

THE MONTHLY NETWORKER

AUGUST 2025 | VOL.12



WORDS FROM OUR DIRECTOR

August has been a rewarding month, as English teachers and students have been actively participating and preparing to engage in a variety of initiatives. One of the main highlights is Festicrec (Festival de Creación de Cuentos), a collaborative event where students, teachers, and parents join forces to create stories. On this occasion, twenty-four English educators had the privilege of translating the stories written by the regional winner, making it a significant and enriching experience for everyone involved.

Our English teachers have also demonstrated strong dedication by enrolling in the competency-based curriculum online courses, and so far, around 1,600 teachers have joined the program. This shows not only their commitment to professional development but also their openness to adopt innovative teaching strategies.

In addition, interdisciplinary projects are being implemented across several regions, and I had the opportunity to witness firsthand the remarkable outcomes of the teachers' efforts. These projects not only promote collaboration among educators but also provide students with a more well-rounded learning experience.

Another remarkable accomplishment is the launch of the After-School Program, through which 2,000 twelfth graders will start their English classes on September 8. Sessions will take place Monday through Thursday, from 8:00–11:00 a.m. and 1:00–4:00 p.m., enabling students to enhance their language proficiency while balancing their academic responsibilities. Parents have been actively submitting participation forms, reflecting their awareness of how English can positively shape their children's future opportunities.

At the same time, preparations are in motion for the rollout of the new curriculum in 24 schools nationwide during the third trimester. Teachers are not only motivated about this initiative, but they are also eager to begin and willing to take on the challenge, knowing that it will ultimately benefit their students.

As you can see, there is a great deal taking place, and although challenges remain, we are advancing with determination and purpose to create meaningful opportunities for our learners.

Thank you for all that you do.

Ms. Davina Cole

REGIONAL NEWS & UPDATES

PANAMANIAN STUDENTS' TALENT SHINES AT THE 2025 MEDUCA NATIONAL CONCERT BANDS GALA

From The Press Center of the Ministry of Education

Nine student bands lit up the stage at the 2025 Meduca National Concert Bands Competition. The winning band was from Instituto Urracá (Veraguas), followed by Colegio José Daniel Crespo (Herrera) and Colegio Ingeniero Tomás Guardia (Panamá Oeste).



Minister of Education Lucy Molinar praised the bands as "schools of personal growth," highlighting their role in building teamwork, discipline, and success.



Held at the Technological University of Panama, the gala featured powerful performances judged by national and international experts. A moving tribute honored Professor Virgilio Escala for 50 years of musical dedication.

The event included 450 students from across the country and was broadcast nationwide on SERTV, celebrating the artistic and academic talent of Panama's youth.

REGIONAL NEWS & UPDATES

INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR: A TRIBUTE TO READING AND CREATIVITY*From The Press Center of the Ministry of Education*

With much imagination and creativity, the Ministry of Education's stand was inaugurated at the International Book Fair, paying tribute to the 120 stories participating in the National Story Contest (FESTICREC) under the theme "The Magical Carpets of Stories," a setting that blended an allegory of the guest country, Morocco.

The Minister of Education, Lucy Molinar, stated, "It is proven that 60% of a student's failure is because they do not understand what they read and cannot communicate what they learn. Developing communication skills is fundamental; it is the foundation of a person's success. For us, this is a fantastic opportunity to make reading fashionable."



Nicole Garibaldo, from Nuestra Señora de Lourdes School, said, "Reading is knowledge; it expands your way of thinking, you learn a lot, and it entertains you." Meanwhile, Eduardo Richard, from the same school, said that he found the fair very good, everything is well organized, and there is a wide variety of books.

"For me, the Book Fair means a great variety of culture. There are many types of books, and it is important because reading a book nourishes us and prepares us for the future," expressed Ángel Ortega, a student from El Buen Pastor School.

In addition to the Minister of Education, the event was attended by the Deputy Minister of Academic Education, Agnes de Cotes; the General Director of Education, Edwin Gordón; national directors; Orit Btsh, president of CAPALI; Jorge Eduardo Ritter, president of the Panamanian Academy of Language; as well as the Music Band from Ingeniero Tomás Guardia School and students from República de Chile School.



REGIONAL NEWS & UPDATES

WHERE LITERATURE MEETS TEACHING

From The Press Center of the Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education (Meduca) announced the winners of the eight categories of the National Story Creation Festival (Festicrec 2025) during the celebration of the 21st edition of the International Book Fair (FIL XXI). The selected students received their awards on August 15.

As part of the fair's activities, held from August 12 to 15, the Teachers' Congress titled "Updating, Innovation, and Commitment: Pillars for Comprehensive Education" took place, organized by the National Network of Spanish Teachers. The congress was attended by 500 educators from across the country.

Érida Morales, the event coordinator, reported that educators from the 30 educational networks across the 16 school regions participated, and national and international speakers addressed topics related to teaching and learning processes, technology use, strategies to strengthen reading comprehension, creative writing, the power of words, advances in the 2025 curriculum redesign, among others.



Meanwhile, Isis Núñez, general coordinator of the Book Fair, explained that the ministry had a stand with the theme "The Magical Carpets of Stories," a space that blended an allegory of the guest country.

This year, the FIL was held under the theme "Weaving Dialogues" and had Morocco as the guest country. The literary celebration was organized by the Panamanian Book Chamber (Capali).



LETTER FROM OUR EDITOR

Dear Readers,

As we move into the second half of the year, the August issue of The Monthly Networker brings you stories that celebrate creativity, collaboration, and cultural enrichment across our National English Network. This edition comes full of inspiration and visuals that showcase the energy of our community.

In this version, you'll find highlights from the 2025 MEDUCA National Concert Gala, a vibrant celebration of music and talent; coverage of the International Book Fair, where thousands gather each year to foster a love for reading in children, adolescents, and adults; and a look at FESTICREC, the national story creation contest where students, teachers, and parents let their imagination fly through storytelling.

Our brand-new Quick Share Corner continues with fresh icebreakers and fun prompts to keep your classrooms lively and engaging. We also feature thought-provoking articles from English teachers across the network, alongside a friendly reminder for educators who haven't yet joined our English Network—we're sharing an easy-to-follow guide to help you become part of this growing community of teachers in Panama.

And of course, don't miss our Resource Corner, Thumbs Up, and Fun Fact sections, designed to give you tools, recognition, and a smile to wrap up your read.

Happy Reading!

Raúl Sieiro
Editor, The Monthly Networker

SPOTLIGHT SECTION

RICARDO MIRÓ'S VISIONARY INNOVATORS: BUILDING ROBOTS, BREAKING BARRIERS IN TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY*By Lucila Córdoba*

When the pandemic turned our classrooms into Zoom sessions and homes into hubs of learning, something extraordinary began at Ricardo Miró School in Panamá Centro. With curiosity as our compass and innovation as our fuel, we launched the Robotics English Club—a student-centered initiative blending STEAM and language learning.

At the heart of this club is a powerful fusion: English as a Second Language and robotics. What started as online training during lockdown quickly evolved into a journey through regional, national, and even international competitions, including the World Robot Olympiad hosted right here in Panama. Our students, some as young as second grade, have shown unparalleled dedication—not just to building robots, but to building futures.

Supported by our visionary principal, Ms. Yeneyra Domínguez, and coordinated by English teacher, Ms. Lucila Córdoba, the club has grown into an interdisciplinary powerhouse. Through projects based on the STEAM methodology—Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math—we've

created learning experiences that transcend traditional classroom boundaries. These learners are not only developing robots—they're mastering 21st-century skills like collaboration, research, deep thinking, and digital fluency.

What makes this club truly unique is its global impact. Our students recognize that English isn't just a subject—it's a bridge. It's how they connect, collaborate, and present their ideas to the world. Whether preparing for competitions or sharing their work on our Instagram page, @roboticstarpanama, they understand that their voices matter and their efforts are seen—from local TV features to international recognition.

At Ricardo Miró, we've transformed our classrooms into labs of possibility. Our Robotics English Club is more than an extracurricular activity—it's a launchpad for future engineers, designers, and changemakers.

We'll keep innovating. Because when students speak the language of technology and hope, the world listens.



Quick Share Corner

Fun prompts, warm-ups, and icebreakers for your next class!



Would You Rather...?

(Language Learner Edition)

Need a quick activity to get students talking? Try this classic conversation game with an English learning twist! Perfect for warm-ups, pair work, or those last five minutes of class.

 Here are some ready-to-go prompts for your students:

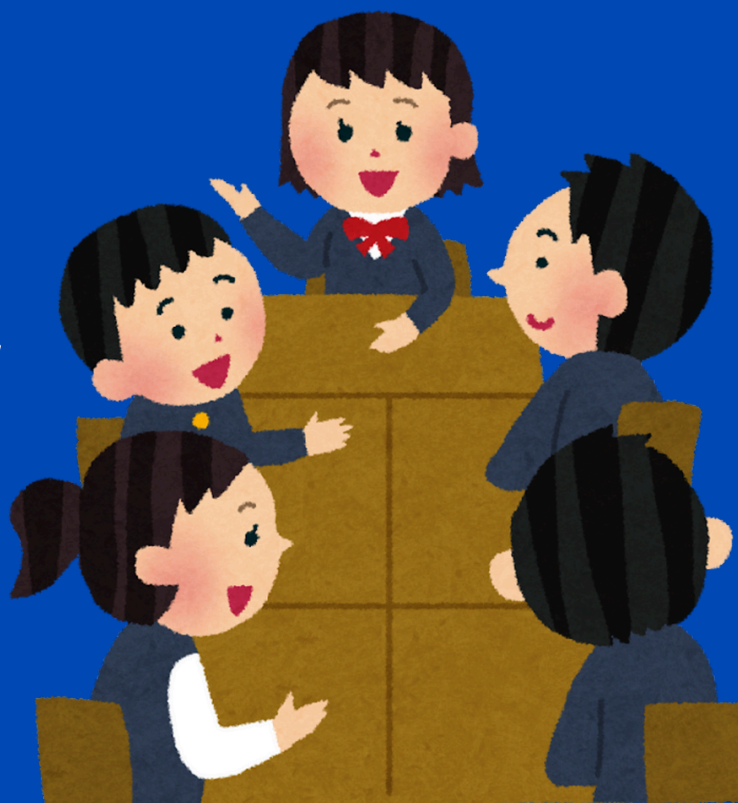
- Would you rather learn 100 new English words 🧠 or watch 10 English movies without subtitles? 🎬
- Would you rather learn English by watching videos or by reading stories? 📺📖
- Would you rather read a book in English 📖 or listen to a podcast in English? 🎧
- Would you rather speak English perfectly but only with one person 👤 or speak with lots of people but make mistakes? 😊
- Would you rather live in an English-speaking country for one month 🌍 or take English classes every day for a year? 📅

Bonus idea:

Ask students to make their own Would You Rather...? questions using vocabulary from your current unit! Great for grammar, creativity, and getting everyone talking. You may also ask *Why?* to generate more conversation.

Example for a Unit on Travel Vocabulary:

- Would you rather travel by plane or by train? Why?
- Would you rather stay in a hotel or go camping? Why?



TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES

UNLOCKING CREATIVITY THROUGH READING: THE MAGIC CEREAL BOX STORY REPORT

By Mixiuris Maltez

One of the most significant challenges I have encountered throughout my career as an English teacher has been encouraging students to develop a genuine passion for reading. In fact, instilling a love for literature has proven to be a demanding task for many educators myself included who strive to cultivate reading habits not only in Spanish but also in English.

There are numerous compelling reasons why reading should serve as a foundational pillar in the classroom. To begin with, it stimulates the imagination, nurtures creativity, and inspires new ideas. Moreover, when learning a second language, reading plays a vital role in expanding vocabulary and reinforcing language structures in a meaningful context.

This year, during our **English Fun-tastic Week**, I saw a valuable opportunity to foster creativity and promote reading in an engaging way. With this goal in mind, my students participated in a project called **"A Magic Cereal Box Story Report."** For this activity, each student read a short story and analyzed key narrative elements, such as the characters, setting, and the structure of the story—including the beginning, middle, and end—presented in a concise format. To ensure variety, every student received a different story.



As part of the project, students repurposed cereal boxes and decorated them using simple, accessible materials. Notably, the most enjoyable and imaginative aspect involved artistically transforming the box to reflect essential elements of the story, with particular emphasis on the main character. Additionally, students presented their

work by delivering a brief oral summary that conveyed the central message of the story.



Witnessing the students' excitement and pride as they viewed both their own work and that of their classmates was incredibly rewarding. Experiences like this reinforce my belief that reading is essential for developing critical thinking, enhancing empathy, and sparking imagination. Moving forward, we must continue to create dynamic, literacy-rich environments to help nurture a lifelong love of reading among younger generations.

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES

A LONG-TERM TEACHING JOURNEY: BUILDING READERS FROM KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 4*By Iván Guerra Tello*

Over the years, I have taught at various schools across Chiriquí and worked with students at different educational levels. However, my current role at Loma Colorada Bilingual School stands out as one of the most meaningful.

What makes this experience unique is a long-term project I began in 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The project involves following the same group of students throughout their primary education—starting with them in pre-kindergarten and continuing through to sixth grade. This continuity has allowed me to closely observe and support their language development over time.



I first met this group when they were in kindergarten, attending virtual classes via Microsoft Teams. In 2022, we transitioned to in-person instruction, and I began teaching them again in first grade. I chose to stay with the same cohort each year, using a consistent set of strategies tailored to their developmental stage. These include phonological awareness exercises, the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, and other techniques depending on the learning needs of each grade level.

From the start, my primary goal has been to help my students learn to read in English. Today, they are in fourth grade, and I'm proud to say they have developed strong reading skills and a genuine interest in the language.

Each class begins with a short reading passage related to the current topic. I implement elements of the Silent Way method to encourage independent thinking, allowing students to analyze and reflect on what they read in their booklets.

We follow a structured three-step reading process:

1. Silent Reading and Reflection: Students read the text silently for five minutes, noting their start and finish times. This simple routine helps them build reading fluency and time awareness, while also encouraging self-monitoring of their progress.
2. Visual Grammar Awareness: I then present the same text in a PowerPoint format, where parts of speech—such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, question marks and exclamation points.
3. Oral Practice and Performance: Students read the passage aloud individually, followed by a group activity using the Reader's Theater technique. Through this method, they practice pronunciation, intonation, and expressive reading. Special attention is given to punctuation, phonetics, and overall fluency.

To track their growth, I've also developed a digital portfolio system using QR codes, where I document their progress year by year. This portfolio not only serves as a record of their achievements but also motivates students by showing them how far they've come.

This long-term teaching approach has been incredibly rewarding. It has allowed me to build strong relationships with my students and witness firsthand the transformative power of consistent, targeted instruction. I hope this experience inspires other educators to consider the value of long-term planning and student-centered strategies in language learning.



INDUSTRY TRENDS

LEARNING ENGLISH IN THE DIGITAL AGE: TRENDS THAT ARE REVOLUTIONIZING LANGUAGE TEACHING

By Zulimar González

In today's globalized world, mastering English is a fundamental communication skill. With over 1.5 billion learners worldwide, new technologies and methodologies are continuously transforming how the language is taught and learned. These trends are making the process more accessible, effective, and engaging for learners of all ages.

1. Hybrid and Digital Learning:

English education now blends traditional classroom methods with digital platforms like Duolingo, Babbel, and Rosetta Stone. These tools offer interactive, self-paced courses, while schools incorporate virtual classes using Zoom or Skype. Language exchange programs connect students with native speakers, allowing for real-world practice and cultural immersion.

2. Personalized Learning:

AI-powered apps such as DreamBox and Lingvist customize content to target each learner's needs—be it pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary. This adaptive approach enhances motivation and accelerates progress.

3. Skills-Based and Project Learning:

Students are encouraged to use English in practical, creative ways—like making podcasts, videos, or campaigns on global topics. This approach strengthens both language skills and digital literacy, fostering teamwork and communication.

4. Inclusion and Diversity:

Modern teaching methods embrace students' cultural and linguistic diversity. Learning materials are adapted to different contexts and needs, while tools like text readers and subtitles support students with learning challenges, creating a more inclusive environment.

5. Emotional Well-being and Gamification:

Recognizing the stress language learning can bring, schools integrate practices like mindfulness and group activities to build confidence. Gamified platforms such as Kahoot and Quizlet make learning fun and interactive, reinforcing vocabulary and grammar.

6. Education for Sustainability:

Incorporating global issues into English lessons not only expands vocabulary but also raises awareness about sustainability and social responsibility.



English learning is evolving through technology, innovation, and a more human-centered approach. These trends make learning more meaningful and motivating, helping students succeed in academic, professional, and social spheres. Teachers play a key role in using active methodologies that personalize learning, promote inclusion, and support emotional well-being.

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CALL TO ACTION

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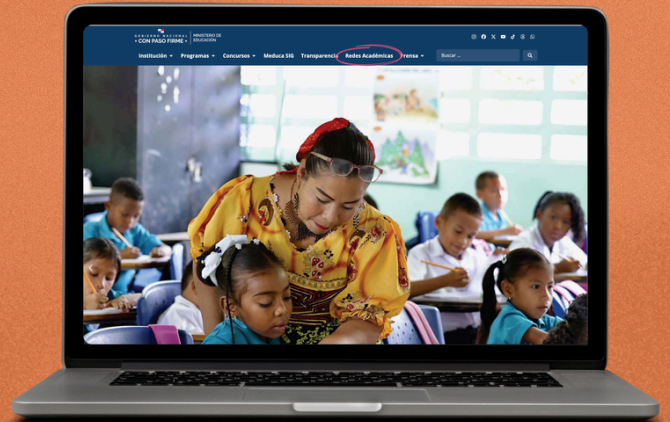
Are you an English teacher
and not yet part of the English
Teachers Network – ENRED?

What are you waiting for?!

Follow these simple steps and join the hundreds of
teachers already in this growing community:



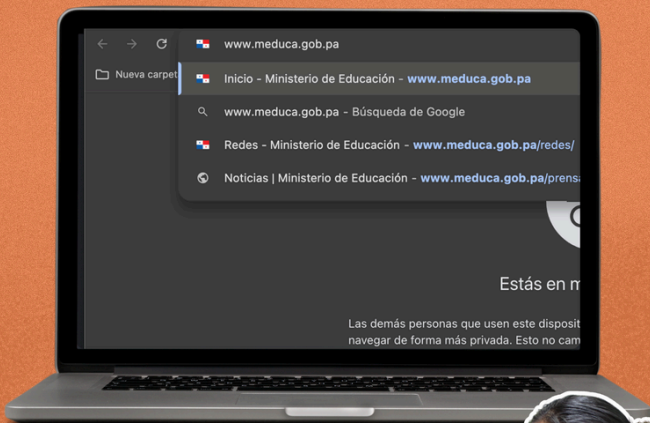
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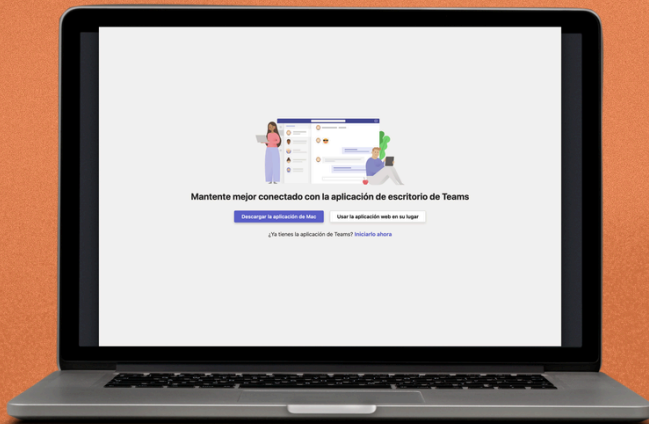
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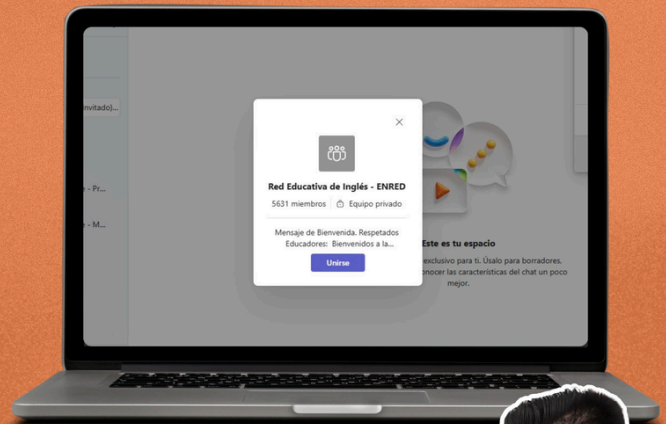
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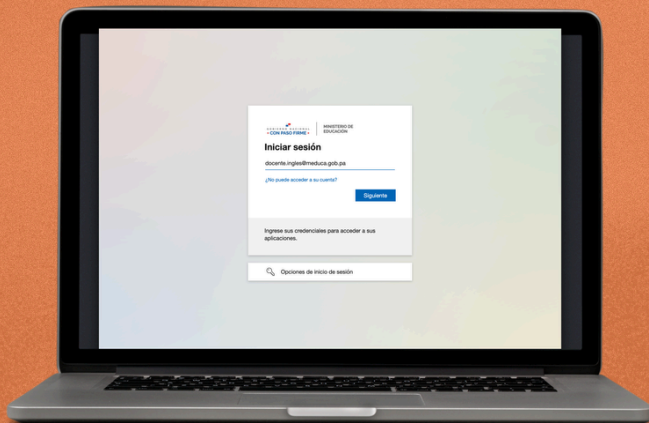
CALL TO ACTION

Follow these steps

4 **DOWNLOAD**
or use the web version
of Microsoft Teams

*Follow these steps*

6 **CLICK "JOIN"**
to access the group

*Follow these steps*

5 **LOG**
in with your institutional
email and password



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And that's it!

You're now part of the English
Teachers Network – ENRED.



MEET OUR TEAM

LOURDES DÍAZ NIETO*English Regional Supervisor for Los Santos*

Lourdes Díaz Nieto has dedicated her career to advancing English education in Panama. Since 2004, she has served as the English supervisor in the province of Los Santos, supporting teachers, developing strategies.

Guided by her mentor, Professor Nelva Peña, Lourdes shaped a philosophy grounded in passion, perseverance, and the belief that every learner deserves access to quality instruction. She views English not just as a subject, but as a powerful tool to connect with others, access knowledge, and open doors to opportunity.

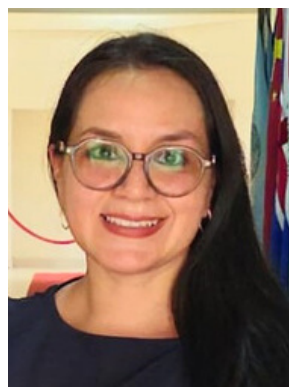
She has contributed to numerous teacher training initiatives, school projects, and community-based activities that make English learning practical, engaging, and relevant. Her leadership has strengthened teacher confidence and inspired students across urban and rural settings.

Challenges—especially limited resources in rural schools—taught her resilience, creativity, and the importance of adapting instruction to students' diverse needs. These experiences helped shape her into the thoughtful and resourceful leader she is today.

Often described as a mentor, motivator, and role model, Lourdes inspires others through her commitment and contagious energy. Outside of work, she values reading and spending quality time with family, which helps her stay grounded and balanced.

Looking ahead, she is determined to keep advancing English education in Los Santos, equipping teachers and students to thrive in a globalized world.

PROFILE OF THE MONTH

MAYBETH DE LA TORRE*English Teacher at Escuela Bilingüe Simón Bolívar*

Since beginning her teaching career in 2018, Maybeth has been committed to transforming classrooms into spaces of creativity, empathy, and purpose learning. In 2019, Escuela de Palmira,

Boquete, quickly recognized her dedication by naming her Teacher of the Year; this honor continues to inspire her work today. She now serves as the English Coordinator at Escuela Bilingüe Simón Bolívar, Panama Centro.

Maybeth's journey into teaching began by chance but quickly became a lifelong passion. She holds certifications in TESOL, TEFL, and TKT Young Learners, a postgraduate degree in English Didactics, and a Master's in Higher Education from Universidad Tecnológica de Panamá (2024). Her teaching embraces gamification, student-centered learning, and critical thinking to make education meaningful. She values her students' growth and confidence, especially when working with 2nd and 5th graders.

Beyond the classroom, Maybeth supports teacher development. In 2020, she collaborated with MEDUCA to train educators in digital tools for remote teaching. In 2025, she led workshops at the Summer Institute and contributed to the national curriculum pilot, gaining innovative strategies that drive results.

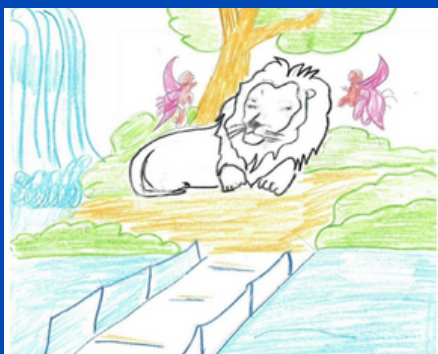
Outside of teaching, she enjoys creating educational materials, reading, swimming, and engaging with professional networks. Her dream is to see public school students graduate as fluent, confident English speakers who believe in their potential.



THUMBS UP!

We are proud to highlight **FESTICREC**, a storytelling contest designed to celebrate creativity, imagination, and cultural expression across different categories from elementary school children, to teachers, and even parents. This initiative not only fosters a love for reading and writing, but also encourages families and communities to come together around the power of stories.

We want to express our deepest gratitude to all the teachers who generously offered their time and talent to translate these inspiring tales. Thanks to their dedication, these stories can reach broader audiences and showcase the richness of ideas that come from our classrooms and homes alike.



RESOURCE CORNER

INTRODUCING KHANMIGO FOR TEACHERS: YOUR FREE, AI-POWERED TEACHING ASSISTANT

Khanmigo is an AI-powered teaching assistant from trusted education nonprofit Khan Academy. It is designed by teachers to make your role less about busy work. What normally takes hours can be done quickly with Khanmigo: differentiation, lesson plans, quiz questions, student groupings, hooks, exit tickets, rubrics, and more. Your prep time will be both faster and better.



Streamline your day-to-day prep.

Khanmigo makes planning your week easy with a suite of standards-aligned tools tailored to how you teach.

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Khanmigo creates lesson hooks about Taylor Swift or Roblox and recommends student groups. Get good results quickly with minimal prompting.



Defeat writer's block.

Khanmigo delivers quick first drafts for anything, from multilingual family emails to grading rubrics to in-class activities and problem sets with correct answers.

Explore more at:

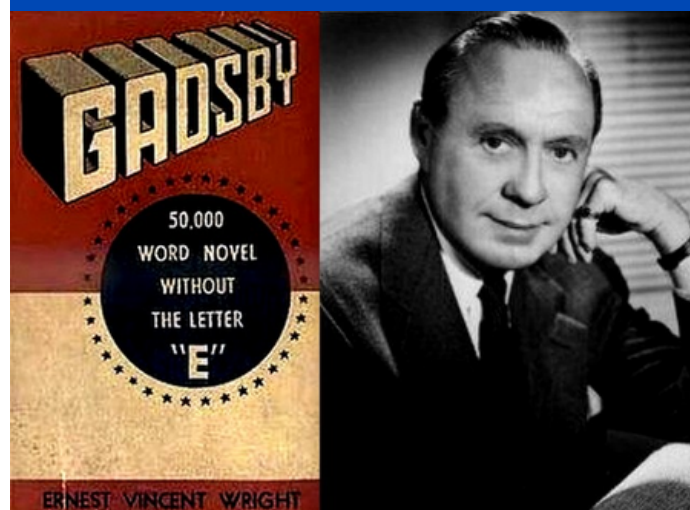
<https://www.khanmigo.ai/teachers>



A novel was written without using the letter "E"—and it's over 50,000 words long! 🤖🇵🇪

Back in 1939, author Ernest Vincent Wright published a novel called *Gadsby*, a remarkable example of a lipogram—a form of writing where a particular letter is intentionally left out. What makes this even more impressive is that "E" is the most commonly used letter in the English language. To stay true to the challenge, Wright even disabled the "E" key on his typewriter!

Despite the constraint, *Gadsby* tells a complete and coherent story, proving that limitations can spark incredible creativity. It's a fascinating read—and a true linguistic stunt!



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