

President's Message

LitCon 2024 Offers Learning Opportunities for Everyone



RRCNA President Debra Rich

Please plan to join me in Columbus for LitCon 2024. Bring a team, including your administrator. With over 100 sessions for Grades K–8, there are learning opportunities for everyone!

Saturday learning: PreCons and the Leadership Institute

When you arrive early on Saturday morning, you will be able to spend the day exploring in-depth study by registering for one of six PreCon sessions. Be an advocate and invite administrators, curriculum directors, teacher leaders, and coaches to the Leadership Institute. Spend a full day learning from Diane Sweeney as she presents “Foundations for Student-Centered Coaching.” Then stay for the Leadership strand through the remainder of the conference and hear from school leaders who have implemented strong literacy programs in their buildings and districts.

Conference highlights

The conference kicks off on Saturday evening with an energetic keynote by Dr. Shuaib Meacham, titled, “Literacy, Joy, and Resilience: Hip Hop Literacy, Youth Excellence and the Power of Hip Hop for Educators.” Be prepared for an inspiring keynote that will transform how you view literacy education. Experience dynamic examples, incredible stories, and innovative teaching strategies that will leave you energized to ignite a passion for learning in students and ready to empower the youth of today for a brilliant tomorrow! Meacham will follow up with a session on Sunday morning.

Dr. Peter Johnston opens the general session on Monday morning with his keynote, “Unshrinking Literacy, Teaching, and Learning.” While children need to acquire “the code” to access print, it is also important to consider the nature of the literacy children acquire. Children’s social and emotional development lies

squarely in the heart of the language arts and the literate talk within which they are immersed, and that development, in turn, supports literacy development.

Tuesday, you will have the exciting opportunity to hear Jason Reynolds, the 2020–2022 National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature. He makes regular appearances on various media outlets and is a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author. His message, “STAMPED: Reflections on Integrating Characters & Stories of Difference,” will surely leave an imprint on you.

Come for the learning, connect with friends new and old, enjoy the exhibitors, and win big at the Big Win! We look forward to seeing you in Columbus. Register at <https://literacyconference.org/registration/>



Executive Director's Message

We Are Strongest Together: The Reading Recovery Community



RRCNA Executive Director Billy Molasso

You know that feeling when you're looking for your lost keys and stumble on something you've long missed, but thought was gone forever? That's serendipity, defined as "luck that takes the form of finding valuable or pleasant things that are not looked for" (Thanks, Webster!)

Sometimes, a small, everyday event will surprise you, transforming a routine task into an illuminating shift in perspective that's anything but mundane.

At the recent fall business meeting for the North American Trainers Group (NATG), I experienced such a surprise. You could call it a serendipity of the soul, a treasure hidden amongst spreadsheets, status updates, and day-to-day task planning.

Before we engaged in the day's agenda, one of our fabulous Canadian trainers, Melissa Wilde, invited the team to gather in a circle. One by one, each member of the group spoke a single word that brought them joy. It was a simple question, but with each simple answer given—family... music... dogs—our smiles widened, and our connections strengthened.

Next, we watched an interview with Archbishop Desmond Tutu in which he explained the concept of *ubuntu*. (The 3-minute video is well worth your time!) Tutu explains that *ubuntu* is the essence of being human. He shares, "Ubuntu speaks

As a community we are stronger because we work together, hope together, and of course, share common joys and sorrows.

particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness ... We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity."

The circle exercise illustrated his point so clearly—our individual joys became communal strength. Not only did this exercise join the team

in a powerful moment of humanity, it prepared us for productive collaboration, reminding us that we were a community with a common mission, and that we were strongest together.

Thank you for inviting the Reading Recovery Community into your circle. As a community we are stronger because we work together, hope together, and of course, share common joys and sorrows. In the face of the political and corporate interests that seek to destroy Reading Recovery, we remain a strong community with a common mission. *Ubuntu*. We are because you are.



Scan to hear Archbishop Tutu's explanation of ubuntu.

Update on the Reading Recovery Suggested Book List: We Need Your Help!

Every year the North American Trainers Group oversees a process of screening titles for the book list that is accessed by educators who are members of RRCNA. A committee of trainers and teacher leaders screen the titles for appropriateness and then follow a process of field testing the titles with students in Reading Recovery® lessons. For over 3 years, the committee had difficulty completing the review and field-testing processes due to limited in-person lessons during the pandemic. No new books were added to the list during that period, and it has become increasingly difficult to accomplish this full process. Ironically, this has been a period of great increase of published titles with a wide variety of genres and text types which have not yet been added to the list. Reading Recovery professionals are not limited to using books on this list but do rely on these suggested titles as they select books for their initial set of materials and for packets they may want to add at various levels.

What is the Book List?

Reading Recovery is an early intervention program for at-risk first-grade children. Because children in Reading Recovery have very specific gaps in developing an effective literacy processing system, a fine gradient of difficulty in texts is needed to support the intervention. A new book is introduced every day of the lesson series, and books are read and reread frequently.

Because of the constant and continual use of texts that fall within this specific gradient of difficulty, a list of books recommended for use during Reading Recovery lessons has been created. Currently, there are thousands of titles on the Reading Recovery Book List. Each book is assigned a level from 1–30 to indicate an increasingly complex gradient of texts. As reading and writing skills improve, students read more-challenging books and book types with a range of genres and text types in their lessons.

How Does a Text Become Part of the Book List?

All texts submitted must go through a rigorous research-based process. Submitting a text for review does not guarantee inclusion on the list. In fact, part of the process of field-testing books is to use them within regular lessons in a range of settings and students. New books are always being released, so the book list is normally updated yearly. The timeline for this process varies and while the pandemic limited field testing of the titles, the plan is to continue the review of those books with a shorter pilot process this year. This year, Reading Recovery is continuing to pilot a new timeline to streamline the process of adding books to the book list. For example, the initial screening in June lessened the number of total titles for field testing which save time for all involved. In addition, many new features are being added to the website including very easy searching of levels, genres, and many other factors.

What's Happening in 2023–2024?

The current screening committee has been faced with a big task to accomplish. To begin the process, a group of trainers and experienced teacher leaders gathered at Saint Mary's College of California in June 2023, to screen over 1,700 titles submitted by a wide range of publishers, some of which had never submitted books previously. In an intense 3-day meeting, the committee first screened the titles for appropriate use in lessons; the levels suggested by publishers ranged from 1–28, with most being in the 7–18 span. The books are initially screened to ensure that there is a range of representation of people and settings with appropriate use of language structure and related issues. After this initial review, the books are accepted for field testing.

Improvements to the process

We are now beginning the second year of piloting an expedited process in which we conduct calls for new titles annually. Timelines for the process have shifted and take into consideration needs for educators for the new school year.

We have reduced the number of copies of each title that publishers need to submit for books selected for field testing to make it easier and more cost effective. We have expanded the actual book list database to include more information about many of the individual titles, and new titles added to the book list will all have the more in-depth

information about each title included as we add them later this school year.

Spanish language book updates

Later, during the 2023–2024 school year, the list will include Spanish and bilingual titles appropriate for Descubriendo la Lectura and reviewed by DLL teacher leaders and teachers, for the first time. We are adding books in Spanish as part of a parallel process leveling Spanish language titles for use in DLL. These lists are being merged as a resource for Reading Recovery and DLL professionals for the first time.

Timeline Summary 2023–2024

The following is a summary of the field-testing process. The first step following the receipt of the books is a review of all books by a group of Reading Recovery trainers and highly experienced teacher leaders by the end of the summer. At that time, each book will be reviewed as appropriate or not for use in Reading Recovery lessons. If the text is found appropriate, there will be a request sent to publishers for additional copies that will be used to field test the book with Reading Recovery students during lessons.

The timeframe of the book leveling process will also be changing; we are continuing to pilot a shorter procedure this year.

March 1 to June 1, 2023

Accepting books for review; one copy of each text

July 1, 2023

Publishers notified of books accepted with invoices

August 1, 2023

Payment of a fee along with 10 copies of each text due

Fall 2023

Field testing with Reading Recovery volunteers

May 1, 2024

Field testing completed and final levels analyzed

June 1, 2024

Notification to publishers of book official levels and added to book list

Volunteer Information

Field testing work is intended to be within the existing Reading Recovery lessons. Volunteers will get a sneak peek at new books, keep their field testing books, and be part of an exciting hands-on professional development experience. Teacher leaders can volunteer to host a field testing site, and we are currently inviting participation through the Reading Recovery Community site.

Volunteers must

- have several years of experience in Reading Recovery,

- attend one training session virtually or watch a recording of the training session,
- level all books in their packet(s) — books will be sent in packets of 10 different titles,
- be an active member of the review community or join RRCNA to access online resources, and
- submit data electronically by May 1, 2024, in an easy-to-use online form.

Field Testing Improvements

- Use an easy online form to submit your data, so the process fits into a teacher's everyday schedule.
- Begin with initial field testing levels so teachers know exactly when to start testing.
- Books are distributed in packets of 10, so teachers can select the best number of books to commit to this year.



Packets of books like these could be on their way to you! Field testing works within your existing Reading Recovery lessons. Volunteers get a sneak peek at new books, keep their field testing books, and share an exciting hands-on professional development experience.

- The deadline to field test the books and submit data is extended until May 1, 2024.

Book List Improvements for Use by Educators

- Indicating which books are newly uploaded
- Being able to search the book list by the year the books were updated
- Including photos of covers in the search
- Ability to leave comments under the books
- And other new options soon to be added

Final Thoughts for the Overall Process

If educators have any feedback on the list or levels, please share; this helps everyone to be more knowledgeable about the use of books in lessons. Of course, we encourage educators across a school site to join RRCNA so they can utilize this members-only resource!

We're Here to Help

If you have questions about the process or anything in this article, please contact the authors:

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Our thanks to these companies for their generous support through RRCNA Associate Membership. Shop their websites for books, assessment materials, and supplies you need for your lessons and classrooms.

The Last Word

Our readers say The Last Word column in *The Journal of Reading Recovery* is one of their favorite things to read. **We need more of your great Reading Recovery stories.** Please share in an email to vfox@readingrecovery.org.

Revisionist Reader

One lesson, I told Asher that we were going to read my very favorite story, *Michael and the Eggs* (Roderick Hunt, 1997). After Asher read the book, I asked him if he thought mom would send Michael to the store again to buy eggs for her. He said, “No, but she could just get them from Amazon. That would solve all of her problems.” Asher wrote about how the sequel to *Michael and the Eggs* would go in our modern day world.

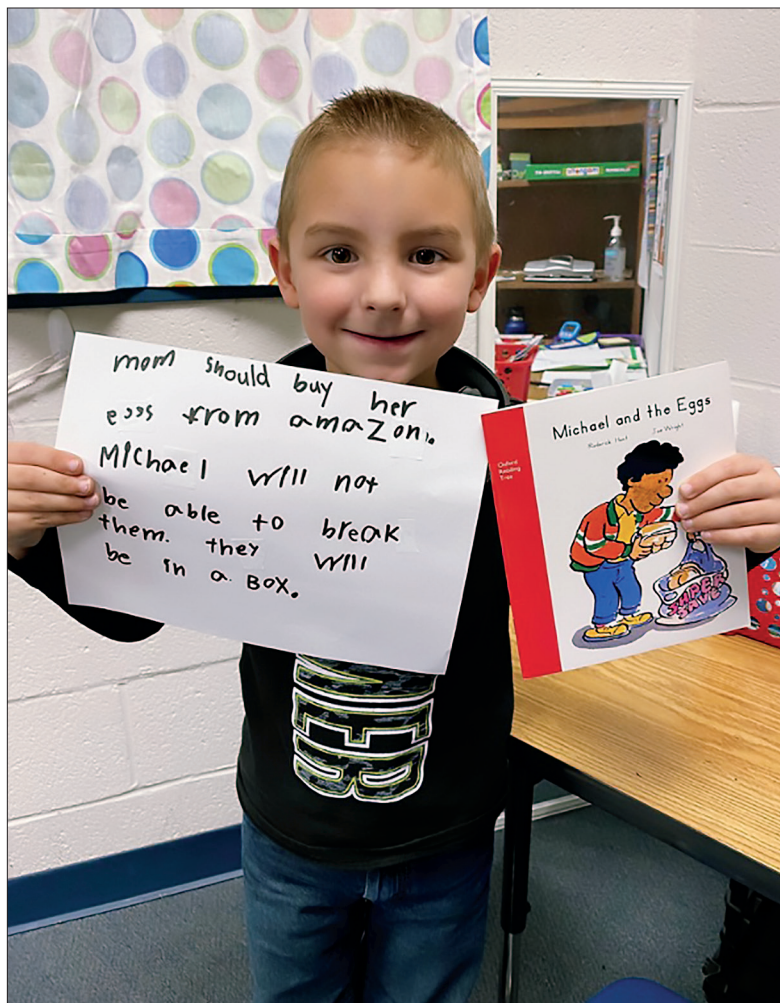
— Courtney Smith

It's All In a Name

My student had an amazing discovery yesterday during our lesson. Her name is Beverly and she started to encounter the word “Every” in text. She stopped and looked at me and said, “You know, that word is like Beverly — I am just taking off the B and the L and it's every! Just amazing!”

Then she said, “You know, the author of a lot of these books has the same name as me “Beverly” and my mom’s name is Randi, so it’s like we are the authors because it says Beverley Randall.”

— Annette Fracassa



Asher adds the modern touch to his teacher's favorite story.