Fifty Years of *English Education*: A Gallery of Covers

1969–1978
Editors: Oscar Haugh; Ben F. Nelms

1979–1986
Editor: Allen Berger

1986–1993
Editors: Mary K. Healy and Gordon Pradl

1994–2000
Editors: Patricia Lambert Stock; David Schaafsma and Ruth Vinz

2001–2005
Editors: Cathy Fleischer and Dana L. Fox

2005–2010
Editor: Michael Moore

2010–2015
Editors: Leslie S. Rush and Lisa Scherff

2015–2020
Editors: sj Miller and Tara Star Johnson
Fifty years of *English Education* have come and gone. For this editorial, the current editorial team drew upon the collective wisdom of our former editors to reflect on our anniversary and speculate about what the future might hold for the journal and the field. Representatives from seven editorships contributed to what follows. We—the editorial team—first asked former editors to submit summaries of their editorships: goals, high points, challenges, and so forth. These summaries appear in chronological order after the table of editors. We then distilled the content of the summaries into recurring themes:

- Honoring previous editors’ and contributors’ work/a sense of history
- Expanding the scale and scope of the journal
- Role of CEE/ELATE: Maintaining and extending our network. A push/pull between having a professional identity and wanting to include more voices in who “we” are
- Civic engagement as a vital part of the work of English educators
Next, we had an hour-long conversation about these themes via Zoom with five of the former editors whose terms spanned 50 years of the journal’s history. After transcribing the Zoom session, the editorial team took a first stab at distilling the transcript into a found poem, which we then modified with input from the former editors. The Wordle that opens this editorial is a graphic representation of the Zoom session’s transcript.

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<td>David Schaafsma</td>
<td>Professor of English and Director of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago</td>
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<td>Enid and Lester Morse Professor in Teacher Education and Professor of English Education, Teachers College, Columbia University</td>
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<td>Cathy Fleischer</td>
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<td>Michael Moore</td>
<td>Professor Emeritus, Georgia Southern University</td>
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<td>Leslie S. Rush</td>
<td>Associate Dean and Director of the School of Teacher Education, University of Wyoming English Teacher, Lee County Schools, Florida</td>
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<td>sj Miller</td>
<td>Secondary Literacy Specialist and Curriculum Administrator, Monte del Sol Charter School, Santa Fe, NM Associate Professor, Purdue University</td>
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*For a history of the journal's covers, see the inside front cover.

**Ben F. Nelms**

*English Education*, as a professional journal, came in the back door. It developed from a newsletter and monographs, the latter collections of papers presented at national meetings.

With Oscar Haugh of Kansas as editor, a decision was made to move to a professional journal. During Haugh’s four years, the preponderance of articles still originated as papers from professional meetings. When I became editor (1975), fewer and fewer speakers at these sessions relied on papers. Most articles then came as unsolicited manuscripts.
So I was an “in-between” editor: We were safely in the door, but we hadn’t made it to the parlor yet. I recognized how isolated most English educators were: the only person in English departments devoted to teacher education, the only one in colleges of education devoted to English, the only English supervisor in a district—or state. I saw EE as a gathering place to exchange ideas, a faculty workroom. We did not yet have formal editorials; I sneaked my ideas in under the heading “Coffee Break.” EE was still primarily a handbook for practitioners, devoted to the preservice curriculum, the methods course, and field experiences that would exceed just a few months of “practice teaching.”

CEE was then involved in attempts to redefine English, making language study and composition equal members in the triad of the 1960s (lang-lit-comp) but also advocating multicultural literature, adolescent literature, the “writing process,” public media (especially film), transformational grammar, and a broader approach to language study (semantics, dialects, ESOL). CEE also was expanding its own self-definition: from preservice to inservice education, from secondary schools to K–12. A primary focus of EE was to support these efforts, to redefine English as a discipline and English education as a profession. My first genuine editorial, in my last year, promoted the Bay Area Writing Project, not only because it finally gave writing prominent attention but also because it represented a bold new model of inservice education.

Still a wide chasm stretched between research and practice. EE highlighted innovative and exemplary practice, but we worked hard to move ahead to “research-based” practice and to “practice-based” research. One of my innovations, a department called “Accounts,” was an amateurish forerunner of classroom inquiry and narrative research.

Furthermore, a major concern of mine from early on had been civic literacy, an emphasis on critical thinking about public discourse, on the effective use and the abuse of language in politics and government. I argued that English deserves to be a required subject only because of its role in preparing citizens for a participatory democracy. In my opinion, that need as well as our failure to fulfill it is documented by the political situation as I write this.

In the early 1970s, our profession was already under attack—from the “back-to-basics” movement, standardized assessments, and efforts of government and business to impose statewide and national standards. So we had no time to serve tea in the parlor of our professional domicile. To survive we had to engage warily in “political” grubbing. It would fall to my successors to start the long, graceful climb up the stairs to professional excellence.
Allen Berger

From *English Education*, volume 43, number 4, July 2011:

We are not getting our view across to politicians or the public—even with all the resolutions opposing mandated single-score standardized tests passed by NCTE and other professional organizations. We need to give the public a better understanding of what it means to be an English teacher. Teachers and future teachers need to be reminded of the value of reaching out to different constituents. Inviting policymakers into our classrooms. Writing op-ed pieces for the public. Invigorating libraries. Striving for closer professional relationships between “English” and “education” on campuses. Encouraging students to participate in local or state chapters of NCTE. (pp. 318–319)

This is what I wrote for the July 2011 issue of *English Education*.

How are we doing since then?

What I wrote in the next paragraph encapsulates the current educational scene:

There are people in key places on the state and national scene who think they know a lot about English and education because they’ve gone to school for 12 years. These people believe the way to improve education is to diminish public support, shut schools, fund vouchers and charters, ban books, vilify teachers, violate contracts, test more, and teach less. (p. 319)

(Think Betsy DeVos, the education secretary, whose views have damaged public schools in Michigan. Her latest effort is to dip into millions of dollars set aside to help public schools and, instead, use the money to purchase guns!)

Continuing: “One out of five children now lives in poverty in the United States. Some have no books or computers in their homes. Some don’t even have homes. These children can be taught, but teachers need time and resources to reach them” (p. 319). (That statistic remains the same and, in some locales, is higher. I spent about 40 days, from the beginning to the end of school days, in an inner-city school in a large Midwestern city. In winter it was so cold in the school building that everyone, including me, wore our outdoor coats inside. In the library it was so cold that I could barely turn the pages of a book. The next class was art, and you could see everyone’s breath.)

Concluding: “The public needs to understand that children have a hard time learning in schools where the roof is leaking and teachers spend their own limited money to buy toilet paper, not to mention other necessities such as pencils and books for the children” (p. 319). (When seminal thinker Louise Rosenblatt addressed researchers when she was 97 or 98 years old at the annual meeting of the National Reading Conference—now called the...
Literacy Research Association—she told the audience: “Be a good citizen. Write for the public.” When I was at a conference for the 50th anniversary of the Reading and Language Arts Center at Syracuse University, presenters told what they would like to see in the future. One said that he would like students to know how to write an op-ed."

"It is not easy to write an op-ed or letter to the editor, and the reward system in most universities does not encourage it. But if we don’t write to reveal what’s happening to millions of school children, who will?"

**Patricia Lambert Stock**

In the October 1996 issue of *English Education*, the first five editors of the journal reflect on the field and the articles they published in the journal from its establishment in 1969 through the first half of 1996. As he describes a field responding to a period of public criticism and reacting to a flurry of federal and state mandates, Ben Nelms (1973–79) indicates that he found hope for the future of the field in articles he published that privileged “narrative modes of expression and inquiry” and “respect for inquiry and reflection which are both personal and collaborative” (p. 198). In his reflection, Gordon Pradl reports that across the 1980s, telling a story began to receive more credence as a research genre and that by the time he composed his reflection in 1996, narrative discourse had come to be acknowledged “as a significant means of analytical awareness, a means which leads to revelations and validations of all sorts” (p. 220).

In 1994, I titled my opening editorial in *English Education* “Continuity and Change” to signal my vision of the journal’s mission: to extend and enrich important discussions underway in the field and to draw attention to emerging ones. I introduce this current reflection on the field and the articles published in the journal during my editorship by recalling Ben’s and Gordon’s observations about storytelling and narrative inquiry to illustrate—with reference to this strand of intellectual work in our field—how articles published in *English Education* in the mid-1990s not only continued to contribute to narrative inquiry as a significant genre of research in English education but also drew attention to our field’s expanding conception of researchers, storytellers.

As I write these words, I cannot help but think of Loren S. (Biff) Barritt, phenomenologist and professor in the University of Michigan’s School of Education, who was fond of saying to those of us who studied with him, “Research is a story someone gets to tell. What counts is who gets to tell the story.” As I look back at the research published in *English Education* in the
Editorial

mid-1990s, I find a number of articles that raise and address questions like Biff’s about issues of representation in research. They question: Who gets to represent whom? Who gets to speak for whom? Who gets to tell the stories in our field? And, to what effect? In other articles, researchers raise and move beyond the questions. Some demonstrate how and why they moved from conducting inquiries and writing about students’ learning to conducting inquiries and writing with student learners. Others, in polyvocal compositions, explore issues of concern in our field in articles co-composed with pre-service and inservice teachers and their students. In ambitious, collaborative inquiries into teaching and learning, these research teams use a variety of narrative methods of inquiry as they work to create a dialogic relationship between researcher and researched.

English educators have long been concerned about issues of representation in the literature curriculum in schools, colleges, and universities; about including instruction in English dialects and regionalisms and the differences between pre- and de-scriptive grammars in English language study; about attention to writing as a means of learning as well as to writing to express formed understandings. That said, it took researchers in our field until the last quarter of the twentieth century to construct a sustained conversation and to question systematically the intellectual and ethical soundness of researchers’ representations of the researched in practice professions like our own—that is, to question “Who gets to tell the story?”—and to conduct research projects designed to address their concerns.

I’m delighted that so many of the researchers who submitted their work for publication in English Education between 1994 and 1996 broke the ground they did to address this issue of concern in human science research. They enriched our understandings of our professional work even as they expanded the cadre of researchers—storytellers—who participate in, conduct, and compose research in our field.

Ruth Vinz and David Schaafsma

The first lines of Anne Sexton’s Icarus poem—“Consider Icarus, pasting those wings on/testing the strange little tug at his shoulder blade. . .”—remind us of our feelings of both exhilaration and trepidation as we started our years of editorship for English Education. Yes, flight and risk. We felt ourselves standing on the ledge of the unknown with toes curled over the familiar rock of certainty—leaning forward ever so slightly. One inch, then two forward—testing currents of the known and unknown and hoping we could encourage uncertainty and unknowing in the research process and
take flight away from more positivist research approaches fostered in many teacher education research journals. We read and reread past issues of EE. We traversed vistas of seemingly settled and unsettled topics, principles, and perspectives for study in English education.

From Oscar Haugh to Patti Stock, we noted how each editor highlighted English educators’ attempts to invent a discipline, and since our editorship the shaping of EE as a profession continues. We discovered that each editor attended to an intimacy of tone in craft, consistent with the aims and practices of English teaching and learning, language, literature, and classroom practices—a direction potentially more in keeping with the humanities than the social sciences. When we succeeded Patti, we were committed to supporting what was a decidedly narrative direction that had developed over time, and we thought our contribution might be to encourage even greater inventiveness in form, perspective, and complexity as narrative morphed into multigenre and multivoiced perspectives.

We believe the most important stance we took as editors was intentionally to engage in creating gaps, pauses, and productive interruptions—to slow down the rush to presentation, exemplars, conclusions, and certainties. We set out to unsettle the relentless journey through certainty that we found disconcerting in so many journals and conferences. We tried to imagine ways to create pauses, stutters, silences—to create textual layers of differing perspectives, digressions, or competing and complementary ideas that might allow readers to hold on and let go at the same time. Our first issue was conceived by Patti as a retrospective on the journal’s first 20-plus years. Each editor or editors wrote an article about their purposes, aspirations, and reflections. We added a range of intertextual narratives and vignettes to the issue—voices of teachers, student teachers, secondary students, and our experiences, too. The editorial consists of a narrative from each of us describing a classroom experience from 1969, the same year the first issue of EE was published. This first issue sets a structure and intent that was always the North Star of our striving. From editorials, articles, narratives, poems, and vignettes—multivocal and multifaceted—we wanted each page of every issue to offer a dialogic space that would provide readers a bounty of possibilities, curiosities, playfulness, and joy in considering the wildly generative and diverse discourses about teaching and learning in English education. For instance, our second issue offers a range of perspectives on gender and sexuality from feminist to postfeminist work and is intended to provoke English educators and teachers to think about how to work toward collaborative, ethical, agile- and restless-minded educational environments.
Presenting the uncontainable and attempting to create unease and dis-ease through competing perspectives was not an easy or sustainable challenge at times because, beyond trying to be provocateurs, we were also guardians and gardeners of our fields of English education and the people and voices therein. We are still hopeful that English educators—former English teachers, lovers of all genres with subtlety and grace—can continue to invent new forms for the future. We came to understand that *English Education* is a generative record of how writers, researchers, teachers, students—all of the teaming perspectives, projects, and interests—might take flight in the blank pages of a journal. For us, the hope we imagined is available for reimagining in the 17 issues of *EE* that we and our marvelous editorial team compiled from October 1996 to October 2000. We’re still hopeful that English educators will continue to invent new forms for the future. Such hopefulness is expressed beautifully by Arundhati Roy (2003) in her speech titled “Confronting Empire,” and she captures for us this desire we had as editors of *EE* to slow down, whisper, stutter, hear, listen, and feel the sensations of possibilities. Roy has the last word for now: “Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.”

**Cathy Fleischer and Dana L. Fox**

As coeditors from 2000–05, we tried to create a journal that focused on a few core beliefs. First, in part because we were English educators who came from two of the many worlds that English education represents (Dana was from a college of education and Cathy was from an English department), we sought to expand the definition of who counts as an English educator. Based on our research into the membership of the Conference on English Education, we tried to seek the common threads that spoke to all of our readers: those inside the university walls (from professors of literacy to those in writing studies, in education, or in English education) and those outside those walls (from curriculum specialists to language arts coordinators to teacher leaders).

This focus on expanding the definition led us also to engage new voices *in the conversation*—through invitations to both teacher leaders and university researchers to write for the journal and by creating an annual themed issue, imagined and edited by those representing new voices in the field.

Third, we tried to expand what counted as the genres of research, encouraging and working with authors who used narrative studies, ethnographic and qualitative studies, and quantitative studies. As we worked with these authors, we encouraged them to critically focus on the connections between research and practice, what we named as theorized practice.
We were also committed to highlighting the political nature of the work of English educators and seeing this important work as a kind of advocacy: from honoring the stories of teachers and classrooms to finding ways to share those stories to the larger public. We believe—and tried to promote the stance—that the work of English education is, at its heart, one of civic engagement that entails continual outreach to others.

And finally, we sought to educate readers about the purposes and activities of CEE by providing a forum for the diversity of voices and perspectives of those involved in CEE, its leadership, and its commissions. Specifically, we initiated one column that focused on the work of the commissions and another that reviewed current books that represented the interdisciplinarity of the field, again demonstrating that who counts as an English educator is wonderfully varied and contributes to the kind of research and daily work we do.

Through our five-year tenure, we set these goals at the center of our work. We sought to create a journal that would enable everyone concerned with the process of educating teachers of English language arts to find a home in our group. Our issues sought to both broaden our understanding of the identity of English educators and unite us in our work, with essays, research reports, and columns that demonstrated a blend of interests in teacher learning and inquiry across the lifespan, a strong connection between theory and practice, and a political focus on English educators as change agents. We also tried to honor the history of our organization, looking backward in order to move forward. Through the thoughtful writing of multiple authors, we came to understand more about the complexity inherent in who we are, where we are situated, and what we do in English education—as well as the multifaceted nature of our discipline. Our organization’s recent name change—from the Conference on English Education to English Language Arts Teacher Educators—signals an attention to this complexity and welcomes all who are engaged in the preparation, support, and continuing education of teachers of English language arts and literacy.

**Michael Moore**

Shortly before my first issue, the CEE Executive Committee and a selected group of 75 scholars met in Atlanta. The meeting was titled “Reconstructing English Education for the 21st Century: A CEE Leadership and Policy Summit.” This meeting resulted in a special issue of *English Education* published in July of 2006. This was the fourth issue in my tenure as editor, but the summit and the work of the summit influenced all three of my previous issues. My second coeditor was Suzanne Miller, CEE chair, who alerted our
readers to the work of the summit and provided the CEE link to our initial belief statements. The resulting publication of the special issue would change my editorship for my remaining four years. Consensus statements on what we knew and believed about why English education matters, how we could extend English toward New Literacies, what real teaching for real diversity entails, and ways for research to reflect complex contexts and practices provided direction for CEE and English educators.

My initial vision for my editorship before the advent of the summit was to heed the advice of previous editor Gordon Pradl (1996), who wrote: “If I had to do it again, I hope as editor I’d have the courage to push harder for a democracy of voices” (p. 223). I used coeditors on each issue to ensure what I hoped to be a democracy of voices. Also, in my five years as editor I published four themed issues and an invited coeditor essay for each regular issue. During my years I received 228 unsolicited manuscripts. This was far more than I expected and driven largely, I suspect, by the summit and special issue. Seventy-five scholars participated in rich discussions that led to articles submitted not only to English Education but to many other journals as well. The special issue ended with “The Call for Collective Action” (Miller, 2006, p. 398). This “Call” was an invitation to join us in multiple ways. The summits would continue every two years on college campuses. Unlike the usual conference formats, the CEE summer gatherings would continue to develop the themes from the first summit.

Two articles stand out that I published in my final year that reflect the lasting influence of the summit. Luciana C. de Oliveira’s and Melanie Shoffner’s (2009) article, “Addressing the Needs of English Language Learners in an English Education Methods Course,” addressed several strands from the initial summit meeting by framing their study on several of the overarching questions that guided the summit. Their discussion at the end of their article pushes the need for research in ever different directions.

Robert Tremmel’s (2010) article, “On the Horns of a Dilemma: Deweyan Progressivism and English Teacher Education,” was one of five articles where I noted in my opening editorial, “Taken together the articles in this issue move our thinking in a direction directly connected to the CEE Summits” (p. 119). What was interesting about Tremmel’s article was his citing of a conversation held during the second summit at Lake Forest College in 2007. The question that provoked the article speaks to the ongoing process initiated by the first summit to push our field in new directions.

The first summit was a game changer for not only my editorship but for the entire Conference on English Education. The summit issue began with a quote from Alan Luke (2004) that is just as relevant now as it was then:
I, too, believe that English Education has reached a crucial moment in its history, but that this moment is contingent upon the changing demographics, cultural knowledges, and practices of economic globalization. . . . We need a broad and thoroughgoing rethinking of the very intellectual field that we are supposed to profess. . . . [We need to] demand more than canonical and reproductive machinery for the production of lists of outcomes, competencies, and skills, or required textbooks. But this shift will require some working principles for how we define profession, work, and field. (pp. 85–87)

The first summit provided these working principles.

Leslie S. Rush and Lisa Scherff

As we wrote about in our first editorial (2010), we first met at a Conference on English Education (CEE, now ELATE) social event. After finding that we had much in common, we continued to correspond and talk about what we valued in the field, whose voices were being heard, and what our role as English educators should be.

Our proposal to serve as editors of English Education emerged from our initial correspondence and focused on conversation, particularly the need to hear from individuals and groups representing a variety of different stances in the literacy field. We called our editorials “Opening the Conversation” to represent our perspective. And, we proposed a strand to be housed in EE called “Extending the Conversation” through which we proposed to publish pieces that addressed English teacher education policy, little-known but relevant research, classroom research, and first-person accounts. Along with publishing research pieces on English teacher education, it was our hope that articles published in the “Extending the Conversation” thread would help EE to serve as “a journal that encourages and supports conversations across all facets of the community that make up English teacher educators.”

We reviewed our editorship in our last issue’s (Rush & Scherff, 2015) editorial, in which we highlighted several research articles that moved our thinking forward, and we reflected on the “Extending the Conversation” section of the journal. We also raised, once again, the issue of silos among English, literacy, language arts, and reading teachers, and among those who prepare and provide professional development for those teachers as a problematic construct of education today. In an attempt to alleviate the impact of those silos, we delighted in the opportunity to have others write with us during our tenure as coeditors. For example, our editorials in Volume 44 were cowritten with several previous EE editors, and those for issues in Volume 45 were co-written with classroom teachers and doctoral students.
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We are both particularly proud of these collaborations, along with the variety of voices that were heard in EE during our editorship.

Do silos still exist among the “facets of the community” that prepare and develop English, language arts, literacy, and reading teachers? Absolutely. Is it possible for a single journal, published four times a year, to significantly affect these silos? Unlikely. Perhaps our goals were set too high. However, as a result of setting the importance of conversation among different stakeholders as a priority, we have both become aware of this important work in our own lives and work. Perhaps we can say that editing the journal for five years affected our work with education stakeholders, and that is no small thing. We both continue to carry this important goal with us as we teach, write, and support teachers and students.

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What Is English? A Former Editors’ Found Poem

The Journal
The journal became the venue for sustained conversation
Given the fact that we seldom occupy the same geographic location
Getting it in print, not written on the wind.
Even though the scale and scope of who we were was extending
There was an integrity in the intellectual issues we were trying to probe

What exactly is the idea of English education?

The Organization
The humanities in times of extreme social unrest—CEE came out of that time.
ELATE is the projection to this new time. Because God knows that’s where we are.
An organization can’t be all things to all people, but This group really took me by the hand and brought me in.
Continually helping new voices—that is a part of our responsibility

So what’s English? What are we about?

The Future
I’m worried about the future
I’m worried about the present!
I’m crying more than I used to.
I’m old and I haven’t seen anything quite like this.
I worry about ELATE and NCTE becoming irrelevant
Is there still going to be a role for us in our universities?

What is English in this day and age?
The Future Is Now
We have to be more interactive
Have to reach out to the public and policymakers.
If we want to be both influential
and influenced by the people in classrooms
We have to step up our game,
Engage with teachers in a way that is engaging for them.

It comes back to that fundamental question: What is English?

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The Zoom session’s refrain—What is English?—sharpened to a specificity in one former editor’s uptake: “What is our work as English educators? . . . What should a journal or a sustained scholarly conversation look like to support that work?” And there was and will be no pithy answer; the desire to define and delineate our work contradicts our wish to blur the boundaries between Us and Other, or at the least keep them invitingly open and permeable. An undercurrent flowed through the former editors’ reflections on their tenure and conversations about the future, though: a sense of the fierce urgency of now, to quote Martin Luther King Jr. What we do—or don’t do—in this moment could open up or foreclose what the next 50 years may hold.

References