

Build Your Stack Committee

Names, affiliations, and geographic region for members:

CHAIR, Jen Vincent (2024) Bannockburn School (Bannockburn, IL)

Seemi Aziz-Raina (2023) University of Arizona (Tucson, AZ)

Gary Gray, Jr. (2023)
International School Manila (Taguig City, Philippines)

Jodi-Beth Hazel (2025)
Agape Education (San Antonio, TX)

Carol Jago (2023)
California Reading and Literature Project (San Diego, CA)

Katie Papesh (2023)
Hopewell Elementary School (Dublin, OH)

Carrie M. Santo-Thomas (2024)
Warren Township High School Almond Campus (Gurnee, Illinois)

Kasey Short (2023)
Charlotte Country Day School (Charlotte, NC)

Aliza Werner (2023)
(Bookelicious/MKE Film, Wauwatosa, WI)

Executive Committee Liaison, María E. Fránquiz University of Texas
(Austin, TX)

NCTE Staff, Sarah Miller

Major Activities:

August 2022 - #NCTEchat: #BuildYourStack for Back to School was co-hosted by Jen Vincent (@jvincentwrites) and Carrie Santo-Thomas (@CMSThomas). This was a conversation that centered teacher self-care while they developed booklists for their classrooms in anticipation of the upcoming school year.

October 2022 - Committee Chair Jen Vincent joined the Middle Level Section Latinx Heritage Month Build Your Stack virtual event to share Latinx books in honor of Latinx Heritage Month.

November 2022 - At Annual Convention, the Build Your Stack Committee hosted over 25 sessions across a range of topics in the Build Your Stack space in the exhibit hall. There was a range of presenters who presented 20-minute sessions live. Convention is one way that we are able to live the Affiliation element of the NCTE Vision Statement in that we connect with groups across the organization. For example, we have included presenters from the Poetry Committee.

February 2023 - Build Your Stack with Nonfiction Texts - Sarah Miller welcomed presenters who shared stacks of nonfiction texts across grade levels and topics were shared.

April 2023 - Build Your Stack: Poetic Possibilities - Committee member Gary Gray Jr. hosted this virtual event that shared verse texts.

June 2023 - Best Books of the 2022-2023 School Year - Committee Chair Jen Vincent hosted presenters who shared their favorite reads from the school year.

Ongoing - The Build Your Stack Committee continually works to engage members to write posts for the NCTE Blog. Blog posts are written by a variety of authors on a range of topics related to developing teachers' knowledge of texts.

In alignment with the area of Access of the NCTE Vision Statement, the committee worked on developing materials and a process to support NCTE members who would like to host their own Build Your Stack events. We are still in the process of finalizing these materials so we can share them.

Upcoming Activities:

The Build Your Stack Committee is currently planning for the Annual Convention in November 2023. We have over 25 sessions across a broad range of topics where presenters will share their stacks in our Build Your Stack exhibit hall space.

The Build Your Stack Committee will continue to hold virtual Build Your Stack events. These events focus on a theme and we invite students, teachers, authors, illustrators, and committee members to share their stacks.

In the future, the Build Your Stack Committee would like to finalize materials to share with NCTE members who would like to host their own Build Your Stack events. We also plan to finalize and share a process that supports people in hosting their own Build Your Stack events.

Impact:

Through blog posts, virtual events, and sessions at Annual Convention, the Build Your Stack committee lives the strand of Impact from the NCTE Vision Statement in everything that we do. Our goal is to empower teachers to connect students with books where they can see themselves and see others in order to make an impact on students' lives.

Recommendations:

The Build Your Stack Committee is cognizant of the continued practice of book banning and censorship and the need to ensure our work advocates for inclusion of a wide range of books for all students.

We believe the prevalence of book banning and censorship continues to be top priority for NCTE to consider and address as they support educators at all levels.

Accomplishments and timeline for future work

In addition to what has been listed in the response to the previous question, the committee has organized a list of recommended books not yet received in order to send out requests to publishers to invite them to submit books for consideration for the award. When committee members locate a book the committee has not yet received, the committee member adds it to the list of recommended books to be sent for request to publishers. We share this list with Sarah Miller, Senior Coordinator at NCTE.

The committee members have read a wide variety of books throughout the year. Members read book reviews, talk with colleagues, and generally do as much as they can to find books that might meet the award criteria. Committee members search for different formats of books (picture, early reader, beginning chapter books, novels, graphic novels, etc.) and different genres. We have three groups that focus on specific genres: contemporary realistic fiction, historical fiction, and science fiction and fantasy. These groups look for books in these genres and all formats. Specific book requests are added to the list of recommended books. Our committee members also complete various forms that guide our monthly meetings, such as monthly keep/withdraw forms that are filled out based on whether a book meets the criteria and should remain under consideration or not. Starting in August, members also fill out individual top 20 forms, where each member lists the 20 books that he/she/they feel best meet the criteria. We use these forms to guide discussion during our meetings, in addition to talking about other books that we have located that might meet criteria. We continue to prepare for the selection of the books that best meet criteria for our award winner, honor, and recommended books.

The committee members feel strongly that we should not have to pay for the Awards Luncheon on Saturday of the NCTE Annual Conference. Rationale: The Huck Award Committee members work for 11 months reviewing hundreds of books, locating quality books, discussing them thoughtfully each month, and toward the end meeting more often. They also spend a whole day of the conference (Thursday) on deliberations. On Friday, they prepare and finalize the presentation of the award winners. At the Awards Luncheon, they help organize the room and they present the award. They eagerly participate in this work because of their deep commitment to the field of children's literature, NCTE, and its membership.

Contributions to the profession of teaching and/or the understanding of literacy in educational contexts:

An excerpt of NCTE's vision states, "NCTE and its members will apply the power of language and literacy to actively pursue justice and equity for all students and the educators who serve them.... NCTE has a rich history of deriving expertise and advocacy from its members' professional research, practice, and knowledge. Today we must more precisely align this expertise to advance access, power, agency affiliation, and impact for all learners." Our committee's work aligns with this vision. The Huck Award Committee this year is composed of a diverse group of members. Each member brings a unique perspective and a wealth of expertise in children's literature. Their experiences as educators is deeply informed by the power of language and literacy to inform and aid work that pursues social justice and equity for all. One criterion for the award is with regards to ensuring that the fiction we select "connects children to their own humanity and offers them a rich experience with the power to influence their lives. We consider literature that centers minoritized groups, tells stories that challenge biases and narratives of deficit. The committee also considers stories that defy the status quo and work toward social justice and equity while stretching "children's thinking, feelings, and imagination", and "inviting compassion, imagination."