

Highlights

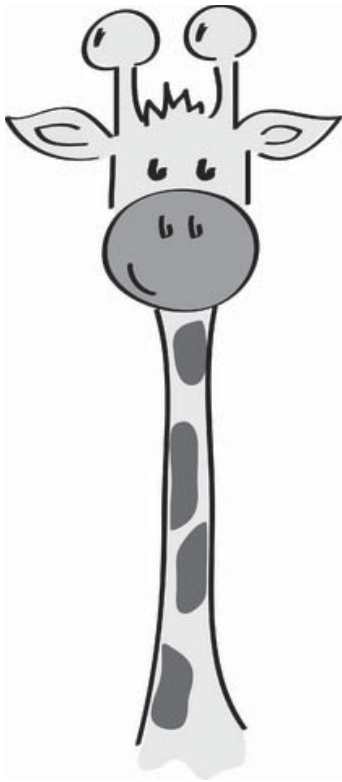
June 2010



of the Minnesota Reading Association, an International Reading Association affiliate

Memories shared, memories created

by Ilene Christian



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I remember I was only four. We were at Grandma's house and I was snuggled in my daddy's lap.

We would hardly wait to get to Grandma's house even though we must have visited her at least twice a week. Her farm was only seven miles from ours. Grandma had a special drawer at her house and it was "ours." By "ours," I mean the grandkids. There were only two of us then.

I still remember that drawer and the treasures kept within. It was the bottom drawer of a yellowing white enamel cupboard that was much taller than a four-year-old. On top was a round container with hundreds of pens and pencils. And above that was the old crank telephone. You needed a very tall stool to reach the mouthpiece.

The other drawers were filled with important papers. Woe be unto the child who strayed to these. But the bottom drawer was always waiting for us. When we arrived at Grandma's, we would tumble through the door, practically bypassing welcoming hugs and kisses. My brother would always get there first. He would yank the simple silver handle and there they would be.

Grandma had the best toys. Looking back, I realize they were nothing spectacular. Her toys were special because they were different from the ones we had at home. There was a set of blocks with several missing, a faded toy tractor with a bent wheel, a tattered doll without any hair and *Jasper the Giraffe*.

Jasper the Giraffe was my very "favoritest" book in the whole world. Every time we went to Grandma's, my daddy would snuggle me in his lap and read me the adventures of Jasper. You see, Jasper never got any letters. I felt sorry for him. All his friends got letters. Daddy would always say in a soft low voice, "Poor Jasper." And I would be near tears.

Thirty years later, I still remember my father's compassion for Jasper. Just last Christmas he asked me, "Do you remember the story about Jasper? I wonder what ever happened to that book. That was your favorite. Remember?" I remember that he read me that story every time we went to Grandma's. I remember he never said, "Not now."

I just finished reading "Arkel, Snarkel, Higgelty, Snoo." I think I've read it 43 times now. I glance only occasionally at the words. I was in the middle of the laundry, you know. How could I stop? Nobody has clean jeans for tomorrow. And then I remembered Jasper. I could feel warm, strong arms around me again. I could hear a voice filled with concern. Jasper had always been there for me. How could I keep "Arkel, Snarkel" from them now?
.....

My youngest granddaughter is turning one soon. Her brother and sister are twins and they are all under the age of 2½. The hustle and bustle of their household reminds me of my days as a young mother when I wrote about Jasper in the essay above. May your summer be filled with hours luxuriating in print, be it a book, magazine, Kindle, iPad, or the delights of children's literature!



Ilene Christian

Ilene

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Reading Councils

Arrowhead Reading Council

BOOKS-N-LOOKS, AN EVENING WITH THE ARTS

This year's *Books-N-Looks: An Evening with the Arts* was held on Thursday, May 13th, at the Holiday Inn Great Lakes Ballroom. About 65 ARC members and guests enjoyed a delicious pasta buffet and the company of others who appreciate good books. A variety of local artists displayed and sold their products to eager buyers. A beautiful fuschia plant, donated by a local greenhouse, was raffled off and won by Carmen Arnold. People stocked up on children's books at the Books for a Buck table. Michelle Bowker and Stephanie Boyat presented book talks on several new titles available for summer reading. This annual event was, as always, an enjoyable and successful evening for all.

— Stephanie Boyat, President

Arrowhead Reading Council Officers for 2010-2011

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Minnesota Academy of Reading

1. Thank you to all those who attended our spring banquet on April 21 honoring Maureen Prenn and her contributions to education in Minnesota. Maureen's thoughts on

preparing teachers were honest, insightful, and challenging to all of us who are working to equip reading teachers to meet the needs of a diverse student population within an ever-changing global culture.

2. Members of MAR have continued to participate in the focus group discussions on the Common Core State Standards convened by the Minnesota Department of Education. Feedback from our state has been instrumental in refining the drafts of the Common Core Standards. Final drafts of the standards will be available soon at www.corestandards.org.
3. Members of MAR have also participated in the review of the new Minnesota Teacher License Exams (MTLE) created by Pearson. The new exams will replace the PRAXIS exams beginning September 1, 2010.

— Debra Peterson, President

Southwest Minnesota Reading Council

Spring Conference Update

Our annual spring conference was held on April 13 at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. Our speaker was author/inventor, Tim Kehoe.

Tim entertained his audience with stories of his inventions. He involved his audience in creating an invention. He

challenged his audience to think about alternative solutions to problems. Those in attendance went home with a



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... Reading Councils (cont'd)

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renewed zeal for challenging their students to think. Before his evening presentation for our reading council, he spent the day at Martin Luther College. He spoke to some of the college classes and then thrilled an audience of over 800 elementary students from the area with his stories and wisdom.

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 the 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 VincentShadow.com for more information.

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!

New Executive Board Officers

Treasurer Dawn Haberman
 Legal..... Barb Polzin
 Secretary Johnathan Roux

Literacy Interventions Beyond RTI (Response to Intervention)

THURSDAY, JUNE 10, 2010
 8:30 AM – 3:00 PM
 PRAIRIE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
 1700 1ST AVENUE, WORTHINGTON, MN
 \$50 SWMRC MEMBERS, \$60 NON-MEMBERS
 NO REFUNDS AFTER JUNE 3

8:30 – 9:00 Coffee, tea, juice, rolls
 9:00 – 12:00 Workshop
 12:00 – 1:00 Lunch (included)
 1:00 – 3:00 Workshop

Send your registration information to Yvonne Sieve, 617 Dugdale Avenue, Worthington, MN 56187. Call her at 507-372-2543 or 507-727-1250 if you have questions.

Dr. Cindy Whaley, a professor of education at Martin Luther College and a member of the SWMRC Executive Board,



Dr. Cindy Whaley

will present a variety of literacy interventions that can be used in any classroom setting by the classroom teacher. The term "literacy interventions" would mean not only reading interventions complementary to RTI, but also interventions for the other components in a balanced language arts curriculum such as writing, spelling, and grammar. As Cindy states, "Modeling by the presenter and active participation by those in attendance will be two requirements during our enjoyable day of learning together."

SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA READING COUNCIL FALL CONFERENCE
 THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2010
 SHETEK BEND, TRACY, MN

Beth Wolf, kindergarten teacher and member of our Executive Board, will motivate you with ideas to use with literature in your classroom. Please join us as she shares her enthusiasm for reading with you!

Membership News

Summer is here, time for relaxation, reflection, and renewal!

Did you know that if your membership has expired for only one day you "disappear" from the membership list? And if you are not on the current list of members you will not receive the eBuzz news or emails on upcoming conferences and events?

Don't let your membership lapse! You can't be involved if you're not informed. You will receive an email reminder when your membership is about to expire. If you are like me, I have to do it right away, or it gets easily forgotten.

Have a wonderful summer. I hope to see you at the MRA conference in August.

Reminder

Please make sure that you have updated your profile on the website with addresses (mail and email) and telephone numbers. If you have forgotten your username or password, send me an email to request the information. We want to keep you "in the loop" on all upcoming events.

– Cindy Blagg,
 Director of Membership

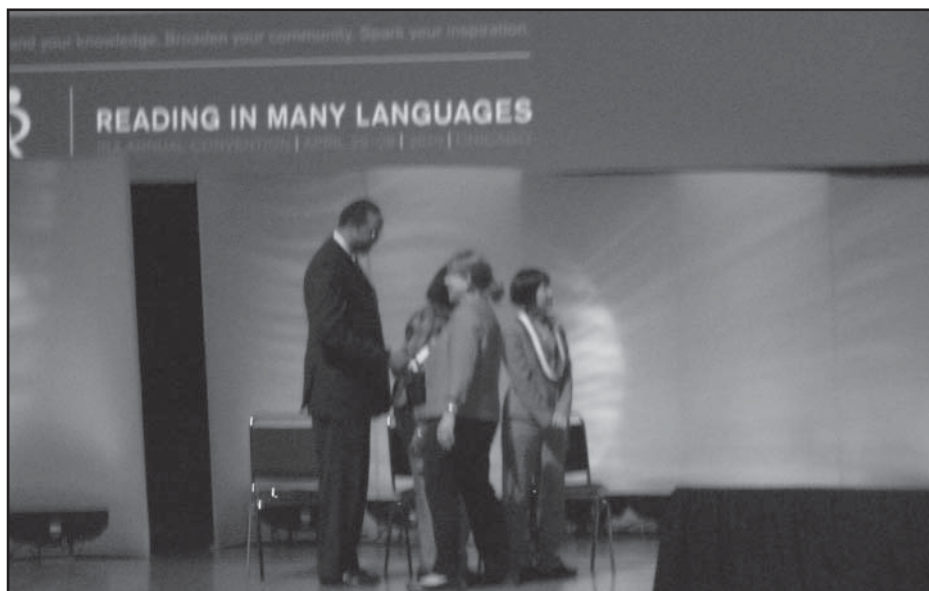
IRA Keynote Speakers Enjoyed by Many *by Ilene Christian*

Thousands of reading enthusiasts descended on Chicago the last week in April for IRA's 55th Annual Convention. Besides the bustling exhibit hall and the many informative sessions, convention attendees had the opportunity to hear from Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan and former Vice President and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Al Gore.

A literacy advocate, Queen Rania shared her message: literacy lifts lives and literacy enriches lives. She encouraged us to engage in cross-cultural literacy, to "grasp the language of diplomacy, dialogue, and discovery." She noted, "We all have a choice. We can turn away from the unfamiliar or we can tune in and learn more. We can let (differences) harden our hearts or we can let it open us up to new truths." Her first children's book, *The Sandwich Swap*, illustrates this point. It describes her first encounter with the unfamiliar, a "yucky peanut butter sandwich." The Queen spoke to a packed house and signed copies of her book. You can hear the Queen's entire speech on her website

<http://www.queenrania.jo/media/speeches/queen-rania-speaks-international-reading-association-55th-annual-convention-literacy>

In his keynote address, former Vice-President Al Gore shared his message about the dangers of global warming and what must be done to stop it. He has recently released a young reader's edition of his book, *Our Choice: How We Can Solve the Climate Crisis*. Written for 8-14 year olds, Gore notes, "This book is about the things we can do, the things we must do, to stop global warming before it's too late." Again, the convention hall was filled to capacity and the Vice-President signed over 500 autographs.



William Harvey, Executive Director of IRA congratulates MRA president Ilene Christian at the IRA awards ceremony in Chicago. The Minnesota Reading Association was the recipient of the Association's highest award for membership, the President's Cup, for achieving the greatest growth in International Reading Association membership for the year among the states and provinces with a similar number of instructional staff. Also pictured is IRA past president, Kathryn Au.

The Minnesota Reading Association also received the IRA Award of Excellence at the annual convention. This award is given to state and provincial associations that have distinguished themselves through organizing and implementing a wide range of programs and activities in their state or province that serve and support councils and members, contribute to education, and coincide with and support the programs and goals of the IRA.



MRA president Ilene Christian and IRA incoming president Pat Edwards pose for a picture at the Language and Literacy China Delegation reunion dinner.

More MRA News



Ronald F. Green, 1929-2010

Former Minnesota Reading Association Award Winner Will Be Missed

Ronald Frederick Green, age 80, of St. Peter, MN, died this past spring.

Ronald grew up on a farm near Swift and Warroad, MN. After graduating from Warroad High School, he earned his bachelor's degree in Education at Bemidji State University, a master's degree in Education from the University of Minnesota-Duluth, and a doctorate in Education from Indiana University in 1969.

He joined the Education Department at Gustavus Adolphus College, where he served as Chairman of the Department from 1976-86, earning the Gustavus Adolphus College Service Award for service to college and community in 1990. In 1991 he earned both Minnesota Reading Association and International Reading Association Awards for service to reading and literature.

An inspiration to family and to so many others whose lives he touched, Ron loved the arts and poetry. He was reciting his favorites until his final days.

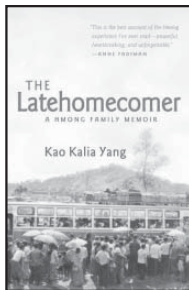
YOU ARE INVITED!

MRA Leadership Retreat

All MRA members are invited to attend our Leadership Retreat at Koinonia Retreat Center in Annandale on June 30-July 1.

We will be analyzing our member survey results and putting together our plans and objectives for the coming year. If you have ideas as to how we can make MRA better, or how we can best serve our members, please plan to attend.

Any member of MRA interested in taking a leadership role in the organization should contact their local council leaders.



Fall Preview!

Author Kao Kalia Yang, author of the Hmong memoir, *The Latecomer: a Hmong Family Memoir*, will be speaking and signing books with MRA members on Thursday, October 7th. Time and location are yet to be determined.

Ms. Yang speaks often to school and community groups about the Hmong American experience and what her life was like growing up in a refugee camp. Her life experiences are vast and fascinating, and we are lucky to have her in our midst.



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.

Great Websites for Teachers

<http://www.readwritethink.org/>

<http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schrockguide/>

http://www.professorgarfield.org/parents_teachers/home.html

Free Resources

<http://www.edpubs.gov/>

Early Literacy

<http://www.hubbardscupboard.org/literacy.html>

<http://www.readmeabook.com/letters/letterotd.htm>

Literacy

<http://www.kidsreads.com/>

<http://www.sleepingbearpress.com/educators/>

Intermediate/Middle/HS Tips on Digital Storytelling/iMovies

<http://www.infotoday.com/MMSchools/jan02/banaszewski.htm>

<http://its.ksbe.edu/dst/>



Conference Update – May 2010

by Scott Voss

As this newsletter goes to press, we are making our final decisions on the sessions that will be offered at this year's annual conference, which will be held on August 12th at Apple Valley High School in Apple Valley.

While the keynote speakers – Aaron Doering on the transformational potential of learning technologies and Nell Duke on the comprehension of visual texts – will provide insight from broader perspectives, conference goers will be able to examine more specific topics within the breakout sessions.

We have a broad range of presenters covering a wide spectrum of subjects, and in this column, I'd like to highlight some of those areas and a few of the sessions that you might find of interest this year.

Following our conference theme, we will have a number of technology related sessions at each of the levels – elementary, middle school, and high school. One session will discuss iPods and ITouches at the middle school level, another will examine SMART Board technology in the first grade classroom, and still another on photos and videos to enhance fluency and writing. A couple of sessions for high school teachers will discuss how to make use of wikis and blogs, and one, offered by Professor Richard Beach from the University of Minnesota, will examine social networking sites.

A number of sessions will address culture and community. One of last year's MRA grant winners, Kristen Thomas, will share her work on a project where she connected her second grade class with a group of seniors for a transformative literacy experience. Jon Kahle from the Eden Prairie School District will offer some of his research on working with his district to improve the educational

opportunities of Somali students. There will also be two sessions – middle and high school – about motivating young boys to read through some innovative strategies. Along those lines, we will have children's and young adult's author John Coy, who was recently spotlighted on MPR's Midmorning Hour discussing the topic of how to get young boys into books.


For those of you looking for broader discussions on school culture and intervention planning, we will have presentations from Kari Ross, reading specialist with Minnesota's Department of Education, and Cory Stai, from South Saint Paul High School, about their latest work with the "Model Secondary Plan for Reading Intervention and Development." Julie Scullen will be discussing the broader context of reading with her session entitled "Building a Culture of Literacy." Jill Maxe and Sarah Haskett-Rutledge will offer their work with a collaborative intervention model.

Katy Carthey, high school reading specialist for District 196, will offer an interactive session in which participants will be provided with several useful strategies that allow students to learn and practice new vocabulary strategies. Jo Sorenson will highlight some very exciting work she has done with reader's theatre in middle schools, and Linda Pils will give us some insight on how to use non-fiction texts with emerging readers.


Spelling, fluency, assessment, storytelling – you should be able to find something that fits your area of interest and helps you to prepare for a new year of teaching.

Be sure to set aside the date, August 12th, for our conference.

And stay updated at mnreading.org where future podcasts will spotlight more conference news.



learning technologies
comprehending visual texts
 MAKING USE OF TECHNOLOGY
wikis and blogs
social networking
culture and community
motivating boys to read
Somali students learning
secondary reading intervention
culture of literacy
collaborative intervention
 VOCABULARY STRATEGIES
reader's theater
nonfiction for emerging readers



A number of other authors will also be with us this year. Among them will be Craig Pierce (American Dog book series), Catherine Urdahl (*Emma's Question*), Pat Bauer and David Geister (*B is for Battle Cry*). Stephanie Watson, author of two *Elvis and Olive* books, will also join us at this year's conference.

Register
today!

Family FUNdamentals for Summer Learning

For students, summer is a time for fun and play. It is also the time when children's learning slides. Research (Brace, 2002a) shows that during the summer students forget many of the reading and math skills learned during the school year. This "summer slide" requires schools and teachers to spend valuable time during the next school year helping students "re-learn" lost skills, and it greatly reduces the time available to master new skills and subjects.

The FAMILY FUNdamentals for Literacy activities were created with the help of teachers, parents, and reading specialists on the Michigan Department of Education's Early Literacy Committee. All information contained in this publication may be printed, copied and given to parents.

Lifestyle Literacy Learning

Helping your child learn to read and write doesn't have to take a lot of extra time or money. Here are some easy ways to build literacy skills, at home, in the sun, or on the run.

At home

- Make sure your child sees you reading and writing as you go through your day. Talk about what you read and write so your child can hear. Say: "I have to use a capital letter at the beginning of this sentence." "I'm not sure how to spell this word. I'll say it slowly and listen for the sounds I hear." "I'm asking Dad a question in this note, so I'd better use a question mark."
- Create a quiet, special place in your home for your child to read, write, and draw. Keep books and other reading materials where your child can easily reach them. (Sets the stage for success.)



- Help your child learn to use more interesting words when speaking and writing. When s/he uses a common word like "nice" or "big," challenge him or her to think of some other words that mean the same thing. Ask, "What other words could you use instead of 'nice' when you are talking about something you like?" (Vocabulary)
- Go through your house with your child and label everyday objects. For example, table, chair, sink, window, bookshelf, and so on. Read the labels with your child. Each day, add a few more labels around the house. After awhile, copy the labels to a sheet of paper and ask your child to read them with you. Then go on a word hunt and find the items throughout the house. (Vocabulary; fluency)

In the sun

- Lie on the ground and describe the shapes of the clouds. (Oral language and vocabulary skills)
- Use sidewalk chalk to write messages to your neighbors, such as "Have a nice day!" (Comprehension; phonics; writing)
- Pick something in nature to observe over the summer and talk about its changes. At the beginning of summer, write down what your child predicts will happen. ("I think the grass will get greener." Or "I think the cat will lose some fur.") Compare the

changes you see throughout the summer with what you predicted. (Comprehension; writing)

- When hiking in nature or walking through your neighborhood, ask your child to describe what s/he sees. Can s/he tell you a story about it? Listen carefully, and ask questions to extend the story. "But how did the kitty get there?" "What could have left a footprint like that?" (Vocabulary)

On the run

- Take children's books and writing materials with you whenever you leave home. This gives your child fun activities to entertain and occupy him while traveling and going to appointments.
- Send your child on a word scavenger hunt. Have your child think of a common word. Search for the word (a, the, in, on, etc.) in a newspaper column or food package, highlighting the word each time s/he finds it. (Fluency)
- When you travel, bring along a cookie sheet and set of magnetic letters. Your children can sound out words, copy billboards and bumper stickers or make word families. (Phonics; fluency)
- Ask your child to help you write a grocery list. At the store, have him or her watch for the items on the list and match the words on the label to the words on the list.

In Defense of the Dumbest Generation

by Scott Voss

My wife, who is a high school communications teacher, came home from school the other day quite irritated. A publishing company had visited her school to field test a presentation. The presentation was to encourage students to think about taking up a career in the field of IT (Information and Technology). However, she felt that this group of presenters failed for a number of reasons.

First and foremost, their mode of presentation was with a Power Point – which in and of itself is not a bad thing, however, the presentation, which had supposedly been designed for teenagers, was nearly all bulleted text with few visuals. They made use of a few video shorts, but they too were just “talking heads” of corporate people talking about the excitement and joy of working in the field. The presenters had to navigate in and out of the power point to run the video so they lost credibility with an audience that is quite savvy with technology. To make matters worse, the presenters played clips of corporate leaders who made claims about how students leaving high school today do not know how to read or write. Therefore, colleges and even businesses are left to train more and more people.

In general, we have come to accept this assumption. Reading scores today are stagnant and though 75% of eighth graders are above “basic” only 32% are considered “proficient (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Yet, as I often question, how can this possibly be the case? Our students, from every class and ethnicity, are surrounded by more text today than at any point in the history of the world. Kaiser Family

Foundation (2010) found that 7th–12th graders report spending about an hour and a half (1:35) engaged in sending and receiving texts in addition to an hour and a half on the computer where they spend most of their time social networking, instant messaging, and emailing. If one considers these activities, it is unarguable that they experience more words today than their parents did. And consequently, they write substantially more as well. For years, research suggested that access to text was an extremely important indicator of future reading success (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Neuman 1999). So by those standards, why isn’t this generation meeting the expectations that this society has of it?

In the past, reading researchers discussed whether the true culprit in low reading scores of many students is not illiteracy (meaning that students can’t read) but “alliteracy” (indicating that they can, but simply won’t). From this perspective, researchers suggest that the problem is not so much technical as it is emotional or social. And so they examine topics like motivation, engagement, self-efficacy, and socio-cultural factors like community, race, gender, and power.

I wonder if the same can be applied to this new phase of the reading debate. I disagree with the assertion that students today do not know how to read or write. I believe they are quite capable of doing so. They spend tremendous amounts of time communicating back and forth in written text and they exert a great deal of effort in reading online. The breakdown occurs when they are asked to do specific types of writing:



formal, academic, business, etc. The book *The Dumbest Generation: How the digital age stupefies young Americans and jeopardizes our future* (2009) argues that our youth are growing more ignorant in this age because of their interaction with digital technologies. I disagree. I believe these students offer the same potential and promise of past generations. Acknowledging this does not release us from our responsibilities to help them “read the word and the world” as Paulo Friere suggested years ago. But it does mean that we may need to re-think how we have characterized

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... Dumbest Generation (cont'd)

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them and their digital lives. Perhaps we should adopt a mentality where we try to bridge the gap between their out-of-school literacies and their in-school literacies.

In closing, I think about the presentation those students saw. I think about how the message of the presentation suggested that those students needed to start learning how to read and write to become more employable. I think about how the presenters read their speech off the slide like it was some huge notecard. And I think about how 91% of Inc 500 companies reported using a social media channel in 2009 (Schoenfield, 2010). And I wonder

if those students are actually closer to entering the business world than what people assume.

Resources

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Kaiser Family Foundation. *Generation M: Media Use in the lives of 8-18 Year-Olds*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation: 2010.

National Center for Education Statistics (2009). *The Nation's Report Card: Reading 2009* (NCES 2010-458). Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C.

Neuman, S. B. (1999). *Books make a difference: A study of access to literacy*. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 34(3), 286-311.

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IRA's Teacher Advisory Panel

The International Reading Association introduces the newly formed "Teacher Advisory Panel" (TAP) at the IRA Convention in Chicago! The Teacher Advisory Panel consists of classroom teachers who are appointed by the IRA Board of Directors. Teachers were nominated by state reading associations, provincial reading associations, and by national affiliates. In 2010-2011, seven teachers will represent various regions of the United States and one teacher will represent Canada. In the following year, four additional classroom teachers will be added to the panel; two who will also represent the United States and two who will represent areas outside the United States and Canada.

Maurna Rome, 2009-2010 MRA President, was selected for the Teacher Advisory Panel and will represent the Plains Region. She



attended several work sessions at the annual conference, meeting with IRA Executive Director Bill Harvey and IRA Board Members Kathy Au, Patricia Edwards, and Marsha Lewis (TAP Chairperson). IRA strategic directions, plans for future professional development, partnerships, research and advocacy were presented to TAP members.

The Teacher Advisory Panel is an advisory body of the Association.

Its members will present issues of concern to the Board and will respond to issues brought forth by the Board. The Teacher Advisory Panel will meet electronically through conference calls and email on a regular basis. For more information about the Teacher Advisory Panel, please contact Maurna at mrome@mnreading.org.