

# Highlights

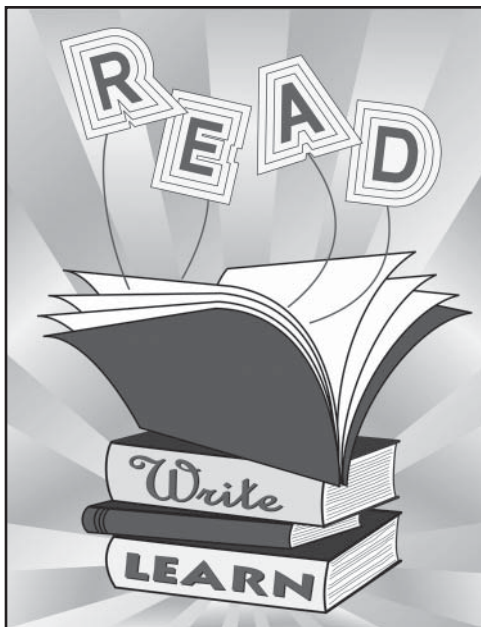
September 2009

of the Minnesota Reading Association, an International Reading Association affiliate



## *Kicking Off a New Year of Literacy and Reading*

*by Ilene Rutten*



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Dear MRA Members,

Yesterday was one of those fabulous days in which I celebrated with colleagues from across the state the joyful work we do as literacy professionals! Nearly 175 literacy enthusiasts gathered in Minneapolis for the annual conference of the Minnesota Reading Association to "Make Connections." Through the thoughtful planning of conference chair Julie Scullen and her helpers, we made connections with other colleagues, new ideas, authors, researchers (and for me, an armload of new books and several pieces of clothing)! I look forward to continuing this process with the many opportunities planned by MRA and our local councils. Check out the MRA website at [www.mnreading.org](http://www.mnreading.org) to be informed about what's new!



**Ilene Rutten**

There are a few things on the MRA website that I would specifically like to point out. Joining and renewing your membership online will save you \$5! In these challenging economic times, every dollar counts. Renewing online also saves our volunteer officers hours of time spent entering data.

Be sure to run your mouse across the tool bar at the bottom of the heading on the MRA website home page. Under each of these headings you can find a wide range of information. The Programs tab provides the guidelines for the MRA grants, the Writers are Readers award, and the Celebrate Literacy award. Check those out! This could be your year to showcase the wonderful writing of your students, to fund the great literacy ideas you have in the back of your head, or to nominate a worthy colleague for recognition.

Another tab you don't want to miss is the one for Councils. Our MRA councils from around the state post their upcoming events, newsletters, officers, and other local information. For example, my local council, Central, is sponsoring a free workshop on September 26th at the new St. Cloud library where I will learn 101 ways to motivate readers!

I am delighted to be serving as your president this year. Our mission states: The Minnesota Reading Association actively promotes lifelong literacy for all citizens. What better job could there be! I look forward to having you join me and the MRA leadership team as we work together to fulfill our goal!

Happy Reading (and writing)!

*Ilene*

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Julie Scullen

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### Minnesota Reading Association

13570 Grove Drive #280  
Maple Grove MN 55311-4400

[www.mnreading.org](http://www.mnreading.org)

# Reading Councils

## Arrowhead Reading Council

ARC has an exciting program in store this year. In keeping up with staff development requirements we have incorporated many activities that address the needs of reading professionals. Here are just some of the scheduled events coming up for the Fall/Winter of 2009-2010:

### SEPTEMBER PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE BOOK TALK

*Understand: New Horizons in Reading Comprehension* by Ellin O. Keene

### OCTOBER AN EVENING WITH AN AUTHOR

Duluth author Chris Monroe will present *Monkey with a Tool Belt* at Marshall Hardware Store.



### NOVEMBER EARLY ONSET MENTAL ILLNESS PRESENTATION AND BOOK TALK

ISD 709 Social Worker will present about these issues followed by a literature discussion of *Rules* by Cynthia Lord and *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night* by Mark Haddon.



### JANUARY WINTER SOLSTICE/ BOOKS FOR A BARGAIN

Tony Dierckins will present his book, *Crossing the Canal*, about the Duluth Lift Bridge. A light supper, book sale, and Solstice beach fire will follow.

Stephanie Boyat, ARC President  
[stephanie.boyat@duluth.k12.mn.us](mailto:stephanie.boyat@duluth.k12.mn.us)

## Southeast Minnesota Reading Council

### Join the Southeast Minnesota Reading Book Club

Gather a few council members, friends, or colleagues and join in a statewide professional book club! Our first book will be *To Understand: New Horizons in Reading Comprehension* by Elin Oliver Keene, published by Heinemann. Choose a time and place to meet during the week of September 21-26 and have a lively discussion. Discussion questions will be available by emailing [semnreads@live.com](mailto:semnreads@live.com).

## Southwest Minnesota Reading Council

### SWMRC Literacy Projects!

This year we have sent money to a school in Bulgaria helping 80 children to continue their love of reading. We also bought books for a community baby shower in New Ulm, putting books into the hands of new parents and their babies! Thanks to all of our members for their support of literacy near home and abroad!

### Summer Reading Workshop a Success!

The 10th Summer Reading Workshop sponsored by the Southwest Minnesota Reading Council was held on Wednesday, June 24, 2009, at Prairie Elementary School in Worthington, Minnesota. Dr. Cindy Whaley, professor of education at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, presented the workshop on vocabulary. Dr. Whaley talked about the importance of teaching vocabulary to aid a student's comprehension.

## ... Reading Councils

She also shared the various tiers of vocabulary that need to be taught in both narrative and expository texts. She presented a variety of ways to teach vocabulary to all students.

Dr. Whaley is president of the Southwest Minnesota Reading Council. We were honored to have her share her wonderful ideas at this workshop.

Thirty-eight teachers and paras attended. We hope to sponsor another workshop in the summer of 2010.

**SWMRC FALL CONFERENCE  
OCTOBER 8, 2009  
SHETEK BEND, TRACY, MN  
AUTHOR – BRENDA EHRMANTRAUT!**

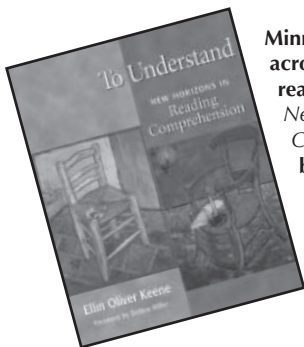
Brenda will present ideas for parental involvement at our Fall Conference on October 8, 2009. She is the author of *Night Catch*, *I Want One Too*, *Reading at Home A-Z*, and *Hope Weavers* (June 2009). Visit [www.bubblegumpress.net](http://www.bubblegumpress.net) to find out more about Brenda, her books, and her presentations. If you would like more information about this conference, please contact Jill Morgan at 507-354-2086 or [jamorgs@hotmail.com](mailto:jamorgs@hotmail.com). Please include SWMRC in the subject line of the email.

### Honor Council

The SWMRC is proud to announce that they have again been given the status of honor council. Thank you to all of our members who have helped with this project.

**Minnesota Reading councils across the state will be reading *To Understand: New Horizons in Reading Comprehension* by Ellin O. Keene.**

**Join us!**



### Twin Cities Area Reading Council

#### September Book Study

Please join us on September 24, 2009, to discuss *To Understand: New Horizons in Reading Comprehension* by Ellin Oliver Keene. With *To Understand* in hand, you'll find new ways to draw out the innate intellectual interest in every student and spark dramatic improvements in literacy learning and comprehension, even among students who struggle. You'll see that by rethinking what it means to understand – by teaching children the Outcomes and Dimensions of understanding – you can help students exceed expectations while broadening your vision of their abilities, their capacity, and their energy for learning.

The first two Twin Cities Area Reading Council (TCARC) members who register to attend this book study will be reimbursed the cost of the book. (Reimbursement will be made the evening of September 24th.)

Join us at Woodbury Davanni's, 1905 Donegal Drive in Woodbury, Minnesota, on Thursday, September 24, 2009. From 6:00 to 6:30 pm, we'll dine and talk; from 6:30 to 8:00 pm, we'll discuss the book.

During the week of September 20-26, 2009, all MRA Councils will meet to discuss *To Understand: New Horizons in Reading Comprehension* by Ellin Oliver Keene.

To attend this book study, please contact Neva Stoebner at [nstoebner@delano.k12.mn.us](mailto:nstoebner@delano.k12.mn.us) or 612-310-6785. There is no cost to participate in the book study and you do not need to be a TCARC member. If you choose to dine at Davanni's, you will pay for the cost of your meal.

TCARC will provide dessert.

At the end of the September 24th book study, two lucky TCARC members in attendance will receive a copy of our next book study read, *Comprehension & Collaboration: Inquiry Circles in Action* by Stephanie Harvey and Harvey "Smokey" Daniels, courtesy of MRA!

#### TCARC Dates to Remember

**SEPTEMBER 24, 2009: 6:00-8:00 P.M.**

Book Study at Woodbury Davanni's

**SEPTEMBER 24, 2009: 8:00-9:00 P.M.**

TCARC Leadership Meeting at Woodbury Davanni's

**OCTOBER 10, 2009:**

**DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION**

**OCTOBER 10, 2009:**

**TCARC LEADERSHIP MEETING**

Location and time are being finalized.

**NOVEMBER 12, 2009: RAISING A READER WORKSHOP IN ANOKA**

5:30-6:00 p.m. Box lunches (included in the cost of registration)

6:00-8:00 p.m. Raising a Reader Workshop by Sue Klund

**NOVEMBER 12, 2009: 8:00-9:00 P.M.**

**TCARC LEADERSHIP MEETING**

**JANUARY 21, 2010: 6:00-8:00 P.M.**

**BOOK STUDY AT PLYMOUTH DAVANNI'S**

**JANUARY 21, 2010: 8:00-9:00 P.M.**

**TCARC LEADERSHIP MEETING**

**MARCH 13, 2010: TIME TBA**

**TCARC LEADERSHIP MEETING**

**APRIL 22, 2010: 6:00-8:00 P.M.**

**BOOK STUDY, BURNSVILLE AREA**

**APRIL 22, 2010: 8:00-9:00 P.M.**

**TCARC LEADERSHIP MEETING**

More activities may be scheduled throughout the 2009-2010 school year.



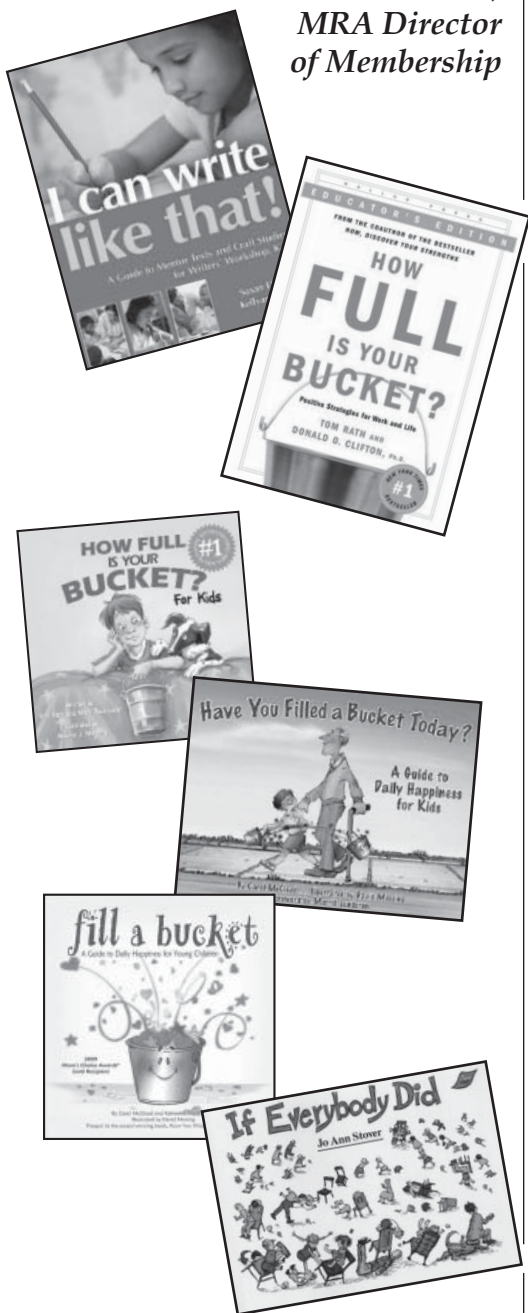
# The Bookshelf

## Book Reviews

by Debbie Sauer,  
IRA Coordinator

and

Kristen Thomas,  
MRA Director  
of Membership



**From Debbie Sauer:** One of the benefits of belonging to IRA is the opportunity to purchase high-quality professional literature at a discounted price. The IRA Publications Catalog has many titles that can enhance your classroom work, as well as serve as the basis for professional literacy groups or staff development within your building. Consider this book:

*I Can Write Like That!* is a very practical resource for teachers who want to use children's literature as mentor texts to support student writing. Ideal for mini-lessons, the book is organized in several ways to support ease of use by busy professionals. Written by Susan Ehmann and Kellyann Gayer, both teachers, it has three sections for very different uses: **Part 1** describes 27 elements of the writer's craft that are important for specific instruction in writers' workshop. Such items as alliteration, personification, and descriptive language are included, but so are circular endings, hyperbole, and breaking the rules! Each is clearly explained, with examples of literature at a variety of levels. **Part 2** gives detailed lesson plans for ten of the craft elements, with student work samples, and a format you could adapt to other mini-lessons. **Part 3**, described by the authors as "the heart of our book," is an annotated bibliography of titles from which you can choose core books to demonstrate the elements of writing for your students. This section includes two reference matrices to help you locate a book by either title or author. Do you want to know how to pull writing lessons from your author study, or correlate your mini-lesson to a read-aloud, or do you have a favorite book and want

to beef up your work with it? All of those possibilities can be supported by this book. It's a readable, accessible guide for busy teachers and support professionals.

This and many other titles are available through IRA and their website: [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org). You can shop online or request a print copy of the catalog. As your state IRA coordinator, I'm available to answer your questions regarding IRA, and I look forward to hearing from you.

**From Kristin Thomas:** Over the summer I devoured many books of both personal and professional interest. The one I want to share with MRA colleagues is called *How Full Is Your Bucket? Educator's Edition: Positive Strategies for Work and Life* by Tom Rath and Donald O. Clifton. The book was "short and sweet" (I read it in a few hours) and the message was refreshing! The basic principle: What we do for and to others (whether intentional or not) affects those around us. Familiar right? But not always so easy! I really enjoyed the message of the book because I think it can be applied when working with colleagues, administrators, students, family, and friends. Below are some titles that you might think about sharing with your students as you begin to create your classroom community. All have to do with kindness, how you treat others and how you affect others in what you do.

*How Full Is Your Bucket? For Kids* by Tom Rath, Mary Reckmeyer, Maurie J. Manning (2009)  
*Have You Filled a Bucket Today: A Guide to Daily Happiness for the Young Child* by Carol McCloud and David Messing (2006)  
*Fill a Bucket: a Guide to Daily Happiness for the Young Child* by Carol McCloud, Katherine Martin, David Messing (2009)  
*If Everybody Did* by JoAnn Stover (1989)

# Family Literacy Idea Exchange

A new feature in the MRA *Highlights* is the Family Literacy Idea Exchange! Each edition of *Highlights* will offer useful information to help educators strengthen partnerships between home and school in an effort to promote literacy.

This month's topic centers on *Family Literacy Bags*. Look for additional ideas to be posted on the MRA website! Coming in October is "Family Message Writing"!

To submit questions, suggestions, ideas or articles related to family literacy, please contact Maurina Rome at [m.rome@mnreading.org](mailto:m.rome@mnreading.org).

## Adventures in Reading: Family Literacy Bags by: Reading Rockets (2008)

Reading Rockets has developed a set of family literacy bags to encourage hands-on fun and learning centered around paired fiction and nonfiction books. Parents who read to their children everyday and talk about what they are reading together promote

a joy of reading and literacy achievement. How can teachers encourage reading at home and support the role of parents as educators? One way is through the use of family literacy bags — a paired set of theme-based fiction and nonfiction books and related interactive activities that kids bring home from school to share with their family. Just assemble everything into a two-gallon zip top bag, and they're ready to go!

The full text of this article can be found at:

[www.readingrockets.org/article/27935](http://www.readingrockets.org/article/27935)

The helpful list of Literacy Bag themes and PDF resource sheets can be found at:

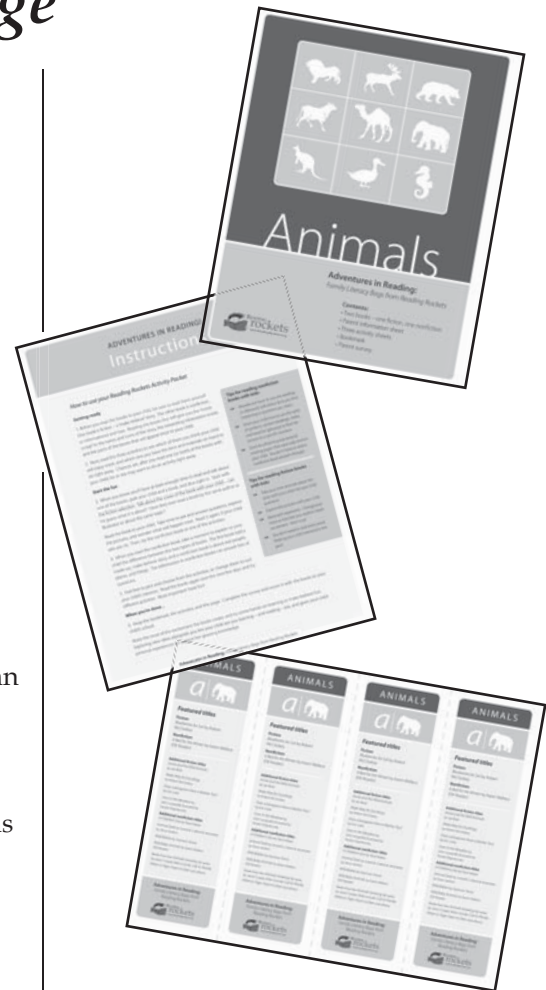
[www.readingrockets.org/content/pdfs/literacybags/](http://www.readingrockets.org/content/pdfs/literacybags/)

Additional Family Literacy ideas and information can be found at these sites:

[www.readingrockets.org/article/20037](http://www.readingrockets.org/article/20037)

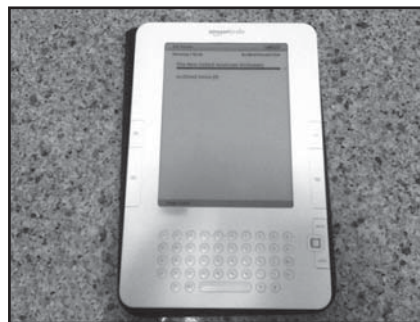
[www.coe.usu.edu/ecc/web/flb.html](http://www.coe.usu.edu/ecc/web/flb.html)

[hercules.gcsu.edu/~cbader/5210SPED/FLB.htm](http://hercules.gcsu.edu/~cbader/5210SPED/FLB.htm)



# Kindle 2

This summer I purchased an Amazon Kindle 2. The Kindle 2 is an E-reader (electronic book) that is the size of a DVD case and weighs 10 ounces. Wireless access to Amazon's bookstore enables me to buy and download a book any time of the day or night in 60 seconds. There were two big reasons I wanted a Kindle. First, I love to read and my house is overrun with books! The Kindle is able to store 1500 books, so space is no longer an issue. The second reason is that the e-ink technology used is easier on the



eyes. I can read for longer periods of time and not feel eye strain (just like when my eyes were younger!) I can also enlarge the font size.

There are over 300,000 books available for the Kindle, bestsellers and new releases are offered for a reasonable price. Authors and publishers offer books for free to

introduce readers to new authors. Amazon also allows you to download a sample of the book to see if you want to purchase the book. This has allowed me to try authors and genres that are new to me. There are several websites where you can download books for free, too. You can find classics like Jane Austen and Sherlock Holmes for free.

I don't think E-readers will ever totally replace DTBs (dead tree books) but if you are a voracious reader like me you will appreciate the no space, no clutter library. I don't even mind the wait at the doctor's office with access to a library in my purse!

— Cindy Bragg



# Planning Ahead? MRA 2009-2010 Calendar

During the fall MRA is looking ahead at the coming year's events with great anticipation! While some of these dates are tentative, it is important to us that you have an opportunity to plan. In particular, notice that there are dates listed for submission of Celebrate Literacy nominations, Writers are Readers Young Author submissions, and MRA Grant applications. You can also note when you should expect to see a copy of the MRA newsletter in your e-mailbox.



Fall electronic newsletter delivered.....	Tue.....	Sept 15, 2009
<i>To Understand</i> Book Club Meetings (statewide) .....	Mon-Fri..	Sept 21-25, 2009
CMRC Free Workshop .....	Sat .....	Sept 26, 2009
MRA Executive Board Meeting .....	Sat .....	Oct 3, 2009
Seasonal Symposium: Kathy-Jo Wargin.....	Sat .....	Oct 3, 2009
SWMRC Fall Conference .....	Thurs.....	Oct 8, 2009
MRA Executive Board Meeting .....	Fri .....	Nov 20, 2009
MRA Fall Leadership Meeting.....	Sat .....	Nov 21, 2010
Winter electronic newsletter delivered.....	Tues.....	Jan 5, 2010
<i>Comprehension and Collaboration</i> statewide bookclub .....	Mon-Fri..	Jan 18-22, 2010
Celebrate Literacy nominations deadline.....	Mon .....	Feb 1, 2010
Writers are Readers submissions due.....	Mon .....	Feb 1, 2010
MRA Grant submission and scholarship deadline .....	Mon .....	Feb 1, 2010
MRA Executive Board Meeting .....	Sat .....	Feb 6, 2010
Celebrate Literacy reception.....	Fri .....	Mar 19, 2010
MRA Winter Leadership Meeting .....	Sat .....	Mar 20, 2010
Spring electronic newsletter delivered .....	Sat .....	Apr 10, 2010
Statewide bookclub meetings.....	Mon-Fri..	Apr 19-23, 2010
Summer electronic newsletter delivered .....	Tues.....	June 15, 2010



## MRA Conference Highlights August 13, 2009



Minnesota Reading Association

*Celebrate Literacy  
Dessert Reception*

*Friday, March 19, 2010*

*7:00 - 9:00 P.M.*

*Maple Grove Community Center*

*Nominations due*

*February 1, 2010*

online applications available at

[www.mnreading.org](http://www.mnreading.org)



## Legislative Update

by Richard Long, IRA  
Director of Government Relations

### Race to the Top and Stimulus Funds

On July 24th the President announced the administration's policy focus and plan for spending about \$10 billion of the stimulus dollars. These funds are the Race to the Top program (\$4.3 billion), the school improvement program (\$3 billion) and other funds (mostly technology). In addition, the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund is also included in this policy initiative. Overall, these funds will flow to the states with the following emphasis:

1. Schools at the bottom 1% will be the focus of improvement.
2. Increased use of data by schools including linking student achievement with teacher and principal evaluation, and linking teacher performance (as partially measured by student achievement to institutions of higher education they attended). Providing links of student achievement data back to teachers to improve instruction.
3. Increased requirements to expand the number of charter schools
4. Requirement that states adopt core common standards by June 2010
5. Support for pay for performance of teachers
6. School improvement focused on charter schools, closing schools, and transforming schools

IRA has sent comments to the administration on their notice of definitions on the Race to the Top program asking that reading and literacy be listed as a priority along with the STEM programs (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

### Core Common Standards

The development of the core common standards by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers is a push to create national standards that are consistent, clear, and demanding. In late July, the college and career-ready draft standards were basically leaked on the Internet after the states received the draft. IRA has been asked to submit comments. To see the IRA statement, go to the IRA website at [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org). These standards are being revised and will be released for public comment in mid-September 2009. Meanwhile, NGA and CCSSO are working on the K-12 standards. They hope to release these standards by late December. The adoption of the core common standards will be a requirement to receive Race to the Top stimulus dollars.

### Comprehensive Literacy Bill

The House and Senate continue to work on a comprehensive literacy bill, the draft of which is entitled LEARN ("Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation Act"). The purpose of the LEARN Act is to create a comprehensive, national literacy program to ensure that children from birth to grade 12 have the reading and writing skills necessary for success in post secondary education and work. This bill recognizes the importance of student literacy skills and the importance of high quality literacy instruction that supports students of all ages and across all content areas. The bill recognizes the critical importance of high quality professional development to instructional staff so that students have literacy learning opportunities based on scientifically valid research and strategies appropriate to their

age and developmental level. The bill would provide federal support for literacy programs, enhance each state's role in improving literacy instruction, and support LEA's creation of high-quality literacy programs in schools.

### Summary

The President's announcement on July 24th was basically the administration's education reform plan. The administration is not planning on pushing the rewriting of No Child Left Behind any time soon. In fact, one senior administration official said that the rewriting may not be until 2012.

This means that the regulations being proposed, and soon to be implemented, are what the administration wants to have happen. This means that we will be hearing more about charter schools, pay for performance, using student achievement data in many new ways including tracking teacher performance linking back to the teacher's institutions of higher education.

From the Hill we are hearing a different emphasis. The Hill is talking legislation, including early childhood programs and new comprehensive reading legislation. Unlike past years, there is a wide range of activity impacting teaching, learning and reading in many different parts of the government. Many of these items interrelate, and reflect a significant change in emphasis.



For more information on any of these issues contact the International Reading Association Washington office at 202-624-8800 or [irawash@reading.org](mailto:irawash@reading.org).



# Writers are Readers

## Young Author Celebration 2010

The Minnesota Reading Association is 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 young readers. Winning entries will be published both in print form and in an electronic format on the MRA website. 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, mystery, poetry, prose, etc.). Examples:

- a story about something that happened in the writer's family
- a biography of a famous person (including sources or references)
- a collection of original poems or song lyrics
- 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 developing.
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.

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

Winners from each category will be notified by mail, and will be invited to the MRA awards function on March 19, 2010.

Two copies of each manuscript should be mailed to:

Julie Scullen  
MRA Chairperson  
1431 - 154th Lane NW  
Andover, MN 55304  
Attn: Writers are Readers

Deadline for entries: February 1, 2010.

Each page of the manuscript should be labeled on the back of each page with 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



**WRITERS  
ARE  
READERS**

**Deadline  
for Entries  
February 1,  
2010**



**MRA Mission**

*The Minnesota Reading Association actively promotes lifelong literacy for all citizens. We encourage professional interaction among all organizations involved with literacy and provide resources for exemplary literacy practices and habits.*

**A Note about Membership**

The Minnesota Reading Association strives to provide not only quality professional development, frequent collaboration and networking opportunities for its members, but also reasonable membership rates. Beginning August 13, 2009 membership rates increased to help offset the rising costs MRA incurs when marketing, updating and expanding website resources for its members, planning and hosting local events and conferences, and offering programs such as Celebrate Literacy, grants and scholarships.

The MRA Executive Board first made a motion to increase membership dues at the Summer Leadership Meeting held on July 8, 2009. Many local council leaders attended the meeting and discussion occurred around the subject. Executive Board members then discussed various rate options and made a motion to local council leaders with new proposed rates. Local leaders were then asked by the President for their vote. MRA has not increased its membership dues in 5 years and the majority of the MRA assembly leaders felt although increasing rates is not exactly ideal in this economic time, it is appropriate and necessary to do so.

Starting August 13, 2009 membership rates became the following:

New membership (paid online) .....	\$35	New membership (via mail).....	\$40
Paraprofessional rate .....	\$25	Retiree rate .....	\$20
Undergraduate full-time student rate .....	\$20		

Notice that MRA no longer allows full-time graduate students to take advantage of the reduced student rate. The reduced rate was always meant for undergraduate students and it is an effort by MRA to connect with teacher candidates before they gain full-time employment. Also, MRA will now offer a reduced "retiree" rate for those members who are no longer employed but want to stay connected to what's going on in the literacy world and be involved with other like-minded literacy professionals.

*— Kristen Thomas, MRA Director of Membership*