

# HIGHLIGHTS

of the Minnesota Reading Association,  
an International Literacy Association  
affiliate

## President's Message

Susan Paash

Welcome to the 2015-2016 school year. This is an exciting and busy time of the year. I wanted to take a few minutes to introduce myself. As of July 1, I am the new President of Minnesota Reading Association. I often joke that I became a part of this Executive Board because I was the only one in the room that hadn't already been President. It truly has been an honor to be a part of this great organization. I have learned so much and have met so many great people.

When I am not doing the MRA thing, I am the Principal at Mississippi Heights Elementary School in Sauk Rapids. It is a K-5 school with about 950 students. I stay very busy every day! I really cannot imagine a better job. Before going into administration, I was a Special Education teacher. Literacy has always been a passion. Several years into my principalship, I joined a cohort of teachers from our district and took classes to receive my Reading License. My husband often asks if I will ever be done going back to school ☺.

During the summer, I try to focus my reading on a topic that I can use throughout the new school year with my staff. This summer, I have been reading about the Growth Mindset. Carol Dweck has done extensive research on this topic.

*"In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work--brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment,"* writes Dweck. Students who embrace growth mindsets--the belief that they can learn more or become smarter if they work hard and persevere--may learn more, learn it more quickly, and view challenges and failures as opportunities to improve their learning and skills.

*Continued on page 5*

## 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

## SUMMER 2015

### What's inside

President's Message	1
Reading Councils	2
Grant Information	4
Event Information	5
MDE & Book Reviews	7
Awards	8

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

## **Executive Committee**

**PRESIDENT** Susan Paasch

**PRESIDENT-ELECT** Mary Lillestol

**VICE-PRESIDENT** Carey Seeley

**PAST PRESIDENT** Deb Peterson

**TREASURER** Linda Snowberg

**SECRETARY** Madeleine Israelson

**IRA COORDINATOR** Andrew Rummel

**MEMBERSHIP** Stephanie Brondani

**WEB MANAGER** Scott Voss

**MDE LIAISON** Cory Stai

## **Local Council Presidents**

**ARROWHEAD READING COUNCIL** Amy Bodin

**CENTRAL MINNESOTA READING COUNCIL** Megan Rogholt

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

**SOUTHWEST READING COUNCIL** Cindy Whaley

**TWIN CITIES AREA READING COUNCIL** Kathy Fox

**MINNESOTA ACADEMY OF READING** Chris Johnson

**SECONDARY READING INTEREST COUNCIL** Risa Cohen

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**MNREADING.ORG**

# **Reading Councils**

## **Minnesota Academy of Reading**

### **Meet Me in St. Louis**

Soul...it became the theme of my 2015 International Literacy Association Convention experience. The trip began appropriately with soul food at Sweetie Pies as advertised on Diners, Drive-ins, and Dives. From there my soulful trip took a more intellectual route, one where my professional and personal souls were afforded time to reflect, to learn, to connect, and to celebrate the work of so many who are passionately committed to promoting literacy worldwide. There were (literally) BIG moments like watching Shaquille O'Neal walk out onto stage to talk about his educational journey and his upcoming Little Shaq books, but it was the long stream of the more "medium-sized" moments that had the BIGGEST impact. As I share a few of those "medium-sized" moments with you, I hope in some small way your professional soul, too, will be fed.

#### Soulful experience 1:

As was shared in an earlier issue of Highlights, the Minnesota Academy of Reading (under the leadership of my then Co-President Kate Kelly) earned Honor Council status for the first time in 2015. It was an honor to be at the Leaders Special Interest Group event representing MAR as our accomplishment was celebrated. It was a soul-lifting experience.

#### Soulful experience 2:

During the opening session we heard the powerful story of Shiza Shahid, the young activist who co-founded the [Malala Fund](http://www.malala.org/). She shared her inspirational story of working to ensure that girls worldwide can reach their true potential. It was a soul-warming story that I look forward to learning more about, one I invite you to begin, or continue following at <http://www.malala.org/>

*Continued on page 2*

# Reading Councils Cont'd

## Minnesota Academy of Reading

*Continued from page 1*

### Soulful experience 3:

How many more places are you allowed to listen to Mark Teague, Brian Selznick, Dan Santat, Jewell Parker Rhodes, and Pam Munoz Ryan pay honor to their teachers through the sharing of their own journey to accomplished authorship? It was soul-inspiring and fascinating to listen as each author recounted their individual literacy journey. Each story moved me--sometimes to laughter, sometimes to tears, but always to a reflective spot where I was reminded of just how varied children's experiences are and how those experiences deeply impact their writing.

### Soulful experience 4:

My soul-calming time came as I visited with representatives from numerous companies about the philosophy behind and the intent of their educational products and/or services. The expansive nature of the exhibit hall alone served as a reminder of all the stakeholders who are eager and positioned to team with teachers as we work to achieve the #800MilltoNil initiative established by ILA--reducing the staggering count of illiterate individuals worldwide from 800 million to NILL.



### Soulful experience 5:

Attending sessions (over 300 to choose from!) provided me time to reflect on the varied roles I have served in my career. One session, in particular, highlighted the complexities of our educational system, a system that until recently has fostered little conversations between the varied stakeholders. Cultivating Literacy Achievement Through Quality Teacher Preparation was a thought-provoking session that brought together individuals from higher education, K-12 schools, state departments, and accrediting bodies. It was a soul-stirring two hours during which tough topics were tackled. I invite particularly those colleagues in higher education to watch the event at <https://ilamedia.eduvision.tv/default.aspx>, to share it with colleagues, and to then continue engaging in conversations about how we can ensure that all classrooms are equipped with dynamic literacy educators.

### Soulful experience 6:

Laughing, reconnecting, meeting, and talking "shop" with MN colleagues old and new...soul-enriched.

These are just a few of the experiences I, along with over 6,000 educators from around the world, was fortunate enough to be a part of during the 2015 conference which was guided by the theme Transforming Lives Through Literacy. I think the words, shared in Dan Santat's new Caldecott award winning book *The Adventures of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend* capture the experiences of many attending this soulful event: "...[we] had many new adventures. [We] shared many snacks. [We] told many jokes. The world began to feel a little less strange. And together [we dreamed of doing] the unimaginable."

# Grant Information

## 2016 Available Grants

MRA Classroom Grant for Innovative Practices. This is a grant of \$1,000 that is awarded to teachers who are looking to try new and creative approaches to teaching literacy. We give out two of these each year.

Joe Jubert Classroom Grant. This is a classroom grant of \$1,000 for programs that specifically helps boys get into books.

Joe Jubert Book Club Grant. We offer three of these \$350 grants to book clubs that, again, focus on getting boys into books.

Karen Lamb Johnson Scholarship. This is a \$250 scholarship awarded to the son or daughter of a current MRA member who is seeking a degree in education.

Winners will be recognized at our Celebrate Literacy Event on March 4<sup>th</sup>.

Details about these grants can be found at [mnreading.org](http://mnreading.org).

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continued from page 1

This work verified just how important it is to believe in all students and their ability to learn. That's an easy thing to say that, but what that actually looks like in your school and classroom is another challenge. Our students can be very resilient in many aspects of their lives such as sports, music, and other things that are important and of high interest to them. Learning often does not follow that same track. Students become frustrated, give up and fear failure. It has become our job as educators to work with students to develop an understanding of learning, making mistakes and then learning again from those mistakes. If a student never struggles, it makes me wonder if that student is being challenged. If they are never challenged, it is hard for them to learn to be resilient.

This year, try incorporating the word “yet” into the conversations with your students. Telling students that they don't have it “yet”, gives them the impression that they will get it. Praising the effort rather than the outcome is also an important part of the growth mindset. Mary Cay Ricci, author of **Mindsets in the Classroom** says it this way, “When adults praise what a child ‘is’, such as tall or smart, the children attribute their accomplishment to a fixed trait they were born with. When adults praise actions or tasks that children ‘do’, the children attribute their accomplishment to their own effort.”

As you start a new school year, I wish you much happiness and success. Minnesota Reading Association is here to serve you. If you know of ways that we can help and support literacy in the state of Minnesota, I would love to hear from you.

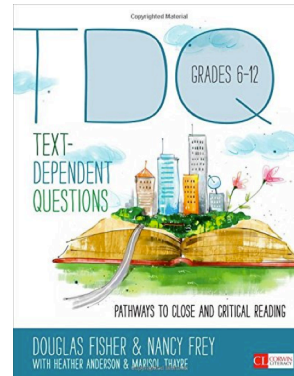
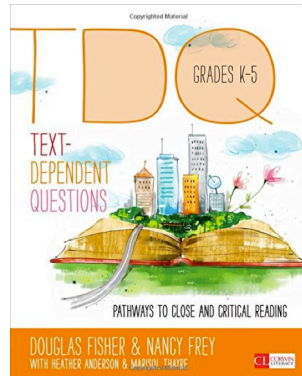
Susan Paasch

# Event Information

## Leaders in Reading Network (LiRN)

2015-2016

"Pathways to Critical Literacies Through Discourse and Action"



### Features of LiRN Membership:

- ✓ Bring a guest to each session at NO additional charge
- ✓ Engage in professional discussions within job-alike cohorts
- ✓ Receive a free copy of one of Fisher & Frey's books *Text Dependent Questions: Pathways to Close and Critical Reading K-5* or *6-12*



### Dates and Topics:

- ✓ Wednesday, October 21 - "Pathways to Critical Literacies"  
Keynote Presenters: Angela Maiers & John Slagle
- ✓ Wednesday, February 10- "Pathways to Meaningful Discourse"  
Keynote Presenter: Dr. Cynthia Lewis
- ✓ Wednesday, April 27- "Pathways to Inspired Action"  
Keynote Presenter: Dr. John Guthrie



**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)



## Attention Minnesota Teacher Educators, Administrators, PreK-12 Teachers & Literacy Leaders

Please join Minnesota literacy leaders and teacher educators in the **Distinguished Scholars' Symposium: Conversations with Dr. Nonie Lesaux!** This is an amazing opportunity to learn from a world-class researcher and author of *Making assessment matter: Using test results to differentiate reading instruction*.

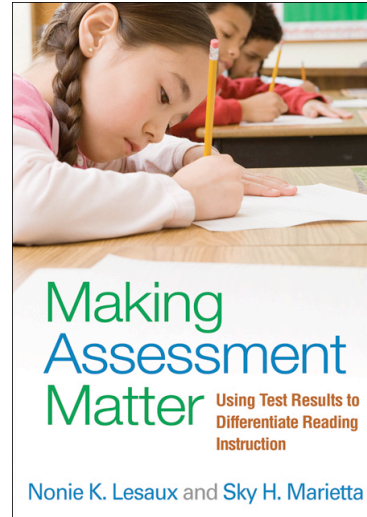
**When:** Friday, September 25, 2015 from 9:00AM – 3:00 PM

**Where:** Minnesota Department of Education in St. Paul, MN

**Registration:** \$75.00 including morning and afternoon snacks (lunch is on your own)

**Special Rate for Graduate Students:** Buy one registration, get one free!

Please register today at <http://mra.onefireplace.org/>



Nonie Lesaux is a professor of education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Lesaux leads a research program that focuses on increasing opportunities to learn for students from diverse linguistic, cultural, and economic backgrounds in today's classrooms. Her research on reading and vocabulary development, and instructional strategies to prevent reading difficulties has implications for practitioners, researchers, and policymakers. Dr. Lesaux is also a recipient of the Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers, the highest honor given by the United States government to young professionals beginning their independent research careers.

*This event is sponsored by the following: Minnesota Center for Reading Research, Minnesota Academy of Reading, Minnesota Reading Association, Minnesota Department of Education, the International Dyslexia Association/Upper Midwest Branch (IDA-UMB), the Dean's Office of the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Minnesota, and The June Stern Family Foundation. A special thank you goes to The June Stern Family Foundation whose financial contribution and vision make this event possible.*

# What's New at MDE?

**This new section of Highlights Newsletter will feature happenings at MDE.**

It is finally here! The *Navigating the School System When a Student is Struggling with Reading or Dyslexia* is hot off the press. Written in an FAQ style, the informational paper addresses the terms used to describe a struggling reader, how to navigate services and supports within the school and community and how to know if the reading services being delivered are of high quality. Parents, principals and teachers will benefit from having this resource at their fingertips. Overflowing with nationally recognized resources linking you with the information and clarification you need to support students. This is a resource not to be missed. [View the dyslexia information paper on the MDE website.](#)

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## Book Reviews

**Got a new book your kids are loving? Have you found a great new professional resource?** E-mail Katie Bannon ([k.bannon@mnreading.org](mailto:k.bannon@mnreading.org)) with the title of the book/resource and a short blurb reviewing the book. We encourage kid review too!



# Awards

## 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, 2016.**





## Writers Are Readers - Young Author Celebration 2016

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 4, 2016**. 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. Teachers may help students with the writing process, as this is a learning experience. Encourage rewriting and editing.
4. Kindergarten and 1st grade students may dictate a story to an adult if the student's writing skills are still being developed.
5. Work may be entered in the modified category if the student is on an IEP for language arts.
6. Entries must be typed.
7. Entries will be judged according to creativity, originality, organization, and mechanics.
8. 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
9. Winners from each category will be notified by mail, and will be invited to the MRA Celebrate Literacy Reception on March 4, 2016.
10. Manuscripts should be shared with:

Katie Bannon  
MRA Celebrations Chairperson  
**MRACelebrateLiteracy@gmail.com**  
Attn: Writers are Readers

11. **Deadline for entries is January 1, 2016.**
12. When submitting the manuscript include the following information:
  - a. Name of student
  - b. Grade
  - c. Teacher's name
  - d. Phone number and/or email address of teacher
  - e. Full name and address of school