ECEA Chair’s Message

It is my great pleasure to serve as the Chair of the Early Childhood Education Assembly (ECEA). The ECEA is a vibrant assembly of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) with a very active membership. I encourage you to invite others to join and become part of our professional community.

The history of the ECEA is brief, yet powerful. The ECEA legitimized a space for early childhood educators at NCTE. While there had been an interest in early literacy for some time and even a Day of Early Childhood at NCTE annual conventions, it wasn’t until the 2007 annual convention that a large group of NCTE members decided that it was time for an assembly focusing on early literacy. Here is why:

Mandates to implement practices that are antithetical to what we embrace as supportive of young children’s literacy learning are pervasive. Teachers of young children are asked to teach-to-the-test in ways that take away opportunities for holistic, thoughtful, play-oriented practices that allow children to construct knowledge through contextualized and purposeful experiences. The Early Childhood Assembly provides a new home at NCTE for all who work with young children. We look forward to supporting teachers of young children with a strong emphasis on promoting thoughtful practices that enhance the teaching and learning of young children within and across diverse communities (continued on p. 2).

Artwork: www.kidactivities.net/category/diversitymulti-cultural.aspx
During the following year, Susi Long, Vivian Vasquez, and I worked together to draft and submit the necessary documents to NCTE. The ECEA was approved during the 2008 NCTE Convention in Philadelphia. Vivian Vasquez served as its Inaugural Chair, 2009-2011, and I have the honor to serve as its 2nd Chair, 2011-2013. This year, Dinah Volk will become the ECEA’s 3rd Chair.

Our motto is “the audacity of changing the face of early literacy education.” We believe that children of color, culturally and linguistically diverse children, immigrant children, and those from nondominant backgrounds have been systematically excluded from what we have come to know as early literacy education. Seemingly inconsequential questions that permeate early literacy practices such as “does it sound right?” further perpetuate mainstream American English norms. We work together to honor diversities—and to not only rethink early literacy education, but to redo it!

The ECEA is a collective effort of many committed individuals with whom I have the honor of working. I sincerely thank those who have been working on behalf of the ECEA. Please know that the assembly is because of the work you do! Finally, I invite you to become engaged with the ECEA (and/or to invite others to do so). Feel free to contact me, our incoming Chair Dinah Volk, or any of the committees listed above (Chairs are identified with *).

Enjoy the newsletter! See you in Boston!
Mariana Souto-Manning
ECEA Chair (2011-2013)

Seven Years and Counting: Reflections on ECEA

It's hard to believe it's been 7 years since Susi Long first contacted me regarding the possibility of growing the ECE presence within NCTE. This initial conversation grew out of years of work by Jean Anne Clyde and Jerome C. Harste on championing work done by teachers of young children within NCTE and beyond. During his time on the NCTE Executive Committee, Randy Bomer together with David Bloome worked hard to continue this effort. Randy along with Kathryn Mitchell Pierce and Curt Dudley Marling then planned the first day of EC, in November 2004, which was held at the annual convention in Indianapolis. This set the groundwork for what happened three years later when, at the annual convention in 2007, Susi Long invited a group of ECE educators to gather together to discuss the future of early childhood voices at NCTE. It was during this meeting that I was nominated as Interim Chair to begin the process of forming the ECE Assembly. A few months later with Susi Long, Mariana Souto-Manning, Dinah Volk, and Lili Medina the pieces were put in place to solidify a vision for the proposed assembly. Debra and Frank Chiki along with the Elementary Section Steering Committee were a great support during this time. Fifteen months later, in February 2009, we received news that the ECEA had voted to approve our status as an official assembly of NCTE. Our journey has been a long one and there have been many people who worked tirelessly along the way. I'd like to extend best wishes to the newly elected officers and Board of Directors as they continue the work of the ECEA. Thank you for your vote of confidence and for giving me the opportunity to help grow an early childhood presence within NCTE.

Yours Truly,
Vivian Maria Vasquez
Former ECEA Chair
A Tribute to Celia Genishi: Mentor, Scholar, Friend

Celia Genishi, one of the nation's most respected scholars in the field of Early Childhood Education, recently retired from Teachers College, Columbia University. Although she will continue to be involved in the work of understanding and teaching young children from diverse backgrounds, the ECEA would like to pay special tribute to her tremendous contributions to the field. While literally thousands of educators across the country have learned and been inspired through Genishi's scholarship, friendship, and mentorship, a few of them represent the much wider group by sharing a few words in reflection. If others would like to share messages with Celia, please address them to Celia Genishi, Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 West 120th Street, Box 31, New York, NY 10027.

Celia was not only my colleague at Ohio State; she was my neighbor as well. It was a pleasure having her in my life in both roles. She brought honor to the college. My husband and I always enjoyed our times together in the neighborhood. We wish Celia all the best. - Rudine Sims Bishop, The Ohio State University

Any words that I might say about Celia's impact on my life and my work are words that every student she has ever nurtured would say. From my doctoral days listening to her open class each week reading aloud from Vivian Paley's Molly is Three through her wise teaching as I learned the importance of being a close observer of the brilliance of young children to her thoughtful guidance as I figured out how to deal with the death of my mother, Celia is a wise and wonderful human being. Through it all, her convictions never falter. I cannot express how grateful I am for Celia in my life and our profession; a gratitude shared by truly countless students and colleagues. We will always be your students, you admirers, and your dear friends. - Susi Long, University of South Carolina

My doctoral work in the early '90s was truly shaped by Celia Genishi's passion for young children's learning. She pushed us to think and truly see what young learners can do! - Mary Jo Fresch, The Ohio State University

She sincerely cared about me as a human being. This made her mentorship all the more meaningful. I wasn't just a graduate student, not just one of her Teaching Assistants; I was her friend. Celia was the first professor (and perhaps the first person ever) to tell me I was a good writer. She modeled for me the kind of mentor I can only hope to be for my doctoral students. - Cheri Williams, University of Cincinnati

I'm glad for Celia's sake that she is retiring, though sorry to hear she's leaving her position--people with her combination of intellect and good sense are hard to come by.

– Janet Hickman, The Ohio State University

Celia has informed what I do since I was a classroom teacher. Her words entered my classroom and came to life in ways that invited me to learn from and with children, to regard them as individuals and to document their wonderful actions and interactions. As a scholar, I have always cited her work, as it provided a much-needed foundation for the work I do with immigrant children and families. Celia has always informed who I am as a professional, yet, in 2006, she became an integral part of my life as she started mentoring me in CNV. As I look back (and forward), I am very grateful for the gift she is in my life. I have found Celia's mentoring unflagging. I was (and continue to be) mentored by her, yet find it challenging to adequately express in words the impact that such critical, conscientious, and systematic mentoring has had on me.

– Mariana Souto-Manning, Teachers College, Columbia University
In *Children, Language, and Literacy in Diverse Times*, Celia Genishi and her colleague Anne Haas Dyson animated sociocultural theories of language learning by inviting us into the intimacy of children’s worlds to experience the work and play of language in use: writing and speechifying, creating and relating, making war and peace – and always making sense. In Dyson and Genishi’s classic *On the Case: Approaches to Language and Literacy Research* Celia introduced us to intriguing classroom case studies including her collaborative exploration of how young English Language Learners “talk their way into print”--as well as a “case” from children’s literature: the story of Peter Sis’ *Madlenka* (2000), a little girl whose world is a multi-ethnic, multi-generational city block. All the children – Madlenka as well as Lyron, Tionna, and Tommy – are so engaging that we hardly realize we have been led skillfully into complex theoretical and methodological aspects of case study research. By the time we reach the final chapter on why case studies matter, we already know. The children have shown us. That is Celia’s great gift. – JoBeth Allen, *University of Georgia*

Dr. Celia Genishi has been at the cutting edge in the fields of early childhood education, language in the classroom and childhood bilingualism. She helped me develop new and sustaining commitments in my teaching, research and service for children and language diversity. While her academic and intellectual endeavors speak volumes, I continue to be impressed with her human insights and creativity. It has been said that teachers open the door, you enter by yourself. Dr. Celia thank you for opening the door!
- Cynthia Tyson, *The Ohio State University*

The very first conference presentation I made while still in graduate school was at NCTE and Celia was the discussant. She gave us all helpful comments at the end of the session but what I remember most is that Celia took the other presenter and me out to lunch after. We talked about our work and received supportive, critical comments from Celia and we talked about ourselves. She connected with us professionally and personally. And--since this was my first presentation-- I concluded that that's what all discussants did.
– Dinah Volk, *Cleveland State University*

Finally, the entire ECEA thanks you deeply Celia, for all that you do for children, teachers, teacher educators, and researchers and for the expertise you always bring to this assembly, including your support for an EC presence at NCTE when the ECEA was first trying to get off the ground. You make a difference every day.
–The Early Childhood Education Assembly of NCTE
A New ECEA Project: Professional Dyads and Culturally Relevant Teaching

In August, 2013, ECEA’s Affirmative Action Committee will initiate a project of Professional Dyads (two-person teacher educator-teacher partnerships) working collaboratively to develop, evaluate, and disseminate culturally relevant literacy practices in pre-kindergarten through third grade classrooms. The project is called Professional Dyads and Culturally Relevant Teaching (PDCRT) and is led by co-directors Erin Miller (outgoing Affirmative Action Committee Chair and incoming ECEA Assistant Chair) and Susi Long (Affirmative Action Committee member) and ECEA’s Affirmative Action Committee, the program’s Governing Board.

Inspired by the work of NCTE’s groundbreaking program, Cultivating New Voices of Scholars of Color, (CNV) - http://www.ncte.org/research-foundation/cnv - the purpose of this exciting project is to create a vibrant space within NCTE for supporting and highlighting the work of early childhood educators committed to the study and development of more equitable educational practices. Invited to participate in two-year cycles, dyads will work with families and communities to generate and implement culturally relevant literacy practices. The project’s Governing Board, in collaboration with project participants, will create spaces for sharing theory and practice at NCTE meetings, summer institutes, and through online communication.

Supported by NCTE for four years, a new cohort of five dyads will be invited every two years to participate in the PDCRT project, with potential to expand to ten dyads per cycle if further grant funding is received. The 2013-2015 cohort has been determined as a pilot group. Information about applying for the 2015-2017 cohort will be posted by January 2014 on the ECEA Webiste/Listserv.

-Dinah Volk (Incoming ECEA Chair)
ECEA Yearbook Info

Those of you who are members should have received a scaled down e-version of Perspectives and Provocations Volume 1 some time ago and you should be receiving a version of Volume 2 within the next three weeks. Thank you to all the amazing authors who contributed to these volumes. More information about Volume 3 is coming soon! Hard copies of the publications are available to the general public via the links below. All royalties from these publications go to the ECEA to further the Assembly's work in supporting early childhood educators.

Volume 1
http://www.infoagepub.com/products/Perspectives-and-Provocations-in-Early-Childhood-Education

Volume 2

ECEA Early Literacy Educator of the Year! Call for Nominations!!

The Early Literacy Educator of the Year Award:
- recognizes the work of an outstanding early literacy educator;
- brings attention to the field of early literacy and its place in English education;
- allows NCTE to recognize and acknowledge the importance of early language and literacy development;
- invites outstanding early childhood educators to join the NCTE community to create networks of support and serve as advocates and in their field.

Nominations are due: August 1st, 2013!! For detailed information on submissions contact: Dr. Dana Bentley/ECEA Award (dbentley@bbns.org) or go to http://www.earlychildhoodeducationassembly.com

NCTE Scholarships Available!
The ECEA Conference Scholarships for teachers are awarded to teachers of children in preschool and early elementary grades. The conference scholarship award supports teachers who:
- Include children’s languages, cultures, and backgrounds in the curriculum
- Embed the teaching of literacy skills within authentic opportunities for reading and writing
- Create spaces for children to inquire into their interests and the world around them

The winners of the scholarship receive a monetary award to support conference attendance and the opportunity to write an entry regarding their experiences at the NCTE Day of Early Childhood for the ECEA website. The website is a generative medium to spark conversations between early childhood teachers and teacher-educators who share common interests within the ECEA Assembly.

-Send nominations to cmedina@indiana.edu.