

# Highlights

January 2011

of the Minnesota Reading Association, an International Reading Association affiliate



## Looking Back, Looking Forward

by Julie Scullen



Julie Scullen, President

The sound of shovels scraping driveways is a familiar sound in the last few months. The tinsel has faded, the glitter has been vacuumed from carpets, the holiday treats consumed, the vacation days savored. As the upcoming cold winter months fly by, it would be easy to forget the accomplishments of the past months while looking ahead and making plans for the warmer ones.

Looking back, Minnesota Reading Association has many reasons to be proud. Our organization continues to change and thrive in response to the changing face of education. Thanks to the astounding leadership of President Elect Scott Voss, we have a new website with updated features for members. Thanks to the diligence of Past President Ilene Christian, we have current bylaws that meet the needs of our members and provide us with a clear focus for the coming years. Thanks to the thorough and conscientious work of MRA Treasurer Mary Johnson, we have a strong financial system in place that will steer our work. Thanks to Vice President Jennifer McCarty Plucker, our annual conference lineup includes nationally known keynote speakers Jim Burke, Kylene Beers, and Robert Probst. Thanks to the MRA Executive Board and the partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education, we have created a network of literacy professionals designed to build literacy leadership capacity across the state. These are no small feats, requiring hours of time and focus.

Looking forward, I am certain that MRA will continue to thrive and grow, due to the knowledge and contributions of all members.

I would like to invite you to consider sharing of your talents and passion for literacy with other members. Contributions to your organization can be great or small, but all are important and have value. Best of all, not all require a significant time commitment.

- **Submit student writing.** Encourage your students to take part in the Writers are Readers Young Author Celebration (entries due February 1st).
- **Recognize someone.** Nominate a deserving literacy leader from your local council for the Celebrate Literacy Award (entries due February 1st).
- **Collaborate.** Visit the blog on the MRA site to share a resource or thought.
- **Share.** Take part in a book club discussion sponsored by your local council.
- **Contribute.** Attend an MRA Leadership meeting (the next meeting will take place March 12) and collaborate with others from around the state.
- **Lead.** Consider spreading your leadership wings by running for a position in your local council, or consider a state level position.

Your contributions matter. Thank you again to all of you who share your passions and talents with us. Thank you to those who collaborate, guide, and support the work of others. And, finally, thank you to our future leaders who will help to guide us as we move forward!

*Julie*

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Julie Scullen

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### Minnesota Reading Association

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[www.mnreading.org](http://www.mnreading.org)

# Reading Councils

## Mark Your Calendars!



August 11, 2011

Continuing Education Center  
University of Minnesota  
Saint Paul Campus

Learn more details on page 9 of this newsletter. Check the website for the Call for Proposals.

[www.mnreading.org](http://www.mnreading.org)

## Central Minnesota Reading Council

Getting to Know the 2010 English Language Arts Standards and How They Will Affect Instruction

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29, 2011

Learn more details. The registration form is included in this newsletter on page 15.



## Minnesota Academy of Reading

### Policy Issues in Literacy:

### Implications for Teacher Educators

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12, 2011

The Minnesota Academy of Reading Leadership Team would like to gratefully acknowledge the presenters who shared their literacy expertise at the recent **MAR Policy Issues in Literacy: Implications for Teacher Educators** event. The January 12 conversation brought together Academy members, MRA members, and colleagues from across the state to discuss policy issues related to changes that impact teacher educators. Gail Jordan (Bethel University) and Kari Ross (MN Department of Education) spoke about the new Minnesota



Kari D. Ross

Academic Standards in English Language Arts, K-12.

Deborah Dillon and Eva Boehm (University of Minnesota) shared their insights regarding the Minnesota Board of Teaching Reading Standards.



Eva Boehm

Carole Koch and Amy Smith (University of St. Thomas) discussed implications for institutions of higher education regarding the new Teacher Performance Assessments.

A reception and conversation with Minnesota legislators concluded the day. Thanks to all presenters and participants for the valuable information they shared.

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## ... Reading Councils (cont'd)

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The vibrant community of literacy colleagues in Minnesota was well-represented and important progress was made toward highlighting the impact that MAR's many efforts are having on the Minnesota literacy landscape.

### The Fourth Guy Bond Memorial Conference on Reading

"Developing Critical Readers & Writers: Improving Adolescents' Literacies through Research, Practice, and Policy" a Celebration of the Research, Teaching, and Impact of Professor Richard Beach

APRIL 29-30, 2011

Speakers include well-known international researchers such as:

- Donna Alvermann, Distinguished Research Professor, Affiliate for African American Studies, Literacy and Language Department, at The University of Georgia
- Jerry Harste, Professor Emeritus, Literacy Education, Indiana University
- Elizabeth B. Moje, Associate Dean for Research and Arthur F. Thurnau Professor, School of Education; Faculty Associate, Institute for Social Research; Faculty Affiliate, Latina/o Studies; University of Michigan
- Chris M. Anson, University Distinguished Professor and Director, Campus Writing & Speaking Program, North Carolina State University
- Deborah Appleman, Hollis L. Caswell Professor of Educational Studies, Carleton College



Donna Alvermann

- Registration will be available online. For more information, please contact Ingrid Cook at the Minnesota Center for Reading Research, [jccook@umn.edu](mailto:jccook@umn.edu)

[Sponsored by the University of Minnesota, the Bond Foundation, the Minnesota Center for Reading Research & the Bush Foundation: Minnesota Reads Project]

### Southeast Minnesota Reading Council

SERC Winter Workshop for Teachers and Young Authors featuring Gary Dulabaum and \$1 bargain book sale

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2011

8:30 AM – 11:00 AM  
Student, Parent, and Teacher Session

12:00 - 3:00 PM Teacher Session  
Mayo High School, Rochester, MN

CEU Credit: 5 hours

Fee: FREE for SERC Members

\$5 for students

\$10 for non-members

Contact Maurina Rome at [maurnarome@yahoo.com](mailto:maurnarome@yahoo.com) for more information

### *My Teacher Rides a Harley: Enhancing K-6 Literacy through Songwriting*

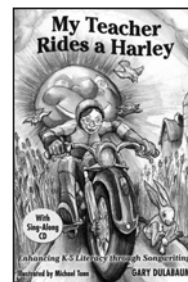
If your students are like most students, they probably groan and roll their eyes each time you make a writing assignment.

And if you're like most teachers, you probably are constantly searching for new ways to make writing assignments interesting. One good approach is to build on young people's interest in popular music and turn your students into songwriters. You can make a songwriting assignment in just about any subject area.



Gary Dulabaum

For example, rather than asking students to write a book report, ask them to write a song about the book. In history class, students can write songs about major figures from the era they are studying or about a major event of the time. They can research the kinds of music that were popular during different eras and their own lyrics to fit some of that music. Students can create original melodies for their songs or they can set them to the music of their favorite performers. They just might have so much fun that they forget they are writing! Sharing stories and songwriting approaches from his book,



*My Teacher Rides A Harley*, Gary outlines the tools and processes teachers need to expose their students to the writing process and encourage their personal creativity.

### *Dr. Dre Makes a House Call: Enhancing Literacy through Rhythm, Rhyme, Movement, and Poetry with Gary Dulabaum*

Explore how rhythm helps students with their fluency in reading, how rhyme is part of our everyday language, and use movement to create meaning. Langston Hughes defined poetry this way, "Poetry is rhythm. The rhythms of poetry give continuity and pattern to words, to thoughts, strengthening them, adding the qualities of permanence, and relating the written word to the vast rhythm of life."

During this session Gary will also demonstrate the close link between song lyric and poem and

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## ... Reading Councils (cont'd)

continued from page 3

how using music of today, including hip-hop/rap instrumental loops, will bring new life to the written word, and will keep the attention of your students (adding music to the experience of learning is a technique students respond to.) Check it out!!

The workshop also explores oral performance—the rocket fuel of full-power language—through performing techniques and non-verbal language elements—facial expression, stance, gesture, tone, timing, and inflection.

[www.garydulabaum.com](http://www.garydulabaum.com)

### Southwest Minnesota Reading Council

#### Fall Conference Update

The fall conference of the Southwest Minnesota Reading Council was held on October 7, 2010, at the newly remodeled Royal Loon in Slayton, Minnesota. Beth Wolf, kindergarten teacher and member of the Executive Board, motivated her audience with ideas to use with literature in the classroom. She presented a variety of ways to extend the books and stories that are used by teachers. Her enthusiasm for reading was contagious! Thank you, Beth!

#### Spring Conference

THURSDAY, APRIL 7, 2011

Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota

Our guest speaker will be author Jonathan Friesen. Jonathan is . . .



Jonathan Friesen

- A resident of Mora, Minnesota
- A fourteen-year public school teacher (both classroom and special education)

- An expert on bullying prevention and intervention, teen isolation and ostracism, and a host of disability issues
- A captivating presenter who draws from his own life lived with Tourette Syndrome and epilepsy
- The author of *Jerk, California*, and *Rush* (Penguin, USA), *The Last Martin* (Zondervan) and two works-in-progress with Puffin and Zondervan
- The recipient of the American Library Association's 2009 Schneider Family Book Award and the Library Media Connection's Editor's Choice Award for his debut novel, *Jerk, California*



### MRA Mission

*The Minnesota Reading Association actively promotes lifelong literacy for all citizens. We encourage professional interaction among all organizations involved with literacy and provide resources for exemplary literacy practices and habits.*

- With the goal of raising up writers of excellence, founded WriteHomeStudio
- A board member of the Minnesota Tourette Syndrome Association

Please join us for an educational and motivating evening. For information about his conference, contact Jill Morgan at [jamorgs@hotmail.com](mailto:jamorgs@hotmail.com). Please include SWMRC in the subject line of your email.

### Literacy Projects!

This year we will be sending money to China, helping children there to continue their love of reading. We also will be buying books for a community baby shower in New Ulm, putting books into the hands of new parents and their babies! We will collect a freewill offering at the spring conference for these reading projects.



Thanks for your help in supporting literacy near home and abroad!

The next *Highlights* newsletter deadline is April 1, 2011. Submit your event details to Maurina Rome before that date in order to have your information included in the upcoming issue.

[m.rome@mnreading.org](mailto:m.rome@mnreading.org)

## Career Readiness

*It's not just  
for high schools  
anymore...*

In these uncertain times, with all of the economic, political and technological changes at our door step, it's difficult to image what college and career readiness really looks like for our K-12 students. How can we possibly prepare all students for a global workplace?

College and career readiness is defined as the ability to independently and proficiently participate in freshman level college courses or independently and proficiently participate in a career training program that leads to employment with a living wage, benefits, and an opportunity for advancement. This connotation of what we expect students to be able to know and do after high school graduation is not new. But the reality is that, even though this has been our goal, a significant number of students are not able to access 21st century career opportunities because their literacy skills are not sufficient to meet the demands of college or the work place.

According to the latest ACT results, 38% of Minnesota students headed to college require remedial reading classes before they can take credit-bearing courses. We don't collect the same data for students going into career training programs, but we know from text analysis and the responses from employers that the reading demands for non-college bound students can be even more rigorous because of the dense, technical nature of the texts career



candidates encounter. So it seems necessary and relevant to focus on literacy instruction in order to assure all of our students have access to a plethora of options.

... the reality is that a significant number of students are not able to access 21st century career opportunities because their literacy skills are not sufficient to meet the demands of college or the work place.

More attention to the requirements of preparing students for college and careers is also the focus of our new 2010 English Language Arts Academic Standards.

The predominance of informational text, along with reading and writing in the content areas, are integral to the framework of these standards. This was intentional, and necessary. If we are indeed going to give all students post-secondary opportunities, then

we need to continually grow in our understanding of the demands on readers and writers throughout their academic experience.

It's challenging to think of college and career readiness preparations in a kindergarten classroom, but that is truly where it all begins. Parents and educators agree, we all want what's best for our youth. Even though it may be challenging, we need to continue to engage in discussions about current best practices for all students, at every grade level and in every program, so that we focus on meeting the needs of all students, and what we can do as a community to foster literacy and future success.

For more information on the 2010 English Language Arts Standards, please contact: Kari Ross, Minnesota

Department of Education Reading Specialist,  
[kari.d.ross@state.mn.us](mailto:kari.d.ross@state.mn.us) 651-582-8455



Kari D. Ross

## IRA Convention 2011

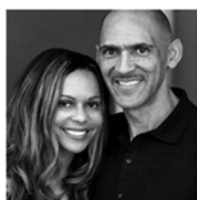
**May 8-11, Orange County  
Convention Center, Orlando, Florida**

Registration is now open! Register  
online or register by mail or fax.  
Prepaid deadline is April 8, 2011.

[www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org)

**Monday,  
May 9, 2011**

8:30-10:00 a.m.  
Opening  
General Session  
Tony and  
Laura Dungy



**Tuesday  
May 10, 2011**

8:30-10:00 a.m.  
General Session  
Goldie Hawn



**Wednesday,  
May 11, 2011**

2:30-4:00 p.m.  
Closing General  
Super Session  
Sharon Draper  
& Dave Isay



**Monday  
May 9, 2011**

Primary Literature  
Luncheon  
Pam Muñoz Ryan  
Noon-1:30 p.m.  
Scholastic




**Tuesday  
May 10, 2011**


Young Adult  
Literature Luncheon  
Lois Lowry  
Noon-1:30 p.m.  
Houghton Mifflin



# Turn it on



Expand your knowledge. Broaden your community. Spark your inspiration.



## THE POWER OF LITERACY

IRA 56<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONVENTION | ORLANDO  
MAY 8-11 | 2011 | LEARN MORE AT [WWW.IRACONVENTION.ORG](http://WWW.IRACONVENTION.ORG)

**Wednesday  
May 11, 2011**

Book and  
Author Luncheon  
Gennifer  
Choldenko  
Noon-1:30 p.m.  
Penguin



### Featured Speakers

**Monday, May 9, 2011**

Jeff Kinney, 11:00 am-Noon  
Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson,  
1:00-2:00 pm  
Mike Buchanan and Diane Lang  
3:00-4:00 pm

**Tuesday, May 10, 2011**

Rosemary Wells, 11:00 am-Noon  
Dwayne Betts, 1:00-2:00 pm  
Pam Allyn, 3:00-4:00 pm  
Maryanne Wolf, 3:00-4:00 pm

**Wednesday, May 11, 2011**

Jon Scieszka, 9:00-10:00 am  
Meg Cabot, 11:00 am-Noon

### IRA Invited Speakers

**Tuesday, May 10, 2011**

Douglas Fisher, 9:00-10:00 am  
Laura Robb, 11:00 am-Noon  
Michael Graves, 1:00-2:00 pm  
Gay Pinnell & Irene Fountas,  
1:00-2:00 pm

**Wednesday, May 11, 2011**

Maryann Manning, 9:00-10:00 am  
Sally Reis 11:00 am-Noon  
Timothy Rasinski, 11:00 am-Noon  
Timothy Shanahan,, 11:00 am-Noon



## IRA Convention 2011 (cont'd)

### Teaching Edge Speaker Series

This sharp, new series premieres at the 2011 IRA Annual Convention promising more than just professional development. Teaching Edge puts you face-to-face with the real stars of the literacy world. Its intensive sessions will boost your knowledge, expand your abilities, and make you eager to return to the classroom to put it all into practice.

**Regie Routman. "I do it." "We do it." "We do it." "We do it." "You do it": Applying an Optimal Learning Model to Accelerate Literacy Achievement, Engagement, Enjoyment, and Independence for All Students.**

Monday, May 9, 2011, 1  
1:00-1:00 pm  
Peabody Hotel  
Windemere Ballroom Y and Z



In this practical, interactive session, Regie Routman will show how to apply an Optimal Learning Model (OLM), a gradual

release of responsibility model, to maximize teaching and learning across the curriculum for all students and teachers. Participants will learn how the OLM can become an indispensable tool for thoughtful lesson planning and observation as well as for raising expectations for what's possible as readers and writers.

Plan your convention to include time in the Exhibit Hall, learning about new products, publishers, and meeting your favorite authors with their upcoming books.

**Lori Oczkus. The Powerful Reading Vitamin: Boosting Comprehension with New Reciprocal Teaching Lessons**  
Monday, May 9, 2011  
2:00-4:00 pm Peabody Hotel,  
Windemere Ballroom Y and Z



Are you ready to revolutionize your teaching and dramatically improve the engagement and comprehension of all of your

students? Would you like to take your comprehension instruction to the next level so your students are the ones doing the work and using the strategies when they read on their own? Many students decode and yet don't comprehend what they read. The Fabulous Four, or reciprocal teaching strategies (Palincsar and Brown) predict, question, clarify, and summarize work as a powerful package to begin to yield dramatic results in reading comprehension in as little as 15 days.

This exciting *new* version of reciprocal teaching is loaded with dozens of new lessons for whole class, content area reading, guided reading, stations, and a practical Response to Intervention Model. You'll experience firsthand motivating lessons. This model yields student growth of six months to two years in just three months. Come to this practical, hands-on, and entertaining workshop to learn ideas you can use tomorrow to strengthen student comprehension using any reading material.

**Beverly Tyner. Practical Engagement in the Classroom**

Tuesday,  
May 10, 2011  
11:00 am-1:00 pm  
Peabody Hotel, Windemere  
Ballroom Y-Z



This session will provide all you need to know to assemble a rigorous literacy curriculum while answering the following

questions: What is best taught in whole group or small group instruction? Would reading aloud or shared reading be the most powerful venue to grow all readers in the classroom? Which components should be included in small group to differentiate instruction for maximum growth? Learn to address the needs of an ever increasing wide range of learners and meet the critical components of reading research-based instruction with practical implementation in the classroom.

**Valerie Ellery. Effective Engagement Strategies.**

Tuesday,  
May 10, 2011  
2:00 - 4:00 pm  
Peabody Hotel,  
Windemere Ballroom Y and Z



Is your classroom inclusive, extensive, far reaching, and wide ranging in the area of

literacy? Are your students motivated and engaged? Join Valerie Ellery for the Creating Strategic Readers session designed

## IRA Convention 2011 (cont'd)

to improve teacher quality and student achievement through intense support with curriculum (strategies), assessment (teacher talk), and instruction (techniques). We will discover ways to educate the "whole child," engage and motivate today's learners, and create lifelong strategic readers utilizing the multiple intelligences. Valerie's session offers innovation, interactive, and motivating techniques with relevant and practical application.

### **The Two Sisters: Gail Boushey and Joan Moser. The Café: How Assessments Drive Instruction for Achievement**

Wednesday, May 11, 2011

9:30-11:30 am

Peabody Hotel,

Windemere Ballroom Y- Z



The sisters welcome you to join them for this informative session as they introduce you to The Café, a simple way to integrate assessment into daily reading and classroom discussions used by thousands of teachers all over the world.

The Café system, based on research into the habits of proficient readers, is an acronym for Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency and Expand vocabulary. The system includes goal-setting with students, posting of goals on a whole-class board, developing individual and small-group instruction based on clusters of students with similar

## **Plan to join us at the IRA Convention**

**May 8-11, 2011**

**Orlando, Florida**

**More information at [iraconvention.org](http://iraconvention.org)**



goals, and focusing whole-class instruction on emerging students.

### **Richard Allington. Research-Based Principles for Reading at Grade Level.**

Wednesday, May 11, 2011

12:30-2:30 pm

Peabody Hotel

Windemere Ballroom Y- Z



We now have good evidence that virtually every child who enters an American kindergarten can be reading on level by the end of first grade (Mathes, et al, 2004; Phillips & Smith, 2010; Vellutino, et al, 1996). But achieving these same results on a national scale will require several things. We know what to do. We can continue

down the path that has led us to where we are or alter the path and improve our reading instruction so that everyone develops full literacy.

This session will define why the following principles matter when teaching children to read and how to go about taking care of them as a teacher:

1. Matching difficulty level of texts with kids' development because kids need lots of high-success reading.
2. Ensuring most of the scheduled reading period has children actually reading and not wasting time on workbooks, test prep, or test taking.
3. Allow children to select most of the texts they will be reading.
4. Engaging children in daily literate conversation about the texts they are reading.

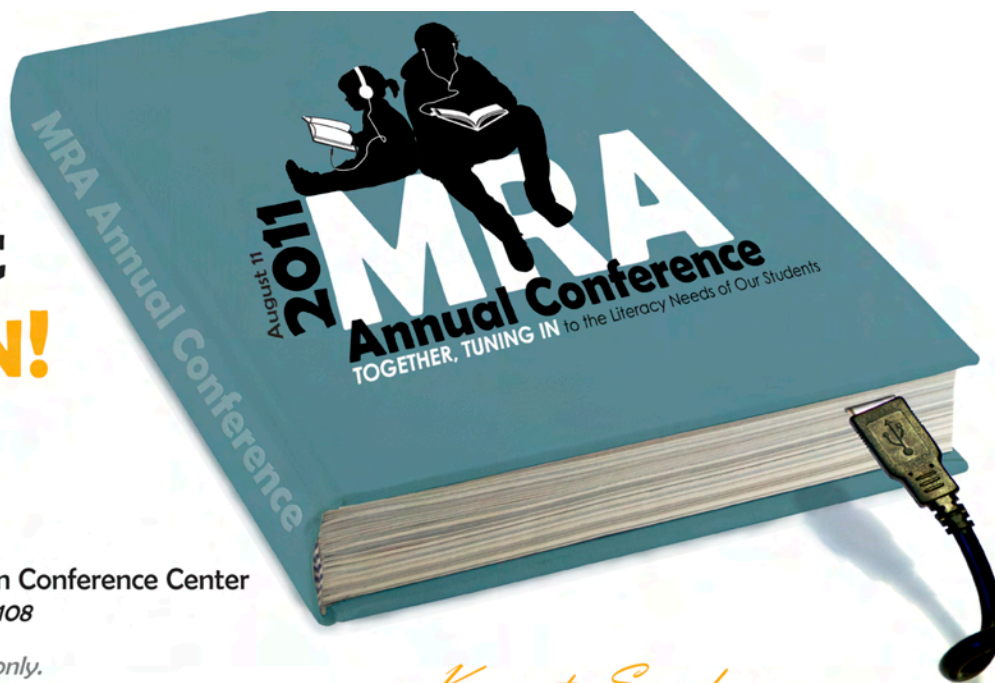


# it's time to get PLUGGED IN!

**August 11, 2011**  
8 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

at the U of M Continuing Education Conference Center  
1890 Buford Avenue ~ St. Paul, MN 55108

Parking available at LS104 -- \$7 cash only.  
(adjacent to the conference center)



## Keynote Speakers...

**JIM BURKE** teaches English at Burlingame High School. He is the author of numerous books, including *The English Teacher's Companion*, Third Edition; *The Teacher's Daybook*; *Letters to a New Teacher*; *ACCESSing School*; *School Smarts*; *Writing Reminders*; *Tools for Thought*; *Illuminating Texts*; *Reading Reminders*; and *I Hear America Reading*, all which are published by Heinemann. Through firsthand classroom materials, he offers 50 Essential Lessons. He is also a senior consultant for the McDougal Littell Literature program as well as the author of *The Reader's Handbook* (Great Source) and *Academic Workouts* (First Choice Publishing). Visit his website ([www.englishcompanion.com](http://www.englishcompanion.com)) for more information.



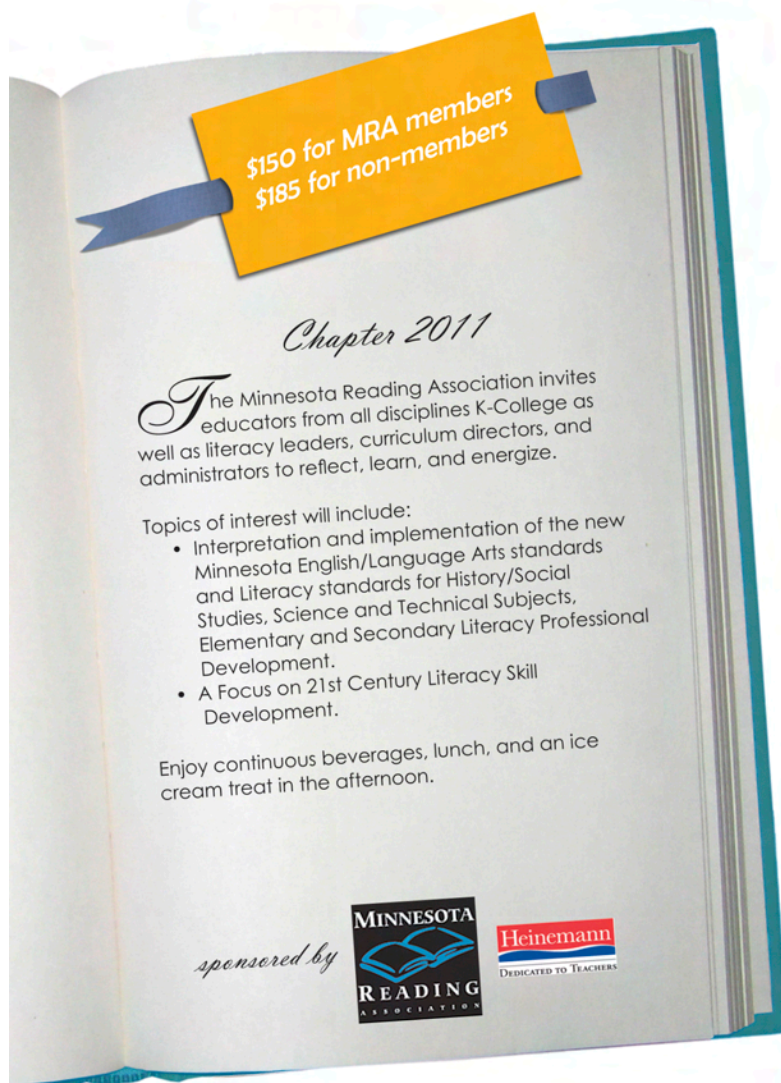
**KYLENE BEERS**, author of *When Kids Can't Read—What Teachers Can Do* (Heinemann, 2002) and **ROBERT E. PROBST**, author of *Response and Analysis*, Third Edition (Heinemann, 2004), are respected authorities on reading instruction. Kyleene—focusing more on reading skills—and Bob—focusing more on engagement and literary analysis—work together to show teachers and administrators how skills, engagement, and literary analysis work together. Bob is currently coauthoring, with Kyleene, a new book for teachers of struggling readers titled *Book by Book: Strategies that Help Struggling Readers with Literary Texts* (Heinemann, October 2010). Together, they are coeditors, with Linda Rief, of *Adolescent Literacy: Turning Promise into Practice* (Heinemann, 2007).



To see a full schedule of the day and register for the conference, go to:

**[www.mnreading.org](http://www.mnreading.org)**

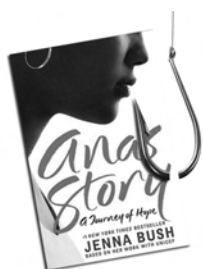
Questions may be directed to:  
Jennifer McCarty Plucker, MRA Conference  
Chair at [Jennifer.Plucker@gmail.com](mailto:Jennifer.Plucker@gmail.com).



## Hot Reads for 9th Graders

These are a few of the most popular books on my classroom shelves last year.

*Ana's Story: A Journey of Hope* by Jenna Bush (HarperCollins, 2007). Former first daughter Jenna Bush tells the remarkable story of Ana, a young woman infected with HIV/AIDS whom Bush met while interning with UNICEF in Latin America.



*Compound* by S. A. Bodeen (Feiwel and Friends, 2008). Eli, his sisters, and his parents have been living in an underground mansion since a nuclear war destroyed their home six years ago. According to his father, they have nine years to go before the air will be clean enough for them to emerge from their compound, but Eli is beginning to question his father's motives in this suspenseful thriller.



### A school turns 9th grade students' disdain for reading into enthusiasm.

It's an August evening, just before the start of a new school year. Students are filled with excitement and anxiety as they tour the school during freshman orientation at Eastview High School, a large suburban school outside Minneapolis/ St. Paul, Minnesota. As I stand outside my classroom door, I anticipate the dread and disdain of the students who will be entering my intervention class for 9th grade students who are behind in reading. After years of struggle, their fear of reading is now disguised as apathy and scorn toward books, reading, and teachers who ask them to read (especially aloud).

So I gear up. Dressed in my best, my classroom squeaky clean, I offer a warm welcome to my new crew. One at a time, students enter my room. One young man, hat pulled down over his eyes, looking at the floor, says, "Do I really have to take this class? I hate reading." Another, "Are you going to make us read out loud?" Still another, "Is there a way for me to test out of this class?" I remember what my father taught me as a child when we spent hours on the lake fishing. I must be patient, I must use the right bait, and I must always have my line in the water. I tell the students to give it a chance and have a look around. "See if there's a comfortable reading space you'd like to claim," I suggest.

Glancing around the room, students see fewer desks than in their other classes. Instead, there are comfortable reading corners with

shaggy bright rugs, bookshelves filled with young adult books, and a wall covered with inspirational quotes, such as, "A room without books is like a body without a soul" and "Today a reader, tomorrow a leader." The questions start again:

"Do we get to pick what we read?"

"Who gets to sit in these comfortable chairs?"

"How come this room looks so different?"

The bait seems to be working.



In the 2008–09 school year, Eastview embarked on a journey to meet the needs of striving freshmen readers. In that first year, students in our homegrown, research-based Academic Literacy 9 class showed growth at three to four times the rate of their peers (McCarty Plucker, 2009). How did we do it?

### Time to Read

Research has shown that high-achieving students read more than low achievers (Allington, 2006; Guthrie, 2008). To accelerate students' achievement in reading, literacy educators must ensure that striving readers are reading at least as much as their higher-achieving peers. We decided to narrow the discrepancy by providing a double

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## ... Baiting the Reading Hook (cont'd)

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dose of literacy instruction in an academic literary class that students must take in addition to their 9th grade English class. In the 2008–09 and 2009–10 school years, we had four class periods of the course, each taught by one of three highly trained and licensed reading teachers. This year, because of budget cuts, we have just three classes, two of them a year long and one a semester long.

We keep the classes small (no more than 10 students per teacher). Students are selected on the basis of standardized reading tests, informal reading assessments in middle school, and recommendations from the middle school reading specialist. We typically work with students whose scores on standardized state assessments are in the 10th–30th percentile.

We also hold sacred a minimum of 25 minutes of the daily 50-minute academic literacy class for students to read silently for enjoyment. Once our students have started reading for fun, we brainstorm and set goals for stealing minutes outside school for reading (Miller, 2009). By the end of the school year, many of our academic literacy students have finished more than 40 books and are reading at least an hour each day.

### A Homegrown Approach

Rather than purchase a commercial reading program, we created a homegrown one (Ivey, 2009). We looked at our resources, considered our students' needs, and consulted the most recent research in adolescent literacy instruction and decided to use our funds to build a classroom library with high-interest young adult novels, create an appealing and comfortable environment for teens, and provide professional development for teachers.

Developing and maintaining a classroom library of high-interest

young adult novels can be a challenge. However, daily access to engaging books is imperative for the success of growing readers. Yes, we lose books. No, our classroom isn't organized like our media center.

We tend to organize books by theme or likely audience, so we might have a table of sports books or teen romances instead of books organized by authors whose names may be unfamiliar to struggling readers.

We work to continually find books that give students just the right level of challenge—not so easy that students won't grow, and not so difficult that students won't understand them. We then help students figure out what books are just right for them. By February, students can often independently choose books that will accelerate their literacy growth.

### The Right Strategies

Instead of teaching strategies for strategies' sake, we take a reflective approach to strategy instruction. We start by helping our students share their thinking as they read. Once we learn what already comes naturally for each reader, we purposefully hone skills in other areas. For example, when our students are reading difficult text steeped in description, we encourage them to make mental movies as they read. When they are reading current events articles, we encourage them to ask questions. We teach students not to get discouraged when they're confused but to use metacognitive strategies to clear up the confusion as it happens.

Ultimately, we want our students thinking as they read, recognizing that reading is a complex process. One student shared his newfound thinking skills when he came into my room last winter, saying, "Dr. McCarty, I can't listen to my iPod

## More Hot Reads for 9th Graders

*The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins (Scholastic, 2008). Each year, the Capitol holds a lottery to choose one girl and one boy from each of the 12 districts of Panem to participate in the Hunger Games, a televised competition to the death that all citizens are required to watch. Katniss chooses to replace her younger sister in the games in this, the first of three books.

*L.A. Candy* by Lauren Conrad (Harper-



Collins, 2009). Jane and Scarlett move to Los Angeles and land on a reality TV show that follows their "real lives" and tests their friendship. Based on the true life of author Lauren Conrad, star of MTV's *The Hills*.



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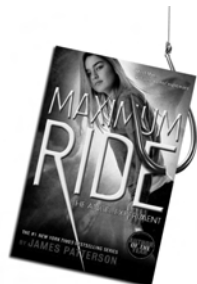


## ... Baiting the Reading Hook (cont'd)

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### More Hot Reads for 9th Graders

*Maximum Ride: The Angel Experiment* by James Patterson (Little, Brown, 2005). Max, 98 percent human, 2 percent avian, has escaped from the lab with her family but is being hunted by the Erasers (part wolf, part human). This fast-paced science fiction young adult novel is the first in a continuing series.



*Street Pharm* by Allison van Diepen (Simon Pulse, 2006). Ty Johnson must use his intelligence and savvy nature to keep his incarcerated father's drug-dealing business successful. A tragedy causes Ty to rethink his career choice.

*Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher (Razorbill, 2007). Clay receives a package in the mail containing cassette tapes recorded by a classmate who recently committed suicide. Each person who receives a tape is one reason she chose to die.



when I read anymore. My meta-cognition voice is too loud!" I sensed annoyance, but also a hint of pride.

Knowing the research on adolescent engagement, we try to give students opportunities for choice and collaboration (Guthrie, 2008). When working with more difficult texts that require scaffolding, the choices are sometimes limited, but there are choices nonetheless. For example, when teaching students to annotate a text by writing their thoughts in the margin, we might offer three current events articles and allow students to choose the one that appeals to them most. Or if all students are working with the same text, we might ask them to choose their purpose for reading. Do they want to understand the author's opinion? Develop an opposing argument? Look for holes in the author's logic?

Instead of making the classroom an electronics-free zone, we have students reflect on what distracts them from their tasks. We work with students to develop goals for taking control of distractions.

One young man had a love affair with his new iPhone. He thought he could hide it in the pages of his book during independent reading time and watch a movie instead. During our one-on-one conference, I told him that I thought he might be addicted to his new iPhone, and we developed a plan for how he could avoid its lure during important work. Most days, he kept it neatly tucked away in his backpack. But on difficult days, he asked me to baby-sit his prized possession so he wouldn't be tempted. During the process, I had to gently remind him of his plan now and again, but the key was that he was in control, not me. Once the students learn to rely

on themselves, instead of on the teacher, they can apply these skills to other situations.

Discerning what literacy skills students use outside school and linking these skills to academic tasks is another important component of our intervention. We've used online discussion forums, videos, digital posters, podcasts, texting, and classroom social networking sites to engage students and allow them to use skills they already have for academic purposes.

### The Sick Factor

One of the greatest lessons I have learned working with high school students is that sound reading instruction principles from our elementary colleagues must be integrated into secondary reading instruction. For example, just like elementary students, adolescents need to hear highly fluent readers. However, students won't respond to read alouds they consider lame, so we look for shared reading experiences that students think are *sick*—a word I really hope means cool when my students use it.

My students enjoyed *Skeleton Creek* by Patrick Carmen (Scholastic, 2009). The novel is written as a journal by Ryan, a high school student. His best friend Sarah communicates with him by e-mailing videos, which are available online at [www.scholastic.com/skeletoncreek](http://www.scholastic.com/skeletoncreek). My students thought the sometimes scary videos that we watched in class were pretty *sick*.

Last winter, I knew that we needed to incorporate small-group reading instruction. But how was I going to make guided reading cool? When in doubt, try an acronym. We implemented CREW (Collaborative Reading Enhanced Work) Time.

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## ... Baiting the Reading Hook (cont'd)

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Simply calling it CREW Time made it cool. We adjusted our crews depending on what strategy or mini-lesson we felt the small groups needed. One minilesson was explicitly teaching students to take their reader response journal entries from lower-level thinking (making connections) to higher-level thinking (making judgments).

To practice reading with fluency, our students needed to read aloud, but they would rather clean gum off desks. So we asked them to create unrehearsed reading podcasts of a children's story of their choice. They didn't balk at reading into a microphone! After a fun-filled week of fluency activities disguised as games, we had students rerecord the story they read at the start of the week, compare podcasts, and reflect on the difference. This led to experiments with readers' theatre and a field trip to a neighboring elementary school, where students performed stories for 1st graders.

### Celebration!

At the end of the 2008–09 school year, we had much to celebrate. Twenty-eight 9th graders had completed the course. Their mean increase on the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) reading test was 10 points, compared with similar striving readers who gained on average 3.6 points or on-grade-level peers who gained 4 points (McCarty Plucker, 2009).

Our students were experiencing academic success in other classes as well. To honor this, we threw a celebration banquet and had students invite their families and influential mentors. We invited our school district superintendent

and administrators to see students receive such awards as Most Valuable Reader (MVR), Most Improved, and the coveted Lightning Award. The Lightning Award is given in many cocurricular activities and is seen as highly prestigious. For our class, it goes to the student who epitomizes the mission of our class by buying into the process, being a leader, becoming an avid reader, and using scholarly behaviors to accelerate his or her own reading growth.

At the end of the evening, each student walked out with a certificate of achievement and positive words about his or her academic growth. Our final note as we encouraged our students to keep reading was an invitation to a Books and BBQ event in July.

Our inaugural class is now in 11th grade. Last April, they took the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment in reading, which they must pass to graduate. Seventy-five percent of our Academic Literacy 9 students met expectations on the exam. We are continuing to support the seven remaining students through a quarter-long reading support class called Reading Lab, also taught by an academic literacy instructor. The goal for this class is to help students not only pass the exam but also gain the skills necessary to do the difficult reading that comes with being an upperclassman and future college student.

Now that the program is in its third year, we're pleased to see that we've found an effective way to lure our students into reading. Students in the 2009–10 class responded similarly to those in the inaugural class. Their mean and median scores showed accelerated growth at three times that of their peers who were reading

at grade level. And their enthusiasm was evident at the summer Books and BBQ event that brought both cohorts of Academic Literacy 9 students together for food, fun, and conversation about summer reading. Students who have been through the program now describe reading intervention with phrases like *fun, comfortable, a place to feel smart, my favorite class, and totally sick.*

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Jennifer McCartney Plucker

# Digital Versions are Better ... Not So Fast



As part of my recent study on digital texts, I made a rather interesting discovery about the versions of textbooks offered online. Recent textbook editions have started to offer online versions of their material, which would appear to make these texts more accessible. However, I found that despite the many affordances of digital texts (like their ability to be more visual, to reduce text density, to link to other texts and to embed writing features), few of the current textbooks purchased by my school do anything meaningful with those digital editions. For example, the English 9 literature textbook – used to teach short stories, poetry, non-fiction, and drama -- offers the text in a digital format. Students log on as a generic student and can see the text on the screen just as they would in print. A few stories offer the audio version, and there are places where students can take notes on the screen. However, since the login belongs to a generic student, any notes taken by a student do not get saved, so the next time they visit the text, those notes are not available, which renders this feature essentially useless. The earth science book offers even less. It really serves as simply a PDF of the textbook with a few links (which were not operational), scattered at the beginnings and the ends of the

chapters. The online version offers no audio or video clips and has not really altered the formatting of the text to accommodate the affordances of digital space. One textbook, the tenth grade biology book, did offer some of these affordances. Though the format on the screen looked identical to the printed page, a series of tabs at the top of the page offered students the chance to view complimentary video clips that gave visual explanations for some of the chapter concepts. There was also a visual graphic organizer available for each chapter, and practice quizzes for each section. Though this textbook certainly offered more than its peers, publishers can still do considerably more to take advantage of online affordances.

The point I am going to make here is rather odd, considering that this column is devoted to promoting digital literacies. Digital versions of print text are not always better than the originals. In fact, I would go so far as to say that if nothing is done to change the text when it is transferred to the screen, it becomes a less effective piece of text. After all, it was originally designed to appear on the page, sitting in front of students. Which means that the book can be held, moved, adjusted, and manipulated in ways that the screen simply cannot. If you have ever tried to read a lengthy PDF, or even a book, off a laptop or desktop screen, you know what I mean. It is extremely uncomfortable to sit in one position to read an extended text with little chance to manipulate it. Ironically, it is also difficult to interact with the text when publishers simply transfer the page (as is) to the screen. Therefore, readers are

unable to take notes, highlight, or make comments in the text-- as was the case for each of the online textbooks I evaluated, thus making these texts virtually useless for students who need to gain access to that information.

Someday, I hope that educational publishers do make the necessary adjustments. These technologies hold great potential for educational materials like textbooks, especially when you consider the struggling reader. One advantage of the digital text is that writers and publishers are no longer confined by space. Text can be manipulated, expanded and formatted without having to worry about how many pages it takes to accommodate these formats and layouts. Imagine having the ability, as a student, to click on words they do not know for more information. Or perhaps having the ability to hear passages that do not make sense. Or the chance to click on a video to learn more about a given topic. Imagine having access to digital graphic organizers that help students to visualize the concepts that they are learning. The possibilities are as infinite as the number of videos uploaded to YouTube every day.

Until that day however, print versions of our textbooks still hold a distinct advantage.

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Scott Voss



## “Getting to Know the 2010 English Language Arts Standards and How They Will Impact Instruction”

Sponsored by  
Central Minnesota  
Reading Association

Saturday, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Blackberry Ridge Country Club  
1402 32nd St. N., Sartell



**8:00 a.m. Registration and breakfast—  
9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Workshop agenda**

Newly adopted by the state of Minnesota, participants will dig into the language arts standards, discovering how the standards have changed since 2003, how they have stayed the same, and what that means for classroom instruction. Participants will leave with a clear understanding of Anchor Standards and how the learning progressions of each grade level benchmark can help them meet the needs of all learners.

*Workshop will feature:*

*Kari Ross, Minnesota Department of Education, shares the process behind the Common Core Reading Standards and what districts need to implement them*

*Book talks by area media specialists*

*Paperback book sales*

*Time to share with colleagues - what is working in the classroom*

3 hours of C.E.U. will be available for attending this literacy workshop

**Registration includes breakfast and workshop  
Register by January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Taught \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$30.00 for members \_\_\_\_\_ \$20.00 teacher candidates and para-professionals

\_\_\_\_\_ \$45.00 for nonmembers \_\_\_\_\_ \$60.00 nonmembers including membership to MRA/CMRC

MAIL REGISTRATION WITH CHECK MADE OUT TO “CMRC” TO:

Pat Hanson 715 West 5th St. Litchfield, MN 55355

or send an e-mail with your registration information to: [lphanson@hotmail.com](mailto:lphanson@hotmail.com)



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](http://www.mnreading.org).

**Nominations must be submitted by February 1, 2011.**

**Please plan to join us  
on Friday, March 11, 2011  
for a celebration of all nominees and their work.**

## Writers are Readers

### Minnesota Reading Association Young Author Celebration 2011

The Minnesota Reading Association is again sponsoring a creative writing award for the K-12 students of our members. Students may submit an original (fiction or nonfiction) piece to be enjoyed by young readers. Winning entries will be published both in print form and in an electronic format on the MRA website. 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:

- story about something that happened in the writer's family
- biography of a famous person (including sources or references)
- collection of original poems or song lyrics
- news story about a historical event, written as if the writer were a reporter witnessing the event
- 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, 500 words or less
  - b. 4-6, 750 words or less
  - c. 7-9, 1000 words or less
  - d. 10-12, 1200 words or less

10. Winners from each category will be notified by mail, and will be invited to the MRA awards function on March 19, 2010.

11. Two copies of each manuscript should be mailed to:

Julie Scullen  
MRA President  
1431 - 154th Lane NW  
Andover, MN 55304  
Attn: Writers are Readers

12. Deadline for entries is February 1, 2011.

13. Label the back of each manuscript page with the following information:

- a. Name of student
- b. Grade
- c. Teacher's name and MRA membership number
- d. Teacher's phone number and/or email address
- e. School's name and address

