



Newsletter of the Illinois Communication and Theatre Association

Summer 2016

A Message from the Convention Planner

Kacy Ablen (*President-Elect and College of DuPage*)

Registration for the 2016 ICTA Convention is open! The convention will take place September 22-24 at the Hyatt Regency in Lisle, IL. In order to guarantee a hotel room at the convention rate of \$109 per night, you must book your room by September 15! Call 630-852-1234 and ask to book with the Illinois Communication and Theatre Association block.

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In order to register without incurring a registration late fee, you must register for convention by September 15th. The convention registration and annual membership form is available on our website: <http://www.illinoiscta.org/2016-convention.html>.

There is online registration at <http://www.illinoiscta.org/2016-convention.html>.

See more information about the theme for our conference and more important information on our website. I look forward to seeing you in September! As we begin another school year I am sure everyone is busy getting back into their Please see conervation on page 2

Getting Critical in High School

Nick Sciallo (*Illinois College*)

Being critical in high school can be difficult. Curricular restrictions, administrative and parental pressures, and of course the time needed to stay abreast of critical literature all make being critical quite challenging. Who, after all, has time to read Slavoj Žižek's *prodigious output* when you have to grade 100 tests several times a semester? Who wants to teach Charles Mills's *The Racial Contract* when parents and community members are going to inundate you and your department chairs with complaints about bias? The challenges secondary school teachers face are real.

I argue, however, that there are ways to be critical in high school and that many teachers are already doing them. One way to be critical is to compare evidence. Some history texts are great at this, but imagine the critical power of a small group project that produces an argument about the relative strength and weakness of evidence from both sides of a war (Union versus Confederacy), a revolution (The French Revolution), a social movement (Occupy Wall Street versus financiers) or

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Consider a Life Membership

By Anna Wright (Executive Secretary & Illinois State University)

ICTA offers a life membership option. The \$500 payment can be made via a single payment or five \$100 payments. Once the \$500 membership fee is fully paid, the member no longer pays a membership fee and if they choose to attend the convention, do so at a reduced convention rate.

If you wish to begin a payment option for the 2016 year and attend the 2016 convention, you would pay \$260. That amount gets you current membership (\$60), convention attendance (\$100), and your first payment (\$100) accomplished. Once all five payments are completed, then you would only need to pay the \$100 convention fee or whatever convention fee is imposed at that time. Members who are considering long term commitment to the Association will find this option to be money saving.

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routines, examining and revising lesson plans, and planning for the 2016-2017 academic year. I hope that you incorporate a trip to Lisle, IL for the 2016 ICTA Convention as part of your planning.

Over the past decade the communication and theatre fields and teaching profession have undergone major changes. We are increasingly asked to do more with less. While we know firsthand that our programs and disciplines help students, we are continually challenged with the notion that “other” academic programs are “more essential.” This thought process has led to dramatic budget cuts for forensics and theatre programs and speech classes on the secondary level are being cut at an alarming rate across Illinois. Moreover, while communication skills are in high demand from employers, they are slowly being cut out of classroom requirements on state and institutional levels. These changes are so severe that we are set to lose our last Communication Education program in the state; Illinois State University announced this summer that it would be phasing out their Com Ed program - the only program in the state credentialing communication teachers on a secondary level!!!! Together, these changes worry me. What will our disciplines look like down the road and what can we do to ensure that communication and theatre thrive?

In preparing for the 2016 ICTA Convention, these questions were forefront in my mind. Thankfully, interactions with colleagues across the state over the past year have made me realize that ICTA is the place to have these conversations. Together, we can critically assess these state and institutional changes and determine how best to proceed! Together we are stronger than we are apart. Changes on every level (secondary and higher ed) will have diverse impacts on each and every one of us so “Let’s Get Critical!”

Our theme this year embraces critical thought and the panels, workshops, performances and discussions this cover topics on how we teach critical thinking skills, how we assess critical thinking, and how we incorporate critical thought into our personal and professional lives. Whether you are apart of secondary and/or higher education, theatre and/or communication, this year’s convention will hopefully reinvigorate you, your program, and your students. We have some amazing presenters and some interesting and nontraditional programs. Please check out the convention schedule posted online at <http://www.illinoiscta.org/>! There are a wide range of topics and some very exciting and creative events planned! If you have any questions about convention, please contact Kacy Abeln at abelnk@cod.edu.

NSDA Results

Illinois was well represented at the 2016 National Speech and Debate Association's National Tournament in Salt Lake City, Utah! Brian Roche and Douglas Stryker of Glenbrook South High School took 7th in Policy Debate while Anthony Trufanov and Jonah Jacobs of Glenbrook North High School took 6th. Roche was also the 5th Speaker at the tournament. In Lincoln-Douglas Debate, Henry Smith of Evanston Township High School took 11th place, and Theodore Steinmeyer of Fenwick High School placed 4th. Dan Brophy of Downers Grove North High School placed 14th in United States Extemporaneous Speaking. Christina Su of University High School placed 10th in Informative Speaking with Veronica Boratyn and Rheyan Graham of Prospect High School placing 4th and 3rd respectively. Also from Prospect High School, Benjamin Marshall and Molly McDermott finished 3rd in Duo Interpretation, and won the final round. In Supplemental events, the Greater Illinois District had four finalists including Andrew Mcallister of Normal Community West High School finishing fourth in Expository, Jordan Killion of Pekin Community High School finishing third in Poetry Reading, Patrick Deneen of University High School finishing Second in Extemporaneous Commentary, and Samuel Geiger of Belleville West High School taking home first place in Expository. Congratulations to the hard work of these fine young adults and their coaches on their incredible accomplishments!

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even from historians writing from different ideological perspectives (Larry Schweikart verses Howard Zinn). This sort of evidence comparison is the basis of advanced work in history, communication and rhetorical studies, and philosophy among other disciplines. Instilling these skills in students at a young age will not only better prepare them for college, but also help them think more critically about life choices from what cell phone plan to choose to how to evaluate job offers and lease agreements.

Second, role reversals can be helpful for students to pursue questions of ontology and privilege without ever saying ontology. Martin Heidegger without Martin Heidegger! Feminist theorist Susan Hekman without Susan Hekman! This sort of activity can challenge out students' fundamental ontological orientations without the heavy lifting of philosophical complexity. This sort of work is important for all of our students, both those comfortable with difference and those who aren't. Reversing roles can help students identify structural discrimination as well as the subtler ideological injustices that pervade the lives of people not like them. This sort of activity can also help students in literature classes consider the ways authors fill characters with advantages and disadvantages and how different identity markers might operationalize certain privileges, which of course makes reading fiction much more interesting. Scholars have consistently found counterfactual arguments and role playing to be effective pedagogical strategies. They help students think about people and ideas differently because they change the orientation students have toward ideas and situations.

Lastly, debate across the curriculum fosters, aside from all the benefits we know exist, research. It's impossible to be critical without information (Although anyone paying attention to this election cycle might think evidence is unnecessary for politics!). Debates encourages good research practices like comparing evidence, citing material well, updating evidence with newer or better argued evidence, diversifying the types of materials used, etc. Of course, to the extent that we can move away from textbooks (and college professors have difficulty with this too), we should because that provides important opportunities for students to invest in sources. Debate can be a way to bring texts into the class and can also encourage students to use the library and other research resources like databases and the internet.

So, for those of you doing some of these things, you're already helping students become critical. And those of you that aren't should attempt to incorporate some of these strategies into class so that our students get as much exposure as possible to critical thinking. Being critical is within our students' grasp and we should do everything we can to enable these skills early so that our students are prepared for whatever their next plans are.

Getting Critical on the First Day of Class: Instructors' Strategies for building Rapport to Encourage Student Engagement

By Amanda Frioli, Ph.D. (Eureka College)

A recent study by the Gallup-Purdue Index found that the type of college or university a student attended “hardly matters at all to their workplace engagement and current well-being” (Gallup Economy, 2014, p. 1). Instead, the study found that a student’s perception of their relationship to faculty had a stronger connection to long-term outcomes related to their future worker engagement and overall well-being. In fact, researchers found that if a student perceived that at least one instructor during their academic career cared about them, made them excited about learning, and encouraged their dreams, their odds of being engaged at work and their odds of thriving in all aspects of their well-being more than doubled. However, of the 30,000 graduates who participated in this study, only 14% strongly agreed they had an instructor during their academic career that met these three criteria.

It’s widely accepted that first impressions affect subsequent interactions. The first day of class is no exception; the initial classroom encounter creates lasting impressions that affect the perceptions students will hold of the instructor and the course (Wilson & Wilson, 2007). This makes it worthwhile to consider instructional strategies on the first day of class that establish a warm and inviting tone for the remainder of the course. Through a collection of interviews with university faculty members, first day classroom observations, and an analysis of instructors’ artifacts such as syllabi, lesson plans, and handouts, I went on a mission to identify ways that instructors build rapport and trust with their students on the first day of class. I outline five of those strategies below:

1. First, these instructors demonstrated their passion for the subject on the first day of class. The instructors in this study almost immediately shared how they developed a passion for their discipline. This technique had a contagious effect; often generating excitement in students, too. While professors were interested in helping students connect to the content, they equally emphasized the value in establishing the tone from the first day forward, and that doing so helped students reduce their uncertainty, making the learning experience more fun, enriching, and valuable.

2. They prepared a “welcome” letter to students on the syllabus. The syllabus is an important tool for establishing first impressions and, consequently, creating the syllabus can be thought of as a tool that invites students to the classroom community we wish to establish (Harnish & Bridges, 2011). These instructors wrote welcome letters to their students on the front page of the syllabus, which showed students that they were essential to the community.

3. They provided students with assignment options. On the first day of class, these instructors presented students with multiple learning options, and often gave students choices for completing experiential learning projects. They empowered their students by opening the floor to a discussion about learning methods and what they hope to achieve through various assignments, followed with a classroom vote to determine students’ preferences. As Bain (2004) notes, “Highly effective teachers design better learning experiences for their students in part because they conceive of teaching as fostering learning. ...They follow few traditions blindly and recognize when change in the conventional course is both necessary and possible” (p. 67).

4. They learned students' names almost immediately. Smith and Malec (1995) state that learning a student's name is the most important initial step toward other interactions with that student. These instructors found it not only important to learn students' names, but also actively committed to learning students' names within the first few days of the semester.

5. Finally, they encouraged students to begin to construct knowledge together. These instructors assembled students in small groups to unpack the learning objectives together. This process served several purposes, but it most importantly modeled to students that they would not be passive learners in the classroom. The more self-determined students' behaviors, the more motivated they are to achieve academically (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Self-determination develops through a series of successful classroom interactions. Allowing students time to read, process, and discuss the information is critical tool for establishing a community-centered learning environment on the first day.

“Excellent teachers develop their abilities through constant self-evaluation, reflection, and the willingness to change” (Bain, 2004, p. 172). From the moment we enter the classroom on the first day of class, we have an invaluable opportunity to begin shaping a classroom culture that emphasizes empathy, critical thinking, and community-centered learning. As speech and communication instructors, we are especially equipped to influence and empower our academic communities by leading the way.

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ICTA Members Nominated for Board & Recognized for Excellence

By Tina Winings (Retired Charleston High School & Executive Vice-President)

One of the highlights of the annual ICTA convention is the recognition of many ICTA members for their excellence in teaching and service to the organization. In addition to recognizing the accomplishments of members, ICTA will also recognize the accomplishments of outstanding students, as well. The award winners were all nominated by ICTA members and selected by a panel of ICTA members who served as the awards committee.

In the spring, Katie Mueller from Charleston High School was presented with the Richard Hunsaker Outstanding Secondary Student Award. The other awards will be presented at convention. Other award winners include Emily Vajjala (Southern Illinois University), who is the Recipient of the L.E. Norton Higher Ed Student Award; Justin Matkovich (Downers Grove South High School), who is the recipient of the Mathis Young Teacher Award; and Kenny Knox (Spoon River Valley High School), who is the recipient of the Link Mentoring Award. The two highest ICTA awards will go to Ellie Marvin (Normal West HS), who was selected for the Harrod Award, and Lauren Morgan (College of DuPage), who was selected for the Sandford Award.

More information about the awards and recipients will be available in the ICTA convention program. The Harrod & Sandford Awards will be presented at the Friday banquet. The other awards will be presented during the convention opening session and the Presidents' reception.

Another highlight of the convention will be the selection of new ICTA officers and board members. New board members are nominated by the nominating committee and the slate is approved by the Executive Board. The membership votes on the slate of three officers at the Friday luncheon. The officer nominees include: **Vice President – Lisa Stout (Washington HS), Treasurer – Melissa Entzinger (Highland College), and Executive Vice President - Tina Winings (Charleston HS). Also at the banquet, Kacy Abeln moves into the ICTA presidency, Adam Jenkins becomes Past President, and Julie Weishar becomes President- Elect.**

New board members who are committee and commission chairs have already been approved and include Debate Chair – Brian Voss (Libertyville High School), Membership/PR – Secondary – Kevin Martin (Thornton HS), Higher Ed Chair – Rich Jones (EIU), Student Rep. – Clinton Brown (EIU).

These new officers and board members will assume their positions at the board meeting following the convention on Saturday.

Town Hall Meeting at Convention

By Brian Rohman (University High School & Newsletter Editor)

As many of us are coming back to school, anxiety is in the air. We are concerned about whether or not we are prepared, if that one problem student will prove to be a problem all year, and ensuring that our students leave our classrooms having acquired skills they need to be successful in the real world. As teachers of communication, we often feel that we can accomplish the last item on that list because we are teaching a skill that employers have identified as necessary to achieving success.

This year, as we head back to school, I am full of those same anxieties and certainties. However, I have an added level of anxiety this year. It is not the new preps or the fact that I am teaching an extra class that has me up at night. Rather, I am losing sleep over the decision of Illinois State University to no longer accept Communication Education Majors. When asked, ISU is able to say that no one was fired, because they were not, and that it is not budgetary, even though it is. Instead, my Alma Mater is able to say that a program with declining enrollment is being phased out by no longer accepting new majors. Declining enrollment is not a unique problem to Communication Education. Between 2010 and 2014, ISU saw a 50% drop in almost every secondary education major within its College of Arts and Sciences, including English, Foreign Languages, and Social Sciences.

The significance of this news hits close to home as an alumnus of the last Communication Education Program in Illinois. Most programs ended when Illinois eliminated the Speech/Communication Endorsement in 2004. ISU held on until the summer of 2016. Now, we, as members of the professional association for communication education, must decide what our next course of action is. I do not like to boil everything down to a false dichotomy, because realistically there are several courses of action; however, the first decision we must make is whether or not we are willing to advocate for communication to be a skill taught at the high school level. From there, we can either walk into the sunset of inaction, or we can put some of the most brilliant minds in the profession and in the state together in one place to determine the best course of action. I have been hoping for months that we will choose the latter.

This year's convention will feature a Town Hall Meeting on this very subject. Please come with ideas, suggestions, and a willingness to go into battle for this profession. Please help guide those of us that are newer to the profession as to what has worked and failed in the past, but don't dismiss us. Younger members, remember that the past happened for a reason, and it should not be dismissed out of hand. Instead, we should embrace the past while learning from mistakes to make a better organization and advocacy effort for everyone involved.

Convention Highlights

Opening Session:

CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS ABOUT COMMUNICATION facilitated by Lauren Morgan

Be apart of a group discussion on the status of communication and theatre in Illinois. The discussion will focus on the challenges ICTA members face in our disciplines, the opportunities that we should embrace, and how ICTA can facilitate a stronger communication and theatre presence in Illinois.

Performances:

- A Critical Intersection: New Media and Performance (Theatre and Higher Ed)

Discussion Panels:

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- Coping Through Communication (Higher Ed)
- Using Technology to Critically Assess Common Core Speaking and Listening Standards (Secondary Ed)
- Beyond the Stage: The Value of Improvisation in Education (Theatre)
- Blending the Forensics Family for Parents and the Childfree: Expectations, Realities, and Consequences (Forensics)

Workshops:

- Experienced Coach Workshop: Teaching Joke-Writing and Authentic Voice for Public Address (Forensics)
- Experienced Coach Workshop: Creative Fundraising and Promotion Ideas for Establishing a Successful Speech Program (Forensics)
- Theatre for Social Change (Theatre)
- New Coach Workshop: Tips and Tricks for Coaching Limited Prep and Public Address Events
- New Coach Workshop: Tips and Tricks for Coaching Interpretation Events

GIFTS:

- Critical Thinking Activities for the Speech Classroom
- The Presidential Election

Convention Highlights (continued)

1. GIFTS - We have two GIFTS sessions this year. The first focuses on Critical Thinking Lesson Plans in the Speech Classroom and the second focuses on incorporating the Presidential Election into the classroom. For more information or if you want to participate, contact Jan Heiteen at jari88@aol.com.
2. COACHING WORKSHOPS - Once again this year, we have Saturday-only workshops. We have workshops for new and experienced coaches. If you would like to present in one of the four coaching workshop sessions being offered on Saturday, contact T.J. Kahrیمان at tkahrیمان@olchs.org.
3. ELECTRONIC SCRIPT EXCHANGE - For many years ICTA has sponsored a script exchange as one of the key services at convention. All of those who would like to participate need to send an electronic copy of a performance-ready script for prose, poetry, OD, HI, DI, HDA, or DDA. Be sure to include specific publication information, as well. Scripts should be sent to T.J. Kahrیمان at tkahrیمان@olchs.org between NOW and September 15. The collected scripts will then be e-mailed to all who contributed. Feel free to share more than one script. Don't miss your chance to share your expertise with colleagues and to find some great new scripts. Everyone should participate.
4. ELECTRONIC SWAP SHOP - We are also following the same format for the Swap Shop. The Swap Shop has been a highlight of ICTA for many years. Members are asked to select a lesson plan, article, activity, etc. for the classroom or extracurricular activities, they would like to share with their colleagues. Members who would like to participate should e-mail activities, lesson plans, articles, etc. to Amanda Ams at Amanda.ams@d214.org. Please feel free to send more than one item; this is a great way to share your expertise with your peers. Send your Swap Shop items between NOW and September 15. Everyone should participate.
5. MILESTONES & ACHIEVEMENTS - Another highlight of the ICTA convention has been special recognition of accomplishments by our members at the Presidents' reception. We recognize members for awards won, special recognitions, upcoming retirements, etc. If you know an ICTA member who deserves to be recognized for his/her accomplishments, please send the name of the person, the title of the award (accomplishment, etc.), and a brief overview of what the achievement involves to Kacy Abeln at abelnk@cod.edu by September 15. Also, send a picture, if you have one. Don't let a colleague's accomplishment go unrecognized! Any questions? Contact Kacy Abeln at abelnk@cod.edu.

Professional Development Hours at Convention

By Anna Wright (Illinois State University & Executive Secretary)

The ICTA Convention will once again be offering Professional Development Hours (PDH, formerly CPDUs) for attending our annual convention. PDHs will be granted for each session that is attended. The program will feature an easy to use mini-schedule so that attendance can be tracked. At the conclusion of the convention, all individuals that need PDHs will need to check out with me at the registration table. A state-mandated evaluation needs to be filled out prior to receiving the PDH certification.

Anyone that needs a PDH certificate will need to provide their Illinois Educator Identification Number (IEIN). This number can be found by logging into your ELIS account through the ISBE website. Without the IEIN, ICTA cannot grant your PDH. Remember to record your PDH into your ELIS account within 60 days of the end of convention! If you have any questions about this process, please contact me at amwrigh@ilstu.edu.

Questions for a specific interest group can be directed to the persons below:

Higher Education: Rich Jones (rgjones@eiu.edu)

Secondary Education: Kenny Knox

(kknox@spoon-river.k12.il.us)

Secondary Individual Events: TJ Kahrman

(tkahrman@olchs.org)

Higher Education Forensics: Judy Santacanterina

(jsantaca@niu.edu)

Debate: Carol Harms (charmsway@yahoo.com)

Theatre: Patrick Santoro (psantoro@govst.edu)

GIFTS: Jan Heiteen (jari88@aol.com)

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