
PRESIDENTIAL PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

KATE President Caleb K. Thornton reflects on transitioning into new positions—personally, professionally, and in a global sense—highlighting the transformative power of English education.

Keywords: teacher community, teacher connection, teacher resilience, growth, advocacy for self and others

The last time that I held a presidential title was in high school student council—when No Child Left Behind was entering its last active semester, eggs cost \$1.92, and Wiz Khalifa was #1 on the charts...

This isn't merely nostalgic reminiscence though (I couldn't even sing that Wiz Khalifa song if I tried); rather, it's a launching point for the exhilarating path ahead.

Stepping into a new leadership role—let alone, *this* leadership role—is daunting to say the least. However, I'm filled with genuine anticipation for the learning that weaves a network of roads before me. The coming years promise more than challenges to overcome, but also opportunities to reimagine what impactful, amazing English education looks like across the state of Kansas.

Moving forward into uncharted territory inevitably brings insecurity and doubt. With so many territories being explored at once, there is a guaranteed sense of discombobulation somewhere in the mix. Many of us are familiar with the sensation of *drinking from a firehose* (raise your hand if you've heard that one before!).

Personally, I strive to meet those challenges and obstacles with hope—not just for my own future, but for those whom I teach. Sometimes, I feel extraordinarily encumbered by all that comes along with teaching, or all that is teaching. However, I remind myself (often) how lucky I am to get to go to a job where I know that each and every day, at some point, I'll have an opportunity to laugh, or learn something new, or even witness one of the coveted a-ha moments that we all so earnestly crave. It truly does take a village!

Teaching—particularly, teaching English Language Arts—has afforded me the joy of getting to assist my students in building resilience in a world that might not be ready to hear them; to be creative and authentically themselves, in spite of who around us might disagree with what those definitions are; to explore and find their purpose—even if just for the present moment.

Regardless of the amount of evolution that the art of teaching will undergo, it is because of and thanks to (so) many teachers like you that I am in this position—celebrating and basking in the



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multitudinous ways that English, pedagogy, and literature continually cultivate creativity, express the beautiful variety of identities, and allow us to discover and express our voices.

I believe that we—as educators *and* as Kansans—possess the power to create meaningful change in every school across our state, touching every student’s life. I know I’ll see you at our [Fall 2025 KATE Conference](#), whether you’re a first-timer or a decades-long veteran. Each gathering continues to nourish our growth at all stages of the journey.

Author Biography

Caleb K. Thornton (he/him), B.A. Secondary English Education and English, is the current President of the Kansas Association of Teachers of English and the editor for KATE’s online publication, *KATE Pages*. He teaches English at Andover Middle School USD 385. Thornton has presented at past KATE conferences, and the 2023 NCTE Conference in Columbus, Ohio. He is a member of NCTE and the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE (ALAN) and can be reached at calebthornton.wsu@gmail.com, kansasenglishblog@gmail.com, or kansasenglishpresident@gmail.com.

