

Welcome from CEL Chair Nicholas Emmanuele



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:

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- 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
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Welcome from 2026 CEL Program Chair Jason Stephenson



Welcome to Philadelphia and to the 2026 CEL Annual Convention! Whether you lead from a state agency, a school district, a department, a classroom, or somewhere in between, I hope you feel at home during our time together.

I joined my state education agency in the summer of 2018 as the Director of Secondary English Language Arts. I was delighted to learn that I was encouraged to attend one national conference annually as part of my job. I knew I would attend the NCTE Annual Convention, but at the time, I did not know anything about the Conference on English Leadership. When I arrived in Houston for NCTE 2018, I met Nicholas Emmanuele who told me to subscribe to English Leadership Quarterly, which would make me an automatic member of CEL. I have since attended and presented at five CEL Conventions in Baltimore, Anaheim, Columbus, Boston, and Denver.

As I began to dream up the theme for CEL's 2026 Annual Convention, I reflected on my role serving secondary English language arts teachers. Throughout the years, teachers had asked for resources and ideas to support their adolescent students who had trouble reading. Like many other states, my state provided statewide support for elementary teachers to be trained in best practices for teaching foundational literacy skills. I realized it was time that I stepped up to provide a similar mechanism for secondary teachers, so I wrote a proposal for such a program.

Meanwhile, I thought about the initiatives and goals shared by my Office of Standards and Learning and the nearby Office of Literacy Policy and Programs. We rarely collaborated on shared projects and seemed to be operating in

separate silos. I wondered if we could be more effective if we worked together to address similar challenges. Instead of addressing this question in my state alone, I decided to transform it into the 2026 theme for CEL's Annual Convention: "Integrated Leadership: Bridging Literacy and English." My hope is that this Convention gives us the space to examine the silos we work within, identify where our goals overlap, and imagine what becomes possible when we work across those boundaries.

The logo for this Convention features an illustration of the Walt Whitman Bridge that connects our host city of Philadelphia to Gloucester City, New Jersey. To close my welcome, I'll draw our attention to the closing lines of Whitman's poem "O Me! O Life!," which provide an answer to the speaker's litany of existential questions:

That you are here—that life exists and identity,
That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.

May the contributions to our respective fields be richer because of our time here, together.

Cheers and welcome to Philly,

Jason Stephenson (he/him/his)
2026 CEL Annual Convention Program Chair
Program Manager, Secondary Education, Oklahoma State Department of Education

Convention Program

Sunday, November 22, 2:00–2:25 p.m.

CEL Welcome: Jason Stephenson & Nicholas Emmanuele
Welcome: Chief Adam Waterbear
Room 201-C

Sunday, November 22, 2:35–3:35 p.m.

Beyond the Spreadsheet: Cultivating Integrated Literacy Leadership through Collaborative Data Cycles
This session shares a three-year roadmap for building teacher data literacy using strategic data systems to bridge ENL, intervention, and classroom instruction. Learn to facilitate collaborative data meetings and design assessment cycles that turn data into instructional action. Participants will receive field-tested protocols to elevate teacher voice and equity.
Presenters: Ashley Ghiraldi, Glen Cove City School District; Kristen Schaefer, Glen Cove City School District
Room 201-C

Bridging Literacy, English Language Arts and Building Teacher Efficacy with Equity Oriented-Quad Text Sets
How can ELA leaders ensure that their curricula build both literacy and language arts skills while providing teachers the professional learning needed to bridge these worlds? Learn about how a professional learning partnership, using the Equity Oriented Quad Text Set approach, provided one district's ELA team the professional tools needed to develop literacy-rich, equity-focused ELA instruction.
Presenters: Lisa Ali-Turner, Appoquinimink School District; Jill Flynn, University of Delaware; Jennifer Fox, Middletown High School; William Lewis, University of Delaware
Room 202-A

Seeing Learning: Visual Literacy and Multimodal Compositions at the Intersection of Literacy and English Leadership
This workshop invites literacy and English leaders to consider how visual literacy and multimodal composition can create coherence across literacy and English instruction while empowering students to represent knowledge creatively and critically. Participants will explore examples of student work and examine the design of multimodal assignments.
Presenters: Elsie Lindy Olan, University of Central Florida; Kia Jane Richmond, Northern Michigan University, Marquette
Room 202-B

Skills and Stories: Using Secondary Texts as a Vehicle for Foundational Skills
Discover how one district's intentional, skill-focused literacy instruction and cross-content and cross-grade level collaboration helped all students thrive. Participants will leave with ready-to-use strategies and frameworks to inspire teachers and strengthen reading skills districtwide.
Presenters: Jessica Bivans, Cherry Hill Public Schools; Shera Goldstein, Cherry Hill Public Schools; Megan Langman, Cherry Hill Public Schools; Christy Lee, Cherry Hill Public Schools; Maria Rebstock, Cherry Hill Public Schools
Room 203-A

Stories of Resistance and Adaptive Leadership from the Hip Hop as Humanities Summer Institute for Literacy and ELA Teachers
At a moment when literacy and ELA teachers face unprecedented constraints, the need for adaptive leadership has become increasingly urgent. Join Drexel University English educator, H. Bernard Hall, and President of the New York State English Council, Michele DeVirgilio, as they share stories of resistance and adaptation emerging from the justice-oriented, Hip Hop as Humanities Summer Institute.
Presenters: Michele DeVirgilio, New York State English Council (NYSEC); H. Bernard Hall, Drexel University
Room 203-B

Sunday, November 22, 3:45–4:45 p.m.

Beyond the Page: Using AI and EdTech Tools to Make Texts Accessible
This session explores how teachers can use technology and AI tools to make literature more accessible for diverse learners. Participants will learn practical strategies using scanning pens, Canva, ChatGPT, Diffit, and Vocaroo to scaffold complex texts, support comprehension, and create engaging extension activities that help all students meaningfully interact with literature.
Presenter: Joseph Rogers, Pope John Paul II High School
Room 202-A

Every Word Tells a Story: How Morphology Bridges Foundational and Disciplinary Literacy across the Grades
Morphology connects learning to read with reading to learn, yet it is often taught as either early decoding or advanced vocabulary—rarely both. In this interactive session, participants explore how coherent morphology instruction across grades connects word study and disciplinary literacy. Participants leave with proven strategies to help students unlock meaning in complex words and texts.
Presenters: Kayla Crawford, EPS Learning; Garrett Ivey, EPS Learning
Room 202-B

Keeping the Thinking with Students: Culturally Responsive Moves That Drive Rigorous Literacy Learning
This session invites literacy leaders to consider how small instructional moves can transform classrooms into spaces where students consistently carry the intellectual load of learning. Participants will experience concrete strategies that increase cognitive lift for students, and learn how to bring these back to literacy classrooms through coaching and instructional leadership.
Presenter: Kristin Jones-Burel, K12 Coalition; Jillian Roche, K12 Coalition – RedThread Literacy
Room 203-A

Both/And Leadership: Leading at the Intersection of Literacy Mandates and English Teacher Identity
Literacy leaders increasingly navigate tensions between literacy mandates and effective English instruction. In this interactive workshop, participants explore how leaders can support English teacher identity while advancing research-based literacy practices. Using polarity mapping, participants learn a practical tool to move from "either/or" compliance thinking to sustainable "both/and" decisions.
Presenters: Jason Haffner, Oakland Schools; Jenelle Williams, Oakland Schools
Room 203-B

Sunday, November 22, 4:55–5:55 p.m.

Pattern, Pulse, and Poetry: Reclaiming Scansion as a Foundational Literacy Practice
Scansion is often treated as an archaic exercise, but it can serve as a powerful bridge between foundational literacy and literary study. This interactive workshop shows how prosody instruction develops pattern recognition, oral fluency, and analytic reasoning while helping English leaders reconnect technical skill, interpretive depth, and the structural beauty of language.
Presenters: Matthew Helmers, Ransom Everglades School; Adam Schachner, Ransom Everglades
Room 201-C

From Permission to Possibility: Using the FIXIT Game to Lead Equitable Literacy
This interactive CEL Convention session introduces a FIXIT game-based literacy leadership protocol for advancing equitable literacy, teacher agency, and inclusive narratives. Collaborative gameplay surfaces systemic barriers including book bans, scripted curriculum, and permission-based policies.
Presenters: Malcolm Andrews; Kelly Thelen, Southwest Minnesota State University
Room 202-A

Fuel for the Journey: Supporting Teachers in Literacy and English
Teacher well-being drives motivation and student success. In this interactive session, discover strategies to support educators' well-being across literacy and English, foster collaboration, and sustain motivation, in order to help teachers lead with energy and students engage deeply with texts and ideas.
Presenter: Kaitlin Stamm, Endicott College
Room 202-B

Sunday, November 22, 7:00 p.m.

Facilitated Dinners: locations to be announced

Monday, November 23, 8:00–8:25 a.m.

CEL Welcome, *ELQ* Awards & Sponsor Announcements, Coffee & Light Breakfast (included): Room 201-C

Monday, November 23, 8:25–9:35 a.m.

Keynote: Tricia Ebarvia: Reading and Writing Toward Freedom
Introduction by Cody Miller
Room 201-C

Monday, November 23, 9:40–10:40 a.m.

Expansive Literacies: Rethinking What Counts as Literacy in the ELA Classroom
This interactive session invites teachers, coaches, and supervisors to examine how current definitions of literacy may unintentionally limit culturally responsive instruction and student voice.
Presenters: Emily Meixner, The College of New Jersey; Cathline Tanis, North Plainfield School District
Room 201-C

Agency by Design: Building 6–12 ELA Curriculum That Elevates Teacher Expertise and Student Voice
Amid growing curriculum mandates, this session invites educators to rethink instructional materials through a human-centered lens. Grounded in research on relational intelligence and culturally sustaining pedagogy, participants will be in conversation with their curriculum, analyze it through critical lenses, and apply an "if, then" framework to prioritize instruction that puts students first.
Presenters: Coley Conter, Teachers College; Kimmy McGuire Tabb, MS 104 Simon Baruch JHS
Room 202-A

Beyond the Screener: Humanizing Data to Bridge Literacy Learning in an MTSS Framework
Districts often struggle with literacy silos and single data points. This session explores how one district used the NJTSS framework to bridge gaps by triangulating universal screening, diagnostic data, and teacher observations. Participants will examine field-tested protocols for data-based discernment to support students and move beyond isolated practices toward a holistic, unified approach.
Presenters: Oona Marie Abrams, Millburn Township Public Schools; Melissa Bryan, Millburn Township Public Schools; Jennifer Doney, Millburn Township Public Schools
Room 202-B

Calling In, Not Calling Out: Inviting Content Teachers into the Literacy Leadership Circle
What are the leadership moves to shift from "calling out" content teachers to "calling in" colleagues as literacy partners? This session reframes literacy as a tool for teacher agency, positioning ELA leaders as collaborators rather than sole experts and practitioners. Map shared and distinct roles, bridge specialized expertise, and build a sustainable, interdisciplinary culture for students.
Presenter: Ashley Strong, Weber School District; Naomi Watkins, Utah State Board of Education
Room 203-A

Literacy without Borders: How Special Educators Bridge Foundational and Disciplinary Literacy in Secondary Schools
Students who struggle with literacy need both foundational skill development and access to grade-level texts, yet these are often treated as separate priorities. This session explores how special educators can lead across content areas by embedding skill instruction within authentic disciplinary tasks. Participants will examine strategies that maintain rigor while expanding meaningful access.
Presenter: Melissa Garcia, Harrison Central School District
Room 203-B

Monday, November 23, 10:50–11:50 a.m.

Leaders as Literacy Designers: High-Impact, High-Interest Approaches for Older Striving Readers
Explore how secondary leaders can bridge foundational literacy and ELA content for adolescent readers. This session shares a collaborative model using high-interest texts and targeted instruction. Attendees will engage with a literacy design framework and leave with actionable tools to strengthen support for striving readers.
Presenters: Shira Engel, Storyshares; Samantha Krzyzanowski, Hope for Youth and Families, Inc.; Emily Russin, Hill for Literacy
Room 201-C

Future Forward: Designing and Implementing an "AI Scope and Sequence"
English and literacy leaders face a shared challenge: developing approaches to AI that are proactive rather than reactive. Drawing on a recent initiative by Ransom Everglades School's AI Task Force, this session explores what it might mean to create, communicate, and form policy around a Scope and Sequence that envisions AI literacy at every developmental stage.
Presenter: Matthew Margini, Ransom Everglades School
Room 202-A

Still in the Classroom, Still at the Table: A Teacher Leader Writing Culturally Relevant, Sustaining, and Historically Responsive ELA Curriculum
Still in the classroom. Still at the curriculum table. This practitioner case study explores how one 5th grade teacher leader writes and implements culturally relevant, sustaining, and historically responsive integrated ELA units—and what ELA teachers and leaders at every level can learn from the view inside the room.
Presenter: Kevin Cataldo, Luis Muñoz Marín School/Newark Board of Education
Room 202-B

Coherence through Collaboration: A Learning Model for Continuous Literacy Improvement
Literacy and English do not often work in partnership. This session shares how a district leader and nonprofit partner built a non-evaluative Learning Walk model to align elementary and secondary practice. Participants will explore how IPG-aligned walks surfaced patterns in text complexity and instructional moves and leave with a protocol and framework to support coherent literacy improvement.
Presenters: Chae D'Ann Ray, Leading Educators
Room 203-A

Monday, November 23, 12:00–12:50 p.m.

Lunch (included): Room 201-C

Monday, November 23, 1:00–2:00 p.m.

Move from Admiring the Problem to Making the Change: Using a Network Structure to Support Disciplinary Literacy Implementation
While we have been supporting learning around disciplinary literacy for years, our team struggled to identify classrooms where that learning was actually changing instruction. Moving from theory to practice is notoriously messy. Come hear about the structures consultants at our regional service agency put into place to encourage educators to put learning into practice.
Presenter: Elizabeth Lietz, Macomb Intermediate School District
Room 202-A

Bridging Preservice and Secondary Classrooms: A Collaborative Model for Feedback, Error Analysis, and Targeted Writing Instruction
What happens when preservice teachers and middle school students become co-constructors of writing instruction? In this interactive workshop, participants will explore a replicable partnership model in which college students enrolled in a Teaching Writing course collaborate with eighth-grade students to improve writing outcomes.
Presenters: Jeanette Capritti, Lawrence Middle School; Jennifer Cline, Ewing Public Schools; Petrina Plunkett, New Jersey Department of Education
Room 202-B

Give Me Literacy or Give Me Death: An English Language Arts Revolution
Are you a loyalist to the literary canon? A rebel ready to revolutionize the ELA field? A believer that artificial intelligence is the real tyrant? Join us in our nation's birthplace for this interactive Convention to champion your hopes and express your fears for the future of ELA, working with other leaders to create a Constitution of the English Language Arts.
Presenters: Elizabeth Gannon, Pennsylvania Department of Education; Jennifer Wicht, Pennsylvania Department of Education
Room 203-A

When the Text Speaks to Every Reader: Curriculum Leadership at the Intersection of Literacy and ELA
Participants will examine why the engagement gap is a curriculum problem—not a literacy or ELA problem—and learn to design text sets that earn the full engagement of every reader. Leaders leave with a text set framework, a professional learning agenda, and a renewed conviction that the best ELA teaching has always been both.
Presenter: Stephanie Owens
Room 203-B

Monday, November 23, 2:10–2:15 p.m.

2027 CEL Convention Theme Reveal: Room 201-C

Monday, November 23, 2:15–3:20 p.m.

Keynote: Jenelle Williams**:** The Power of AND: Moving beyond Pendulum Swings in Literacy Leadership
Introduction by Jay Haffner
Room 201-C

Monday, November 23, 3:20–6:30 p.m.

3:20–4:00	**Announcements, EC Member Recognition:** Room 201-C
4:30–5:30	**Social Hour:** Brü (1318 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia)
6:30 p.m.	**ELF Dinner:** location to be announced

Tuesday, November 24, 8:30–10:50 a.m.
Room 201-C

8:30–8:35 a.m.	**Welcome, Daily Preview**
8:35–9:35 a.m.	**Collaborative Workshop:** Barriers between Literacy and English
9:35–9:45 a.m.	**Break**
9:45–10:45 a.m.	**Collaborative Workshop:** Bridges between Literacy and English
10:45–10:50 a.m.	**Closing Remarks**

2027 CEL Annual Convention Call for Proposals

The full call for proposals, including the link to the proposal form, will be available on Sunday, November 22, at https://ncte.org/groups/cel/convention/.

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