lockdown: Classroom Strategies in an Age of Censorship	Acacia
	Historias—The Book Was Better	Kilimanjaro 1
	Sharing Practical Applications of Cuentos/Historias to Honor and Celebrate All Students’ Culture, Identities, and Family Stories	Kilimanjaro 2
	Every Voice Matters: Scaffolding Stories Through Data and Differentiation	Kilimanjaro 3
	Entre Lineas: Crafting Plans That Bring Conversations to Life	Kilimanjaro 4
	TEA RLA Assessment Updates	Kilimanjaro 7-8
	Listening to the Stories Within Us	Bamboo
1:15pm–2:15pm	Grab and Go Teaching Strategies	Kilimanjaro 9
1:30pm–1:50pm	From Sorrow to Strength – Between the Páginas Stage	Kilimanjaro 5

Continued on next page.

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE (CONTINUED)

1:55pm-2:25pm 	Teaching Upstanders & Holocaust History Through Literature: Text, Analysis, and Field Trip Experiences – Power Station Stage	Kilimanjaro 5
2:30pm-3:45pm	General Session With e.E. Charlton-Trujillo & Dr. Roni Dean-Burren Literacy Leader Award	Kilimanjaro 6
3:45pm-4:10pm	Book Signing With e.E. Charlton-Trujillo & Visit Exhibit Hall	Kilimanjaro 5
3:45pm-4:05pm	Social Responsibility Through the Lens of the Holocaust – Between the Páginas Stage	Kilimanjaro 5
4:15-5:15pm	Concurrent Session B	
	Roots and Voices: Growing Literacy From the Stories Within	Acacia
	Inviting Emergent Writers to Play With the Conventions of English and Spanish	Kilimanjaro 1
	Voices, Stories, and Identities: Literacy for Diverse Learners With AI-Supported Stations	Kilimanjaro 2
	Stories That Strengthen Students: Coaching Educators to Cultivate Literacy, Culture, and Community	Kilimanjaro 3
	Writing Our Communities: How Place-Based Stories Transform Student Engagement	Kilimanjaro 4
	TEA Reading and Language Arts Curriculum Update	Kilimanjaro 7-8
	This Is Our Story: Leading Structured Literacy and Biliteracy Through an Equity Lens	Kilimanjaro 9
5:30pm-7:00pm	Membership Celebration & Section Connection	Event Barn

SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, 2026

7:30am-4:45pm	Registration	Registration 4
7:30am-8:30am	Breakfast With Exhibitors	Kilimanjaro 5
7:30am-7:50am	Artificial Intelligence in a Post-Truth World: Snow Crash and the Epistemic Epidemic – Between the Páginas	Kilimanjaro 5
7:30am-4:45pm	TCTELA Connection	Registration 5
7:30am-4:15pm	Exhibits, Conference Bookstore, Power Station/Between the Páginas Stage, Book Signings	Kilimanjaro 5
7:55am-8:25am 	Can You Brisk-It? Reclaiming 10 Hours a Week With AI-Powered Writing Instruction – Power Station Stage	Kilimanjaro 5
8:30am-10:00am	Panel Discussion With Matt de la Peña & Mercedes Bonner Leadership Award (Annual Business Meeting—Election Results Announced)	Kilimanjaro 6
10:00am-10:25am	Book Signing With Matt de la Peña & Visit Exhibits	Kilimanjaro 5
10:00am-10:30am 	STAAR Mastery in 4 Weeks or Less – Power Station Stage	Kilimanjaro 5

Continued on next page.

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE (CONTINUED)

10:30am-11:30am	Concurrent Session C	
	Engaging Text Sets to Empower Student Voices: Leveraging Literature to Strengthen Culturally Sustaining Instruction	Acacia
	Story by Story: Nurturing a Love for Reading Through Picture Books	Kilimanjaro 1
	Historias in Partnership: Leveraging AI as a Writing Companion in the ELA Classroom	Kilimanjaro 2
	Your Choice, Your Voice: Creating Literacy Legacy With Independent Reading	Kilimanjaro 3
	Transforming Writing Instruction With AI-Powered Writable	Kilimanjaro 4
	From Origin to Memoir: Tracing the Literacies That Live in Us	Kilimanjaro 7-8
10:30am-11:30am	Art Student Drawings	Kilimanjaro 9
10:35am-10:55am	Complexities and Nuances: Stories of Arab Resilience – Between the Páginas Stage	Kilimanjaro 5
11:40am-12:00pm	Presentation From the Between the Páginas Stage	Kilimanjaro 5
11:45am-1:00pm	PD Luncheon With Matt de la Peña (Ticketed Event)	Kilimanjaro 6
1:00pm-1:20pm	Book Signing With Matt de la Peña & Visit Exhibits	Kilimanjaro 5
1:00pm-1:20pm	Uncovering Brilliance: Stories of Voice, Identity, and the Power of Being You – Between the Páginas Stage	Kilimanjaro 5
1:00pm-1:25pm	Visit El Mercado (Exhibits & Bookstore)	Kilimanjaro 5
1:30pm-2:30pm	Concurrent Session D	
	Centering Identity in Literacy: Bias-Free Practices to Create Inclusive, Equitable, and Engaging Classrooms	Acacia
	Where Stories Begin: Internalizing Lessons That Center Identity and Learning	Kilimanjaro 1
	An Invitation to Share Stories With the Co-Editors of <i>English in Texas</i>	Kilimanjaro 2
	Reading to Resist: Embedding Critical Literacy and Social Justice in Elementary Classrooms	Kilimanjaro 3
	Teaching Into Oral Storytelling in the High School Classroom	Kilimanjaro 4
	Poetry Unbound: Cultivating Voice and Story in the Classroom	Kilimanjaro 7-8
2:45pm-3:45pm	Concurrent Session E	
	Book Clubs as Story Sanctuaries: Where Student Historias Drive Knowledge Building, Vocabulary Acquisition, and Authentic Discussion	Acacia
	Stories of Us: Using Historical Context to Tackle Today's Complexities	Kilimanjaro 1
	Empowering Secondary Writers: Intervention Strategies Rooted in Equity and Voice	Kilimanjaro 2
	Book Battles 101: Build a Literacy Community Through a Bookish Competition With Friends	Kilimanjaro 3
	Historias as Equipment for Living	Kilimanjaro 4
	Our Stories in Progress: Student Portfolios as Living Literacy Narratives	Kilimanjaro 7-8

Continued on next page.

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE (CONTINUED)

Concurrent Session E Roundtables:		
	Instructional Coaching—How We Use Our Historias to Build Relationships for Coaching: Celebrating the Historias of Teachers and Students	Bamboo
	Filling in the Gaps for Students (Differentiated Instruction to Meet the Diverse Needs of Learners)	Bamboo
	Narratives That Nurture and Inspire: Supporting Multilingual Learners Through Equitable Literacy Practices	Bamboo
	Literacy Acquisition in SOR Times	Bamboo
2:45pm-3:45pm	Art Student Drawings	Kilimanjaro 9
3:45pm-3:55pm	Visit El Mercado (Exhibits & Bookstore)	Kilimanjaro 5
4:00pm-5:00pm Concurrent Session F		
	Help! My Secondary Student Struggles to Read and Write Words	Acacia
	Language as Legacy: Reclaiming Literacy Through Cultural Storytelling	Kilimanjaro 1
	Voices From the Field: Ways That a Knowledge-Based Curriculum Worked for Emergent Bilinguals	Kilimanjaro 3
	Living the Story of Teaching: Reflection, Identity, and Responsive Practice	Kilimanjaro 4
	Tinta y Inspiración: Poetry From the Heart	Kilimanjaro 7-8
Concurrent Session F Roundtables:		
	Paving the Way Towards Critically Conscious Classrooms Using Diverse Texts to Promote Equity and Justice	Bamboo
	Storytelling for Self-Care	Bamboo
	Honoring Historias: Holistic Rubrics for Biliteracy, Identity, and Storytelling	Bamboo
	Finding Our Voice: Historias That Empower High School Literacy and Identity	Bamboo
5:30pm-6:15pm	Rising Leaders Meet & Greet (Invitation Only)	Red's Piano Bar
6:15pm-7:30pm	Poetry Reading	Red's Piano Bar

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2026

8:00am-8:45am	Intellectual Freedom, Censorship, and Reading in These Times	Kilimanjaro 6
8:30am-9:00am	Registration	Registration 4
9:00am-11:30am	Workshop With Colin Seale	Kilimanjaro 6
9:00am-11:30am	Workshop With Lisa Van Gemert	Kilimanjaro 2-4
11:30am-11:50am	Book Signing With Colin Seale	Kilimanjaro 6
11:30am-11:50am	Book Signing With Lisa Van Gemert	Kilimanjaro 2-4

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#TCTELA2026

RISING LEADERS

2024–2026 Cohort

Sara Johnson
Elizabeth Moll
Ángeles Muñoz
Sheila Weathers

2025–2027 Cohort

Soumi Chakraborti
Shalania Levy
Marissa Cisneros Perez
Emy Tomita

WHO ARE TCTELA RISING LEADERS?

Rising Leaders:

- Demonstrate a passion for teaching, learning, and leadership in English language arts
- Collectively exhibit a broad range of diversity in position, location, cultural background, and perspective
- Hold promise as leaders
- Are committed to TCTELA’s mission and to pursuing leadership opportunities in the organization

How do I apply for the Rising Leaders program?

Applications will be accepted from January 31, 2026, through March 1, 2026.

How are Rising Leaders selected?

Self-nominations are welcome.

Completed applications are scored by a selection panel of TCTELA board members using a rubric focused on the program goals.

Finalists are forwarded to the executive committee for approval.

The eighth cohort of Rising Leaders will be notified by April 25 and announced via TCTELA’s socials on May 1, 2026.

How many Rising Leaders are accepted to the program each year?

The selection committee will select four leaders from across Texas each year who represent diversity in multiple dimensions.

Rising leaders will participate in the program for two years.

AMBASSADORS

WHO ARE TCTELA AMBASSADORS?

The TCTELA Ambassador program was established in 2022 to expand the influence of TCTELA across the state, ensuring that educators and leaders have a community to lean on for instructional expertise and support in navigating state policies that impact the classroom. The primary goals of the program are to:

- advance the literacy growth of all Texas students by developing a network of diverse professionals and providing access to professional development based on best practices in education
- serve as advocates for Texas students and teachers by providing legislative updates and assisting teachers in amplifying their needs and concerns

Our ambassadors are allies for Texas RLA teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators. As such, we are currently recruiting **eight people** for the new cohort and are

looking for individuals who:

- are deeply rooted in their educational communities
- stay abreast of legislation that impacts instruction, teacher autonomy, and policies that infringe on students’ right to read
- are connected to other professional organizations
- have a knack for crafting effective information communication

The Ambassador role is a **one-year appointment** with the option to extend for consecutive years. Applications for the 2026–2027 cohort will open on Sunday, April 5, 2026, and close at 11:59 PM CST on Sunday, April 26, 2026. New mentees will be notified by Friday, May 22, 2026. Please follow TCTELA on social media for updates.

For more information about the role and the responsibilities of an ambassador, please visit the TCTELA Booth or email info@tctela.org.

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!

Alexis Argueta
Lauren Brown
Michelle De Leon
Dana Dillon
Christopher Duke

Andrea Folse
Malene Golding
Tonja Gray
Melynda Heller
Lilliana Kendrick

Tatyana Lampe
Alexus Lee
Nicole Maldonado
Marla Marlin
P. Tim Martindell

Emily McClure
Jacob Pineda
Amanda Sanchez
Alexandria Sedeno
Jazmyn Zuniga

TCTELA's Dream Program is designed to support preservice and early-career educators of color in developing literacy and ELA professionals as future leaders in Texas and to amplify their voices across the state. This program connects participants to professional development, career opportunities, and a growing community of diverse educators and instructional leaders across Texas. It is funded through a grant from our national organization, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). The NCTE Fund provides affiliates, like TCTELA, with grants to implement initiatives aimed at recruiting and supporting English language arts teachers of color. Several documented studies have demonstrated that more teachers of color need to be recruited and supported to not only meet the growing shortage of teachers of color in elementary and secondary American schools, but also to reflect the increasingly multiethnic student population.

Who can apply?

- College students of color (preservice teachers) majoring in RLA education or bilingual education; an English major with a teacher certification track
- Educators of color who **currently** teach literacy and/or English language arts in a Texas school and are in the **first three years** of teaching.

Why apply?

Participants will have the opportunity to be mentored by experienced educators of color, access quality professional development, and participate in career planning and growth, all while being part of a growing community of diverse educators and instructional leaders across the state. You would also receive:

- Free TCTELA membership
- 2027 and 2028 conference registration assistance
- Coaching to compose a conference proposal and prepare a conference presentation
- Presentation opportunities at the 2027 Annual Conference
- Quarterly professional development
- Mentoring to develop and enact an action-research project in your local context
- Coaching from established literacy experts and educational leaders
- Professional headshots and career planning tools
- Learning credit and volunteer hours
- Free books and merchandise!

As a participant, you must commit to:

- Attend the 2027 and 2028 annual conferences
- Attend monthly personalized coaching sessions with a mentor starting in September 2026 and ending in January 2028
- Attend quarterly cohort meetings starting in August 2026 and ending in December 2027
- Plan, implement, and report on an action-research project conducted in your local context
- Compose a conference proposal and prepare a conference presentation
- Present your action-research project at the 2028 Annual Conference

Applications for the 2026–2027 cohort will open on Sunday, March 8, 2026, and close at 11:59 PM CST on Sunday, April 5, 2026. New mentees will be notified on Friday, April 10. Please follow TCTELA on social media for updates.

For more information, please visit the TCTELA Booth, chat with Dr. Lois Barker, or email info@tctela.org.

FRIDAY SPECIAL EVENTS*

POWER STATION/BETWEEN THE PÁGINAS STAGE KILIMANJARO 5

8:00am–8:20am	STORIES THAT STRENGTHEN US: BOOKS ABOUT COURAGE, RESILIENCE, & IDENTITY
	<p>Meagan Hensley Caity Vogl Christi Wade</p> <p>Book Talk – Elementary: <i>The Day You Begin</i>–Jacqueline Woodson, <i>Alma and How She Got Her Name</i>–Juana Martinez-Neal, <i>The Name Jar</i>–Yangsook Choi Secondary: <i>14 Cows for America</i>–Carmen Agra Deedy, <i>A Long Walk to Water</i>–Linda Sue Park, <i>The Red Pencil</i>–Andrea Davis Pinkney</p>
10:45am–11:15am	SHORT & SWEET: AUTHENTIC INSTRUCTION FOR REAL CLASSROOMS
  	<p>Michael Guevara, Perfection Learning</p> <p>With everything happening in your classroom, you need simple, effective, inspiring lessons using authentic, real-world resources that spark engagement, extend learning, and support lasting academic success.</p>
11:30am–11:50am	FINDING HOME AND BUILDING COMUNIDAD
	<p>Genevie C. Rodríguez-Quiñones</p> <p>Book Talk – Last Stop on Market Street/Ultima parada de la calle Market (de la Peña), My Papi Has a Motorcycle/Mi papi tiene una moto (Quintero), Where Are You From?/De dónde eres? (Saied Méndez), Dreamers/Soñadores (Morales), All Around Us/Por todo nuestro alrededor (González), Home/Hogar (de la Peña), etc.</p>
12:45pm–1:15pm	TRANSFORMING ADOLESCENT LITERACY: FROM STAGNANT TO LIMITLESS
	<p>Louise Baigelman, Storyshares</p> <p>Literacy is not a finish line reached by grade 3—it's a lifelong journey. Discover concrete tactics to unlock access, rigor, coherence, and continuity for older striving readers.</p>
1:30pm–1:50pm	FROM SORROW TO STRENGTH
	<p>Helen Read</p> <p>Book Talk – <i>The Boy in the Black Suit</i>, <i>Debut Book</i>, <i>All the Bright Places</i>, <i>Everyone Dies at the End</i>, <i>The Outsiders</i>, <i>The Fault in Our Stars</i></p>
1:55pm–2:25pm	TEACHING UPSTANDERS & HOLOCAUST HISTORY THROUGH LITERATURE: TEXT, ANALYSIS, AND FIELD TRIP EXPERIENCES
	<p>Latricia Davis</p> <p>This session equips English language arts teachers with strategies to teach Holocaust history and Upstander stories through TEKS-aligned literacy instruction. Participants will explore age-appropriate texts—from <i>The Diary of Anne Frank</i> to <i>Refugee</i> and <i>Bud, Not Buddy</i>—and learn how to connect classroom reading, analysis, and writing to immersive field trips and primary sources. Attendees will leave with practical activities, discussion prompts, and resources to help students analyze character, the author's craft, and historical context as they engage with powerful stories of courage.</p>

Continued on next page.

FRIDAY SPECIAL EVENTS* (CONTINUED)

3:45pm-4:05pm

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH THE LENS OF THE HOLOCAUST

Kimberly Molidor

The Story of Blima: A Holocaust Survivor by Shirley Russak Wachtel (for middle school), *Night* by Elie Wiesel (for high school), *Terrible Things* by Eve Bunting, the poem "First They Came" by Martin Niemoller, and the play *Monsters on Maple Street* by Rod Serling

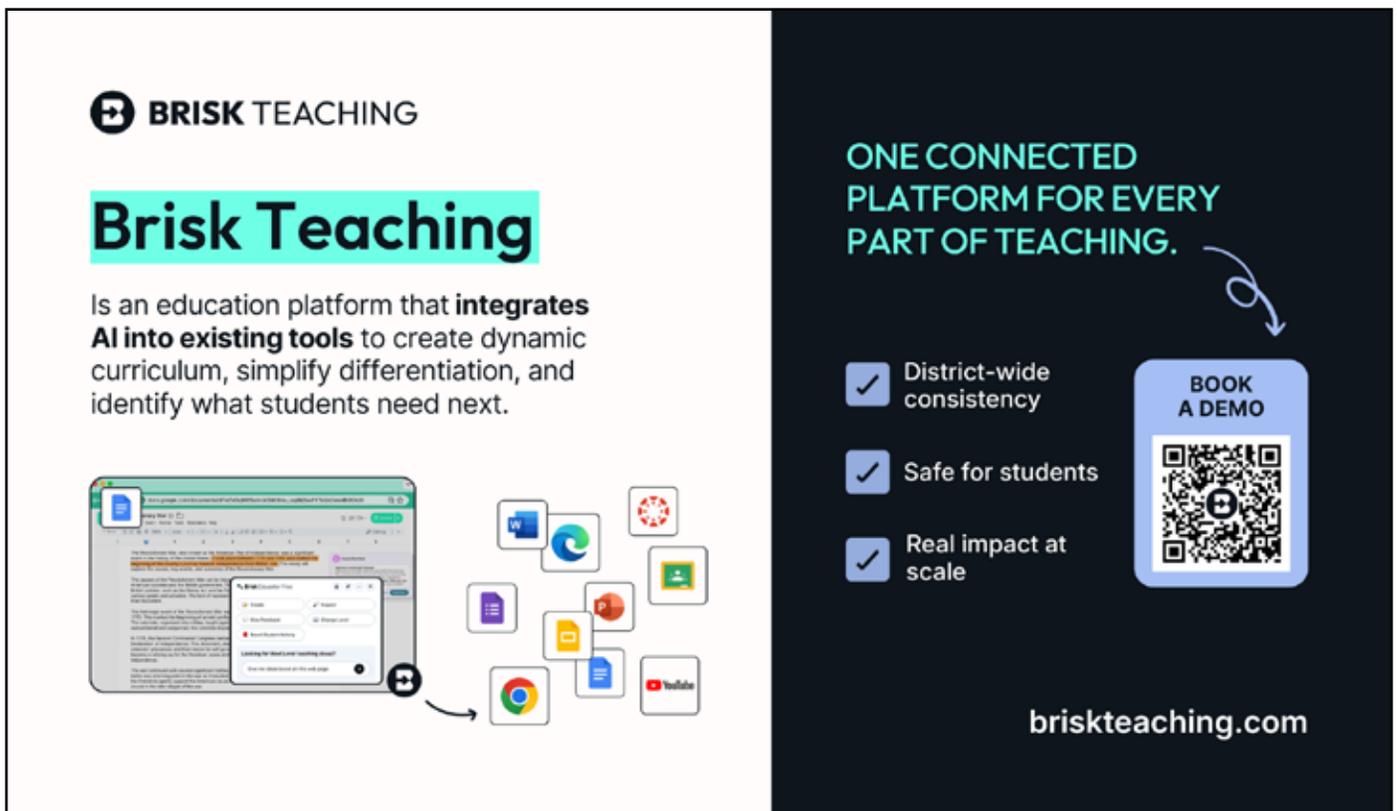
SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES KILIMANJARO 9

1:15pm-2:15pm

GRAB AND GO

Teachers, bring your favorite strategy, graphic organizer, engagement idea, or any other best practice that you would like to share with others. This is an opportunity to get a strategy and give a strategy. The format will be mingle and share so come learn from one another!

*Friday Special Events do not qualify for CPE credits.



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C. THOMAS HOWELL 8:30AM–10:45AM KILIMANJARO 6

The Art of Staying Gold—Literacy, Legacy, and the Power of Story

From the rodeo arena to the silver screen, C. Thomas Howell has spent a lifetime bringing unforgettable stories to life. The son of a professional bull rider turned stuntman, Howell made his film debut at the age of seven, setting the stage for a decades-long career in Hollywood. His breakout role as Ponyboy Curtis in *The Outsiders* cemented him as a cultural icon, introducing audiences to a coming-of-age story that continues to inspire generations of readers and moviegoers. The novel’s unforgettable message—Stay Gold—is more than just a line in a script; it’s a call to embrace identity, empathy, and the transformative power of storytelling.

Through roles in films like *Red Dawn*, *The Hitcher*, and *Secret Admirer*, as well as acclaimed television projects including *Criminal Minds*, *Southland*, *SEAL Team*, *The Walking Dead*, and Netflix’s global hit *Obliterated*, Howell has built a career centered on the enduring power of story. His performances have transported audiences into worlds of struggle, resilience, and triumph, proving that stories—whether told through books or movies—shape who we are and who we can become.

But his impact extends far beyond the screen. Inspired by the timeless message of *The Outsiders*, Howell founded the Stay Gold Foundation, dedicated to empowering young people through creativity, literacy, and the arts. Just as Ponyboy found solace in poetry and books, Howell champions the idea that literacy gives young people the tools to tell their own stories, rewrite their futures, and find a sense of belonging. His work reminds us that storytelling—whether on film or in the pages of a book—preserves the human experience and keeps hope alive.

From Ponyboy to purpose, C. Thomas Howell continues to prove that the stories we tell have the power to shape our world. Through his dedication to film, literacy, and giving back, he invites us all to *Stay Gold*—to hold onto the creativity, curiosity, and passion that make us who we are.



— Photo opportunity to follow in Kilimanjaro 5 —

DR. EDMUND J. FARRELL TEACHER ADVANCEMENT SCHOLARSHIP



ELIZABETH CASTAÑEDA



AMY CUNNINGHAM

Apply for the 2027 Dr. Edmund J. Farrell Teacher Advancement Scholarship at [tctela.org](https://www.tctela.org).

MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Sara Du Plaga

The Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts is proud to honor Sara Du Plaga as the 2026 Middle School Teacher of the Year. This award recognizes exceptional educators whose instructional excellence, leadership, and unwavering commitment to students elevate teaching and learning across their campuses and communities. Ms. Du Plaga exemplifies these qualities through nearly two decades of service at North Shore Middle School in Galena Park ISD.

An accomplished classroom teacher and instructional leader, Ms. Du Plaga creates learning environments where students feel safe, valued, and capable of success. Her classroom is intentionally designed to meet the needs of every learner, blending structure with flexibility and rigor with care. Teaching in a co-teach setting for many years, she has mastered the art of differentiation and scaffolding, using data to make immediate instructional decisions that move learning forward. From individualized STAAR preparation materials aligned to specific TEKS to small-group instruction grounded in real-time assessment, her precision and intentionality consistently produce strong outcomes for students.

Beyond data, Ms. Du Plaga understands that relationships are the foundation of learning. She engages reluctant learners through creativity, joy, and authenticity, inviting students to share their lives through writing, celebrating effort, and fostering a classroom culture rooted in trust. Her calm, steady presence and belief in every child inspire students to invest in their growth because they know she is fully invested in them.

Ms. Du Plaga’s impact extends far beyond her own classroom. As ELA Department Chair, longtime coach, and mentor to new teachers, she has shaped campus culture and strengthened instructional practice schoolwide. She has presented professional learning, collaborated with colleagues at TCTELA, and guided educators with humility and a coach’s mindset, always seeking feedback and growth even after years of success. Teaching on an “A” rated campus serving a predominantly economically disadvantaged and emergent bilingual population, she has played a vital role in sustaining excellence and equity.

Sara Du Plaga is a teacher’s teacher, a leader’s leader, and a tireless advocate for students. TCTELA is honored to recognize her extraordinary dedication, instructional mastery, and lasting influence with the Middle School Teacher of the Year Award.

Continued on next page.

HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Zainab Jabak

The Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts is proud to recognize Zainab Jabak as the 2026 High School Teacher of the Year. This award honors outstanding secondary educators whose instructional excellence, leadership, and advocacy create transformative learning experiences for students and extend far beyond the walls of their classrooms. Zainab exemplifies this distinction through her commitment to equity, literacy, and elevating student voice.

As a 10th-grade English teacher at Alief Taylor High School in Alief ISD, Zainab creates inclusive, student-centered classrooms where all learners feel seen, heard, and empowered. Bilingual and biliterate in Arabic and English, she brings deep multicultural understanding to her teaching and intentionally designs instruction that supports emergent bilinguals, advanced learners, and students across Pre-AP and on-level courses. Her innovative, research-based practices foster critical thinking, academic confidence, and a genuine love of reading and writing, both in traditional and virtual learning environments.

Zainab's impact extends well beyond her classroom. She is a tireless literacy advocate, serving as the school sponsor for the Project LIT Community chapter, a Donors Choose Teacher Ambassador, and a First Book Teacher Champion, all in service of expanding students' access to diverse, meaningful texts. She has created extraordinary opportunities for students by hosting teen book festivals on campus, facilitating author panels, and partnering with leaders such as Texas Poet Laureate Lupe Mendez to connect reading, writing, and lived experience in powerful ways. Through her work with TAFE, she has mentored aspiring educators, many of whom are now pursuing careers in education and educational leadership.

A respected leader within the profession, Zainab formerly served on the TCTELA Board as High School Section Chair and actively contributes to NCTE, ALAN, and other professional organizations. She shares her expertise widely through conference presentations, publications, and professional learning, modeling the belief that effective teaching is meant to be shared. Her excellence has been recognized through numerous honors, including Texas TIA Exemplary designation and the Abydos International Learning Conference "Promising Young Educator" Award.

Zainab Jabak is a passionate educator, advocate, and leader whose influence continues to ripple through classrooms, communities, and the profession at large. TCTELA is honored to celebrate her extraordinary contributions with the High School Teacher of the Year Award.

Continued on next page.

UNIVERSITY TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Dr. Laveria F. Hutchison

The Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts is honored to recognize Dr. Laveria F. Hutchison as the 2026 University Teacher of the Year. This award celebrates exceptional university educators whose teaching, mentorship, and leadership have shaped the field of literacy and strengthened the preparation of future educators. Dr. Hutchison embodies this distinction through more than five decades of unwavering commitment to literacy education at the University of Houston.

For over 50 years, Dr. Hutchison has taught literacy at the undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels, leaving an indelible mark on generations of educators across Texas. Her classrooms are known for being both rigorous and deeply supportive, spaces where high expectations are paired with consistent guidance and care. Students describe her as inspiring, demanding in the best way, and profoundly invested in their success. Long after courses end, many continue to seek her mentorship, a testament to the trust and respect she builds through her teaching.

Mentorship sits at the heart of Dr. Hutchison's career. She has guided dozens of doctoral students through proposals, dissertations, and leadership development, preparing them to serve as school and district leaders, scholars, and advocates for literacy. She intentionally bridges theory and practice, requiring students to engage with real audiences and real issues, and equipping them to lead complex literacy conversations with confidence and clarity. Many of her former students now publish, present nationally, and contribute actively to TCTELA, continuing the legacy of professional engagement she instilled.

Dr. Hutchison's dedication to TCTELA is longstanding and deeply intentional. She regularly brings her doctoral students to the annual conference, introducing them to a professional community that extends their learning and amplifies their voices. Her scholarship in literacy leadership and culturally responsive pedagogy, along with her leadership on major grant initiatives linking literacy and STEM education, ensures that her teaching remains current, relevant, and research-driven.

Across five decades, Dr. Hutchison has distinguished herself as a master teacher, mentor, and leader whose influence reaches far beyond the university classroom. For her extraordinary commitment to teaching, her transformative mentorship, and her enduring service to the literacy community, TCTELA is proud to honor Dr. Laveria F. Hutchison as University Teacher of the Year.

Nominate a deserving candidate for a 2027 Teacher of the Year Award at [tctela.org](https://www.tctela.org).

EDMUND J. FARRELL DISTINGUISHED SERVICE & ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

DR. MARGARET HALE AWARD PRESENTED DURING FRIDAY LUNCHEON 11:30AM-12:45PM KILIMANJARO 6

The Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts is honored to recognize Dr. Margaret Hale as the 2026 recipient of the Edmund J. Farrell Distinguished Service and Achievement Award. This award represents the highest level of recognition for sustained excellence, service, and impact within the profession, and Dr. Hale's career exemplifies every aspect of its purpose.

Dr. Hale is a lifelong educator, mentor, and leader whose influence on English language arts education in Texas spans classrooms, universities, professional organizations, and generations of educators. Whether working directly with students, coaching teachers, or guiding future leaders, she has an extraordinary ability to ignite curiosity, deepen understanding, and translate theory into meaningful classroom practice. Her work consistently bridges scholarship and instruction, ensuring that strong ideas become strong teaching.

A steadfast advocate for literacy, Dr. Hale has given decades of service to TCTELA, including leadership on the board and serving as president. In these roles, she elevated the voices of educators across the state, championed equitable literacy practices, and strengthened the organization's mission to support teachers and learners. Her commitment to TCTELA did not end with formal leadership roles. She continues to mentor, write, collaborate, and build community, ensuring that the organization's work remains vibrant and relevant.

Dr. Hale's impact as a mentor is both profound and far-reaching. She is known for giving generously of her time, meeting teachers and students wherever they are, whether in classrooms, on weekends, or late into the evening. She models the highest standards of professionalism with warmth, integrity, and care. Many educators credit her with shaping their professional identities, encouraging them to present, publish, lead, and serve. Her legacy lives on through the countless teachers, scholars, and leaders she has inspired.

At the heart of Dr. Hale's work is a deep and contagious love for literacy. She fosters authentic readers and writers by creating spaces where curiosity thrives, conversations matter, and learning feels purposeful. She leads with compassion and clarity, holding high expectations while offering unwavering support. Through her service and mentorship, she has strengthened literacy education across Texas and beyond.

For her enduring dedication to the profession, her profound influence on educators and students, and her unwavering service to TCTELA's mission, the Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts is proud to honor Dr. Margaret Hale with the Edmund J. Farrell Distinguished Service and Achievement Award.



Nominate a deserving candidate for the 2027 Edmund J. Farrell
Distinguished Service & Achievement Award at [tctela.org](https://www.tctela.org).

ANIKA ALDAMUY DENISE 11:30AM-12:45PM KILIMANJARO 6

The Stories We Carry: How Cultura and Memory Inspire Narrative

The most powerful stories often begin with the ones we carry inside us. Award-winning children’s book author Anika Aldamuy Denise explores how weaving culture and ancestral memory into her stories creates a deeper connection for young readers and invites them to honor their own histories.

Anika Aldamuy Denise writes books that plant seeds of inspiration in readers of all ages, many of which celebrate her Puerto Rican heritage. Her debut picture book biography, *Planting Stories: The Life of Librarian and Storyteller Pura Belpré*, received a 2020 Pura Belpré Award Author Honor, NCTE Orbis Pictus Honor for Outstanding Children’s Nonfiction, and the Arnold Adoff Poetry Award for Early Readers. *Planting Stories* was also named a Best Children’s Book of 2019 by *Smithsonian Magazine*, *School Library Journal*, New York Public Library, Los Angeles Public Library, Chicago Public Library, Bank Street College of Education, and the Center for the Study of Multicultural Children’s Literature.



Anika’s follow-up title, *A Girl Named Rosita: The Story of Rita Moreno: Actor, Singer, Dancer, Trailblazer!*, received a starred review from *School Library Journal* and was an American Library Association 2022 RISE Feminist Book Project selection. Her latest picture book biography, *Phenomenal AOC: The Roots and Rise of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez*, received a starred review from *Booklist* and was awarded a Pura Belpré Honor for illustration.

Anika’s forthcoming middle grade poetry collection, *La Bandera: Poems of Resistance and Pride*—about the history and symbolism of the Puerto Rican flag—will be out in the fall of 2026.

In addition to writing, Anika frequently speaks at schools and in professional organizations, where she leads workshops in creative writing and representation in kids’ literature. She also mentors writers for *Las Musas* and *We Need Diverse Books*. To learn more, visit anikadenise.com.

— Book signing to follow in Kilimanjaro 5 —

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SESSION CODES

INTENDED AUDIENCE

P Pre-Kindergarten

E Elementary

M Middle School

H High School

C College/University

G General

TOPICS

ADV AP/Pre-AP

CMR College/Career/
Military Readiness

EL EL/Bilingual Education

GT Gifted & Talented*

S Learners with Special Needs

TD Teacher Development

T Technology

*See page 56 for a list of all GT sessions.

ACACIA	LITERATURE UNDER LOCKDOWN: CLASSROOM STRATEGIES IN AN AGE OF CENSORSHIP
Intended Audience: E, M, H, C, G	Ann David, University of the Incarnate Word Amber Funderburgh, Leander ISD
Topics: TD	Emily McClure, University of the Incarnate Word Cody Miller, SUNY Brockport NY Nicole Mize, Leander ISD
	Restrictions on what books students can read, what texts can be included in the curriculum, and what conversations English teachers can have in class are a daily reality in Texas. This session offers participants an opportunity to discuss restrictive policies, share creative responses, and develop local advocacy plans. Additionally, participants will develop effective talking points about the freedom to read and teacher expertise by drawing on school district language and messaging.
KILIMANJARO 1	HISTORIAS—THE BOOK WAS BETTER
Intended Audience: E, M	Heather Alambarrio, McKinney ISD
Topics: S	Does the word “essay” cause your student writers to flinch? Are you tired of reading student writing that lacks voice and enthusiasm? As a secondary teacher with elementary experience, I embarked on a journey last year to get my reluctant eighth graders to write, using whatever means necessary. Writing books instead of papers helped them to unlock their historias in memoir and their expertise in expository as well as to tap into all the metacognitive moves of real writers!
KILIMANJARO 2	SHARING PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF CUENTOS/HISTORIAS TO HONOR AND CELEBRATE ALL STUDENTS’ CULTURE, IDENTITIES, AND FAMILY STORIES
Intended Audience: E, M, H, C, G	Aurelia Davila de Silva, Bexar County Academy Roxanne Henkin, University of Texas at San Antonio
Topics: TD	We will introduce what a Cuento is and share strategies and insights from Cuentos Projects. We will facilitate key aspects of the Cuentos Project for the audience to experience. Participants will be able to take project strategies back into their classrooms, schools, and/or communities. By incorporating Cuentos into classrooms, we are preserving historias familiares, thereby honoring all students’ voices, identities, and families.

Continued on next page.

SESSION CODES

INTENDED AUDIENCE

P Pre-Kindergarten

E Elementary

M Middle School

H High School

C College/University

G General

TOPICS

ADV AP/Pre-AP

CMR College/Career/
Military Readiness

EL EL/Bilingual Education

GT Gifted & Talented*

S Learners with Special Needs

TD Teacher Development

T Technology

*See page 56 for a list of all GT sessions.

KILIMANJARO 3

EVERY VOICE MATTERS: SCAFFOLDING STORIES THROUGH DATA AND DIFFERENTIATION

Intended Audience:
M, H

Sara DuPlaga, Galena Park ISD
Amy Garza, Galena Park ISD

Topics:
EL, S, TD

Carmen McWilliams, Galena Park ISD

Literacy lives within every student’s story. This session explores how teachers can scaffold instruction to ensure equity and access for all: emergent bilinguals, students with special needs, and advanced learners. Participants will learn how academic vocabulary builds bridges, how growth data informs differentiation, and how RAC and Say-Mean-Matter deepen evidence-based writing. Together, these strategies provide students with the tools to tell, justify, and expand their own stories with confidence.

KILIMANJARO 4

ENTRE LINEAS: CRAFTING PLANS THAT BRING CONVERSATIONS TO LIFE

Intended Audience:
E

Taylor Randolph, Humble ISD

Topics:
TD

Deep conversations don’t happen by chance—they’re crafted between the lines of intentional planning. In this session, we’ll explore how the texts we choose and the evidence we highlight can breathe life into meaningful dialogue. Participants will learn how to design literacy experiences that invite students to think critically, talk authentically, and write purposefully. Together, we’ll uncover how planning with conversation in mind transforms complex texts into powerful entry points for student voice, connection, and understanding.

KILIMANJARO 7-8

TEA RLA ASSESSMENT UPDATES

Intended Audience:
E, M, H

Joe Cisneros, TEA
Chelaine Marion, TEA

Topics:
TD

This session will provide the most up-to-date information on the STAAR RLA assessed content, resources available to support implementation of the STAAR assessment program, upcoming changes to the assessment program, and opportunities for educator involvement. TEA presenters will also provide an overview of assessment scoring as used in all current Texas assessments.

BAMBOO

LISTENING TO THE STORIES WITHIN US: HOW A COLLABORATIVE COHORT OF LITERACY LEADERS TURNED QUESTIONS INTO ACTION

Intended Audience:
E, M, H, G

Erika Sanders, Humble ISD
Isabel Tuliao, Texas Woman’s University

Topics:
TD

This poster session shares the work of a collaborative cohort of literacy educators who engaged in sustained inquiry around a shared problem of practice. Attendees will learn about the cohort structure, inquiry process, and outcomes, and reflect on how collaborative inquiry can honor lived literacy while leading to meaningful change in practice.

PRESIDENT-ELECT

bell hooks reminds us that hope and vision grow out of the challenges we face, and her words have guided me throughout my journey in education. Community-building, hope, and resistance aren't just ideas to me—they are practices that have shaped who I am as a teacher, coach, and advocate.

For the past five years, TCTELA has been a professional home where I could live out these values. As Teacher-Development Section Chair, I helped create spaces for educators to learn from one another, share their expertise, and strengthen instructional practice. Now, as NCTE Liaison and SLATE Representative, I've had the opportunity to represent Texas teachers at the national level, advocate for students' right to read, and support members navigating increasingly restrictive policies. In these roles, I've seen firsthand how powerful it is when educators feel connected, affirmed, and equipped.

My experience as an ELA/ESL teacher and teacher development specialist as well as my work with NCTE and the Educator Collaborative have only deepened that belief. TCTELA has helped me grow as a leader, and I want to continue pouring back into this community. As President-Elect, I hope to expand our Ambassador Program, nurture the Dream Program for future educators of color, and continue building strong, meaningful instructional resources. I'm honored to serve and eager to keep dreaming—and working—alongside this incredible community.



Lois Marshall Barker

VP-ELECT FOR MEMBERSHIP AND AFFILIATES

As an educator, literacy advocate, and proud TCTELA member, I believe in the transformative power of stories to connect, challenge, and inspire learners of all ages. My vision as Vice President-Elect is to champion the voices of Texas educators and students, ensuring that our classrooms remain spaces where diverse literature, critical thinking, and equity-driven practices thrive. Across my career, I have served as a high school English teacher, a literacy leader, and a conference presenter, sharing innovative strategies on digital storytelling, student choice, and culturally responsive teaching. My work within TCTELA—which has included mentoring fellow educators—has deepened my commitment to our mission and strengthened my belief in the power of collaboration. Beyond the classroom, I have led community-based literacy initiatives, moderated author panels, and built partnerships that expand access to inclusive books and resources for Texas students. In this new role, I would work to amplify member voices, cultivate meaningful professional learning opportunities, and strengthen connections between our organization and the communities we serve. Together, we can continue building a network that honors the craft of teaching, nurtures educator growth, and ensures every student in Texas can see themselves—and the world—in the pages of a book.



Zainab Jabak

Students deserve an education that is responsive to their needs. They deserve to learn the way they learn. As educators, it is our responsibility to provide opportunities for critical thinking and deep reflection. We should focus on the “windows and mirrors” so that students are able to challenge their own beliefs, embrace their own uniqueness, and explore the diversity in the spaces that they encounter. Their tasks are heavy. Our tasks are heavy. Together, we lighten the load.



Tanesha Yusuf

Continued on next page.

RECORDING SECRETARY

I have a strong interest in serving as the 2026 Recording Secretary. I am a passionate educator with experience in organization, record-keeping, and communication skills that are needed for this position. I feel that the role of Recording Secretary is crucial for maintaining the continuity and transparency for the members of TCTELA and the board. Since serving in 2025, I feel I have gained extensive experience accurately documenting and formatting meeting minutes to ensure all motions, discussions, and decisions are clearly and concisely captured. I feel that because I align with TCTELA’s mission to provide professional development, literacy advocacy, and support educators in our state, this allows me to prioritize and see the value that the minutes have as an organization and their efforts to remain honest and transparent to the teachers we serve. I am eager and hopeful that I will be given another year to be able to support TCTELA and the board in their mission of supporting Texas teachers and beyond.



Donna Herrera

Literacy is the foundational civil right upon which all future academic success, economic stability, and civic participation are built. Current data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicates that Texas student reading proficiency rates remain at historic lows, underscoring an urgent crisis that demands unified, comprehensive, and evidence-based action across all educational levels. We call on Texas policymakers, educators, and community members to unite behind these commitments. The future workforce and civic health of Texas depend on our collective success in ensuring that the next generation of Texans are strong, confident, and proficient readers.



Marissa Perez

As an educator and lifelong advocate for literacy, I believe that language arts is at the heart of human connection, helping students discover who they are, how they think, and how they belong in the world. For over a decade, I have dedicated myself to cultivating spaces where reading and writing spark not just academic success, but empathy, resilience, and voice. Serving as Recording Secretary for TCTELA would allow me to contribute to an organization that has deeply shaped my professional growth and my classroom practice. I have attended every TCTELA conference since I began teaching and have brought back so many things to my classroom. I value the role of accurate documentation as the backbone of any thriving organization. The Recording Secretary’s position preserves one shared vision, ensures that the ideas and initiatives of our members are acknowledged, and sustains the organizational memory that helps TCTELA to continue to grow and lead literacy education in Texas. My experience includes extensive collaboration at both campus and district levels, as well as presenting at TCTELA numerous times and this year at NCTE. As a teacher, curriculum writer, and literacy advocate, I am highly organized, detail-oriented, and committed to clear communication. These strengths would guide me in maintaining precise records, promoting transparency, and supporting the smooth operation of the board. It would be an honor to serve in this capacity to help ensure the important work that TCTELA does to continue to inspire, inform, and empower educators across our state.



Helen Read

Continued on next page.

RECORDING SECRETARY (CONTINUED)

Documenting TCTELA contributions provides essential, accurate information to advance TCTELA goals and mission. Timely and active involvement supports leadership and organizational activities. I'd love to contribute to the next phase of TCTELA's future as Recording Secretary.



Shona Rose

I am a detail-oriented person who keeps color-coordinated notes while in my meetings with my district/campuses. My communication skills and ability to accurately report information enable me to effectively plan and provide support, ensuring success. I believe these strong qualities, along with promoting literacy, would be an asset to serve as Recording Secretary for TCTELA and support the organization's mission to advance literacy in Texas.



Gwen Sharp

Nominate yourself or a colleague for a 2027 board position at [tctela.org](https://www.tctela.org).

DR. RONI DEAN-BURREN LITERACY LEADER AWARD

DR. ASHLEY SCHLAFLY AWARD PRESENTED DURING FRIDAY GENERAL SESSION

2:30PM-3:45PM KILIMANJARO 6

The Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts is honored to recognize Dr. Ashley Schlafly as the 2026 recipient of the Dr. Roni Dean-Burren Literacy Leader Award. This award celebrates a campus or district leader whose work advances literacy for all, strengthens instructional practice, and supports educators at scale. Dr. Schlafly exemplifies this vision through her bold leadership, deep content expertise, and unwavering commitment to student-centered, equitable literacy instruction.

As the Director of Secondary Reading Language Arts and Advanced Academics for Tomball ISD, Dr. Schlafly has transformed literacy teaching and learning across the district. Under her leadership, Tomball ISD has achieved historic gains in student performance, including top-ranked secondary RLA achievement in Region 4 and the highest extended constructed response writing scores in Harris County. She has led a comprehensive curriculum redesign that reintroduced full-length novels, strengthened cross-genre instruction, and aligned writing expectations through district-wide calibration protocols. Her strategic use of Depth of Knowledge has elevated rigor across all content areas, ensuring students engage in complex thinking and authentic learning experiences. Beyond the classroom, her leadership has expanded advanced academic opportunities, increased UIL participation, strengthened SAT and ACT readiness, and launched innovative initiatives such as the Advanced Academic Research Conference.

What truly sets Dr. Schlafly apart is how she leads. She is a collaborative partner, a master teacher at heart, and a tireless advocate for educators and students alike. She walks alongside teachers, models instructional practices, listens deeply, and builds systems that empower others to do their best work. Her leadership reflects the legacy of Dr. Roni Dean-Burren by placing literacy at the center of learning and by cultivating a culture where reading, writing, and critical thinking are celebrated and sustained. TCTELA is proud to honor Dr. Ashley Schlafly for her extraordinary impact and exemplary literacy leadership.



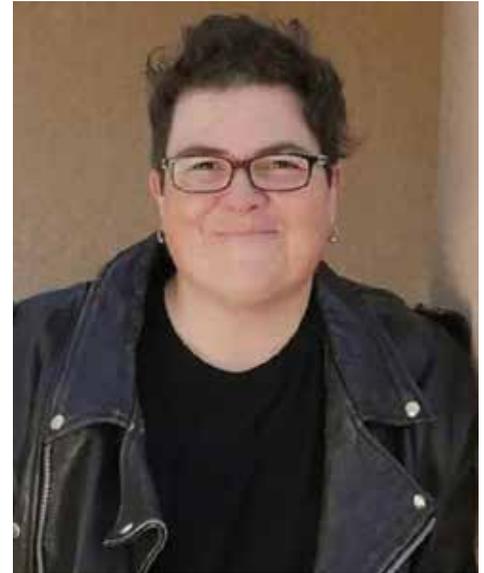
Nominate a deserving candidate for the 2027 Dr. Roni Dean-Burren Literacy Leader Award at [tctela.org](https://www.tctela.org).

e.E. CHARLTON-TRUJILLO 2:30PM-3:45PM KILIMANJARO 6

What I Know So Far

Join award-winning author, filmmaker, and literacy activist e.E. Charlton-Trujillo for a raise-the-roof celebration of historias for young people.

Described as a “force of nature” by *Kirkus Reviews*, e.E. Charlton-Trujillo is one of the most dynamic and inspiring speakers for youth and educators today. Trujillo is a Michael L. Printz Award winner for their work in *The Collectors: Stories*, and their *Fat Angie* series is an ALA Stonewall Award winner and a Lambda Literary Finalist, among other accolades. Their *Lupe Lopez* picture book series, coauthored with *New York Times* Best-seller Pat Zietlow Miller, illustrated by Joe Cepeda, garnered an International Latino Book Award and was a Bank Street Best Spanish Book of the Year. *A Girl Can Build Anything*, also coauthored with Zietlow Miller, illustrated by Keisha Morris, was a NSTA Best STEM Book Winner. And their fiction in *Living Beyond Borders: Growing Up Mexican in America* was a Read Across America selection.



e.E.’s activism with youth featured in the documentary *At-Risk Summer* led them to cofound the literacy nonprofit Never Counted Out. Today much of e.E.’s time off the page is dedicated to their “Your Story Is Now” initiative focused on empowering youth to be heard through written, oral, and visual storytelling. Because for Trujillo, there are few things as exhilarating and impactful as the shaping of one’s story.

New works coming in 2026 include *Lupe Lopez: Rock Star Rivals*, a middle grade hybrid *The Ghost Track Kids*, and poetry in *No Brain the Same: Neurodivergent Activist Shaping Our Future*.

— Book signing to follow in Kilimanjaro 5 —

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#TCTELA2026

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GT Gifted & Talented*

S Learners with Special Needs

TD Teacher Development

T Technology

*See page 56 for a list of all GT sessions.

ACACIA	ROOTS AND VOICES: GROWING LITERACY FROM THE STORIES WITHIN
Intended Audience: E, M, H, C	Chandra Shaw, Region 10 ESC Relevant, resonant texts can transform literacy from an academic task into a personal journey. In this interactive session, participants will explore heritage-centered reading and writing strategies, craft works in multiple genres, and discover ways to connect classroom literacy to the stories, cultures, and identities living within every student.
Topics: EL, S, TD	
KILIMANJARO 1	INVITING EMERGENT WRITERS TO PLAY WITH THE CONVENTIONS OF ENGLISH AND SPANISH
Intended Audience: P, E	Whitney LaRocca, Author Caroline Sweet, Austin ISD This session will guide participants through a series of invitations to foster wonder and exploration of languages with our youngest writers. Utilizing culturally responsive literature by bilingual authors and illustrators, we will demonstrate how to help children recognize the moves writers make while affirming their capabilities as writers. Participants will discuss how to value what students already know about language and trust that even the youngest learners can make meaningful decisions about their writing.
Topics: EL	
KILIMANJARO 2	VOICES, STORIES, AND IDENTITIES: LITERACY THROUGH DIVERSE LEARNERS WITH AI-SUPPORTED STATIONS
Intended Audience: E, M, G	Gwen Sharp, Beaumont ISD Every child enters our classrooms with a story that shapes who they are. In this session, we'll explore how storytelling, literacy, and identity intersect, and how diverse read-alouds can amplify student voices. Together, we'll discover practical strategies for building differentiated literacy stations—enhanced with AI tools—that meet learners where they are, celebrate their cultural and personal identities, and inspire a love of reading and writing while affirming every child's unique story.
Topics: EL, TD, T	
KILIMANJARO 3	STORIES THAT STRENGTHEN STUDENTS: COACHING EDUCATORS TO CULTIVATE LITERACY, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY
Intended Audience: E	Lucrey Goff, Humble ISD Shalania Levy, Humble ISD Erika Sanders, Humble ISD Stories live within us—they shape identities, connect communities, and serve as powerful tools for learning. This session invites instructional coaches to explore how storytelling can strengthen teachers' literacy practices by centering students' voices, experiences, and cultures. Participants will examine strategies for guiding educators toward culturally responsive instruction that honors students' lived stories. Through collaborative learning, coaches will experience story-based strategies, routines, and practices they can implement in coaching conversations.
Topics: TD	

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S Learners with Special Needs

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*See page 56 for a list of all GT sessions.

KILIMANJARO 4

WRITING OUR COMMUNITIES: HOW PLACE-BASED STORIES TRANSFORM STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Intended Audience:
M, H, G

Monica Hart, West Texas A&M University
Shanna Peeples, West Texas A&M University

Topics:
TD

Drawing from a pilot research study, this session explores how place-based writing dramatically increases student engagement. Students demonstrated enthusiasm and growth when they wrote about their neighborhoods, family stories, and local landmarks, given permission, time, and trust. Participants will experience our highest-impact activities, requiring only basic supplies and community connections. Through interactive gallery walks, participants will contribute to ongoing research while gaining immediately implementable strategies that transform required writing instruction into meaningful inquiry rooted in students' communities.

KILIMANJARO 7-8

TEA READING AND LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM UPDATE

Intended Audience:
E, M, H

Tamara Robert, TEA

Topics:
EL, TD

In this session, staff from TEA's Curriculum Standards and Student Support Division will present informational updates on reading language arts topics, recent legislation, and resources related to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for English and Spanish language arts. Attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions.

KILIMANJARO 9

THIS IS OUR STORY: LEADING STRUCTURED LITERACY AND BILITERACY THROUGH AN EQUITY LENS

Intended Audience:
E, M, H, C, G

Lilliana Kendrick, Austin ISD

Topics:
EL, TD

In this session, participants will explore how to implement structured literacy and Science of Reading principles through an equity-focused, bilingual-inclusive lens. Attendees will leave with a customizable literacy action plan, biliteracy scaffolds, and strategies for aligning leadership, MTSS, curriculum, and professional learning at the campus or district level.

SATURDAY SPECIAL EVENTS*

POWER STATION/BETWEEN THE PÁGINAS STAGE KILIMANJARO 5

7:30am-7:50am	ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN A POST-TRUTH WORLD: SNOW CRASH AND THE EPISTEMIC EPIDEMIC Reed Cook Book Talk – Neal Stephenson’s <i>Snow Crash</i> , Michel Foucault’s <i>The Archaeology of Knowledge</i> , and Gerard Genette’s <i>Paratexts</i>
7:55am-8:25am	 BRISK TEACHING Sheryl Colaur, Brisk Teaching Discover how Brisk saves teachers 10+ hours weekly on STAAR prep, feedback, and planning while providing students immediate writing support—without replacing your expertise or creating extra work.
10:00am-10:30am	 ZINC LEARNING LABS Priscilla Barrera, IDEA San Juan College Prep Matt Bardin, Founder of Zinc Learning Labs Can 4 weeks transform STAAR scores? Hear from a teacher who used Zinc STAAR Mastery to move from 31% passing to 71% and get FREE licenses for all your students!
10:35am-10:55am	COMPLEXITIES AND NUANCES: STORIES OF ARAB RESILIENCE Zainab Jabak Sawson Jaber Book Talk – <i>Eleven Words for Love</i> by Randa Abdel-Fattah, <i>The Book That Almost Rhymed</i> by Omar Abed, <i>The Boldest White/ Red/ Blue Series</i> by Ibtihaj Muhammad, S.K. Ali, <i>Ramadan Kareem</i> by M.O. Yuksel, <i>In My Mosque</i> by M.O. Yuksel, <i>Halal Hot Dogs</i> by Susannah Aziz, <i>The Catman of Aleppo</i> by Karim Shamsi Basha and Irene Lathman, and more.
1:00pm-1:20pm	UNCOVERING BRILLIANCE: STORIES OF VOICE, IDENTITY, AND THE POWER OF BEING YOU Madison Stanfill Book Talk – <i>Fish in a Tree</i> by Lynda Mullaly Hunt; <i>Out of My Mind</i> by Sharon M. Draper; <i>Welcome Back, Maple Mehta-Cohen</i> by Kate McGovern; <i>How to Find What You’re Not Looking For</i> by Veera Hiranandani; <i>Close to Famous</i> by Joan Bauer.

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES KILIMANJARO 9

10:30am-11:30am	DRAWINGS Taylor High School students will be accepting donations for their drawings! Stop by and get a drawing done while supporting the art department at a local high school!
2:45pm-3:45pm	DRAWINGS Taylor High School students will be accepting donations for their drawings! Stop by and get a drawing done while supporting the art department at a local high school!

*Saturday Special Events do not qualify for CPE credits.

MATT DE LA PEÑA PANEL DISCUSSION 8:30AM-10:00AM KILIMANJARO 6

Mi Historia Cuenta: Educator’s Stories, Student Voice, and the Power of Storytelling

Before students are invited to share their stories, teachers must often reckon with their own. In this reflective and generative panel, educators courageously share personal stories from their lives and classrooms, exploring how storytelling has shaped their identities, their teaching, and their understanding of students. Guided by author Matt de la Peña, panelists will be led through a process of reflection that models how lived experience can become a powerful literacy practice.

As educators share their historias, the session illuminates why storytelling is not “extra,” but essential, especially for students whose voices have been historically silenced. Attendees will witness how honoring personal narrative builds empathy, deepens connection, and creates classroom spaces where students are empowered to see their stories as meaningful and worthy of being told. Participants will leave with a renewed commitment to storytelling as a tool for student voice, identity affirmation, and transformative literacy instruction.

Matt de la Peña is the *New York Times* best-selling, Newbery Medal-winning author of seven young adult novels (including *Mexican WhiteBoy*, *We Were Here*, and *Superman: Dawnbreaker*) and six picture books (including *Milo Imagines the World* and *Last Stop on Market Street*). In 2016, he was awarded the NCTE Intellectual Freedom Award. Matt received his MFA in creative writing from San Diego University and his BA from the University of the Pacific (UOP), where he attended school on a full basketball scholarship. In 2019, Matt was given an honorary doctorate from UOP. He currently lives in Southern California. He teaches creative writing and visits schools and colleges throughout the country.



Matt de la Peña

Tee Hubbard is a PhD candidate at Texas Woman’s University, researching student writerly identity and Black language, and serves as a secondary RLA curriculum coordinator at Crandall ISD and English faculty at Dallas College. With extensive teaching experience spanning grades 7–12, including AP Literature and Language, and having recently published in *Reading Research Quarterly* on the Science of Teaching Reading, he brings practitioner and researcher perspectives to literacy education with an intentional focus on marginalized communities.



Tee Hubbard

Dr. Sawsan Jaber is an award-winning educator, author, and global equity leader whose work transforms classrooms into spaces of agency, belonging, and liberated learning. Her story, rooted in resistance, identity, and the legacy of her Palestinian ancestors, especially her father, continues to inspire educators worldwide to teach with courage and purpose.



Sawsan Jaber

Continued on next page.

Jake Pineda teaches high school English in the Lower Valley of El Paso, Texas. As a coach and educator, he supports youth from his childhood community by centering mindset, identity, and culture to help them navigate life along the border. He plans to become a sports psychologist, combining his life experiences—from troubled youth to military veteran—to better guide young people facing challenges like his students.



Jacob Pineda

Genevie Rodríguez-Quiñones is a Chicana scholar, mother, and maestra from San Antonio, Texas, who has over 20 years of experience in public school education serving as a bilingual teacher, literacy coach, and international baccalaureate coordinator. As a doctoral candidate at The University of Texas at San Antonio, her research interests center on Mexican American/Chicanx students, multicultural children’s literature, and the impact of culturally sustaining pedagogy on the identity formation of youth.



**Genevie Rodríguez-
Quiñones**

Rosa Trevino believes that all students carry their own powerful historias, or stories, within them, which fuel their foundational literacy. This belief drives her work as an English II and IV teacher, where she focuses on giving all students the tools to discover and articulate their inner writer.



Rosa Trevino

— Book signing to follow in Kilimanjaro 5 —

#TCTELA2026

MERCEDES BONNER LEADERSHIP AWARD

DR. TRACEY T. FLORES AWARD PRESENTED DURING SATURDAY GENERAL SESSION

8:30AM-10:00AM KILIMANJARO 6

The Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts is proud to honor Dr. Tracey T. Flores with the 2026 Mercedes Bonner Leadership Award. This award recognizes a leader of a diverse background whose work has advanced multicultural awareness, strengthened our professional community, and expanded what equity-centered literacy leadership can look like in practice. Dr. Flores embodies the spirit of this award through a career defined by courage, advocacy, and an unwavering commitment to honoring voices that have too often been pushed to the margins.

A nationally recognized scholar, educator, and community leader, Dr. Flores serves as an Associate Professor of Language and Literacy Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. Her research, teaching, and service center the lived experiences, literacies, and cultural knowledge of Latina girls, families, and multilingual communities. As the founder of *Somos Escritoras*, she has created transformative spaces where storytelling becomes a source of healing, agency, and joy. Her work bridges scholarship and practice, demonstrating how culturally sustaining pedagogies come alive in classrooms, communities, and relationships.



While Dr. Flores has not yet held a formal role within TCTELA, her impact aligns powerfully with the organization's mission and values. Through decades of scholarship, mentorship, and community engagement, she has elevated equity-focused literacy practices across Texas and beyond. Her leadership has influenced educators, inspired critical reflection, and affirmed the belief that literacy, when rooted in culture, language, and love, can change lives.

Dr. Tracey T. Flores leads with heart, brilliance, and purpose. TCTELA is honored to recognize her enduring contributions with the Mercedes Bonner Leadership Award.

Nominate a deserving candidate for the 2027 Mercedes Bonner Leadership Award at [tctela.org](https://www.tctela.org).

WELCOMING WONDER

TRANSFORMING LITERACY EDUCATION
WITH INQUIRY AND IMAGINATION



#TCTELA2026

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GT Gifted & Talented*

S Learners with Special Needs

TD Teacher Development

T Technology

*See page 56 for a list of all GT sessions.

ACACIA	ENGAGING TEXT SETS TO EMPOWER STUDENT VOICES: LEVERAGING LITERATURE TO STRENGTHEN CULTURALLY SUSTAINING INSTRUCTION
Intended Audience: E, M	Genevie Rodríguez-Quñones, The University of Texas at San Antonio This session engages culturally sustaining pedagogy to enrich instruction through the use of text sets. Centering critical literacy, educators will create inclusive learning environments that reflect and build on students’ identities and languages. Participants will analyze multicultural literature, collaboratively build text sets, and design literacy activities that use the power of story to enhance literacy and amplify students’ lived experiences. Attendees will empower students as cultural and linguistic contributors, strengthening academic achievement and classroom community.
Topics: EL	
KILIMANJARO 1	STORY BY STORY: NURTURING A LOVE FOR READING THROUGH PICTURE BOOKS
Intended Audience: E, M	Joyce Tucker, Retired Picture books provide accessible, high-impact entry points for teaching comprehension across grade levels, helping students recognize aspects of themselves in the stories they read. This session explores how the power of story—through narrative elements in fiction and nonfiction texts—can be used to model effective strategies, spark meaningful discussions, and connect students personally with the content. Attendees will leave with practical tools to create literacy experiences that are rigorous and rooted in storytelling, embracing all learners.
Topics: TD	
KILIMANJARO 2	HISTORIAS IN PARTNERSHIP: LEVERAGING AI AS A WRITING COMPANION IN THE ELA CLASSROOM
Intended Audience: E, M, H, C	Margaret Hale, University of Houston This interactive session explores how English language arts teachers can leverage artificial intelligence as a tutor and writing partner to support authentic student storytelling. Grounded in the conference theme “Historias: Literacy Living Within Us,” participants will examine practical strategies for using AI to spark ideas, refine drafts, and strengthen writing while preserving student voice. Ethical and pedagogical considerations will be addressed, ensuring AI enhances—rather than replaces—the human stories at the heart of literacy.
Topics: T	
KILIMANJARO 3	YOUR CHOICE, YOUR VOICE: CREATING LITERACY LEGACY WITH INDEPENDENT READING
Intended Audience: M, H	Kristen Vollman, Alvin ISD Daily independent reading is essential for student growth, yet too often those 10 to 15 minutes of silent reading turns into minutes unaccounted for. While teachers take care of their unending task list, students often sit and fake read. This session equips you with practical strategies that take students from fake reading to true engagement. You’ll leave knowing how to effectively support, enhance, and track your students’ independent reading, ensuring every minute genuinely counts.
Topics: TD	

Continued on next page.

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KILIMANJARO 4

TRANSFORMING WRITING INSTRUCTION WITH AI-POWERED WRITABLE

Intended Audience:
E, M, H

Topics:
CMR, EL, S, T



Jennifer Whitmarsh, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Discover how Writable’s integrated AI tools can help teachers deliver personalized, rubric-aligned feedback at scale—without sacrificing instructional integrity. In this session, we’ll highlight how educators can use Writable to support drafting, revising, scoring, and monitoring growth. Perfect for teams looking to elevate writing instruction and improve student outcomes with efficiency and confidence.

KILIMANJARO 7-8

FROM ORIGIN TO MEMOIR: TRACING THE LITERACIES THAT LIVE IN US

Intended Audience:
M, H

Topics:
TD, GT

Andrea Folse, Northwest ISD

Eva Goins, Northwest ISD

Helen Read, Northwest ISD

Every student enters the classroom carrying stories of joy, struggle, resilience, and hope. Too often dismissed as distractions, these narratives can be powerful assets. Through the lens of kintsugi—the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with gold—this session explores hands-on activities and strategies that help students honor their lived experiences, craft personal vignettes and memoirs, and build confidence, empathy, and belonging. Educators will leave equipped to transform narrative work into resilience and community.

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#TCTELA2026

MATT DE LA PEÑA 11:45AM-1:00PM KILIMANJARO 6

The Power of Patience and Restraint in Fiction Writing

We will explore the reader-writer relationship and how writers can create more space on the page for audiences of all ages. We will examine the role of the narrator and the magic of scene-driven storytelling, with an emphasis on how small craft choices can deepen tension, character, and emotional impact. While we will focus on developing your own creative voice during our time together, you will also leave with concrete exercises and strategies you can bring directly into your classroom.

— Book signing to follow in Kilimanjaro 5 —



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Ranyah Hindi

The Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts is proud to honor Ranyah Hindi as the 2026 Elementary Teacher of the Year. This award recognizes outstanding educators whose classroom practice, commitment to students, and dedication to literacy create meaningful and lasting impact. Ranyah embodies the very heart of this honor through teaching that is grounded in empathy, excellence, and a deep belief in the power of children’s voices.

A fifth-grade reading teacher at Joe Hubenak Elementary in Lamar CISD, Ranyah creates a classroom where students feel seen, valued, and inspired to take risks as readers, writers, and thinkers. She is known for going far beyond what is required, staying after school to help a student write and deliver their very first speech, building immersive learning experiences that bring novels to life, and intentionally curating classroom libraries that reflect the languages, cultures, and identities of her students. For Ranyah, literacy is not just about skill development, it is about belonging, voice, and confidence.

Ranyah’s impact reaches beyond academics. She teaches with care and intention, responding to students’ emotional needs with compassion and thoughtfulness. Whether organizing affirmations to support a grieving student or checking in daily to ensure a child feels supported, she consistently leads with humanity. Her approach reminds us that relationships are the foundation of meaningful learning.

As the 2023 GYTO Gold Star Teacher of the Year, Ranyah has also emerged as a leader beyond her classroom, inspiring educators through conference presentations and collaborative work with colleagues. Her teaching reflects equity, creativity, and courage, and her influence continues to ripple outward through the students and teachers she uplifts. TCTELA is honored to recognize Ranyah Hindi as Elementary Teacher of the Year for her extraordinary commitment to literacy and to the lives she changes every day.

#TCTELA2026

SESSION CODES

INTENDED AUDIENCE

P Pre-Kindergarten

E Elementary

M Middle School

H High School

C College/University

G General

TOPICS

ADV AP/Pre-AP

CMR College/Career/
Military Readiness

EL EL/Bilingual Education

GT Gifted & Talented*

S Learners with Special Needs

TD Teacher Development

T Technology

*See page 56 for a list of all GT sessions.

ACACIA	CENTERING IDENTITY IN LITERACY: BIAS-FREE PRACTICES TO CREATE INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE, AND ENGAGING CLASSROOMS
Intended Audience: E	Lucrey Goff, Humble ISD Shalania Levy, Humble ISD
Topics: TD	Erika Sanders, Humble ISD Literacy classrooms are powerful spaces where identity, voice, and equity converge. This session will guide educators in examining how classroom environments, book choices, and instructional practices either affirm or silence student voices. Through interactive strategies such as identity mapping, classroom audits, and text analysis, participants will reflect on their own practice and leave with practical tools to dismantle bias. Educators will gain strategies to build inclusive, bias-free learning communities that empower all readers.
KILIMANJARO 1	WHERE STORIES BEGIN: INTERNALIZING LESSONS THAT CENTER IDENTITY AND LEARNING
Intended Audience: G	Dee-Anna Kitson, Katy ISD Aaliya Mohammed
Topics: TD	Every student carries a story. Internalizing a lesson is how we prepare to honor those stories while staying true to the rigor of high-quality instructional materials. This session invites teachers to slow down and look closely at what a text asks of students and what students bring to the text. Through thoughtful planning, we will explore how to create lessons that build connection, deepen comprehension, and make space for every learner's voice.
KILIMANJARO 2	AN INVITATION TO SHARE STORIES WITH THE CO-EDITORS OF ENGLISH IN TEXAS
Intended Audience: G	Gage Jeter, Texas Woman's University Aimée Myers, Texas Woman's University
Topics: ADV, CMR, EL, S, TD, T	As the incoming coeditors of <i>English in Texas</i> , the premier journal of TCTELA, we invite you to share your stories for the Spring/Summer 2026 issue as they relate to the theme "Cultivating Critical Hope: Fostering Transformative and Nourishing Practices in ELAR Education." In this session, you'll meet and interact with the incoming coeditors, receive detailed information about our upcoming issue, and learn about the various publication opportunities for you, your colleagues, and your students.

Continued on next page.

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KILIMANJARO 3

READING TO RESIST: EMBEDDING CRITICAL LITERACY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS

Intended Audience: Malene Golding, University of Houston–Clear Lake

G

Topics:
TD

Discover how to nurture young changemakers through critical literacy. This session explores how K–5 educators can use read-alouds, student writing, and classroom discussions to help students question injustice, examine bias, and explore fairness. Learn how to curate diverse libraries, design equity-centered prompts, and facilitate brave conversations that honor students’ voices and lived experiences. Grounded in love-centered leadership, this session equips educators to create classrooms where literacy and social justice go hand in hand.

KILIMANJARO 4

TEACHING INTO ORAL STORYTELLING IN THE HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM

Intended Audience: Nicole Conter, Teachers College, Columbia University

H

Topics:
TD

Storytelling is a powerful tool that shapes how we understand ourselves and the world around us; it’s a skill we use every day from casual conversations to job interviews. This session focuses on how to teach into and support students in sharpening storytelling as a skill. Rooted in research and the standards, the session will highlight how to build units around oral storytelling, embed mentor texts, and coach students as they try out the strategies.

KILIMANJARO 7-8

POETRY UNBOUND: CULTIVATING VOICE AND STORY IN THE CLASSROOM

Intended Audience: Sara Butler, Leander ISD

M, H

Amber Funderburgh, Leander ISD

Topics:
TD, GT

Nicole Mize, Leander ISD
Aligned with the TCTELA theme “Historias: Literacy Living Within Us,” this session invites educators to revitalize poetry as a tool for storytelling, identity, and joy. Participants will learn to break free from rigid structures, use mentor texts, and foster authentic, student-driven poetic voices. Through hands-on activities and discussion, teachers will discover how to help students craft meaningful poems that reflect their unique stories, cultures, and experiences—bringing poetry to life in their classrooms.

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T Technology

*See page 56 for a list of all GT sessions.

<p>ACACIA</p>	<p>BOOK CLUBS AS STORY SANCTUARIES: WHERE STUDENT HISTORIAS DRIVE KNOWLEDGE BUILDING, VOCABULARY ACQUISITION, AND AUTHENTIC DISCUSSION</p>
<p>Intended Audience: M, H</p> <p>Topics: CMR, TD, T</p>	<p>Heather Burns, Teachers College–Columbia University</p> <p>Book clubs can be more than discussion spaces—they can become story sanctuaries where students’ historias drive collective learning. What if book clubs resembled makerspaces where students contribute cultural knowledge, investigate vocabulary, and design text sets that unveil connections between their lives and literature? This session demonstrates how centering student stories in book clubs builds knowledge, develops powerful vocabulary, and lifts understanding while fostering social action.</p>
<p>KILIMANJARO 1</p>	<p>STORIES OF US: USING HISTORICAL CONTENT TO TACKLE TODAY’S COMPLEXITIES</p>
<p>Intended Audience: M, H, C</p> <p>Topics: TD</p>	<p>Amy Cunningham, Round Rock ISD</p> <p>Histories are the stories of us. This presentation explores strategies for teaching ELA through a humanities-based lens, emphasizing storytelling as a vehicle for civic awareness and critical thinking. In an era when humanities are increasingly undervalued, this approach restores relevance to our field and heightens student engagement. Drawing from experiences at the George Washington Teacher Institute, this session explores methods for integrating history and historical texts into the ELA classroom.</p>
<p>KILIMANJARO 2</p>	<p>EMPOWERING SECONDARY WRITERS: INTERVENTION STRATEGIES ROOTED IN EQUITY AND VOICE</p>
<p>Intended Audience: M, H</p> <p>Topics: TD</p>	<p>Tracey Hodges, Sam Houston State University</p> <p>Are your students feeling less than motivated with writing? Do you wish you had concrete supports for developing writing intervention? Attendees will explore practical strategies such as write-alouds, writing-to-learn tasks, and scaffolded reflection activities that promote writing fluency, decision making, and confidence. Emphasizing culturally responsive pedagogy and teacher-student collaboration, these interventions center equity by amplifying student voice, agency, and advocacy. Participants will leave with concrete supports and tools to implement writing instruction.</p>
<p>KILIMANJARO 3</p>	<p>BOOK BATTLES 101: BUILD A LITERACY COMMUNITY THROUGH A BOOKISH COMPETITION WITH FRIENDS</p>
<p>Intended Audience: E, M, H</p> <p>Topics: TD</p>	<p>Kimberly Kinnaird, Sam Houston State University</p> <p>This interactive session will provide a comprehensive overview of a book battle, an exciting competition designed to promote a love of reading, foster teamwork and community, and strengthen comprehension skills. The presentation will share every stage of the planning process, including team formation, book selection, coaching techniques, and running the competition event. Attendees will participate in a mock battle and will leave with links to resources and tips for creating a schoolwide reading culture.</p>

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KILIMANJARO 4

HISTORIAS AS EQUIPMENT FOR LIVING

Intended Audience:
H, C

Jim Warren, University of Texas at Arlington

Topics:
CMR, TD

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) require students to learn literary analysis skills that do little to foster a love of historias or an appreciation of the “literacy living within us.” This session introduces an alternative approach, one that takes seriously Kenneth Burke’s definition of literature as “equipment for living.” Participants will learn strategies to help students read stories to develop self-knowledge, forge identity, and create purpose, all while maintaining academic rigor.

KILIMANJARO 7-8

OUR STORIES IN PROGRESS: STUDENT PORTFOLIOS AS LIVING LITERACY NARRATIVES

Intended Audience:
M, H

Sara Butler, Leander ISD

Amber Funderburgh, Leander ISD

Topics:
CMR, S, T, GT

Nicole Mize, Leander ISD

In this session, we explore how student-driven literacy portfolios serve as powerful tools for honoring learners and supporting academic development. The presenters will showcase digital portfolios—crafted through Google Sites—to document, reflect on, and grow students’ literacies. By fostering ownership of learning, portfolios become more than assessments—they become evolving stories of identity, growth, and empowerment. Join us to see how this practice supports academic development and amplifies the voices, lives, and experiences of every learner.

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BAMBOO

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING—HOW WE USE OUR HISTORIAS TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS FOR COACHING: CELEBRATING THE HISTORIAS OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Intended Audience:
G

Soumi Chakraborti, Katy ISD
Marissa Cisneros Perez, Edgewood ISD

Topics:
EL, TD

Shalaina Levy, Humble ISD
Emy Tomita, Aldine ISD

This roundtable will explore ways to embrace the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of Texas students through translanguaging, culturally responsive teaching, and writing beside mentor texts. Participants will discuss translanguaging strategies that allow students to have their voice, elevating student voice through discourse, and building an instructional coaching culture that centers historias. We will also fuel historias with mentor texts that center culture and engage in a protocol for using culturally rich mentor texts in practice.

BAMBOO

FILLING IN THE GAPS FOR STUDENTS (DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION TO MEET THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF LEARNERS)

Intended Audience:
M, H

Sara Johnson, Fort Bend ISD
Elizabeth Moll, Hutto ISD

Topics:
EL, S

Sheila Weathers, Leander ISD

Targeting Literacy Skills: Examining the essential roles of fluency and morphology in reading development, and discussing concrete steps for addressing the challenge of “When Kids Can’t Read, What Teachers Can Do.” Responsive Instruction and Curriculum Control: Exploring how teachers can implement Responsive Instruction while navigating a structured curriculum. We will look at strategies for greater control of the calendar/content and practical, day-to-day, minute-by-minute breakdowns for incorporating differentiation. Teacher Autonomy and Voice: Discussing the importance of teacher autonomy and addressing concerns about maintaining the voice of teaching within a standardized framework, ensuring instruction remains engaging and personally relevant.

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BAMBOO

NARRATIVES THAT NURTURE AND INSPIRE: SUPPORTING MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS THROUGH EQUITABLE LITERACY PRACTICES

Intended Audience:
H

Maryann Hasso, Adelanto High School

Topics:
G, EL, TD

Rooted in the theme “Historias: Literacy Living Within Us,” this session explores how equitable assessment can honor the diverse identities of multilingual learners. Participants will examine challenges in K-12 assessments and gain strategies to eliminate bias through differentiated and multimodal instruction. Designed for dual language and K-12 educators, this presentation offers practical tools to create meaningful, culturally responsive assessments that empower multilingual learners and support their success in both classroom and district-wide evaluations.

BAMBOO

LITERACY ACQUISITION IN SOR TIMES

Intended Audience:
E, M, H, C

Melynda Heller, Texas Tech University

Shona Rose, Texas Tech University

Topics:
EL, S, TD

Haylee VanCuran, Georgetown ISD

Literacy acquisition students at Texas Tech examined research and best practices in processes and pedagogy. Topics include literacy as a neglected right, perceptions of Amplify, digital reading instruction, word recognition, vocabulary, elementary reading performance in the U.S., dynamic instruction fused with SEL, and divergent learning solutions. As researchers, the presenters will share research findings, watch lists, and replacement practices discovered during their course experiences.

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<p>ACACIA</p>	<p>HELP! MY SECONDARY STUDENT STRUGGLES TO READ AND WRITE WORDS</p>
<p>Intended Audience: M, H, C</p>	<p>Tonja Gray, Region 14 ESC</p>
<p>Topics: CMR, EL, S</p>	<p>Only about one-third of U.S. eighth graders scored proficient in Reading on the 2024 NAEP, which is a three-decade trend. Research has recently explored the connection between spelling and word-level reading. This session will explore the use of explicit and systematic secondary-level phonics instruction, particularly in the areas of graphophonemic knowledge and morphological awareness, to develop students' ability to read, comprehend, and write about the rich literary texts presented in their classes.</p>
<p>KILIMANJARO 1</p>	<p>LANGUAGE AS LEGACY: RECLAIMING LITERACY THROUGH CULTURAL STORYTELLING</p>
<p>Intended Audience: G</p>	<p>Ashley Schlafly, Tomball ISD</p>
<p>Topics: EL, TD</p>	<p>This interactive session invites educators to explore how family, cultural, and ancestral stories can deepen narrative writing and strengthen student identity. Grounded in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa and oral storytelling traditions, the presenter will guide participants in engaging in reflective writing and identity-mapping activities. The session offers practical, culturally responsive strategies for honoring multilingual voices and lived experiences in literacy instruction, empowering students to see their language, heritage, and stories as powerful tools for expression, connection, and learning.</p>
<p>KILIMANJARO 2</p>	<p>THE POWER OF OUR STORIES: A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTIVE LIVING LITERACY IN THE CLASSROOM</p>
<p>Intended Audience: E</p>	<p>Linda Denness-Arvizu, Northside ISD Frances Gonzalez-Garcia, University of the Incarnate Word</p>
<p>Topics: TD, T</p>	<p>This session details a culturally responsive framework for building a vibrant literacy community. It demonstrates how leveraging the power of storytelling, cultural events, books, and technology integration can foster pride and love for reading and writing. Through collaborative cross-cultural story mapping, students connect their individual narratives to a broader classroom conversation, transforming the learning environment into a space where literacy is not just taught but actively lived.</p>
<p>KILIMANJARO 3</p>	<p>VOICES FROM THE FIELD: WAYS THAT A KNOWLEDGE-BASED CURRICULUM WORKED FOR EMERGENT BILINGUALS</p>
<p>Intended Audience: E, M</p>	<p>Emy Tomita, Aldine ISD</p>
<p>Topics: EL</p>	<p>This session will demonstrate how bilingual teachers implement instructional strategies that address the specific needs of emergent bilinguals while delivering a knowledge-based curriculum. Participants will leave with practical tools, effective practices, and solutions to support academic achievement in both L1 and L2. This session aims to inspire a shift away from monocultural, deficit-based, one-size-fits-all approaches toward inclusive, culturally responsive teaching that honors and leverages the full linguistic repertoire of emergent bilingual students.</p>

CANCELED

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KILIMANJARO 4

LIVING THE STORY OF TEACHING: REFLECTION, IDENTITY, AND RESPONSIVE PRACTICE

Intended Audience:
P, E, M, H, C, G

Topics:
TD

Katrina Jansky, Texas State University

This session explores how reflective writing and storytelling support host teachers, residents, and preservice teachers in growing into responsive educators. Stories act as powerful tools to process classroom experiences, uncover strengths and challenges, and build deeper connections with students. Through examples of practice, we will explore how reflection strengthens collaboration, shapes teaching identities, and nurtures responsive teaching that meets the needs of diverse learners.

KILIMANJARO 7-8

TINTA Y INSPIRACIÓN: POETRY FROM THE HEART

Intended Audience:
E, M, H, C, G

Topics:
GT

Eva Goins, Northwest ISD

Margaret Hale, University of Houston

Donna Herrera, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD

LaWanda Williams, Dickinson ISD

Poetry lives where ink meets the heart. In this interactive session, participants will explore tinta y inspiración as a pathway to identity, healing, and empowerment. Through reading, writing, and sharing original poems, educators will experience strategies that center student voices and affirm lived experiences. Attendees will leave with ready-to-use classroom practices, multimodal approaches, and their own sparks of inspiration, reminding us that poetry is not only craft but also belonging, resilience, and story.

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BAMBOO

PAVING THE WAY TOWARDS CRITICALLY CONSCIOUS CLASSROOMS USING DIVERSE TEXTS TO PROMOTE EQUITY AND JUSTICE

Intended Audience:
P, E, M, H

Christiana Parra, Princeton ISD

Isabel Tuliao, Texas Woman's University

Topics:
EL, TD

Participants will explore how English-dominant policies and practices can silence students' cultural and linguistic identities in the classroom. This roundtable will offer strategies and resources for building equitable, inclusive learning environments that value students' home languages, center their voices, and empower multilingual learners to participate as their full, authentic selves.

BAMBOO

STORYTELLING FOR SELF-CARE

Intended Audience:
E, G

Marissa Cisneros Perez, Edgewood ISD

Topics:
TD

Storytelling, also known as *historias*, is a powerful tool for both learning and healing. In the classroom, *historias* can be used to support student learning, while also serving as a form of self-care for educators. This session will explore how to use storytelling as a means of self-support during the busy and often stressful work of teaching and advocating for students.

BAMBOO

HONORING HISTORIAS: HOLLISTIC RUBRICS FOR BILITERACY, IDENTITY, AND STORYTELLING

Intended Audience:
P, E, M, H, C

Ángeles Muñoz, Texas Woman's University

Topics:
EL

This roundtable explores how biliteracy practices and crosslinguistic storytelling affirm students' identities while transforming assessment into an empowering practice. Using holistic rubrics designed to honor emergent bilinguals' full linguistic repertoires, participants will consider how storytelling functions as both literacy instruction and identity affirmation. Attendees will engage in dialogue, review adaptable rubrics, and leave with practical strategies to implement inclusive, asset-based literacy assessments that celebrate every student's *historia*.

BAMBOO

FINDING OUR VOICE: HISTORIAS THAT EMPOWER HIGH SCHOOL LITERACY AND IDENTITY

Intended Audience:
H

Cassandra Garza, Edinburg CISD

Topics:
EL

Every student has a story worth telling—and those *historias* can spark powerful literacy growth. As educators it is up to us to nurture and encourage this learning. In this hands-on session, we'll explore fun, practical ways to weave student voices into reading, writing, and even STAAR prep. Walk away with ready-to-use strategies that celebrate identity, support emergent bilinguals, and build joyful literacy communities.

ANN DAVID KILIMANJARO 6

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM, CENSORSHIP, AND READING IN THESE TIMES

Join Ann David, NCTE’s Chair of the Committee Against Censorship, for an informal discussion about strategies for navigating book selection in the climate of curriculum restrictions from SB12 and other laws and policies. We’ll share stories and strategies. Additionally, Ann will connect participants to both state and national resources for advocating for diverse books, speaking out and up, and keeping diverse books in students’ hands.



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COLIN SEALE KILIMANJARO 6

DON'T WORRY, BE A CRITICAL THINKER: THE EQUITY CASE AND PRACTICAL TOOLS TO FUTURE-READY STUDENTS THROUGH PRIORITIZING AI (ACTUAL INTELLECT)

So many districts have added critical thinking into their Profile of a Learner or Portrait of a Graduate, but when it comes to actually embedding critical thinking into the school day, access is still often limited to high-performing students in resource-rich schools. Our mandate is to create practical policies, systems, and structures to ensure that critical thinking is no longer a luxury good.

Knowledge is power. And historically that knowledge has been focused on the “what” and the “how to.” But with the proliferation of artificial intelligence threatening to automate almost any job that can be reduced to an algorithm, our approach to K-12 teaching and learning must shift. In this workshop, Colin Seale—educator, attorney, author, founder, and CEO—will make the case for prioritizing a different kind of AI—Actual Intellect—as a key priority for today’s learners and will provide powerful but practical tools that educators can use to make critical thinking accessible to all students.



Participants will:

- Recognize the need for 21st century education to shift from asking “what” and “how to” to “why” and “what if”
- Define the habits, skills, and mindsets of critical thinking that prepare students to not just navigate the world as it is, but as it ought to be
- Practice powerful, practical tools for embedding critical thinking into all learning environments.

Colin Seale was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, where struggles in his upbringing gave birth to his passion for educational equity. Tracked early into gifted and talented programs, Colin was afforded opportunities that his neighborhood peers were not. Using lessons from his experience as a math teacher, later as an attorney, and now as a keynote speaker, contributor to *Forbes*, *The 74*, *Edutopia* and *Education Post*, and author of *Thinking Like a Lawyer: A Framework for Teaching Critical Thinking to All Students* (Prufrock Press, 2020) and *Tangible Equity: A Guide for Leveraging Student Identity, Culture, and Power to Unlock Excellence In and Beyond the Classroom* (Routledge, May 2022), Colin founded thinkLaw (www.thinklaw.us), an award-winning organization to help educators leverage inquiry-based instructional strategies to close the critical thinking gap and ensure they teach and reach all students, regardless of race, zip code, or what side of the poverty line they are born into.

— Book signing to follow. Books must be purchased Friday or Saturday. —

Continued on next page.

SUNDAY WORKSHOPS (CONTINUED)

LISA VAN GEMERT KILIMANJARO 2-4

UNLEASHED: RELEASING THE POWER OF DEPTH AND COMPLEXITY IN THE ELA CLASSROOM (GT)

Would you like to see your students' thinking power grow exponentially? Would you like to differentiate for high-ability students with ease and in no time at all? Would you like to get in on the secret of how teachers around the world are deploying an easy-to-use framework to do just that? Join in this workshop to find out exactly what Depth and Complexity can do for your ELA classroom at any grade level. You'll learn the key ideas you need to know, get practical strategies that work with actual students (not just the perfect ones!), and hear about the pitfalls to avoid. Come join in as a teacher who has taught third grade through AP guides you through everything you need to know to begin your Depth and Complexity journey. You'll leave with your mind spinning with all you'll be able to do in class the very next day as well as with fantastic resources and tips to take with you.

Using a combination of neuropsychology, pedagogy, experience, humor, technology, and sheer fun, Lisa Van Gemert shares best practices in education with audiences around the world. She is an expert consultant to television shows including Lifetime's *Child Genius*. She is also a writer of award-winning lesson plans; numerous published articles on social psychology and pedagogy; and four books, including the Legacy Award winner *Perfectionism: A Practical Guide to Managing Never Good Enough*. A former teacher, school administrator, and Youth & Education Ambassador for Mensa, she shares resources for educators and parents on her websites GiftedGuru.com & VocabularyLuau.com. She holds an undergraduate degree in English and an M.Ed.T. from the University of Texas at Arlington. When she's not trying to teach random kids she meets in the grocery store, she is a volunteer genealogist for the Daughters of the American Revolution and will happily search old newspapers for your family. Lisa and her husband, Steve, are the parents of a lot of sons and live in Arlington, Texas.



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GIFTED AND TALENTED STRAND SUMMARY

Texas Board of Education Certification Verification
TEXAS COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS
 TCTELA is an approved CPE Provider: ID 500444
 61st Annual Conference:
 January 31-February 1, 2026

The online app or conference program provides a complete listing of the session descriptions.

Audra Rowell

Audra Rowell, Advanced Academics Coordinator, Northwest ISD

Date	Session Time	Title	Stamp
Saturday January 31	10:30am-11:30am	From Origin to Memoir: Tracing the Literacies That Live in Us Andrea Folse, Northwest ISD Eva Goins, Northwest ISD Helen Read, Northwest ISD	
Saturday January 31	1:30pm-2:30pm	Poetry Unbound: Cultivating Voice and Story in the Classroom Sara Butler, Leander ISD Amber Funderburgh, Leander ISD Nicole Mize, Leander ISD	
Saturday January 31	2:45-3:45pm	Our Stories in Progress: Student Portfolios as Living Literacy Narratives Sarah Butler, Leander ISD Amber Funderburgh, Leander ISD Nicole Mize, Leander ISD	
Saturday January 31	4:00pm-5:00pm	Tinta y Inspiración: Poetry From the Heart Eva Goins, Northwest ISD Margaret Hale, University of Houston Donna Herrera, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD Isabel Tuliao, Texas Woman’s University LaWanda Williams, Dickinson ISD	
Sunday February 1	9:00am-11:30am	Unleashed: Releasing the Power of Depth & Complexity in the ELA Classroom Lisa Van Gemert, Author	

These sessions may count for GT Update at your district’s discretion.

TEXAS BOARD OF EDUCATION CERTIFICATION VERIFICATION FORM

TCTELA is an approved CPE Provider

Provider ID 500444

TEXAS COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

61st Annual Conference:

January 30–February 1, 2026

This is to certify that

_____ has attended each checked session. Sessions are equivalent to one or two hours of continuing education.



Eva Goins, TCTELA President

FRIDAY WORKSHOP (2 HOUR CPE)

___ Workshop With C. Thomas Howell

FRIDAY LUNCHEON (1 HOUR CPE)

___ Professional Development Luncheon With Anika Aldamuy
Denise

CONCURRENT SESSION A (1 HOUR CPE)

___ Literature Under Lockdown: Classroom Strategies in an Age of
Censorship

___ Historias—The Book Was Better

___ Sharing Practical Applications of Cuentos/Historias to Honor
and Celebrate All Students' Culture, Identities, and Family
Stories

___ Every Voice Matters: Scaffolding Stories Through Data and
Differentiation

___ Entre Líneas: Crafting Plans That Bring Conversations to Life

___ TEA RLA Assessment Updates

FRIDAY GENERAL SESSION (1 HOUR CPE)

___ General Session With e.E. Charlton-Trujillo

CONCURRENT SESSION B (1 HOUR CPE)

___ Roots and Voices: Growing Literacy From the Stories Within

___ Inviting Emergent Writers to Play With the Conventions of
English and Spanish

___ Voices, Stories, and Identities: Literacy for Diverse Learners
With AI-Supported Stations

___ Stories That Strengthen Students: Coaching Educators to
Cultivate Literacy, Culture, and Community

___ Writing Our Communities: How Place-Based Stories
Transform Student Engagement

___ TEA Reading and Language Arts Curriculum Update

SATURDAY GENERAL SESSION (1 HOUR CPE)

___ General Session With Matt de la Peña

CONCURRENT SESSION C (1 HOUR CPE)

___ Engaging Text Sets to Empower Student Voices: Leveraging
Literature to Strengthen Culturally Sustaining Instruction

___ Story by Story: Nurturing a Love for Reading Through Picture
Books

___ Historias in Partnership: Leveraging AI as a Writing
Companion in the ELA Classroom

___ Your Choice, Your Voice: Creating Literacy Legacy With
Independent Reading

___ Transforming Writing Instruction With AI-Powered Writable

___ From Origin to Memoir: Tracing the Literacies That Live in Us

SATURDAY LUNCHEON (1 HOUR CPE)

___ Professional Development Luncheon With Matt de la Peña

CONCURRENT SESSION D (1 HOUR CPE)

___ Centering Identity in Literacy: Bias-Free Practices to Create
Inclusive, Equitable, and Engaging Classrooms

___ Where Stories Begin: Internalizing Lessons That Center
Identity and Learning

___ An Invitation to Share Stories With the Co-Editors of English
in Texas

___ Reading to Resist: Embedding Critical Literacy and Social
Justice in Elementary Classrooms

___ Teaching Into Oral Storytelling in the High School Classroom

___ Poetry Unbound: Cultivating Voice and Story in the Classroom

TEXAS BOARD OF EDUCATION CERTIFICATION VERIFICATION FORM (CONTINUED)

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TEXAS COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS
January 30–February 1, 2026
Historias: Literacy Living Within Us

This is to certify that

has attended each checked session. Sessions are equivalent to one or two hours of continuing education.



Eva Goins, TCTELA President

CONCURRENT SESSION E (1 HOUR CPE)

- Book Clubs as Story Sanctuaries: Where Student Historias Drive Knowledge Building, Vocabulary Acquisition, and Authentic Discussion
- Stories of Us: Using Historical Context to Tackle Today's Complexities
- Empowering Secondary Writers: Intervention Strategies Rooted in Equity and Voice
- Book Battles 101: Build a Literacy Community Through a Bookish Competition With Friends
- Historias as Equipment for Living
- Our Stories in Progress: Student Portfolios as Living Literacy Narratives
- Roundtables

- Language as Legacy: Reclaiming Literacy Through Cultural Storytelling
- The Power of Our Stories: A Framework for Active Living Literacy in the Classroom
- Voices From the Field: Ways That a Knowledge-Based Curriculum Worked for Emergent Bilinguals
- Living the Story of Teaching: Reflection, Identity, and Responsive Practice
- Tinta y Inspiración: Poetry From the Heart
- Roundtables

EVENING EVENT (1 HOUR CPE)

- Poetry Reading

CONCURRENT SESSION F (1 HOUR CPE)

- Help! My Secondary Student Struggles to Read and Write Words

SUNDAY GENERAL SESSION (2 HOUR CPE)

- Workshop With Colin Seale
- Workshop With Lisa Van Gemert



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- Limited educator bandwidth, resources, and training



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Together, we can build stronger programs, support one another, and amplify student success. Take the first step —we're excited to work alongside you.

SUPPORT OUR EXHIBITORS!

Visit the Exhibits in the South Lobby & Bookstore in Ivy 2.

Friday 8am-4:30pm & Saturday 8am-4:15pm

Company	Description	Website
95 Percent Group	95 Percent Group is an education company whose mission is to build on science to empower teachers—supplying the knowledge, resources, and support they need—to develop strong readers. Using an approach that is based in structured literacy, the company’s One95 literacy ecosystem integrates professional learning and evidence-based literacy products into one cohesive system that supports consistent instructional routines across tiers and is proven and trusted to help students close skill gaps and read fluently. 95 Percent Group is also committed to advancing research, best practices, and thought leadership on the Science of Reading more broadly.	95percentgroup.com
Amplify	A pioneer in K–12 education since 2000, Amplify is leading the way in next-generation curriculum and formative assessment. Our core and supplemental programs in ELA, math, and science engage all students in rigorous learning and inspire them to think deeply, creatively, and for themselves. Our formative assessment products help teachers identify the targeted instruction students need to build a strong foundation in early reading and math. All of our programs and services provide educators with powerful tools that help them understand and respond to the needs of every student. Today, Amplify serves more than 15 million students in all 50 states. Visit amplify.com for more information.	http://amplify.com
BFW Publishers	At BFW Publishers, we’ve built our reputation on producing the highest quality materials for AP courses and a variety of electives, and now we’re proud to offer resources for a range of high school courses. With BFW, you’ll find what you need for class today: classroom tools that work, extensive support for teachers, media that adds value to your classes, and the support you need when you need it. Our groundbreaking books and media are based on changes in education, in student populations, and in accepted best practices for the classroom.	https://www.bfwpub.com/high-school/us
Bookji	Bookji is a social reading platform designed for K–12 schools. It helps students discover books, share their thoughts, and engage in meaningful discussions about what they read.	https://www.gobookji.com/about
Bravo Care	Medical Grade Tens and Ems	hidow.com
Brisk Teaching	Brisk is an AI-powered education platform that supports teachers, students, and schools at every stage of learning—from planning and instruction to feedback and student practice. Brisk is made up of three connected experiences: the Brisk Extension, which brings in-the-moment support into the tools teachers already use; Brisk Boost, a safe space for student-facing AI activities with teacher control; and Brisk Next, a hub for planning and instruction that anticipates what you’ll need next and streamlines resource creation, bundling, and assignment. Together, these experiences support teachers day to day, accelerate student learning, and scale safely across schools and districts.	www.briskteaching.com
Curipod	Curipod is the AI-powered curriculum platform for teacher-paced lessons that spark curiosity, discussion, and critical thinking. Every student responds, shares, and learns from their peers. With real-time AI feedback and interactive lessons aligned to standards, Curipod helps teachers create classrooms where students look up from their screens and talk.	Curipod.com

Continued on next page.

SUPPORT OUR EXHIBITORS!

Visit the Exhibits in El Mercado (Kilimanjaro 5).

Friday 7:30am-4:30pm & Saturday 7:30am-4:15pm

Company	Description	Website
Dallas Baptist University	Dallas Baptist University, Master of Education in Educational Leadership	https://www.dbu.edu/graduate/degree-programs/med-educational-leadership/
Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum	We are a history museum dedicated to teaching the history of the Holocaust and advancing human rights to combat prejudice, hatred, and indifference. Through our exhibitions and educational programs, we explore U.S. civil and human rights history and the lessons of the Holocaust. Our resources and lessons use historical figures as examples to help students and educators build Upstander skills.	https://www.dhhrm.org/
Dr. Graze Mullens, Young Adult Author	<p>About Dr. Graze</p> <p>I grew up in Houston’s Near Northside, a diverse, mostly Latino neighborhood with a long history and story of its own. Having gone to school and worked in and near the community as an educator in public schools and universities for over 30 years, I became endeared to the community, its people, youth, culture, and spirituality.</p> <p>I wrote these novels for the youth in this neighborhood and all youth and teens throughout the country who need to or have been able to overcome the many obstacles that exist in the barrio. I always thought of the students, teachers, and classrooms that could use these novels in a positive way in schools and districts similar to mine. I have endured in my own personal story, and so can you. “Sigue luchando por el bien. El futuro es brillante!”</p> <p>Free Online Educational Resources for classroom use of novels.</p>	drgrazemullens.com
East Texas A&M University	Discover graduate opportunities in English at East Texas A&M University located in Commerce, Texas! Learn more about our Master’s in English, Graduate Certificates in specialized areas, and our PhD in English. Our team will be available to answer questions, share program details, and guide you through the next steps toward advancing your academic and professional goals.	www.etamu.edu
GF Educators	For the past 30+ years, GF Educators, Inc. has been dedicated to providing on-target instructional materials that focus on the depth and complexity of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). With components for Math, ELAR and Science, written for the latest standards and STAAR question types, you can depend on our Step Up to the TEKS books and TEKSology.com, our online instructional platform, to provide you with materials to insure your district and campus instructional goals are not only met, but surpassed.	www.StepUpTEKS.com
HMH Houghton Mifflin Harcourt	HMH is an adaptive learning company that helps educators create growth for every student. Our integrated curriculum, assessment and professional learning solutions use data to paint a full picture of every learner and recommend how to best support their needs. By partnering with educators, we create lasting momentum so that all students can reach their full potential.	www.hmhco.com
KAMICO Instructional Media, Inc.	KAMICO Instructional Media, Inc. creates TEKS-based kindergarten through high school STAAR-formatted materials in all content areas. KAMICO is also a TEA-approved continuing professional development provider and will customize professional development to meet the needs of your school or district. All materials are developed by Texas teachers for Texas teachers!	www.kamico.com

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Friday 7:30am-4:30pm & Saturday 7:30am-4:15pm

Company	Description	Website
Lowman Education LLC	Simple and effective educational materials that make teachers' lives easier.	https://lowmaneducation.com/
Loyola Press	Loyola Press serves schools through the development of supplemental language arts programs for grades K-8. Central to our mission is dedication to quality, commitment to ongoing educational research, and creation of effective instructional solutions for teachers and students. Loyola Press provides grammar, writing, phonics, vocabulary, and ELL programs.	https://languagearts.loyolapress.com
McGraw Hill	<p>McGraw Hill is a learning science company that is driven by a vision to help unlock the full potential of each learner. We believe that by harnessing technology and applying what we know about learning science, we can enhance learning and create powerful personalized learning experiences. We can play an integral role, alongside educators, schools, universities and wide range of educational institutions, in helping people learn better and achieve more.</p> <p>We believe our contribution to creating a brighter future lies with our deep understanding of how learning happens and how the mind develops. Based on this, we develop methods to make the learning process more effective, and we apply all of this to creating digital and print solutions that empower educators and propel learners on a path toward success.</p>	www.mhetexas.com
Membean Inc	Membean is an easy-to-use, cognitive science-based vocabulary learning platform for grades 6-12. Offering personalized instruction that adapts to individual students' needs, the program builds long-term word knowledge, preparing students for success in school and life.	membean.com
Padlet	<p>Padlets are visual collaboration tools for creative work and education. We have boards to collect, organize, and present anything. We have sandboxes for whiteboarding, lessons, and activities.</p> <p>If you need to build a daily schedule, create a lecture presentation, or lead a classroom discussion, Padlet is a beautiful way to do it.</p>	https://padlet.com/
Penguin Random House Education	Home to award-winning, classroom-favorite authors, Penguin Random House Education offers an array of classic and contemporary titles. Visit our booth to browse books by subject area and learn more about our higher education offerings.	https://penguinrandomhouseeducation.com/
Perfection Learning	As a family-owned business founded by two educators, we know both the challenges and the opportunities that today's learning environment presents. For over 95 years, we have been committed to working side by side with educators like you to build the very best curriculum solutions for teachers and students. Together, we can help all students reach their potential.	www.perfectionlearning.com
QEP Professional Books	Your one source for professional and classroom books from popular publishers, such as Corwin Press, Scholastic, Stenhouse, Heinemann Professional, ASCD, and more. QEP has been in business for over 38 years as a one-stop shopping source of professional and classroom books for educators in Texas.	qepbooks.com

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Friday 7:30am-4:30pm & Saturday 7:30am-4:15pm

Company	Description	Website
QuillOrg	Quill.org is a nonprofit dedicated to helping all students become strong writers, readers, and critical thinkers. Quill’s six free literacy tools—Quill Diagnostics, Quill Grammar, Quill Connect, Quill Proofreader, Quill Lessons, and Quill Reading for Evidence—deliver immediate feedback and coaching to strengthen student writing and save teachers’ time. Through Quill’s library of 1,000+ differentiated activities, students in grades 4–12 learn to write by mastering sentence construction and write to learn by reading cross-curricular texts and responding to open-ended prompts. Over 11 million students have strengthened their literacy skills with Quill, writing and revising over three billion sentences.	quill.org
Sadlier School	For over 190 years, Sadlier has provided the finest in educational programs and resources for students, teachers and families. We continue this legacy of excellence today with one of our newest programs, From Phonics to Reading, authored by Wiley Blevins. Looking for targeted support to boost literacy in your district? Sadlier offers Science of Reading-aligned programs for foundational skills, vocabulary, grammar, writing, and intervention—built to meet the diverse needs of Texas educators and students. Explore PreK–12 ELA programs Find Tier 2 & 3 intervention support Discover print + digital resources	www.sadlierschool.com
Sam Houston State University, Department of Library Science and Technology	SHSU’s Library Science program is an AASL/CAEP accredited program which offers two paths to teachers to become a certified school librarian—the MLS and a 24-hour certification only pathway for those already holding a master’s degree. The Master of Library Science (MLS) is designed to prepare competent professionals for school librarianship. The MLS program will introduce students to library collection development that supports the curriculum as well as reading for pleasure; a comprehensive review of children’s and young adult literature; best practices in how to manage a school library; information and digital literacies; digital tools that school librarians use; reference and services; and cataloging, classification, and subject analysis techniques. Graduates of the MLS program will also have the required coursework necessary for the School Librarian Certification exam in Texas. To be recommended for Texas certification, you must have a valid teaching certificate, two years of teaching experience, the requisite coursework to take the exam, as well as any other requirements included in the Texas Administrative Code for the School Librarian Certificate.	https://www.shsu.edu/academics/majors-programs/library-science
Savvas Learning Company	At Savvas, we believe learning should inspire. Our next-generation K–12 learning solutions, developed by leading authors and educators, span every grade level and discipline, from evidence-based, standards-aligned core curricula and supplemental and intervention programs to state-of-the-art assessment tools and the industry’s most innovative portfolio of college and career readiness solutions—all designed to meet the needs of every learner. Visit www.savvas.com .	www.savvas.com
Short Answer	Short Answer amplifies K12 writing across the curriculum through gamified writing activities for any subject.	https://myshortanswer.com/

Continued on next page.

Company	Description	Website
Sirius Education Solutions	Sirius Education Solutions is a Texas-based publisher that focuses exclusively on supplemental TEKS-based instructional materials. Sirius sells print, digital, and blended learning resources for all 20 STAAR-tested courses from grade 3 through End-of-Course (EOC).	https://siriuseducationsolutions.com/
Storyshares	Storyshares is changing the world through stories. With a unique community approach to content development, Storyshares creates new bookshelves for striving readers in grades 3 and up. By providing content that sparks curiosity, empathy, and confidence, Storyshares empowers older students to strengthen their foundational literacy skills—inspiring a lifelong love of reading.	https://www.storyshares.org/
Texas Commission on the Arts	<p>Texas Poetry Out Loud is a free national poetry memorization and recitation contest for high school students, designed to deepen students’ appreciation and understanding of poetry through performance. http://www.arts.texas.gov/initiatives/poetry-out-loud/</p> <p>The Texas Young Masters program is an extraordinary opportunity for 8th–11th grade students to receive up to \$10,000 in grants for advanced training in visual arts, music, dance, theater, literary arts, and more, before college. https://www.arts.texas.gov/initiatives/young-masters/</p> <p>Both programs are proudly conducted by the Texas Commission on the Arts. If you’re interested in participating in either program or would like more information, please come by our booth and fill out our contact form.</p>	http://www.arts.texas.gov/initiatives/poetry-out-loud/ https://www.arts.texas.gov/initiatives/young-masters/
Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts	Stop by the TCTELA booth to learn about the many resources available.	https://www.tctela.org/
The DBQ Project	Document-based questions have been part of history classrooms for years, particularly in AP courses. However, DBQs are also a great tool for use in the ELA classroom, and with the right scaffolding and support, can be used with students at all levels, from grades 4–12. Using DBQs, literary and nonfiction texts can be chunked, and the process of literary analysis and evidence-based argument writing can be broken down into its root parts, facilitating deep thinking throughout.	www.dbqproject.com
Texas Writing Revolution, LLC	Texas Writing Revolution has engaging hands-on products and anchor lessons specifically designed to help writers flourish! We grow writers grades 3–6 based on action research. Each lesson is scaffolded, consistent and prescriptive for all learners and educators aligned with Texas state standards. Developed for today’s learner, TxWR lesson’s not only improve scores, they grow writers and empower Texas teachers.	www.texaswritingrevolution.org
University of Houston College of Education and Abydos Learning International	<p>The EdD in Professional Leadership is a 51-hour doctoral program (within the Department of Curriculum and Instruction) focusing on research and applied skills for educators grappling with current issues in education in urban contexts. The program is designed to facilitate the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for professional and instructional leadership in urban schools, community organizations, museums and related educational institutions. The program is designed as a cohort model with online and flipped courses.</p> <p>Abydos Learning International, formerly the New Jersey Writing Project in Texas, offers professional development sessions to support teachers in integrating writing and grammar instruction with reading. These sessions are offered both virtually and face-to-face.</p>	https://www.uh.edu/education/degree-programs/cuin-edd-executive/ and www.abydoslearning.org
Zinc Learning Labs	Zinc Learning Labs seeks to empower teachers to help their students become better readers. Zinc does this with engaging digital tools and easily implemented reading strategies that teach students what to do when they read so they can better comprehend complex texts and participate in classroom conversations.	www.zinclearninglabs.com

SAVE THE DATE . . .

For the 62nd Annual TCTELA Conference!



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