
FROM THE EDITOR: LET'S AFFIRM AND CELEBRATE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

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Abstract

Kansas English Editor-in-Chief Katie Cramer is fed up with anti-DEI agendas at the state and national levels and urges readers to share their own efforts to uplift diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. She also previews the 2025 issue; offers thanks to outgoing YA Book Review Editor John Franklin and a warm welcome to incoming YA Book Review Editor Kevin Kienholz; and provides an update on indexing *Kansas English* in ERIC.

Keywords: diversity, equity, inclusion, DEI, sociopolitical climate, writing for publication, KATE



Kansas English Editor Katie Cramer

We live in unsettling and disheartening times: we face a daily barrage of state and national laws, policies, and executive orders that limit free speech, distort or erase history, and harm vulnerable populations locally, nationally, and globally. These efforts are mind-boggling in their breadth, scope, speed, and horrifying impact. For example, just a few months into its second term, the Trump administration has dismantled diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives across a variety of sectors, including education, which “has been a major target of the administration’s efforts to do away with DEI programs” (Flowers & Raychaudhuri, 2025). In Kansas, legislators have done the same to colleges and universities with the passage of [Kansas Senate Bill 125](#), which requires that by August 1, “all state agencies have eliminated any positions that relate to DEI; eliminated any mandates, policies, programs, preferences and activities relating to DEI; eliminated any training requirements in DEI for any employee; canceled any state grants or contracts relating to DEI; and removed gender identifying pronouns or gender ideology from email signature blocks on state employee’s email accounts and any other form of communication” (p. 254).

Just so we are clear, diversity, equity, and inclusion are *positive* attributes or aspirations. We should not be aiming for uniformity, inequity, and exclusion in our classrooms, curriculums, schools, or communities. The Kansas legislature’s and the Trump administration’s relentless pursuit of an anti-DEI agenda is unethical, immoral, and terrifying.

Earlier this year, a 2020 graduate of my program and current ELA teacher reached out to me because some members of her urban middle school community, including fellow educators, now felt empowered to espouse anti-LGBT rhetoric aimed at her and the school's Pride Club, which she sponsors. According to the school's website, the Pride Club is "dedicated to creating a safe and inclusive environment for all students. It promotes a sense of belonging and acceptance, providing a space for students to discuss important social issues, support one another, and engage in activities that foster community." This is an important mission, particularly in middle schools, which have higher rates of LGBTQ+ students who feel unsafe and have less access to LGBTQ+-related resources and curriculum (Kosciw, et al., 2022).

The teacher and her students invited me to participate in a question-and-answer session during a recent Pride Club meeting. Their questions included the following:

1. Why is LGBTQ+ inclusion a topic that public school staff need to be aware of and familiar with?
2. Is school generally a safe place for LGBTQ+ students? What makes it safe/unsafe?
3. How does being LGBTQ+ impact mental health outcomes in schools perceived as unkind or non-inclusive?
4. How can schools help kids who are trying to understand their identity without adding to a sense of shame or embarrassment?
5. How can we ensure we are shutting down and responding to anti-LGBTQ+ hate speech?
6. How can we ensure we are validating students' names and pronouns with respect to student privacy in class? How can we make sure students feel safe to share this information?

The intended—and invited—audience was faculty/staff members who cause harm—intentionally or not—to LGBTQ+ people and/or other marginalized groups through their words and actions. But, as you might expect, they did not opt-in for this after-school learning opportunity. Instead, about 10-15 students and 10-15 educator allies attended the meeting, including the school's principal. We had a productive dialogue—with energizing and thoughtful student and educator participation—using data from GLSEN's most recent [National School Climate Survey](#) (Kosciw, et al., 2022), The Trevor Project's [2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People](#) (Nath, et al., 2024), and Learning for Justice's "[Speak up at school: How to respond to everyday prejudice, bigotry, and stereotypes](#)" (Burkhalter & Jones, 2022).

My hunch is that most readers of *Kansas English* are also engaged in similar conversations, actions, and instructional design that resist this harmful narrowing of who is affirmed and uplifted in our schools and curricula. And I urge you to share your stories, ideas, and advice with us—in [Kansas English](#), at the [KATE Fall Conference](#), and in [KATE Pages](#). Raise your voices. Raise your pens and keyboards. Silence is not an option.

2025 Issue Preview

Welcome to another exciting and energizing issue of *Kansas English*. This year's authors provide us with scholarly and creative pieces that will both enlighten and delight.

KATE's new President **Caleb K. Thornton** offers a hopeful perspective on stepping into new leadership roles personally and professionally, in spite of obstacles and trepidation.

In a new column, KATE Fall Conference Chair **Nathan G. Whitman** provides a preview of and this year's conference, including the keynote speakers, as well as encouragement to attend and even submit a breakout session proposal!

In their practitioner piece, "Sound Foundations: Strengthening Reading Development through Phonological Awareness and Phonics Integration," **Reagan Murnan** and **Sandra Bequette** describe evidence-based practices for integrating phonological awareness and phonics instruction to support early literacy development.

Lael Ewy explores the challenges and opportunities of dual enrollment/dual credit programs in his reflective essay “Dualities of Dual Enrollment: Navigating the Literal and Liminal Spaces of a Community College Outreach Program.”

In their reflective essay “*All American Boys* has Staying Power a Decade Later: Here’s Why,” co-authors **Kaitlyn Chain**, **Avery Gathright**, **Alice Huelskamp**, and **Sophia Loerke** discuss why Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely’s award-winning young adult novel remains relevant ten years after its publication.

In her scholarly article, “Choosing Words Wisely: Influences on Literature Selection in Oklahoma Classrooms,” **Tyler Munson** explores how ELA teachers navigate tensions between state standards that encourage inclusivity and external pressures that restrict their curricular choices (e.g., anti-DEI initiatives and resource shortages).

Whitney Wrestler examines the effectiveness of explicit morphological instruction in improving vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension for middle and high school students in “Closing the Word Gap: Morphological Instruction Across Middle and High School Classrooms.”

In an interview with Printz Honor-winning young adult author Lisa Fipps, **Kevin B. Kienholz** explores themes of storytelling and safe places across her verse novels *Starfish* (2021) and *And Then, Boom!* (2024).

Jayden Mitchell explores the tensions and contradictions of the teaching internship (a.k.a. student teaching) while also depicting the resilience and courage of the teacher intern in her poem “Something More.”

In her poem “Jem Touches the Wall,” **Deborah McNemee** imagines what must have been going through Jem’s mind when he takes Dill’s dare in Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

In his poems “Dawn over a Small Town” and “Lawn Deer,” **Dave Malone** attends to the seemingly mundane details we might overlook, uplifting them so that we might also linger in wonder and appreciation.

In five young adult (YA) book reviews, **Amanda K. Stinemetz**, **Laney Roller**, **Halle Harbers**, **John Franklin**, and **Katherine Mason Cramer** elevate recently published YA books that we should add to our classroom and/or professional libraries (and, perhaps, curricula!).

And finally, the Teaching Tips column brings us pedagogical strategies that we can immediately integrate into our curricular design. Column authors for this issue include **Andrew Bellamy**, **Thomas Reynolds**, **Beth Gulley**, and **Katherine Mason Cramer**.

Well Done and Welcome to YA Book Review Column Editors!

Thank you to **John Franklin**, professor of English at Pittsburg State University, who has served as YA (young adult) Book Review Editor for *Kansas English* since 2019 and is now stepping down from the role. Prior to 2019 he served on the journal’s Editorial Review Board, and he has previously served as Editor of *Kansas English*. John provided informed advice and encouragement as I assumed the role of Editor in 2017, even driving to Wichita from Pittsburg to share his wisdom in person over lunch at WSU’s Shocker Hall. For the past six volumes of *Kansas English*, John has mentored authors, including undergraduate student authors, in publishing their reviews of YA books while also publishing his own reviews, which serve as models for other authors. Thank you, John, for sharing your wisdom and enthusiasm for YA books so generously!

Welcome to **Kevin Kienholz**, professor of English at Emporia State University, who will replace John as YA Book Review Editor starting with the 2026 issue. Kevin has served on the Editorial Review Board since 2017, and he frequently publishes interviews with YA authors in *Kansas English*. He is looking forward to receiving your YA book review submissions; you can find submission requirements on the [Kansas English website](#).

***Kansas English* indexed in [ERIC](#)**

Kansas English is once again indexed in [ERIC](#), the free online library of education research sponsored by the US Department of Education and used by over 12 million students and researchers worldwide each year. In July 2024, in consultation with Journal Manager **Susan Matveyeva** and then-KATE President **Nathan Whitman**, I completed the agreement that gives ERIC permission to index *Kansas English* and specifies that ERIC provides a direct link to each article in [WSU's Open Journal Systems \(OJS\)](#) where ERIC users can download *KE* research articles. This allows OJS to continue to have an accurate account of the number of downloads for each piece.

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Author Biography

Katherine (Katie) Mason Cramer, Ph.D. (she/her) is starting her 16th year as Program Chair and Professor of English Education in Wichita State University's School of Education. Prior to earning her doctorate, Katie was a middle school English teacher in Kansas City, Kansas, Public Schools, and she has maintained her Kansas teaching licenses (ELA 5-9 and 7-12) so that a joyful return to the middle or high school ELA classroom is always possible. She has been a member of KATE and on the Executive Board since moving back to Kansas (from Arizona and Georgia) in 2010, and she has served as Editor of *Kansas English* since 2017. Under her leadership, *Kansas English* has been honored with NCTE's Affiliate Journal of Excellence Award in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. Katie's research and publications center the use of young adult literature to recognize, affirm, and teach diverse genders and sexualities in ELA classrooms and curricula. She can be reached at Katie.Cramer@wichita.edu.

