



# Content Area Literacy Task Force



CALTF Newsletter  
Volume 2, Issue 1  
August 2013

## Begin Your School Year on the WRITE Track!

**Tricia McKenny, English**

Wow! Every year it seems like the summer gets shorter and shorter and this year was no exception. We at the Content Area Literacy Task Force had a busy summer, participating in the EKUWP Summer Institute and attending workshops and seminars. Through our work we got some great ideas we hope to pass along to you all year long!

For those of you new to our newsletter, welcome! For those of you returning, we have made a few changes (some based on your own suggestions!) and hope you enjoy them. Each month will have a focus based on what we have identified as an important skill or concept in our own classes and we will turn to our CALTF team to share their best strategies with you.

We also hope to expand ways to communicate with other teachers and our exciting new venture will be monthly Twitter Chats! We will use #CALTF and chat the first Tuesday of each month from 6-7 pm, so please join me on August 6 as we talk about

ways to set up our classes for success.

We hope to use the newsletter and things such as the TwitterChats to open the conversations to as many teachers as possible in order to share the strategies and ideas we have used successfully in our own classes as well as get new and exciting ideas from all of you!

This month our focus is on beginning the year on the track to success from the first day of school. I have found that the first days and weeks of school are crucial in establishing routines and setting expectations that students will follow all year long. While I don't necessarily believe in the, "Don't smile until Christmas" method, I do believe that being a stickler for procedures and expectations from the very first day can set the tone for the rest of the year.

I teach juniors and seniors and one of the first things we do is literally create a path to success. The first few days of school we are just starting our work in our Writer's Notebook, so I have them begin by making 3 lists: Goals for themselves for the next year, goals for the

next 2 years, and goals that will take longer than that to reach. I try to push them to think about what they truly want for themselves and out of life since most of them are starting to realize they are almost adults heading into the real world. Then they make a list of potential obstacles in this path. Before writing, I let the students use pages in their notebook to create a visual representation of their path and obstacles using any 'path' they like. Students choose anything from train tracks, to racetracks, to a path through a forest, to even a football field. Then the students write about one of their biggest obstacles and how they plan to overcome it.

In addition to giving me a sample of their writing, this activity lets me quickly get to know my students and what is important to them so that I can refer to their goals all year long. It also lets me establish procedures for writing practice and sharing as we work through those steps that we will refer to all year long.

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### Coming In Future Editions:

**September: Vocabulary**  
**October: Visual Literacy**  
**November: Integrating Subjects**  
**December/January: Digital Literacy**  
**February: Text Complexity**  
**March: On-Demand March Madness**  
**April/May: End of Year Reflective Writing**



## It Was A Scientific Summer! Lisa Antoniou, Science

To kickoff the school year in my 6<sup>th</sup> grade science classroom, I have my students write about their summer in a scientific way. By writing this piece, it gives the students a chance to (a) reflect on their summer activities (which they always like to share), (b) gets them thinking about how science is all around them and a part of every aspect of their world, and (c) allows them to write freely without too many restrictions, which gives me as a teacher the opportunity to see how developed they are as writers early on in the school year. Below is the assignment I give them on the second day of school:

### It Was a *Scientific Summer*!!

1. Think about something you did this summer that was scientific. Write a paragraph to describe what you did. Be sure to give some detail of your activity. Remember a paragraph must have a beginning, middle and end. It should be 5 sentences in length.
2. Provide a picture of yourself doing the activity if you have one. If you do not have a picture, you may design a drawing, graphic, etc. of the activity. You can also download a picture from the Internet or other source (be sure to cite your source) showing the activity if needed.
3. Write a second paragraph to explain what is scientific about what you did. Give an example and put some detail into your explanation. Refer to science concepts (for example, Newton's 2<sup>nd</sup> Law of Motion, gravity, electricity, blood flow, etc.) and give a short lesson if you so choose.

This assignment is always so much fun and meaningful to the students. I hang them in my classroom for everyone to peruse when they have a moment to do so, and it is great for parents to see during our beginning of the year open house.

## Resources for the Beginning of the School Year Collected by Katie McClain, Library Media Specialist

- Assessment to Instruction Genre Study in Nonfiction Grades 3-6* by Dr. Janine Batzle
- Notice and Note: Strategies for Close Reading* by Kylene Beers
- Techniques of Close Reading* by Barry S. Brummett
- Close Reading of Informational Texts: Assessment-Driven Instruction in Grades 3-8* by Sunday Cummins PhD and Camille Blachowicz PhD
- Making the Most of Small Groups: Differentiation for All* by Debbie Diller
- Book Love: Developing Depth, Stamina, and Passion in Adolescent Readers* by Penny Kittle
- The Book Whisperer: Awakening the Inner Reader in Every Child* by Donalyn Miller
- The Next Step in Guided Reading: Focused Assessments and Targeted Lessons for Helping Every Student Become a Better Reader* by Jan Richardson
- Inviting Families into the Classroom: Learning from a Life in Teaching* by Lynne Yermanock Strieb
- "You Gotta BE the Book": Teaching Engaged and Reflective Reading with Adolescents* by Jeffrey Wilhelm

## Start the Year with a Song Sandy Allen, Music

I am an elementary music teacher, church musician, and lifelong music lover. Much of my life story could be told in songs that were meaningful for me throughout my life. As I began thinking about a project to start the year, I automatically thought of music. Here are a couple of projects that will kick off your school year with music:

### TIMELINE

First, have students make a timeline of important events in their lives (e.g. birth, year they started kindergarten, siblings' births, achievements in school, sports, etc.). Then, have students think of songs that illustrate those milestones in their lives. Perhaps a song from the year they were born or one that has their name in it. Any song that was meaningful to them at the time.

After their timeline and songs are complete, students can create a Powerpoint or Prezi presentation that uses audio and/or video recordings of the songs they chose along with short autobiographical writing portions in between. While this project naturally lends itself to older students, it could be adapted for elementary students as well. Perhaps extend the timeline back to include parents and grandparents as well as events in their own lives.

### THEME SONG

As a class, have a discussion about things they are nervous about in starting the new school year and goals they have for the year. Choose a theme song to represent those fears and goals. Come prepared with a list of possible songs to use, but also take suggestions from students. Of course, a discussion must be had about school appropriate language and subject matter. Once a song has been chosen, have students write a sentence, paragraph, poem, or story that reflects their goals for the year.

This theme song can be either a class theme song or an individual one. If you choose a class theme song, it can be a touchstone throughout the school year. Perhaps you play it on Monday mornings to start each week on a positive note, or as a celebration song on Fridays, or as a motivational moment before beginning a difficult task. We all know that music can be a powerful tool in education, so what better way to kick off the year than to start with a song?

### Possible song choices:

- “Home” by Phillip Phillips
- “Hall of Fame” by The Script feat. will.i.am
- “Firework” by Katie Perry
- “Ain’t No Mountain High Enough” by Marvin Gaye & Tammi Terrell
- “Don’t Worry, Be Happy” by Bobby McFerrin
- “Lovely Day” by Bill Withers
- “Stand By Me” by Ben E. King
- “Lean On Me” by Bill Withers
- “Dream Big” by David Cook
- “I Believe I Can Fly” by R. Kelly
- “Stand” by Rascal Flatts
- “The Climb” by Miley Cyrus
- “Who I Am” by Jessica Andrews
- “What A Feeling” by Irene Cara



Book circles do a number of things in a Social Studies class. First of all, they show my students that I'm not kidding around about historians using reading and writing all the time. They also help my students to get to know each other (something that's not really that difficult in the school I teach in, but might be important if you teach in a big school), get a little bit outside their comfort zones, and make everyone responsible for doing their own share of the work.

I have done book circles a number of ways from kids picking their own books and groups to me doing all choosing for them to somewhere in between and I suggest you do what is right for you. Here's what works best for me: I do a bit of a preview of each of book (a great extra credit assignment for this year might be to have some kids create book trailers for upcoming years) describing the time period and story line. I also make sure to tell kids if the book includes anything that their parents might find inappropriate in case that is an issue. I incorporate book choices that span a variety of reading levels. Some of my choices include: *Fallen Angels* by Walter Dean Myers, *Code Talkers* by Joseph Bruchac, *The Red Necklace* by Sally Gardner, *Snow Falling on Cedars* by David Guterson, *Revolution* by Jennifer Donnelly, *Sarah's Key* by Tatiana de Rosnay, and *Milkweed* by Jerry Spinelli. I have the students write down what books they have already read in order to exclude them from ranking and then rank the other books in order from what they would most like to read to what they least want to read. That evening I go through all the lists and place students in groups. I try to give

## Back to School Book Circles Maggie Brewer, Social Studies

students as close to their first or second choice as possible. I place them in groups of as close to four as possible depending on class size. Upon receiving their books, students meet in groups for the first time and decide how far they will read each week. We choose our four meeting dates and mark them on the calendar. Students are given their first role for the week. Book circle roles or jobs can easily be found by searching the Internet for book or literature circle roles, jobs, or tasks. If that sounds daunting, a kind English teacher would also probably be of assistance.

The particular roles I like to use are discussion leader (used every week, asks questions of the group members about what they have read, notes the group's answers), vocabulary (lists and defines new words learned in the section. Some books do not lend themselves to this role simply because they do not have enough new vocabulary. Your students should try and choose roles wisely), literary luminary (finds significant moments in the text and explains their importance), travel tracer (describes the setting of the story as it changes or moves), summarizer (summarizes that section of the plotline), personal connection (makes personal connections to events in the story, elaborating on how the event in the book is similar to what has happened to them). No group member is allowed to do a job more than one week in a row, and every group member must be a discussion leader at least one time.

Each week the groups will meet. Led by the discussion leader, the group will answer discussion questions and report back on their individual assignments. Group members must have read the portion of the book and completed the written assignments before book

circle time each week in order for the book circle to function the way it should.

This year, I am adding a few more elements to the book circle assignment in order to hold individual students more accountable. After hearing a presentation by ECU Writing Project Teacher Consultant Doug Reece (a teacher at Southern High School in Pulaski County) on the use of dialogical journals (also called dialectical journals) when teaching novels, I decided to add this element to book circles. Requiring an individual response to the novel through writing will add a layer of accountability as well as connection to the text. For his dialogical journals, Doug has his students choose a quote of any length from each chapter and reflect on what they have read.

Another ECU Writing Project Teacher Consultant, Pete Edwards, a teacher at Madison Central, shared a document he uses with his art students where he has them analyze a painting where he has them analyze a painting using "inner voice" on a variety of topics by writing down what they notice. Pete adapted this assignment from one created by Alicia Hunter, principal at Farristown Middle School in Madison County, who has her students use "inner voice" or write down what they notice in the text. This would be similar to the dialogical journal but on a smaller, more focused scale that would allow students to look at a short piece of text and analyze it on multiple levels. I always enjoy book circles but I'm looking forward to the new elements I'm adding this year in order to keep every member of each group involved and accountable. If you use book circles in your classroom and have found something that works well I'd love to hear about it.

## Kick-Start the Year with Multigenre Projects Rhonda Ortenburger, Social Studies

Each year during the first full week of school, my students begin a multigenre project in which they write multiple genres that provide the reader with information about their favorite topic - **themselves**. I, too, create one right along with them.

It serves several purposes: First, it introduces writing workshop routines and the writing process. Second, by modeling my writing pieces daily, it shows me as a writer who is willing to make mistakes in front of my students. Third, each genre they write shows me what experiences they have as writers, what their strengths are, and what their areas of growth are. Fourth, it is one way to get to know each student so I can make connections with them. Fifth, it provides me with the opportunity to begin using descriptive feedback so I can help them grow as a writer. Sixth, it exposes them to different genres as I model each one. Finally, pieces of their projects will be used throughout the year to show progress they make as a writer and as a resource for reflective writing throughout the school year.

Each piece must show new information. For example, I might ask them to write a paragraph about their family, a favorite activity piece about a sport they play, a list of academic, behavior, and personal goals for the year, a poem about friends they have in school, a t-chart about what qualities a good student has and what qualities a good teacher has, a menu of their favorite foods, and a tweet about something they would like their classmates and me to know about them. (We have a class Twitter account.) They also create a heart map and write directions from their house to school. Depending on their interest level, we continue this writing throughout the year.

If you would like to see samples of student work, check out my website after Labor Day. I will include the link in the September newsletter. Be sure to check it out!

### More information about Multigenre Projects:

#### Lessons and Planning:

[Colorado State University](#)

[Miami University](#)

[Weaving the Multigenre Web:  
Read, Write, Think](#)

[Multigenre Mapper: Read, Write,  
Think](#)

[Teaching Multigenre Writing:  
Write in the Middle](#)

#### Recommended Reading:

[A Teacher's Guide to the Multigenre  
Research Paper: Heinemann Pub-  
lishing](#)

[National Writing Project Book Re-  
view: \*Blending Genre, Altering Style:\*  
\*Writing Multigenre Papers\*, by Tom  
Romano](#)

[The Multigenre Research Paper: \*Voice,  
Passion, and Discovery in Grades 4-6:\*  
Heinemann Publishing](#)

#### Teacher Created:

[Multigenre Research Project: Huff  
English](#)

[List of Multigenre Ideas](#)

[Example Multigenre Research  
Projects: Write From the Heart](#)

[The Multigenre Research Paper](#)

[Students Write with Passion:  
Multigenre Writing Projects](#)

## Reading Novels for Math Class

### Lee Alan H. Roher, Ed.D., Mathematics

A great way to start your math class for the year is to pull in popular novels. Math is alive in popular culture! There are fiction novels that incorporate mathematics and their storyline. It is important for students to not just skip over these ideas. Students need to understand and make connections to the concepts they learn in math class and how the author is using the concept. There are nonfiction works that discuss mathematics hand-in-hand with other content areas.

In assigning a book to read in a math class it is important to give the students choice in selection of the reading material. The big question, "Well, what books have math in them?" There are some bestsellers out there that have mathematical material in the story line. Dan Brown has *The da Vinci Code* and *The Lost Symbol*. Other books that students have read for my class include *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon, *Zero: The Biography of a Dangerous Idea* by Charles Seife, and *The Sir Cumference Series* by Cindy Neuschwander. A teacher may decide to not give a finite list of books so that students have the flexibility in choosing a book to read.

Every year I assign a book reading to a math class, the book list expands depending on books that students choose that the teacher may not have been exposed to. It is important to assign reading in math class to promote literacy.

**The Assignment:** Choose a book to read this year. The book must have at least three math topics. Math topics may include formulas discussed in applications, cryptography used to solve mysteries, or historical references of mathematics like in Seife's book mentioned above. Once the book is selected, read the book. Identify the three math topics. Write a math book review identifying a connection of the math topics as used in real life or when that mathematical content is taught in the classroom. Students may not use a book that they have already read. Before the student turns in an original draft, the draft must be peer edited. Students may not peer edit a review if they are reading the same book title. As students ask questions, the teacher can clarify additional rules and regulations using the rubric.

**The Rubric:** It is essential to have a rubric that describes all of the aspects that the teacher wants included in the paper. The rubric includes a description for each of the following: a brief summary of the book, three mathematical topics, identified real applications or classroom connections of the mathematics, and a conclusion for the paper with a personal reflection on how the author used the mathematics to enhance the book or characters in the book.

**Peer editing:** Students need to be trained in peer editing and peer editing needs to be tied to the students' grade for the editing to be taken seriously. A checklist document is not adequate for peer editing tool. The editor must make substantial comments to help the writer revise and edit the paper to be submitted.

**Optional draft submissions:** Some students may appreciate the ability to submit multiple drafts. This allows the teacher to give the student feedback prior to the final submission. Some students need more than one session of teacher feedback.

More information, rubric, and sample documents can be found at [roheringgood.weebly.com](http://roheringgood.weebly.com).

Click on the "Book Review" button

## Back to School!

### Amanda Pasley Terry, Mathematics

Welcoming students back to school through writing is a great way to get to know new students. Writing allows students to share information about themselves with their teacher and peers. As an intervention teacher, my students have already completed the pieces on what they did over the summer and telling about themselves in their homerooms therefore, I like to get to know my students and what they like in the content area that I teach, math.

At the beginning of each new group I ask my students to write about something they like about math and why they feel that way. I also ask my students to tell me something in math that they do well and again their feelings backing that thought. Then, I ask my students to tell me something that they need help with and why. The questions above let me know where my students are coming from in mathematics on a personal level, leaving test scores and grade aside to the know the individual.

This newsletter is a publication of the Eastern Kentucky University Writing Project, Dr. Sally Martin, Director  
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**Louisville Writing Project Writing Mini-Conference Saturday, August 24, 2013**

8:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.  
College of Education  
University of Louisville

Meeting the COMMON CORE STANDARDS (KCAS), P-12, all contents FEATURING a Special **Science Writing Strand**

More information: [Louisville Writing Project](#)



**FALL 2013 CONFERENCE: September 14**

**Exploring Literacy and the Common Core Standards  
Hazard Community and Technical College Hazard, KY**

**Registration \$125**

**Questions: Linda Satterlee-McFadin, 502-852-4544**

**In future CALTF Newsletter Editions:**  
*Teaching Complex Texts: A Common Sense Approach* – a series of articles that engage students in reading complex texts and in talking and writing about that reading.



Kick-off your school year by joining our inaugural TwitterChat  
Aug. 6 6-7 pm EDT  
Follow #CALTF