

*Summer 2019*

# Specialized Literacy Professionals

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## *A message from the President...*

Dear Members,

I want to start our newsletter by recognizing the wonderful leadership of Laurie Sharp, Jacy Ippolito, and Heather Kindall. They have fulfilled the role of SLP board members throughout the last three years and have dedicated many hours of service to our SIG. I thank them for their leadership and passion for the field.

I also want to welcome Ramona Pittman, Wolfram Verlaan, and Cathy Toll as our 2019-2021 newly-elected board members.

In this newsletter, you will find updates from our various committees and information about special projects. You will also find information about our ILA session titled, *ILA Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals: Challenges, Barriers, Bridges, and Possibilities*. Included with the session information is a special article titled, "ILA Standards 2017: Five Key Notions."

I encourage you to share this newsletter with colleagues and other individuals that might be interested in the preparation and professional development of literacy professionals.

Dr. Stephanie Grote-Garcia  
*President of the Specialized Literacy Professionals SIG*



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*Meeting...*

# Your Board Members

**President-Elect.** Bethanie Pletcher, *Assistant Professor*, Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi

## Board Members.

Evan Ortlieb, *Professor*, St. John's University

Ramona Pittman, *Associate Professor*, Texas A&M University- San Antonio \*NEW

Wolfram Verlaan, *Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and Director of the Reading Specialist Masters Program*, University of Alabama-Huntsville \*NEW

Cathy Toll, *Department Chair*, University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh \*NEW

Treasurer: Johnathan W. Hill, *Doctoral Student*, Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi

Secretary: Patricia Durham, *Associate Professor*, Sam Houston State University

Emeritus Member, Jack Cassidy

Emeritus member, Mary Ellen Skidmore

Emeritus Member, Barbara Kleban

**Welcome our new Board Member...** Ramona Pittman is an Associate Professor at Texas A&M University- San Antonio. As a board member her goals are to: grow and/or encourage more participation from specialized literacy professionals by marketing and advertising (plus encouraging my network on professionals to join SLP), provide diverse perspectives to the current board and organization, mentor new professionals and/or graduate students, and advocate for literacy in all areas of learning.



**Welcome our new Board Member...** Wolfram Verlaan is an Associate Professor at the University of Alabama- Huntsville. He has been a member of the Specialized Literacy Professionals SIG for over 9 years and served as the SIG's treasurer from 2013 until the Fall of 2018. During his tenure as treasurer, he modernized and streamlined the SIG's membership activities and finances and created and helped maintain the SIG's current website. He believes strongly in the SIG's work, and wants to continue serving the SIG as a board member. Wolfram's goals are to maintain the SIG's visibility on the national stage by assisting in the planning and development of those activities in which we have traditionally disseminated our expertise such as webinars, conferences, and our annual ILA conference presentations. He also wants to continue to support the expansion of our presence on various social media platforms. Finally, Wolfram believes it is important to continue supporting the research and mentoring activities that the SIG has recently undertaken and to grow our membership.



**Welcome our new Board Member...** Cathy Toll is Department Chair at the University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh. She would like to see our SIG continue to contribute to ILA policy and resources. Cathy believes there is already a trajectory of activity and influence in the SIG and would support and enhance this movement. Her goals are to encourage more ILA members join the SIG, learn more about how the SIG markets itself, and to think with others about how we could do more.



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*And ... Looking Forward*

## Join us for a Special Session at ILA

**Title: ILA Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals: Challenges, Barriers, Bridges, and Possibilities**

October 11, 2019 10:00am -12:00pm New Orleans, Louisiana

New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, Room 295

The special session will focus on ILA's *Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals 2017* and will feature Rita Bean, Diane Kern, Jacy Ippolito, and Allison Swan Dagen — four authors of the revised standards document. The session will include a keynote presentation addressing the roles and responsibilities of various literacy professionals as discussed in the publication. Following the keynote, the four authors will form a discussion panel to address the challenges, barriers, bridges and possibilities of implementing the revised standards. Lastly, audience members will be invited to extend the panel's discussion through a question and answer session. Special emphasis will be placed on the following:

- changes in the reading/literacy specialist and literacy coach role, and what it means for preparing professionals;
- equity and advocacy;
- disciplinary literacy implications within and beyond the standard; as well as,
- learners and the literacy environment, including digital literacy

\*All attendees are invited to stay for the business meeting of the Specialized Literacy Professionals SIG, which follows the session.

*New to Members...*

## Doctoral Student and New Faculty Mentoring Program



The Specialized Literacy Professionals offers a mentoring program for our current members who are preparing literacy professionals to teach in grades K-12, or conducting research affecting those in specialized literacy positions.

### **Doctoral Students and New Faculty Members**

- Do you teach university courses that prepare specialized literacy professionals? Would you like to be paired with another university-based instructor teaching similar courses?
- Are you conducting research that affects literacy professionals? Would you like feedback on a manuscript, presentation proposal, or other project?

If you are interested in being paired with a mentor, email your inquiry to [grotegar@uiwtx.edu](mailto:grotegar@uiwtx.edu). After receiving your request, we will pair you with a mentor that has similar interest.

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*Spotlight on: ILA 2017 Standards*

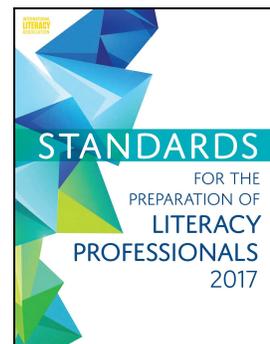
# ILA Standards 2017: Five Key Notions

Diane Kern, University of Rhode Island

Jacy Ippolito, Salem State University

Allison Swan Dagen, West Virginia University

Rita Bean, University of Pittsburgh



In this newsletter segment, we invite you to join the conversation about the International Literacy Association *Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals 2017* (ILA, 2018) at the Specialized Literacy Professionals SIG session on October 11, 2019 at the ILA Conference in New Orleans.

As an “advance organizer” we ask you to consider the five key notions we highlight below. As you read, you may want to think about the following questions:

- How do each of these notions play out in your schools and communities?
- How might *Standards 2017* inform your literacy teaching, learning, and leadership?
- What innovative curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment practices are you engaged in that align with *Standards 2017*?

## Key Notion 1: The Concept of Literacy Is Expanding and Changing

Between the ILA 2014 annual conference in New Orleans and the ILA 2015 annual conference in St. Louis, the International Reading Association achieved a name change. The organization dropped its middle name (“reading”) and replaced it with a new moniker, “literacy.” From that point on, the organization would be known as the International Literacy Association (ILA). To those of us who held membership in the organization, used the organization’s resources (e.g., journals, website), interacted with the organization’s professional standards, or attended annual regional and state conferences, this change was not unforeseen. The organization’s focus has always been more than only “reading,” yet the new name certainly reflected a 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to the reading, writing, and communication skills and strategies needed by all learners.

ILA’s rebranding and 21<sup>st</sup> century name change is also parallel to another notable shift influencing learning—namely digital literacies. Readers of the *ILA Standards 2017* will see the influence of digital literacies across multiple standards, with particular emphasis in Standard 5. The authors of the Standards assert: Digital Literacy *IS* Literacy. Even our youngest learners regularly engage with digital tools, devices, and contexts on a regular basis. So, addressing this topic is in essence a response to what it means to be literate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Today’s learner has opportunities that go well beyond access in printed books, extending to digital content (e.g., social media). Literacy professionals (e.g. teachers, reading specialists) have a role in guiding students in the selection, use and evaluation of these materials. Additionally, educators must be knowledgeable, accepting, and respectful of the literacy relationship between in-school and out-of-school literacy, especially as it relates to the use of digital technologies. Furthermore, educators must know how to teach students to safely and effectively use technology as a tool to learn.

Next, we share the 2<sup>nd</sup> key notion that disciplinary literacy enhances PK-12 student learning across the academic areas.

### What are Standards 2017 Writers Reading?

Diane Kern is reading *We Got This. Equity, Access, and the Quest to Be Who Our Students Need Us to Be* by Cornelius Minor.



### What are Standards 2017 Writers Reading?

Allison Swan Dagen is reading ILA Position Statement and Research Brief entitled *Digital Resources in Early Childhood Literacy Development*.



## Key Notion 2: Disciplinary Literacy Instruction Enhances Learning in English, History, Mathematics, and Science

Another major shift in the *Standards 2017* is the appearance and prevalence of disciplinary literacy as an instructional framework. In the intervening years between the publication of ILA's *Standards 2010* (IRA, 2010) and *Standards 2017*, many researchers, policymakers, and teachers have adopted disciplinary literacy language and ways of teaching across grade levels. A disciplinary literacy framework suggests that there are highly specialized ways of reading, writing, and communicating associated with both school-based academic subjects such as English/language arts, American history, calculus, chemistry, and so on, as well as their related professions (e.g., journalist, documentarian, astrophysicist, biochemist).

Throughout the *Standards 2017* specialists, teachers, and other literacy leaders are called upon to understand and be able to teach disciplinary literacy. Such a focus, as the Common Core State Standards (NGACBP and CCSSO, 2010) have suggested, places the ownership of high-level, discipline-specific literacy instruction squarely in the hands of middle and secondary school teachers who are themselves experts in the language, habits of mind, and ways of working expected by each discipline and their related professions. *Standards 2017* go a step further, however, by asking that *all educators*—including early childhood and elementary school teachers—understand and teach age-appropriate disciplinary literacy skills.

While disciplinary literacy teaching and learning may look quite different across grades—helping kindergartners observe fish and draw detailed pictures in science notebooks versus writing sophisticated lab reports on oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon dioxide levels in water in a high school chemistry class—the *Standards 2017* make the case that high-level literacy skills are an end goal that require collaborative adult efforts over many years of students' educational careers.

Last, while *Standards 2017* suggest that disciplinary literacy should be highlighted in all educator preparation programs, the standards also recommend that disciplinary literacy become a major focus of ongoing, job-embedded professional learning. This would certainly include the professional learning supported by specialists, coaches, and coordinators at the school and district levels.

Next, we examine the 3<sup>rd</sup> key notion in *Standards 2017*—the central role that assessment and evaluation play in schools today.

## Key Notion 3: Assessment Informs Instruction

Reading/literacy specialists, literacy coaches, and literacy coordinators play an important role in supporting colleagues to examine their curriculum, instructional practices and student assessment results to find ways to meet the educational needs of each student. *Standards 2017* Standard 3: Assessment and Evaluation provides key information for preparing literacy professionals to select, administer, and interpret the results of assessment measures to inform instruction and program evaluation. It also describes the importance of assessment for not only informing instruction but also for accountability purposes.

Literacy professionals must have the knowledge to adequately determine the purposes, technical strengths and limitations of both formative and summative assessment measures. These measures should include both formal and informal tools. Further, given

the limitations of specific measures, literacy professionals should understand the need for multiple measures that reveal data patterns as a means of gaining a more complete understanding of students' literacy strengths and needs. Specialized literacy professionals and teachers must also share information about students with key stakeholders, including families, and at the same time, seek information from them that will broaden their understanding of students' literacy needs.

As we know, assessment is a central issue in schools today. Educators and policymakers alike have indicated concern about the time allotted for assessment and the fact that too often, key decisions about students (e.g., retention, grouping) are made based on the results of a single assessment measure. Literacy professionals must have the knowledge that enables them to accurately interpret results and advocate for the appropriate use of assessment data for accountability purposes.

Assessment is inextricably linked to the 4<sup>th</sup> key notion, which we examine next.

### Key Notion 4: Culturally Responsive Instruction Is Critical in Our Diverse Society

*Standards 2017* writers built on the 2010 diversity standard, adding one important word to the title: *Equity*. As a result, Standard 4 Diversity and Equity provides a framework for educators to look inward to not only explore their own experiences, beliefs, potential biases, and cultures, but also to learn from and with people from varied diverse backgrounds. Diversity is viewed as an asset, not deficit; equity is viewed as an essential goal that calls on literacy professionals to ensure students, especially those from minoritized or underrepresented groups, gain access to excellent literacy instruction.

*Standards 2017* expands ILA's definition of diversity to include respect for and valuing of differences among groups and individuals related to such factors as ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, learning exceptionalities, geographic area, physical abilities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and political affiliations and other ideologies. Literacy professionals are called upon to develop foundational knowledge of theories and research on topics such as critical race theory, second language acquisition, sociocultural theory, and transgender and queer theory. In addition, they must apply this knowledge to culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogies and practices.

Literacy professionals today must learn to advocate for equitable policies that affect children, youth, and their families. They understand ways to advance social change and equity through pedagogies in literacy and in community literacy practices. For example, literacy coaches could facilitate a professional book group to discuss *For White Teachers Who Teach in the Hood, and the Rest of Y'all, Too* by Christopher Emdin. Other ways educators could advocate for equity include: analyzing the classroom and school library to ensure diverse people and perspectives are represented in reading materials; examining data for evidence of culturally or linguistically biased assessments or instructional practices to determine ways to adapt or modify tasks or assessments to ensure fair and equitable access to literacy learning; and working to find ways to meet families when, where, or how they are able to meet, such as at a local community center or by phone rather than traditional in-person meetings.

Culturally responsive instruction—the 4<sup>th</sup> key notion in *Standards 2017*—is, indeed, critical in our diverse society. In order for literacy professionals to develop culturally responsive practices and dispositions, we must have varied and ongoing professional opportunities to learn, which leads us to the 5<sup>th</sup> and last notion.

#### What are Standards 2017 Writers Reading?

Jacy Ippolito is reading *Leading Well: Building Schoolwide Excellence in Reading and Writing* by Lucy Calkins, with Mary Ehrenworth and Laurie Pessah.



#### What are Standards 2017 Writers Reading?

Rita Bean is reading *Coach it Further: Using the Art of Coaching to Improve School Leadership* by Peter M. Dewitt.



## Key Notion 5: Professional Learning Provides for Both Personal and Organizational Growth

One can imagine that literacy professionals would be hard-pressed to address the four key notions above without opportunities for professional learning. While Standard 6: Professional Learning and Leadership shares the same name in *Standards 2017* as in *Standards 2010*, the revised standard advances the notion that professional learning provides for both personal and organizational growth. Literacy professionals must learn not only how to teach literacy to children and youth, but they also must know and understand how adults learn and how to affect organizational change in order to be a successful literacy leader.

Specialized literacy professionals develop partnerships—with students, colleagues, administrators, families, within the community, and with state department of education leaders. They advocate for time to coach teachers, developing professional learning communities, and designing professional meetings. They also advocate for effective school literacy practices, a robust school-wide literacy program, and district and state policies. In short, effective specialized literacy professionals are collaborators, who build trust, and empower teachers, students, and families.

In order to be successful in such a demanding and multifaceted position, specialized literacy professionals need their own professional learning time and a willingness to learn, to reflect, and to grow as professionals. Active membership in professional organizations, shadowing more experienced specialists and coaches, working on advanced credentials, and joining the state literacy association chapter events—both in-person and via social media—are examples of professional learning opportunities that foster not only personal growth but also create the conditions for organizational growth.

### Summary

*Standards 2017* offer an evidence-based framework for the design, assessment, and evaluation of literacy professional preparation programs, state standards, and PK-12 professional learning. The five key notions offer you an overarching view of the 2017 Standards to consider, to discuss with colleagues, and to read more about. We look forward to sharing more thoughts on *Standards 2017* with you and learning from you about the many promising practices you are engaged in as specialized literacy professionals in your communities. See you in New Orleans!

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*Highlighting....*

## Member's Impact on the Community

**Kelli Bippert** is proud of her students' commitment to serving the community of Corpus Christi, Texas. Undergraduate and graduate students volunteer as one-on-one and small group tutors for English learners at Haas Middle School in the Corpus Christi Independent School district. Her undergraduate preservice teachers also continue to volunteer as mentors and tutors at George Evans Elementary in the neighboring community.

**Evan Ortlieb** is working with Sequoia Union High School District in Palo Alto, California to bring together school psychologists, teachers, specialists, and administrators to confront issues surrounding the curricular planning

and instruction for those with dyslexia. This ongoing partnership aims to shift the focus away from deficit models and into models of empowerment for all learners.

**Lucia Schroeder** volunteers to read to 3 and 4 year olds at the local YMCA Daycare and spends numerous hours serving at the local Shelter for Homeless adults and children.

**Jodi Pilgrim** has been an active advocate for students in Texas who have to take the state standardized test (STAAR), which is written above 1-3 grades above the tested grade level. She supports Texas HB 4242, which would require the

Texas Education Agency check the readability of the tests.

**Islanders Helping the Early Acceleration of Readers Together (iHEART)** is an in-school tutorial program at Kennedy Elementary School for kindergarten, first-, and second- grade students who struggle with literacy tasks. The mission of the program is to provide primary grade children with early reading intervention, through research-based instruction, and to give teacher candidates opportunities to implement strategies learned in their reading courses.

[http://tamucc.edu/news/2018/10/102518\\_iHeart\\_Literacy\\_Program.html](http://tamucc.edu/news/2018/10/102518_iHeart_Literacy_Program.html)  
[#XNG9XRNKiIM](#)

*Become a member today!*

## Membership options

MEMBERSHIP FORM - Specialized Literacy Professionals		
_____ \$10.00 (one year)	_____ \$ 15.00 (two years)	_____ \$ 30.00 (four years)
Please complete the below form as completely as possible; be sure to include your <b>email address</b> and <b>IRA number</b> .		
Please make out the check to <b>Specialized Literacy Professionals</b> and mail it along with the form to:		
<b>Jonathan Hill</b> 557 Parade Dr. Corpus Christi, TX 78412		
Please share copies of this form with others who might be interested. Contact Jonathan Hill for any questions regarding membership ( <a href="mailto:litprofmembership@gmail.com">litprofmembership@gmail.com</a> ).		
Name: _____	IRA Membership #: _____	
Position: _____	Institution Name: _____	
Home Address: _____	Institution Address: _____	
Home Phone: _____	e-mail: _____	

**Membership is also available online:**

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

**Ways to become involved:**

- Join a committee
- Participate in the mentoring program
- Share your research
- Attend the annual session at ILA
- Join our Facebook community

[@literacyprofessionals.org](http://literacyprofessionals.org)

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## *An Update from the Committees*

**Membership Committee.** The Specialized Literacy Professionals SIG has a diverse membership made of doctoral students, faculty members, researchers, and K-12 educators. Together, we support the SIG's mission of helping literacy professionals:

- keep abreast of recent efforts to develop standards and assessments for those delivering reading/literacy services;
- actively communicate with other professional organizations;
- take a proactive stance on issues involving literacy professionals;
- provide a forum for the professional development of all literacy professionals;
- conduct research relevant to literacy professionals.

Our membership committee continue to develop ways to support the SIG's mission and are proud to announce our new **mentoring program** for doctoral students and new faculty members interested in conducting research related to specialized literacy professionals. Visit our website for more information: <http://www.literacyprofessional.org/>

**Research Committee.** The Research Committee has stayed busy with its focus of extending the important work featured at international literacy conferences and spreading those messages even wider through publication. Further, we believe that diving deeper into hot topics is of critical importance such as recent topics like diversity in literacy instruction and preparing teachers to be adept in teaching digital literacy skills. We have completed the first aspect of our diversity survey project where we are investigating the awareness and ability of literacy teachers to see and use diversity as an asset in their instruction. The second phase of the study involves interviewing literacy coaches to get their vantage point on these same issues as they see it play out in schools nationwide. If you are interested in becoming an interviewee on this project, please let us know. Also, we have a new member of the Research Committee, Alida Hudson, who has recently joined our efforts. We look forward to her contributions from the field as an early career researcher and longtime literacy specialist. If you have ideas that warrant further investigation and wish to partner with us in our ongoing research efforts, please reach out!

**Awards Committee.** The Awards Committee, comprised of Evan Ortlieb, Earl H. Cheek, Jr., and Kristin Anderson, received five nominations this year for the newly minted Jack Cassidy Award for Scholarly Contributions. After a comprehensive review of the two academic articles, one book chapter, one edited book, and one authored text, the Awards Committee selected Bethanie C. Pletcher and Alida H. Hudson's (2019) *Coaching on Borrowed Time: Balancing the Roles of the Literacy Professional* as a recently featured article in *The Reading Teacher*. This article highlights the experiences of four reading professionals who share strategies for balancing the many roles, specifically those of literacy coach and reading interventionist, that fall under the title of specialized literacy professional in a school. It is both research based and incredibly practical in its scope. We encourage everyone to check it out at the following link: <https://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/trtr.1777?af=R>

**Social Media Committee Report.** This spring, the Social Media Committee has been posting information related to the ILA Preparation of Literacy Professionals Standards to our Facebook page. These have been in the format of engaging infographic flyers created by graduate students in Bethanie Pletcher's Leadership and Literacy course at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi. So far, we have covered the following standards: 1) Foundational Knowledge; 2) Curriculum and Instruction; 3) Assessment and Evaluation; 4) Diversity and Equity; and 5) Learners and the Literacy Environment. Please stay posted and involved in our discussion of the remaining standards as we gear up for the ILA annual conference!

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*Highlighting...*

## Member's Publication

- Bippert, K. (2019). Perceptions of technology, curriculum, and reading strategies in one middle school intervention program. *Research in Middle Level Education Online*, 42(3), 1-22.
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