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Canadian Special Interest Group on Literacy



Message from the Chairperson

Last September I celebrated my retirement as a Literacy Coach with a cruise to Alaska, a wonderful experience in every way. Reflecting on the interdependence of local residents on the cruise ships for support and to sustain their economy throughout the winter months, brought to mind that in our literate world, we are also dependent on each other for support and sustainability. Just as the Alaskan people would not survive without the tourists, we would not survive without the support and assistance of other like-minded individuals. I saw this in the natural world as well, as I watched a pod of whales bubble netting and coaching their youngsters through survival skills, and groups of sea lions encouraging each other as they basked in the bright sunshine. Coaching is NOT mentoring, training, counseling, consulting or program management. It is instead the first line of intervention to improve performance, in an educational context, on the job, in sports, or in life. We all need a coach at some point in our lives. A coach directs learning through leading questions. It is the 'sifting' process through which other avenues of intervention can be considered. That would include mentoring, counseling, consulting, or program management.

Coaching focuses on short-term needs to address immediate challenges and opportunities which allow individuals the space to learn and grow. The role of a coach is 'getting out of the way', creating a space and facilitating solutions through asking leading questions. Whether you're a student, athlete, musician, actor, singer, businessperson, professional, or friend, everyone needs a coach. There are people who have different coaches throughout their lives, depending on their areas of need.

Questions provide insight, provoke thinking in different ways, and help explore different options. Great questions are open, exploratory and empowering. Above all they should be free of judgement or expectations. The coach starts by asking questions. The right questions have the power to allow people to realize different possibilities and make informed decisions. Anybody with an authentic interest and knowledge in the area being coached can be a coach. Coaching should lead to an action plan. Examples of such questions could include:

- What takes up most of your time and effort during the day?
- What do you feel is being neglected?
- What support do you need to regain energy/impetus?

- What would be a more manageable way to approach this?
- What can you do to create more time for what is important to you?
- What do you need to create a plan?

In all of this, the goal is to get people thinking about what's working, what's not, avenues to address challenges, and steps to action. Self-awareness is important in navigating one's way through challenges. This could be realizing the need for help in learning how to study or the necessity to restructure one's day for maximum benefit. It could be insight into ways of networking, looking at ways to explore a more suitable way of doing things, or changing perceptions of one's lifestyle. A winning combination is a coach who has the knowledge, is a good listener, is open to new ideas and has a positive attitude; and who is a person willing to be coached. This could lead to addressing challenges effectively, and opening up new opportunities. Do you have that winning combination?

Our conference presentation this year will showcase the winning combinations put together by a group of teachers and consultants from the Frontier School Division in Manitoba. I sincerely thank these people for agreeing to showcase their successes with our northern students and encourage each and every one of you to attend our presentation in New Orleans.

As my term of office winds down I take this opportunity to extend a personal thank you to all who have mentored and assisted with this task. Dorothy Morrow, who kept me in line when newsletters were due and who has handled our membership for many years; Carol Hyrniuk – Adamov, my good friend who coached me in my journey with the Canadian Special Interest Group on Literacy; our treasurer, Diane Beettam, and valued friends Garth Brooks and Mike Bowden will also be missed.

I wish all our members success in all their endeavours both in literacy and life. Thank you one and all.

Yours in literacy,

Sandra Quayle

Crisis Mode!

What is happening to CSIG-L?

CSIG -L is in crisis.

We need to do something!

Options available:

1. Members come forward to serve on the committee.

2. We wind up the organization.

3. ?????

Canadian Special Interest Group on Literacy



What is your solution?

CSIG-L Executive Members

Chairperson:	SANDRA QUAYLE	squayle@srsd119.ca
Past chairperson:	Carol Hryniuk Adamov	
Treasurer:	Diane Beetam	
Membership:	Dorothy H. Morrow	
Assistant Editor:	JoAnne Paden	
Newsletter Editor:	Dorothy H. Morrow -	morrow83@bell.net

CSIG-L NEEDS YOU!

Through the years, I have enjoyed getting the Newsletter ready for you, but the time has come to allow someone else to have the privilege. It is time for me to step aside.

You will enjoy communicating with our members!

Dorothy Morrow

Canadian Special Interest Group on Literacy



Morrow83@bell.net



Margriet Ruurs

I just was in Toronto visiting publishers. I am pleased to tell you that I presented at **Reading For The Love Of It** in Toronto to a full house of wonderful teachers. My next book will be out soon with **Kids**

Can Press, illustrated by

Jessica Rae Gordon:

Families Around the World.

This is a picture book portrayal of families in many different countries and cultures around the globe.

In July I will be on the faculty of the **Oregon Coast Children's Book Writers Workshop**: www.ocbbw.org, a vibrant workshop for those who want to write for children.

I am pleased to tell you that I write a regular interview column for

Canadian Teacher Magazine.

This column features a Canadian author or illustrator in each issue, reaching all schools across the country. I also review global books for

The International Educator.

I also signed a contract for a picture book biography of Canadian artist

Ted Harrison, which will be out in Fall 2014.

Currently I am speaking at the **American School of Israel**. So these greetings come to you from **JERUSALEM!**

Many best wishes,

Margriet

Margriet Ruurs, author

Canadian Special  acy



Salt Spring Island, BC, Canada

Speaking My Mind: Matching Students to Materials They Can Read

Jerry L. Johns, Ph.D.
jjohns@niu.edu

In this brief article, I question the large amount of attention given to difficult texts as emphasized in the Common Core in the United States and offer research that shows some of the benefits of placing students in materials they can read. I do not believe these are the only materials for instruction, but more difficult materials will require a lot of high-quality instructional support (scaffolding). Without that support, students' progress is likely to be hindered when instructional materials are much too difficult for students.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010) may not be acknowledging or honoring diversity of the student population in the United States and the differences among learners. In a recent report, the number of English-language learners (ELLs) in public schools increased by 51 percent, from 3.5 million to 5.3 million (The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2011). Achievement data suggest that ELLs lag far behind their peers. For example, only 3 percent of ELLs scored at or above the proficient standard in eight-grade reading in 2009 compared to non-ELLs (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Standard 10 in the CCSS expects students at the end of the year to read materials independently and proficiently at or beyond their grade levels. This sort of expectation seems to ignore individual differences and fails to acknowledge the reality that exists in so many of our nation's classrooms—not all students read at grade level. The expect-

ation that all students should read at grade level by the end of the school year may actually hinder or work against accelerated growth in reading achievement. Although students may be taught with a range of materials throughout the year, the assessments being developed for the CCSS place a heavy emphasis on a grade level expectation. Expert teachers can make a difference by scaffolding instruction where it is appropriate and needed, but sometimes the gap between a grade-level text and the student's reading ability is too large for meaningful instruction and helpful scaffolding to occur. This reality seems to be ignored by the CCSS except for including the importance of scaffolding. Linking a standard to a grade level is likely to be appropriate for many students, but not all. A more helpful approach is placing them on a trajectory and providing high-quality instruction that moves them along the continuum so they become more efficient and effective readers.

Years ago, Vygotsky (1934/1976) shared the zone of proximal development—that zone where what is being taught is neither too hard nor too easy and where students are likely to grow in reading when aided by scaffolding that is responsive and targeted to their needs. Afflerbach (2012) identified the instructional level (Betts, 1954) as the level where “the accomplished reading teacher helps the student build on current reading competences for new learning and continued reading development” (p. 41). It is at the instructional level where the intermediate student typically recognizes 95% or more of the words and can read fluently with comprehension (75%). For students in grades one through three, research on oral reading accuracy percentages were lower (90-91%), but students could still achieve comprehension scores of 70% or more (Anderson & Joels, 1986; Johns & Magliari, 1989). Hays (1975), however, found results from a randomly selected group of 25 second graders and 25 fifth graders at odds with these two studies. Most second graders who achieved less than 92% in word recognition had accompanying comprehension scores of less than 50%. Sixth graders who achieved less than 96% in word recognition also had comprehension scores of less than 50%. Although the research findings are not entirely uniform for the elementary grades, if comprehension is the desired goal, intermediate students should be able to recognize about 95% of the words in a text. For students in the primary grades, word recognition should be about 92% or better. While there will be exceptions to these percentages, they are a helpful basis for placing students in instructional materials.

The student's instructional level can be thought of as an appropriate beginning point for quality instruction even if that level is at, above, or below the student's grade placement. It is important to note that student-text matching is a complex process involving multiple factors related to students, texts, and contexts for reading” (Halladay, 2012, p. 54). Even when teachers attempt to match reading materials to their students' instructional levels, that match is not perfect but an approximation. The goal, however, should be to avoid massive mismatches that can discourage students and stifle reading growth. Standard 10 in the Common Core expects students to read materials at or above grade level by the end of the year. That standard, while noble, may be unattainable because of the students who are experiencing difficulty reading with current instructional materials. One possible approach would be to have every student move from their present level, including students who are reading at or above grade level when they enter a grade. High-quality instruction would enable all students to grow in their reading achievement. Students who struggle in reading may not reach grade-level standards, but they should, with expert instruction, make progress toward the standard. Forell (1985) studied 91 third-grade students who were placed in basal reading materials that were read with not more than 5% meaning-changing miscues and a comprehension score of at least 75%.

Half of the students were placed in grade-level materials; the remaining students needed books one to three years below grade level. Five years later, the students who were placed in materials that matched their varying reading levels showed substantial improvement on a standardized reading test—from the 23rd percentile at the beginning of third grade to the 48th percentile at the beginning of seventh grade.

Allington (2009) reviewed a number of studies examining what he termed “high-success reading activities” (p. 47) to buttress his argument that such activities produce more reading growth than instruction using difficult texts. One study (Ehri, Dreyer, Flugman, & Gross, 2007) concluded that “the reading achievement of students who received tutoring appeared to be explained primarily by one aspect of their tutoring experience—reading texts at a high level of accuracy, between 98% and 100% (p. 441). In another study (Fisher & Berliner, 1985), the authors noted that “the data indicated that high success during instruction is especially crucial to the learning rate of low achieving students (p. 224). The “high-success activities produced far greater gains than classrooms where struggling readers read harder texts” (Allington, 2009, p. 48). A study by O’Connor, Bell, Harty, Larkin, Sackor, & Zigmund (2002) compared tutoring in resource rooms where struggling readers brought in their grade-level texts that were used in the intervention lessons. These students “benefited little from the tutoring when compared to the gains made by the struggling readers using texts matched to their reading levels” (Allington, 2009, p. 48). For many struggling readers, the major problem is unknown words. It is especially important, therefore, that struggling readers are taught with materials where they know a high percentage of the words so they can devote their attention to comprehension and achieve at higher levels. Students deserve books at their reading levels, not just their grade levels.

Other studies (e.g., Cooper, 1952; Enz, 1989; Gambrell, Wilson, & Gantt, 1981) also found that students do best when they can recognize 96-98% of the words. Cooper (1952) found that gains in reading achievement tended to decrease as the difficulty of reading materials increased, and Enz (1989) found that placing students in materials that can be read with a high degree of accuracy resulted in students spending a greater proportion of time on task and having more positive attitudes toward reading.

It may be a common-sense view, borne out in both everyday experience and a number of research studies, that students who are reading materials that are appropriate for their abilities are likely to be engaged and motivated readers. Students who are asked to read materials that are too difficult struggle and are likely to avoid reading. The key is to adopt a plan that honors individual differences and tailors instruction so that students are taught using materials suitable for their reading abilities, whether they are at, below, or above grade level. There is no one-size-fits-all approach; rather, the goal is to enable all students to experience high levels of success. Achieving that goal involves efforts to locate and use a wide range of instructionally-appropriate materials that better match students’ varying levels of reading abilities. In addition, teachers need to structure instruction in ways that will accelerate all student learning, especially for those students most at risk. Some teachers may be well intentioned, but without a strong commitment to accelerate reading achievement to higher levels, too many students will be left behind. Acknowledging the linguistic, cultural, and experiential differences the student brings to the reading task should guide implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

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Canadian Special Interest Group on Literacy



From the Executive Director Realizing the Promise of our Councils



By

Marcie Craig Post

With challenge comes opportunity. The problems that all non-profits are currently grappling with are formidable, including out-moded governance structures, reduced membership, falling conference attendance and revenue decline. But a great opportunity has also been presented to transcend these obstacles by implementing a carefully planned strategic realignment that anchors on original strength.

In the case of IRA, the opportunity is really extraordinary, for one thing, for the association is the center hub of a council and affiliate network that is facing the same problem and working hard on creating effective solutions. By collaborating on realignment strategies, we can share resources and pool insights in a way that solidifies our relationship while empowering new approaches to internal operations and external outreach that will secure our future.

This past June a team of IRA staff, joined by several board members met in Minneapolis with about 80 council officials for a totally revamped leadership academy. Together, we undertook frank SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) discussions regarding and sharing a wealth of great ideas for formulating concerted action going forward. I can tell you that the energy, enthusiasm, and creativity evidenced by all of the attendees were quite remarkable.

In round tables and breakouts, at the podium and the easel pad, over coffee and at the dinner table, we got to talking about issue after issue, shared our hopes and frustrations, compared notes on a series of initiatives that we're keen to launch, and felt very tangibly the tidal ups and downs as professional organizations. It was an exciting experience and we mean to build on that excitement.

Our attending staff shared their expertise with their council colleagues, offering presentations on board fiduciary responsibilities, legal entity structure, member recruitment and retention, communication and social media, financial oversight, advocacy and other critical topics. In return, they received vital intelligence from council leaders on the current situations at their respective organizations, as well

as suggestions on practical strategies for making improvements or turning things around, as the case may be.

(1)

What was most evident was the difference that direct contact and real support make when taking action against daunting obstacles. By the time the academy concluded you could hear the inspired tone and catch the confident mood of everything that was being said and shared. Renewal is doable, success is possible, and we truly are the people to bring it about. Our continued collaboration will be the hallmark of this effort, the thing that everyone will remember and celebrate once the labors of transition have reached an end.

Nor will any creeping idleness be permitted to frustrate real momentum. Over this past summer, selected members of the headquarters staff have joined me and outside consultants to plan an intensive fall workshop for leaders from a pilot group of councils who will actually kick off the strategic renewal in their state associations. To prepare for the important work, the staff has also been hard at work developing new modalities of council support, looking at everything from new types of membership models to more efficient information sharing and the creation of online workflow tools.

We are looking forward to the fall workshops, as well as to the local renewal officers who will follow. We expect that many questions will arise along the way, and we are ready to respond as needed, looking to provide the fullest possible collaboration. If things go as planned, we will be asking one or two of the pilot councils to present at IRA in New Orleans, letting leaders and members from

other councils and affiliates hear an inside view of what this type of strategic renewal entails. We are also planning another general Leadership for 2014.

Realizing the promise of our councils in this way is the key to IRA'S own strategic renewal. By aligning tightly on cause, mission, and strategy, and by leveraging shared resources to the fullest, we can offer literacy professionals, especially younger ones, a vital professional connection with indispensable benefits, including products, services, professional development, digital access and person-to-person connections. Let's pause, smile, roll up our sleeves, and get started. I hope to meet all of you along the way.

Canadian Special Interest Group on Literacy



This article appeared in the Reading Today August/September 2013

Creating Dynamic Large Scale Outcome-based Assessment to Enhance Classroom Reading and Writing Instruction

By Frontier School Division

Members of Frontier School Division's English Language Arts Assessment Project Team (ELA-APT) will share their experience of developing and implementing division wide, culturally relevant comprehending and communicating assessments. The team consisting of five English language arts consultants and five classroom teachers will describe their divisional context and explain their mandate to gather assessment data which will guide instruction and improve student learning across the division. Their PowerPoint presentation will include interviews of classroom teachers, beautiful images which reflect Frontier's unique communities, and an opportunity for participants to speak with teachers

and view samples of assessment materials through an interactive gallery walk. The Frontier team is excited to share their successes and challenges in developing and implementing assessments which attempt to gather meaningful data while serving as models of best practice in assessment. Come join us in New Orleans!

New Orleans

There is nowhere quite like New Orleans, with its rich history, lively arts and music culture and welcoming citizens. We invite you to experience the unique sights, sounds and tastes you will discover while exploring the city.

A rich of mixture French, Spanish, European or Haitian spices can be found in many of the foods. Be sure to visit the French Quarter, museums and restaurants. Take advantage of the various tours available to avail yourself of world famous festivals and jazz music.

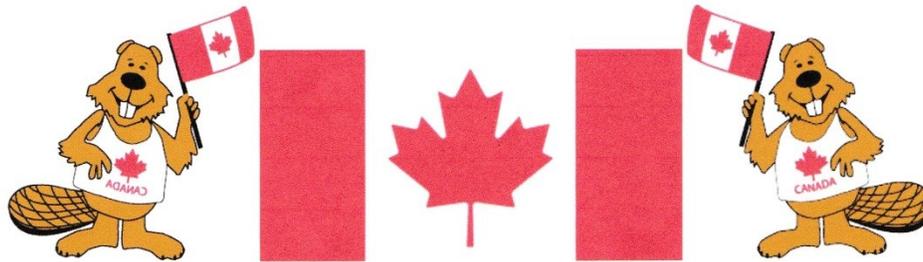
Plan your time as you enjoy visiting New Orleans and benefit from the presentations at the IRA Conference 2014.



Canadian Network of IRA Councils (CNIRAC)
&
Canadian Special Interest Group (C-SIG)



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**at the 59th Annual Conference of the
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Canadian Special Interest Group on Literacy



MEMBERSHIP FORM

We welcome you for the first time and we welcome you back
as a returning member to our
Canadian Special Interest Group on Literacy.

Our year extends from May to May.
We recognize that this timing makes it difficult for some members for
whom fall brings many changes,
but for those members who are able,
we encourage you to renew your membership
before the first of June
because that is when we must submit our membership report to the
International Reading Association.
Our presentation time at the IRA conference in the following year
depends on our membership at that time.

Canadian Special Interest Group on Literacy

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