

Highlights

January 2010



of the Minnesota Reading Association, an International Reading Association affiliate

Ni Hao (Hello)

by Ilene Christian



After 12 days with the International Reading Association (IRA) Literature and Language Delegation to China, that is my one reliable Chinese phrase. During the first two weeks of November, IRA President-elect Patricia Edwards led a delegation of 34 IRA members and seven guests from 23 states on this informative journey. I was fortunate to be one of the delegates. The Chinese greeting (pronounced nee how) came in handy as we visited elementary schools and engaged in professional forums with elementary and secondary school faculties in the cities of Beijing, Xi'an, and Shanghai.



Ilene Christian

Though China and the United States share roughly the same land mass, China has four times the number of people as we do. I tried to imagine Minneapolis and the surrounding area with four times as many people. And St. Cloud, Brainerd, Marshall, New Ulm, and Duluth with four times as many people. Suddenly, Minnesota becomes quite crowded. No wonder the public school classrooms in China have 50 to 60 students.

Our delegation visited three private schools. Many parents choose to pay for private school as the class size is about half of those in public schools. Prior to being admitted to two of the schools, school personnel took our temperatures. Luckily, everyone was healthy. At one school, we also needed to wear plastic coverings on our shoes. Every class we visited was excited to demonstrate their English. A class of five-year-olds sang "Old Mc Donald," "The ABC Song," and, surprisingly, "Jingle Bells"! In China, kindergarten refers to the ages of 2-7 and is optional. Children begin formal schooling at the age of seven.

As our delegation was a group of literacy teachers, we were constantly on the lookout for books. Surprisingly, we saw very few. None of the schools had what we would traditionally think of as a library. One school had a "reading room" with delightfully curved tables and chairs, wire book baskets on the wall, and a limited number of books. We also tried to purchase books on our shopping outings. Pop-up books and cartoon type books were about all we found. At the airport several delegates purchased Robert Sabuda pop-up books that were translated into Chinese.

I must admit that after 11 days of Chinese food, I did sneak out to a McDonald's for some fries and a cheeseburger. I could have been at any McDonald's in the US. I was surprised that I could have chosen amongst Burger King, Dairy Queen, Cold Stone Ice Cream, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Subway, Dunkin' Donuts, or Pizza Hut for my taste of home.

Please read on to see what else Minnesota Reading Association members have been up to!

May your new year bring you times of rest, renewal, and reading!

Ilene



MRA president Ilene Christian visiting kindergarten students in Shanghai, China.

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Reading Councils

Arrowhead Reading Council



Duluth author Chris Monroe, author of the *Monkey with a Tool Belt* series, presented her slide show in November.

As reading professionals, we are always striving to keep up with current research and strategies. As Arrowhead Reading Council put together the program for the 2009-2010 school year, we tried to keep in mind the mission of ARC: *To provide a quality program for growth in professional and personal literacy and best practice.*

This year the ARC program is also attempting to meet the needs of our staff development goals in the areas of Reading, Behavior Modification, Recognizing the Signs of Mental Illness, and Meeting the Needs of All Learners. Our action-packed program this year includes many authors, speakers and activities that will pertain to these areas. We will hear from local authors and be involved with some book discussions pertaining to professional issues.

ARC is proud to be celebrating its 27th year of recognition by the International Reading Association as an IRA Honor Council for providing outstanding literacy programs and activities.

WINTER SOLSTICE/BOOKS FOR A BARGAIN
THURSDAY, JAN. 21, 2010, 6:00 PM
LAFAYETTE SQUARE, PARK POINT
COMMUNITY CENTER, MINNESOTA AVE.

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. 2 credit hours.

—Stephanie Boyat, ARC President
stephanie.boyat@duluth.k12.mn.us

Central Minnesota Reading Council

CMRC LITERACY WORKSHOP

SAT, JANUARY 30, 2010

BLACKBERRY RIDGE COUNTRY CLUB

“Engaging the Reader through Family Involvement”

Making connections to families and interactions with poetry and reader’s theater

3 hours of CEU will be available for attending this literacy workshop. For a registration form and detailed flyer go to www.mnreading.org or feel free to contact Pat Hanson at lp Hanson@hotmail.com.

Minnesota Academy of Reading

The purpose of the Minnesota Academy of Reading (MAR) is to bring together K-12 teachers and higher education professors to discuss and respond to reading practices/policies in the state.

New Officers

This year, the MAR executive board is excited to announce that Debra Peterson and Amy Smith will be serving as co-presidents. Debra is an instructor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Minnesota and has supported the work of the Minnesota Center for Reading Research. For the past nine years,

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... Reading Councils (cont'd)

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she has worked with elementary teachers and schools to improve reading instruction and implement school-wide reform.

Amy is an assistant professor in the Graduate School of Education at the University of St. Thomas. She coordinates the K-12 Reading Licensure Endorsement program and is a faculty member in the College of Applied Professional Studies.

MAR SPRING BANQUET

WED, APRIL 21, 2010, 5:00-8:30 PM
NORTHLAND INN, BROOKLYN PARK, MN

The Minnesota Academy of Reading also provides opportunities for the reading community to celebrate the achievements of reading professionals. Each spring, a banquet honors one Minnesota reading professional who has made significant contributions to reading education. Past recipients have included: Barbara Taylor (2005), Michael Graves (2006), Jay Samuels (2007) and Alton Greenfield (2008).



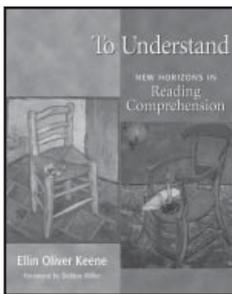
Dr. Maureen Prenn information, please contact Terri Christenson (tchristenson01@hamline.edu) or Gail Jordan (gail-jordan@bethel.edu).

Become a Member of the Minnesota Academy of Reading

To become a member of the Minnesota Academy of Reading, first join the Minnesota Reading Association and then identify MAR as your local council.

Southeast Minnesota Reading Council

Book Club Happy Hour



Please join us for a Book Club Happy Hour on Thursday, January 14th from 5:00-6:30 pm at Whistle Binkies North,

3210 Wellner Dr NE, Rochester, MN.

All are welcome! You do not need to be a member to attend. Come and discuss Elin Keene's new book *To Understand: New Horizons in Reading Comprehension*. Or just come to socialize with reading friends.

Hope to see you there! RSVP to jeboray@rochester.k12.mn.us or hewillman@rochester.k12.mn.us by January 11th, 2010.

Southwest Minnesota Reading Council

Fall Conference Update

The Fall Conference for the Southwest Minnesota Reading Council was held October 8th in Tracy, MN, with speaker Brenda Ehrmantraut. She is the author of *Night Catch, I Want One Too, Reading at Home A-Z* and *Hope Weavers*. Brenda presented ideas for parental involvement. Visit www.bubblegumpress.net to find out more about Brenda, her books, and her presentations.

SWMRC SPRING CONFERENCE
APRIL 13, 2010
NEW ULM, MN
AUTHOR - TIM KEHOE

Tim Kehoe is the inventor of numerous products, including the world's first colored bubbles, Zubbles. In 2005, Zubbles was awarded *Popular Science's* Grand Prize for Innovation.

Named one of America's 100 Best by *Reader's Digest*, Tim has been featured in *Fortune Small Business, Business Journal, Entrepreneur, Minneapolis Star Tribune, Saint Paul Pioneer Press, Popular Science, Believer* and also made appearances on National Public Radio, Discovery Channel, NBC, CBS, and NY1.

Tim recently finished the first book in his new series *The Unusual Mind of Vincent Shadow* which was featured in *Publishers Weekly* and selected as one of the "Pick of the Lists" choices at the Midwest



Booksellers Association Fall Trade Show. Visit www.VincentShadow.com for more information.

"This is a children's book about a boy who invents things, all sorts of things. Vincent Shadow is in middle school. He has a secret laboratory where he creates things like "Biting Beast Balls," "FibFinderPenz," "MoodPaintz," and "Roc-Kitez." His life has ups and downs, but even when he is disappointed he just keeps on inventing. One of Vincent's inspirations is Nikola Tesla, a mechanical and electrical engineer born in the 1800s. (Tesla could also be said to have had an unusual and inventive mind.) When some of Tesla's artifacts and notebooks are discovered, the results impact



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... Reading Councils (cont'd)

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Vincent's life. This is a fun read. Moms or Dads reading with their kids will also get a kick out of it."

—Betty J. Roiger

New Ulm Public Library

This book, published in a unique format with an inventor's guide inside the back cover, is sure to ignite an excitement for science, invention, and reading!

For information about attending this conference contact Jill Morgan at jamorgs@hotmail.com. Please include SWMRC in the subject line.

Secondary Reading Interest Council

The Twin Cities Area Reading (TCARC) and Secondary Reading Interest (SRIC) Councils held a collaborative event called a Reading Teacher Symposium on November 14th. Teachers chose between elementary or secondary strands. K-12 teachers new to the teaching of reading can feel isolated and overwhelmed.

SRIC and TCARC recently collaborated to support new teachers through differentiated professional development. Each symposium participant attended

a series of three 45-minute sessions, with separate offerings available for elementary and secondary teachers. The focus of each session was on furthering understanding and knowledge of literacy instruction and best practices.

Twin Cities Area Reading Council

TCARC JANUARY BOOK STUDY
THURS, JAN 21, 2010
DAVANNI'S, 3015 HARBOR LN N,
PLYMOUTH MN, 763-550-0003
5:00 PM, TCARC BOARD MEETING
6:00 PM, DINE AND DIALOGUE
6:30-8:00 PM, DISCUSS THE BOOK

The Twin Cities Area Reading Council invites everyone who has read *Comprehension and Collaboration: Inquiry Circles in Action*, by Stephanie Harvey and Harvey Daniels, and those who are interested in learning more about the book to join us as we discuss it. This book is written for K-12 teachers and literacy coaches. It will lay the foundation for inquiry circles citing current research and practices behind comprehension instruction and classroom collaboration. Differentiation is a current buzz word in education. This book will explain nine fundamental classroom conditions needed

for active, small-group learning while providing practical lessons in omprehension, collaboration, and research.

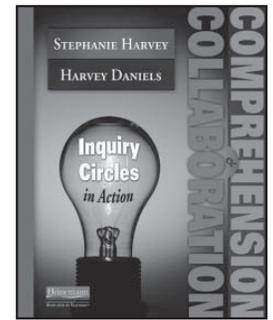
Readers

will obtain how-to directions for four types of inquiry circles: mini-research projects, curricular inquiries, extensions of literature circles, and open inquiry projects.

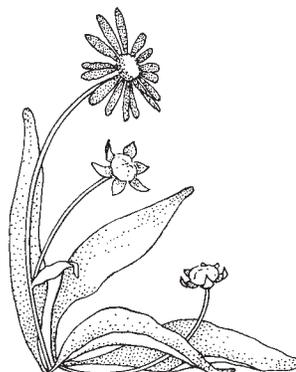
"This book is about small-group projects that work. It's about combining what we know about the research process, about thinking, and about people working together to create a structure that consistently supports kids to build knowledge that matters in their lives." Stephanie Harvey and Harvey "Smokey" Daniels

If you are interested in attending this book study, please contact Neva Stoebner at nstoebner@delano.k12.mn.us or call 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.

Remember, you do not need to have read the book to attend this book study! Much, if not all of the talk this evening will revolve around reading in our schools, so come join us for new friends and excellent conversation! If you are like many of us, you have a never-ending pile of books to read. If you have not read the book, come and find out if you might want to do so in the future!



Teachers attending the elementary strand enjoy one of their three presentation topics.



Digital Technology in Literacy

by Scott Voss

In an effort to promote digital literacy, MRA has asked me to dedicate a regular column to some of the innovative and new computer features available to teachers. Now while it is easy to get excited about some of the new gadgets and gizmos, many of which are available online free of charge, it must be remembered that the digital toys are merely a medium through which we hope to engage our students. This may seem like an unusual statement to lead off a column that will be dedicated to digital literacy, but I think it should be established early on that good teaching is simply good teaching. We cannot come to depend on the perfect book, the perfect program, the perfect intervention, or the perfect technology to magically free us from our classroom struggles.

With that said, I also believe that the digital world can offer us a means of connecting students to literacy in ways that have not been possible in the past. In fact, a recent survey by the Pew Internet and American Life Project (January 2009) found that as many as 65% of teens participate in social networking / blogging sites on a regular basis. Add in gaming, micro-blogging, texting and I begin to wonder how it is that they can be surrounded by more text today than at any point in the history of the world and yet still be deemed as inadequate readers?

Reading specialists walk a fine line, trying to prepare students for the type of literacy demands of the 21st Century and at the same time legitimizing the types of literacy practices they already employ.

Using wikis is a fantastic place to bring these worlds of literacy together. A wiki is a web-based



writing tool that allows writers to collaborate and connect their ideas.

Personally-run wiki pages are a bit easier to monitor and manage. Setting one up is extremely easy, even if you are setting it up for an entire class. PBWorks.com offers free accounts that require just two or three steps to get started. In setting up your wiki space, you get to choose your address, which makes it very easy for students to remember. Getting students to navigate to the page easily allows for a smooth start.

Creating a page on the wiki is as easy as clicking the "create a page" button and giving it a title. Adding content to the page is as easy as typing in the box and clicking save. Linking the page to another page is as easy as clicking on the "make a link" button on the right side of the page.

I have used wikis for reading classes, where students create a page for the books they read. They become book reviews. To utilize the "linking" function, and to teach students lessons on making connections, I require them to

make connections (either to other books within our class's wiki, or to a movie review or song review they find online). Middle school and high school students will be more familiar with the technology. For them, they will be able to do fancy things with their pages by adding music, pictures, or even video clips.

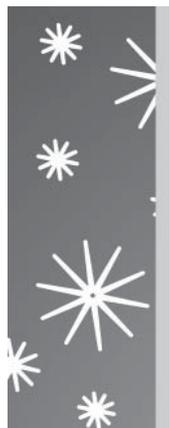
Of course using wikis takes time. It assumes that you have access to computer labs and, like all new technologies, wikis involve a good deal of patience and experimentation. In the way of digital tools, they are relatively low-tech. In other words, they do not require much expertise to set up or operate. While wikis may not be the answer to all of our literacy challenges, they do provide a very interactive and exciting way for students to create, record, and share their thoughts.

See the following websites for some examples:

- pbworks.com
- sric.pbworks.com
- avreading.pbworks.com
- avwriting.pbworks.com

Planning Ahead? MRA 2009-2010 Calendar

We're halfway through the year, but these dates remain important. 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.



Comprehension and Collaboration 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 News

Celebrate Literacy Award

The International Reading Association seeks to promote literacy worldwide by improving the quality of reading instruction through the study of the reading process and teaching techniques. The Celebrate Literacy Award recognizes individuals who have made significant literacy contributions at the local, state, or provincial level. We hope the celebration will familiarize the public with literacy activities in the community and call attention to the work that is being done by the schools and the International Reading Association to promote literacy worldwide.

Candidates who have shown exemplary accomplishments and leadership in K-12 literacy may be suggested for consideration by the MRA Board as Celebrate Literacy Award recipients.

Please visit www.mnreading.org (under the "Programs" tab) to nominate a deserving colleague. Deadline for nominations will be February 1, 2010.

Nominees chosen by the MRA Executive Board for further consideration will be recognized at the MRA Celebrate Literacy Dessert Reception March 19, 2010.

Mark Your Calendars!

Hamline University will be holding their 20th annual Summer Literacy Institute the week of July 12-16, 2010. Celebrate this 20th year milestone with Stephanie Harvey, Ralph Fletcher, Georgia Heard, and Lester Laminack. For more information, www.hamline.edu/literacy or contact Terri Christenson at 651.523.2532.

MRA Education Scholarship

Do you have a son or daughter majoring in education at college? Consider applying for the MRA Education Scholarship.

Please contact MRA President Ilene Christian for a scholarship application. The deadline is February 1, 2010. Submit your application now!

Seeds, Sprouts, and Blossoms: Growing a Garden of Writers

In October, a wonderful group of MRA members joined children's author Kathy-jo Wargin as she spoke at length about how to develop a writing workshop within a classroom that will grow better writers. Teachers learned practical and "use tomorrow" strategies for helping students define their story ideas (seeds), nurture their creative and organizational skills (sprouts), and make their own voice "blossom." The author had many creative ideas to help teach editing skills to the young author and ways to design an atmosphere supportive of the young author's mindset and ability. Thanks to a generous donation from Sleeping Bear Press, this workshop was free for MRA members.

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



Minnesota Reading Association Presents



Engage & Envision:

**New Literacies, New
Looks, and New Energy**

**2010
Minnesota
Reading
Association
Annual
Conference:**

**Thursday August
12, 2010**

**Apple Valley High
School**

Keynote Speakers:



**Aaron Doering, PhD.
University of Minnesota
Learning Technology**

**Nell Duke, PhD.
Michigan State
University
Informational
texts and early
literacy**



MRA Annual Conference Set for 2010

It is an exciting time to be a teacher – especially a teacher of reading. Things are changing exponentially faster than they ever have. Imagine that Facebook was not introduced into mainstream culture until 2005. Today, it has surpassed 175 million users, adding (as of February of this year) about 600,000 users a day, according to “Inside Facebook,” a website that tracks Facebook for Developers and Marketers. And contrary to the myth that there is this “digital native / digital immigrant” split between young and old, the largest group of people using it are middle-aged women. Last week, Oxford dictionary added the word “unfriend” to its lexicon.

Another indicator of how fast things are changing is the website made by two college students in 2005 that offered the rather unique opportunity to upload video. Four years later, YouTube released figures that show 20 hours of video are being uploaded every minute, which amounts to about 1,000,000 minutes of video uploaded. . . each day (Michael Wesch, Kansas State University).

Walking into a high school classroom today is distinctly different than it was five or six years ago. Nearly everyone, even those who have little financial means, will have a cell phone, and so there is this constant rustling, a panicked, nervous movement as they try to negotiate the risks involved with trying to access their cell phones without notice.

So perhaps the biggest changes involving our classrooms – involving how students understand information, comprehend information, organization information, visualize information – are happening outside the classroom.

And at the same time, some things have not changed, and will never change within our rooms. Students will always need a well-trained, caring professional who can guide them through this very stimulating, sometimes confusing, world in which we live. That is why the MRA focus for this year will be on the new literacies. Our annual conference, which will take place August 12, 2010 at Apple Valley High School, will highlight two very talented educators whose work will help us to become better at working with these new forms of literacy.

Our first keynote speaker comes to us from the University of Minnesota. Professor Aaron Doering is perhaps most recognized as the face of **PolarHusky.com**, an adventure learning website that allows students to not only follow but interact with him and other experts from around the world as he travels to the distant reaches of our globe. His work focuses on the principles of transformative learning and the role that learning technologies can play in that process.

Our second keynote speaker also has a focus on the more visual side of literacy. Professor Nell Duke, Michigan State University, focuses on early literacy development with an emphasis on children living in poverty. Her latest work examines the role of informational texts in comprehension development and instruction in early schooling. She fits in nicely with our emphasis on new literacies as she explores how visual texts shape and influence student comprehension.

In addition to our keynotes, we are also looking forward to other experts from around the area. If you have been doing some innovative or

interesting research or work within your elementary, secondary, or higher education classroom, we hope that you will consider sharing your ideas in one of our breakout sessions. Proposal applications are now available at our website (mnreading.org). The deadline for applications will be March 31st.

We are also looking for members of MRA to help during the day of the conference, August 12th. Various committees you could join include graphic design, marketing, media relations, site set-up, centerpieces, exhibitor liaison, door prizes, and proposal selection. Please consider getting more involved in MRA by volunteering! Contact the 2010 MRA Conference Chair, Scott Voss at svoss@mnreading.org.



The Minnesota Reading Association Annual Conference is a fantastic opportunity to make connections, share ideas, re-energize, and become involved in literacy-related causes. With the hopes of reaching more people, we have reduced the cost of the day down to \$100 for members and \$135 for non-members – a great price for two presentations from nationally recognized leaders in the field, two meals, a wide variety of special topic break-out sessions, and the chance to reconnect with or meet other passionate reading educators. Of course, it wouldn't be a conference without the prerequisite door prizes and exhibitors as well. We hope you set the date aside and join us for this special opportunity!

Legislative Update, December 2009

by Eva Boehm

The state of reading is a societal condition around which many interest groups center their advocacy efforts. While the Minnesota Reading Association is a professional organization, we have found ourselves side-by-side in legislative contexts with many different interest groups advocating for their position of how to best educate our children in the area of reading. During the past couple of years, I have found that it is not an arena many educators are comfortable navigating, and when our presence is not there, other messages are heard about what is best for our students in the area of reading education. Alan Farstrup, former IRA executive director, reinforces the need for educator voices in the policy process by stating that “education has become a top priority of our nation. However, this does not mean the education community can back down and assume our job is over. It is now more important than ever for the education community to stick together and be vocal about the importance of public education” (IRA, 2007, p.3).

During the November 2009 MRA leadership meeting, a presentation was made on the politics of reading. In this presentation, key advocacy- and policy-related terms were defined, summaries of past legislation and current policy proposals were shared, as well as advocacy how-tos for MRA members. MRA encourages its membership to check out these documents, especially the advocacy manual as it provides sample letters, steps on how to connect with legislators, and the must-knows of the legislative process. To access the IRA advocacy manual, visit: www.reading.org/Libraries/Association_documents/Advocacy_manual_7_09.sflb.ashx



The Minnesota Legislature voted and passed House File 2 (HF2) in May 2009. The key implication of this legislation requires that Minnesota’s teacher candidates show competency in the five components of effective reading instruction by February 2012. Minnesota Institutions of Higher Education will be submitting amendments to their existing pre-service teacher education licensure programs and their teacher of reading endorsement programs that include documentation on how rules will be met consistent with the literacy provision of HF2. Minnesota is currently working with Pearson Education in the development of a new Minnesota Teacher Licensure Examination (MTLE). This exam will replace the current Praxis Exam that new teacher candidates are required to take under current Minnesota law. In anticipation of this legislation, Minnesota’s institutions of higher education have gathered six times over the course of the year to learn about the Minnesota board of teaching rules, exchange ideas, collaborate and solve problems. Most institutions of higher education are planning to submit their proposed amendments to the Board

of Teaching for review beginning in January 2010.

MRA is continuing to monitor Minnesota’s reading education-related policy streams, but much of Minnesota’s activity will be dependent upon pending Federal policies. The LEARN Act (Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation) was introduced into both the senate and house in November 2009. It is a comprehensive literacy professional development bill that provides \$2.35 billion in grants to fund state and local school-based literacy programs spanning early childhood to grade 12. The LEARN Act builds off several expired programs including “Reading First” and “Striving Readers” Federal Adolescent Literacy Program. Specifically, the bill will provide federal support for literacy initiatives, enhance each State’s role in improving literacy instruction, and support the creation of local high-quality literacy initiatives. One feature of this act that we will be following is the formation of a state literacy leadership team made up of literacy experts and key stakeholders. Their task will be to assist in the development of a comprehensive state

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Legislative Update (cont'd)

literacy plan that includes a needs assessment, a capacity survey, and an implementation plan to ensure high quality instruction in reading and writing. To view a two-page summary of this proposed legislation visit www.all4ed.org/files/LEARNActSummary.pdf

The second federally supported policy initiative is the Race to the Top grant program in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. The Grant has 4.3 billion dollars allocated for US states. Minnesota could receive between \$60-700 million of this money. Grants encourage and reward states that are creating conditions for education innovation and reform, achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, and implementing ambitious plans in ARRA's four areas. These include adopting internationally benchmarked standards and

assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace; recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals; building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals of how they can improve their practice; and turning around America's lowest-performing schools. The selection of Race to the Top grant recipients will be announced Sept 2010. To view an executive summary of Race to the Top visit www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf

As an MRA member, what does all of this mean for you, a reading educator in Minnesota? Expect legislation next year that will have a significant impact on how we teach children in kindergarten through grade 12. Your voice as a Minnesota reading educator has an impact on

these conversations. Policy makers are interested, but if we do not make our voices of expertise and experience readily accessible, other interest groups will step in line ahead of us on issues that reside at the center of our identities—educating children. Please consider educating yourself on the LEARN act and the Race to the Top grant program. Reach out to legislators at the state and federal level. Let them hear what is working in your classroom, and what you need to be successful and effective as a Minnesota reading educator.

MRA will provide updates on these and other policy items as the legislative session progresses in 2010. Please contact Eva Boehm at boeh0056@umn.edu if you need additional information or want to become more involved in advocating for Minnesota's youth and Minnesota's reading teachers through MRA.

Literacy Leader Network

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and The Minnesota Reading Association (MRA) have recently partnered to offer a network for district-level and school-wide literacy leaders who support teachers and administrators in developing literacy programs based on research-based best practices.

More than 60 K-12 literacy leaders from all corners of the state have come together to engage in meaningful dialogue about literacy education, coaching, and leadership, and to learn from each other to continue to develop sustainable literacy programs that meet the needs of all students in our schools. This group will meet in day-long trainings, in Book Club settings, and through online connections over the course of the 2009-2010 school year.

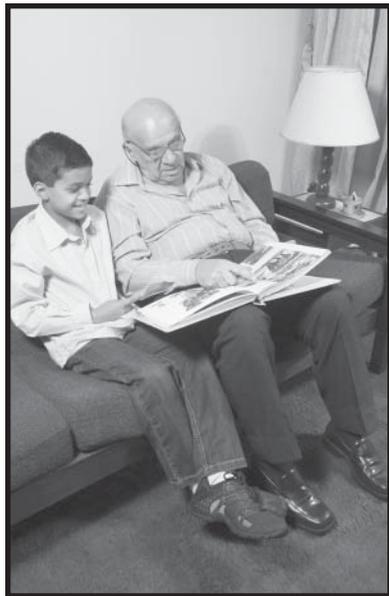
This is an exciting opportunity for MRA and MDE as we work together to support educators and students in our great state. We will continue to look for other collaborative ventures in the future that support our goal to

engage literacy leaders in professional development and networking that informs our work and helps to make our schools places of literacy, learning, and lasting success!



Literacy Leadership Network members network and collaborate during discussion of the book "Systems for Change." The group met for the first time at the Brookdale Library on November 11th.

Generations through the Eyes of Our Kids



MRA grants fund learning opportunities

Introductions, conversation, giggling, coloring, and cookies ... These were the activities, sounds, and smells that accompanied second-grade students from Kristen Thomas' class at Sunrise River Elementary School on their Tuesday, October 20th visit to The Villages of North Branch. Second-grade students, chaperoned by classroom volunteers and their teacher, as well as the fifteen seniors living in the facility thoroughly enjoyed visiting and had a great time getting to know each other.

When the second graders arrived at the senior living complex they were greeted by an enthusiastic staff, an elevator ride, and many smiles from those working or living at The Villages. When asked about the experience, Pam Dolin, The Villages Social Events Director, commented, "The day was magical! The kids were awesome! Smiles filled the room. The children's visit was the buzz the whole day. I was asked many times when are they coming back. It was wonderful to see the wisdom of the seniors mix with the curiosity of the youth in our community. Everyone had a terrific time!" Teacher Kristen Thomas shared her viewpoint, "The day was a huge success! Students had smiles from ear to ear throughout the entire trip and after returning to school couldn't stop chattering about the various things they had learned about their new friends."

Mrs. Thomas' class is taking part in a classroom project titled, "Generations through the Eyes of our Kids." The project, which was dreamed up by Thomas, was written into an MRA grant application last spring with the expertise of NBAPS grant writer Pat Tepoorten. The project was submitted to the Minnesota Reading Association for their yearly grant giveaway and, in

June, Mrs. Thomas was told that the project was selected as one of their two annual winners.

As part of the project, students will visit The Villages on three different occasions to collect information about their senior partner, complete themed projects, and share snacks together. After establishing a relationship, students will use the information they've collected to write biographies, narratives, and other stories about their experience. The finished books will be shared with the seniors living at The Villages sometime in the spring and other copies will be distributed to various businesses in the community for all to enjoy.

Prior to visiting, the students prepared for their first visit by learning about appropriate introductory behaviors (using eye contact, offering a firm handshake, and wearing a smile). They discussed and practiced interviewing etiquette and also brainstormed a variety of questions they could ask their senior friend upon meeting. "It was a wonderful learning experience," commented Thomas. "I can't wait to watch this project unfold."

The MRA Grant Opportunity

Do you have a great idea for a literacy project but need some funding? The Minnesota Reading Association Grant Program might be the answer. MRA funds up to two \$1,000 grants each year! The grant application is on MRA's website www.mnreading.org. Go to the Programs tab and click on MRA Grant Program on the drop-down menu. Click on the downloadable PDF grant application. The deadline for applications is February 1, 2010. The MRA grants program is one of the many benefits offered to members who belong to this dynamic professional organization.

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**

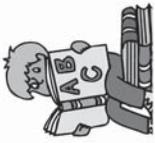
**Deadline
for Entries
February 1,
2010**

Ideas for I Love to Read Celebrations

1. **Adopt a book:** Class and/or school adopt a favorite book and/or author. This book can be honored as the school's book to be read and enjoyed by all.
2. **Principal story time:** Principal opens his/her office to share a favorite story, or visits the classroom to continue reading the class book. Other important people can also share favorite books, i.e., custodian, secretary, food helpers, etc.
3. **Speakers:** Invite guest speakers to speak to school/class on such topics as importance of being life-long readers, or "why I love to read."
4. **Make buttons:** Each child designs a button advertising their favorite book. Like a candidate, the child could tell why they chose that book and "defend it" when participating in a class "walk-around" during reading time. Share these with other classrooms.
5. **Drama or readers theater:** Have students prepare choral reading and/or short readers theater productions. These can be shared with other classrooms, parents, or community via video. Send one to a teacher at another school. Share the love of reading.
6. **Door book cover contest:** Have a contest in which classroom doors are decorated as book covers.
7. **Candid Camera:** Catch kids (adults too) in the act of reading. To make it more fun, books are to be read in the student's favorite positions. Display these during the month on a bulletin board entitled "Caught Reading."
8. **Involve the home and family** by suggesting a period of time be set aside for reading. Send a letter home to parents advertising Love of Reading Month. Have children make these flyers with their own suggestions for their family.
9. **Make a class/school graph on ways we use reading** during the day. Ex.: lunch menu, exit signs, room numbers...
10. **Plant reading seeds:** During the month, plant spring flower seeds in peat pots as a child completes a book. In a few weeks watch the "reader's book" sprout. Instead of calling the plant by its botanical name, use the name of the book it represents.
11. **Stage a noon read-in:** Students listen to stories in the library during noon.
12. **Hold a picnic** for storybook characters: Students dress up as their favorite character and enjoy a picnic in the room.
13. Start a **school-wide bookworm** that grows throughout the school. Add a circular segment each time a book is read.
14. **Book swap box:** If several students have books they have read and do not wish to keep, have them bring them to school to trade with another student. One book has to be exchanged for one to take out.
15. **Make placemats** that share the love of reading. These can be used on lunchroom walls during the month. Or take them home and use them at dinner. The creator of the mat can use this as a talking point with the family about the book they read.
16. Design illustrations for a favorite poem. If you do not have a favorite poem, check out poetry books from the library.
17. Write the text for a wordless book. See if yours is similar to a friend's. Talk about the plot and how it developed.
18. **Begin an author study** for the month, i.e. Cynthia Rylant, who has picture books and chapter books. Compare the author's writing and story development with each type of book.
19. **Read a nonfiction book** about inventions and famous people. Dress up as the inventor and report on the book, the invention and inventor to your class.
20. Use your favorite book to make up a **board game** to play with friends, family, or classmate. Research other board games for ideas. (*Jumanji* and *Zathura* by Van Allsburg)
21. Make a **Reader's Balloon Bouquet**. Choose books that can be read in one night and place them in a special box. Ask students to take one home and read it to a significant person, then fill out a Love of Reading cut-out. (You choose the design.) This could have the book name, listener's name, student's name, and date. Collect these and add a balloon each time a cutout is returned. (You can use a permanent marker and write the name of the book on the balloon.) Celebrate when the class has all shared a book at home.
22. **Nominate Your Favorite Book:** Post charts or hearts in a place to which all students have access so they can put up their nominations for the following categories of books: funniest, scariest, best for boys, best for girls, best for families, best biography, best fairy tale, best animal, best ABC, best science, best science fiction, best illustrated...

Ideas compiled by Kathy Moran, board member of the Oregon Reading Association, Parents as Partners committee, and Capital Reading Council.

February 2010



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>7 Go to allrecipes.com with a parent and find a pancake recipe for breakfast.</p>	<p>1 Create a paper book chain. Add a loop for each book you read this month.</p>	<p>2 Groundhog Day Read a story about how this day started.</p>	<p>3 Make a list of ways that you can make a difference. Choose one to work on.</p>	<p>4 Create a character to add to a familiar story. How would this character change the story?</p>	<p>5 Have fun reading in the dark with a flashlight.</p>	<p>6 Write a letter to a loved one about your favorite winter activity.</p>
<p>8 Read a magazine or newspaper.</p>	<p>9 Write a letter of appreciation to a favorite author or illustrator. Mail it to them.</p>	<p>10 Pull the plug and READ day. Turn off the TV and Video Games and READ instead!</p>	<p>11 Visit www.RIF.org/readingplanet</p>	<p>12 List a famous person for every letter of the alphabet. Use first or last names.</p>	<p>13 Warm up by visiting the library and checking out books about tropical islands.</p>	<p>20 Books Day Go to your local library to get new books. READ!</p>
<p>14 Make a list of ways that you can make a difference. Choose one to work on.</p>	<p>15 Presidents Which presidents were born in February? Read about presidents.</p>	<p>16 Carry a Book Day! Everyone carries a book in a pocket, under the arm, or in a book</p>	<p>17 Have a contest. Challenge your family to create as many words as they can from the letters in the sentence - February is I Love to Read Month.</p>	<p>18 Hold a book exchange. Swap a book with a friend or classmate.</p>	<p>19 Read a book with a friend</p>	<p>26 Count all the times you've read something today.</p>
<p>21 Organize a neighborhood read-in! Make flyers and invite neighbors to participate.</p>	<p>22 WEAR A SHIRT WE CAN READ DAY!</p>	<p>23 Read to an older person, parents, aunts, neighbors, or tell them about a book you've read.</p>	<p>24 Read to a younger person - read to a younger brother, sister, cousin, friend.</p>	<p>25 Read or write a joke or riddle today - share it with your family & friends.</p>	<p>27 Read your entire cereal box.</p>	<p>28 Play a word game such as Hangman or Concentration with younger children or Scrabble, Password, Pictionary, or Boggle.</p>



DISCOVER THE MAGIC OF
Reading

Dr. Seuss Birthday March 2
Plan a Dr. Seuss big birthday bash!
www.catinthehat.com
www.nea.org/readacross
www.reading.org



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.

The Importance of eMail

The holiday season has come and gone! In the past several weeks your lives were no doubt jam-packed with job duties, family life, shopping trips, entertaining, baking, cooking, and hopefully some quiet reading time (even if it was just a recipe or two). I'm sure you're finding that your 2010 calendar has already filled up with numerous gatherings and many "to do's." If your bank account is anything like mine, you're also finding that the numbers are dwindling faster than you anticipated.

In the midst of this busy time I wanted to bring your attention to the importance of your email address as an MRA member. MRA members now receive four electronic newsletters per year (rather than receiving paper copies) and email is used quite frequently by the Executive Board and local councils to announce events (such as book club meetings, workshops, and other professional development opportunities). I also use your email address when sending out renewal or membership information that is pertinent to you.

If your email is not current or if you've forgotten what email you initially signed up with when you became a member or renewed your MRA Membership, please check your Member profile on the MRA website (www.mnreading.org). Once at the MRA site, sign in with your username and profile. (You can always email thomaskristen17@gmail.com for a reminder of both). Then click on the Membership tab across the top of the site and select "Review/Change Your Profile." You should find your contact information listed as well as which council you belong to, the email address we have on file for you and any other information you selected when you first signed up or renewed your membership. To make revisions, simply change whatever information you need to change and click "Save Profile" at the bottom of the page.

Your attention to this matter is greatly appreciated! We want you to be "in the MRA loop"! If it's been quite some time since you've been contacted via email and you haven't been receiving occasional messages, your attention to this matter is crucial.

Happy New Year!



—Kristen Thomas, MRA Director of Membership