

2008 Annual Report — Elementary Section Steering Committee

Elementary Section Steering Committee (ESSC) activities over the past months focused mainly on the work at the meetings at the annual convention in New York City.

Early Childhood

Susi Long has been working with other early childhood educators to develop a proposal for an NCTE Early Childhood Education Assembly. A group of 45 interested NCTE members met at the 2007 convention and agreed to develop a proposal. Between November and June, Susi worked with NCTE members Vivian Vasquez and Mariana Souto-Manning and with Millie Davis at the NCTE headquarters to draft a constitution, a statement on involvement of persons of color, and a membership list. Susi will share the progress of this work at the August EC meeting and the proposal will be brought to the EC for a vote in November.

Outstanding Educator in the English Language Arts

The ESSC named Carolyn Burke and Jerome Harste as joint recipients of the 2008 Outstanding Language Arts Educator Award. They will receive the award at the Elementary Section Get-Together in San Antonio. The award will celebrate their work individually as well as their collaborative work in the field providing an opportunity not only to honor two outstanding educators, but to emphasize the significance of collaboration in literacy education

Diversifying ESSC

Via email prior to the New York convention, Susi Long asked ESSC members to consider ways to diversify the ESSC governance group. With the 2008-2009 year, the committee, although representing diversity in other ways, is not racially and linguistically diverse. The ESSC discussed this as a serious issue and considered possibilities for ensuring that the committee would always be diverse and that such diversity would be broad in scope. Committee members met with the ESSC Nominating Committee during the conference to explain the current problem as one strategy for working toward a diverse committee. Debi Goodman, Susi Long, and Becky McCraw will explore this issue further before the next ESSC meeting.

“One-Pagers”

A great deal of time was spent at our New York meeting discussing the “one-pagers” project. These will be one-page, easily accessible handouts designed to support teachers in providing research justification for valued practices “in a nutshell.” We had a few completed drafts of one-pagers that we were able to review and discuss. Some committee members volunteered to give these drafts to their university students and colleagues to receive feedback that will guide revisions and formats for further work. Drafts of the new topics have been assigned to committee members and we will use the listserv to continue on this project. Debi Goodman, Linda Crafton, and Susi Long will coordinate our efforts to move this project forward.

ESSC Chair/Assistant Chair Rotations

As part of our meeting in New York, we discussed ways to put the chair/assistant chair schedule back on an alternating track. (The chair and assistant chair are currently on the same rotation and will end their terms in November 2008.) It was decided that the ESSC will select an assistant chair for a one year term from 2008-2009. At the same time, we will select a chair for a two year term from 2008-2010. In 2009, the Assistant Chair will move back into a 2 year term which will put the rotation back on track.

Other ESSC Activities

- Katie Ray, Linda Crafton and Becky McCraw are working to judge this year's Donald Graves award nominees. They will also review criteria and make changes if needed.
- Frank Chikki will join the editors of *School Talk* and begin his term as editor with Nancy Johnson with the September 2008 issue.
- Nancy Johnson and Barbara Lehman are planning the 2008 Books for Children Luncheon. This year's theme will be "Literature in the Literacy Curriculum."
- Susi Long, Katie Ray and Laurie Katz will coordinate the planning of the Day of Early Childhood for the 2008 Convention.
- Susi Long and Vivian Vasquez will organize the proposal for an Early Childhood Assembly and Susi will correspond with ESSC members and with the editors of *Language Arts* to continue the conversation about possibilities for providing better support for teachers of very young children (birth through kindergarten) at NCTE.

Donald Graves Award

A subcommittee is working to review applications for this year's Donald Grave Award.

School Talk

Nancy Johnson and Frank Chiki will be the editors for the coming year's issues of *School Talk*. They have been working on identifying the overarching theme for the four issues and have decided to focus on "Rethinking Writing".

Outstanding Language Arts Educator

Carolyn Burke and Jerry Harste will be honored as this year's Outstanding Language Arts Educators.

Convention Planning

Day of Early Childhood

Susi Long organized the Day of Early Childhood for the New York conference. Debbie Miller was the opening keynote and drew a large audience as did closing keynote speakers, Celia Genishi and Anne Haas Dyson. Prior to the convention, Susi corresponded with a large group of NCTE early childhood educators who met at the end of the Day of Early Childhood. The group agreed to submit a proposal to the Executive Committee for the development of an NCTE Early Childhood Assembly. Vivian Vasquez from American University will take the lead in drafting a constitution. She and Susi will contact the group of early childhood educators and the ESSC to inform them about the progress of this proposal.

Katie Wood Ray and Deborah Wells Rowe will be the keynote speakers at the "Day of Early Childhood" that is part of the 2008 annual convention. Participants will continue to have the opportunity to hear speakers throughout the day that focus on issues of early childhood.

Elementary Section Get-Together: New York City, 2007

The Elementary Section Get-Together honored Rudine Sims-Bishop as the 2007 Outstanding Educator in the English Language Arts. One of our main goals at the 2007 Get-Together was to continue to make newcomers feel welcome at this event. We created and distributed bookmarks with quotes from the Outstanding Educator's *Language Arts* interview as well as other information. We awarded the Donald H. Graves Writing Award to Anne Marie Corgill, a first grade teacher at Riverchase Elementary School in Hoover, Alabama. Anne Marie was the sixth winner of this award. We thanked ESSC outgoing members, Patsy Hall and Carmen Medina for their service to the ESSC. The event was very well attended and participants stayed and chatted long after the program ended. This year, due to space and the number of invited members who agreed to host tables, we had 2 hosts at most tables. Preliminary accounts indicate that these efforts were successful and we expect to undertake similar efforts at next year's Get-Together. The space allotted for our get together posed some problems as it was long and narrow making it difficult for the speaker to speak to the audience as a whole; also large pillars meant that a

number of audience members could not see the speaker at all. We will discuss solutions to these kinds of problems at convention planning for 2008 in February.

Carolyn Burke and Jerry Harste have helped us identify possible table hosts for the 2008 Elementary Get-Together. We are in the midst of planning for the event, which will celebrate the work of our Outstanding Language Arts Educators as well as the work of our Donald Graves Award winner.

Books for Children Luncheon: New York City 2007

The annual Books for Children Luncheon featured Brian and Andrea Pinkney. The event was exceptionally well organized by ESSC member, Nancy Johnson, and Debbie Zagorski and NCTE staff, and was very well attended. We had a large number of authors and giveaways (books donated by publishers) at this year's event due to generous support from publishers. At the post-conference ESSC meeting, a list of possible speakers for next year's luncheon speaker was developed and sent to NCTE staff so that speakers could be contacted in priority order. Issues regarding the luncheon were also discussed and included: providing two viewing screens so that audience coming just for the speakers (not sitting a luncheon tables) can see the speakers clearly; and ensuring that enough Children's Literature Assembly members are available to serve as escorts for the authors.

Tomie dePaola has agreed to be the speaker for the Books for Children Luncheon held on Saturday, November 22 in San Antonio.

Conference Debriefing

ESSC members again reported generally favorable reactions to program sessions and events. The "Early Childhood Strand" was well received again this year and we will organize a similar strand for next year's conference in San Antonio. The ESSC discussed ideas for next year's program. Some challenges from the conference this year included:

- Space for the Elementary Section Get-Together
- Room size for Day of Early Childhood opening keynote
- Supporting teachers of very young children (birth through kindergarten in particular) at NCTE; some suggestions under consideration include: expanding the name of ESSC to "Early Childhood and Elementary Section"; devoting an issue of *Language Arts* to issues regarding language, literacy and the very young child; extending the byline in the *Language Arts* title to include wording related to young children.

New Members of the ESSC

We had three new member elected to the ESSC this year. We welcome Danling Fu, Andrea Garcia and Jeffrey Williams. These new members will begin their terms in November.

Debi Goodman was elected as the new Chair of the ESSC. Jeffrey Williams was elected as the new Assistant Chair. Their terms will begin in November 2008.

— *Franki Sibberson, Chair, Susi Long, Assistant Chair*