INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION

LITERACY TODAY

January/February 2020
Volume 37, Issue 4

What's Hot in Literacy 2020

- The most critical topics for shaping the future of literacy education
- The dos and don'ts of personalized learning
- Literacies that cross school walls and national boundaries

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We all know that Writing matters, but we also realize teaching writing is a complex task. At Corwin Literacy, we have put together resources from trusted experts to help you engage and enrich students' writing experiences while offering practical solutions for classroom implementation.

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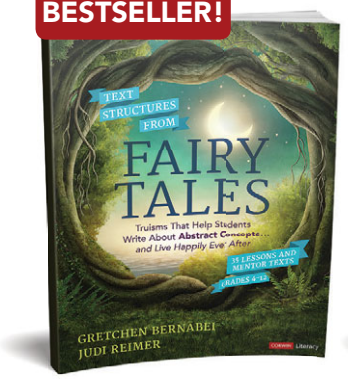

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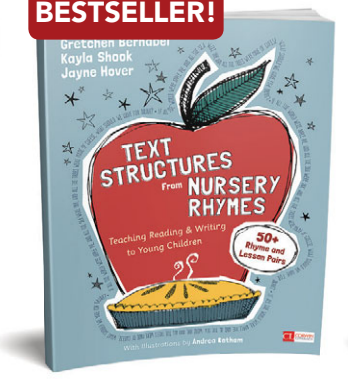

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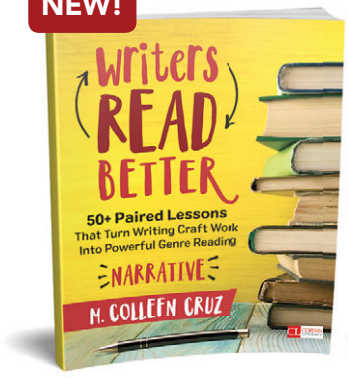

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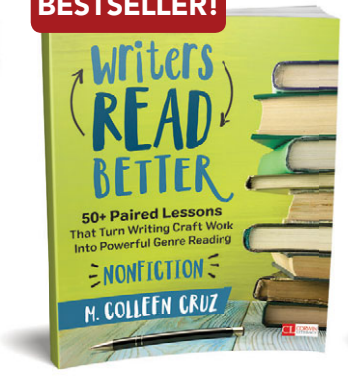

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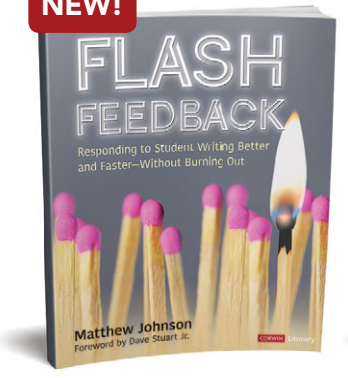

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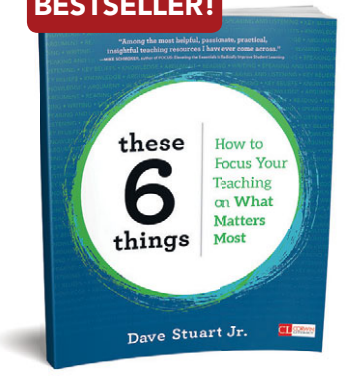

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Volume 37, Issue 4
January/February 2020

ABOUT US
Literacy Today is the bimonthly membership magazine of the International Literacy Association, a nonprofit that strives to empower educators, inspire students, and encourage teachers with the resources they need to make literacy accessible for all.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

LITERACY WORK AHEAD

Colleen Patrice Clark
Managing Editor
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As we enter a new decade, it's natural to take a step back and examine where the literacy field's priorities are, where they should be, and what we want to see accomplished in the years ahead. ILA is committed to shaping the future of literacy, and we're just as dedicated to ensuring we don't go it alone. We want our members and fellow literacy professionals to share in this work so we can shape the literacy agenda together.

Enter What's Hot in Literacy—a biennial survey and report from ILA that gauges the amount of attention topics are receiving, how much attention they *should* be receiving, and how conversations in literacy education need to shift. In recent years, the survey has expanded to give voice to more than 1,400 respondents from around the world.

For the 2020 iteration, we wanted to develop a deeper look at respondents' thoughts on what's truly most critical in literacy education and what our priorities should be in the next decade. To do this, we moved beyond simply ranking topics by asking a series of follow-up questions about challenges respondents face, support they want (and where that support should come from), and resources they need to improve literacy outcomes.

You can get a sneak peek at the results in our comprehensive feature on page 22—an analysis available only to *Literacy Today* readers—but be sure to download the full report when it's released on January 22 at **literacyworldwide.org/whatshot**.

ILA will be using the results to shape our direction in the years to come, and we encourage you to use the report as well to guide conversations within your schools, districts, and literacy communities.

Warmly,

DO YOU WANT TO...

- **Get more involved in the literacy conversation?**
- **Network with colleagues in your state and learn about global literacy?**
- **Be the first to hear about special literacy events near you?**

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Learn how to become a part of ILA's state, provincial, or local chapters, international affiliates, and Special Interest Groups!

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION

literacyworldwide.org/networks

What Research Really Says About Teaching Reading Livestream

During the ILA 2019 Conference in New Orleans, LA, the What Research Really Says About Teaching Reading—and Why That Still Matters panel made its debut. The panel dived into critical conversations about what we mean when we talk about evidence-based instruction, featuring renowned literacy scholars such as P. David Pearson and Nell K. Duke—both recipients of ILA's prestigious honor, the William S. Gray Citation of Merit. Although the conference may be over, a recording of the panel is available indefinitely for free and public access at **ilaconference.org/live-stream**. Just log in with your ILA account or create one for free to view the digital resource.

ILA 2020 Registration Opening Soon!

Registration for the ILA 2020 Conference in Columbus, OH, is scheduled to open in late February. This year's theme is "Shaping the Future of Literacy: 2020 Vision." ILA's annual conference serves as a forum for literacy and education professionals from all over the world to share personal experiences, cutting-edge research, and success stories in the field. Through robust discussion and workshops, participants will work together to create a shared vision for the field of literacy education as we enter this next decade.

Visit **ilaconference.org** for more information.

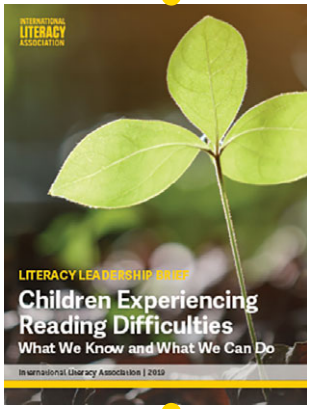
Choices Team Leaders Deadline Approaching

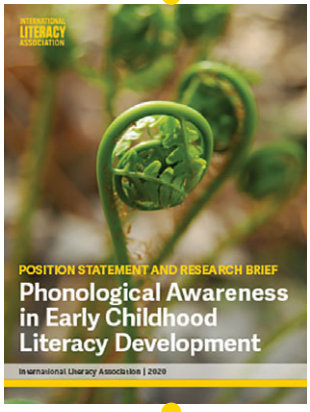
The deadline to apply to be a team leader for our Children's, Young Adults', or Teachers' Choices reading lists for the 2020–2023 term is **March 31, 2020**. ILA's Choices lists provide valuable insight every year into the favorite books of students and educators alike, personally handpicked by those who make up each group. Team leaders immerse themselves in a three-year professional development opportunity in which they lead the Choices project in their region and serve as a mentor for future team leaders. Application forms and brief descriptions for each project may be found at **literacyworldwide.org/choices**.

Where We Stand

The following pieces from ILA are now available or will be published soon. Check out **literacyworldwide.org/statements** to download each one.

- *Children Experiencing Reading Difficulties: What We Know and What We Can Do*, published in December, confronts the large amount of misinformation regarding reading difficulties and examines what we do and do not know from research
- *Right to Policies That Ensure Equitable Literacy Instruction*, published in December, stresses the importance of crafting policy that supports families and children struggling with nonacademic barriers to education
- *Phonological Awareness in Early Childhood Literacy Development*, a position statement and research brief scheduled to publish in January, delves into the importance of high-quality phonological awareness instruction for supporting literacy development and provides guidelines for classroom implementation





Remembering the Leaders We Lost in 2019

While we reflect on 2019 and the progress made in the field of literacy education, we also mourn the loss of several beloved literacy leaders and ILA members, such as brilliant poet and anthologist Lee Bennett Hopkins. These champions leave behind a legacy that won't be forgotten. As our community charges into the new year, these icons of the field serve as a reminder of the exemplary standards we should strive to reach in all things literacy.

Read ILA's memorial post written in their honor at **literacyworldwide.org/in-memoriam-2019**.

—Annie Lee

NEW MODELS OF PERSONALIZATION

The dos and don'ts of personalized learning

By **Paul Emerich France**

Paul Emerich France (paul.emerich.france@gmail.com) is a National Board Certified Teacher, author, and keynote speaker. He has been teaching elementary school for 10 years and recently published his first book on personalized learning, *Reclaiming Personalized Learning: A Pedagogy for Restoring Equity and Humanity in Our Classrooms* (Corwin Press).

The debate on personalization doesn't appear to be ending anytime soon, but it certainly is changing. Although we've learned a great deal about what doesn't work, we've also learned a great deal about what *does* work.

Flexible learning environments, learner profiles, personal learning pathways, and competency-based progressions are among the most recommended strategies to enable personalization. For some, these strategies require significant changes to existing classroom structures, and for others, these changes are subtle but welcome shifts in classroom culture.

Regardless, when making changes, be sure to consider the following dos and don'ts for personalization.

Don't over-individualize.

Many believe there is a direct relationship between individualization and personalization. But this isn't true. In fact, over-individualization can have significant detrimental effects on student learning and classroom culture.

Put simply, over-individualization creates divides among students, exacerbating toxic cultures of achievement and engendering competition among students. Inevitably, when varying levels of activities exist in the classroom, students easily differentiate between the "challenge" activities and those that are less challenging. This creates implicit hierarchies and fixed mind-sets in the classroom, causing teachers and students alike to label some as advanced and others as behind.

The alternative? *Do* use complex instruction.

The term *complex instruction* was coined by Elizabeth Cohen and Rachel Lotan at Stanford University in 1997. Complex instruction relies on a multi-ability curriculum to address issues of status within classrooms. A multi-ability curriculum is designed with varied entry points, ensuring access for all within a diverse group of students. This term recently gained momentum with the publication of *Mathematical Mindsets* (Jossey-Bass) by Stanford University professor Jo Boaler, in which she discusses the benefits of complex instruction on achievement and in dismantling equity challenges in mathematics classrooms.

Complex instruction can be applied to literacy through the workshop model. Lucy Calkins is renowned for making reading and writing workshop common practice in literacy classrooms. Within a workshop minilesson, students converge around a common provocation, preserving a collective sense of belonging and allowing for classwide learning objectives. Minilessons are accessible to all not because the teacher provides each student with an individualized text or minilesson, but because the teacher uses differentiated instruction to help all students access the content.

In reading workshop, this takes place through a think-aloud, read-aloud, or collective reading of complex text. After this minilesson, the teacher confers with students individually or in small groups, creating opportunities for individualized

feedback at levels of text that are within individual students' grasp but still related to classwide objectives. Here, we find a healthy amount of individualization, with students applying the minilessons to books of choice, without losing connectedness to the collective classroom culture and curriculum.

But far too many teachers fail to see that using the workshop model actualizes a model for personalized learning. They succumb to the pressures of technology initiatives, forcing students into automated programs that are more likely to chip away at a love for reading than they are to boost test scores—especially for those students who need it most.

Don't use digital curricula to achieve equity.

To achieve equity means to ensure all students are getting what they need. Personalized learning experiences that are meaningful, relevant, and accessible to all students—not digitally individualized—help us achieve this end.

The intention behind individualization is usually to achieve the aforementioned personal learning pathways, but what many teachers do not realize is that over-individualizing curriculum through digitally driven platforms actually threatens equity by creating the aforementioned divides among students, siloing them through gamified quantitative levels that attempt to extrinsically (and ephemerally) motivate students to consume more content.

This sends the wrong message to students, telling them that success is measured in terms of the amount of content consumed over the shortest period of time. In reality, for deep, meaningful, and personal learning to occur, we hope they'll make connections to other disciplines, collaborate with peers, and otherwise leverage the classroom culture to enrich learning experiences. This can't happen with digitally driven individualization.

Do try personalizing in three dimensions.

Personalization can occur without digital intervention at any point throughout the school day. Achieving personalization within whole-group, small-group, and individualized experiences is possible. I refer to these as the three dimensions of personalized learning.

In the first dimension, we leverage complex instruction to help all students integrate into a common task engineered for varied abilities. In the second dimension, we flexibly group students to provide a variety of small-group learning opportunities for ability-alike and ability-diverse groups of students. In the third dimension, we nurture students' inner dialogues through consistent conferring. By balancing these three dimensions, we preserve the collective conscious of the classroom through classwide curriculum while giving all students the individualized attention they need within small groups and conferences.

A sustainable path forward

When we conceptualize personalization in three dimensions, we liberate ourselves and our students. We not only preserve equity within our classrooms but also relieve ourselves of the responsibility of unnecessarily planning individual curricular pathways for each student. That teachers are overworked goes without saying, and our models for personalization must not add insult to injury. Instead, they must remove barriers to personalization for both teachers and students.

The three dimensions of personalized learning help us forge a path toward a brand of personalized learning that not only is sustainable but also restores the humanity that so many of our classrooms have lost in this digital age of personalization.

After all, to learn is to be human, and to be human is to perpetually engage in the process of learning. As a result, our humanity is our most precious commodity in our schools—and if you ask me, we can't afford to lose any more of it. ■

CYPHERS FOR JUSTICE

The role of beyond-school literacies in developing critical thinking and social awareness

By **Limarys Caraballo**, **Jordon Comrie**, & **Gloria Tsang**

Limarys Caraballo (limarys.caraballo@qc.cuny.edu) is an associate professor at Queens College and Graduate Center, CUNY, in New York. She is the founding codirector of Cyphers for Justice and the coeditor of the Sustaining Multilingual Literacies department in ILA's *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*.

Jordon Comrie is an undergraduate student at Alfred State College of Technology, SUNY.

Gloria Tsang is a senior at Townsend Harris High School in New York.

Many current debates about literacy focus on college readiness, where students' preparation for college, career, and civic participation is framed by skill- and competency-based perspectives. Yet such a framing of literacy offers little preparation for future citizens who will fight for a more just society in the midst of these complex and tumultuous times.

A powerful alternative is one in which literacy education is embraced as an opportunity to support students' and teachers' critical engagement with literacies and education writ large. At Cyphers for Justice, we do just that: We explore the overlaps among literacies, activism, and pedagogy via a critical youth studies lens.

Cyphers for Justice

Cyphers for Justice (CFJ; **iume.tc.columbia.edu/research#cfj**) is a youth and teacher development program in New York City that apprentices youth and preservice teachers as critical researchers through the use of hip-hop, spoken word, digital literacy, and critical social research methods. Grounded in Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) and hip-hop culture, CFJ is an intergenerational space where youth work alongside their peers, undergraduate and graduate students, professors, and community-based teaching artists to conduct research and present their findings on relevant social issues.

Our team represents a collaborative of researchers across educational levels and institutions (K–12 through university) working on various social justice issues in the context of after-school seminars that focus on youth culture, critical literacies and social theory, and research methods and design. Youth and preservice teacher participant-researchers engage in every phase of inquiry, from design and implementation to critical reflection, analysis, and performance, in collaboration with academic researchers and community artists. CFJ's curriculum, developed in collaboration with youth, simultaneously introduces high school students and preservice teachers to multiple literacies and critical research methods and explores opportunities to report and to act on research results using a range of rhetorical modes, from digital literacies to hip-hop and spoken word.

By creating spaces in which students and teachers may engage in dialogue and critical analysis on key social and educational issues, our collaboration seeks to build upon recent critical youth research to disrupt the ways in which critical thinking is taught as a skill, a "neutral" higher order thinking activity. Critical pedagogy scholars such as Michael Apple and Ernest Morrell have demonstrated that criticality is never neutral, that all curricula have an agenda, and that every agenda privileges some interests and marginalizes others—so engaging students in that conversation is critical to their active role in their own education and community.

In what follows, two CFJ alums discuss how their experience changed their ideas about literacy, agency, and civic engagement.

Jordon: How Cyphers for Justice shaped my activism

Prior to Cyphers, I witnessed issues that plagued my community and had a passion to help people, but I felt powerless to do anything. When I joined Cyphers for Justice, I was happy to meet people my age who shared similar values. We all wanted to help others, and CFJ taught us that when working together, anything is possible.

Our adult allies helped us to identify social problems that were important to us and then broaden our understanding by collecting our own data, such as through interviews and surveys. My research for CFJ focused on the school-to-prison pipeline in order to learn how to break that cycle for future generations. My group members and I studied the environments and curriculum experiences of students of color in inner-city schools. We then discussed the resemblances shared between school security and prison programming.

At the end of the semester, my peers and I presented at the Reimagining Education Institute at Teachers College, Columbia University. Then, when I was given the opportunity to become a youth board member, I quickly jumped at it. I also got to participate in conferences at the United Nations, the American Educational Research Association, and others. I was able to cofacilitate events for middle schoolers in the Bronx and for youth detained at Rikers Island. I even had the opportunity to help new Cyphers members develop their research and artistic talent.

After being exposed to people from all over the world, I have developed a sense of civic duty that goes beyond my community. The issues in my country are the same issues that plague others. Discrimination, poverty, miseducation or barriers to education, and poor access to health/mental health care are all issues that we can relate to. When I take the stage to perform my poetry, or even have everyday conversations on topics of human rights, I promote equity and cultural understanding.

I am forever indebted to the mentors and family I have gained through Cyphers, who have all helped to make me a better leader and a better member of my community. Of course, I still wish to see the problems in my community resolved, so I will follow in the footsteps of revolutionaries I admire (such as Fred Hampton, founder of the Rainbow Coalition) and I believe that change will come.

Gloria: Reimagining college-going literacies

In a classroom, I'd always been led to view *literature* through different "gazes" and "lenses." But these attempts to unravel further layers of text were

rather unfulfilling, revealing no substantial connection between the literature and my reality.

Even in my current humanities class, when my professor talks of Patricia Salzman-Mitchell's feminist take on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, this analysis through a feminist lens just doesn't *click* with me or my life. Yet this is the closest I've been able to connect to the text within the limits of academia, aligning myself with female characters who are limited by their inherent lack of masculine agency. But the relation stops here, and except for the fact that the characters and I have both suffered woes on the basis of being women, the text and I lose any form of intimacy.

This was similar to how I interacted with *literacy*; I viewed it one-dimensionally and at a distance, perceiving literacy to be nothing more than writing and reading skills needed to advance knowledge. Literacy was undoubtedly important, and I could acknowledge how essential it was to education, but it was also *flat*.

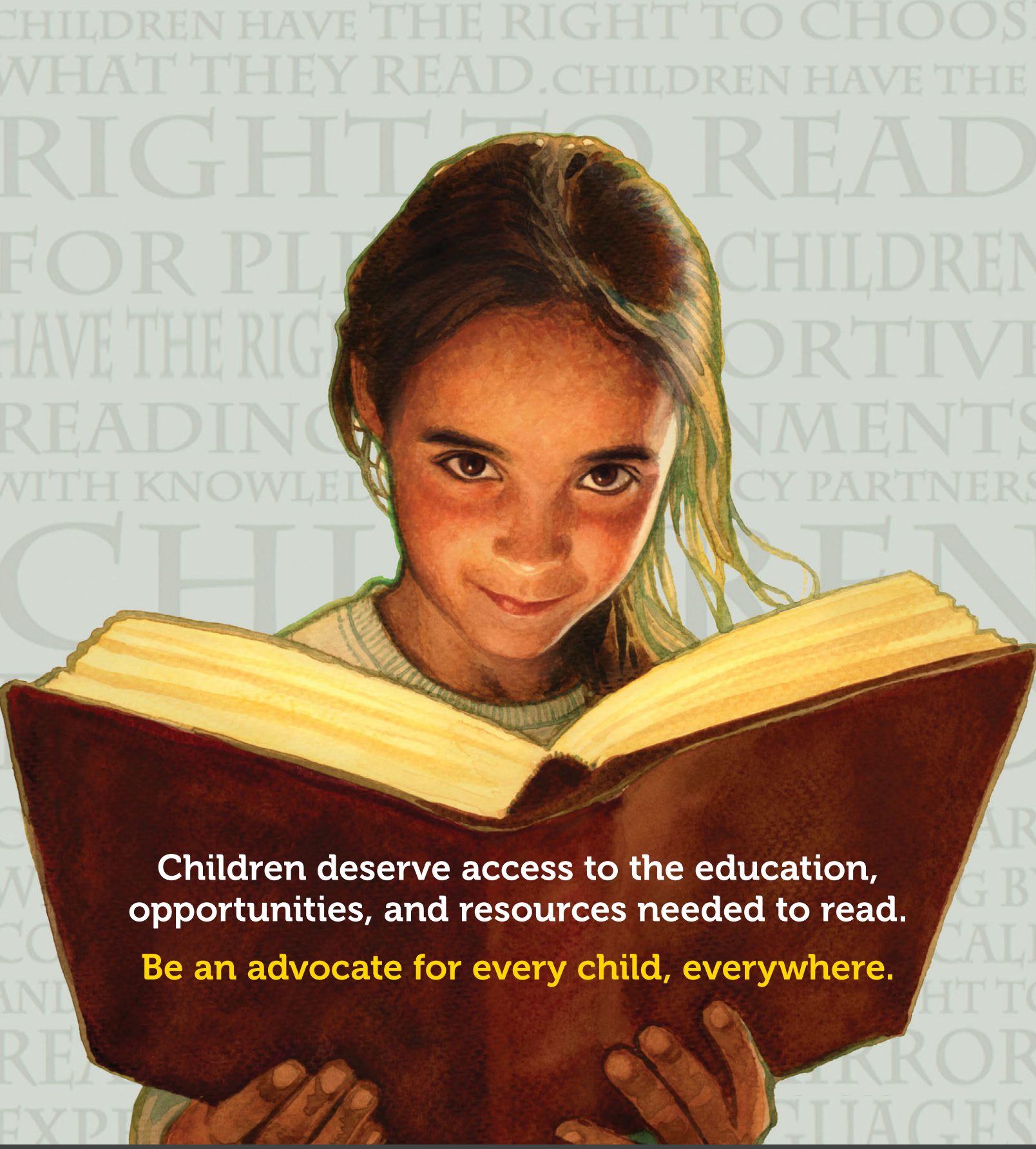
This changed when I was exposed to the ideologies Cyphers for Justice was built upon, and I was suddenly equipped with a more culturally and racially aware literary lens. I became more aware of the intersections between class and race within literacy, both textually and audibly. For example, when reading articles with my peers, I frequently consider socioeconomic and racial aspects that wouldn't have crossed my mind before Cyphers. Is this article about hydraulic fracking simply about public vs. corporate interests? Or is there also a disparity between how indigenous people and other folks are impacted? Did the author take those divides into account?

Before Cyphers, I had never even heard of the terms *culturally sustaining pedagogies* or *digital literacy*, much less how they could be applied in a school curriculum. Nor did I ever expect that I would spend a good chunk of my time as a student activist advocating for these educational models to be implemented within school systems. Cyphers taught me the importance and value of connecting my background to literacy, that it was not only possible but also beneficial to me.

What's next: Rethinking college-going literacies

YPAR is a critical approach that privileges the firsthand experiences and knowledge production of youth as agents of social change. These projects, and the opportunity to draw on youth culture and hip-hop to make sense of the issues faced by their peers and communities, lead to inquiries that are designed, conducted, reported, and acted on by the youth who are most affected.

YPAR projects contribute to an expanding literacy toolbox that not only helps students to critically analyze their world, but also serves to increase teachers' repertoires. As teachers become increasingly aware of critical issues and barriers related to student learning, we are more likely to engage youth as learning partners. Incorporating student voice in curriculum and pedagogy challenges teachers to rethink literacy learning as a collaborative and democratic endeavor with—rather than for—youth. ■



INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION

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ATTENTION TO AFFECT

Rehumanizing literacy pedagogy through a focus on affect

By **Kelly C. Johnston**

Kelly C. Johnston (kelly_johnston@baylor.edu), an ILA member since 2009, is an assistant professor of literacy at Baylor University in Texas. Her areas of interest and specialization include sociocultural, critical, and affective approaches to literacy theory, research, and practice; classroom-based research; and integrating literacy pedagogy in interdisciplinary, out-of-school spaces.

At the International Literacy Association (ILA) 2019 Conference in October, the theme "Creating a Culture of Literacy" brought issues of equity front and center. Keynote and session presenters advocated for our most vulnerable students who are positioned as "struggling" or "failing" when they do not align with the expected performance of the "ideal" learner in our classrooms.

This concern resonates with thousands of educators. We must continue to work toward equitable and humanizing literacy pedagogy if we are to create a culture of literacy that seeks to honor and support students in who they are and who they are becoming.

Literacy pedagogy extends *before* and *beyond* a teacher's plan for instruction and student learning. Our values—philosophical, ethical, theoretical—always seep into who we are in the classroom and how we enact literacy pedagogy. This enactment also extends the pedagogical plan. Plans are one thing, but the actual enactment of literacy pedagogy is produced through an entanglement of instruction, materials, texts, and people that is felt and experienced in affectively charged ways.

Scholar Brian Massumi defines *affect* as the capacity to affect and be affected. In this sense, *affect* refers to the ways things and people act upon and with one another to create effects of all kinds. Students in our classrooms are always experiencing affect as they interact with one another, the world around them, texts, materials, policies, and so on. Whether through socially charged interactions, visceral response, or inexplicable felt perceptions, students' literacy engagement is always affectively charged. Understanding the nature and presence of affect, then, might support our efforts in enacting humanizing literacy pedagogy in the classroom.

Literacy as affectively charged

Understanding literacy as affectively charged calls attention to felt intensities in the process of literacy engagement and learning. As defined in ILA's Literacy Glossary, literacy is "the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context." We know these literate practices are multiple, multimodal, and socially and culturally constructed, but what about the felt processes of engaging in these literate practices?

In their book *Affect in Literacy Learning and Teaching* (Routledge), scholars Kevin Leander and Christian Ehret argue for affect as a way to think about how these practices "*feel* as fully embodied experiences that are constantly unfolding." The relationship between literacy and affect entails recognizing literacy's capacity to affect intensities we sense or feel, even before we can name them.

These intensities emerge through students' literacy engagement and, in turn, charge how they think, experience the world around them, and their "becoming" different-from-before. This includes who they are as literate beings. Why should these intensities be any less important than what someone or something else has imposed onto our students? Why should imposed control relegate students'

lived, felt experiences in ways that position them as off task, deviant, or out of control? Although I believe most educators want students to engage with literacies, we must foster opportunities for that to happen on terms that are less about imposed outcomes and control and more about the affective experience.

Valuing students' affective engagement

When students get caught up, charged with literate activity, it is because of the bodies affected and becoming in that moment, not because of that five-paragraph essay or whatever textual endpoint another entity has determined for them. As a teacher educator and researcher, I have used affect theory to recognize unsanctioned forms of engagement produced through intensities of socially charged interactions, spontaneous peer literacy instruction, visceral response, and collective agency.

Inarticulable sensations, what might be more felt and visceral than planned and intentional, are a very real part of literacy engagement. For instance, when students' affective engagement moves toward other potentials—discontent, resistance, violence—educators might consider what constructs (e.g., racism, sexism, neoliberalism) affect such engagement. This mobilizes educators' support of and relationship with students, seeking out what might be worked against so that a different potential can be affected.

If educators were to value students' affective engagements with literacy, perhaps lesson plans and pedagogical choices might follow suit. Such changes would not only open up pathways for students to engage with literacies in our classrooms, but also push against overtly imposed schooled literacies that tend to dehumanize students by negating their affectively charged literacy engagement.

(Re)humanizing literacy pedagogy in our schools

As educators, we must allow students to be human—to feel, to be moved, to act—as they become literate in the classroom. Becoming literate values students engaging with texts, with

one another, and with the world as an evolving, indeterminate, felt process. This is different from controlling the predetermined, fixed definition of what it means to be literate. This is too limiting for our students and has often worked to dehumanize students who veer from the idealized path.

In his featured speaker session at ILA 2019, scholar David Kirkland urged educators to start not with *what* we teach but *who* we teach. When we think about the teaching of literacy and what defines a successful literacy learner, reading levels, test scores, or assessments are most frequently the markers of success. This is the dominant system within which we are working. However, we must also work against this system because, at its best, it marginalizes the multiple, diverse literacies our students affectively engage with every day, and at its worst, it harms our most vulnerable students—black, brown, poor—when labeled, sorted, and punished through normed enactments of schooled literacy.

Indeed, it is not what we teach, but who we teach. An affective perspective moves forward efforts to (re)humanize literacy teaching and learning in classrooms. The (re) signifies the move to humanize differently from before. How might affect move educators to (re)humanize literacy pedagogy in a way we have not yet experienced? Affect theory pushes us to look toward what we do not yet know but what *could be*. ■

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE

The digital edition of *Literacy Today* includes an additional Literacy Leadership article by **Michael Haggen** about steps administrators can take to serve as literacy leaders and create a culture of literacy. Print readers: Log in at **literacyworldwide.org /literacytoday** to read the digital issue.

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE

SUPPORTING THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY

How literacy leaders can set the example

By **Michael Haggen**

Michael Haggen (mhaggen@scholastic.com), an ILA member since 2019, is the chief academic officer for Scholastic Education. He has more than 25 years of academic experience, having served as a teacher, principal, chief academic officer, deputy superintendent, and direct report to superintendents in three school districts.

I have spent time in hundreds of school districts. Time and again, I meet with school leaders who express the tremendous pressure they feel to be all-knowing and well-versed on content, curriculum requirements, and more in order to be effective. But I believe that the most effective literacy leaders are those who embrace lifelong learning and make it a priority in their schools.

Administrators who view themselves as lead learners help to foster inclusive and literacy-rich environments where continued learning and growing is encouraged for everyone—students, teachers, and leaders alike.

While working toward cultivating a schoolwide culture of literacy, there are five helpful and important considerations for guiding learning, serving as the lead learner, and being a literacy leader.

1. Commit to a promise of practice.

Teachers look to school leaders to support them, just as students depend on their teachers for support. Of course, there are challenges, but spending time together and getting to know one another is helpful for building the background knowledge needed to directly address these needs. This extends across all relationships within the school community.

Inspired by discussions during a recent Literacy Leaders' Institute, I like to think about taking a problem of practice and turning it into a promise of practice in regard to instruction, which is a guarantee that with strategic, ongoing professional learning and support, everyone will work toward improving academic and social-emotional outcomes for students. We call it a *promise of practice* because we shift the focus from "What is the student doing wrong?" to "What can I, as the classroom or leadership practitioner, do to improve my daily practice?"

Administrators who view themselves as lead learners help to foster inclusive and literacy-rich environments where continued learning and growing is encouraged for everyone.

2. Spend time in classrooms.

School leaders should also immerse themselves in classrooms during the school day. Taking regular literacy walks is a way for administrators to check in on the implementation of their schools' comprehensive literacy plans. Observing classrooms in action is the only way to truly hear students' needs and see the teaching that is taking place. With this background knowledge, school leaders can then give teachers the tailored professional learning they need to provide targeted instruction and reach their students where they are with individualized attention.

3. Take part in professional learning.

School leaders set an example for their staff, so they too should be engaging in the specific professional learning opportunities they deem important. This means participating in workshops alongside teachers and modeling key skills for deeper learning using their strengths.

According to the Scholastic *Teacher & Principal School Report: Equity in Education*, more than 97% of teachers and principals agree they want effective, ongoing, relevant professional development. Teachers are looking for ways to keep growing as professionals in order to help students reach their full potential. School leaders must listen to this call, make sure that efforts are aligned, and set an example for their staff. Teachers and principals should attend professional learning workshops together, working and learning as one community. This sets a tone for continued, collaborative learning that will benefit everyone.

4. Incorporate families and community members.

Let's not forget how important it is to consistently communicate instructional plans with families and community members. Scholastic's report also indicates that 45% of teachers and 60% of principals say reaching out to community partners to offer services to families is among the most important things they can do to help families be engaged with children's learning. For students, this allows independent reading and learning to continue outside of school.

Academic research from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development shows that the opportunity to practice independent reading every day leads to higher test scores on measurements of reading comprehension. When time is spent reading both in and out of school, and everyone throughout the community is aligned on learning goals, the workload of the instructional leader, or lead learner, is supported through synergy.

5. Concentrate efforts on effective teaching and learning.

This is where balance comes in. When student-centered teaching is the focus, teachers are supported and students are engaged. Discipline and attendance worries are reduced because when students are excited and committed to their learning, they have more motivation to come to school.

A recent state-by-state analysis of U.S. testing data from Attendance Works shows that students who miss more school than their peers consistently score lower on standardized tests at every age, demographic group, and location tested. Engagement and commitment to learning is crucial for student success everywhere.

Although leaders are focused on supporting the entire school community, they may not know all content areas, but committing to a promise of practice, taking literacy walks, participating in whole-staff professional learning, involving families and the community, and prioritizing learning for everyone builds up the entire school community. This is supported by a strong and inclusive culture of literacy in which everyone—students, teachers, and instructional leaders—sees themselves as lifelong learners. ■

TRANSNATIONAL LITERACIES

Connecting globally for rich literacy instruction

By **Margaret R. Hawkins** & **Lisa Velarde**

Margaret R. Hawkins (mhawkins@education.wisc.edu), an ILA member since 2017, is a professor in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her work focuses on languages, literacies, and learning in classroom, home, and community-based settings in domestic, global, and transnational contexts. She is the recipient of the ILA 2019 Erwin Zolt Digital Literacy Game Changer Award.

Lisa Velarde is a PhD candidate in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She has taught English to adults in Mexico and middle school language arts in Salt Lake City, UT. Her research focuses on digital literacy practices and cross-cultural communications of youth in transnational contexts.

The ways in which youth engage with one another changes at speeds that make keeping up with the latest a true feat. Not only are students interacting with new apps, platforms, and websites constantly, but also their interactions often take them far beyond their local communities.

Researchers Eva Lam and Doris Warriner found that many immigrant youth participated in transnational literacy practices—maintaining relationships with family members and friends in their home countries, incorporating a variety of linguistic and nonlinguistic modes in communication, and moving between different cultural systems—daily through digital communication.

As the lived literacy practices of youth have changed with the demands of this era of globalization and digitization, classroom literacy practices have, for the most part, stayed the same as they were a generation ago. As a result, very rich opportunities for literacy instruction are being missed. Committing to equity means preparing students to interact with not only their local peers but also diverse global ones.

Critical cosmopolitanism

In a world that is increasingly divided, one important facet in transnational communications is how people are encountering and making sense of one another across distances. Theorist Kwame Anthony Appiah defines cosmopolitanism as the ties that bind us beyond "kith and kind" and the moral and ethical obligations we have to strangers in our world. Yet all too often when people from different linguistic, cultural, and geographic backgrounds communicate as strangers, the effect is to further strengthen existing stereotypes and biases as people position and judge one another. This happens not only in transnational communications but also in classrooms and communities at a local level.

Critical cosmopolitanism, as we define it, addresses difference and diversity and issues a call for initiatives that work toward equity. As educators, our responsibility is to foster dispositions of inquiry, openness, and care, such that in transnational (and other) encounters, youth can learn with and from one another, leading to new and equitable relationships.

Transmodalities

Much of the communication that occurs across distances occurs digitally, whether it be immigrants connecting with family back home or youth participating in chat rooms online or posting on social media platforms. Literacies take on new forms, with expanded modes and features, in digital communications.

In order for students to participate in online exchanges, new literacy resources must be available. Online communication involves not only text but also sound, gesture, motion, timing, icons, and symbols (and so on), which may have different meanings in different cultures and contexts. How do we

understand what meanings are carried by new combinations of features and resources? And, when signs and symbols have different meanings in different places, how do we know that the messages we intend to send are being received?

We have developed a theory of transmodalities to think about aspects of transnational literacies in order to better understand how people are making sense of one another through digital exchanges. For educators, an important aspect of this is that, as students engage in transnational literacies, they must consider *audience*. Who are these people engaging with them, and how does their understanding of these others shape the ways in which they craft their messages and, reflexively, the ways in which messages are received?

Theories in action

We have implemented Global StoryBridges (**globalstorybridges.com**), a project in which youth in under-resourced communities around the world communicate and collaborate online. It embodies task-based, dialogic learning. Youth, together in their sites and with support from an adult facilitator, explore their lives and communities, then make a digital story (short video) that represents an aspect that they wish to convey to their global peers. As videos are posted, youth per site watch and discuss them, then post comments and questions in a chat space beneath the video, which the video makers then respond to.

Youth learn from and with one another, with facilitators ensuring that critical discussions occur around issues of diversity and equity. Youth are learning language, literacy, and digital skills while forging relations with peers transnationally. Some project sites are in schools while others are in community-based sites. We feel that these learning goals can also be met using the following classroom activities:

- **Engage students in critically examining their everyday literacy practices and assumptions.** The first step in breaking down harmful stereotypes is to critically examine our own assumptions and beliefs about what literacy is and is meant to do. Have students keep a log of all of the ways in which they engage in communication with others over the course of a week. Not only can this expand simplistic school-based notions of what literacy is, but also it can challenge inequalities present in the classroom as students are positioned as being multiliterate rather than as "advanced" or "struggling" readers/writers.
- **Expose students to youth-produced, global media.** In addition to exposing students to the handful of renowned global authors who are typically part of a curriculum in an effort to diversify perspectives, expose students to texts produced by their peers. Youth around the world are producing innovative media. Because of the abundance of platforms where youth publish their work, access to voices and perspectives of global youth is at our fingertips.
- **Leverage the transnational literacies and connections of students.** As you build relationships with your students, find out with whom and in what ways they communicate outside of school. Incorporate these transnational connections and practices into your classroom and curriculum. Finding creative ways for students to leverage their and their classmates' connections with friends and family creates global opportunities to interact with different languages, cultures, and formats for communication.
- **Engage with authentic and diverse audiences.** As students produce texts for audiences with diverse languages, cultures, or histories, they are required to creatively incorporate and examine a wide variety of modes. To write, create, or produce for an audience, one must imagine the audience. How better to foster critical cosmopolitan attitudes of inquiry, openness, and care than to have students learn with and from their diverse global peers?

Transnational pedagogies

The goal is to engage creatively and purposefully in literacy instruction that challenges the divisions, prejudices, and problematic attitudes that affect our world.

Designing pedagogy for transnational, digital literacy—the act of engaging with diverse people through a variety of modes, across distances, technology, and differences—can make great strides toward that goal. ■

FURTHER READING

Appiah, K.A. (2006). *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a world of strangers.* New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co.

Hawkins, M.R. (2018). Transmodalities and transnational encounters: Fostering critical cosmopolitan relations. *Applied Linguistics, 39*(1), 55–77.

Hawkins, M.R. (2020). Toward critical cosmopolitanism: Transmodal transnational engagements of youth. In E. Moore, J. Bradley, & J. Simpson (Eds.), *Translanguaging as transformation: The collaborative construction of new linguistic realities.* Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

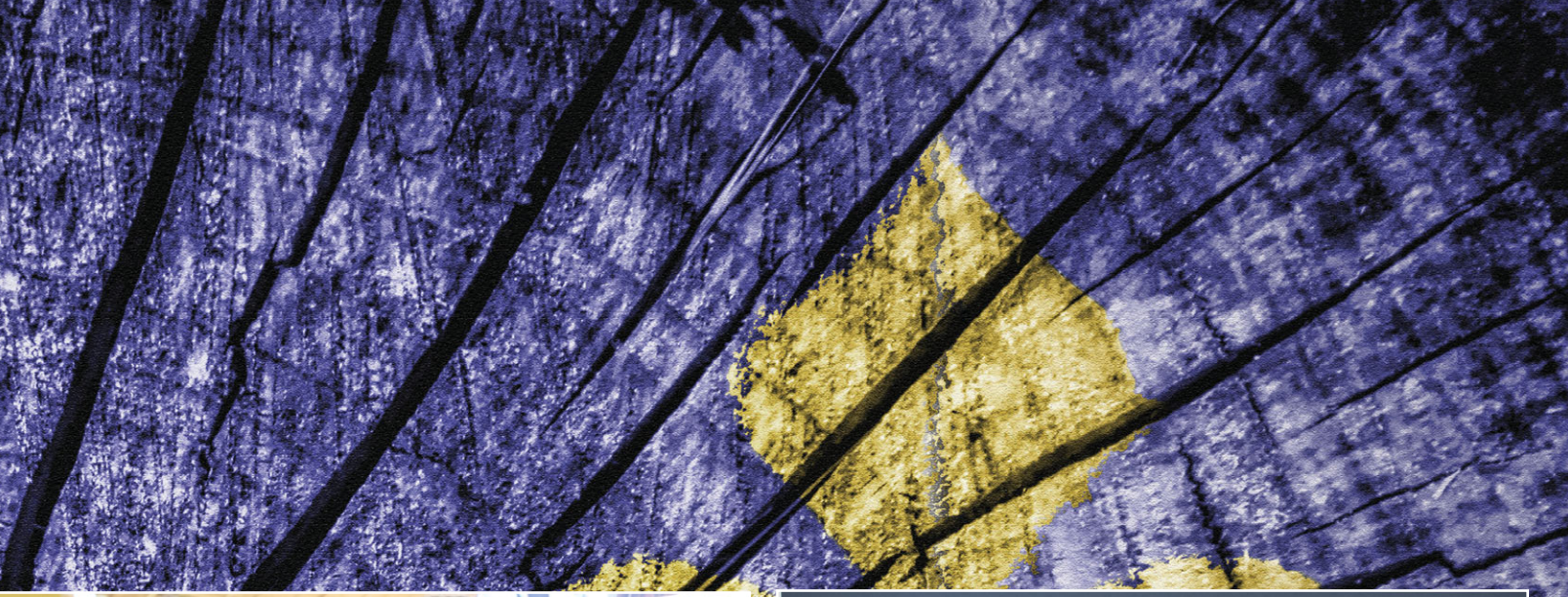
Lam, W.S.E., & Warriner, D.S. (2012). Transnationalism and literacy: Investigating the mobility of people, languages, texts, and practices in contexts of migration. *Reading Research Quarterly, 47*(2), 191–215.

OUR ILA 2019 PHOTO RECAP

Day-by-day highlights from NOLA

After more than a year of planning and anticipation, the whirlwind experience of ILA 2019 is now behind us—but the learning hasn't stopped. Discussions continue to spread around the collaborative work that took place, the networking opportunities that were had, and the thought-provoking sessions that were held, such as the Equity in Education Program events focused on the connections between social-emotional learning and literacy.

Before we start counting down the days to ILA 2020 (**Oct. 15–18, 2020, in Columbus, OH!**), let's take a look back at some day-by-day highlights from New Orleans, LA. Also be sure to check out the Conferences & Events section of our blog (**literacyworldwide.org/blog**), where you'll find more highlights from #ILA19, including a recap of our What Research Really Says Panel.




INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION


ILA 2020


Reading for All!
Reading for All!
Reading for All!
Teachers Change the World
Student at a Time


LITERACY ASSOCIATION
ILA
LEARNIN
SALON

1 Thursday, Oct. 10: Institutes, Edcamp Literacy, and the Welcome to ILA 2019 Event


Institute Day


Welcome to ILA 2019 Event


Edcamp Literacy


Welcome to ILA 2019 Event

2 Friday, Oct. 11: General Session, David Kirkland, the Equity in Education Program, Dave Stuart Jr., and Literacy Night at Mardi Gras World


Chelsea Clinton and Kimberly Eckert

Stuart


Literacy Night


Pedro Noguera during the Equity in Education Program

Kirkland

Saturday, Oct. 12: The ILA 2019 Awards & Reception, Donalyn Miller, Tricia Ebarvia, the Equity in Education Program, and the Research Address

3

Marcie Craig Post, Bernadette Dwyer, D. Ray Reutzel, and Kathy N. Headley


Miller


Ebarvia

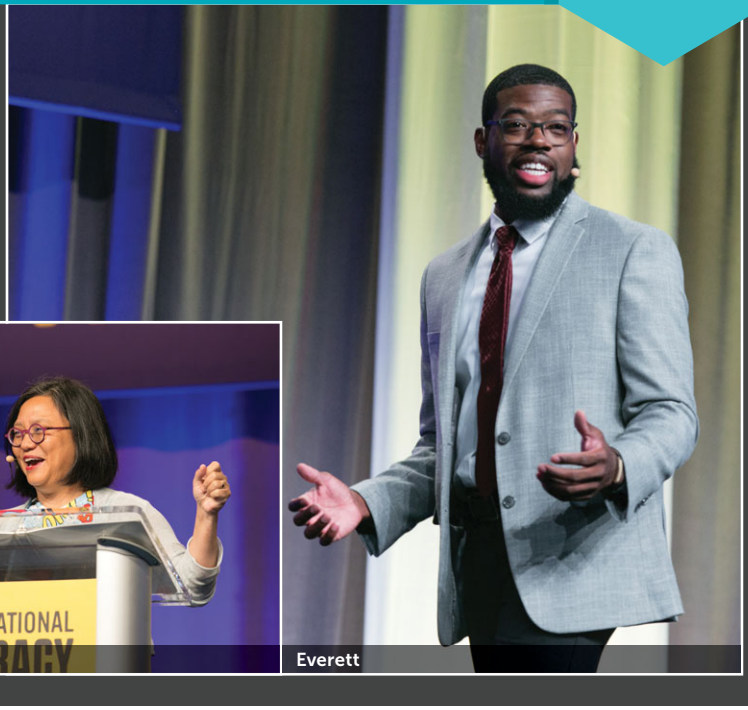

Steve Graham during the Research Address roundtables


Shawna Coppola, Tiana Silvas, Tamera Slaughter, Gerald Dessus, and Kimberly Eckert during the Equity in Education Program

Sunday, Oct. 13: Children's Literature Day Author Meetups and Keynotes Chad Everett, Linda Sue Park, Matt Mendez, and Ruta Sepetys

4


Juana Medina, second from left, at the Author Meetups


Everett

Sepetys


Mendez

Park

Gerald Dessus presenting during the 30 Under 30 Power Hour at ILA 2019

LITERACY AND SOCIAL ACTION

A reflection on my experiences at ILA 2019

By **Gerald Dessus**

Gerald Dessus (gcdessus@gmail.com), an ILA member since 2019, is a social justice teacher at The Philadelphia School in Pennsylvania. He is an ILA 2019 30 Under 30 honoree.

I vividly remember reading *The Bully* (Townsend Press) in Mrs. Collier-Bacon's seventh-grade language arts class at Wagner Middle School. As I often mention to my students, Paul Langan's teen novel was the first time I felt reflected in literature. There was a character who looked like me and shared similar experiences in public education, and that windows and mirrors moment helped me fall in love with literature. After reading this text from the Bluford Series, I read every book I could get my hands on.

At this point, I realized why I wanted to teach. For me, reading was an opportunity to experience life through the eyes of a character, allowing me to escape the reality of violence and poverty in my Philadelphia neighborhood. I began wondering how many lives I could change if I helped other black and brown students, specifically black boys, fall in love with literature.

At the time, I never imagined that I would have the opportunity to join thousands of educators from all over the world at a convening designed not only to unpack new research to support literacy instruction, but also, and more important, to explore the intersections among social-emotional learning (SEL), equity, and literacy.

Our work is interconnected

At the International Literacy Association (ILA) 2019 Conference in New Orleans, LA, in October, I attended the General Session and other keynotes and was moved by the thought-provoking statements shared. Literacy advocate and educator Chad C. Everett asked us to consider how we align the words on a page of a book with words in our world. Nationally Distinguished Principal Hamish Brewer challenged us to think about our legacy: "When you give students the opportunity to read and write, you give them a chance to change the world."

Brewer's statement was a recurring theme at ILA 2019. As educators, we understand now more than ever the deep connection between literacy and social action, which is why equity—including ensuring access to literature that provides windows and mirrors—is so important.

Although I had my own presentation to prepare for, I made space to attend Friday's Equity in Education Program—"The Intersection of Literacy, Equity, and Social-Emotional Learning"—where Pedro Noguera shared a sentiment that teachers have echoed for years: "If you only focus on tests, you'll fail to provide kids with what they need."

Later, Justina Schlund from the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning asked educators who are doing the work of SEL to think about their purpose: "Are you doing SEL to produce calm and compliant students? Or do you engage in SEL work to produce active citizens who will be prepared to go out and positively impact society?"

That question resonated with me because too often SEL becomes code for building stronger relationships with students in order to increase compliance, which undermines its essence and purpose.

From left to right, Shawna Coppola, Tiana Silvas, Tamera Slaughter, Gerald Dessus, and Kimberly Eckert at ILA 2019 discussing integrating social-emotional learning in the literacy classroom

Later that day, I had the pleasure of sharing my work as a social justice teacher leader and curriculum writer alongside my fellow ILA 2019 30 Under 30 honorees. I met Matt Panozzo and heard how he uses literacy to teach middle school students about identity and empathy in Houston, TX. Patrick Burke discussed his work with teacher preparation programs in Ireland. I spoke at length with Nangamso Mtsatse about the work she is pioneering in South Africa around literacy instruction for elementary students in their native languages. And I was deeply moved by Shontoria Walker's work with black boys in Texas. Through her research, she found that SEL does affect achievement. Sharing a platform with young educators who have a positive impact on communities around the world was an honor and a privilege.

SEL is deeply embedded in literacy

The next day, I joined Kimberly Eckert, Shawna Coppola, Tamera Slaughter, and Tiana Silvas for the Equity in Education Program event, "Integrating Social-Emotional Learning in the Literacy Classroom." Eckert reflected on a field trip to a Louisiana prison with her students, where they explored the education system and how SEL permeated the classrooms. Slaughter reminded us that SEL begins with the teacher. We must do the work on ourselves first before we can support our students. Silvas shared powerful stories of her childhood and emphasized how critical providing students with space to share their stories is. And Coppola challenged us to meet students where they are. Storytelling and SEL can look different for all students.

My time at ILA 2019 ended shortly thereafter, but not before I had the pleasure of joining six educators from different states for a collaborative session. We discussed the problems our school communities faced with implementing SEL and proposed solutions that would support our respective schools.

From theory to practice

ILA 2019 reminded me of the direct connection between literacy and social action, and that as educators, we must move with urgency to create academic and professional spaces that are diverse, equitable, and aligned to social action.

When I returned to Philadelphia, I was hyperaware of just how important literacy was in my own school community. I connected with my grade team at The Philadelphia School and challenged them to think about how we can use narratives and discussions in our community meetings to emphasize themes of belonging, diversity, and empathy. We decided to move forward with a nine-session unit on identity development. We chose to push students to grapple with who they are, what experiences and thoughts influence the decisions they make, and the obligations to create inclusive and empathetic spaces within our school community.

My experience challenged me to consider the deep value in creating spaces for educators and researchers to convene. The sessions we attend, the conversations and networking we engage in, and the partnerships we create in those spaces mean nothing if we fail to apply what we learn to how we practice. ■

WHAT'S HOT IN 2020—AND BEYOND

ILA's biennial report highlights the topics most critical to shaping the future of literacy

By **Kelly Bothum**

It's probably no surprise to learn that 98% of all ILA 2020 What's Hot in Literacy Survey respondents believe that literacy is the foundation of all learning. Nor will it come as much of a revelation that the same percentage think of literacy as a fundamental human right—one that must be granted and protected to give every child the same chance to succeed.

"Literacy is a tool to use toward greater equity," wrote an educator from Missouri. "It is also the key."

Equity remains a top concern of the 1,443 literacy professionals who participated in the 2020 survey. It's a topic that teachers, higher education faculty, researchers, literacy consultants, and administrators hailing from 65 countries and territories identify as deserving more attention and focus, just as they had in 2018, placing it firmly in the top five critical issues.

But thanks to the survey's redesign, we know more than where equity falls in the rankings. Now we know *why*.

Developing a deeper, more meaningful look at what's needed to improve literacy outcomes spurred ILA's decision to revamp the biennial What's Hot in Literacy survey. This latest iteration—the complete results of which will be released in the ILA 2020 What's Hot in Literacy Report on January 22—asked literacy professionals about the challenges they face, the support they would like, and the resources they need to help shape literacy instruction in the next decade.

Respondents to the 2020 survey were presented with a list of 20 topics and asked first to choose any number of which they thought were among the most important, then to rank those selections to determine the most critical. A series of follow-up questions were then posed to gain greater insight.

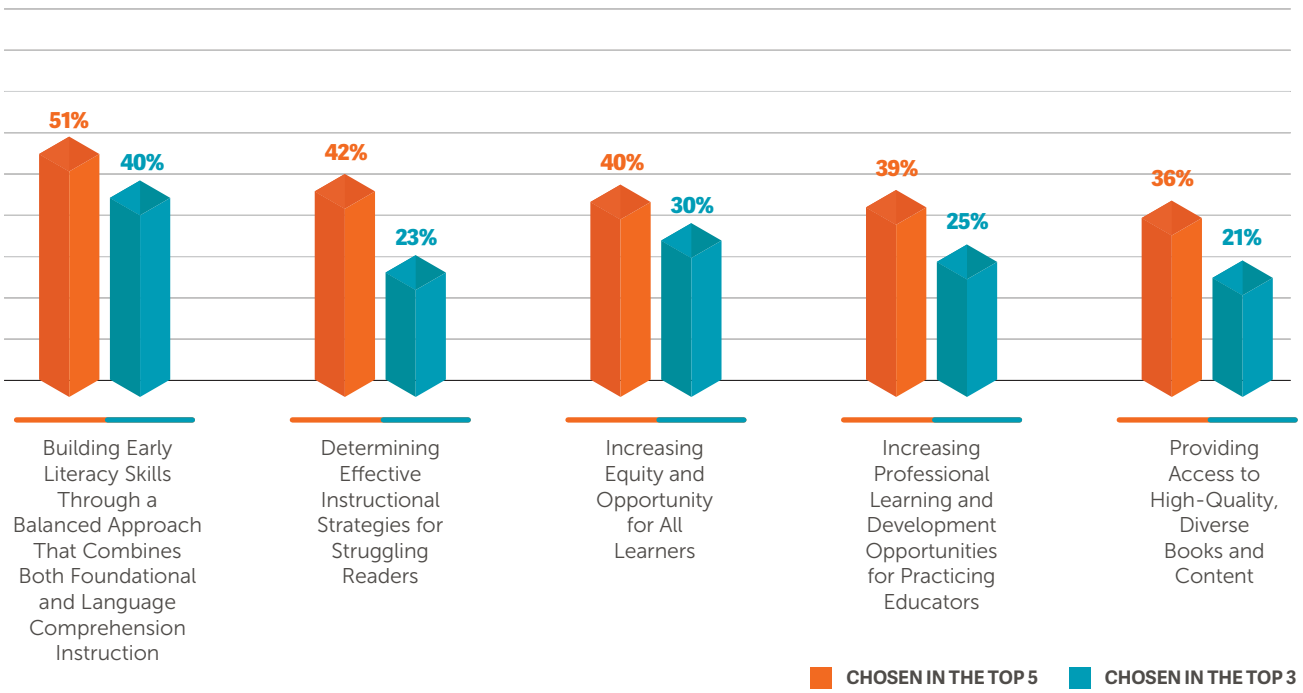
The result is a more robust and accurate snapshot of the environment in which literacy professionals are working. Survey answers reflect a desire for more time to collaborate with other teachers, an overall strengthening of preservice programs teaching beginning reading instruction, and more support to pursue ongoing professional learning and development.

"Everything that's listed, they're all very much related," says Kathy N. Headley, president of the ILA Board of Directors.

According to respondents, the top five most critical topics are

1. Building Early Literacy Skills Through a Balanced Approach That Combines Both Foundational and Language Comprehension Instruction
2. Determining Effective Instructional Strategies for Struggling Readers
3. Increasing Equity and Opportunity for All Learners
4. Increasing Professional Learning and Development Opportunities for Practicing Educators

The Top Five Critical Topics



5. Providing Access to High-Quality, Diverse Books and Content

Interestingly, there is little variation among survey respondent subgroups; percentages and rankings differ, but the same topics appear in the top five for teachers, pre-K–12 administrators, literacy consultants, and higher education professionals.

On equity: A closer look

Equity continued to be a prominent issue throughout the survey. Respondents note that there is no single solution to issues of equity, but a majority—71%—says the greatest barrier to equity in literacy education is the variability of teacher knowledge and teaching effectiveness.

"Educational inequities are huge in all areas, such as teacher preparation, teacher opportunities for continued professional learning and development with their peers, adequate resources in terms of classroom libraries, and small class sizes," wrote one respondent from Illinois. "All of this greatly impacts literacy learning for students."

Another key finding related to equity is that 96% of respondents say all children deserve access to a free, high-quality preschool education that lays a strong foundation for literacy development.

An overwhelming 92% of respondents agree that educational equity for all students cannot be achieved without instructional equity, while 84% say we still have a long way to go in recognizing and addressing biases in literacy instruction.

"Educational inequities are huge in all areas, such as teacher preparation, teacher opportunities for continued professional learning and development with their peers, adequate resources in terms of classroom libraries, and small class sizes."

Equity is also the area in which respondents say they need the most help, with 49% percent saying they want more support addressing inequity in education and instruction.

"It's a hugely difficult thing because there is such heterogeneity among students," says Sonia Cabell, an assistant professor at Florida State University and a member of the research faculty for the Florida Center for Reading Research. "It's really knowing them and understanding what they need to succeed."

Equity must play a role in discussions about curriculum, accountability, and school climate, says Rachael Gabriel, a member of the ILA Board of Directors. From a policy standpoint, that means making a commitment to investing resources such as time, money, and materials to allow teachers access to consistent, long-term professional learning opportunities in the area of literacy.

Talking to and sharing ideas with other educators can also help teachers identify and deepen their

understanding of how students learn; Additional time to collaborate with other teachers facing similar challenges is a top need of 61% of respondents to help them address those challenges.

In addition, 30% of teachers say they need more support in content area literacy, according to the survey. To this end, 84% of teachers think staff with expertise in the area should provide this kind of support, while 72% think colleagues should be responsible.

As long as the collegiality isn't forced, Gabriel says, "structures aimed at collaborative problem-solving can be used as practice grounds for more equitable conversations because of their emphasis on protocol, participation, and the use of evidence."

On teacher preparation

When it comes to preservice programs, respondents say there is room for improvement. Only 40% of respondents believe that teacher preparation programs are equipping today's educators with the skills they need for effective reading instruction.

"Quality in education depends on the quality of interactions students receive in all scenarios," said one respondent from Venezuela. "Teachers well prepared are needed to improve literacy in all learners."

The survey probed further by asking respondents about which methods were included in their preparation programs and how they rated that preparation. For example, 63% reported phonics instruction being part of their preparation for teaching beginning reading instruction, but only 27% say their program did an "excellent" or "very good" job of preparing them to teach in this way.

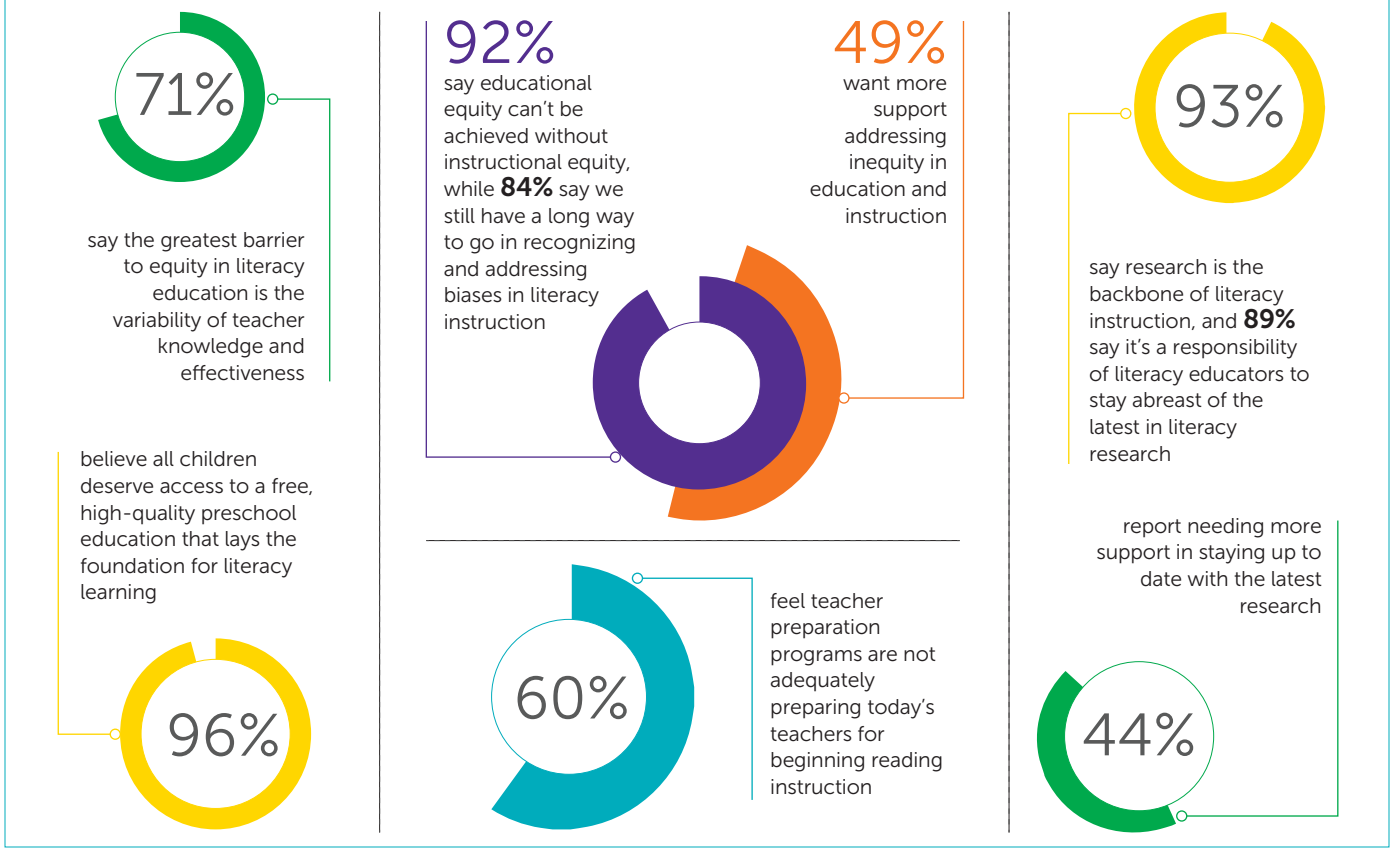
Differing ideas about what teacher preparation is supposed to accomplish may be part of the issue, Gabriel says. Preservice training programs are focused on preparing novice teachers starting their careers rather than addressing the wide swath of experiences that will cover a lifetime career of teaching.

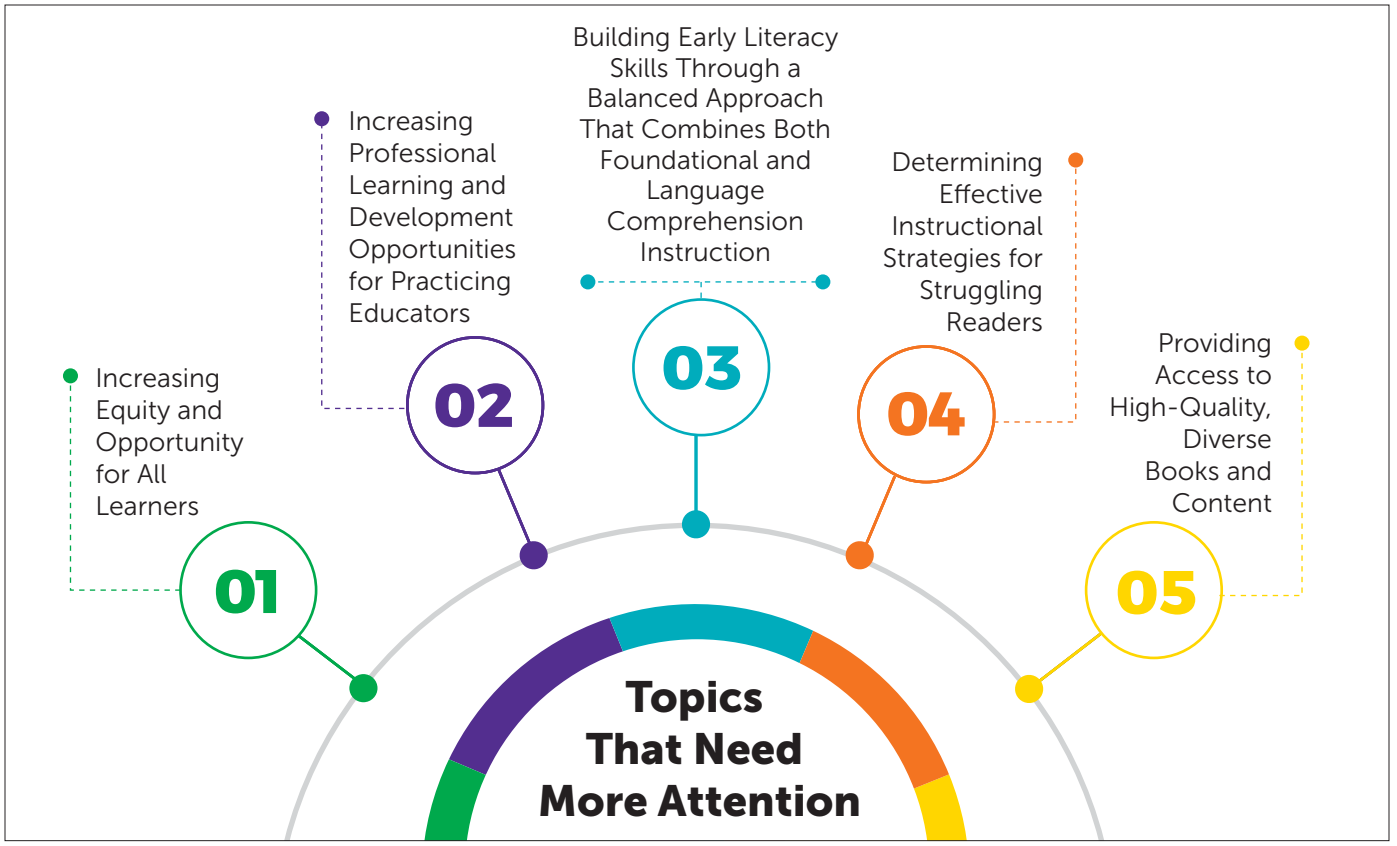
"Preparation is only preparation; it is not inoculation," says Gabriel, an associate professor of literacy education at the University of Connecticut. "Ready to start is not necessarily ready to respond to whatever is thrown at you. It's ready to begin the process of learning over time."

To address how well teachers are being prepared, knowing which grades they plan to teach is also critical, says Diane Lapp, chair of the ILA Literacy Research Panel. For example, teachers who teach children up to the third grade must have different depths of knowledge about reading, language, and writing instruction than those who teach older grades.

"They all need some basis of knowledge that is the same, but they need deep knowledge about how to teach literacy and content to the age of students at their chosen grade," says Lapp, a professor of education at San Diego State University. "They also need to know what to do to accommodate differences for students who have skills

Key Findings





at, above, or below those expected for the grade."

Looking at responses among subgroups of respondents also reveals a disconnect between those who are training future educators in preservice programs and those who are learning from them. Among those respondents in higher education, 54% say preservice programs are working well to prepare teachers, but only 34% of teachers and 27% of pre-K–12 administrators feel that way.

Cabell says the disconnect may be a matter of perspective. "Teachers and administrators are the ones with the boots on the ground. They're seeing what is happening and they are seeing the results firsthand of the teacher prep programs," she says. "Those of us in higher ed don't have the same visibility."

Considering the variability across teacher preparation programs is also important. Across the United States, for example, there are differences in endorsements and certifications between the states. In Florida, a teacher can receive an endorsement for reading as an undergraduate, whereas in Virginia, a graduate degree is needed.

That variability across programs speaks to the importance of nationally recognizing high-quality engagement in teacher preparation, says Headley, professor of literacy education at Clemson University.

"There is a variety of ways to become certified to teach," Headley says. "These avenues need ongoing review for high standards within and across programs."

On professional development

Respondents to the 2020 What's Hot in Literacy Survey say that professional development and time with other teachers are among the top supports needed in addressing challenges in literacy. Increasing professional learning and development opportunities for practicing educators ranks second among the top five topics that respondents say deserve more attention.

Focused professional development is critical to helping teachers promote learning for all students in their classes, Lapp says. Teachers deserve a say in the kind of development they need to help them promote learning for all of the students in their classes.

"Ask teachers what knowledge areas they wish to strengthen and they will most likely be able to tell you," she says. "Professional development needs to be differentiated and accommodated through online resources, conference attendance, and school-based professional developers. The specifics of each professional development experience need to be decided by teachers and their very knowledgeable administrators. One thing is for sure: It should not end until one leaves the profession."

Respondents in the survey did, in fact, cite several areas in which they would like more professional development. The top three are as follows:

1. Using Digital Resources to Support Literacy Instruction
2. Supporting Social-Emotional Learning
3. Writing Instruction

Unfortunately, Gabriel says, professional development topics are often at the mercy of other district and school priorities. As a result,

professional development in literacy instruction can feel piecemeal.

"The finite resources of professional development time get eaten up by things that are also an important part of being a professional in the building," Gabriel says. "If your school improvement plan isn't related to literacy, you might go for years without literacy professional development."

And respondents note that preparation isn't just for teachers in the classroom. One quarter of teachers say they need support cultivating a professional learning network, and 83% believe support and direction should come from school or district administration.

Cabell says some districts are pursuing sustained, on-the-ground professional development resources built from within and contextualized for the district's specific needs. That helps, but there should also be an effort in schools to build capacity for literacy leaders. This means making sure staff are well trained in literacy issues so they can be a resource for other educators.

Cabell's views were shared by a survey respondent from Texas.

"More attention has been given to teacher preparation," the educator wrote. "However, these efforts must be taken to the next level. For example, there is a great need for administrators to become more knowledgeable and skilled with supporting effective literacy practices."

"To guide learners, you need to be a learner," said one literacy professional from Finland.

On early reading instruction strategies

The best methods for early reading instruction are often debated in literacy communities, so it's not surprising the survey revealed a split among respondents on the topic of strategies they believe are most effective to build early literacy skills. There also was a split among respondents in how much attention they believe these topics should receive.

Fifty-one percent say a balanced approach that combines foundational and language comprehension instruction is critical, while 32% say explicit and systematic phonics instruction is the way to go. A whole language approach is unpopular with nearly all respondents; only 6% identify it as critical.

"More attention has been given to teacher preparation. However, these efforts must be taken to the next level. For example, there is a great need for administrators to become more knowledgeable and skilled with supporting effective literacy practices."

When it came to the amount of attention these topics receive, 47% say a balanced approach is not receiving enough attention, while only 5% think it receives too much.

Respondents were more split on explicit and systematic phonics instruction, with 31% in favor of the topic receiving more attention and 24% saying it already receives too much.

Headley says the essence of the survey shows the importance of a balanced approach *and* the importance of phonics instruction.

Cabell says seeing educators place importance on combining foundational phonics and comprehension for early literacy is encouraging. It acknowledges that the roots of reading and writing start early.

Headley agrees. "We should be looking at what works, what's the research base for what works."

Although there may be variability in how educators are teaching these foundational skills, having educators share the same philosophy is important, Cabell says. On a higher level, there seems to be more interest in moving beyond whether phonics is needed to how should literacy educators provide this instruction. "It should be how much and when, not whether we teach it," Cabell says.

The focus on early literacy skills is critical, but Gabriel says making sure the conversation about instruction includes a place for teachers working with older students as well is also important. Educators teaching students in higher grades also need support, particularly if their students struggled in their younger years.

"For a fourth-grade teacher, how are you supposed to understand your role down the line?" Gabriel says. "You can recover from a year of having a teacher who isn't very good. In the same way, you can come back from not having a good or existing pre-K experience."

On the role of research

There's great unity in how respondents feel about research, with 93% believing research is the backbone of effective literacy instruction. About half of teachers, administrators, literacy consultants, and higher education professionals cite staying abreast of the latest literacy research as being among the top three most important responsibilities of literacy educators.

The challenge, however, is how to keep current on the latest research findings. Forty-four percent of respondents indicate they need more support in staying abreast of the latest research. Most professionals look to academic experts as well as to professional associations to provide this direction and support.

Patrick Burke, a lecturer in language and literacy education at Mary Immaculate College in Limerick, Ireland, understands the challenges educators face in keeping up with the latest literacy research, which is why one of his top areas of focus is building bridges between research and practice in literacy teacher education.

Burke says teachers typically are incredibly driven and motivated, often spending their own time investigating ideas for research-based best practices to enhance their classroom efforts. Many look online, but few of the popular destinations—personal blogs, Pinterest boards, and Instagram accounts, among others—are research informed.

Burke suggests building in time for research through "article clubs," where professionals come together to discuss

an article relevant to their practice. In addition, schools can provide time in faculty meetings for colleagues to share what they have been reading in the research.

Cabell says most literacy professionals haven't been trained to fully digest the research that is published. At the same time, researchers don't always reach out to educators to see how their research is being accessed and used.

"Researchers and practitioners need to come together and mutually respect the ways that they value each other," she says.

What comes next

Over the next year—and beyond—look for ILA to use the findings from the 2020 survey to further develop innovative ways of delivering literacy research and practical resources for educators. We firmly believe that these topics are among the most critical for shaping the future of literacy education. The challenges may be great, but the collective power of literacy educators and other stakeholders can overcome barriers.

As one respondent said, "This survey is important because we need to come together as a team of literacy professionals to cooperatively address the literacy issues and needs facing today's students in our modern world."

This sentiment was echoed by many in the survey.

"Literacy involves so much more than reading and writing," one educator wrote. "[It] provides a gateway to other understandings about individuals and the world. We need to keep expanding the literacy agenda to help relevant stakeholders understand this as well." ■

Kelly Bothum (kelly.bothum@gmail.com) is a former newspaper reporter who now works as a communications specialist for the University of Delaware.

DOWNLOAD THE REPORT

The ILA 2020 What's Hot in Literacy Report will publish on **January 22** at **literacyworldwide.org/whatshot**. For questions, to share your thoughts, or for more information, email **whatshot@reading.org**.

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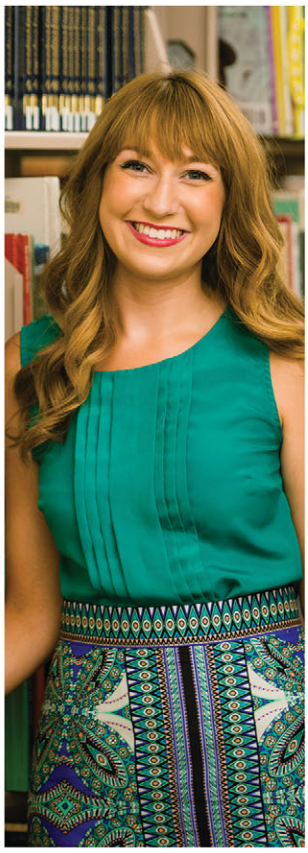

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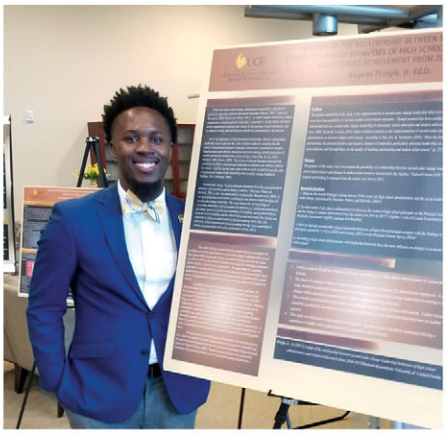




OUR 30 UNDER 30 REVIEW

Catching up with ILA's emerging leaders

By **Charmaine Riley**

Since 2015, ILA has honored 90 educators, researchers, and literacy advocates with the 30 Under 30 distinction, which celebrates the up-and-coming generation of literacy pioneers. As we enter a new decade—and begin preparing our 2021 list (more on that later)—we checked in with some of our previous honorees to see how their work and dedication continues to impact the literacy field.

- Magical Books, based in Nigeria, was founded by 2015 honoree **Oluwaseun Aina**. Her organization has coordinated a series of innovative after-school literacy programs targeted at boosting children's love for reading while improving their literacy skills. Currently, Aina is pursuing her doctoral studies at Clemson University in South Carolina in the Literacy, Language and Culture Program. She recently coauthored a chapter, "Bolstering Reflective Practice Through Digital Tools in an Online Practicum," in *Effective Practices in Online Teacher Education for Literacy Educators* (IGI Global).
- Since 2015, **Jennifer Albro**, faculty member at Johns Hopkins School of Education in the Urban Teachers program and founder of Pages & Chapters, has enjoyed working with her colleagues to develop and prepare teachers in Washington, DC, to make changes starting in the classroom through rigorous coursework and supportive coaching. She has undertaken several research projects, including a collaboration with her former advisor Jennifer D. Turner on the article "Six Key Principles: Bridging Students' Career Dreams and Literacy Standards," published in ILA's *The Reading Teacher* journal.
- **Babar Ali**, a 2016 honoree, recently expanded Ananda Siksha Niketan (Joyful Learning Center) to include computer literacy. To meet his mission of "education for all with equal opportunity" in Murshidabad, India, he is helping families keep up with the modern world by organizing a free computer center for formal studies and he plans to open a free reference library. In the future, the school intends to organize monthly science talks to inspire local children.
- **Patrick Burke** has been busy since he was honored in 2019. In between his research and progressing in his doctoral studies, he attended and presented at the ILA 2019 Conference in New Orleans, LA, and the 21st European Conference on Literacy in Denmark on building bridges between research and practice in literacy teacher education. As a part of his doctoral studies, he's also working with four local elementary schools in Ireland, looking at how disciplinary literacy can be supported in classrooms.
- **Allister Chang**, a 2019 honoree, stepped down as executive director of Libraries Without Borders to begin a new venture called Civic Suds in Washington, DC. The organization seeks to expand digital access and supports digital literacy development for families in the United States living below 200% of the poverty line by installing public access computers and facilitating digital literacy trainings inside coin laundries. Civic Suds aims to open the first coin laundromat that recycles 100% of its profits to provide educational resources and programs in its waiting areas.
- Middle school English teacher **Alex Corbitt** was honored in 2016. While teaching in the Bronx in New York, he continues to advocate for inclusive, critical literacy instruction. To aid his mission, he was awarded a grant from Penguin Random House to create culturally sustaining book clubs at his middle school. In 2018, he enrolled at Boston College to pursue his PhD in curriculum and instruction. (Side note: His advisor is 2015 honoree Jon Wargo!) Currently, his qualitative research focuses on genre, identity, gaming, and digital writing.
- **Gerald Dessus**, middle school social justice teacher, was honored in 2019. Since then, he began a new position as a cultural studies teacher at The Philadelphia School in Pennsylvania and he has received several opportunities to expand his

30 Under 30 honorees at the ILA 2019 Awards & Reception in New Orleans, LA, in October. From left to right: ILA's Marcie Craig Post and Bernadette Dwyer, honorees Patrick Burke, Elaysel Germán, Nangamso Mtsatse, Matt Panozzo, and Shontoria Walker, and ILA's Kathy N. Headley

social justice curriculum in schools in Pennsylvania and Kansas. Further, he's working with organizations that are looking to implement student-facing curricula and programs rooted in cultural awareness. The organization he cofounded, Beta Gamma Chi Fraternity, Incorporated, is working to design literacy programming for LGBTQ+ youth in Philadelphia, PA, Wilmington, DE, Baltimore, MD, and Brooklyn, NY. In addition, Dessus was a speaker during the ILA 2019 Equity in Education Program event, "Integrating Social-Emotional Learning in the Literacy Classroom."

- **Tanyella Evans**, honored in 2016 as executive director of Libraries for All, helped lead the rebrand of the organization in 2018 to NABU. With 250 million children globally not achieving basic literacy, NABU works to solve the imbalance in children's book creation and distribution so all children can read and rise to their full potential. The organization leverages technology to publish children's books for free on digital platforms in mother tongue languages.
- Since being honored in 2016, **Jeff Fonda** went on to work at IBM, where after just 15 months he was accepted into IBM's Account Leadership Development Program. He has continued The Literate Earth Project, which has opened and supported 16 libraries in Uganda and in 2019 partnered with PANGEA to open the world's first mobile library in a refugee camp. With each library opened, training for all the teachers at the school and classroom book sets of children's books by African authors and illustrators are included.
- **Sarah Grant**, a 2019 honoree, was selected as a fellow in the first cohort of the Emerging Leaders program with WISE (World Innovation Summit for Education). Her objective as head of partnerships and programs with the organization Limited Resource Teacher Training (LRTT) is to increase English proficiency and confidence of Lao teachers. She reports that in 2019, a total of 517 teachers participated in LRTT's fellowships in 11 countries, supporting 1,481 teachers who teach 57,813 children.
- **Karlos Marshall**, cofounder of The Conscious Connect in Ohio, was honored in 2019. The Conscious Connect, which aims to eliminate book deserts, was recently named a Best Practices honoree by the Library of Congress, becoming the first in Ohio to be recognized by the organization. Since launching in 2016, The Conscious Connect has established 29 Houses of Knowledge (their own version of Little Free Libraries) and more than 65 reading stations in barbershops and beauty salons. Their efforts have resulted in the distribution of nearly 50,000 free books.
- **Cody Miller**, formerly an ELA teacher at P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School in Florida, is now an assistant professor of English education at SUNY Brockport. Miller, who was honored in 2019, is working on several projects aimed at using young adult literature to support teacher candidates in developing social justice ELA pedagogies. He reminds young educators that although the field can be overwhelming, they belong and their ideas are valuable.
- Fresh from her 2019 designation, **Nangamso Mtsatse** was appointed head of relationships for Funda Wande, a nonprofit that aims to ensure all learners in South Africa can read for meaning in their home language by the age of 10. The PhD candidate at Stellenbosch University encourages up-and-coming literacy leaders to always be thinking about innovative ways to get children engaging with text. Her research envisages improving the teaching and learning of African languages in the foundation phase as well as developing valid and reliable assessment tools in African languages.
- Honored in 2019 as an assistant principal at Odyssey Middle School in Florida, **Eugene Pringle Jr.** is now an assistant professor and department chair for elementary education at Bethune-Cookman University, where he teaches the reading courses that grant students a reading endorsement. Additionally, as an executive consultant and school improvement advisor with Scholastic, he's meeting with school teams regarding research-based practices to positively impact literacy instruction and instructional coaching methodologies that are essential in promoting literacy through an interdisciplinary approach.
- **Bhawana Shrestha**, a 2015 honoree, has continued working in the field of education in Nepal, but with a different angle. After working as an English teacher at Jyotidaya Cooperative School, her interest in social-emotional learning (SEL) led her to conduct research on the state of emotional intelligence in Nepal in 2017. She found that if the teachers lacked SEL skills, they could not nurture the skills in students. "I started my education venture, My Emotions Matter, in March 2018," Shrestha says. "Through this venture, my team and I

are introducing emotional intelligence as a learnable life skill in different schools and organizations of Nepal so that individuals are more aware, intentional, and purposeful—both in their personal and professional lives."

- **Kellyn Sirach**, a 2016 honoree, is now a literacy specialist at JW Eater Middle School in Rantoul, IL. In her highly diverse community, she is proud to have chartered a Project LIT chapter, part of a national grassroots literacy movement in the U.S. to empower students and the community in reading. She encourages other young literacy professionals to not settle for what's always been done and use the fire inside them to ignite a change in students, colleagues, and the world.
- The Fourth Annual Literacy Competition, hosted by the iRead To Live Initiative in Nigeria, was held last year by 2019 honoree **Jacob Olaoluwa Sule**. In addition, he's continued to establish reading clubs in rural communities, hosted several initiatives to raise awareness about Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and taught about the SDGs in Beijing, China.
- **Dylan Teut**, a 2015 honoree, continues to serve as executive director of the Plum Creek Children's Literacy Festival in Nebraska. He finished his coursework for his PhD and is ready to begin a dissertation focused on limitations of novice elementary teachers regarding teaching literacy. "Teachers need to be able to meet the specific needs of every one of their readers, and there are a number of new teachers who need more help in that area," Teut says. "I want to find out how we can provide them support—whether in their undergraduate coursework, ongoing professional development, or something else."

For more information on the ILA 30 Under 30 honorees, visit **literacyworldwide.org/30under30**.

NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN!

Do you know a literacy advocate making an extraordinary impact in the lives of students and others in their community? Nominations for the next 30 Under 30 list, to be published in January 2021, are open. Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis, but they must be received by **June 1, 2020**, to be considered for the next list. For more information, visit **literacyworldwide.org/30under30**.

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Karen D. Wood (kwood@uncc.edu), a longtime ILA member, is a professor in the Department of Reading and Elementary Education at University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Janis Harmon (janis.harmon@utsa.edu), an ILA member since 1993, is a professor in the College of Education and Human Development at University of Texas at San Antonio.

MORE THAN A SINGLE WORD

Why contextual-based vocabulary approaches are more effective

By **Karen D. Wood** & **Janis Harmon**

We use the title "More Than a Single Word" to make the point that vocabulary should not be taught in isolation or as a drill and practice, rote memorization activity. We prefer the term *vocabulary literacy* to expand our thinking about word study that extends beyond the surface, definitional level, with the end goal of increased comprehension.

The act of promoting vocabulary literacy is multidimensional and involves making the vocabulary/comprehension connection using all aspects of literacy: reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and visually representing.

In the scenario that follows, vocabulary is taught using a definitional approach where students leave the experience with an inadequate understanding and no long-term retention of key terms. This scenario represents the linear, "bottom up" approach to vocabulary instruction that starts at the word/definition level.

> *The teacher tells the class they will be reading about life in China in their social studies textbook. He lists several new words on the board and tells the students these are words that will be on the test at the end of the unit. He has*

students work in pairs to find the definitions in the glossary or online dictionaries. The students write the first or the shortest definition, regardless of the relevance to the topic. To assess their learning, students match the words to the definitions on the unit test. As a class, the students do poorly on this test and are unable to articulate an understanding of specific concepts.

In the next scenario, vocabulary is taught using a vocabulary literacy, comprehension-based approach where students process word meanings at a deeper level and are engaged in multimodal activities designed to promote strategic learning.

Students are taking a virtual tour of China by visiting several websites. While on tour, students work in groups to target conceptually important vocabulary and then use their background knowledge and available hyperlinks to clarify word meanings. In whole-class format, the teacher and students decide which student-selected words are the most valuable for understanding the information about China. The teacher also adds two words of his own to the list. Then students collaboratively develop an interactive word wall using colors, symbols, and meaningful questions to aid in vocabulary learning. The word wall becomes a resource for the students as they create digital travel brochures on China.

Next, in order to implement our notion of *vocabulary literacy*, we present six instructional guidelines for promoting a contextual, comprehension-based approach to word study.

1. Engage students in decision making about word selection.

Typically, the choice of which words to be emphasized in a unit is left to the teacher or to the commercial materials used in the classroom. We believe a balance is needed in what teachers deem important and students feel is necessary, and there is ample evidence that giving students a voice in learning is intrinsically motivating, enhances learning, and increases the level of enjoyment and pleasure with the learning task.

Our "Pick a word, not just any word" strategy allows for student self-selection, peer discussion and interaction, and a final multimedia presentation by student groups.

2. Aim for deeper and richer understandings of conceptually loaded terms rather than surface-level understandings.

Effective vocabulary instruction must require students to apply the meanings of newly introduced terms in a variety of activities that build vocabulary literacy and consequently have a strong impact on comprehension. For example, in a geometry unit, asking students to define words like *polygon* and *trapezoid* calls for low-level cognitive processing. Instead, asking higher level questions such as "Is a trapezoid a polygon?" requires that students apply what they know about both terms in order to answer the question correctly.

3. Promote students' vocabulary awareness through a print-rich environment.

Print-rich or "high-literacy" environments are evidenced by many elements, such as classroom libraries, objects labeled throughout the room, posters, maps, multimedia centers, newsprint, bulletin boards, and student-produced writing and art, to name a few. Labeling objects in a classroom is a beneficial means of developing word consciousness among all learners and is particularly helpful to English learners.

4. Encourage collaboration and discussion for vocabulary teaching and learning.

Consider using literature circles with roles such as "vocabulary enricher," "word wizard," and "vocabulary researcher" to allow students to talk, question, connect, and think more deeply about how word meanings impact their understanding of the passage.

5. Use a structured lesson framework to be applied to other disciplines and contexts.

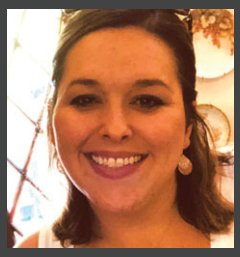
Sometimes a structured approach is the best way to teach, explain, and relate key terms to other contexts when a teacher determines that a more explicit approach to word study is necessary to ensure learning. Our four-step P.E.A.R. instructional framework consists of Preparation, Explanation, Application, and Reinforcement.

6. Underscore the ways in which vocabulary is used and represented in content area texts.

Teachers can easily point out how authors help with vocabulary through direct explanations of word meaning by thinking aloud, engaging in predictions and confirmations of the meaning, encouraging discussion and writing activities and, finally, illustrating how to use the authors' clues to be applied to other contexts and disciplines.

A broader view

The term *vocabulary literacy* is used here to highlight the need for a broader view of vocabulary development, a comprehension-based view of word study that never loses sight of the connection to understanding and the fact that vocabulary is more than just a single word. ■



Laurel A. Sviatko (slsviatko@gmail.com), an ILA member since 2018, teaches eighth-grade English at Thomas Harrison Middle School in Harrisonburg, VA. She has been a secondary English educator for 12 years. Her dissertation research focused on middle school ELA teachers' use of silent reading practices to promote literacy.

STRIKING A BALANCE

How independent reading and data can coalesce

By **Laurel A. Sviatko**

As an English language arts (ELA) teacher, you likely feel passionately that *every* student has the right to literacy and lifelong reading. You may feel a sense of agency not just to provide top-tier instruction of the ELA curriculum but also to pass along a love for reading.

Realistically, though, you may struggle to strike a balance between using authentic reading practices (e.g., independent reading) and maintaining a laser focus on ELA instruction that is specifically designed to ensure students make adequate gains in reading. Perhaps you agonize over providing time for your

students to read independently in that no-strings-attached fashion where enjoyment, not content or analysis, is the focus. You may even question if the use of independent reading is still viable in this era of high-stakes accountability.

As ELA teachers, we want our instruction to be authentic, but we are simultaneously tasked with making data-driven decisions to support the learning of *every* student. Believe it or not, there are ways that you can implement independent reading in your classroom that can be data driven.

Using data to encourage progress with reading

One type of data that is most likely accessible to you (depending on where you teach) is a student's "reading range" or zone of proximal development (ZPD). This zone would be the levels between which reading is optimized for students—just the right amount of challenge without too much frustration. Many diagnostic reading assessments (like the STAR test for Accelerated Reader) have an output for this reading range or ZPD. Not only can you track this data for your own instructional purposes (when modifying or differentiating instruction on the basis of reading levels), but also you can use it to make more appropriate book recommendations to students. A quick search of the Accelerated Reader database will inform you of a book's reading range or ZPD. You can look up books for students in this manner on the basis of topics that interest them, teach them how to look up books within their reading range (adding that extra layer of autonomy for them), or do a quick check to make sure that the books they are already reading are within the ideal range. By using this reading range/ZPD data to recommend a book for a student, you have made a data-driven decision. Ideally, you have coupled the use of this data with a book that targets the student's interests.

Keep track of how much progress [students] have made since your last conference—this is data!

Tracking progress with reading

You may soon notice that after having books within the ideal reading range, your students are more engaged in independent reading. Now that they are *really* reading, tracking and monitoring their progress becomes important.

Take a cue from Kelly Gallagher and Penny Kittle and confer with your students. (This can be alongside them during independent reading time, at your desk, during library time, or at any time that works for your classroom routine.) When you confer with them, ask them about their books. Keep track of how much progress they have made since your last conference—this is data! (Remember, data are not always numerical; notes of conferences, anecdotal records of informal chats about reading, or any type of running records are all forms of data that demonstrate how you are individualizing and differentiating your reading instruction to meet the needs of *every* student in your classroom.)

Creating a tracking chart or form can help you keep your data and records organized. Don't be afraid to create your own or adapt one. It will not only be a resource for you but also come in handy at parent–teacher conferences, team meetings, or even IEP meetings.

As you continue to confer with each student, take note of the following:

- How quickly is the student progressing through the book?
- Is the student interested or disinterested?
- Is the student doing any reading outside of the classroom?
- What other tertiary phenomena may be impacting the student's progress (e.g., issues at home, attention span, motivation, reading stamina)?

Using this data, and maybe a bit of that ELA teacher instinct, you can make a judgment as to whether a student might need to be redirected to another book or if his or her progress is fine. If the student needs a new book, just repeat the process until an ideal book is located.

It is important to note that progress can sometimes be subjective under these circumstances. Maybe your variation of independent reading requires students to read a certain number of books in a term or maybe you are hoping to increase engagement with independent reading in your classroom. In each of these scenarios, the definition of "progress" will vary. Take your classroom objectives for independent reading into consideration when assessing students' progress.

Promoting literacy for every student

Regardless of your purpose, part of the appeal of using reading range or ZPD data to help students select appropriate books is that it targets the needs of every student. For this reason, progress can and should be defined differently for each of your students. In my own eighth-grade ELA classroom, students are reading anywhere from fourth grade to post–high school levels. Therefore, I cannot expect all of my students to read books at the same rate, within the same range, or on the same topics.

This is the reality for many of us, but we accept this charge and aim to promote literacy and lifelong reading for each of our students. Implementing independent reading provides authentic reading practice for students and promotes the enjoyment of reading. Using data to support this practice will better ensure *every* student's progress with reading and literacy. ■

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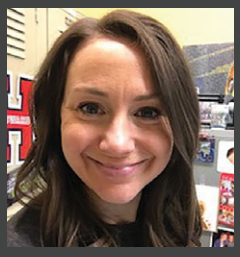

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ROLE-PLAY AND STUDENT VOICE

Making space for critiquing language in the literacy classroom

By **Kate Seltzer** & **Lauren Ardizzone**

For those of us teaching English language arts (ELA), particularly at the high school level, there is a constant push to teach what we traditionally think of as literacy: reading, analyzing, writing, and generally growing students' command of what some call academic language. This is especially true for educators who teach language minoritized students, those whose language practices are often viewed as in need of remediation, such as English learners or speakers of different varieties of English. The general thinking tends to be that with so much "catching up" to do, there is little time for classroom experiences that foster multiple

literacies and incorporate ways of using language that do not align with academic English. And, importantly, despite the emphasis on English, there is little explicit talk about language itself and how it intersects with issues of power and identity.

Our perspective emerges from our long-standing partnership. Kate is an educational researcher and former ELA teacher and Lauren is a veteran teacher with 13 years' experience teaching ELA in New York City. Together, we designed a curriculum that put language itself at the center of the English classroom. Students' entire year of ELA asked them to think, talk, and write about questions such as the following: What counts as a language? Which language practices are valued in our society and why? How do multilingual, multidialectical writers and artists use language and to what effects? What does it mean to take linguistic risks in our own writing?

Role-play in the classroom

To engage with such questions, we incorporated texts such as poetry, articles, YouTube videos, and blog and social media posts, among others. In addition, we designed literacy activities that challenged students to use their different language practices and sophisticated understandings of language to engage with these questions. One such activity was role-play.

Throughout the year, we designed opportunities for role-play that served as catalysts for conversations about language, power, and identity. We began with an engaging question or idea, such as, "Have you ever felt judged for the ways you use language?"

Once students had explored this question or idea—through both discussion and engagement with different texts—we asked them to answer the question through the creation and performance of a short role-play. We gave students time in class to plan their role-plays, facilitating their conversations but being careful not to impose our own ideas. After this planning time, students performed their role-plays for the class. We then asked students to debrief the role-plays—sometimes as a whole class, other times in small groups or through journal writing—and connect what they saw to the topics and essential questions being explored in class.

During these debriefs, we drew attention to moments in the role-plays that elicited students' reactions: laughter, eye rolls, side conversations, or commentary. The moments that might have seemed insignificant or even as detracting from the larger goals of the classroom literacy work became rich opportunities for the critical analysis of language.

For example, in a role-play that portrayed a student's transition from a conversation with friends to a college admissions interview, the student playing the college interviewer chose to refer to the interviewee as "bud." The class erupted in laughter, which surprised us and became an entry point for conversation. Students initially struggled to articulate why they were laughing, but we discussed and explored the performative elements of language and how intimately language is tied to identity, both how we self-identify and how others ascribe identity to us. This small moment was powerful, highlighting how linguistically savvy students are and how able they are to negotiate various settings, contexts, and audiences with incredible nuance, something they are too often described as lacking.

Moments like these helped us—both white women who do not share a linguistic or cultural background with our students—to change our listening practices and better recognize the linguistic expertise and awareness that is always present in the classroom but is so commonly overlooked.

Learning from our students

In today's standards-driven context, creating space for activities such as role-play isn't easy. Yet the resulting student work and feedback have made it clear that it is well worth the time. Students' high levels of engagement led to powerful skill building as they reflected on their role-plays, citing evidence to support their analysis and discussions, asking questions, and making connections, the very skills we tell students they need to read, write, and think critically on standardized tests and beyond. And, most important, this kind of activity invites students to develop the critical literacies they can take with them into the world.

Despite our belief in the importance of activities like role-play in the ELA classroom, we still feel the pull toward "standard English" because we, too, have internalized the idea that this narrow focus is what students need to be successful. However, as critical educators and researchers, our role cannot be to simply uphold and transmit those ideologies that deem one discourse more important, worthy, and aligned with academic success. Instead, we must keep at the front of our minds, as Bettina Love discusses in her book *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom* (Beacon Press), that our students want—and deserve—instruction that empowers them to thrive.

We believe this happens when students are invited to question existing ideologies about language, many of which have been presented to them as fact throughout their educational experience. This requires us to relinquish our role as linguistic experts, recognizing that our students' knowledge of and ability to use language exceeds our own. Students' voices are essential for any authentic inquiry, and there is so much we can learn from them. ■

READ MORE

Kate Seltzer recently wrote on this topic for ILA's *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*. Journal subscribers: Visit **literacyworldwide.org/journals** to access her article, "Performing Ideologies: Fostering Raciolinguistic Literacies Through Role-Play in a High School English Classroom."

RAP volunteers in Basilan, a dangerous area of the country that requires armed guards to travel

RAP KEEPS ON ROWING

Bringing literacy training to remote areas of the Philippines

By **Marie Grace C. Reoperez**

RAP on Wheels and RAP on Wings (RoWs) is the Reading Association of the Philippines' (RAP) extension arm that provides free training in literacy education to underserved Filipino teachers all across the country. These teachers who don't have access to professional trainings usually come from government schools based outside of the National Capital Region, where the country's capital, Manila, and where the seat of the government is located.

Conceptualized by the board of directors in 1994, RoWs was launched in Marinduque, an island province located in the Southwestern Tagalog region. Elena Cutiongco, former RAP president, served as its first project director. The

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project is aptly called RoWs because the Philippines is an archipelago consisting of more than 7,000 small islands, where the popular means of hopping from one island to the other is by boat. We call the training RAP on Wheels when the area can be reached through road travel and RAP on Wings when we have to travel by plane. Although sometimes we have to do it all—by land, water, and air.

Since its launch 25 years ago, RoWs has become the flagship project of RAP. The efforts that go with conducting RoWs activities have not gone unnoticed. In 2001, RoWs received the Constance McCullough International Research Grant from what was then the International Reading Association (IRA, now the International Literacy Association) and in 2005, it received IDCC grants from IRA and a subsidy from the Missouri State Council.

RAP supports Filipino teachers because they believe in their crucial role in helping build a thinking and caring society.

RoWing far and wide

RoWs is usually conducted alternately in the three major islands of the Philippines: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. However, in 2017, as part of RAP's preparation for its 50th anniversary in 2020, RoWs@50 was launched as one of the several projects to drumbeat the celebration of RAP's golden jubilee anniversary, which will coincide with the Asian Literacy Conference that will be held in Manila April 23–25, 2020.

RoWs@50 aims to provide 50 literacy trainings not just to teachers but also to other literacy advocates, parents, and students, specifically preservice teachers. As of the end of 2019, RAP already conducted almost 40 RoWs in different areas in the country. Requests through letters were sent by teachers, principals, education supervisors, superintendents, and even students from nearby and far regions.

Since September 2017, RAP board directors and volunteers have been "RoWing" to different islands in the country. We have conducted lecture workshops on various topics to teachers across grade levels. The topics include teaching beginning reading, reading in the content areas, remedial reading, mother tongue–based literacy, digital literacy, professional development, literacy assessment, and adult literacy.

In one school, we administered assessment of reading skills among struggling intermediate grade level students. Afterward, we trained the teachers on how to help the students who need reading remediation. In another school, we taught the parents who were mostly farmers and fishermen how to write books and how to convert them into big books that they can read to their children or that their children can read at home and at school. The parents were delighted upon realizing that they can be a part of their children's literacy development, and the teachers were happy that their students could now read materials that are relevant and culturally appropriate.

"Where the Brave Dare Not Go"

One place that we visited in 2018 was Basilan, a predominantly Muslim region that is notorious for frequent bombings and for being an Abu Sayyaf haven. To reach the island province, we took an almost two-hour flight from Manila, then transferred to a jeepney (a popular mode of transportation in the Philippines) for a short ride to the port where we boarded a ferry boat for another 45-minute trip. It was not yet the last trip as we still had to be taken to our hotel by a small truck. The journey was not the challenging part, for we have experienced rockier and longer ones prior to this. It was the presence of uniformed men and military escorts dressed in plain clothes all throughout our stay that hinted at possible dangers that could happen anytime. And true enough, the day after we left, there was a bombing in the city where we stayed.

But for us, the real brave ones are the teachers we met during our RoWs trainings. For one, they dare to stay in the country to teach the Filipino children despite the temptation to work abroad and earn a better income just like what many other Filipino teachers are doing. They dare to dream for their students to rise above poverty and adversities in life. One teacher who requested RoWs wrote, "We would like our students and parents to feel that we care for them, so that they will know that even if they are poor, they still have the chance to improve their lives through reading."

This inspires RAP to continue RoWing for the Filipino teachers to be empowered to deliver literacy instruction that is liberating and transformative. After all, we truly believe that the real hope of the nation is the teachers, for they have the power to transform the lives of their students. ■

LEARN MORE

For those based in the Philippines and looking for more information about RoWs training, visit **rap.org.ph**.

EVENTS

JANUARY 2020

16–21
Baltic Sea Conference on Literacy
Tallinn, Estonia
4bscl2020.ee

FEBRUARY 2020

6–8
Wisconsin State Reading Association Conference
Milwaukee, WI
wsra.org

7–8
Oregon State Literacy Conference
Portland, OR
oregonread.org

13–15
Palmetto State Literacy Association Conference
Hilton Head, SC
scira.org

28–29
Texas Association for Literacy Education Conference
Odessa, TX
texasreaders.org

MARCH 2020

22–24
North Carolina Reading Association Conference
Winston-Salem, NC
ncreading.org

26–28
Virginia State Reading Association Conference
Roanoke, VA
vsra.org

APRIL 2020

1–3
State of Maryland Literacy Association Conference
Hunt Valley, MD
somla.online

2–3
Massachusetts Reading Association Conference
Quincy, MA
massreading.org

23–25
Asian Literacy Conference
Manila, Philippines
rap.org.ph

JUNE 2020

23–24
Iowa Reading Association Conference
Ames, IA
iowareading.org

JULY 2020

9–12
Australian Literacy Educators' Association Conference
Sydney, Australia
regodirect.com.au/aleasydney2020/registrations

SEPTEMBER 2020

12
Indiana State Literacy Association Conference
Noblesville, IN
indianareads.org

OCTOBER 2020

1–3
Illinois Reading Council Conference
Peoria, IL
illinoisreadingcouncil.org

15–18
International Literacy Association 2020 Conference
Columbus, OH
ilaconference.org

NOVEMBER 2020

29–1
Keystone State Literacy Association
Hershey, PA
ksla.wildapricot.org

DECEMBER 2020

6–8
Literacy Association of Tennessee Conference
Murfreesboro, TN
lat.wildapricot.org

FEBRUARY 2021

10–13
Wisconsin State Reading Association Conference
Milwaukee, WI
wsra.org

MARCH 2021

21–23
North Carolina Reading Association Conference
Winston-Salem, NC
ncreading.org

APRIL 2021

12–13
Massachusetts Reading Association Conference
Quincy, MA
massreading.org

JUNE 2021

22–23
Iowa Reading Association Conference
Ames, IA
iowareading.org

JULY 2021

5–7
European Conference on Literacy
Dublin, Ireland
literacyeurope.org/dublin2021

FEBRUARY 2022

3–5
Wisconsin State Reading Association Conference
Milwaukee, WI
wsra.org

MARCH 2022

20–22
North Carolina Reading Association Conference
Winston-Salem, NC
ncreading.org

APRIL 2022

4–5
Massachusetts Reading Association Conference
Quincy, MA
massreading.org

MARCH 2023

26–28
North Carolina Reading Association Conference
Winston-Salem, NC
ncreading.org

Please email **intldev@reading.org** to confirm dates and locations of international events. To have an ILA-affiliated event added, send event information to **literacytoday@reading.org**.

Hannon Receives Horace Mann Award for Teaching Excellence

Patricia Hannon, reading specialist at Hohenfels Elementary School in Germany, was one of five recipients of the NEA Foundation's 2020 Horace Mann Award for Teaching Excellence. Hannon is the first Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) educator to win this prestigious award, which comes with a $10,000 prize for her classroom. Hannon will be honored during the annual NEA Foundation Salute to Excellence in Education Gala in February. She is also in the running for the NEA Foundation's top honor, the Member Benefits Award, which comes with a $25,000 prize.

Prior to her position at DoDEA, Hannon played the cello and taught music at the college level. When she became a reading specialist, she realized that teaching reading was surprisingly similar to teaching music. Hannon now uses her music background to help children overcome reading difficulties, incorporating singing and drumming, and even a metronome, into her literacy instruction.

JONES RECEIVES TWO NATIONAL HONORS FOR BOOSTING LITERACY AWARENESS

Live Oak Middle School librarian **Amanda Jones** was recently awarded two national honors from the American Association of School Librarians: the 2019 Social Media Superstar Program Pioneers Award and 2019 Inspire Special Event Grant. Jones has crafted a number of award-winning social media strategies for promoting a schoolwide love for reading and literacy awareness. The grant offers up to $2,000 for Jones to invest in these strategies. Jones is also a past recipient of the James O. Modisette Award for Excellence in Middle School Library Programming from the Louisiana Library Association and serves as an active member in a number of education and literacy organizations.

WARGO RECEIVES ELATE NATIONAL TECHNOLOGY LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE AWARD

Jon Wargo, Lynch School professor at Boston College and an ILA 2016 30 Under 30 honoree, received the 2019 ELATE National Technology Leadership Initiative Award, which recognizes those who demonstrate cutting-edge methods of integrating technologies into education. Wargo has led multiple research studies on the value of digital technologies in learning and instruction, particularly how technology facilitates new understandings, critical thinking, and civic participation.

Library of Congress Honors The Conscious Connect, Inc.

The Conscious Connect, Inc., cofounded by ILA 2019 30 Under 30 honoree **Karlos Marshall**, was recognized recently as a Best Practices honoree by the Library of Congress for their efforts in eliminating book deserts in the Springfield-Dayton community of Ohio. Since its launch in 2016, The Conscious Connect has established 29 Houses of Knowledge (their own version of Little Free Libraries) and over 65 reading stations, distributing a total of nearly 50,000 free books to make literacy more accessible.

UT COLLEGE APPOINTS MCINTYRE AS DEAN

The University of Tennessee at Knoxville selected **Ellen McIntyre** as the next dean of the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences. McIntyre previously served as a dean at University of North Carolina (UNC) Charlotte for six years, during which she developed initiatives to promote educational equity and played a major part in revamping UNC's doctoral and teacher preparation programs. In her new role, McIntyre will oversee eight departments and 17 academic centers.

—Annie Lee

To submit news for consideration on the News & Notes page, email **literacytoday@reading.org**.

An Opportunity for Understanding

By **Angela Curfman**

As an assistant professor of teacher education and a doctoral candidate, the International Literacy Association's *Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals 2017* ignited a personal reflection of pedagogical practices. A deeper mindfulness was given to Standard 4: Diversity and Equity. Upon closer examination, I realized that my demonstration as an advocate for literacy and a creator of an inclusive classroom needed improvement.

A transformation began to take place as I embraced this personal challenge.

The journey was launched from literature reviews and dialogues with my doctoral advisor, colleagues, and teacher candidates. A pattern began to arise as I recognized that we were not fully aware of the power of children's literature to create inclusive classroom communities. Soon, the term *developmental bibliotherapy* emerged as an avenue to provide an opportunity for understanding diversity.

Developmental bibliotherapy is the purposeful selection of books to address sensitive topics and issues. Children's literature is employed in a guided discussion to promote understanding and reliability. Through the lens of a read-aloud, students and teachers may engage in conversation to discuss the character, conflicts, resolution, and the main idea. It is an occasion to promote empathy and situate diversity as a core asset in the classroom.

I initiated several responsive activities, including the following:

- **Books & Barks:** As a community collaborative, we formed a partnership with a local animal rescue. Together, we designed a learning experience that includes a read-aloud, interactions with a shelter animal, and a donation of a gently loved book. The educational experience is offered for free to all local elementary educators. Through the event, literacy skills and attributes such as kindness and sharing are modeled and supported. Reading aloud is also a proven technique to help children cope during times of stress or tragedy.
- **Read-alouds in the higher education classroom:** I began to view my own read-alouds with a greater awareness. In all of my courses, I increased reading aloud children's literature to my teacher candidates and a more purposeful integration of children's literature in pedagogical approaches and course applications.
- **Genius Hour:** I created and designed innovative instructional approaches that place a greater value on teacher candidates as individuals. One means was a Genius Hour instructional framework. To commence, I read aloud *What Do You Do With an Idea?* by Kobi Yamada (Compendium). The read-aloud is intended to spark passion, creativity, and motivation for the semester-long assignment. With consideration of course concepts and goals, teacher candidates are challenged to be literacy advocates fueled by their passion and cultural background. To enhance students' literacy learning, teacher candidates must identify contextual factors, identify a need in the community and/or school, design a solution, and share that innovative approach. This encourages and embraces individualized needs and background knowledge, responds to students' diversity, and develops a relationship among the university, local schools, and the community.

Children's literature has the potential to create inclusive classroom communities. Just a few of the books that have situated their stories in my pedagogical bank and heart are *We're All Wonders* by R.J. Palacio (Knopf Books for Young Readers), *Hey, Little Ant* by Phillip and Hannah Hoose (Tricycle Press), *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon* by Patty Lovell (Scholastic), and *The Recess Queen* by Alexis O'Neill (Scholastic).

The mindful use of children's literature in classrooms offers a powerful avenue to examine culture, beliefs, and appreciation for diversity and to forge beautiful relationships.

Angela Curfman (angela.curfman@westliberty.edu), an ILA member since 2019, is an assistant professor of teacher education at West Liberty University and a doctoral candidate at West Virginia University.

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION

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ilaconference.org

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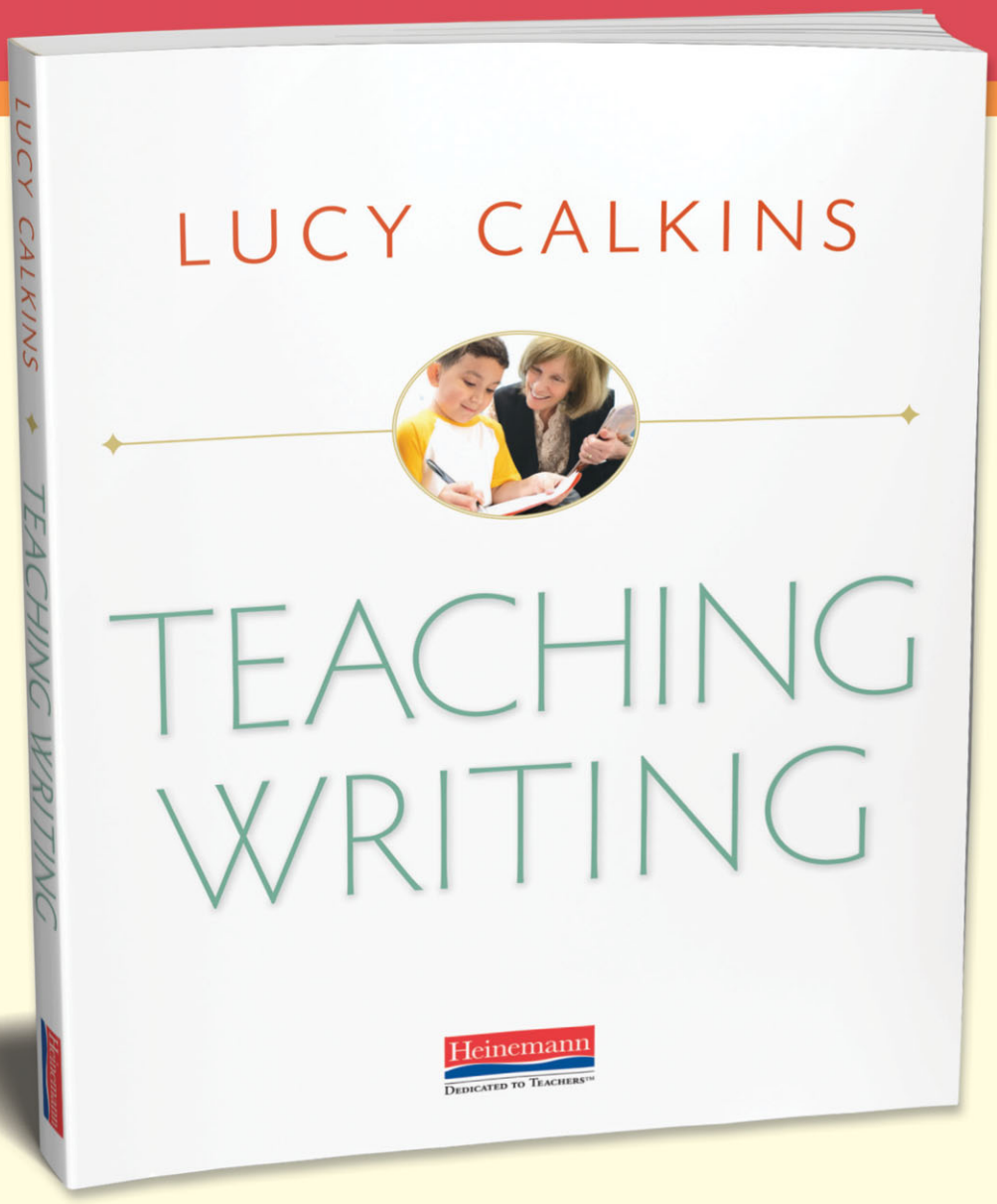

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Author **Lucy Calkins** is the Founding Director of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, and is the Richard Robinson Professor of Children's Literature at Teachers College, Columbia University, where she co-directs the Literacy Specialist Program.

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