2026 MATE Professional Development Day via Zoom

Manitoba Association of Teachers of English (MATE)

Conference Program

Navigating Change in the ELA Classroom

This year's conference will be delivered online via ZOOM Events. After you complete registration, you will receive an email two days before the event with instructions for accessing the conference site. You will have access to all sessions. Two morning keynotes are offered.

Session A1: ZOOM 9:10 am -10:00 am

Keynote Title: The AI Toolkit: Elevating Learning in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Keynote Description (50 minutes):

In an era where artificial intelligence is reshaping the landscape of education and the workforce, knowing *how* to use AI is just as important as knowing *that* it exists. This 50-minute keynote presentation explores the concept of AI not as a shortcut or a replacement for human thinking, but as a powerful toolkit — one that, when applied with purpose and intent, can elevate learning, deepen research, and expand what's possible in the classroom and beyond.

Drawing on real classroom experiences and practical examples, this keynote unpacks how different AI tools serve different functions. From AI-assisted brainstorming bots and large language models like Gemini to specialized tools like Notebook LM, which allow learners to train a model around their own curated research, attendees will come away with a clearer picture of how to match the right tool to the right task.

At the heart of this presentation is a simple but transformative idea: AI should be doing work *for your thinking*, not *instead of it*. When students and educators learn to pick up AI like a hammer and start building, the possibilities for reimagining research, inquiry, and learning are genuinely limitless.

This keynote sets the foundation for a deeper dive in the follow-up workshop session, where participants will have the opportunity to explore these tools hands-on. Whether you're just getting started with AI or looking to be more intentional in how you use it, this session will leave you better equipped to navigate and shape the future.

Bio: Kristina Peterson and Dr. Dennis Magliozzi have been teaching high school English in Exeter, NH, since 2008. Kristina holds a Master of Arts in Teaching and has served the educational community as the Secretary for NHCTE since 2017. Dennis has an MFA in poetry from Vermont College of Fine Arts and a Ph.D. in Education from the University of New Hampshire. Together, they co-teach in the University of New Hampshire's Writers Academy and Learning Through Teaching program. Their first book, *AI in the Writing Workshop: Finding the Write Balance* (Heinemann, 2025), explores AI as a thought partner, research companion, and writing tool,

While addressing the ethical complexities and instructional opportunities AI presents in today's classrooms. They have presented their pioneering work on the role of AI in writing instruction, helping to shape the conversation. In addition to their speaking engagements, they regularly contribute to leading publications such as *Education Week*, *eSchoolNews*, *English Journal* and *Educational Leadership*.

Session A2: ZOOM 9:10-10:00 am

Keynote Title: The Weird Enough Way

Keynote Description (50 minutes)

Tony Weaver, Jr. is a storyteller who creates diverse worlds where every person can find their place. Before he learned to tell his own story, stories saved his life. Learn about embracing your own creativity and loving yourself for the weirdo you are in this keynote that blends comedy and vulnerability to make every child find a story of their own.

Bio: Tony Weaver Jr. is a storyteller who uses his passion for comics and anime to help people unlock their inner hero. His wholesome messages of self love and creativity have gained him a following of over 1.5 Million across social media. In the publishing world, he's an Eisner and Harvey nominated comic writer. His book *Weirdo* was named best book of the year by People Magazine, Kirkus, The School Library Journal, Publishers Weekly, and The New York Public Library. In the social impact world, his nonprofit, Weird Enough Productions, has brought literacy and mental health tools to over 1 million students. His work has attracted coverage from CNN, NBC, HuffPost, and The Mary Sue, and landed him honors from organizations such as Microsoft, Gucci, and Coca-Cola.Tony brings a sense of nerdy joy to everything he does. If you're looking for self love and laughter, he'd love to be your "Nerdy Older Brother."

Tony Weaver

Break: 10:00 am-10:15

B Sessions: Zoom 10:15-11:45 am

Session B1: 10:15-11:45 am

AI in Action: Practical Classroom Strategies for Using AI as a Thought, Research, and Writing Partner

Kristina Peterson and Dr. Dennis Magliozzi

Workshop Description (90 minutes):

This hands-on workshop is designed for middle and high school educators looking to move beyond the conversation around AI and into meaningful classroom application. Building on the keynote's framing of AI as a toolkit, this session invites participants into real classroom practices where AI supports student thinking.

Grounded in authentic examples from a 9th grade English classroom, this workshop explores how AI can function as a thought partner, research partner, and writing partner throughout the learning process. Participants will experience demonstrations of tools such as SchoolAI, Brisk, NotebookLM and Gemini, while also considering how these tools can be adapted across content areas and grade levels.

Together, we will:

- Explore practical routines for integrating AI into reading, writing, and research
- Model how AI can support student inquiry, feedback, and revision without diminishing voice or agency

- Examine strategies for teaching students to question, verify, and think critically alongside AI
- Discuss ways to navigate classrooms where expectations around AI are still evolving or undefined

Participants will leave with adaptable strategies, sample prompts, and classroom-ready approaches that prioritize student thinking, creativity, and independence. Whether you are just beginning to explore AI or looking to refine your practice, this session offers concrete entry points and flexible pathways for implementation.

Session B2: 10:15-11:45 am

Integrating the Manitoba Global Competencies into ELA Classroom Practice (MY/SY)

Charlene Smallwood

This workshop introduces the Manitoba Global Competencies and explores how they prepare learners to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Participants will explore how teachers can integrate the MB Global Competencies (critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, citizenship, communication, and connection to self) in their classrooms through meaningful learning experiences. Participants will explore the competencies and actively engage in discussions and with resources that will help them foster the competencies in their learners. **Bio:** Charlene Smallwood is a Curriculum and Assessment Consultant at the Learning and Outcomes Branch with Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning. Her work focuses on the Manitoba Global Competencies as part of the Framework for Learning. She "retired" in June of 2022 from Louis Riel School Division where she was most recently the principal of Nelson McIntyre Collegiate but her teaching heart lives in English Language Arts; a discipline in which she taught for 25 years.

Lunch: 11:45-12:45

C Sessions (two-hour sessions) 12:45-3:00

Session C1: 12:45-3:00 pm

Worlds We Create (EY/MY/SY)

Christy Jordan-Fenton

Description to Follow

Bio: Christy Jordan-Fenton is the author of four award-winning books about her Inuvialuk mother (in-law) Margaret Olemaun Pokiak-Fenton and her time attending a high Arctic Residential School in the high Arctic during the 1940s: FATTY LEGS, A STRANGER AT HOME, WHEN I WAS EIGHT, and NOT MY GIRL. Christy and Margaret travelled internationally sharing her story for over a decade until Margaret's passing in 2021 at the age of 84. Some of their greatest adventures together include visiting Cuba and Alaska, and getting tattoos when Margaret was 81.

She participated in five TRC National Events, along with several regional ones, and has worked with educators to develop age-appropriate, trauma-informed, and strengths-based approaches to teaching residential school history for more than a decade and a half. Christy's facilitation approach involves modelling, inquiry, connection, and examination to help educators, especially nonindigenous educators, adopt respectful methods for bringing Truth and Reconciliation into their classrooms. As a full-time touring storyteller, she draws from the experience of sharing with thousands of K-12+ audiences.

Christy is not only an ally, but a relative. Her passion for Margaret's stories began with a desire for her own children (Margaret's grandchildren) to be proud to be Inuvialuit. She was also raised by a Cree residential school survivor for part of her life, and she practices traditional Lakota ceremony with the Kainai Blackfoot.

Christy lives with the youngest of her three children in Fort St John, BC, the territory of the Dane-zaa. She has been an infantry soldier, a survival instructor, a bronc rider, a rugby player, and a wild pig farmer, among other things, and has lived in the United States, Australia, and South Africa.

Session C2: 12:45-3:00

Storytelling for Teachers: Unleash Your Inner Storyteller (MY/SY)

Daria Salamon-Krause

The best writing teachers don't just teach writing—they write. In this hands-on workshop, you'll step into the role of storyteller, experimenting with the same creative processes you ask of your students. Through engaging prompts, mentor texts, and guided writing, you'll craft your own narratives while exploring techniques that are immediately transferable to the classroom.

You'll leave with more than lesson ideas. You'll gain firsthand experience with the vulnerability, challenge, and joy of the writing process—giving you valuable "skin in the game" when you ask students to do the same. Along the way, you'll build some original writing and classroom-ready story samples you can share with students to model risk-taking, revision, and authentic storytelling.

This workshop will help you become a more confident storyteller—and a more effective teacher of stories.

Bio: Daria Salamon Krause is the author of two books whose writing has appeared in publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Guardian*. She holds degrees in Arts from the University of Winnipeg, Education from the University of Manitoba, and an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia.

A teacher in the River East Transcona School Division for more than 25 years, Daria is passionate about helping students and educators discover the power of story. She believes that storytelling is one of the most effective ways to build empathy, deepen critical thinking, and inspire authentic writing. Her workshops combine hands-on writing with practical strategies that teachers can immediately bring into their classrooms.

Session C3: 12:45-3:00

Kindergarten to Grade 12 English Language Arts Draft Curriculum Overview Session

Carrie Lourenzo

This interactive webinar will deepen your understanding of the new ELA draft curriculum by anchoring it directly within the *Manitoba Framework for Learning*. Together, we will unpack how these elements integrate to guide your instructional practice. We will also explore the *Foundational Skills in the Development of Literacy (Literacy Progressions)*, examining how this essential capacity-building resource directly supports curriculum implementation in the K–5 years. Whether you are looking for a solid starting point or wanting to deepen your systemic understanding, you will leave this session with greater clarity, practical insights, and a roadmap for navigating these foundational documents.

Bio: Carrie Lourenzo is a Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning Consultant

D Sessions (1-hour sessions) 12:45-1:45 pm

D1: The Ethics of Humour: Comedy and Effective Communication (SY)

Andrew Unger

This session will offer questions and tools to help students think about the type of humour they use in both writing and day-to-day conversation, while also raising questions about the contentious role that comedy plays in our current political and social discourse.

Bio: Andrew Unger is a high school teacher, founder of the satire website *The Unger Review*, and author of the book *Just Satire: Comedy and Commentary in an Age of Chaos*.

D2: Name of Session: From Balanced Literacy to Structured Literacy: SSES's Journey in Action (EY)

Join us for a practical session exploring SSES's journey from balanced literacy to structured literacy. Classroom teachers and literacy interventionists will share honest reflections on what this shift has meant for classroom instruction, interventions, and student learning.

The session will highlight how structured literacy has changed core instruction in Grades 1–3, how interventions have evolved, and how classroom and intervention

practices are now intentionally aligned within an MTSS framework. Presenters will reflect on what they initially feared they might lose—and what they ultimately gained, including stronger student outcomes, clearer instructional decision-making, and increased teacher confidence.

Early years literacy interventionists alongside Grade 1, 2, and 3 teachers will share concrete examples of evidence-based instruction in action and how this work reshaped their beliefs about reading instruction and student success. Participants will leave with practical takeaways: classroom teachers will gain strategies they can implement immediately, and interventionists will learn how to design effective MTSS practices that support all learners.

Time will be reserved at the end of the session for questions.

Presenters and Bios:

Krystal Isfeld: Krystal Isfeld is an experienced educator with 29 years of teaching, specializing in early years literacy interventions and structured literacy approaches, with a strong commitment to supporting diverse learners in building foundational reading and writing skills through evidence-based practices.

Tabitha Johannesson: With 21 years of experience in the Evergreen School Division, Tabitha has dedicated 20 years to teaching grade 1 and 2. She currently teaches grade 1 at SSES, where she continues her passion for early learning.

Leanne Mager: Leanne is a dedicated and passionate grade 3 educator with 26 years of experience, specializing in early literacy and structured, evidence-based practises to support all learners.

Michelle Poloski: Michelle has 27 years of experience as an early years teacher in Evergreen and is strongly invested in early literacy. She currently teaches Grade 2 at SSES and is committed to intentional, high-quality instruction that supports all learners.

E Sessions 2:00-3:00 pm

E Session: (1-hour session) 2:00-3:00

E1: The Vital Value of Shakespeare Now

Rodrigo Beilfuss, Shakespeare in the Ruins

In a world of distractions and quick-bites, engaging with complex language and classical texts might be the antidote to unlock an expansive sense of imagination, calm, and collaboration in the classroom.

Bio: Rodrigo Beilfuss is a theatre director, an actor of stage and screen, and a committed educator. Since 2019, he has been the Artistic Director of Winnipeg's Shakespeare in the Ruins (SIR). A former member of the Stratford Festival (2015-2019), Rodrigo has trained at the University of Winnipeg, at Stratford's Birmingham Conservatory, and at LAMDA in the UK. He has participated in over 20 Shakespeare productions and dozens of premieres of brand-new Canadian works, and he is a graduate of Stratford's Michael Langham Workshop in Directing. Rodrigo has taught at many universities and colleges, as well as at Canada's National Theatre School, and has led workshops across Canada, in the US, and in his native Brazil. His work focuses on language as a sonic and sensual experience, with a passion for translations and cultural adaptations.

Fees and Registration (fee includes both half day and full day)

Conference Fees:

Full day SAGE Conference and Membership -- $30.00 ($20 membership plus $10 conference fee for members)

Conference (non-member) $40

LATE Registration Fee (After October 20, 2026) -- $40.00 (includes membership)

MATE Membership:

MATE Membership ONLY--$20.00

If you do not have Internet access, please contact Linda at 204-255-1676 or at email mate@mts.net to make alternate arrangements for payment.

Registration Dates:

Registration opens on September 14, 2026

Registration closes on Tuesday, October 20, 2026 at 11:59 pm.

LATE Registration opens on Wednesday, October 21, 2026 at 9:00 am.

Contact Information:

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