



2024

## Cover, Editors' Note, Front Matter

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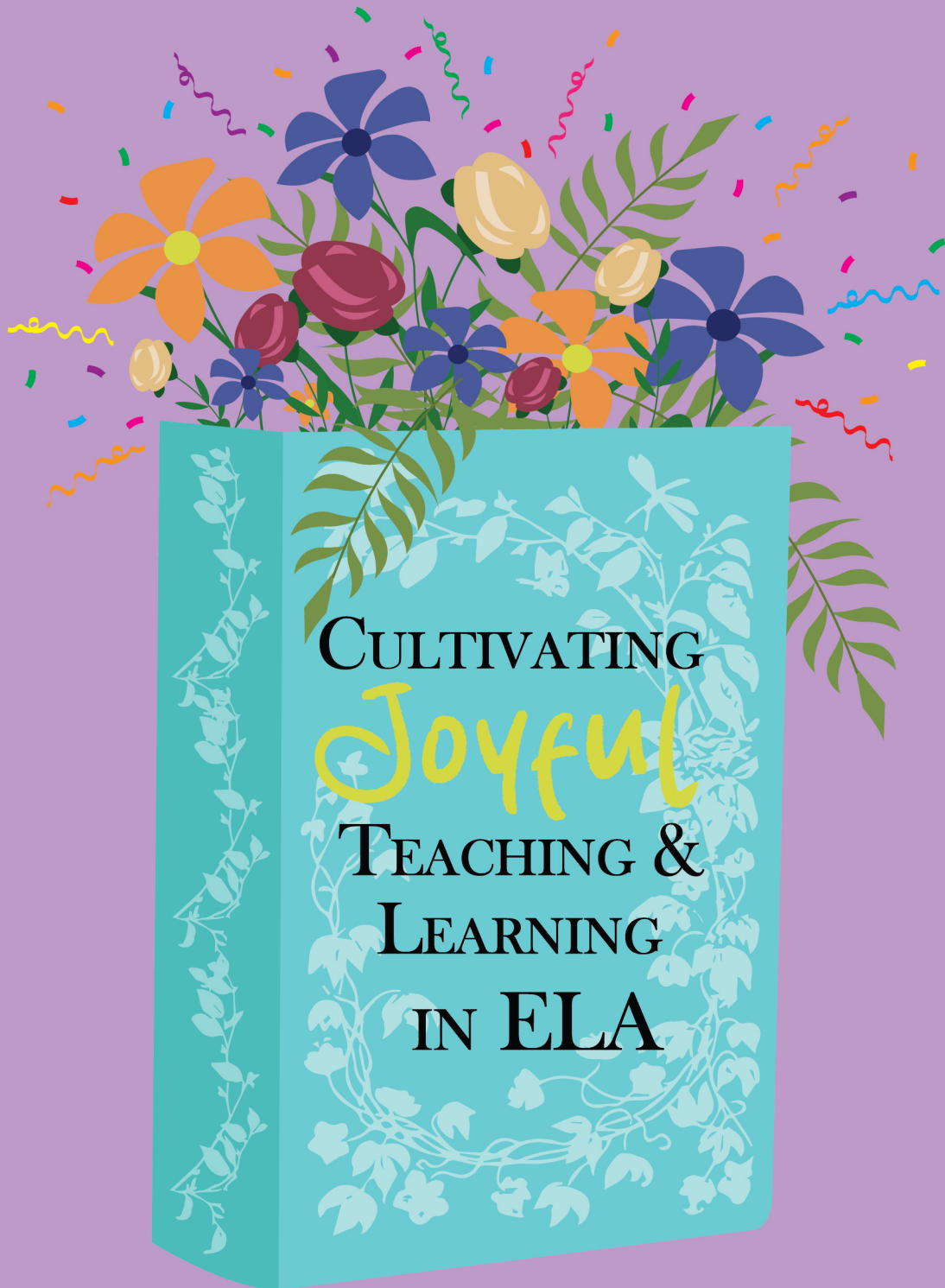
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2024

VOLUME 13

NEW JERSEY COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

# NEW JERSEY ENGLISH JOURNAL



## **Editors' Note**

**Lauren Zucker, PhD**

*Northern Highlands Regional High School, Montclair State University, and Drew University*

**Susan Chenelle, PhD**

*University Academy Charter High School, New Jersey City University*

**Katie F. Whitley, PhD**

*Manchester Regional High School, Montclair State University*

It is our pleasure to introduce you to the 2024 issue of *New Jersey English Journal (NJEJ)*. This year's theme is "Cultivating Joyful Teaching and Learning in ELA." In our call for submissions, we asked authors to consider the following questions:

- How can we help our students find joy in learning language and literature? How can we cultivate (or reclaim) it for ourselves as teachers?
- What are the new or tried-and-true ways we can cultivate joyful teaching and learning in our classrooms? What makes teaching and learning ELA joyful in the 21st century?
- What are the unexpected moments or sources of joy in our ELA classrooms? How can we build on them for ourselves and our students?
- How can schools, school leaders, and educators collaborate to create joyful learning communities? How can we push back against practices or policies that disrupt joyful teaching and learning?

This issue features work in three genres: poetry, reflective pieces, and research articles. This issue shares an inspiring variety of ways that ELA teachers are cultivating joy in their classes, such as culturally responsive genre discovery, student-selected digital texts, and authenticity, purpose, and mindfulness. We are proud to share work from writers across the country.

Two secondary ELA teachers, Darlene Calderon and Kayla Sullivan, and ELA teacher educator Emily Smith share vignettes from their classrooms in which they illustrate ways they have nurtured moments of joy in their lessons by centering their students' vulnerability and their own.

In "Centering Joy in the Classroom: Authentic Pedagogy Through Purpose and Mindfulness," E. Mariah Spencer explores the need for authenticity as key to a joyful classroom and outlines the ways in which this authenticity can be achieved. Purpose and mindfulness are the linchpins to creating an authentic and joyful learning environment, she finds.

Annie Yon proposes station rotation activities as a method for restoring the joy and “exuberant discovery” that Alfie Kohn observed as lacking in many classrooms.

Carly Berwick explores how student-led culturally responsive genre discovery can connect to curricular mandates, affirm student knowledge, and spark sustained and engaged student work. She offers four principles for uncovering students' existing, out-of-school genre understandings.

Lauren Zucker, Kristen Hawley Turner, and Rachel Besharat Mann recommend that teachers incorporate student-selected digital texts for pleasure reading in secondary and higher education contexts.

Poetic contributions, such as those from Bill Meissner, Joseph Pizzo, and Oona Abrams, make powerful statements about the particular joys and challenges of teaching English language arts.

Since 2020, when we shifted *NJEJ* to a digital format and uploaded archival issues dating back to 2013, our journal has attracted a wide online readership. As of August 2024, prior to publishing the current issue, our 263 works have 31,400 unique downloads from 179 different countries representing 1,907 institutions. We thank Montclair State University for hosting our journal on their library's Digital Commons repository, which helps readers find our pieces through search engines, institutional databases, and keyword searches.

This year's cover was designed by rising sophomore Prisca Li of Northern Highlands Regional High School, who was nominated for the opportunity by her graphic design teacher, Doreen Albano. Prisca worked in consultation with our editors to execute the design, drawing inspiration from our past several covers designed by Noreen Hosny, winner of the 2020 cover design contest. We look forward to seeing future *NJEJ* cover designs from this talented young artist.

This issue would not be possible without the dedication and service of our reviewers. We also extend our thanks to the NJCTE Board for their recommendations, and to Valerie Mattessich, NJCTE President, for her steadfast leadership and support.

## New Jersey English Journal 2024 Issue, Volume 13

*New Jersey English Journal is a peer-reviewed publication of New Jersey Council of Teachers of English (NJCTE). This journal is intended to serve our members through the sharing and showcasing of research, best practices, and ideas related to K-12 and college English Language Arts education, and to encourage diverse discussions and inclusion.*

### NJCTE OPPORTUNITIES

#### NJEJ REVIEWERS

*NJEJ* seeks educators with experience in P-12 and/or postsecondary English Language Arts to serve as reviewers. Reviewers are typically asked to read and evaluate 1-2 submissions per year. Instructions to join our reviewer pool can be found on the journal’s website: <https://digitalcommons.montclair.edu/nj-english-journal/>

#### WRITING CONTESTS

NJCTE offers several student writing contests. Please encourage your students to submit to them—and join us as a judge. For more information, see <https://www.njcte.org/njcte-writing-contest>.



Professional development workshops at the 2024 Spring Conference, “Beyond Boundaries: Exploring Interdisciplinary Literacies,” including a session on incorporating visual texts (left) and a session co-run by students and educators (right)

## AWARDS

NJCTE offers several awards for teachers and authors. More information about these awards and past award winners are listed on our website: <https://www.njcte.org/awards-contests>.

- The Muriel Becker Award is the highest honor bestowed on a writer by the New Jersey Council of Teachers of English. It has been given annually since the 1980s to a writer deemed by the Becker Award committee to be someone who reflects the best of positive ideals that inspire young readers to high achievement.



New Jersey writer Alicia Cook accepting the 2024 Muriel R. Becker Award from NJCTE President Valerie Mattessich at the NJCTE Spring Conference.



Keynote speaker Alicia Cook signing books for NJCTE Spring Conference attendees.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow us on Instagram at @thenjcte for news and updates about our organization and English Language Arts. Consider sharing your work—a project, an anecdote, some words of inspiration, a classroom story—with our members around the state as a featured guest author on our website, <http://www.njcte.org/>. We invite you to submit pieces over 500 words to our journal.

## CONFERENCES & PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

NJCTE hosts its annual conference in the spring. We hope you will join us as an attendee or presenter! Learn more at <https://www.njcte.org/>.

Additionally, NJCTE offers professional learning opportunities throughout the year. We also held our Spring Conference on “Joyful Teaching: Reviving Engagement in ELA,” tied to this year’s journal theme. This year’s conference will be held on March 20, 2025, and the theme will

be “Visual Literacy: Curricular Relevance for Modern Students.” We are accepting proposals for presentations through December 13, 2024. Visit the NJCTE website (<https://www.njcte.org>) for more information.

### JOIN NJCTE!

Looking to connect with New Jersey ELA educators and access high-quality, local professional development opportunities? Join NJCTE. Read more about member benefits at <https://www.njcte.org/member-benefits>.

Subscribe to our mailing list at <https://www.njcte.org> for information about NJCTE membership and future events.



Current and former members of the NJCTE executive board at the 2024 Spring Conference held at Drew University in collaboration with the Drew Writing Project / Digital Literacies Collaborative.



Valerie Mattessich (right), President of New Jersey Council of Teachers of English, and Kristen Hawley Turner (left), Director of the Drew Writing Project and Director of Teacher Education at Drew University, welcome attendees to the 2024 Spring Conference.

## CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

### **2025 Issue of *New Jersey English Journal***

*New Jersey English Journal*, a peer-reviewed publication of New Jersey Council of Teachers of English, invites you to share submissions on the theme, “**Bridging Literacy and Learning**.” We ask writers to consider ways to connect literacy with learning goals across disciplines. How can literacy serve as a bridge between students’ experiences in the ELA classroom and their broader educational journeys? How can teachers help students apply literacy and language skills in meaningful, interdisciplinary ways? Ultimately, how can students use language and literacy to enhance their understanding in various subjects and in their personal lives, and how can teachers leverage these connections to foster deeper, more inclusive learning experiences?

We seek research and practitioner-oriented pieces (~1000–3000 words), personal essays (~1000+ words), and original poetry related to this issue’s theme and geared towards an audience of P-12 and postsecondary English Language Arts educators. Please note that word limits are suggestions and not fixed requirements. We welcome single and co-authored submissions from both veteran and early-career teachers, and we especially invite new writers, pre-service teachers, and graduate students to develop submissions. Writers are encouraged to access past issues at <https://digitalcommons.montclair.edu/nj-english-journal/> to review successful submissions. We invite you to respond to the theme “**Bridging Literacy and Learning**” by considering such questions as:

- How can we help students see the connections between literacy and learning in other subjects? How can teachers promote these interdisciplinary links to deepen understanding across the curriculum and/or beyond the classroom?
- How can highlighting interdisciplinary connections enhance the relevance of English Language Arts for our students, particularly for those who may not see themselves reflected in the curriculum or whose future aspirations lie outside ELA?
- What do literacy and learning across the disciplines mean in light of the rapidly evolving context of AI tools for both teachers and students? What in-school and out-of-school literacies will students need in a future in which AI plays a growing part?
- How can schools, school leaders, and educators collaborate to highlight the importance of literacy across all subjects?

Submissions will be accepted until **Tuesday, February 11, 2025**, via <https://digitalcommons.montclair.edu/nj-english-journal/>. All submissions will be reviewed through a double-blind process by multiple peer reviewers. Submissions should not have been previously published or be under review elsewhere. Manuscripts should follow current APA guidelines for citations. All writing should appear in Times New Roman 12 pt. font, and authors’ names and identifying information must be removed from all submissions. Send any queries to [njenglishjournal@gmail.com](mailto:njenglishjournal@gmail.com).



bell hooks: "As we think and write about visual art, as we make spaces for dialogue across boundaries, we engage a process of cultural transformation that will ultimately create a revolution in vision."



# NJCTE

## 2025 Spring Conference

### Call for Proposals



### Visual Literacy: Curricular Relevance for Modern Students Thursday, March 20, 2025 at TCNJ

Every day students are bombarded with visual texts. Images, billboards, social media posts, reels, videos, emojis, animations, films. What role can and should these texts play in K-12 ELA classrooms? NJCTE's spring conference will explore how and why teachers integrate visual texts into their instruction as well as their impact on student engagement, the development of student reading and writing, and their relevance for 21st century readers and writers.

Please consider sharing your experiences and expertise by submitting a proposal [via this Google Form by Friday, December 13, 2024](#). Proposals for interactive, participatory 45-minute sessions that answer the following questions are encouraged:

- How are you incorporating visual artifacts into your instruction (pictures, photographs, artwork, infographics)?
- In what ways can teachers meet the NJ ELA standards by including visual literacy into their teaching?
- What role can visual assessment play in K-12 classrooms?
- When working with students with differing abilities, what are the benefits and challenges of using visual texts?
- How can visual text enhance learning outcomes for students with learning disabilities?
- How can visuals inspire teachers and students to want to learn more about a text or topic?
- How does the science of reading attend (or not) to visual literacy instruction?
- What criteria do teachers need to consider when selecting visual texts?
- How can visual literacy enhance curricular cultural relevance?
- What writing and compositional opportunities do visual texts make possible?
- How might teachers use visual texts to build students' interest in informational text?
- What should teachers consider when designing visual texts for classroom use?

*"We don't see things as they are. We see them as we are." Anais Nin*

*"The question is not what you look at, but what you see." Henry David Thoreau*



NEW JERSEY COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

# NJCTE Writing Contest 2024

NJCTE is a professional organization committed to applying the power of language and literacy to pursue justice and equity for the students and teachers of New Jersey. NJCTE is the New Jersey affiliate organization of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

- Style Criteria
- Poetry (50-line max.)
  - Short Story (5-page max., double-spaced)
  - Personal essay (5-page max., double-spaced)
- MUST RESPOND TO PROMPT**

*Writing from the heart, with hope to empower humanity*

### Essay Prompt

The NCTE theme of “Heart, Hope, Humanity” connects the lives of youth with leadership. A leader impacts hearts by providing hope, inspiring humanity, and galvanizing student thinking.

Consider how leadership –personal, private, or within society– affects you as a young person. How do leaders gain and maintain power? Do we necessarily relinquish power when we appoint leaders? Does leadership flourish more through shared wisdom and community? What do you think your generation might do better than those who came before it did? What and who do you think has helped form your beliefs about our society and your role in it?

Write a short story, poem or essay that emanates from your heart, evinces hope, and meditates on humanity as a high school student in 2024.

### Why Join NJCTE

- New Jersey English Journal ✓
- Conferences and Webinars ✓
- Blog and Newsletter ✓
- Professional Development ✓

### Tips To Avoid Disqualification

1. Students may submit a maximum of one entry in each category (one poem, one short story and one essay).
2. Teachers may submit up to ten entries for their students in each genre. Surplus entries will be disqualified.
3. The file submitted must be anonymous. Submissions with a student’s name, school or class will be disqualified

#### Poetry

<https://forms.gle/BgfiXETTy7VNKbqv8>



SCAN ME

### Submission Links

#### Deadline 1-10-25

#### Essay



<https://forms.gle/PuYRkCEbGsP1eJ2N9>



SCAN ME

#### Short Story



SCAN ME

### Awards



1st Place Gold Winners in poetry, short story and personal essay=certificate and \$150.00 prize money

2nd Place Silver Winners in poetry, short story and personal essay = certificate and \$75.00 prize money

3rd Place Bronze Winners in poetry, short story and personal essay = certificate and \$50.00 prize money

Teachers receive professional development hours upon submission from students



<https://forms.gle/FJSK9ymYqAFfzMDh9>

First place winners will receive recognition on the New Jersey Governor’s Awards in Arts Education (NJGAAE) webpage and a medal.

**MORE INFORMATION: [njctewriting@gmail.com](mailto:njctewriting@gmail.com).**