

Specialized Literacy Professionals

A Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association

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The Literacy Professional

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

An Interview with Dr. William Harvey Executive Director of IRA

By Jack Cassidy
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

In August, I sat down with Dr. William Harvey, the new Executive Director of the International Reading Association. At the time of the interview, he had been Executive Director for about ten days. Nevertheless, he was already beginning to form an impression of the organization. Dr. Harvey came to IRA after some distinguished administrative appointments at a number of universities, government agencies, and private foundations. Immediately prior to his appointment, he was Vice President and Chief Officer for Diversity and Equity at the University of Virginia.



Q. Dr. Harvey, a number of articles about you have appeared on the Internet and in *Reading Today*. In general, those pieces have focused on your professional accomplishments. I would like to look at some of the personal factors that have shaped your career. However, to start off, I'd like to get your impression of IRA after ten days on the job.

A. I see IRA as an organization with tremendous potential—a potential for growth and a potential to make a difference. Specifically, I would like to establish a number of new chapters of Alpha Epsilon at our colleges and universities. If we have an opportunity to get young preservice professionals involved in IRA, we can keep them involved.

Q. Tell us a little bit about your early life.

A. I was born in North Carolina, one of four children. My father was a science teacher. In order to make a better life for his children, he moved the family to Asbury Park, New Jersey, when I was ten. I attended West Chester University in Pennsylvania where I met my wife. I wanted to be a journalist, but after one year as a reporter for the *Newark Ledger*, I decided to go into teaching—a decision I thought I would never make. I taught English at Red Bank High School near Asbury Park. Then I was offered a position at Brookdale Community College. While there, I pursued my masters in academic administration at Rutgers University. Eventually, I was offered a position as director of the W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center at the University of Pennsylvania. I then went on to get my Ph.D. in anthropology at Rutgers, but I took half my courses at the University of Pennsylvania.

Continued on next page.

Dr. William Harvey, Continued

- Q. Some people have expressed concern over your lack of training or background in the field of literacy. How would you respond?**
- A. I think not having such a background helps me be more objective. I see it as an advantage because I am not linked to any one perspective. I can concentrate on the business of the organization.
- Q. Who were the people who have had a major influence on your professional life?**
- A. My father would definitely be one of them. He taught science for forty years. I knew I could never be as good a teacher as he was. That is one reason I left high school teaching. He was also a wonderful role model for all his children. My wife has also been a great influence. She has taught 5th and 6th grade for many years. She has provided wonderful insights into teachers as they practice their craft.
- Q. What does William Harvey like to do when he is not doing the work of IRA?**
- A. I have developed an unhealthy appreciation for fine art. I have no artistic talent myself so I am in awe of those who do have this talent. Early on, I was inspired by Picasso's interest in African art. I have now been to Africa many times and have developed quite a collection of African art.
- Q. Tell us about your daughters.**
- A. My older daughter is a sociologist and on the faculty at Georgia State. She is about ready to publish her second book, a sociological analysis of the Obama phenomena. My younger daughter is in her second year of an MBA program at Tulane. I'm quite proud of both of them.
- Q. What do you like to read?**
- A. I love science fiction. Most recently, I have turned back to biographical works. The Obama books have definitely influenced me. I've just read the autobiography of Congressman John Lewis.
- Q. What might our readers find surprising about William Harvey?**
- A. I have become fascinated with the Nintendo Wii. I spend at least 30 minutes a day on the machine; I like to say it's a good form of exercise. My wife calls herself a Wii widow.
- Q. Is there anything else you would like our members to know?**
- A. I would like them to know that I need help. I really do need to hear from our members. What can we do for them? How can they help us recruit new members? The more involvement and engagement we have from members the more opportunity we have to shape policy and practice.

Thank you, Dr. Harvey for taking the time to speak with me.

SIG Initiates Awards

As part of the effort to recognize individuals who have contributed to the field of Literacy Education in a meaningful way, the Awards Committee has decided to establish two awards for this purpose. These awards have some similarities to current honors that other organizations in Literacy Education recognize, but the intent of the Specialized Literacy Education Professional special interest group is to emphasize an overall contribution, rather than specifically focusing on research, for example. The primary purpose of these awards is to recognize individuals for contributions in teaching, service, and research.

Faculty Newcomer Award

The first award will be the Faculty Newcomer Award, which is intended to recognize individuals who have been active in the field of literacy for 5 years or less in a college or university setting. Criteria for this award reflect an effort to honor an individual in the early stages of a career which suggests excellence in teaching, service to the community, and scholarship, but with the emphasis on all these areas equally. Such criteria as modeling appropriate teaching behavior, emphasis on providing quality advising to students, providing service to the university or college, local community, school districts, and state agencies should be considered in the nomination process. Other criteria would include the level of activity in organizations that support the development of literacy, and certainly, an appropriate level of scholarship would be expected. Although nominations for this award are expected to be initiated by members of the Specialized Literacy Professionals, nominees are not required to be members.

Literacy Laureate Award



The second award is the Literacy Laureate Award, which is intended to recognize individuals who have been active in the field of literacy for at least 25 years. It is expected that the recipient would have made a significant contribution to the field of literacy through a variety of venues to include teaching, service, and scholarship. Although the nominee would likely have been involved in higher education, individuals who have contributed to the development of literacy in school districts, state and/or national agencies, or other appropriate career paths should be strongly considered. The impetus for this award is intentionally not focused on scholarship, but instead emphasizes a multi-pronged approach to advancing the cause of literacy. Nominees are expected to be members of the Specialized Literacy Professionals interest group.

Nominations for these awards should include a detailed letter of support, and current vitae. Nominations should be sent to:

Earl Cheek, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair and Patrick and Edwidge Olinde Endowed Professor of Education
Department of Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice

223 Peabody Hall
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

The deadline for receipt of all nominations is March 1, 2010.

The Literacy Professional

This is an editorial and certainly does not represent the opinions of all SIG members. The editors welcome responses to this piece.

A Board Gone Wild Or.....!??



By Jack Cassidy, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi
IRA President 1982–83

Last year (2008–09), IRA experienced a deficit in its operating budget. This was not the first time that IRA has experienced a deficit in the operating budget. However, with the general economic downturn and a decrease in conference revenue, the IRA Board, which includes the Executive Committee made up of the President, President-elect, and Vice-President, was justifiably concerned. However, most of the actions which the Board took to address this deficit could be characterized, at worst, as draconian and, at best, as extreme. The Board had the option of borrowing the needed funds from the many ancillary funds that IRA has in investment accounts. These accounts had also experienced a decline, but there was more than enough remaining funds to cover the deficit. What was particularly troubling to many was the fact that at the same time the Board was cutting member services and longtime staff, the Board authorized additional expenditures of \$468,000. This additional expenditure was used to pay an outside consulting group to study the organizational structure of IRA and make recommendations. In my opinion, these additional expenditures were misguided particularly with the downturn in the overall economy and the deficit. Outside consulting groups had been retained in the past, and their findings and recommendations had been largely ignored.

Positive Actions

To be fair, some of the Board actions were cost-saving and did not cut services to members

1. **Offering retirement incentives to long-term or highly paid employees.** This was a good idea. Longtime employees received recognition for their years of service, and the Association saved needed funds. However, some employees were forced to take the retirement option or be fired.
2. **Eliminating the fourth IRA Board meeting.** For almost 30 years, the Board and the Association survived with only three Board meetings. In fact, when IRA membership was at its height, there were only 3 meetings. Then, in the mid-nineties, a fourth Board meeting was added, often in connection with the World Congress. Some have maintained this addition was merely an excuse for the Board members to get their ways paid to the World Congress. In any case, eliminating this fourth meeting was a good idea—particularly in this age of increased communication technology.
3. **Cutting Staff Travel Budgets.** Sometimes in the past, unneeded staff members were flown to program committee meetings or other events. Cutting back on this kind of travel was beneficial.

Draconian Actions

1. **Firing (or eliminating the positions of) longtime employees.** This action is undoubtedly the worst of all the Board decisions. Some of these long-term terminated employees had received positive evaluations and raises over the years. These actions

caused a decline in the overall morale of the remaining IRA staff as well as bitterness in the dismissed staff members, many of whom had established close working relationships with many IRA members. Numerous IRA members were also outraged by these dismissals. Obviously, the Board was making these decisions with the help of some staff members who were perhaps disgruntled with their colleagues or supervisors.

2. **Eliminating the research conference prior to the annual conference.** Many members valued this Saturday conference, prior to the annual conference. It had been in existence for over a decade and (except for 2009) attendance and revenues had actually increased. Of course, the Board would argue that research is infused throughout the annual conference so the one day pre-conference is not needed. Most regular attendees at the research conference disagree.
3. **Eliminating the international leadership workshop.** Individual membership in IRA has been declining. Key to maintaining and increasing that membership is the work of state, provincial, and national council leaders. The leadership conferences was a wonderful way to provide those council leaders with appropriate training at the same time giving them some recognition for their efforts. To completely eliminate them was counter-productive.
4. **Cutting one day from the annual conference.** The annual conference has been four days for at least 35 years. Eliminating one day essentially reduces the amount of staff development provided to members. Presumably, the cost of the annual conference will remain the same so members will be paying the same for less service.
5. **Eliminating funding for the Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse.** Literacy coaching is still a very important topic to reading professionals, and the financial support that IRA provided for this effort was already minimal.

A Caveat

This editorial has been extremely critical of recent Board actions. However, I have not been critical of the Board members themselves. All are dedicated professionals deserving of their elected positions. Undoubtedly, they were doing what they thought best for the organization. Unfortunately, they gave too much attention to their *fiduciary responsibility* as Board members and not enough attention to their *professional responsibility* to the members and staff. Most employers feel some responsibility to both their clients and their staff members.

SO

So what should be done now? Well hopefully, at the next Board meeting in October, the Board can reverse some of its actions. Also, perhaps this experience will convince many IRA members, who are not on the Board, to become more informed about Board actions and to voice their concerns when those actions are harmful to the Association.

OR

You will notice that the word *Or* appears in the title of this editorial. Is there another point of view? How can draconian cuts be justified when the Board authorized \$468,000 in additional (unnecessary in my opinion) expenditures. Is there another explanation for what happened? We would like to hear from our SIG members. (Contact: jack.cassidy@tamucc.edu or 361-825-5611)



Former & Present Board Members React

Advance copies of the editorial "A Board Gone Wild Or..." were e-mailed to all present and former IRA Board members who are also members of our SIG. Here are some of their reactions.

"It's great that you are raising this Jack. IRA is one of the financially well off organizations I know. It has deep pockets and can certainly survive a period of annual deficits. The loss of staff and services not only is unneeded but also surely threatens the future of the organization. There is some real danger that our international affiliates will choose to become independent with so little service and such bad leadership from Newark."

*Kenneth Goodman, University of Arizona
IRA Board member 1976-79, IRA President, 1981-82*

"Congratulations!! I do think that this kind of critique is desperately needed by the IRA board and other active members in other groups. We are a professional group of members who are knowledgeable and committed to IRA. We live in a democratic society and work for democracy in classrooms, schools and organizations. IRA board and staff need to be open and transparent to the membership. We need to critique honestly at the same time that we support."

*Yetta Goodman, University of Arizona
IRA Board member 1994-97*

"I agree that \$468K for a study is just plain stupid but I'd keep the attack aimed at that rather than the dismissal of folks many of whom should have been let go without financial incentives..."

*Richard Allington, University of Tennessee
IRA Board member 1996-99, IRA President, 2005-06*

"I would point out that there was a unanimous vote by the Board to hire the consultants and it was DESPERATELY needed. IRA HQ had lost vision, energy, and direction...In my opinion, your editorial does nothing to help the situation. That is why it saddens me so much to see a former President, and someone I respect, do great harm to IRA. You are, of course, free to do so. I have tried to share as honestly as I can, my take on the matter."

Present IRA Board member

"Since when does asking questions become harmful? Since when is silence preferred over dialogue? Personnel matters aside, my major concerns with the actions of the Board are centered on transparency and process. Any plans for change

in the organization should be openly discussed and debated before any action is taken. The members of IRA should not be hearing about changes after the fact and through rumors, nor should they be excluded from the decision-making process. Trust is lost and bad decisions are made. Openness is as important for the future of IRA as anything we do. The fact that those who have raised questions about recent actions—even those who have simply asked for clarification—have been rebuked with challenges of disloyalty and acting against the best interest of the organization is of great concern. We have been silenced professionally for the past eight years in a political context that has relied on similar tactics. I applaud Jack for asking critical questions and opening dialogue. Now, let's get a full report on what is really going on and move forward to discuss the critical concerns and options that have been raised and those that have not."

*James Hoffman, University of Texas
IRA Board member 1995-98*

The Departed By Jack Cassidy

Many longtime staff members have left IRA. I know of 15; together they represent 259 years of experience. Some have taken the early retirement buyout. Some were forced to take the early retirement buyout. Some were fired. Some had their jobs eliminated. In any case, they served IRA for many years. I'm appreciative of their service.

- Marianne Allen (Marketing) 22 years
- Deb Andress (Customer Service/Finance) 4 years
- Sue Annable (Publications) 20 years
- Alida Cutts (Executive) 31 years
- Virginia Devonshire (Conferences) 21 years
- Cheri Dill (Finance) 12 years
- Carol Dunn (Conferences) 31 years
- Alan Farstrup (Executive) 24 years
- Mora Gorman (Publications) 4 yrs
- Linda Hunter (Finance) 39 years
- Sharon Moorman (IT/Finance) 18 years
- Merle Roemer (IT/Finance) 14 years
- Cathy Roller (Research) 11 years
- Wayne Steagall (IT/Finance) 1 year
- Melanie Younger (Conferences) 7 year



Name Change for Our SIG

At the Minneapolis Annual IRA Conference, members present at the business meeting of the *Specialized Reading Professionals* SIG voted to change its name to the *Specialized Literacy Professionals* SIG. The change was made because the special interest group deals with more issues than just reading. Writing is also an important part of most members' jobs. Also, it was thought that by changing the name, literacy coaches would be more likely to see our SIG as a home for them. Many organizations and publications with the term

Reading in their names have changed their names in recent years. For instance, the College Reading Association recently changed its name to the Association of Literacy Educators and Researchers (ALER). IRA's *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* (JAAL) was formerly the *Journal of Reading*. The change in the name of our SIG does not become official until it is approved by the IRA Board, hopefully at its October meeting.

The Literacy Professional

The Literacy Coaches' Corner

by Nancy Shanklin



I am honored to write this first "The Literacy Coaches' Corner" for The Literacy Professional newsletter. There is much to update you on and several upcoming events that you will want to put into your calendar for 2009–10.

A Passing of the Baton

I completed my tenure as Director of the Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse on July 1, 2009. Given the current economy, the Executive Boards of NCTE and IRA have decided that they can no longer fund the Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse as they have in the past. However, they continue to emphasize that they will support literacy coaching through conferences, embedding the LCC into their websites, and calling for a volunteer LCC Editor (see the box on page 6). I do hope that you will think about applying for this position. For the present, the current link to the Literacy Coaching website remains open. <http://www.literacycoachingonline.org>

Special Topics Issue on Coaching for September 2010 Issue of *Elementary School Journal*

As an outgrowth of the NRC Study on Coaching from November '08, Misty Sailors from UT-Austin and I submitted a proposal to edit a special topics issue of *Elementary School Journal* on coaching. Our proposal was accepted, and we received close to 40 empirical studies as of July 15, 2009. We have been busy sending these manuscripts out for review. This issue, which will contain approximately nine studies, is set to come out in September 2010. We believe this will be good timing linked to the potential reauthorization of NCLB/ESEA helping educators, researchers, and policymakers understand the significant work being done on coaching across reading, math, and science in grades K–8.

The Comprehensive Literacy Bill

The most exciting announcement about literacy coaching is that the role of "literacy/instructional coach" has been written into the new Comprehensive Literacy Bill that, hopefully, will be introduced into Congress this fall. Even if this does not happen because of Congress' work on healthcare and the economy, much of the wording that has been developed is likely to become part of the reauthorization of NCLB/ESEA. It is important for us to follow developments on this bill.

Seven Sessions on Coaching at NCTE Annual Convention in Philadelphia on November 19–22, 2009

I hope that many of you will attend NCTE in Philadelphia this fall. There will be sessions on coaching along with much emphasis on 21st century skills.

Study Group on Literacy Coaching, National Reading Conference, Albuquerque, NM, December 2–5, 2009

This year Jennifer Hathaway and I will co-host the study group on literacy/instructional coaching at the National Reading Conference (NRC). We hope that you will think about joining

us from 7:30 to 8:25 AM each morning. We have a wide variety of coaches, district level personnel, researchers, and teacher educators who attend the study group. The breadth of people involved demonstrates the interest and coordination it takes to do research in this area. The group's efforts have spawned a book manuscript, the ESJ Special Issue, and much networking. We discuss important pieces on coaching that have appeared in the previous year and share what we have learned from sessions at the conference itself.

2010 International Literacy Coaching Summit, Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi, April 16–17, 2010 <http://literacy.tamucc.edu/>

Jack Cassidy and his group will once again be the hosts for the Literacy Coaching Summit in Corpus Christi, TX. I hope that you will think about putting in a proposal using the link above. The theme will be coaching and RTI. Last year's conference was a great success! The relaxed hospitality of UT Corpus Christi was conducive to in-depth sharing and discussions by coaches, district leaders, and researchers.

IRA in Chicago, April 25–28, 2010

We are all just now receiving our acceptances for IRA in Chicago. I am confident that there will be several presentations on literacy/reading/instructional coaching.

Literacy Coaching in the new IRA Standards

As the chair of this effort, Rita Bean reports that another draft of the new standards will be out for review by IRA members this fall. The plan is for the IRA Board to vote on the standards at their February 2010 meeting. The new standards would be published, at the earliest, in Summer 2010. As the draft stands currently, the role of the literacy coach will stay synonymous with that of the literacy specialist at the MA level.



Three New Book Recommendations

Before I ended my tenure as Director of the LCC, I reviewed several new books. I would particularly like to call your attention to three about which you can read more in-depth reviews in the LCC Library.

Burkins, J. (2009). *Practical literacy coaching: A collection of tools to support your work*. Newark, DE: IRA.

Froelich, K. & Puig, E. (2009). *The literacy leadership team: Sustaining and expanding success*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Frost, S., Buhie, R., Blachowicz, C. (2009). *Effective literacy coaching: Building expertise and a culture of literacy*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

While in some parts of the country the funding around coaching is tenuous, many of us are staying the course and moving forward in our efforts. We hope to prove that coaching is an important form of job-embedded professional development that can help to improve the quality of teachers' instructional efforts and, subsequently, students' learning and achievement.

Nancy Shanklin is an associate professor at the University of Colorado and the former Director of the Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse. She is also a longtime member of our SIG.



Call for LCC Editor

NCTE seeks a volunteer Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse editor. This editor will support the vitality of the Clearinghouse by developing an acquisitions and review system for new literacy coaching materials. In addition, the editor will support conversations about literacy coaching in an online discussion space open to anyone to post events, describe projects, ask questions, and connect with others involved and interested in literacy coaching. The two-year term carries a small honorarium. If you would like to apply for the editor role, please send a letter of interest and a CV to Kent Williamson, executive director, at kwilliamson@ncte.org. The term begins on November 1 or when an appointment is made.

✓ Check the Red Check

Do you have a red check on the mailing label on the front of this newsletter? If you do, it means your membership in our SIG is about to expire. If you have two red checks, it means your membership has already expired. In either case, it is time to RENEW your membership. Our SIG includes as its members many prominent leaders in the field, including present IRA board members Patricia Edwards, Maryann Manning, Donald Leu, Taffy Raphael, and Ray Reutzel as well as former presidents Ira Aaron, Richard Allington, Mary Austin, Jack Cassidy, Jerry Johns, Linda Gambrell, Walter MacGinitie, Delores B. Malcolm, Donna Ogle, Kathryn Ransom, Carol Sanata, Doris Roettger-Svoboda, Timothy Shanahan, Dorothy Strickland, and MaryEllen Vogt. Many former IRA board members also belong.

Our Members Publish

In this column, we list some of the 2008–2009 publications of our members whose names are listed in boldface. For the next issue, please e-mail Jack Cassidy (jack.cassidy@tamucc.edu) the names of any of your 2009 publications that we may have missed.

Rita Bean (University of Pittsburgh) is again the author of the 2nd edition of *The Reading Specialist: Leadership for the Classroom, School, and Community* published by Guilford.

Karen Bronley (University of Binghamton–SUNY) is the editor of *Writing for Educators: Personal Essays and Practical Advice* published by Information Age Publishing in North Carolina

Jerry L. Johns (Northern Illinois University) has authored two books in 2008–2009: *Basic Reading Inventory*, 10th ed., and is the co-author of *Improving Reading: Interventions, Strategies, and Resources*, 5th ed. with Susan Davis Lenski.

Dale D. Johnson and **Bonnie Johnson** (Dowling College, NY) are two of the authors of *Stop High-Stakes Testing: An Appeal to America's Conscience* published by Rowman & Littlefield, MD.

Jill Lewis (New Jersey City University) is the editor of *Essential Questions in Adolescent Literacy: Teachers and Researchers Describe What Works in Classrooms* published by Guilford.

Misty Sailors (University of Texas–San Antonio) is co-editor of *Finding the Right Texts: What Works for Beginning and Struggling Readers* published by Guilford.

Karen D. Wood (University of North Carolina–Charlotte) is co-author of *Literacy Instruction for Adolescents: Research-based Practice* published by Guilford. Wood is also co-author of "An Investigation of Teachers' Concerns About Vocabulary and the Representation of These Concerns in Content Literacy Methodology Textbooks" in volume 30 of *Reading Psychology*.



Membership Form – Specialized Reading Professionals

Checks should be made out to **Specialized Reading Professionals** and sent to:

Gary L. Shaffer
1809 Country Club Drive
Tullahoma, TN 37388-4832

- \$10.00 (one year)
- \$15.00 (two years)

Please share copies of this form with others who might be interested.

Name: _____ IRA Membership #: _____
Position: _____
Institution Name: _____
Institution Address: _____
Home Address: _____
Home Phone: _____
E-mail: _____