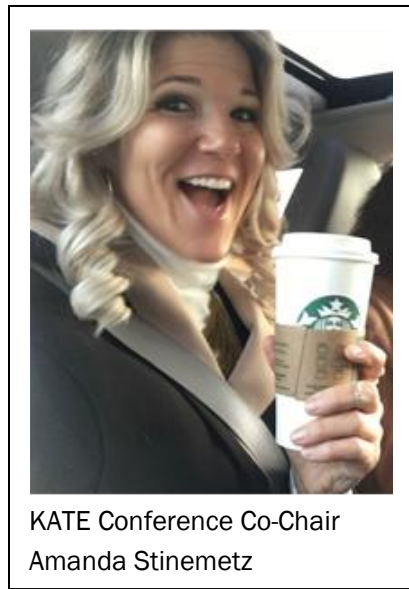

CORE ESSENTIALS AND COLLABORATION AT KATE CON

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Abstract

2026 KATE Conference co-chair Amanda Stinemetz shares the theme, keynote speakers, and professional collaborations with the Kansas Book Festival and Kansas Association of School Librarians for the upcoming fall conference, which takes place in Wichita, KS, Oct. 30-31, 2026.

Keywords: KATE Conference, Guadalupe Garcia McCall, Wendy R. Williams, imagination, realism, collaboration



The 2026 [KATE Conference](#) is assembled with core essentials that attendees and KATE members love, celebrate, and eagerly anticipate every year. This year’s theme of “Reading and Writing Between Worlds: Imagination and Reality in ELA” aligns fantastically with the Saturday keynote speaker, author [Guadalupe Garcia McCall](#), who has an extensive inventory of novels, many of which dive into magical realism. Several of her novels, including *Under the Mesquite* (2011), *Summer of the Mariposas* (2012), *Shame the Stars* (2016), and *Echoes of Grace* (2022), have received prestigious awards; however, the list of notable novels is quite vast. Additionally, the Friday NCTE keynote, [Dr. Wendy R. Williams](#), will present about how to inspire, motivate, and mentor youth writers, which aligns with her publication *Mentoring Youth Writers: Six Strategies to Bring Out the Author in Every Student* (2025). To further enhance the conference overall, an assortment of breakout sessions will be delivered by educators and academics involved in English and literacy education at all levels. Indeed,

KATECon 2026 will again deliver on its standard of quality by serving, networking, and invigorating attendees.

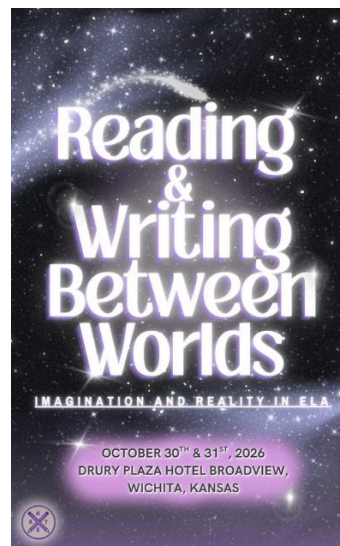
With that said, there are also new developments underway that we believe will enhance the conference experience overall. For starters, the 2026 KATE Conference committee has been in communication with the [Kansas Book Festival](#) leadership team to explore collaboration between the two organizations, thereby encouraging Kansas authors (and authors who write about Kansas) to engage with Kansas educators. Ideally, this will result in authors visiting schools for specialized book discussions, classroom activities, or student-writing workshops, ultimately arranging for Kansas authors to inspire students. Similarly, the committee has also been in touch with the [Kansas Association of School Librarians](#) (KASL) about arranging a social hour where educators and librarians can network and strategize about ways to collaborate during the school year, especially

since the KASL Conference concludes the same day that the KATE Conference begins. Planning ahead, we are optimistic that advanced conference planning will allow KASL to be more involved, especially when its biannual conference rotation lands in Wichita to overlap with KATECon.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge an additional change to KATECon 2026. After several years of service and absolute dedication to piecing together the puzzle of the conference, Mr. Nathan Whitman has surrendered the task of conference chair. In fact, the task was so complex that two people were required to accept the challenge of planning the conference as co-chairs. Through Nathan's direction and oversight, Ms. Amanda Little and Dr. Amanda K. Stinemetz (affectionately referred to as "The A Team") are coordinating, planning, and sharing the duties of building the 2026 KATE Conference. Tackling the conference as a co-chair team (with Nathan on site to assist) has afforded the luxury of time and division of work to explore suggestions made by conference attendees in the past. To the point, by focusing on core essentials that represent the heart of the KATE Conference, while also dabbling in collaborative opportunities of mutual interest and benefits, we are thrilled for the experience that KATECon 2026 will deliver to its attendees and members.

Author Biography:

Amanda Stinemetz, Ph.D., is entering her 19th year of teaching. While finishing her MA, Amanda was central in creating a university-level English as a Second Language (ESL) Program. During this time (2008-2017), she taught and extensively traveled to build international partnerships and recruit students. While briefly away from Kansas (2018-2021), Amanda served as Director of Internationalization at Fairmont State University and was also the State Coordinator for DE English. Upon returning to Kansas (from West Virginia), she taught ELA at a rural high school. She returned to Fort Hays State University in fall 2023 as Assistant Professor of English and is currently the Coordinator of Secondary ELA Teacher Education. She has maintained a KATE membership for most of her teaching career; in 2024, she was appointed to the position of English Language Learner (ELL) liaison on the KATE Board. She has also served as KATE Secretary and KATE Conference Co-Chair since 2025. Amanda can be reached at akstinemetz@fhsu.edu.



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