



# Texas Association for Literacy Education

TALE

Volume IV, Issue ii  
Fall 2014

## President's Message

### *Transformative Thinking*

Lately, I have found myself talking to many teachers across the state about the Instructional Read Aloud/Think Aloud. I know, I know... the Think Aloud? Of all the other things going on with literacy in Texas, it seems so minor to talk about. I guess some may say that it has had its day or maybe it is assumed standard practice now. Well, maybe and maybe not.

Those of us who have been advocating for Reader's Responses-like literacy platforms in our classrooms realize just how important it is to mentor and model reading behaviors to our students. We want them to experience the text personally and academically. If we want our students to become critical and opinionated about what they read, they need to hear what that sounds like- and often! As a mentor reader of the classroom, the teacher uses the Think Aloud as that window into the mysterious mind of a reader. Students hear what it is like to think like a reader and speak like a reader at the moment the text connects to them so they can begin using that reading behavior for themselves. Transformative thinking in action!

So, okay, why talk about the Think Aloud now? It seems that in our fast-paced world society is always seeking out the next best thing or the need to push something past its limits. We are always on the pursuit of what is sizzling in literacy now and where we are headed in our field for the future. While of course

it is necessary to explore and redefine practices, I find myself lately thinking about those that are just now coming into the field of literacy, and of those that have taking the step to evolve their literacy practice, and also of those that just need some "Throw Back" thinking... and so the "Think Aloud" pops into my mind! It is one of my favorite things to do while reading with students! I have the best memories of moments when students have turned the tables and opened up their thinking to me.

With that said, I ask you to share your stories with us about Think Aloud moments in the past and in the future on Facebook or Twitter, and I leave you with this to ponder: "If reading is about a mind journey, teaching reading is about outfitting the travelers, modeling how to use the map, demonstrating the key and the legend, supporting the travelers as they lose their way and take circuitous routes, until, ultimately, it's the child and the map together and they are off on their own". -Keene and Zimmerman, *Mosaic of Thought*, 1997, p. 28.

Happy reading!

Patricia Durham  
Assistant Professor  
Sam Houston State University  
2014-2015 TALE President



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## Conference Preview:

See pages 8-13 for information  
about TALE's February Conference!!

# Featured Technology Tool — Book Creator

by Sarah Tchoukaleff, Good Shepherd Episcopal School

## Book Creator—My “Go To” App

I have been known to skip through the halls or abruptly bust into classrooms shouting, “Wait until you see the amazing work this child has just created!” It has become a running joke between my colleagues that usually when I am skipping, there is an iPad in my hand and the app Book Creator is open. For me, Book Creator is a chameleon that lends itself to help transform students’ thinking and learning.

The app was originally introduced to me as a way to publish students’ writing. In short, students are able to create a book on their iPad, import pictures, videos, text, and record themselves. When a group of students began working on their first book, I noticed how this app transformed their learning. The students jumped in feet first and began typing their stories, changing the font and page color, and then they discovered the ability to add sound. At their fingertips, students were able to record themselves reading the text and then they inserted their recording into the book. I discovered that when they listened to the recordings they asked, “That didn’t sound right...do you care if I go back and make some changes?” And from that moment on... I was hooked!

A teacher approached me just yesterday as she was preparing for parent conferences. She was eager to show the parents the amazing work the children in her classroom had accomplished in the short six weeks they have been under her wing. With a twinkle in my eye, I suggested that the children could reflect on their work and document their thinking by creating an e-book. Her eyes lit up and within twenty minutes we were leading the children into creating a reflective journal that documents what they have learned, what

they would do differently, and what they are most proud of. The teacher and I watched in amazement as children began looking through their work to find the perfect piece they wanted to share with their parents.



*Sarah Tchoukaleff is an LS Reading Specialist at Good Shepherd Episcopal School in Dallas, Texas.*



Over the next hour, the students were actively engaged in their learning as they paused for reflection, wrote, revised, recorded, and revised again until it was suitable to be published on their bookshelf. It was incredible watching the 7 and 8 year old children as they masterfully clicked on text and buttons until they found the perfect tool they needed to perform the job. The children became teachers as they helped their peers discover a new option for changing the font or page color. The students discovered strategies for oral and written expression such as, “If I write my thoughts down before I record, it might sound more fluent when I record it.” There were so many light-bulbs and ah-ha’s going off I imagine that if there were sound effects, it would have sounded like a pin-ball machine in the classroom. To top it all off, the work was a quick snapshot for the teacher regarding who needed reteaching and who was ready to move on in their learning.

Book creator began as a platform for students to generate writing. The app quickly escalated to a tool that leads to instant revision in students’ writing, a fluency work station, and even a platform where students’ work becomes the mentor text to students in other grade levels. Book Creator is not a free app (\$4.99). However, the cost is worth it because of the ease and options this app contains. I am eager to see the next great opportunity that awaits for the learning in the students on our campus.

# The Flipped Classroom

By Debra Faulkner  
Temple College

## Introduction

I teach Developmental English at a local community college. I attended a workshop on the “Flipped Classroom” during the week leading up to the fall semester in 2012. I was intrigued by this concept, but I did not have the time or the experience to create my own videos of instruction. I decided to adjust the “flipped classroom” concept to meet my immediate needs-- students not reading the chapters in their grammar textbook. Perhaps, if they had a video to watch, students would be more motivated to learn the new concepts.

**Education Portal** (<http://education-portal.com/academy/course/college-composition-writing-course.html>)

First, I set out to find a website that offered good instruction on grammar concepts. I found Education Portal which offered videos in both grammar and writing. There are thirteen grammar videos, seven videos addressing writing usage, and various videos addressing revision, editing, and essay writing. I have only utilized the grammar videos, as I currently prefer to address writing in a more traditional way. I hope to phase in some of the writing and essay videos soon.

Education Portal combines both visual and auditory learning. The graphics are interesting and keep the viewer engaged. The language and instruction for the grammar lessons are simple and easy to understand. I viewed all videos before giving the links to my students to ensure that the video and I were using the same language to teach the concept.

## Method

I assign both the textbook chapter and the video link for homework because I want students to choose the option that best suits them. I post the video onto my message board as a hyperlink so students only have to click the link to view the video. Also, by posting on the message board, students are able to go back any time to view the video.

In class, I either put students into small groups or into pairs (think-pair-share) to discuss what they learned about the grammar lesson. I encourage students to make notes at this time, if they did not take notes while reading the textbook or watching the video at home. Then, we come together as a class, and I answer any questions, reteach, and clarify

misunderstandings. Next, I demonstrate the concept through sentences. We label each word in the sentence and correctly punctuate it. Labeling all concepts, whether they know it at that time or not, is indirectly teaching them future concepts. Last, students engage in their own practice of the new grammar concept, and these practices vary. Some practices are done on an individual basis, but some engage small groups or pairs. Most practices entail students generating their own sentences or finding the grammar concept within their own writing to demonstrate the newly gained knowledge.

Students learn quickly that they have to either read the textbook or watch the video because most of our class time is spent practicing what they are supposed to have learned from the homework. If they do not do the homework, they know that they will be behind their peers.

## Measured Success

I believe that the Education Portal has been quite beneficial to my teaching and to my students. I hear more discussions about the grammar homework, and I see students bringing in notes. My students have voiced that they like having the videos and that they use them. Many students have reported that they appreciate the videos because they understand the videos better than the textbook. I find that many more students now come to class better prepared. Giving students the option to read a textbook or to watch a video ensures the student who is typically unprepared will at least watch the video. Options are what students want. They like having the autonomy. Plus, the students who struggle with reading are able to participate in homework and obtain enough knowledge to come to class and learn.



*Debra Faulkner teaches  
Developmental English at  
Temple College.*

## Language and Literacy in Early Childhood Education

by Susan Reiley, Stephen F. Austin University

### **PART ONE of a TWO Part series on ELLs**

#### **Introduction**

It is the responsibility of the Early Childhood Educator to understand the connection between language and literacy and how the experiences of the individual child affect development in those areas. "Children who have strong oral-language skills often have strong reading and writing skills. In contrast, children with oral-language problems are at higher risk of reading and writing difficulties" (Bennett-Armistead, Duke, & Moses, 2005, p. 45). A knowledgeable Early Childhood Educator uses the importance of developing strong language skills to promote the development of fluent speakers and readers by creating opportunities for optimal language and literacy development.

#### **Language and Literacy Connections**

The Early Childhood Educator understands that language is essential for the development of the literacy skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Bennett-Armistead et al., 2005; Moravcik, Nolte, & Feeney, 2013). According to Smith and Read (2009), a solid literacy foundation consists of developing skills in oral language, alphabet knowledge, phonemic awareness, and print awareness. Developing literacy skills begins from birth with the language interactions children have with the people and experiences in their environment (Bennett-Armistead et al., 2005). These experiences beginning from birth produce emergent literacy, which is the developmental time before children can conventionally read and write (Bennett-Armistead et al., 2005). During emergent literacy development, children acquire literacy and language skills through interactions with adults who model how language works and how to communicate with others (Moravcik et al., 2013). "The foundation of learning to read successfully actually begins in infancy as parents

speak to and with their children. Students' ability to use oral language is a precursor to their ability to use written language" (Smith & Read, 2009, p. 48). By interacting and modeling language to children through conversations in play, read alouds, and engaging experiences, adults are building a foundation in developing literacy skills for the young child.

#### **Supporting Fluent Speakers and Readers**

Due to understanding that literacy development begins at birth, Early Childhood Educators recognize the importance of involving parents. Early Childhood Educators know that the varying home environments that children come from will affect the amount of exposure to literacy each child experiences (Smith & Read, 2009). Through collaboration with the families, the teacher can obtain a better understanding of a child's background experiences when making connections to language and literacy for the child at school and home. Children whose primary language is not English should be encouraged to use both languages and provided opportunities to teach their primary language to other students (Bennett-Armistead et al., 2005). "Classroom teachers who actively and consistently promote oral language use can have a tremendous impact on their students' oral language development, particularly for those students from disadvantaged homes and homes where little or no English is spoken" (Smith & Read, 2009, p. 49). For struggling students, the educator should regularly engage children in conversations by asking open-ended questions, modeling, and encouraging interactions with peers (Bennett-Armistead et al., 2005).



*Susan Reiley is an assistant professor at Stephen F. Austin University in Nacogdoches, Texas.*



## Language and Literacy, continued

### Creating Opportunities for Optimal Development

When creating opportunities for optimal development in the areas of literacy development, the Early Childhood Educator should consider factors such as establishing a literacy-rich environment and introducing literacy through a variety of developmentally appropriate activities that motivate and engage all learners (Bennett-Armistead et al., 2009). Literacy development in the early childhood classroom is more than reading to a child. Early childhood educators should structure the classroom environment and schedule to provide opportunities to develop the foundational skills of reading and writing. Bennett-Armistead, Duke, and Moses (2009) noted that in order to promote interactions with text, teachers should consider materials and areas in the classroom that encourage interaction with print, such as the library center, and print on walls and other surfaces. Educators create opportunities for optimal development by providing a variety of instructional opportunities throughout the day that involve direct instruction through modeling, guided practice, and independent practice, in order to meet the needs of all learners (Bennett-Armistead et al., 2005). It is important that educators create environments that provide “verbal models and instructions, extended adult-child dialogues, questions and answers, poetry, singing and chanting, and especially many hours spent enjoying and discussing picture books, fairy tales, and Mother Goose” (Smith & Read, 2005, p. 49).

Educators can motivate students to use language through thoughtful planning of activities that are both content and student appropriate. By providing materials that encourage literacy skills and allowing children to choose activities, the educator creates experiences that are conducive to children’s exploration of language (Coppie & Bredekamp, 2009). When students are actively engaged in activities, they have opportunities to engage in language experiences with their peers. Along with the teaching methods of providing materials for student interests and asking questions to probe information or challenge students, educators should utilize language assistance strategies. Language assistance strategies include think-alouds, repetition, and frequent review of vocabulary related to different content areas to promote continued language and literacy growth for all students (Vogt & Echevarria, 2008).

### Conclusion

In addition to Early Childhood Educators planning opportunities for optimal development of the conventional literacy skills of reading and writing, educators understand that literacy development begins with the ability to listen and speak. Children begin their literacy development at birth as they experience language opportunities with the people and places they encounter. Educators build upon the experiences children encounter and seek collaboration with families in order to provide developmentally appropriate instruction to meet the needs of all students. Educators establish an engaging environment for learning and experimenting with language and literacy by utilizing a variety of teaching methods to instruct and encourage the continued development of every student.

### References

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# Texas Virtual Academy

by Kim Hornsby, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor

Colleges, universities, and other post-secondary educational institutions have been making the transition from the traditional approaches of educating students to more virtual options through online and hybrid courses. Public schools have not been immune to this transition. Some Texas students, grades 3-12, are currently forgoing the traditional classroom to attend the Texas Virtual Academy (TXVA), a free online public school option accredited by both the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Southern Association of College and Schools Council (SACS).

Students in grades 3-8 are taught their core courses of language arts, math, science, social studies, technology, and art through both offline and online tools. These tools include interactive animations, printed books with illustrations and narrative, CDs and videos, and materials for students to participate in hands-on experiments. The individualized curriculum is written in such a way that the lesson plans for each subject are integrated across the curriculum. At the conclusion of each lesson, an assessment is administered to check mastery before moving on, allowing students to progress at their own pace.

Students in grades 8-12 are taught their content with many of the same characteristics of the 3-8 curriculum. The high school students' experience differs from the 3-8 delivery in that students are given a weekly schedule with activities and assignments laid out and have course-by-course discussions monitored by teachers. The TXVA also has numerous options for high students in preparation for their future after high school. They offer AP courses, honor courses, early college credit options, rigorous classes under STEM, and career focused courses.

The TXVA is a online public school option that is tuition free. However, families are responsible for covering some of the costs of consumables. The student to teacher ratio for grades 3-8 is 40:1 and for grades 8-12 it is 30:1. They offer monthly progress meetings, parent- teacher workshops, teacher-guided outings, daily e-mail and other contacts from teachers. Students who are gifted and talented or have

accommodations will also have their needs met within the virtual academy.

A huge concern most people have when they think about a virtual school for students relates to the amount of time a child spends on the computer. According to the TXVA, they believe that the computer acts a facilitator to motivate and stimulate students. They believe they have a well-rounded delivery that includes not just the computer, but also textbooks, workbooks, and hands-on materials.

The TXVA adheres to an academic calendar, and students who miss a day of the week are counted absent, just like in a traditional school. Students are expected to log 1,080 hours of attendance in a calendar school year, which is approximately 30 hours per week. Students enrolled in the TXVA are evaluated through lesson, unit, and semester assessments. They are also assessed on the STAAR and EOC exams, as well as other benchmark testing.

The TXVA offers another option for students who are looking for an alternative to the traditional classroom. It mirrors the traditional classroom in having an academic calendar, attendance expectations, certified teachers, and state assessments. The school stands out in its ability to allow students to progress once they, as individuals, reach mastery. It also appears to have a curriculum that integrates across the core subject areas. Students struggling in the traditional classroom or students looking for more individualized instruction could perhaps benefit from this option for education.

Resource: <http://www.k12.com/txva>

*Kimberly Hornsby is a doctoral student at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor.*



**Texas Association for Literacy Education (TALE)  
Award Submission Information**

**The Jack Cassidy Distinguished Service Award**

Dr. Jack Cassidy is a Professor Emeritus at Millersville University in Pennsylvania. He is known for his work on literacy trends and issues as exemplified by his yearly column in *Reading Today*, "What's Hot, What's Not." He is a former President of the International Reading Association and the College Reading Association and is the co-founder of the Texas Association for Literacy Education. His hard work and dedication is appreciated by TALE, and this award, named in his honor, is designed to recognize individuals who support literacy education in the state of Texas. This award is presented to any teacher-- public, elementary, secondary, or university level-- who has demonstrated exemplary service in this field.

*The first award was granted to Jack Cassidy in 2013.*

Guidelines for Selection of Recipient:

Nominees should have made a significant contribution in the area of Literacy Education; specifically, contributions in scholarship, practice, policy, or trends.

Nominees should have made a significant contribution to TALE and the education profession.

Nominations will be accepted from members of TALE.

To nominate an individual for a 2014 TALE award, please submit the nomination form below to:

**Sharon O'Neal**  
Texas State University  
[sfoneal@aol.com](mailto:sfoneal@aol.com)

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**2014 Award Nomination Form**

*Extended Deadline: November 15, 2014*

Distinguished Service Nomination



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

University or School Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Area of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Brief Summary of Contributions:

Formal Statement of Support (750 word max):



## Texas Association for Literacy Education



Presents:

# **TALE 2015 Annual Conference** **Inspiring and Transforming Literacy**

February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015

8:00 – 4:30 PM

Sam Houston State University  
The Woodlands Center

3380 College Park Dr. The Woodlands, TX 77384



*quest*  
**speakers**



Steven  
Layne



Donalyn  
Miller

### Conference Rates

Early Bird: \$100  
(Ends 11-30-14)

Regular: \$125  
(11-30-14 to 1-31-15)

Students: \$35

**Visit Our Website for More  
Information and Registration**

[www.texasreaders.org](http://www.texasreaders.org)





# Conference News

Texas teachers and literacy professionals are welcomed to the TALE Conference on Saturday, February 21, 2015.

- Attendees will hear two keynote presentations by speakers well-known for their dynamic presentations and effective content: Donalyn Miller and Steven Layne.
- Concurrent sessions during the conference include more than thirty different, hour-long sessions offered by literacy professionals from Texas and beyond. The program of all sessions will be available on the TALE web-

site the month before the conference. Print programs will be distributed at the conference.

- The conference provides full breakfast and lunch meals. Starbucks coffee and snacks are available throughout the day. There is also a room of vendor tables.
- The State Chapter Leadership Workshop will be held on Friday afternoon, February 20. This afternoon meeting will support the development of leadership for local chapters, affiliated with TALE and the International Reading Association. Sign up in advance if you wish to participate in the

workshop.

- The night before the conference, everyone is invited to attend the TALE Scholars Social. This informal meet-and-greet will be held Friday evening at SpringHill Suites, one of the hotels near the conference site. The purpose is socializing among TALE members and friends. The hotel has food and drinks available for purchase.

We look forward to seeing you in February! When you have questions or suggestions for the conference, feel free to contact the Planning Committee at [texasmembership@gmail.com](mailto:texasmembership@gmail.com).



Sam Houston State University,  
The Woodlands Center

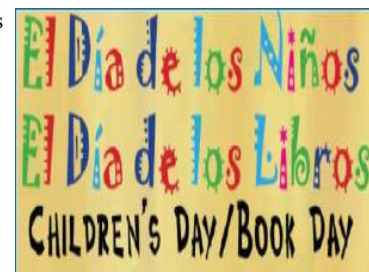
## Support Huntsville Area Literacy Council and *Día de los Niños*

TALE aims to leave a literacy footprint in each location where a conference is held. This year, we are supporting the Huntsville Area Literacy Council. The HALC is a non-profit organization that operates entirely on grant funds and donations. This non-profit coalition organizes resources to benefit the local community. One ongoing program of the Huntsville Area Literacy Council is an afternoon tutorial program at the Huntsville Public Library. The other pro-

gram is an annual service project celebrating *El Día de los Niños* (Children's Day) that gives books to young readers. The purpose is to encourage family literacy and love of reading.

Many nations celebrate *Día de los Niños* on April 30 to honor and celebrate children and literacy. In Huntsville, the community holds a celebration on the first Saturday in May. The HALC gives away a children's book and a t-shirt each year to every child that stops by.

TALE members and friends can support the Huntsville Area Literacy Council by donating online right now through the TALE website. All donated funds are used to support the HALC's Children's Day event. In addition, you are urged to bring children's books (especially bilingual books) for HALC to the conference on February 21. The books will be distributed at the 2014 Children's Day celebration.



## Apply by Nov. 10 for Conference Registration Fee Grants

TALE will award three Conference Registration Fee Grants to cover the registration fee for one elementary school (K-5), one middle school (6-8), and one high school (9-12) teacher to attend the conference on February 21 at Sam Houston State University's Woodlands Center campus.

Applicants must be either elementary or secondary teachers and cannot be presenters in a concurrent session at the 2015 TALE Conference. TALE is offering this grant

because one of the keynote speakers, Donalyn Miller, waived her speaking fee for the TALE conference. TALE thanks Donalyn Miller, well known as "The Book Whisperer," for her generosity.

To apply for this small grant, download and complete the application form (a writeable PDF) from the TALE Conference website. Then submit it by email attachment to [TALEmembership@gmail.com](mailto:TALEmembership@gmail.com) with the subject line TALE Conference Registration

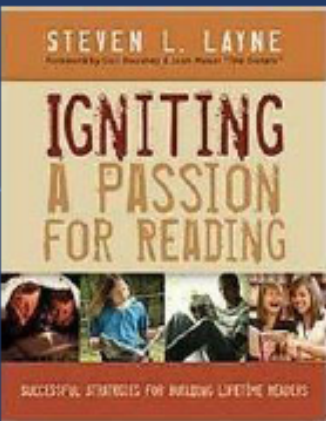
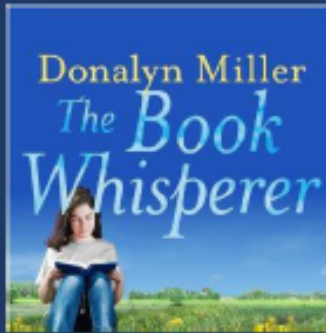
Fee Grant Application.

The deadline to apply is Monday, November 10, 2014. A committee of TALE members teaching at different grade levels will review the applications. Notifications to all applicants will be made by November 20 so that TALE members can still register for the conference during the "early bird" registration period that ends November 30, 2014.

TALE seeks to leave a literacy footprint...join us by bringing a book to the conference or donate today!



## TALE Book Club Challenge



Who?

TALE members and friends

What?

Book clubs on the *Book Whisperer* or *Igniting a Passion for Reading*

When?

Before TALE's Conference

Where?

Face to face or virtual locations (libraries, Starbucks, Zoom, Facebook, Skype, etc.)

READ!

**CHALLENGE:** TALE's conference planning committee challenges members to form book clubs in preparation for February's conference. Authors Donalyn Miller and Steven Layne will present on February 21 reflecting on content from their books. We encourage discussions about these books from TALE members--book clubs would provide a great way for members to share ideas and collaborate with other educators.

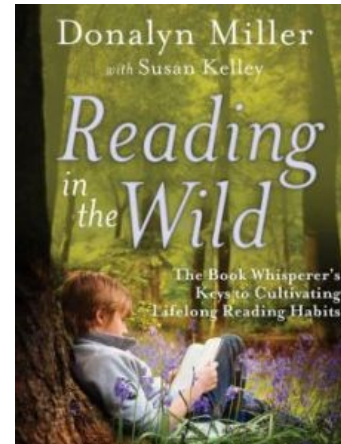
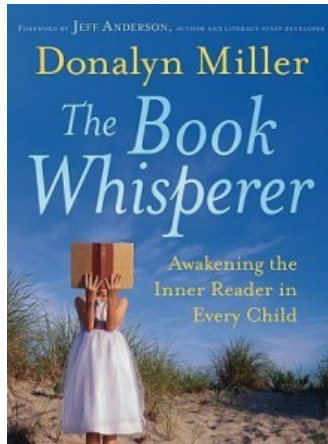
**How?** Organize and form small groups/book clubs with co-workers, friends, or other literacy educators in your area! Register your book club at [www.TexasReaders.org](http://www.TexasReaders.org) for first dibs on author autographs. We also invite clubs to share information about their meetings or discussions on TALE's Facebook page or other platforms!

**Note:** Another book for clubs to consider might be Donalyn's new book, *Reading in the Wild, The Book Whisperer's Keys to Cultivating Lifelong Reading Habits*.

Conference Date: February 21, 2015  
[www.TexasReaders.org](http://www.TexasReaders.org)

## 2015 TALE Conference Keynote Speakers:

### Donalyn Miller



Donalyn Miller will deliver a keynote presentation at the 2015 TALE Conference. Known as “The Book Whisperer,” Donalyn Miller currently teaches fifth grade in Fort Worth, Texas. She has worked with a wide variety of upper elementary and middle school students and is beloved for her presence on social media, online, at conferences, and in the classroom. Donalyn Miller facilitates a community blog called “The Nerdy Book Club” and co-authors a column for Scholastic’s *Principal-to-Principal Newsletter*. Miller has published articles about reading in journals such as *The Reading Teacher* and *Educational Leadership* and in periodicals such as *The Washington Post*.

Donalyn Miller has published two professional books: *The Book Whisperer: Awakening the Inner Reader in Every Child* (2009) and *Reading in the Wild: The Book Whisperer’s Keys to Cultivating Lifelong Reading Habits* (2014). Miller emphasizes that students need to make their own choices about reading material and writing topics, and they need a lot of time to read and write. Miller’s students read forty or more books every school year. She requires that students read books from nine different genres; there is plenty of room for choice so students can read more books in the genres and authors they like. All students, especially developing readers, need more reading time so they can become stronger, not weaker readers with each year.

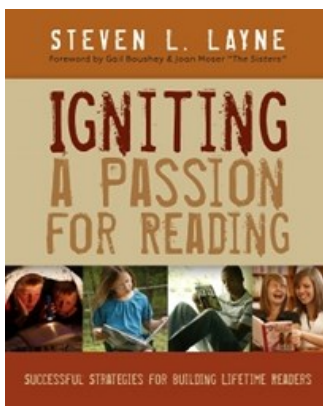
Miller’s new book *Reading in the Wild* was written with reading teacher Susan Kelley. Miller and Kelley sought to learn more about the reading habits of lifelong readers, or “wild readers,” so they gathered responses from over 800 adult readers in order to figure out what makes lifelong readers. They found that wild readers dedicate time to read, self-select reading material, share books and reading with other people, have reading plans, and show preferences for genres, authors, and topics. In addition, time spent reading has a positive correlation with students’ gains in academic achievement. The Book Whisperer’s goal is to help students become capable and empowered readers.



*“Reading changes your life. Reading unlocks worlds unknown or forgotten, taking travelers around the world and through time. Reading helps you escape the confines of school and pursue your own education. Through characters – the saints and the sinners, real or imagined – reading shows you how to be a better human being.”* – Donalyn Miller, *The Book Whisperer: Awakening the Inner Reader in Every Child*



## Steven Layne



Dr. Steven L. Layne will deliver a keynote presentation at the 2015 TALE Conference. Dr. Layne works as Professor of Literacy Education at Judson University in Elgin, Illinois. He directs Judson's Master of Education in Literacy program and teaches courses in children's and adolescent literature. Dr. Layne taught elementary and junior high students for fifteen years and also traveled around the United States as a national literacy consultant. He writes in many genres for different audiences, including scholarly research, young adult literature, children's picture books, and poetry/gift books.

His professional book *Igniting a Passion for Reading: Successful Strategies for Building Lifetime Readers* (2009) offers practical ways to engage and inspire readers from kindergarten through high school. Layne describes process and activities to build literacy so that students love reading in its own right. Featured methods include book discussions, book chats, reading lounges, the "Golden Recommendation Bookcase," interest inventories for students, and more techniques. Dr. Layne's engaging book, the result of experience and research, is inspired by what he has learned from fellow teachers and from his own students. *Igniting a Passion for Reading* further includes "From the Trenches" sidebars as well as narratives contributed by current writers for children and teens about the teacher or librarian who influenced their own love of reading. His forthcoming professional book is *In Defense of Read Aloud: Sustaining Best Practice*.

Steven Layne's novels for young adult readership are *Mergers* (2007) and the Paradise series, which includes *This Side of Paradise* (2001) and *Paradise Lost* (2011). *This Side of Paradise* won the Hal Clement Award for Best New Science Fiction Novel for Young Adults in the U.S. and was on the Texas Lone Star Top Twenty List. Layne's YA books feature action-packed suspense, speculative elements, and dystopian themes.

Dr. Layne has written many picture books. *Love the Baby* (2007) has two companion books, *Share with Brother* (2010) and *Stay With Sister* (2012). Popular titles include *Thomas's Sheep and the Great Geography Test* (1998) and the companion book *Thomas's Sheep and the Spectacular Science Project* (2004). His alphabet and counting books include *T Is for Teachers: A School Alphabet* (2007), its companion book *Number 1 Teacher: A School Counting Book* (2008), and *P Is for Princess: A Royal Alphabet* (2007). His teacher-oriented picture books includes *The Teachers' Night Before Christmas* (2001), *The Principal's Night Before Christmas* (2004), *The Teacher's Night Before Halloween* (2008), and more. Dr. Layne's poetry books include *Life's Literacy Lessons: Poems for Teachers* (2001), *Verses for Dad's Heart* (2004), and *Verses for Mom's Heart* (2005).





## A Message from your State Coordinator

I hope that your school year has been great so far. Mine has been full of change and a sense of adventure. I have returned to higher education after a two-year job as a literacy coach in an independent school district. I now teach at Texas Woman's University in Denton and I love it!

Not only has my new job been exciting, but I am also excited about the 2015 Texas State Chapter Lead-

ership Workshop. This leadership workshop is scheduled for the afternoon of February 20, 2015. The workshop is a meeting for TALE leaders and local chapter leaders to work together to develop their leadership skills. Local chapter leaders and individuals interested in starting new local chapters in their regions are invited to attend this workshop the day before the TALE 2015 conference. We will meet at

Sam Houston State University at The Woodlands from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. We have invited our Council Advisor from IRA to join us and to keep us up-to-date about changes in the international organization.

Please watch for registration information for this workshop and sign up. We look forward to seeing you there!



*Lorene Reid*  
*TALE State Coordinator*

## Thank you!

Thank you to the conference planning committee for providing a sneak peak into this year's conference, Transforming and Inspiring Literacy. Committee members contributed newsletter information to keep TALE members informed. Please remember, you can receive a reduced registration fee if you register now! We will see you in February!



**Is there a topic you want discussed in the Newsletter?**

Let us know at

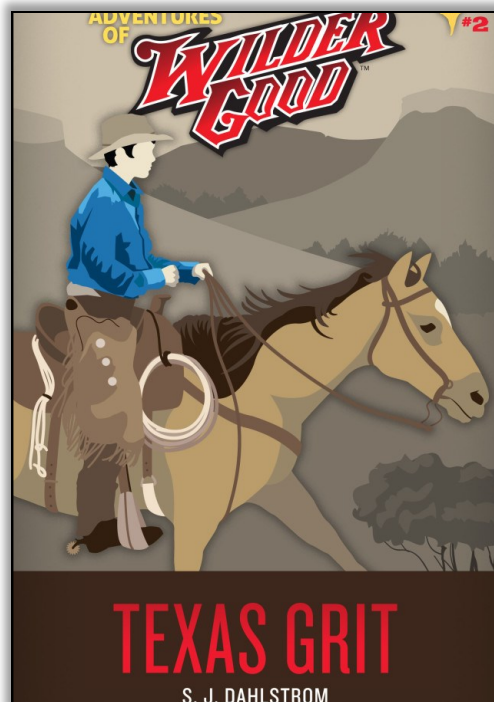
[TALEmembership@gmail.com](mailto:TALEmembership@gmail.com)

## TALE Member Book Review: *Texas Grit* by S.J. Dahlstrom

*Texas Grit* is the second in a series featuring twelve year old Wilder Good's adventures in the modern American west. The book begins with Wilder preparing to leave his family, including his cancer stricken mother, to spend a week with his grandpa on a ranch in Texas. Once there, Wilder relishes hunting and working with horses and cattle. His Papa, described as "a mean old rattlesnake" by Wilder's father, turns out to be a thoughtful and wise mentor. Throughout the book, Wilder is the model of a young man eager to learn and prove himself in a rugged environment. Interactions with his Papa and others teach him valuable lessons about team work. When branding, for example, a calf leg covered with manure, is still a leg you must hold onto, especially when it can kick somebody else.

The impressive level of detail leaves little doubt that the ranch environment is familiar to the author, S.J. Dahlstrom. On the other hand, some of the passages do little to advance the story. While a potentially thrilling "oh gross" moment for kids, the extended and overly descriptive passage on castrating bull calves (and snacking on the resulting "calf fry") is out of balance considering its place and importance in the story. Still, Wilder knows, and young readers will learn, that good cowboys "kept an eye on the boss at all times and took his lead for everything." He or she will also be interested to find that "a [recently] dead snake could bite you just the same, if you got too close to the head."

In spite of the unique perspective, *Texas Grit* lacks a compelling plot line or character development. There is no rising action or defining conflict either within Wilder or between characters. Although concern for Livy, Wilder's cancer stricken mother, pops up at intervals, it remains peripheral to the story. In essence, the book reads more like an extended descriptive essay than a western adventure. The interjection of some depth and humor could transform Wilder into a realistic and likeable young man. Overall, the book offers some important lessons and, for some, will be a satisfying change from the current run of vampires and ghosts.



*Texas Grit*, 2014

Age Range: 10-14

Goodreads Rating: 4.4/5

Amazon Rating: 4.9/5

*Reviewer Jennifer Batson is a reference librarian at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. She also serves as the Education and English Liaison.*



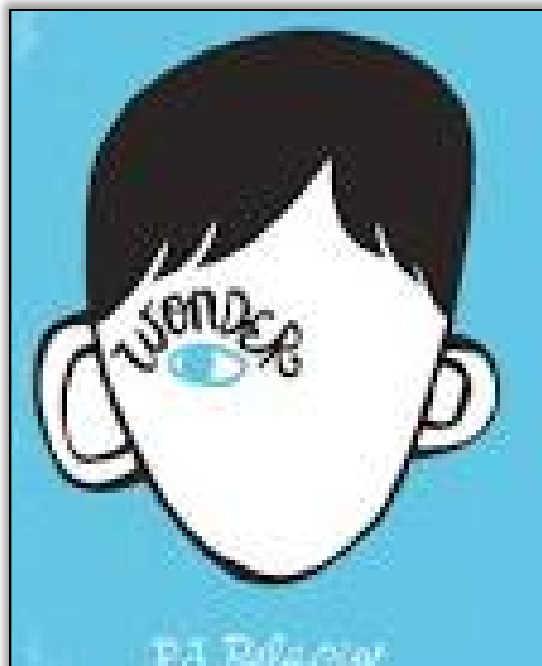
## TALE Member Book Review: *Wonder*, by R. J. Palacio

*"I won't describe what I look like. Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse."*

If you hadn't met August "Auggie" Pullman, you'd say he was just like any other kid. He loves Star Wars, video games, and playing with his dog Daisy. He's a perfectly ordinary ten year old boy- except for the fact that he was born with a cranio-facial anomaly that prevented him from attending public elementary school. When he finally starts 5<sup>th</sup> grade at Beecher Prep, Auggie must navigate new rules, challenges, and bullies. Just when school seems completely hopeless, he begins to make friends and succeed in school. With some help from his supportive parents, fierce older sister Via, and his friends Summer and Jack, Auggie makes his way through the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and grows up more than he ever imagined he would.

This heart-breaking, honest juvenile fiction work by R. J. Palacio explores issues such as bullying, self-acceptance, and the importance of friendship. While Auggie is the main character in this first-person narrative, there are other narrators in *Wonder* as well, including several of his friends, his sister, and her boyfriend. The perspectives of the primary, secondary, and tertiary characters intertwine to create the plot of this touching novel. I experienced this book in audiobook format, which I believe strengthened the book and greatly added to the characterization of the narrators. Steele, Rudd, and Podehl gave spectacular vocal performances that made me grow to love even the most unlovable of characters.

*Wonder* is a realistic juvenile fiction book intended for ages 8-12, and Palacio hit the nail on the head with the subject matter of this book. I believe this is a vitally important book to include in any classroom library. In our world where bullying, prejudice, and cruelty are so prevalent in many middle schools, I hope that *Wonder* can provide an eye-opening perspective into the importance of acceptance and kindness.



*Wonder*, 2012

Written by: R. J. Palacio

Narrated by: Diana Steele, Nick Podehl, Kate Rudd

Age Range: 8-12

Goodreads Rating: 4.42/5 stars

Amazon Rating: 4.7/5 stars

Sensitive Areas: Bullying, Death

Reviewer Sabrina Crespin is an Education Major at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. She will earn a 4-8 Generalist degree.



TALE is open to anyone interested in the development of literacy in children, youth and adults. This organization is a recognized affiliate of the International Reading Association (IRA). Contact us at [TALEmembership@gmail.com](mailto:TALEmembership@gmail.com)



Remember TALE is on Facebook! Please follow this link to see what is happening with TALE members:  
<https://www.facebook.com/texasreaders.org>

[www.TexasReaders.org](http://www.TexasReaders.org)

## Upcoming Plans and Events

See our website for additional information regarding the following TALE plans and events:

- Manuscripts now being accepted for the summer 2015 issue of *Texas Journal of Literacy Education*
- Reviewer applications now being accepted for *Texas Journal of Literacy Education*
- Memberships fees (\$5.00) now accepted online via credit card
- TALE Conference at Sam Houston University, February 2015
- Book clubs now forming
- Nominations for the Jack Cassidy Distinguished Educator Award now being accepted

If you have an event you would like to share with fellow TALE members, please contact: [TALEmembership@gmail.com](mailto:TALEmembership@gmail.com)

## Editor's Note

I love Mary Engelbreit's quote, "A book is a gift you can open again and again." I love to read and reread books for pleasure. I also love books that provide useful information again and again. Since I first bought Miller's *The Book Whisperer*, I have reopened the book for use with teacher educators and for tips on good books. TALE's annual conference will host author Donalyn Miller and Steven Layne. These authors are among many of the highlights for February's conference. This newsletter contains tips for transforming

and inspiring literacy, which is the theme for this year's conference.

This issue includes an article about Book Creator, a technology tool which can transform the classroom writing process. This issue also contains an article about language and early literacy, an article about the flipped classroom, and an article about new approaches to online education in K12 schools. These pieces include important and innovative practices transforming education in Texas.

Finally, check out TALE's conference information. Conference events such as book clubs, grant opportunities and more have been provided to make help you plan for February's event. Please do not hesitate to contact TALE with questions!

TALE strives to leave a "footprint" among Texas literacy education. Please join us as we walk together to transform and inspire!

~Jodi Pilgrim



Jodi Pilgrim, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
University of Mary Hardin-Baylor

If you would like to write for TALE's newsletter, please submit your ideas/articles to me at  
[jpilgrim@umhb.edu](mailto:jpilgrim@umhb.edu).