

2024 CEL ANNUAL CONVENTION

LEADERSHIP matters; Leadership *MATTERS*

NOVEMBER 24-26 | BOSTON, MA | #CEL24



Dear CEL Friends,

Welcome to Boston and this year's CEL Annual Convention! I'm so glad you're here! A heartfelt thank you to Program Chair Mary Luckritz for bringing us together. That we come together to learn and grow in this space as a community is a result of her vision; her deep commitment to CEL, schools, and students; and her success in assembling an exciting selection of sessions as well as the opportunity to learn from our two keynote speakers, Carol Jago and Dr. Sonja Cherry-Paul.

As this year's theme asserts, "LEADERSHIP matters." It's become clear to me, as I reflect on my experiences in both K-12 and higher education, that educational leaders can make—or break—schools. They impact school culture and curriculum, they affect methods and morale, and their vision (or lack of it) can build confidence and momentum (or undo it). In my role as a program coordinator, I also know how easy it is to get mired in the "matters" of our many necessary daily tasks and lose sight of where we'd like to go. Sometimes, nurturing a shared vision is challenging when you're staring into the black hole of hundreds of immediate-need emails.

All this to say, thank you for being here and using these next few days to contribute to our cumulative ability to offer strong, just leadership while also navigating the many important matters that can occupy much of our time. Given the challenges of the current moment—ongoing, heartrending geopolitical conflict; politically polarized communities; the aftermath of another contentious election cycle; censorship and book banning; ever-changing AI; and efforts to legislate the bodies of women and queer youth—schools, teachers, and students need you.

I hope that as you imagine your professional development throughout the year, you'll choose to extend your interactions with CEL and with other CEL members. Know that the organization is here to support you, and please make use of it by participating in our online events (socials, book clubs, critical discussions), reaching out to colleagues who might benefit from support and mentoring through our Emerging Leaders Fellowship Program, or considering becoming a mentor yourself. Perhaps you'll even join the CEL Executive Committee via an appointed or elected position.

It has been an honor to serve you and to represent this organization on the NCTE Executive Committee for the past two years. I am constantly moved by the thoughtfulness, persistence, compassion, and energy that CEL members devote to their work. Thank you to Emily Kirkpatrick, María Fránquiz, Shelley Rodrigo, Lisa Avetisian, and all of the wonderful folks on the NCTE Executive Committee. Serving with you has been a professional highlight. Thank you to Kristen Ritchie, Michaela White, Lisa Fink, Matt Burruss, and Lori Bianchini for your patience and guidance and knowledge of all NCTE systems and processes and budgets. We all know we couldn't do this without you. Finally, thank you to the members of the CEL Executive Committee (Chris, Nick, Ann Marie, Amy, Shervette, Cat, Liz, Jenelle, Kia, Krissy, and Cody). I really couldn't have asked for a better team. Five out of five stars.

Looking forward to looking forward,

Emily Meixner
CEL Chair