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The Literacy Professional

A publication of IRA's *Specialized Reading Professionals* Special Interest Group

An Interview with Dr. Barbara Marinak:

A Literacy Star

By Jack Cassidy, Co-editor,
The Literacy Professional



Dr. Barbara Marinak is a longtime member and secretary of the Specialized Literacy Professionals SIG. She is an associate professor and department Chair at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, MD. Previously, she taught at Penn State Harrisburg and Millersville University (PA). In addition she has been a teacher of the hearing impaired, a reading specialist, a reading coordinator, and an acting superintendent. Her 2004 dissertation won the College Reading Association's Outstanding Dissertation Award. She is also a senior author of Reaching All Readers: Strategic Reading Intervention, a reading intervention program for grades K through 3 published by Zaner-Bloser. For IRA, she was co-chair of the Response to Intervention Task Force and was featured in several IRA webinars. Her more than two dozen professional publications

appear in a variety of educational journals. Undoubtedly she is becoming a major leader in the reading field. However, this article will not focus on Barbara Marinak, the literacy professional but Barbara Marinak, the person.

1. Tell us about your early life.

I was born in Abington, PA {a northern suburb of Philadelphia, noted for its good schools} and graduated from Abington High School and Temple University in Philadelphia. Both my parents were voracious readers. My Mom read to me and always discussed books at dinner. But, it was my Dad who stimulated my love of informational texts. As an engineer, he loved books about space and NASA.

2. Do you have a person or persons you consider a mentor?

Undoubtedly, Dr. Linda Gambrell of Clemson University has been my mentor, my dissertation advisor, my friend, and my collaborator on numerous projects and writing. She has a generosity of spirit and a work ethic that is enviable.

3. Tell us about your avocations.

Of course, I love to read. In my spare time, I attempt to garden. Also, I love college basketball. My husband and I met at Temple University in Philadelphia so I am an avid supporter of OWLS basketball.

4. What do you read for fun? What kinds of books do you read?

I have no specific kind of fiction that I read although I do like historical fiction and mysteries. In terms of non-fiction, I tend to read books about leadership. I am fascinated with the insights I can glean from leaders in other professions.

5. What is your favorite food?

White pizza – that is pizza without tomato sauce.

Continued on next page.

6. What about Barbara Marinak might our readers find surprising?

My husband and I are animal rescuers. We tend to rescue animals with special needs. Right now, we have 9 cats including an amputee and one who is visually impaired. We also recently rescued a golden retriever. Amazingly-everyone gets along!

7. WOW, I am impressed.

(Jack Cassidy is the Executive Secretary of the Specialized Literacy Professionals SIG and co-editor with Jennifer Shettel of the newsletter. He is a former president and board member of the International Reading Association and the Association of Literacy Educators and Researchers (ALER). He is also a member of the Reading hall of Fame. Like Dr. Marinak, he graduated from Abington High School. Ideas for newsletters should be sent to dr.jackcassidy@gmail.com)

Chair's Message

Dear Members,

The SIG Board of Directors has been busy planning the following exciting events for 2014-2015!

Webinars. To meet our SIG's goal of advancing knowledge for our members, we plan to host two webinars for specialized literacy professionals worldwide. Collaborating with the Literacy faculty at the University of Texas, San Antonio, we will offer two webinars will be offered early in 2015 on text comprehension and digital literacies. Julie Coiro, current IRA Board Member and dynamic leader of digital literacies instruction, will be the speaker on this series of webinars, with the second webinar extending the content of the first. We plan to engage 100 participants in each webinar.

Advocacy. Rita Bean, Diane Kern, and I are developing a brief survey that you will receive to help us identify the policies and actions that are most troubling to you and that seem to impede rather than support your professional work. Addressing our mission of advocacy, we want to take a proactive stance on these issues and communicate with those who may be open to listening to our perspective on the professional work of specialized literacy professionals. Additionally, we plan to share what we are learning about policies and directives that are affecting our profession and our students' literacy instruction.

IRA St. Louis, 2015. Barbara Marinak has planned a dynamite program that will feature Jack Cassidy and his famous "What's Hot" presentation, Linda Gambrell (discussing "Motivation and Why it isn't Hot, but Should Be"), and a panel of discussants who will address issues, different perspectives, and challenges associated with implementing the Common Core and other forms of standards-based literacy education. We think this session



will invite participant discussion with the goal to find some common ground and direction for achieving high quality literacy instruction supported by specialized literacy professionals. We are excited about professional development opportunities this session will offer for our members.

Wishing you a great start to another school year! Look for more news from us!

Vicki Risko
Chair, Specialized Literacy Professionals
Special Interest Group

(In addition to being chair of the SIG, Dr. Risko is a former IRA President and former president of the Association for Literacy Educators and Researchers. She is a member of the Reading hall of Fame.)

SIG Completes National Study about Roles of Specialized Literacy Professionals

By Rita Bean

In 2012, the Specialized Literacy Professional Special Interest Group began a project designed to obtain information about the roles and responsibilities, qualifications, characteristics, and preparation of those serving as specialized literacy professionals. A summary of findings from that survey was presented to the Board of the International Reading Association in February 2014.

Results indicated that that these specialized literacy professionals had multiple responsibilities that included both instruction of struggling readers and support for teachers, e.g., coaching, providing resources, problem-solving with them, and interpreting assessment results to inform instruction.

FINDINGS

Four specific and distinct role-groups were identified: academic/literacy coaches, reading specialists, reading teachers/interventionists, and supervisors. Although all groups tended to have similar responsibilities, there were differences in the extent and frequency with which they performed these tasks. Although all role-groups identified "supporting teachers" as one of their five major responsibilities, academic/literacy coaches were the only ones to identify "coaching" as a major task. Likewise, reading specialists and interventionists/reading teachers ranked instructing students as one of the five major responsibilities, while coaches nor supervisors did not. Almost all respondents indicated that they had some responsibility for supporting the work of



the classroom teachers. Most respondents were not the sole specialized literacy professional in the school; rather they worked collaboratively with several others in the school.

IN CONCLUSION

Overall, respondents believed that their preparation should include many more experiences with coaching, leadership, school change, and adult learning. Challenges identified included: time and resources necessary to function effectively in schools, resistance or reluctance of teachers to working with the specialized literacy professionals, and lack of understanding or support of administrators. Questionnaires were completed by over 2,500 respondents from every state, U.S. territories, and from several other countries. SIG members who worked with this project included the following: Rita Bean (chair), Jack Cassidy (co-chair), Kristine Kalo, Shari Frost, Virginia Goatley, Laurie Elish-Piper, Mae Lane, Diane Kern, Susan L'Allier, Evan Ortlieb, Barbara Marinak, Pamela Mason, Jennifer Shettel Diana Quatroche, Betty Sturtevant.

(Rita Bean, University of Pittsburgh, is the immediate past chair of the Specialized Literacy Professionals SIG, a former IRA Board member, and the present Chair of the Reading Hall of Fame)

Our Members Publish

By Jennifer Shettel

Laurie Elish-Piper and **Susan L'Allier** (Northern Illinois University) co-authored several literacy-coaching publications, including the Pearson published book *Literacy Strategies for Teacher Candidates*, a book chapter "Literacy Leaders in Elementary Schools" (and the workshop-in-a-box, *The Literacy Coaching Series*). Check out their samples and video clips at <http://www.theliteracycoachingseries.com>.

Diane Kern (University of Rhode Island) authored the *Cliffs Test Prep Praxis II* series for Wiley & Sons. She also published the articles "Zombie ideas in education," "Re-visioning literacy circles," "Real Rigor, Rubber Rulers, and Raising Reading Achievement," "The universe is on the side of justice," and "Real world reading and the common core standards" for the *New England Reading Association Journal* in 2012-2013.

Evan Ortlieb (Monash University, Australia) & **Earl Cheek** (Louisiana State University) edited two new volumes in their series, *Literacy Research, Practice and Evaluation*. Volume 2 features advanced clinic-based practices while Volume 3 targets school-based interventions.

Jodi Pilgrim (University of Mary Hardin) was quite prolific in 2013. She published three book chapters with C. Bledsoe on literacy and technology and co-authored several articles:

- Bledsoe, C., & Pilgrim, J. (2013). Teaching literacy with technology through instructional models. In J. Whittingham,

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S. Huffman, W. Rickman, & C. Wiedmaier (Eds.), *Technological Tools for the Literacy Classroom* (pp. 243-262). New York: IGI Global.

- Pilgrim, J., (2013). Literacy Issues: Valuing literacy research. *Journal of Reading Education* 39(1), 32-33.
- Pilgrim, J., & Bledsoe, C. (2013). The application of Web 2.0 tools in literacy education. In J. Whittingham, S. Huffman, W. Rickman, & C. Wiedmaier (Eds.), *Technological Tools for the Literacy Classroom* (pp. 27-45). New York: IGI Global.
- Pilgrim, J., & Martinez, E. (2013). Defining Literacy in the 21st Century: A Guide to Terminology and Skills. *Texas Journal of Literacy Education*, 1 (1), 60-69. Retrieved from http://www.texasreaders.org/uploads/8/6/6/5/8665759/tjle_2013.corrected.pdf
- Pilgrim, J. & Zipperlen, M. (2013). An investigation of technology integration in teacher preparation programs. *The Texas Forum of Teacher Education*, 3(1), 22-35. Retrieved from <http://www.txate.org/documents/TxATE-forum-vol-3-2013-FINAL2.pdf>

Victoria Risko (Vanderbilt University) authored several publications in 2013, including:

- Hathaway, J. I., & Risko, V. J. (2013). On becoming teachers: Knowing and believing. In K. Hall, T. Cremin, B. Comber, & L. Moll (Eds.), *International handbook of research on children's literacy, learning, and culture* (pp. 427-439). West Sussex, England: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Jimenez, R. T., David, S., Pacheco, M., Risko, V. J., Pray, L., Fagan, K., & Gonzales, M. (in press). Supporting teachers of English Language Learners: Leveraging students' linguistic strengths through translation. *The Reading Teacher*.
- Elish-Piper, L., Matthews, M. W., & Risko, V. J. (2013). Invisibility: An unintended consequence of standards, tests, and mandates. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, 9(2), 4-23. <http://jolle.coe.uga.edu/>

Continued on next page.

Jennifer Shettel (Millersville University of PA) published a group article, "Transforming first-year learning experiences to enhance success for at-risk undergraduates" in volume 24 of *Metropolitan Universities Journal*. She also co-authored the article "Infusing technology with reading instruction" in volume 2 of the eJournal of Balanced Literacy Instruction, available at: <http://www.balancedreadinginstruction.com/e-journal-bri-fall-2013.html>

Nancy Stevens (University of Wisconsin, Whitewater) published the article, "What You Don't Know Can Hurt You: Expertise Matters" in the *Wisconsin State Reading Association Journal*.

Sheri Vasinda (Oklahoma State), published the following pieces in 2013:

- Vasinda, S., Grote-Garcia, S., & Durham, P. (2013). Sharing common ground: Texas and the Common Core State Standards. *Texas Journal of Literacy Education* 1(1), p. 77-89.
- Vasinda, S. & McLeod, J. (2013). Podcasting approaches to readers theater. In Rasinski, T. & Padack, N. (Eds.), *From fluency to comprehension: Teaching practices that work*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- McLeod J., Dondlinger, M.J., Vasinda, & Haas, L. (2013). Digital play: Mathematical simulations transforming curiosity into play. *International Journal of Gaming and Computer-Mediated Simulations*, 5(2), pp. 34-59.
- McLeod, J., Vasinda, S., & Dondlinger, M.J. (2013). Conceptual visibility and virtual dynamics in technology-scaffolded learning environments for conceptual knowledge of mathematics. *Journal of Computers in Mathematics and Science Teaching*.

Wolfram Verlaan (University of Alabama) collaborated on several publications in 2013-2014, including:

- Ortlieb, E., Verlaan, W., & Cheek, Jr., E.H. (2013). Content-specific literacy practices. In E. Ortlieb & E.H. Cheek, Jr.

(Eds.), *Literacy Research, Practice, and Evaluation: Vol. 3. School-based interventions for struggling readers, K-8* (pp. 21-40). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group.

- O'Brien, J. & Verlaan, W. (2013). 500 years of Spanish exploration and settlement: Children's literature. *Social Education*, (77), 1, 28-31.
- Ortlieb, E., Verlaan, W., & Cheek, Jr., E.H. (2013). Vocabulary/comprehension-based models of reading clinics. In E. Ortlieb & E.H. Cheek, Jr. (Eds.), *Literacy Research, Practice, and Evaluation: Vol. 2. Advanced literacy practices: From the clinic to the classroom* (pp. 119-140). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group.

Shelley Wepner (Manhattanville College), published two articles in 2013:

- Wepner, S. B. Gómez, D.W., & Ferrara, J. (2013). Beyond campus walls for preparing new teachers to work with Hispanic students. *Excelsior: Leadership in Teaching and Learning*, 8(1), 95-105.
- Wepner, S. B., Clark Johnson, V., Henk, W., & Lovell, S. (2013). Deans' interpersonal/negotiating skills. *Academic Leader*, 29(3), 2-3.

Jack Cassidy (Millersville University of PA)

- Cassidy, J. & Grote-Garcia, S. (2013) Common Core State Standards top the 2013 what's hot, what's not survey. *Reading Today* 31 (1), 12-16.
- Cassidy, J. & Ortlieb, E. (2013). What was hot (and not) in literacy: What we can learn, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 57 (1), 21-29.

(Jennifer Shettel, Millersville University of PA and a member of the SIG Board, has compiled these publications. SIG members should send a list of their 2014 publications to her in APA format for publication in a forthcoming SIG newsletter. (jennifershettel@gmail.com).

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