

2026 CEL ANNUAL CONVENTION
INTEGRATED LEADERSHIP: BRIDGING LITERACY AND ENGLISH
NOVEMBER 22-24 | PHILADELPHIA



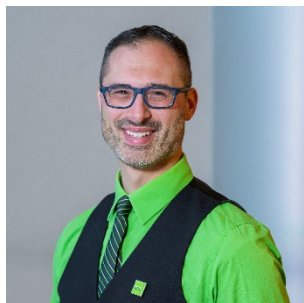
Welcome to the Conference on English Leadership's 58th Annual Convention! Jason Stephenson, this year's Program Chair, challenges us with "Integrated Leadership: Bridging Literacy and English." I was drawn to Jason's bridge metaphor from the start. Bridges connect people, and what is leadership if not a space to integrate people, ideas, and systems all while linking the past to the future?

Bridges and connections are central to literacy leadership as we work with colleagues, students, and communities while simultaneously sifting through standards, educational philosophy, research, and policy. Once I began thinking of the multiple bridges between ideas and people, I was reminded of the idea of a "rhizome" from the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Rather than a straightforward, hierarchical structure, rhizomatic assemblages connect everything in a criss-crossed web that allows for multiple entry points and continual becoming. This mix of everything is what makes our field so difficult; so many angles and crises and items need our attention. However, as we explored last year at Matthew Helmers's convention, plentitude allows for fertile abundance and possibility.

I hope our short time together offers moments of clarity, insight, connection, rejuvenation, and inquiry. My bridge from NCTE to CEL was through Emily Meixner (our outgoing Past Chair): she invited me to CEL when we happened to sit next to each other at the ALAN Breakfast in 2016 to hear from author S. E. Hinton. This one invitation created a pathway to my present service to our organization. In every CEL social hour from 2020 to today, I realize that I am not building bridges or structures at work alone; so many of us are working through similar problems of practice when we discuss team dynamics, scheduling, literacy programs, or text selection. As I continue to work with CEL members, students, colleagues, and administrators, I realize that I have created a rhizomatic assemblage that informs all of what I do. Jason Stephenson, in his call for proposals this year, warned how some of our work can become siloed. The bridges that others have built or invited me across and the bridges that have been co-constructed have resulted in a rhizome of entry-points and possibilities.

All of our unique gatherings and bridging have brought us to the time we have together here in Philadelphia. Leadership can be lonely, but here, we're all leaders committed to supporting our colleagues back in our home institutions and schools. I encourage you to connect with other attendees, join a facilitated dinner on Sunday, and make an appearance at our social hour on Monday. I hope the bridge metaphor informs and rejuvenates your practice and supports your well-being. Throughout our time together, I hope you build bridges between one another, between ideas of literacy and English, and between your job and our sessions. Our collective community will help bridge the past to our futures.

As you navigate all of your relational and conceptual bridges, I hope you continue to find CEL a place where we can support each other in our professional trajectories.



Dr. Nicholas A. Emmanuele (he/him/his)
CEL Chair
English Teacher and Department Chair,
McDowell High School (Erie, PA)

The Conference on English Leadership is not possible without the contributions of its Executive Committee (both appointed and elected), who volunteer their time to connecting with members, crafting outreach efforts, and dedicating their talents to supporting literacy and English leadership:

- Nicholas Emmanuele, CEL Chair
- Cathline Tanis, CEL Associate Chair
- Emily Meixner, CEL Past Chair
- Anna Schultes, Secretary
- Kristine Lize, Member-at-Large (2023–2026)
- Jenelle Williams, Member-at-Large (2023–2026)
- Katie Cubano, Member-at-Large (2024–2027)
- Jill Davidson, Member-at-Large (2024–2027)
- Matthew Helmers, Member-at-Large (2025–2028)
- Kristen Schaefer, Member-at-Large (2025–2028)
- Hiawatha Smith, *ELQ* Editor
- Amy Marshall, Nominations Chair
- JoEllen McCarthy, Assistant Nominations Chair
- Jason Stephenson, 2026 Convention Program Chair
- Cody Miller, 2027 Convention Program Chair

The Conference on English Leadership also thanks NCTE's staff, who answer questions, clarify policies, negotiate contracts, organize budgets, and work behind-the-scenes to manifest CEL's visions and ideas, especially

- Emily Kirkpatrick, Executive Director
- Kristen Ritchie, Director of Affiliated Groups
- Lori Bianchini, Program Manager
- Matt Burruss, Director of Events
- Allie Ciaramella, Director of Communications