

Virginia English Journal Call for Submissions

Vol. 73, Issue 2: Growth Mindset: What Failure Can Teach Us about Success!

"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall." — Ralph Waldo Emerson

It's mid-January as I write this, and like many of you, we have had a fragmented start to reestablishing classroom routines in 2025 post winter break. Well written plans and goals made at the beginning of the quarter have been revised and modified, sometimes two or three times. My students seem to alternate between being apathetic to working frantically, but inaccurately, as they struggle to finish assignments before the end of the marking period. It is cold. The days are short. The weeks are long.

I teach Juniors, so we are preparing for the upcoming EOC Writing SOL. Recently, my students responded to this prompt, "Failure is not the worst thing in the world, the very worst is not to try." I've been thinking about failure ever since I went to NCTE '24 in Boston in November.

I was thrilled to be able to represent VATE and accept the Affiliate Journal of Excellence award. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity and I will forever be grateful.

A few things are true about me: I am severely spatially challenged, I don't like to spend money on unnecessary expenses, I'm very stubborn, and I'm fiercely independent. When I got on the plane it was raining, when I had a layover in NJ it was raining, when I got to Boston it was raining, when I got to the hotel it was raining, when I got lost (in the daylight) walking to the conference center from the hotel it was raining. And I'm not talking about a little bit of rain, I mean so much rain that the gutters could barely keep up, so much rain that it was hard to see, a cold rain, a pelting rain, an unforgiving rain. By the time the conference was finished for the day and I left to walk to the dinner I'd been invited to attend, it was raining even harder and now, it was dark. I decided to not take an Uber because the expense was outrageous and the distance, at least according to my map app, was short and very walkable. I walked in the rain and the dark up and down the same stretches of street for over an hour. I knew, at that point, that I was terribly late for the meal and the most sensible thing to do would be to walk back to the hotel before my phone battery completely died. But then, just as I was about to give up, I found the restaurant. Only, I couldn't find the people I was supposed to meet. I had failed again to have the details of the reservation, or the phone number of people who could help me. I was soaked through. I was lost and alone in a strange city in the dark, the cold, and the pouring rain. I was almost out of phone battery and I wasn't very confident in my own ability to find my way back to the hotel without getting lost again. So, I did something I hate to do. I quit and began the long, wet walk back to the hotel. I was determined to learn

from at least some of this failure, so I decided to drop my fierce independence and my general disdain for asking for help and found a retired teacher couple who were heading my way - it was still wet and dark, but it wasn't so lonely. I'm sure this won't surprise you, but I got lost heading to the venue again in the morning (I didn't learn from my mistake either as I had opportunities to ask for directions). I got lost going back to the hotel that evening. I even got lost the third morning, but by then the rain had cleared a bit, it was light and I was able to start learning from all of the wrong turns. The last morning, I finally had the map of the area set in my head and started to understand where I was and where I needed to be. So, why do I share this long narrative about getting lost?

Because teaching, and learning is often about failing, regrouping, asking for help, trying something new, fixing our mistakes and then trying again. I know very few teachers who teach the exact same lessons from year to year. Teachers are constantly learning and working together to build something better to reach the kids we have in front of us today, not the kids we had last year or ten years ago. We are constantly failing, and it makes us better at what we do. So, for this issue I want to hear about your growth mindset in your classroom. What have your biggest failures been and how have they shaped your teaching? What have you learned when your students fail and you have to regroup and reteach? How do you use collaboration or technology or professional development or journals like this one to continue to grow and learn, even when teaching feels like a long wet walk in the dark? Share your worst - and then tell us how it made you better.

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: May 28, 2025.

Please visit the Virginia English Journal website to submit articles.

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