

# HIGHLIGHTS

of the Minnesota Reading Association,  
an International Reading Association  
affiliate

## President's Message

*Debra Peterson*

Dear MRA Colleagues,

I know that you are very busy at this point in the school year, but I hope you will schedule some time for your own professional learning and growth. While this may seem like a low priority because it does not require urgent attention, professional learning is the fuel that powers your daily teaching. Learning with colleagues who inspire and motivate you can provide the impetus you need to continue to meet the increasing demands of our profession. There are many convenient and inexpensive opportunities for professional learning being offered by your local councils. Upcoming sessions are described in this newsletter and the topics include: using questioning and feedback to stimulate students' engagement and thinking; using children's literature to address complex issues in the classroom related to behavior and relationships; and encouraging students to read and interact with local authors.

If your schedule does not allow for participation in these stimulating events, then you may want to set aside some time to read articles from professional journals and then discuss them with your grade-level team or department. Professional journals can offer relevant and innovative ideas to fuel your creative engines. I highly recommend "Four practical principles for enhancing vocabulary instruction" in the September 2014 *Reading Teacher*. \* This article provides specific examples of classroom activities and concrete tips for increasing the effectiveness

of vocabulary instruction in your school.

Research clearly documents that the most powerful tool for preventing reading difficulties is effective classroom instruction. What you do matters tremendously! To keep operating at maximum efficiency with optimum power, fuel up with the resources offered through MRA.

Debra S. Peterson , MRA President and figurative "pit crew member"

## FALL 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

## **Executive Committee**

**PRESIDENT** Debra Peterson

**PRESIDENT-ELECT** Sue Paasch

**VICE-PRESIDENT** Mary Lillestol

**PAST PRESIDENT**

**TREASURER** Linda Snowberg

**SECRETARY** Emily Hoeschen

**IRA COORDINATOR** Kari Ross

**MEMBERSHIP** Stephanie Brondani

**WEB MANAGER** Scott Voss

**MDE LIAISON** Cory Stai

## **Local Council Presidents**

**ARROWHEAD READING COUNCIL** Polly Tracey

**CENTRAL MINNESOTA READING COUNCIL** Laura Arndt

**SOUTHEAST READING COUNCIL** Heather Willman and Jill Magnuson

**SOUTHWEST READING COUNCIL** Cindy Whaley

**TWIN CITIES AREA READING COUNCIL** Kathy Fox

**MINNESOTA ACADEMY OF READING** Kate Kelly and Karen Moroz

**SECONDARY READING INTEREST COUNCIL** Risa Cohen

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**Minnesota Reading Association**  
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**MNREADING.ORG**

# **Reading Councils**

## **Arrowhead Reading Council**

2013-14 Programming and Looking Ahead to 2014-15

The Arrowhead Reading Council enjoyed a wide variety of programming in the 2013-14 school year. The following are just a few of the highlights to be mentioned:

The year began with our Early Onset Mental Illness in-service. Attendees learned about recognizing the warning signs of adolescent mental illness, building and community resources, and working with parents to support our students. In November, we held an event for Pinterest addicts! Teachers came together to share their favorite “pins” related to literacy activities and instruction. This in-service will likely be held again sometime in the future as it was very well received and sparked many new ideas for use in the classroom.

Two of our annual events are the Winter Solstice, which we hold in January, and the Young Authors’ Conference held in February at the College of St. Scholastica. Both events are looked forward to by our members and local students. Last year’s Winter Solstice speaker was Chris Monroe and the Young Authors’ Conference speaker was Debra Frasier. We are in the process of looking for speakers for both events this year and look forward to passing those names along soon.

We are looking forward to hosting Jennifer McCarty-Plucker, Ed. D., this year to delve deeper into the Common Core ELA standards. Jennifer is a K-12 Intervention Specialist for ISD 196 Rosemount--Apple Valley--Eagan Schools, a Literacy Adjunct Instructor at Hamline University, and an Independent Literacy Consultant. We tried and tried to have her with us last winter but due to freezing cold weather and amazing amounts of snow, we just couldn’t quite pull it off.

2013-14 was a very full and busy year. We are proud of the programming that we offer teachers to support literacy instruction and look forward to all 2014-15 has to offer!



# Reading Councils Cont'd

## Minnesota Academy of Reading

### Connecting and Celebrating

Connectedness. It is a term that was shared with me this summer and a concept I am paying more attention to in the varied aspects of my professional work, including my involvement with The Minnesota Academy of Reading. Connectedness is the measure of how people interact; it:

- involves quality connections with others in a particular circle,
- offers reminders that one is not isolated, and
- provides benefits to both individuals and to society.



Indeed connectedness is alive within our organization as we work to fulfill IRA's charge for MAR to be a special interest council providing opportunities for members to share and test professional ideas while engaging in the service functions of instruction, consultation, and evaluation. Our gatherings encourage the sharing of new knowledge and provoke rich discussions about the member's commitment to serve as visionaries for future policies regarding literacy instruction. I invite you to share in these enriching discussions. One way to do so is to attend Executive Board meetings held each month. These meetings are open to everyone. Our next scheduled meeting is November 14<sup>th</sup> from 1:00-2:30 on Hamline's campus. Please email me, [kmoroz01@hamline.edu](mailto:kmoroz01@hamline.edu), if you would like more information.

Beyond our Executive Board meetings, we work to create several opportunities each year that bring together literacy advocates from around the state. In the last several months, for example, we were honored to team with The Minnesota Reading Association during the MRA Day at Hamline's Summer Literacy Institute. We were also pleased to collaborate with the Sterns Foundation as they worked to bring literacy leaders from throughout the state together, along with nationally renowned researchers, to discuss important advocacy issues.

These are examples of the kind of connectedness MAR strives to create as we learn and grow together. The experiences enrich us professionally and have positioned us for our most current quest, that of earning honor council status through the International Reading Association. My co-president, Dr. Kate Kelly, has worked tenaciously to determine the requirements of this honor and has guided the work of the Executive Board to ensure that all criteria are met. Through her strong leadership, necessary paperwork will be submitted later this fall. We look forward to sharing our Honor Council status with you in a later issue of Highlights.

We also look forward to connecting to each of you in various ways throughout this academic year. For now, we invite you to mark your calendars for our annual policy event being held at Hamline University on January 12, 2015.

Connectedness. It is at work in MAR!

Karen Moroz, EdD Co-President,

# Reading Councils Cont'd

## Southwest Minnesota Reading Council

### Highlights from SWMRC

On Tuesday, September 30th our council hosted an author visit and presentation by Gordon W. Fredrickson at the Windom Community Center. His presentation on life on the farm in the 1950s was fantastic! 20 people were in attendance. His books, written in verse and filled with beautiful illustrations, were a hit with the teachers to share with students in their classrooms to learn about how farming "back in the day."

With the new school year upon us, our president Cindy Whaley encouraged members to make use of the acronym: ELECTRIC (enjoyable/engaging; life-long; environment; choice; time; research; individualized/integrated; and collaborative) as they go about their literacy activities in their instruction.

Encouragement is being given for members to delve deeper into professional titles from IRA and to plan for discussions at our spring conference.

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## Secondary Reading Interest Council

### Highlights from SRIC

October 11<sup>th</sup> is the date of SRIC's first event of the 2014 - 2015 school year. Titled "What Are They Thinking?: Using Questions and Feedback to Maximize Learning," this symposium will feature Polly Patrick, a veteran teacher and educational consultant who has recently authored a book on using questioning in the classroom, and Todd Beach, a locally known expert in the area of formative assessment and using feedback for learning. This is a topic relevant to content teachers as well as reading teachers, and the hope is to attract a wide variety of attendees.

SRIC is taking a new approach this year, hosting three main events over the course of the year, rather than having monthly meetings along with an event or two. In addition to our fall symposium, we intend to have an event with more of a social focus in the winter, along with one more professionally aimed symposium in the spring. We are also hoping to increase our online presence through social vehicles like Facebook and Twitter, as well as actively posting things on our Council page, which will allow us to connect with reading teachers around the state.

SRIC is always looking for ways to best support our members, and we would love to hear from you about what you would like us to provide for you. If you have thoughts or ideas, please email any of these SRIC Board members: Risa Cohen ([risa.cohen@spps.org](mailto:risa.cohen@spps.org)); Weston Johnson ([wjohnson@gced.k12.mn.us](mailto:wjohnson@gced.k12.mn.us)) or Stephanie Brondani ([stephanie.brondani@minnetonka.k12.mn.us](mailto:stephanie.brondani@minnetonka.k12.mn.us)).

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# Event Information

## Leaders in Reading Network (LiRN) 2014-2015

### "Fostering Literacy Independence: Rituals & Routines for Literate Thinking"



#### Features of LiRN Membership:

- ✓ Bring a guest to each session at NO additional charge
- ✓ Engage in professional discussions within job-alike cohorts
- ✓ Exchange instructional strategies with colleagues in regional groups
- ✓ Receive a free professional resource



#### Dates and Topics:

- ✓ October 30- "Developing a Culture for Thinking"
- ✓ February 19- "Fostering Literate Thinking: Demystifying Text Complexity"
- ✓ April 30- "Literacy Independence: Demonstrating and Assessing Thinking"



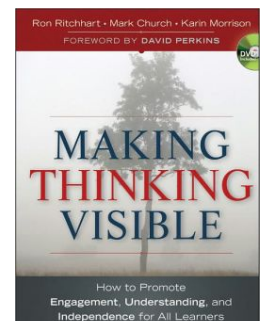
#### Membership Costs:

\$295 for all 3 sessions (includes a 1-year membership to Minnesota Reading Association) For more information and registration go to [mra.onefireplace.org](http://mra.onefireplace.org)



#### Book Information:

Our book study book this year is *Making Thinking Visible: How to Promote Engagement, Understanding, and Independence for All Learners*.  
Ritchhart, Church, Morrison (2011). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.



# Awards and Grants

## 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 January 15, 2015.**





## Writers Are Readers - Young Author Celebration 2015

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 6, 2015. 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 6, 2015.
  11. Copy of each manuscript should be e-mailed to:

Katie Bannon, MRA Celebrations Chairperson  
K.Bannon@mnreading.org  
Attn: Writers are Readers
  12. ***Deadline for entries is February 1, 2015.***
  13. When submitting the manuscript include 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
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