

HIGHLIGHTS

of the Minnesota Reading Association,
an International Reading Association
affiliate

President's Message

Jessica Crooker

Greetings Minnesota Reading Association Members! It's that time of year again—the time of year when we all ask ourselves why the heck we live in this icy, cold mess of a state! Any hearty Minnesotan can rattle off a list of things that make the winters long and arduous—shivering as the car warms up, icy sidewalks, clunky winter boots, and fewer hours of daylight just to name a few!

So this winter, make sure you are finding ways to focus on the things in life that bring you joy. Here are a few ideas to get you started!

- Plan a coffee date with a friend and sit by the fireplace at your local coffee shop
- Have a choose-your-own-book club where you commit to reading for enjoyment and all attendees give a brief book talk (whether they are finished or not—no guilt!)
- Bundle up and take a walk through the crunchy snow—you won't regret it!
- Do something you associate with summer—hit the Dairy Queen drive-thru for a Blizzard
- Scope out spring runs/walks and rally your friends to register with you. I always run the Get in Gear in April—keeps the motivation flowing through February and March.
- Head to the Maple Grove Community Center on March 7th for Celebrate Literacy! Bring a friend and introduce them to MRA! The event is FREE!
- Read on to see what MRA members have been doing to keep warm and stay focused on learning this winter!

WINTER 2013/2014

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**Thank you for being
an MRA member!**

MRA's Mission Statement and Goals

Minnesota Reading Association's mission is to actively promote lifelong literacy for all citizens. We encourage professional interaction among all organizations involved with literacy and provide resources for exemplary literacy practices and habits.

- Supporting, Recognizing, and Celebrating Literacy Efforts across the State of Minnesota
- Promoting Networking and Collaboration in the Area of Literacy
- Providing Resources and Opportunities for Professional Growth and Leadership Development

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NEWSLETTER EDITOR Kathryn Bannon

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Reading Councils

MAR Reading Council

By Catherine Kelly

I'm preparing to teach one of my favorite preservice teacher education classes, Content Area Literacy in the Elementary Classroom in January. Many of the preservice teachers in the class remember negative experiences with nonfiction from elementary school. They read nonfiction only in the context of writing the Animal or State report, and found little enjoyment in the texts they found. I get the opportunity to open their eyes to the wonderful nonfiction books available to students now, books that excite students, not bore them.



And seems as though everyone is talking about nonfiction lately. With the *Common Core State Standards* requiring students to read more and more nonfiction, teachers of all grade levels are on the lookout for high-quality nonfiction to incorporate in their classrooms. Here are some of my go-to resources for nonfiction in the classroom.

In a joint project between the [National Science Teachers Association](#) and the [Children's Book Council](#), the organizations publish a list of outstanding science trade books, K-12 every year. The lists can be found [here](#). Some of my favorite recent winners include: *Swirl: Spirals in Nature* by Joyce Sidman (local author!), *Bomb!* by Steve Sheinkin, *The Mighty Mars Rover* by Elizabeth Rusch, and *Lives of Scientists* by Kathleen Krull.

[Kirkus](#) also publishes a "Best of" list, which includes categories on nonfiction. Check out the categories [here](#). One of my favorites from the "Best Middle Grade Books That Make History Come Alive" is Russell Freedman's *Becoming Ben Franklin: How a Candle-Maker's Son Helped Light the Flame of Liberty*.

Here are some other great resources:

1. I follow the blog [There's a Book for That](#), and there is a fabulous list on nonfiction read alouds available [here](#).
2. If you're looking for digital texts, there are many nonfiction texts available from the Teachers' College [Reading and Writing Project](#).
3. And then, of course, there's the ALA's [Sibert Medal](#), NCTE's [Orbis Pictus Award](#) and IRA's [Children's and Young Adult Book Awards](#).

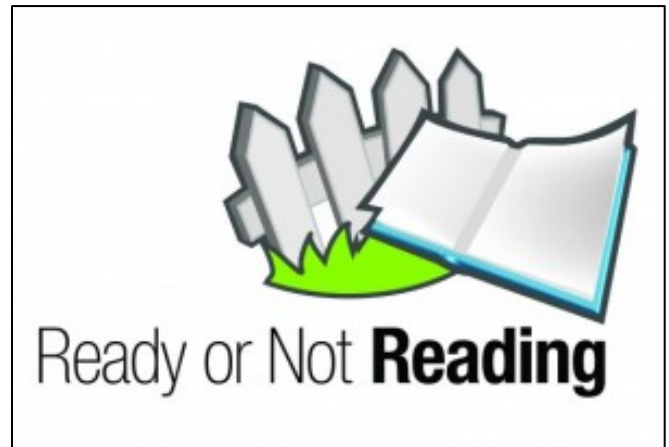
Happy nonfiction reading!

Reading Councils Cont'd

Secondary Reading Interest Council

Brad Biggs, Ph.D.

“Reading comprehension isn’t just for reading specialists any more!” We’ve been hearing that refrain for quite a while, and these days, with new pushes from the Common Core State Standards and Minnesota Board of Teaching revised requirements for all teachers’ licensing, it’s truer than ever.



In recent Secondary Reading Interest Council meetings we’ve talked about ways to support content area teachers in content area reading instruction. There have been some success stories, but often it’s a struggle. Content area teachers, like all of us, are besieged with many calls for their attention and efforts.

One supplemental tool for content area reading is the Ready or Not Reading website (www.centerforcollegereadiness/ready-or-not-reading). Ready or Not Reading (RNR) increases teacher and student awareness of student college readiness with research-based, college level readings, multiple choice and short answer assessments, and targeted feedback for teachers and students. It’s a free online program from M State College and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities available to teachers and students across Minnesota. With RNR, reading specialists can discover an opportunity to learn more about content area reading, and teachers and their students can benefit from strands of individual and class feedback on student reading content area reading comprehension. RNR’s reading comprehension rubric is based on the 2009 NAEP Reading Framework and the Common Core State Standards.

During RNR pilot testing and in the year since the upgrade of the website, students have shown enthusiasm for the direct, personalized feedback from the site’s college-level reading educators. Educators have appreciated the site’s resource page, where high school and college content area educators provide reading education and strategies in video, audio, and downloadable hard copy. RNR is a flexible tool, and can be used during class, as homework, or by individual students.

If you’re interested in finding out more about RNR, please feel free to email me at brad.biggs@minnesota.edu. I’d be happy to chat about RNR, arrange an online or in-person interactive discussion of the site, or talk with content area teachers about it.

Reading Councils Cont'd

Central Minnesota Reading Council

CSB Students Share Children's Literature Trends at Readers Night Out

By: Emily Hoeschen, Adjunct Instructor at CSB

The first annual Reader's Night Out took place on Monday, November 11th in St. Cloud Minnesota. The event combined appetizers, vendors, book sales and book talks for area educators. One of the nights highlights' was having students from Emily Hoeschen's Literature for Children and Adolescents course at St Benedicts present the latest and greatest in Children's Literature and activities to accompany them.

What are the latest trends in Children's Literature?

- Picture books continue to represent a wide range of themes, approaches and artistic merit. Picture books that make us laugh will continue to be welcomed by young audiences.
- For adolescents there continues to be great interest in series of all kinds, whether they are fantasy, mystery, or science fiction based.
- Timely topics in children's literature include bullying, survival and nature stories.



Throughout the semester students have been learning tools for analyzing and selecting books that meet developmental, literary and artistic criteria. Specific qualities associated with the major genres of literature. Models for asking questions that promote thoughtful and supported responses to literature. Finally, formats for conducting discussions of literature that are collaborative meaning-making experiences.

Some of the activities shared at Readers Night Out was the course blog, where students read and analyzed 25 different Picture Books and made recommendations for grade levels and possible instructional strategies to be paired with each book. Check the blog out here: <http://high5for25.wordpress.com/>.

The students also shared Picture Book Kits, Think-Aloud Lesson plans, Digital Book Trailers with QRA codes linking right from the book and finally multiple resources for Literature Circles and Readers Theatre.



Over the course of the evening, the CSB table was constantly flooded with eager educators to take back activities to their classrooms. Many educators commented on the students' professional manner and content knowledge with Children's Literature. The students gave out book marks with links to all of the resources and children's books' shared and welcomed emails with any questions or future concerns from their visitors.

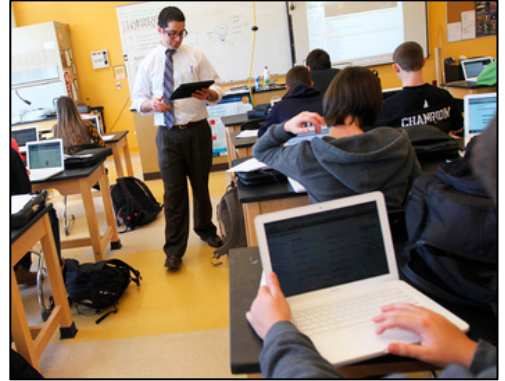
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Reading Councils Cont'd

Twin Cities Area Reading Council

Literacy and Technology Event

On Wednesday, November 13 “Literacy and Technology” was the topic of the Twin Cities Area Reading Council’s evening event at the Bloomington Public Schools Educational Services Center. Andrew Rummel from the University of Minnesota and Sean Beaverson from Bloomington Public Schools kicked off the evening with a keynote presentation titled, “New Literacies and Today’s Learner”. The engaging presentation included the examples of websites and apps to use in a variety of classroom levels. They also shared YouTube’s *The Old Man in the Sea* –sketches by Hagen Reiling with suggestions for student writing and reading activities after reading the story by Ernest Hemmingway and viewing the video. Another message that resonated with me was “Technology best serves when it is least noticeable”. They recommended the following website: goo.gl/FquxZL.



The second part of the evening provided an opportunity for the attendees to choose one of three breakout sessions to discuss in depth the use of technology in either elementary, middle school or high school. The facilitators for each level provided more ideas on how to use technology in the classroom through websites and apps increasing student engagement, creative methods for students to demonstrate knowledge or comprehension of specific topics, along with classroom management tools and assessment.

Andrea Bodeau facilitated the elementary breakout session. Andrea is a Media Specialist for the Bloomington Public Schools. She shared a variety of apps and websites for reading and writing skills. It provided time for everyone in the breakout session to share the apps they used, to ask questions about the newly introduced apps. Everyone walked away with a list of apps for reading, writing, phonics and management of assessments.

The middle school breakout session was facilitated by Maria May, 6th Grade Reading Teacher and Building Literacy Lead Valley View Middle School, Bloomington Public Schools mmay@bloomington.k12.mn.us. Her presentation is below and also can be found on TCARC website. <http://goo.gl/ir33VK>

Scott Voss was the facilitator for the High school breakout session. In his presentation, Scott emphasized the importance of using technology as a support to teaching and learning. “We shouldn’t just be doing the same things we’ve always done, just on a screen.” He encouraged us to ask “does this feel like a digital worksheet?” Another suggestion for High School classes was that, novels could be pre-recorded on an iPad and then played in class as students follow along with their copy of the book, freeing the teacher up for individual conferencing and even small group instruction. The digital backchannel known as Blyve (www.blyze.com) was introduced in the session. In 1:1 settings students can respond, ask questions and interact as the teacher or other classmates speak to the whole class. Unlike other backchannels, Blyve allows the teacher to preview comments before they are posted. Scott’s log www.avreading.blogspot.com has other great ideas for authentically incorporating technology into reading instruction at the secondary level.

The evening was concluded with dessert and a drawing for a gift card for Barnes and Noble. It was evident by the number of teachers in attendance that the topic of technology and literacy is an area of interest for teachers in kindergarten through high school.

Internet Sites and iPad Apps from the Twin Cities Area Reading Council Technology and Literacy Workshop.

Hello all, I want to share with you some Internet sites/I pad apps that I learned about to use with literacy. The workshop I went to was on technology and literacy put on by the Twin Cities Area Reading Council. I attended a special session on iPad apps to use with kids. These are the ones the presenter suggested. She categorized them according to the Daily Five components. See my note at the end on the app Chirp, which is by far one of the coolest and most helpful educator apps I have seen!

Read To Self

- Learning A-Z- RAZ kids—this is a database of many books at levels A-Z. Kids can read or be read to from the books. I think books can also be print out. It has a cost (not sure) and it can only be used on computers, not iPads due to being run on Flash.
- LAZ leveled readers: At least one free book per level 5\$ per additional book—for iPad
- Grasshopper books: Free or 99 cents, good for younger kids
- Storia—part of scholastic books, has a cost but you can use points to purchase books for the iPad.
- Mackin Via: for the iPad, I think this is a publishing company. You can purchase books for the iPads
- Overdrive is the Hennepin county Library ebooks website

Work on Writing

- imovie. Cost: \$5.00
- Stories on stix: \$2.00
- Book creator: \$5.00, She said this was very good. I saw there is a fee one-probably has limited features.
- Puppet pals: free

Read To Others

- Little bird tales: \$ 2.99
- Voice thread: free
- Audiobooks: free
- Voice record pro: free
- Sparkle fish

Listen to Reading

- Tales2go: free trial
- Storynory: \$ 2.99
- Hennepin county library: free
- National geographic young explorers: I think she said you can read old copies online. There is a way to get it to download to the iPad, but I don't remember right now.
- Storyline online. Free

Word Work

- Alphabet organizer: Free, from the site: read write think which offers many other apps, games and lessons for reading
- Phonics tic tac toe: free
- Screen chomp: A whiteboard app (not sure what that means) free, kids can demonstrate what they know on this
- Sparkle fish: like ad- libs, not sure about cost
- Flying alphabetinis
- Educreations
- Symbaloo
- Sound Sort from Lakeshore learning: free (I used this with Ellie last year and it was great!)

She also mentioned **Chirp**, which is an app that will let you share from your iPad or phone to any others in the room that have the app open. For example, if I have a picture or a website location that I want all the students to have on their iPads, I make sure the app, Chirp, is open on mine and on theirs and then press the send button and it magically appears on their iPads. It is free and really neat! You have to go to iPhone apps and then download it to your device (doesn't matter if it is an iPad).

Reading Councils Cont'd

Southwest Minnesota Reading Council

Happy New Year!

Are you looking for books to use during the New Year? Check out this website for suggestions to use for each day of the upcoming New Year.

<http://childrensbooks.about.com/od/forteachers/a/january-books.htm>



Looking ahead to Spring 2014

SAVE THE DATE

April is Poetry month. To help celebrate this genre, the Southwest Minnesota Reading Council would like to invite you to join us with poet, Laura Purdie Salas, as she shares her poetry and how to incorporate poetry into your classroom.

April 8, 2014

Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN

Contact Jill Morgan at jamorgs@hotmail.com for info.

Please include SWMRC in the subject line.



Shoes and Books – what a great combination!

Do you love shoes? Do you love reading? Pete the Cat loves shoes too! Eric Litwin, (known as Mr. Eric), author of Pete the Cat books likes cats, music, books and coffee. Check out Mr. Eric's website – ericlitwin.com!

Mr. Eric has a great CD called The Big Silly. The last track of the CD has the great story/song I Love My White Shoes! It is very catchy and fun!

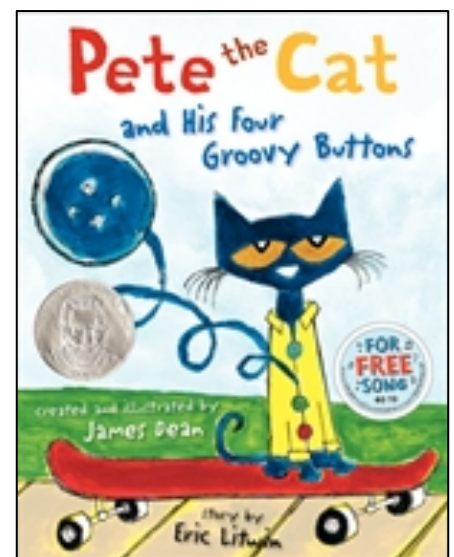
Pete the Cat books...

Pete the Cat I Love My White Shoes

Pete the Cat Rocking in My School Shoes

Pete the Cat Saves Christmas

Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons



Event Information

Nominate a Deserving Literacy Professional for the Minnesota Reading Association

Celebrate Literacy Award

Do you know an individual making an exceptional and inspiring contribution to K-12 literacy education in Minnesota?

Recognize their efforts by nominating them for an MRA Celebrate Literacy Award. To be eligible, candidates must be MRA members working in K-12 literacy endeavors.

Contributions of nominees must be significant and related to improving the reading process, reading instruction, or furthering literacy in Minnesota. Nominees should demonstrate exemplary service, practice, and accomplishments that provide a model of leadership for others.

For more details and to submit a nomination, visit the

Minnesota Reading Association website at www.mnreading.org.

Nominations must be submitted by February 7, 2014.



You are cordially invited to the 2014

Celebrate Literacy Dessert Reception

Presented by the Minnesota Reading Association

*Please join us as we
recognize and celebrate the work of
Minnesota's finest literacy leaders.*

A Silent Auction and Dollar Book Sale will be a part of the evening:

Proceeds to benefit the Karen Lamb Johnson Scholarship Fund

Friday, March 7, 2014

7:00 - 9:00 pm

Maple Grove Community Center

12951 Weaver Lake Road

Maple Grove, MN 55369

For more information, contact Katie Bannon

k.bannon@mnreading.org

651-503-8502

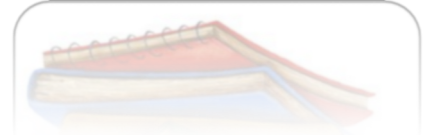
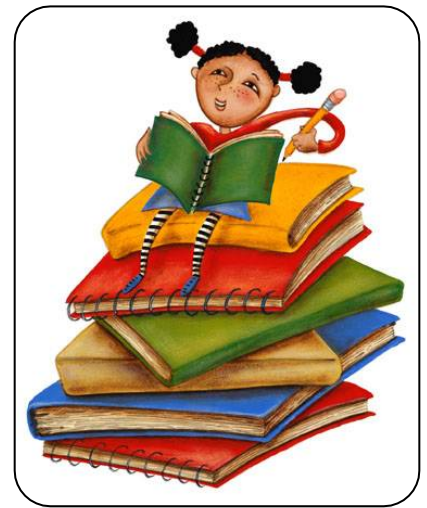
The Minnesota Reading Association is sponsoring this event and it is being held free of charge; however, please RSVP by visiting www.mnreading.org in order to reserve space and refreshments for all attendees.

Writers Are Readers - Young Author Celebration 2014

The Minnesota Reading Association is again sponsoring a creative writing award for the K-12 students of our members. *Students may submit an original manuscript (fiction or nonfiction) piece to be enjoyed by their peers.* Winners will be recognized on the MRA website as well as at our Celebrate Literacy Reception on March 7, 2014. Students have the opportunity to showcase their creativity and enthusiasm for writing to entertain or inform other readers.

The writing submitted can be fiction or nonfiction from any genre (adventure, make-believe, poetry, prose, etc.) but some ideas include:

- a story about something that happened in the writer's family
- a biography of a famous person (including sources or references)
- an original poem
- a news story about a historical event, written as if the writer were a reporter witnessing the event
- a description of a life-changing event



Guidelines:

1. Writers must do their own work.
2. The audience for this writing will be other students.
3. While illustrations are acceptable, and for some genre encouraged, writers must keep in mind that all publishing will be done in black and white, so the use of color is discouraged.
4. Teachers may help students with the writing process, as this is a learning experience. Encourage rewriting and editing. Stories will be published as they were submitted.
5. Kindergarten and 1st grade students may dictate a story to an adult if the student's writing skills are still being developed.
6. Work may be entered in the modified category if the student is on an IEP for language arts.
7. Entries must be typed.
8. Entries will be judged according to creativity, originality, organization, and mechanics.
9. Judging will be done by grade level, according to these specifications:
 - a. K-3 around 500 words or less
 - b. 4-6 around 750 words or less
 - c. 7-9 around 1000 words or less
 - d. 10-12 around 1200 words or less
10. Winners from each category will be notified by mail, and will be invited to the MRA Celebrate Literacy Reception on March 7, 2014.
11. Two copies of each manuscript should be mailed to:

Katie Bannon, MRA Celebrations Chairperson
1845 Donegal Dr. #11
Woodbury, MN 55125
Attn: Writers are Readers
12. **Deadline for entries is February 7, 2014.**
13. Each page of the manuscript should be labeled on the back of each page with the following information:
 - a. Name of student
 - b. Grade
 - c. Teacher's name and MRA membership number
 - d. Phone number and/or email address of teacher
 - e. Full name and address of school

Learners as Leaders: Are We Modeling Curiosity?

by Jen McCarty Plucker, Ed.D. MRA Past President

"Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other." —John F. Kennedy

In his engaging [Ted Talk](#), Ramsay Musallam shares how a life-threatening situation, a conversation with his surgeon, and the questions of his four year old daughter caused him to create the following rules for his classroom:

1. Curiosity comes first. Questions can be windows to great instruction, not the other way around.
2. Embrace the mess. Learning is ugly.
3. Practice reflection. What we do is important. It deserves our care, but it also deserves our revision.

I recently moved into a new role in my district facilitating an English/Language Arts team of teacher leaders as our district moves into year three of implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). I was reluctant. I wasn't excited. In fact, I was dreading my year believing it would likely be my last in a district role. I'd be returning to the classroom as soon as I could. Fortunately, this last week my perspective has changed... for the better. Largely due to Musallam's advice and my colleagues' willingness to be vulnerable and open to trying on new thinking.



Once the team of ELA Lead Teachers were named (we hired eleven educators at stipend positions), we gathered to build our team and began to tackle what we knew would be a bumpy road ahead. Like many school districts, ours jumped into curriculum review the year the standards were published, believing we could place the standards into our already created classes/curriculum and then buy new materials. At the end of that first year, our district leadership realized that the CCSS required instruction in ELA to be quite different and that the changes suggested would not be enough. So year two, our district leadership worked to steer ELA in the right direction. We took a look at the shifts that CCSS are asking for including integrating/bundling benchmarks, raising the rigor, considering the complexity of text, and moving away from teaching "the book" or "the paper" and instead ensuring students master benchmarks. This meant more than simply changing placement of texts or standards, but also shifting paradigms for instruction. It meant we needed to focus on skill development in a much richer and more differentiated way. We also discovered, inherent in the standards, was inquiry as a best bet instructional approach.



Chemistry teacher Ramsey Musallam also encourages *"educators to leave behind a simple role as disseminators of content and embrace a new paradigm as cultivators of curiosity and inquiry."* Inquiry requires students to embrace ambiguity, let go of the "one right answer" and consider multiple perspectives. At a recent professional development session where all high school ELA teachers in our district were exploring practical ways to integrate standards into inquiry units of study, I heard many teachers asking for more clarity, additional examples, and to please "tell us exactly what do to." Irony?

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CSB Students Share Children's Literature Trends at Readers Night Out

Emily Hoeschen

Reflecting back on the Central Minnesota's Reading Council's first annual Readers Night Out, it was a success. We had a wonderful presence of educators stopping by to check out local vendors, hearing book talks and taking back some fresh and new ideas to re-ignite a passion for reading in their students. The students of the College of St Benedict, thoroughly enjoyed their time sharing their activities and expertise with fellow educators. We look forward to being a part of the Readers Night Out event in the years to come.



Continued from page 11

Learners as Leaders: Are We Modeling Curiosity?

Jen McCarty Plucker

It is our Lead Teachers who are quick to share their successes, failures, and new shifts in thinking that are helping to calm the fears of those who are resisting the changes. One Lead Teacher shared her journey in a center-based classroom with students of various needs showing how she used to try to teach standards and functional skills separate of one another. She found last Spring as she pioneered inquiry units of study that when she used an overarching question, like "How do decisions, actions, and consequences vary depending on the different perspectives of the people involved?" she could integrate reading, writing, speaking, and social skills all in a differentiated way to push all her students forward. She shared with her colleagues this past week that even her students with ASD who thrive in the black and white were able to embrace a new way of learning English/Language. This Lead Teacher and our others are embracing Musallam's idea that, "*Student questions are the seeds of real learning — not some scripted curriculum that gives them tidbits of random information.*"

The greatest lesson for me has been the reminder that learning and leading must go hand in hand. I am excited to see what more we will learn this year.

