The English Department Issue!

Excluding religious and political books, the all time top selling books:

1.) A Tale of Two Cities—Charles Dickens (200 million copies sold)
2.) The Lord of the Rings—J.R.R Tolkien (150 million copies sold)
3.) The Little Prince —Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (140 million copies sold)

English Department Mission Statement

• I am a CCPS English scholar.
• I can read familiar and unfamiliar texts fluently and critically.
• I can write proficiently for a variety of purposes and audiences.
• I can discuss actively, persuasively, and respectfully a variety of challenging and controversial ideas.
• I can listen actively and attentively in discussions and presentations.
• I can think critically about literature and develop a deep sense of self and an awareness of the world.
• I can present confidently for a variety of audiences.
• I can analyze and evaluate style, structure, and technique and its effect of the reader.
• I can appreciate and respect varying perspectives.

In This Issue

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#WhyILoveCCPS

by Emmie Porter

The second week back from break, a table was placed at the entrance of the school and was swarmed with students of all grades. Within arriving at school, you were most likely asked to fill out a blank sheet of paper with big letters that said “#WhyILoveCCPS.”

A small, sixth grader would look up at you with big, hopeful eyes and ask you to write your response on a sheet of paper that morning. They would hand you a colored marker and watch you, ever so patiently write something down.

At the end of the week, there were two walls filled up with these sheets and the answers were sweet, true, and some were very amusing. Each morning a group of these smiling kids would ask their classmates to fill these papers and act as nothing would ever bother them. These students were from Mr. Butz’s advisory and they were truly dedicated to showing up every morning to promote the “#WhyILoveCCPS” campaign.

After interviewing several of the sixth graders involved in this campaign, I found that the reason they wanted such an event was to show any new possible principals what a great school Cottonwood is and to spread awareness in the student body that so many others love our school.

In an interview, Mr. Butz said, “I am really proud of my kids who were driving this...(and) really impressed by the pride of the school.” Mr. Butz believed that one of the main reasons his young students pushed for the campaign to happen was to show the state how incredible Cottonwood is and they wanted to bring the student body together and to promote student activeness within campaigns such as this.

I grew up in Western New York, near Buffalo, until my early 20’s. After graduating from the State University of New York at Fredonia with my bachelor’s in Early Childhood and Childhood Education, with a concentration in English, I moved to Concord, North Carolina. In North Carolina I taught 2nd grade for a year, then taught 4th grade for two years. I moved to Albuquerque in 2014 and worked at Sierra Vista Elementary teaching 5th grade for a few months. It was in April of 2015 when I began working at Cottonwood as a 7th and 8th grade English teacher.

At Cottonwood I coached middle school girls basketball for 3 seasons, 2 of which we won the ACSL Championship. This year I gave up my coaching duties to pursue my master’s degree. I am currently in my 2nd of 5 semesters in the Masters in Reflective Practice program with a focus on secondary education at UNM.
Leah Plymire

I was born and raised in Alaska but have lived in New Mexico for nearly half my life. This is my 6th year teaching middle school English Language Arts and my third year teaching at Cottonwood. I earned a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from NMSU and a Masters of Arts in Secondary Education from UNM. I love teaching English but am also passionate about providing experiential education through travel. Last year, I led a student tour to Beijing, China and I will be leading another this year to London, England! When I’m not teaching or reading all the books, I’m probably doing something outdoorsy with my dog Kalam, who loves hikes and trail running in the beautiful Sandia Mountains.

In To Kill a Mockingbird, the mockingbird symbolizes innocence. Tom Robinson is similar to a mockingbird because he has been accused of a crime that he didn’t commit. In the book Atticus says, “Mockingbirds don’t do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don’t eat up people’s gardens . . . they don’t do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That’s why it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird.” (Lee 164). This statement gives us an idea that Atticus was harmless and only brought goodness in the world, similar to a mockingbird. Secondly, the good that he’s bringing to the world through the case with Tom Robinson is his song and the killing, being a sin, is arriving through the backlash for taking the case. This is why Atticus may be represented as the harmless mockingbird.

Koko Nagatomo

In To Kill a Mockingbird, which character is most similar to the mockingbird’s symbolism?

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Andrew Lovato

Instead of doing Christmas presents this year, my sons and I decided to donate to charities. Partly my interest was due to a yearlong conversation with my students about needs and wants. “How much stuff do we have in our closets that we’ll never use?” My son Matt and I debated back and forth about homelessness. Is it their fault? Or does it even matter if anyone is at fault. They’re poorly treated by society because people see them as making poor choices.

(Continued on Page 8).
A Stranger on Campus
by James Vautier

Some of you will remember me...I was the guy walking around your campus on January 8th, with a camera and wearing a hoodie. By the look on many of your faces (when I entered the building through the southeast door during a passing period), I should’ve said “BOO!” My question to those who saw me (and got a little nervous) is:

*Did you tell an adult about the presence of someone without a visitor badge?*

If the answer is “No” – let me help you with some training.

As I told many of you during the Room Fortification Training we did together over the next couple of days, I retired from the Albuquerque Police Department (after 25 years) about five years ago and now work as a security consultant with many public and charter schools throughout New Mexico. I love my job because I get to help (through education and training) many staff and students learn how to be more safe and secure, while at school and wherever they go in public.

The purpose of my visit on January 8th was to conduct a security/intrusion assessment of your school. In addition to evaluating existing physical security features, I concealed my visitor pass and became *the stranger* (intruder) walking around campus; politely asking staff (and sometimes students) questions about the school. The goal is get people (staff and students) to notice that I am missing the visible visitor pass and to do something about it (either contact me directly or tell someone).

It should be noted here that out of eight (8) staff I came into contact with, only two (2) asked me directly about my visitor pass. I was told that some staff called reception staff and/or Ms. Rigali to report my presence. Don’t worry about this too much – about 95% of all schools never contact me directly. We’ll discuss this more later.

As I also told many of you during our training, I don’t want people to be so terrified about what might happen (because they watch the news too much), that they never go anywhere and have fun! Statistically, U.S. K-12 schools are pretty safe and our quality of life would pretty bad if we were scared all the time. That said, bad things can happen to good people so we just need to be more aware about what’s going on around us.

Therefore, let me share some ideas about simple habits you could create to improve Situational Awareness, which will lead to more confidence in your safety and security:

1) Know your school. Know who belongs here and who does not.

2) Know that ALL visitors should be wearing a visible “visitor” badge or lanyard.

(Continued on Page 8).
Hello,

I want to first thank the staff here at CCPS for making my first full year of teaching a memorable one. As I embark on this mid-life journey, landing my feet within these halls has been a wonderful experience. I greatly appreciate the support, atmosphere and friendly faces I get to see every day. It makes the hurdles and hurt of learning so much easier.

I came to this career later in my life influenced by my experiences that I’ve had since moving to Albuquerque eight years ago. I was looking for a new path and I certainly have found one that keeps me engaged and on my toes. Teaching was a way that I could spend my life in service to others. I consider it my activism, utilizing my privileges and position to give our students the tools they will need to navigate a world that becomes more and more available to them.

I hope to continue to learn and grow in my own right and the 5 months I have spent here has certainly nurtured that process. I look forward to the remainder of the year, taking on new challenges and will strive (and sometimes struggle) to remain optimistic as we enter the second half of this school year.

Thanks,

Erik

Meet Dr. Karen Trujillo, Our New Secretary of Education!

Karen Trujillo, Ph.D., has 25 years of experience in education, including nearly a decade in the classroom and 20 years working in professional development. She currently serves as the Interim Associate Dean for Research at the NMSU College of Education, as well as the Research Director for the college’s Alliance for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning. Trujillo has worked in four different districts and charters as well as with educators in over thirty districts across New Mexico. She has taught at the NMSU College of Education as an adjunct professor in addition to overseeing grant research pertaining to educational innovation. She has multiple publications on teaching and education demographics. Trujillo holds a bachelor’s and master’s from New Mexico State University, as well as a doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from the university.

OTHER PED STAFF INCLUDE
– Kara Bobroff: Deputy Secretary
– Tim Hand: Deputy Secretary
– Katarina “Kata” Sandoval: Deputy Secretary
– Gwen Perea Warniment: Deputy Secretary
– Pedro Noguera: Special Advisor to the Secretary

Note from the Editor
Recently, I emailed the New Secretary of Education to congratulate her on this post. She warmly responded back, grateful for the support.
Learning through Simulation?
By Cassidy Orlando, Venezia Sinclair, Briseis Orosco, and Hadiya Rezaie

One of the staple activities in 7th grade US history involves reading through primary sources (and summaries) of Lewis and Clark’s expedition. As students proceed through the journey they must make decisions that either award bonus points, or subtract their morale. One group shares their experience below.

Students: Venezia, Cassidy, Briseis, and Hadiya; Carlee Ridenour builds a fort

How was this lesson different than traditional learning?
This lesson was different from traditional learning because of the way it approached us. It was more engaging and caught my attention when the lesson was explained. The lesson was great in team building and in cooperation. Everyone had to put their minds into every statement that we recorded and everyone had to agree on a decision.

What are the pros & cons of learning through games/simulations?
There are many pros and cons to really any learning situation. However, most pros of learning through games/simulations consist of the following: very interesting and engaging, must be on task and well-behaved, and it encourages you to work together socially and mentally, giving each other help instead of being alone and confused on your own. The cons of these kinds of assignment include: there are some people who don’t engage, are off task, and take a lot of it as a joke rather than a learning experience.

How engaged was your group? Are you typically this engaged?
My group was pretty engaged, we all worked together and hardly got off topic. Typically I’m not really this engaged but my team was very focused on winning and so was I. Most of the time I will listen and do as instructed, but I won’t be happy to do it. In this lesson, I was excited!

What things did you learn in your journey?
I learned a lot, for example I learned that Lewis and Clark were instructed to be peaceful with the Native Americans and that they traveled a lot. I also learned that I need to be careful when making decisions, and I shouldn’t rush the learning process.

If you had to complete this task individually (instead of as a group), how might that have changed your overall performance or understanding?
If I had to complete this task individually, I might have been a wreck. With the motivation from my group members, help with indecisive moments, and help with explaining, my team really came in handy and helped me success in things I wouldn’t be able to on my own. The fact that we got to choose our team as well made it easier to work with those I knew I would work hard and excel with well.
Katherine Smith

I was born and raised in Albuquerque. Despite twice moving across the country I returned to the beautiful "land of enchantment" to get married, raise a family of my own, and attend the University of New Mexico. I earned my BA in History and Art History in 2010 and my Masters in Secondary Education in 2012. When I began my teaching career in 2013, it was Cottonwood that I embraced as my teaching home. In fact, when the universe conspired to have me instruct English Literature, I found my true calling in the classroom! I live with my husband, Kevin, our two daughters, Jesse and Blaise, and three adorable Golden-doodles. When I'm not teaching I can usually be found at home working on the most recent remodeling project.

Last Semester’s Success - By Nate McKeever

To begin the Spring 2019 semester I asked my students to watch a TEDTalk entitled Can skateboarding save our schools? By Scientist and Educator Dr. Tae. After watching this video, I had my students respond to four questions, reflecting on their own learning, successes, process and support they needed. Following is a response I received from 9th Grader Nathan McKeever.

I believe that the thing that has made my education more successful were the in class discussions, and the Do Nows. These things changed my perspective about how I see myself and the world around me. The in-class discussions were important to me because of the conversations they provoked, they raised bigger ideas that were important, and expanded my understanding. The most important ones were when we discussed communism, capitalism, social darwinism/social degeneration. These ideas were able to spark conversations with my peers that were meaningful and that had real thought behind them.

But I learned the most when we applied these ideas to our world today. Not only did we see the type of social structure that is used in our government, but they also gave valuable insight into class systems. This has not only created interest in my mind about the most effective form of government, and social structure that a nation should have but also led me down a different path of thinking that made me develop a different understanding of our world today. When we applied these things to the real world it also allowed me to create my own opinions. The Do Nows made us test our ideas and lead to informed conversation, often surprisingly when I am talking during a Do Now, it is because that question creates conversation, and leads me to a better understanding. This often allows for me to find out what I think and believe about something.

But I think that the most important thing last semester that really lead to me advancing myself more than ever is talking to you in-class or after school. These conversations I can say have lead me to become a much more important open-minded person. For example the time I randomly asked if you heard that new X-box commercial that had the Beach Boys in it, and the teacher asking me questions about it lead somehow to the meaning behind the songs and why that small detail of the commercial was there. But further we went down a path that connected ideas we learned in class and made them understandable because they were being used in the real world. We ended up talking about the act of learning and what it was. It's the conversations like these that I think I learn the most in. They not only lead me to the water of understanding but teach me how to swim in it. These not only make me see the world through a different lens, but they make me see it through a better one.

You may find it odd that these conversations after school and in-class that normally start with banter of some kind can lead to such understanding. After watching the video about FLOW it made me see what real learning is, and I was able to reflect on when I have truly learned, and it lead me to these moments, because I believe these moments, because I believe these are great examples of FLOW.
3) Learn to be good at “Aggressive Hospitality”. This is the art of “confronting” someone without being “confrontational”. For some of us, this means coming out of our comfort zone and using that “teacher voice,” stating, “Excuse me, can I help you?” or “Have you signed-in as a visitor? Let me escort you back to our reception area.”

Think this way: If I entered your home without knocking and started walking around, wouldn’t you say something immediately? Your school should be no different.

4) Know your school’s communications systems and how they work. If there were a power outage, what systems would fail and how would staff communicate throughout the campus?

5) Remember that you have options during any major crisis. Ideally, the best option is always to evacuate, putting as much distance between you and the threat as possible. When evaluating your options, think: What is the threat? And where is the threat?

6) Know where your exits are: all buildings must have more exits than entrances.

7) Pre-lock classroom doors – that will be one less thing to worry about during a crisis. If there are unsecured doors that can be accessed by anyone – without checking-in, you should keep those classroom doors closed.

8) Practice Room Fortification when you can. Have fun with it (this helps stress) – but take it seriously. Doors and interior windows must be fortified. Successful practice leads to confidence building and empowerment.

9) Consider keeping the sub’s classroom door pre-locked (or providing substitute teachers with a room key). Remember: Unlocked doors & interior windows are the easiest ways into a room.

10) Know your off-site rally (evacuation) locations.

11) Train and practice as much as you can. Also incorporate a little stress into your training – this is always the one thing missing from a power point presentation.

12) Train and practice with the students now, before they graduate. Most (if not all) emergency training stops after students finish high school.

Life is good, but bad things continue to occur in our world. Let these events become teaching tools for awareness and motivation for more training – not drivers of fear, worry and paranoia that control our lives.

Be Safe, Be Aware, Be Prepared

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Denise Gianopoulos

I was born to immigrant Greek parents in Salt Lake City, UT. With the maiden name Papado-poulos, it hardly changed when I married Dean Gianopou-ulos and moved to his home state of New Mexico. We met singing in a Byzantine church choir! (alto and baritone). I earned my BA in English from the University of Utah, and followed up with my Juris Doctor from the same home state university. I worked in a civil law firm initially before moving to NM. Once here I enrolled at UNM to complete my Masters in Secondary Education. In my years in education in NM, I taught at Madison Middle School, CNM, and Cottonwood. I joined the Cottonwood founding team and served as the first GC president (true!), then stepped down in order to teach here at our new charter school. Our twin daughters attended Cottonwood and are now in college. We opened the school in 2008-2009, and this is my 11th year at CCPS. I am the veteran member of the faculty regarding tenure at beloved Cottonwood. Sometime I’ll show the staff the original school charter and the images of the evolution of our school logo and mascot!

Winter Homeless Drive (Continued)

I ended up giving my portion to Joy Junction after seeing the high ratio of money that goes to the intended recipients (as opposed to administrative costs). My sons chose other charities.

Upon learning about my decision, I was approached by some of the Student Ambassadors. They wanted to partner with me. So they set up baskets at entrances and in strategic areas around the school. As a first time effort, I was pleased with the outcome. At this time of the year, there’s a lot of fundraising, and people are shopping for their own families and personal needs.

I would like to commend the Student Ambassadors and everyone that gave during this event. And I would love to see this become an annual event.