

Virginia English Journal Call for Submissions

Vol. 73, Issue 1: Unlocking Opportunities for All: Community, Collaboration, and Creativity

“Around here we don’t look backwards for long... We keep moving forward, opening new doors and doing new things because we’re curious... and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.”

- Walt Disney

If you’ve been in the classroom for even a few years, then there are times when the students, the parents, the educational tools, the political climate, the workload, the community expectations, and even the content you’re teaching can all feel like the first few years of your teaching career happened on another planet. Many of these changes feel scary and often make teaching an extremely difficult career. However, a more personalized learning approach to teaching is one dynamic shift that brings more challenges of preparation and grading, but also brings the best aspects of teaching and learning.

When I first started teaching, I was told to, “Teach to the middle”. Class would move too slowly for some kids (they would be bored) and it would move too fast for others (they would likely fail). English class had whole class novels, study guides, and whole group vocabulary, spelling and grammar lessons. Everyone wrote to the same prompt and completed the same kind of research project. I clearly remember my first department chair showing his 9th grade students the large stacks of reading guide packets and grammar worksheets on the first day of school. I’m pretty sure that only a handful of students actually read *Great Expectations*, most just studied the Cliff Notes so they could complete the packet and pass the test.

I hope no one teaches like that anymore. I like to think we have all evolved, and I’m pretty certain that if you’re a member of VATE or reading or writing for the VEJ you’re a creative teacher that counts making learning fun, engaging, meaningful and deeply personalized as the center of your whole teaching philosophy.

Even though it’s much more work to teach this way, I’m so glad we’re no longer in the era of whole class novels and grammar worksheets. One way we can help combat the extra workload is to collaborate with each other. The Winter Issue of

the VEJ is a place to do just that. What does the current research say about reaching all of our students? What are your best personalized learning and teaching ideas? What professional texts are you reading that give teachers easy tools to individualize student learning? There's no way we can do individualized learning for all of our students if we continue to all work individually.

This fall we will gather in Harrisonburg and we will share our best ideas for how to teach all of our students. The theme for the 2025 Winter Edition of the VEJ has the same scope. Let us know how you're reaching all of your students: English Learners, Students with Disabilities, kids "in the middle," and exceptional learners. How do you help your students find joy in learning? How do you use reading to help connect students to the things that interest them? How have you used writing and reading to extend and connect both in terms of skill development and personal inquiry? How have you moved students to see reading and writing not just as a required task, but as an opportunity to learn more about themselves and how they fit in the world? How are you making learning personal within the confines of the expectations placed on you from outside your classroom?

Want to submit an article, but not sure how to go about preparing one? Come to the VATE conference in October and chat with the editor. Spend time workshopping your piece and get feedback from your peers before you submit.

This issue of the Virginia English Journal will contain three types of articles, described below:

- Feature articles: These are longer articles of 3,000 to 5,000 words (including references, tables, and figures) that blend research and practice, providing educators with theoretical understandings as well as practitioner-friendly ideas.
- Great teaching ideas: shorter articles of 1,000 to 2,000 words (including references, tables, and figures) that focus on effective and innovative teaching practices that other educators can quickly put into action in their classes.
- Budding scholars: English and English education majors interested in sharing their ideas with an audience of fellow educators are encouraged to submit. Articles of 2,000 to 4,000 words (including references, tables, and figures) should blend research-based insights with practical suggestions for application and share unique perspectives on English instruction.
- We also invite writers to bring variety to our journal by contributing book reviews and poetry that will appeal to our readership.
- Book Reviews: We invite you to submit a book review 1,200 to 1,400 words, showcasing how it impacted you as an educator.
- Poetry: The VEJ wants to celebrate our poets. If you use poetry in your classroom, then please include what has worked for you along with your poems.
- Submission deadline: December 1, 2024

Please visit the Virginia English Journal website to submit articles. <https://digitalcommons.bridgewater.edu/vej/>