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# 2025 KATE CONFERENCE PREVIEW AND INVITATION

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Nathan G. Whitman, KATE Conference Committee Chair  
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## Abstract

KATE Past President and Conference Committee Chair Nathan G. Whitman previews the 2025 KATE Conference, including keynote speakers Colby Sharp (educator and co-founder of The Nerdy Book Club) and NCTE Executive Director Emily Kirkpatrick.

**Keywords:** KATE Conference, professional learning, Colby Sharp, Emily Kirkpatrick



KATE Conference Chair and Past  
President Nathan G. Whitman

Each day, students walk through our buildings, down our hallways, and into our classrooms. They expect us to keep them safe, to navigate complex issues and topics, to mentor them through all the rough patches that youth, adolescence, and adulthood bring. Each day, we carry out those tasks, add their hopes, dreams, and burdens to our own. Each day, we use our voice to give them voice—often at great cost.

But who is there for the teachers?

We know what human resources and public relations would say. However, we also know the truth. The truth is that teachers are there for each other. We keep one another safe. We help one another navigate the complex issues and topics of the day. We carry one another through the rough patches that no one else in the public seems to understand.

That is why professional organizations and conferences exist. That is why the [Kansas Association of Teachers of English](#) (KATE) exists. That is why our theme for the [2025 Fall Conference](#) is **Empowering Voices, Inspiring Change: Navigating Change in Turbulent Times**. This is a conference that we know will bring English educators from all walks of life together to find camaraderie and solidarity. Our educational landscape is shifting more than ever: the dismantling of the Department of Education, funding cuts to higher education, ongoing attacks on academic freedom and the right to read, new technologies like generative AI, and attention-draining technologies like cellphones. The world of education is a frightful place to navigate on one's own.

So, who can guide us? We can. Propose a session at this year's conference! You are doing amazing things in your classroom, with your professional learning team, and on district committees. You have the answers and solutions other educators seek.

However, since we also know that we don't know *all* the answers, we've also asked for help from two very special keynote speakers.

ELA is more than the secondary and postsecondary classroom. A love for literature and literacy begins at an early age. Hence, we've invited **Colby Sharp**, the co-founder of *Nerdy Book Club*, co-host of *The Yarn* podcast, the co-author of *Game Changer! Book Access for All Kids* with Donalyn Miller, and the editor of *The Creativity Project: An Awesometastic Story Collection. A Commonsense Guide to Your Classroom Library*, written with Donalyn Miller.

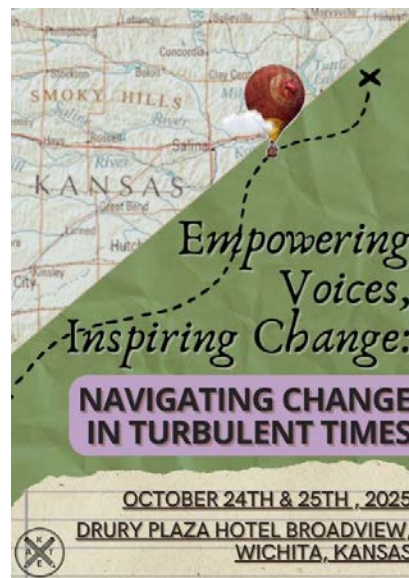
We are also exceedingly pleased to announce that our NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) Co-Sponsored Speaker is **NCTE Executive Director Emily Kirkpatrick**, a champion of literacy, educator voice, and equity in education. She is a visionary leader with a background in nonprofit strategy, innovation, and fundraising. She previously served as Vice President at the National Center for Families Learning, where she created the award-winning platform Wonderopolis®. With a career rooted in public service and civic engagement, Kirkpatrick continues to drive national efforts to improve student outcomes, support educators, and challenge systemic barriers to opportunity.

Both of these remarkable individuals believe in bringing educators and people together for the betterment of our students, our schools, our societies, and our world. Be a part of that collaboration at this year's [Kansas Association of Teachers of English Conference](#) on Oct. 24-25 in Wichita, KS.

I can't wait to work with you in October!

### Author Biography

Nathan G. Whitman (he/him), M.A. English, B.A. Secondary English Education & Creative Writing, is the past Kansas Association of Teachers of English President, current KATE Conference Committee Chair, and the NCTE Standing Committee On Affiliates Region 5 Representative. He teaches English at Derby High School USD 260 and is also an adjunct professor at WSU Tech. He is a recipient of the 2014 Kansas Cable Telecommunications Horizon Award and a member of the Kansas Exemplary Educators Network. He can be reached at [nwhitman@usd260.com](mailto:nwhitman@usd260.com).



Learn more about the KATE Conference and register at <https://www.kansasenglish.org/fall-conference.html>.