

HIGHLIGHTS

of the Minnesota Reading Association,
an International Reading Association
affiliate

President's Message

Debra Peterson

Dear MRA Members and Committed Colleagues:

I would like to share with you some of my thoughts after attending a policy breakfast where **Dr. Alfred Tatum** was the keynote speaker. Dr. Tatum is the director of the University of Illinois at Chicago Reading Clinic and the author of many books including *Teaching Reading to Black Adolescent Males: Closing the Achievement Gap* and *Fearless Voices: Engaging the Next Generation of African American Male Writers*. He challenged us as Minnesota educators to consider the achievement that African American males have historically made in our state. He said that our slow growth models are only going to maintain the status quo. We need to create systems that exponentially increase ALL students' growth.

We can do that by engaging students in activities where they can use reading, writing, thinking and speaking to “define themselves, become resilient, engage others, and build capacity”.

His words resonated with me as I reflected on the instruction I see in many classrooms. Perhaps some of the questions I asked myself will be helpful to you as you observe the students with whom you work:

1. What opportunities do students have each day to read things that they care about?
2. When do students write about meaningful topics that inspire their passion and connect to their real life experiences?
3. How are students engaged in student-led discussions where they ask each other questions about big life ideas like injustice and equity?

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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

WINTER 2015

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

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NEWSLETTER EDITOR Kathryn Bannon

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MNREADING.ORG

Reading Councils

Minnesota Academy of Reading

The Minnesota Academy of Reading Holds its 5th Annual Policy Symposium

The Minnesota Academy of Reading (MAR) hosted the 5th annual January Policy Symposium on Jan 12, 2015. The title of the event was, "Charting Our Way: Teacher Evaluation Across a Career." Because of new state requirements for teacher evaluation systems, this topic was determined to be widely applicable. The symposium began with updates from the Minnesota Department of Education, led by Cory Stai and Tyler Livingston. Cory Stai, MDE Reading Specialist, provided general literacy relate updates for Minnesota. Districts have been required to develop literacy plans and post on district websites, as a part of the Reading Proficiently by Grade 3 legislation (Statute 120B.12). This year for the first time, the state has been gathering literacy plans for grades K-2, preferably grade 3. The state will be doing an analysis of the plans for some baseline data. In a few weeks, the 3rd annual survey to assess implementation of RTI or Multi-tiered systems of support will go out to schools. As a state organization, MDE is using the information to implement support and track support for schools.

Tyler Livingston, Educator Evaluation and Q Comp Supervisor at MDE, shared specific information related to teacher evaluation in MN. Statute 122A.40 & 122A.41 approved in 2011 and revised in 2013-2014 required school districts to develop systems for evaluation that met certain requirements, which was set to launch this academic year. Discussion related to the state teacher evaluation systems centered on what these evaluations require of teacher educators and administrators to prepare teachers to be successful in these new systems, including the impact of these systems on climate and culture of schools and the results of the evaluation of the pilot of the state model, undertaken by the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota.

The symposium continued with the panel discussion, comprised of a recent teacher candidate, a principal, district leaders, and an edTPA coordinator. Panelists were asked about how evaluation systems were being developed in their settings, concerns of teachers and administrators, and how best to prepare teachers for the new systems of evaluation. Panelists shared many insightful ideas about their settings and the importance of teacher development in order to prepare teachers for current systems of evaluation, as well as successes and challenges related to teacher evaluation. Conversations continued at individual tables, and concluded with an opportunity to share out with the large group.

The policy symposium represents a highlight of each year for the Minnesota Academy of Reading, and is held each year in January. We invite you to watch the MRA website and join us next year for the 6th annual symposium.

Reading Councils Cont'd

Twin Cities Reading Area Council

Blog Post- Fluency and Technology by Jessica Giah

I have been on a journey with technology on the classroom. As a coach and classroom teacher I have been hesitant to use it in many of the ways proposed because I haven't always seen the learning value, but this year things have begun to change in a simple and profound way. Today my second graders and I spent some time practicing reading fluency. I spent quite a bit of time in my mini lesson helping them understand that even teachers have different opinions about fluency and how it should be assessed and practiced. From there we talked about what our classroom definition would be and why it was important. I shared with them a fluency checklist/rubric that is kid friendly and illustrated.

Then, during Reader's Workshop I met with them in groups of 8 (I have a 1:3 ratio for ipads in my classroom) and we talked more. In these small groups I trained them on how to use the camera app to record a video of themselves reading a page from one of their just right books. Then I sent them off, with an ipad, fluency checklist and their book.



Just after they recorded, they were instructed to listen to the recording once for each area of fluency and evaluate themselves. They listened to the recording 5 times total. Once they knew what they needed to improve on, they were to re-read the same page and re-record it. Both short videos were sent to me.

They truly enjoyed the work and had deeper insights than I expected. The immediate feedback and adjustments were anchored in self reflection which brought such value to the learning. I look forward to doing this every other week with them. Building an awareness of one's own strength and weaknesses is one the things that makes young readers into strong readers :)



Grant Winners

Grant Winner Sara Martini

Talahi's Roll and Read Bus had its second successful summer thanks to a generous grant provided by MRA. Our Roll and Read Bus ran on Tuesdays throughout the summer stopping at six different locations providing the opportunity for our students to check out library books. Each week over 135 children checked an average of 300 books! Our youngest visitor was under one year old and our oldest was a Grandmother who was checking out books for an upcoming visit from her grandchildren. This all-volunteer program was extremely well received throughout the community. Our purpose was to provide high quality literature for students to read during the summer months so they did not lose the gains made during the school year.



Although the city of St. Cloud has a wonderful public library system, Richard Allington's research on children living in poverty states that children living more than six blocks from a library will never have the opportunity to visit that library, so we were bringing the books to them to prevent the "summer reading slide".

The second year of the Talahi Roll and Read Bus was so successful that we are working on a plan to expand it to all of the eight elementary schools within the St. Cloud School District. We felt that our program not only provided quality books for our students to read during the long summer months, but that it provided us with the opportunity to make deep and lasting connections with our students and families.

2015 Available Grants

Details about these grants can be found at mnreading.org.



Debra S. Peterson

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:

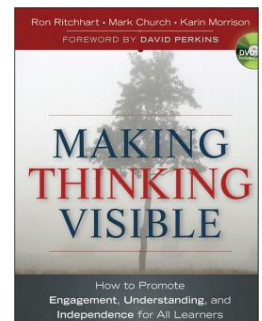
\$295 for all 3 sessions (includes a 1-year membership to Minnesota Reading Association) For more information and registration go to mra.onefireplace.org



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

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 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 e-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 15, 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