

From the Editor
Summer Inquiry, Reflection, and Dialogue with KATE and NCTE



2019 KATE Camp participants pose for a photo outside Wichita East High School on June 18, 2019.

Photo courtesy of Nathan Whitman.

Back row: Stacy Chestnut, Alexis Fisher, Ashli Corbella, Steve Maack, Shayn Guillemette, Rebecca Pflughoeft, Katie Cramer, Candice Michaud, Mary Roseberry

Front row: Monica Swift, Shea Cooper, Joy Stahl, Krystal Atkinson, Leann Buethner,

July 2019

Dear Readers,

I hope your summer has been both relaxing and rejuvenating. For me, this is a time to catch up on rest and reading, a time to take care of tasks that fall through the cracks during the academic year, and a time to reflect on my personal and professional goals.

In fact, I have a number of professional goals I'm attempting to tackle while I'm not on contract, and this summer, I was inspired by one of my 2016 graduates (and KATE Executive Board member) Michaela Liebst to enlist the support of accountability partners to help me stay focused on those goals. You can read more about my intentions in [this post](#), and Michaela's intentions on her [Courageous edYOU website](#).

One of my favorite parts of summer is the opportunity to explore new ideas and texts related to teaching English—and spend time reflecting on and further exploring them. Rather than feeling the pressure to get back to grading, lesson planning, and committee work, I can follow a line of inquiry (or several!) for as long as I'd like. I can also designate time to meet up with colleagues to engage in these same lines of inquiry.

On June 18, I had the opportunity to do just that when I attended KATE Camp 2019 (free for KATE members!) at Wichita East High School. Organized by KATE's past president Steve Maack, this was a day of energizing and informed dialogue among new and veteran English teachers—and delicious bagels and cream cheese from Panera. The organically developed breakout session schedule included resource-sharing and focused conversations on 21st century literacies and technologies, project-based learning, language and grammar, classroom libraries, ACT prep, classroom behavior and cell phone policies, and sexual/gender diversity and equity. And all attendees received access to all breakout session notes and resources via the KATE Camp 2019 shared folder on Google Drive, so we can return to those resources (and add to them) anytime—even if we weren't able to attend a particular session.

This is exactly the kind of professional rejuvenation I crave, and summertime is the perfect time to soak it up. With that in mind, here are four ideas for your own professional rejuvenation as you begin making plans for the 2019-2020 academic year:

1. **Read this issue of *Kansas English*.** With a range of scholarly, practitioner, and creative pieces, as well as book reviews and an author interview, you'll find ideas for your classroom and your own professional inquiry. If you finish the 2019 issue and you're hungry for more, check out [past issues of *Kansas English*](#) online.
2. **Make plans now to attend the [2019 KATE Annual Conference](#) on October 25-26 in Wichita**, and prepare to be inspired by our two keynote speakers: award-winning young adult literature authors [Tiffany D. Jackson](#) and [Alan Gratz](#). While you're registering for the conference, consider [submitting a proposal to present a breakout session](#) by August 31, so you can share your own classroom practice and ideas. I plan to submit my breakout session proposal this month, and I hope you'll join me. If you have questions about the proposal submission process, check out [this helpful page I created](#) for my students and graduates. *And consider this:* Your school administrator may be more inclined to pay for your conference registration and travel expenses if your name is in the conference program!
If you're not sure about submitting a proposal this year, take the long-range approach: simply attend this year's KATE Conference, get a feel for the types of sessions available, consider what's missing or what you could add to the conversation, and submit a proposal for 2020. Better yet, bring your ideas to KATE Camp 2020 next summer, get feedback on them, submit a proposal to present at the 2020 Annual Conference, and then turn that presentation into an article to submit to the 2021 issue of *Kansas English* to get your ideas out to as wide an audience as possible!
3. **Visit [NCTE's Blog](#)**, which adds new content almost daily from scholars and practitioners in the field and is searchable via a wide variety of categories (e.g., advocacy, assessment, diversity, intellectual freedom, literacy, literature, poetry, social justice, writing). The posts are brief (most are 500-800 words), informative, and resource-rich with links to supporting articles, reports, policies, and organizations. Who knows what line of inquiry you might end up pursuing in your professional practice as a result of the timely and informed posts on this blog!
4. **Finally, look for information about KATE Camp 2020** next spring, and make plans to attend. Bring your colleagues!

So set your professional development goals for summertime (and beyond) using the above suggestions as a starting point. Find some colleagues with whom to share ideas (the [KATE Facebook Group](#) is a great place to start!). Hold one another accountable this summer—and throughout the year—for continuing your inquiry, staying connected to other energizing teachers, and being part of the professional conversation. I look forward to seeing you at future KATE events and reading your published work in *Kansas English*!

Until next time, happy teaching and learning!

Katherine Mason Cramer