



Highlights

*of the Minnesota Reading Association,
an International Literacy Association affiliate*



President's Message

Carolina A. DuFault

*"Without education, we are in a horrible and deadly danger of
taking educated people seriously"*

G.K. Chesterton

Dear Literacy Colleagues,

The end of the school year is coming up soon. I hope everyone is having a great year so far. Thank you for your work supporting our students' love for reading! It is so important to foster reading among our students.

In this newsletter, Dr. Kate Kelly from Concordia University-St. Paul comments about the Policy Symposium recently held by Minnesota Academy of Reading and the work of Eva Boehm in the field of literacy. Thank you, Kate, for contributing to our Spring MRA Newsletter!

“In January, the Minnesota Academy of Reading held our annual Policy Symposium, this year titled “Elevating the Minnesota Literacy Landscape.” Every other year at our symposium, we celebrate the contributions of someone who has made significant contributions to the field of literacy in Minnesota and beyond, and this year we had the pleasure of honoring Eva Boehm for her work as a literacy teacher, advocate, and leader.

In her talk, Eva shared about the networks that she has participated in to support literacy teacher education and P-12 literacy teaching in Minnesota. From her work with the Minnesota Reading Association and International Literacy Association, to the Best Practices Network with MDE, to the Metro Area Reading Specialist Network, to the Quality Teacher Network (QTN), to the Literacy Coalition of Minnesota (LCM), to the Leadership in Reading Network (LiRN) to the Higher Education Literacy Partnership (HELP), Eva has and continues to shape the literacy landscape in Minnesota in countless ways.

Eva started her inspiring walk through her career with these two quotes:

Find a group of people who challenge and inspire you, spend a lot of time with them, and it will change your life. - Amy Poehler

A single arrow is easily broken, but not ten in a bundle. – Proverb

As teachers, our work in-the-moment can often feel solitary. While we are in a room with lots of people, teaching can feel lonely when we are the only one in the front of a classroom. But the most effective educators are not isolated individuals, they are those who seek collaboration.

Eva’s talk left me thinking about the importance of the professional networks we have with our colleagues and with other professionals in the field. Research has long established the need for formal induction and mentoring programs for the success of early career teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017; [Smith & Ingersoll, 2004](#)), but just as valuable are the informal networks we build and nurture (März & Kelchtermans, 2020). As the path of Eva’s career indicates, we don’t always know the trajectory of our professional journey. Our professional networks provide advice, support, and connections, as well as lead us to new opportunities, often those we would never have imagined for ourselves.

The Minnesota Academy of Reading has been a powerful professional network for me. I have been able to nurture my passion for literacy education as well as be challenged to grow in new and exciting directions. Through this organization, I have had opportunities to explore new ideas; to research, write, and present; and to get advice for challenges I face in my own practice. The Minnesota Academy of Reading, as well as the Minnesota Reading Association

and the International Literacy Association, have provided me with people and spaces that challenge and inspire me, helping me feel stronger as an educator. I'm glad that you are all members of this professional community and that together, we continue to elevate the literacy landscape in Minnesota and beyond.

Kate Kelly

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Feiman-Nemser, S. (2001). From preparation to practice: Designing a continuum to strengthen and sustain teaching. Teachers College Record, 103(6), 1013-1055.

März, V. & Kelchtermans, G. (2020). The networking teacher in action: A qualitative analysis of early career teachers' induction process. Teaching and Teacher Education, 87, 102933.

Ronfeldt, M., & McQueen, K. (2017). Does new teacher induction really improve retention? Journal of Teacher Education, 68(4), 394-410.

Smith, T. & R. Ingersoll, R. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? American Educational Research Journal, 41(3), 681-714.”

Our Celebrate Literacy event is scheduled to be on May 3rd, 2024. This is an opportunity to encourage students and families the importance of reading and writing in all languages. I invite all to share your love for reading and writing either directly participating in this event, or holding your own local events at schools and communities.

Here is the form for submission:

[Submission form](#)

Here is the flier:

 Celebrate Literacy 2024 ENGLISH Flyer

Our current mission and vision:

As the Minnesota Reading Association, our core mission is fostering lifelong literacy for all. As a hub for professional connections, we unite diverse entities committed to literacy's growth. We fuel interactions among like minded organizations, magnifying collective efforts and

nurturing holistic literacy initiatives. Our resources, designed for exceptional literacy practices, kindle enduring reading habits and a deep affection for words.

GENERAL LITERACY RESOURCES:

Because my sweet spot is in the field of Early Childhood Education and Multilingual Education, I have selected several resources related to these two areas. I hope they are useful for your work. Please see below:

📄 [“But-Teacher-I-Don’t-Know-How-to-Write.”-Helping-Young-Students-Develop-Founda...](#)

[ECE resource hub](#)

[Spanish Playground](#)

[Lenguaje y lectoescritura para niños preescolares](#)

[Promoting Preschoolers’ Emergent Writing](#)

[Emergent Writing](#)

[Zero to THREE](#)

[NEWSELA](#)

[Reading Rockets](#)

[Colorín Colorado](#)

[World Languages](#)

1. **Lingro**

Lingro is a cool tool for both the ‘wow’ factor and for its usefulness. Simply type in a website address on the Lingro website and it instantly turns the website into a clickable

dictionary that translates text in 12 languages. Lingro hides in the background until students need it. To use, students simply click on any word and several definitions of the word are instantly displayed. A useful tool for just-in-time support for English language learners.

2. Lexipedia

Looking for a visual thesaurus? Then Lexipedia is for you. Simple to use. Just type in any word and Lexipedia instantly displays the target word along with other words. It also color-codes the words by both parts of speech and relationships. As you hover over a word, a complete definition is displayed.

3. Shahi

Shahi, as described on the website, is a visual dictionary that combines Wiktionary content with Flickr images, and more! An absolute new favorite for me. Besides serving as a non-linguistic tool, a very useful tool for English language learners.

4. Snappy Words

Similar to Lexipedia, Snappy Words is another visual thesaurus. Teachers may want to introduce several of the thesaurus tools and allow students to select which works best for them.

5. Visual Dictionary Online

Check out Webster's visual dictionary which is simple to use. Type in a single word or choose a theme that also includes many sub-categories from which to choose. Even though Webster's is simple to use, there is a downside to this tool. After typing in a word search, 4 or 5 Google ads quickly appear above the definitions.

6. Word Hippo

An all-in-one reference tool, Word Hippo does the following: defines a word, provides a meaning, provides a word that is opposite, pronounces a word, provides rhyming words, places the word in many different contexts, and translates the word.

7. [Wordnik.com](#)

Wordnik has the look and feel of a traditional dictionary with a twist. Along with the definition, students can see images related to the word, hear related sounds, and even see tweets with the target word highlighted. The ‘related words’ feature is particularly helpful. Wordnik also features a “Word of the Day,” “Random Words,” and pronunciations of words.

8. [Your Dictionary](#)

Your Dictionary bills itself as providing simple, straightforward definitions and the easiest-to-use online dictionary. That’s about right. Sometimes simple is good. In addition to providing a definition, Your Dictionary also includes a thesaurus and places the word in varied sentence examples.

9. [MathWords](#)

Math Words is a simple-to-use online dictionary specifically for math terms and formulas. This dictionary appears most appropriate for intermediate and secondary students.

10. [A Math Dictionary for Kids](#)

A kid-friendly math dictionary. I like the simple, bright appearance that includes visual examples of each term. This math dictionary seems to be appropriate for elementary students.

11. [Wordle](#)

Type (or copy & paste) in a chunk of text or individual words and Wordle generates a word cloud of the key vocabulary based on word frequency. Wordle can also be used for many varied purposes – check out these: [ideas for using Wordle to support learning](#).

12. [WordSift](#)

Similar to Wordle, students type (or copy & paste) in a piece of text and WordSift sorts the text based on word frequency. The visual thesaurus that displays beneath the words is a

nice addition in WordSift. With the visual thesaurus, students immediately see how words are grouped semantically.

13. Tagxedo

Tagxedo is a word cloud app with style! Tagxedo provides a good deal of customization for users. For example, if teachers or students want to create a word cloud in a shape such as the apple shown above, then Tagxedo is the right tool for the job. For younger students, Wordle is much more straightforward to use; however, older students will love the customization Tagxedo provides which includes colors, shapes, fonts, and themes.

14. Flashcard Stash

While I think that flashcards are sometimes poor practice, students can benefit from instant recognition. Fluency, if you will, with a specific set of words. Now, if understanding doesn't go deeper than instant recognition, students are in trouble. Teachers can sign up for a free account and create flashcards to coordinate with units of study.

15. Vocabulary Games

While I'm not a fan of word searches for review or 'seatwork,' this website also includes a wide assortment of other vocabulary games that can be used on a SmartBoard for review purposes. To make a tool like this more effective, be certain to review the meaning of words as students play games.

16. Vocabulary Spelling City

A beefed-up version of vocabulary games, Vocabulary Spelling City includes many more game-like activities useful for reviewing words. A number of teacher-made lists are included such as analogies, compound words, math words, and many more. The free version seems to include about 5 activities and teachers can save lists. "Teach Me" pronounces words and uses each word in context. Teachers can use pre-selected sentences or create their own. Vocabulary Spelling City is a useful tool for students, teachers, and parents. While there is both a free and paid version, Vocabulary Spelling City seems like a natural for PTA funding. The classroom paid version allows students to practice in school and at home as well.

17. [VocabAhead](#)

VocabAhead is a useful tool for secondary students and teachers. Short videos – 30 to 60 seconds – accompany each word and make this tool stand out among others for secondary students. The Study Lounge, for students, features leveled word lists (grades 6-12) and SAT word lists. Students can view videos, hear pronunciations, practice, take quizzes, play games, track performance, and more. In addition, teachers can create their own word lists for students. Custom word lists can be embedded in a blog or class website which makes integration and review a snap. Apple and Android apps are also available for free download.

18. [Free Rice](#)

At Free Rice, students can practice matching words to the correct definition, and donate rice at the same time. For each correct answer, the United Nations World Food Programme donates 10 grains of rice to a country in need. How's that for combining word learning with social goodness? When a student plays, there is a visual display of rice (see image) which is added to a bowl each time the student makes a correct response. Free Rice includes subject area lists in Geography, Science, Math, and others. It is leveled so students can play at just the right level of challenge for them. Note of caution: Free Rice may be addicting to you *and* your students.

19. [Wallwisher](#)

Wallwisher is an online space to create a collaborative, digital word wall. Getting a leg up on the more traditional word wall, Wallwisher allows users to create sticky notes that can include text, images, links and videos. Teachers can embed this into a classroom website or blog which makes it a go-to collaborative space for students. For primary students, teachers will probably want to create the wall with words and links for students. Older students will get the hang of it fairly quickly. A great, collaborative tool and virtual classroom space to build online references and key vocabulary for content units.

20. [ThingLink](#)

ThingLink is a tool for making images interactive. To use, simply upload an image, identify hot spots on specific parts of the image, and add text or web links to the image. In the

classroom, teachers could use ThingLink to launch a unit by introducing students to key vocabulary or students could design interactive images as they become more familiar with vocabulary. There are many possibilities; I'd love to know how you use ThingLink to extend and deepen student learning.

Upcoming Events:

Minnesota Academy of Reading Spring Mixer- April 11 4:30-6:00 via Zoom

Lisa Hunninghake will be sharing a librarian's list of children's books.

Enjoy an opportunity to discuss resources for teaching literacy with colleagues.

Come to share and learn (even if you choose not to share)!

Bring 1 or 2 items to share:

Teaching tool/ideas for new standards

Literacy resources: article, book activities

Children's books

REGISTER HERE: <https://mra.wildapricot.org/event-5664005>

April 24 Webinar—"Fact Not Fiction: The Science DOES Address Reading Comprehension"



In this **free** HELP (Higher Education Literacy Partnership) webinar, **Nancy Hennessy, M.Ed.**, teacher, administrator, and literacy consultant, will examine what research has revealed about comprehension and its critical contributors. Hennessy will explore how that awareness informs an

instructional framework that addresses both the acquisition of literacy skills and content knowledge. She will share practical instructional tools that support the reader's understanding and application of learning from texts. Don't miss this digital HELP webinar on April 24, 4:00-5:00 p.m. CDT. Co-hosted with [The Reading League Minnesota](#). [Register at Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)