

President's Message

Working Together to Clean Up the Literacy Landscape



RRCNA President Leslie McBane

This past fall, I shared my mom's analogy of how the barrenness of winter reveals the structure of living things and how our community's navigation of the pandemic unveiled some unexpected strengths and celebrations. As I wrote that message, we had no idea what this past winter would bring. Who could have predicted the effects of the Omicron variant on our schools and our families?

While it is a welcome thing to see the last of winter, its departure does expose debris uncovered by the receding snow. As I drive to work each morning, I am astounded by the amount of litter along the highway. I think of the huge task of clearing it away. Frankly, I'm bothered by it. I'm tempted to stop and begin picking it up. I find it unsightly and distracting. It's obscuring my view.

In some ways, our receding winter has exposed some detritus and distractions in our community as well. The challenge is to determine what merits our attention and what we leave for others to address. It is critical for us to decide what steps and structures will advance our stated vision of ensuring "the competencies necessary for a literate and productive future for children learning to read and write." If we want such a future

for the children we teach, we need to keep our own theories on teaching and learning robust and clutter-free.

First, what might constitute the 'litter' in our community? It is found in the clamor of voices, the clutter, if you will, of opinions and viewpoints that make a mess of the landscape

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but do not really achieve anything of value. The distractions that get our attention but aren't worthy of our time and energy. The social media pettiness and noise that sap our energy. We've got some litter defacing our garden. When is it our responsibility to pick up the trash and when must we leave it to decompose?

Back in 1991, Marie Clay was prescient when she stated, "I find the big debates divisive, for people feel obligated to take up opposing positions on matters like phonological awareness, the reader's use of context, and the nature of getting meaning from texts" (updated 2016, p. 3). She knew that holding a complex theory of literacy development would serve to keep us out of the weeds of oversimplified conclusions. We are attempting to grow readers and writers, while narrow views and simplistic theories are threatening to starve these tender sprouts by withholding needed nutrients — such as continuous text, responsive teaching, and books with natural language patterns. Instead, let's make sure they thrive by clearing away the weeds of compromise.

To clear the way for spring growth, we need like-minded partnerships with friends outside the Reading Recovery Community. Happily, these friends have become a part of our family through our advocacy initiatives, and their presence is creating a stronger and healthier garden. We need to nourish these relationships, ensure their cultivation, and seek to expand them even more. Helpfully, our offense-based messaging strategy has created more visibility and increased opportunities for others to

align with our purpose and join our efforts. We are also able to support these new friends as they seek to actualize their own goals and aspirations. It is very much like the work done each spring in my neighborhood's tiny park: Friends from all walks come together for our spring cleanup so that we can all enjoy the green space. And we appreciate it even more because we had a hand in filling those bags of yard waste.

Litter is not only an eyesore, it is depressing. But in contrast, our message is attracting others because it is attractive. We have a joyful message. There are countless stories of cheerful readers and writers who, guided by us along different paths, have entered the world of literacy with competence and success. My current student, Tyler, approaches reading and writing with exuberance, agency, and good humor. When I recently cut a word in his cut-up sentence into parts he exclaimed, "Get a medic!" Tyler has a can-do spirit in part because he has successfully learned how to look at print. And my hope for each of us is that we, too, learn how to look. To train our eyes to see possibilities among the problems. To see growth emerging through the garbage.

As we move into this new season, what litter should we focus on collectively and what should we let go? First, as a community, we can speak up against misinformation and oversimplification. I have a tiny garden in a historical neighborhood, and I have had to learn how to create and maintain an attractive outdoor space. I've had master gardeners teach me how to plant herbs and divide hostas. In the same way, we are

learning from others how to speak up and speak out in knowledgeable ways. Kivvit—our master gardener—is helping us create powerful and attractive messaging. And we can now respond to real time legislative happenings through our legislative response team. In Clay's words, we are "strengthening our range" (2016, p. 106). Together, we are engaged in cleaning up the literacy landscape. We may not be able to attend to every piece of detracting information, but we are able to achieve much as we combine our efforts.

Closer to home, my responsibility is to respond thoughtfully to those who may not agree with me. Think of it as making sure that my personal space is clutter free. Individually, this requires refining how I describe my work, and using all my ingenuity to clarify what I say and do when others misrepresent Reading Recovery theory and practice. In our own backyards, we must become adept at presenting our viewpoints with more than just fervor. Whether we are speaking with a school board member, administrator, or fellow teacher, we must learn how to be what Clay (2016) describes as "charmingly negative," if necessary (p. 183).

It is heartening to be able to say goodbye to winter. In the spirit of spring cleaning, let's rid ourselves of what might be littering our landscape. Let's tend our gardens shoulder to shoulder, so that young learners can thrive in the sun.

Reference

Clay, M. M. (2016). *Literacy lessons designed for individuals* (2nd ed.). Heinemann.

RRCNA Board of Directors Election Results

*We are pleased to share
results of the recent election
for terms beginning
July 1, 2022.*



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Executive Director's Message

Doing Whatever It Takes to Serve Our Students' Needs



RRCNA Executive Director Billy Molasso

In a recent reunion with long-missed friends, we rehashed the past 2 years of COVID struggle with a sense of awe from all the positive outcomes of pandemic isolation.

We spoke fondly of new pets adopted, hobbies we reembraced or tried for the first time, the remodeled spaces in our homes, and recipes adapted out of the necessity of barer-than-usual store shelves. We marveled at how our habits had changed as we learned to adapt to new circumstances like masks and Zoom meetings and wondered aloud how we would take these fresh skills into the “after times.”

Rose-colored glasses firmly in place, we counted the merits of difficult times, and applauded our own flex-

ibility — and not just with the living room yoga we finally had time to try.

It's no surprise to members of the Reading Recovery Community that flexibility is a virtue. This community has always embraced the concept of doing *whatever it takes* to serve our students' needs no matter how insurmountable the challenge. I'm in constant awe of the lengths that educators go to—even in the best of times—to reach their kiddos. And even amidst the struggles of COVID times, teachers continued to “level-up” by turning their porches into makeshift virtual classrooms and using a system of soup cans to prop up books to their webcam (two real-life scenarios from our own Community heroes).

Teachers provide everything from a well-needed high five, to nourishment, to financial support out of their own pockets, and that's all on top of the subject matter expertise outlined in the job description! In short, they do what Reading Recovery teachers have always done: *Whatever it takes.*

Flexibility isn't just a virtue, nor is it simply a necessity of the job; it's a privilege ... and it's one that is threatened.

As every Reading Recovery professional knows, every child is different, and their needs vary. We meet the

child where they are and give them *whatever it takes* to help them catch up. And we know that forcing one method when we know another will work better for the individual child's needs is always the wrong path to take.

Yet, legislations that restrict teacher choice and undermine teacher expertise continue to pop up with the persistence and stubbornness of weeds on the lawn. Proposed legislations under the guise of accountability and fiscal responsibility have the potential to hamper teachers' ability to do whatever it takes, whether by enforcing restrictive mandates or prescribing the use of a particular program.

It is becoming increasingly important to stay on top of the legislative issues in your state so you don't miss upcoming legislation that may hamper your ability to choose flexibility tomorrow. Visit <https://readingrecovery.org/act-now/> to stay informed of some of the most pressing issues, and take a few moments using our advocacy tools to voice your concerns and share your literacy expertise with your local legislators. Or better yet, proactively and regularly invite legislators to a behind-the-glass lesson so they can see the power of Reading Recovery in action, so they are on your side when it comes time to vote for your right to do *whatever it takes* on behalf of your students.



Get your **Whatever It Takes** tee in the Reading Recovery Store!



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Reading Recovery
Community



Reserve Your Room for TLI in Louisville

The Reading Recovery Community is thrilled to be gathering in person for this year's Teacher Leader Institute. Held in legendary Louisville, KY, at the Galt House Hotel from June 21-24, the Institute will feature content focused on advocacy, agency, and acceleration.

Connect With Reading Recovery Teachers On Meta

Social media can be a virtual whirlwind of information. The Reading Recovery Teachers Meta (formerly known as Facebook) group is a private, closed space where Reading Recovery professionals can connect and engage. Members actively discuss

strategies for student success, ask questions about working with district teachers and administrators, and explore ways to advocate for Reading Recovery. Search for Reading Recovery Teachers on Meta to join!



Community Forum Offers You Exclusive Access

Engage with other members in the Reading Recovery Community Forum. As an active member of RRCNA, you already have exclusive access — click the Community link at rrcna.org. This space is dedicated to our Community, where you can connect with like-minded colleagues, share ideas and best practices, and celebrate success. Plus, the popular Listening Library has found its new home in the forum. Enjoy audio recordings of past presentations from greats like Maryann McBride, Noel Jones, Mary Fried, and more!



This year will also have a new Site Coordinator Summit with sessions tailored specifically for this critical role.

Thank you to Institute co-chairs K. Journey Swafford, Jamie Lipp, Tracee Farmer, and Sandy Brumbaum for your dedication in planning the event. To register, visit the TLI webpage on the RRCNA homepage under Events. Reserve your room at the Galt House by June 5, 2022.

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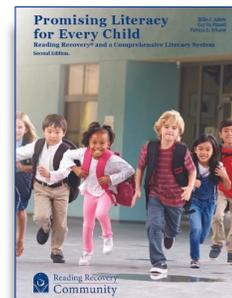
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LitCon 2022: Incredible Professional Development From Our Screens to Yours

Teachers, administrators, and literacy advocates joined together for a week of wonderful learning at LitCon: National K–8 Literacy & Reading Recovery Conference, Jan. 29–Feb. 6, 2022. While we truly missed welcoming the Reading Recovery Community to our annual in-person conference, another year of virtual learning allowed us to reach more attendees than would have been able to travel without sacrificing quality content from literacy experts!

A total of 1,837 attendees (a 19% increase from LitCon 21!) from nearly every state and five countries worldwide enjoyed more than 100 sessions on Classroom Literacy, Children’s Literature, Leadership in Literacy, Literacy Coaching, and Reading Recovery. Through both live and recorded sessions, attendees enjoyed a powerful mix of best practices and practical takeaways to take back to their schools.

This year’s keynote speakers wowed the crowd with powerful insights into the landscape of literacy education. **Gay Su Pinnell** (top right) inspired with her mission-driven affirmation that, “Teaching is a relentless quest, and one that takes courage.” Author **Carmen Agra Deedy** (middle right) charmed the audience with stories and inspiration of how books can change a reader’s life. And **Lucy Calkins** (bottom right) brought the fire with an impassioned reminder to “Be fierce” in championing for our students and their right to learn how they learn best.

Mark your calendars for LitCon’s triumphant return to downtown Columbus, OH, Jan. 28–31, 2023. It will truly be a homecoming of literacy leaders, and we can’t wait to welcome you back, in person, for the biggest and best K–8 literacy conference in North America!



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Many thanks to the sponsors and exhibitors who helped make LitCon 2022 possible.

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THE FOUNDATION SUPPORTS

- ✓ Generating positive engagement in national dialogue through our PR partnership with Kivvit
- ✓ Advocating at both the state and federal level around literacy learning legislation, funding, and administrative regulations
- ✓ Expanding funding awards for professional development experiences for Reading Recovery and classroom teachers
- ✓ Expanding the integration of Improvement Science initiatives, establishing Carnegie Improvement Science as a central strategy to improve early literacy intervention, specifically, Reading Recovery
- ✓ Developing pro-school, pro-teacher, and pro-student resources and strategies to reach struggling readers
- ✓ Creating professional development resources for Reading Recovery and classroom teachers to improve their skills and impact students
- ✓ Engaging with Advocates for Literacy, a coalition of professional associations with a focus on literacy efforts
- ✓ Partnering for school and district improvement initiatives through the Council of Chief State School Officers Collaboratives

LEARN MORE
readingrecovery.org/foundation

LitCon Professional Development Awards



While another year of virtual LitCon learning provided flexibility for attendees, it once again allowed limited opportunities for photos. We look forward to seeing everyone in person for more photo ops when we are all back in Columbus next year. In the meantime, we would like to recognize the names of this year's award recipients.

A total of 47 awards were presented by generous donors to help offset the cost to attend the conference. Awards are given to Reading Recovery teachers, teachers-in-training, teacher leaders, university trainers, or administrators who support the implementation of Reading Recovery.

Teacher Leader Training Awards



Dana Hagerman Lisa Lawrenz Sharon Smith

Three teacher leaders are in training thanks to funding from Pioneer Valley Books, dedicated to producing the highest-quality books for early literacy learners: **Dana Hagerman** from National Louis University, Lisle, IL; **Lisa Lawrenz** from the School District of Waukesha, Waukesha, WI; and **Sharon Smith** from Gwinnett Public Schools, Gwinnett, GA.

Applications for the 2022–23 Teacher Leader Training Awards are now available (see page 75).

Tenyo Family Foundation funded 22 Professional Development Awards. Founded by the late Sophie Tenyo, the foundation supports charitable, religious, scientific, literacy, and educational endeavors for the public welfare and well-being of humankind.

Karen Barcenas
Sarasota County Schools
Sarasota, FL

Bobbie Barrier
Wayne County Schools
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Rochester Community Schools
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Sarah Blair
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Kristie Epperson
Fayette County Schools
Lexington, KY

Michelle Gagnon
Auburn School Department
Auburn, ME

Melissa Greenlee
ISD 196
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Lisa Hoover
Chignecto Central Regional Centre
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Lauren Johnson
Beaufort County Schools
Chocowinity, NC

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Wythe County Public Schools
Wytheville, VA

Amanda Leach
Langly SD 35
Langly, BC

Amy Littlefield
King Center Charter School
Buffalo, NY

Melissa Misnik
King Center Charter School
Buffalo, NY

Tunde Olson
Sarasota County Schools
Sarasota, FL

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Pinellas County Schools
Clearwater, FL

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Monett R-1 School District
Monett, MO

Stephanie Smith
Henderson County Schools
Henderson, KY

Kimmi Sorg
Plainfield Community Consolidated
School District 202
Plainfield, IL

Tracy Vitale
King Center Charter School
Buffalo, NY

Tamara Watson
Auburn School Department
Auburn, ME

Hannah Winkler
Cleveland Metropolitan School
District
Cleveland, OH

Geri Stone Memorial Fund was established to remember the leadership of Geri Stone who passed away in 2002. Geri was one of Michigan's first Reading Recovery teachers and served as the Reading Recovery teacher leader for the Livonia, Farmington, and Utica Public School systems.

Penny Baran
Fieldcrest CUSD 6
Minonk, IL

Liz Dodge
Fieldcrest CUSD 6
Minonk, IL

Debbi Klendworth
Fieldcrest CUSD 6
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Jennifer Roman
Grand Blanc Community Schools
Flushing, MI

Amy Shiever
Orange City School District
Pepper Pike, OH

Jennifer Taylor
Grass Lake Community Schools
Grass Lake, MI

Lynn Tjaden
Fieldcrest CUSD #6
Minonk, IL

Debby Wood Memorial Fund was established in memory of Debby Wood, Reading Recovery Teacher Leader in Prince George's County, MD.

Debra Switalski
Prince George's County Public Schools
Landover, MD

Rose Mary Estice Memorial Fund was established in memory of Rose Mary Estice, one of the original Reading Recovery teachers trained at The Ohio State University.

Shanoe Singh
Cleveland Metropolitan School District
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MaryRuth Books offers instructional, clever books that provide reading practice using photos and illustrations to facilitate word recognition and engage the young reader. MaryRuth Books is the proud publisher of the Danny series of books that not only provide reading practice, but also support the development of a lifelong love of reading.

Amy DeWitt
Tucson Unified School District
Tucson, AZ

LaShaunta Lake
Orange City School District
Pepper Pike, OH

Blueberry Hill Books were written by a certified Reading Recovery teacher and carefully designed to enhance a child's strategic thinking and develop comprehension skills. Recurring characters inhabit stories filled with humor and excitement in the leveled storybooks.

Nancy Lane
LaRue County Schools
Hodgenville, KY

Cheryl Panchur
Cleveland Metropolitan School District
Cleveland, OH

Hameray Publishing Group/Yuen Family Foundation is dedicated to publishing innovative literacy materials for today's educators by combining a sound research-based approach with cutting-edge classroom solutions.

Christina Bradley
Rudyard Area Schools
Rudyard, MI

Catherine Finlay
Teton County School District 1
Jackson, WY

Jamie Groff
King Center Charter School
Buffalo, NY

Heinemann Publishing has provided professional and educational resources for teachers, kindergarten through college, for over 40 years. Heinemann strives to give voice to those who share their respect for the professionalism and compassion of teachers and who support teachers' efforts to help children become literate, empathetic, knowledgeable citizens.

Amy Bates
Sarasota County Schools
Sarasota, FL

Connie Orman
ISD 196
Eagan, MN

Julie Olsen Professional Development Fund was established in honor of Dr. Julie Olson, retired director of ISD 196 elementary education and Reading Recovery site coordinator, to honor her commitment and passion for Reading Recovery, literacy, and learning.

Kallista Grueneich
ISD 196
Eagan, MN

Lizabeth Kyser
ISD 196
Eagan, MN

Teresa Douglas Professional Development Fund was established in honor of long-time Reading Recovery Teacher Leader and donor Teresa Douglas from ISD 196, to honor her generosity and love of teaching.

Lynette Roland
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Reading Recovery Teacher Leader Professional Development Award was funded by the generosity of donors to the Foundation for Struggling Readers.

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Great Prairie Area Education Agency
Fairfield, IA