

*Winter 2019-2020*

# Specialized Literacy Professionals

Volume 27, Issue 2

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



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

The year 2019 was a very productive year for our SIG. We awarded the first Jack Cassidy Award for Scholarly Contributions. This award recognizes one publication each year that addresses HOT literacy topics and that holds promise for impacting specialized literacy professionals. We also initiated a mentoring program for doctoral students and early career faculty members. More information about these initiatives is found on our website (<http://www.literacyprofessional.org/>).



In this newsletter, you will find updates from our various committees and information about special projects. I encourage you to become active in our SIG by volunteering on a committee or as a mentor. I also encourage you to share this newsletter with colleagues and other individuals that might be interested in the preparation and professional development of literacy professionals.

Lastly, we will be holding elections this spring. With Bethanie Pletcher moving into the president role, we will be looking for a president-elect. We will also have one opening for a board member. Consider nominating yourself or a colleague. We will announce our call for nominations via email in March.

Cheers to another productive year,

Stephanie Grote-Garcia  
President (2018-2020)



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*Meeting...*

## Your Board Members

**President-Elect.** Bethanie Pletcher, *Associate 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 Kleba

*And ... Looking Back*

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



- 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



Following the special session, the Specialized Literacy Professionals held a business meeting. Each of the committees presented updates as well as the honoring of the first recipients of the Jack Cassidy Award for Scholarly Contributions (to be presented later in the newsletter). Topics for the 2020 session were brainstormed by those attending.

*Members reflect on the Special Session ...* This was such an informative session! After hearing the speakers' experiences with literacy professional preparation, I was inspired to make adjustments to my graduate Leadership and Literacy course. -Bethanie Pletcher, Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi.

*Highlighting....*

## Member's Continued Contribution to the Field

Published in June 2018, the *Handbook of Reading and Study Strategy Research (3rd ed.)*, Rona F. Flippo & Tom Bean (Eds.), published by Routledge / Taylor & Francis.

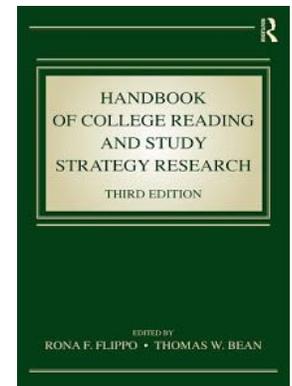
Published in 2017, a four volume set of books, *Reading: Major Themes in Education*, Rona F. Flippo (Ed.): Volume I (begins with Huey 1908 and ends with Shirley Brice Heath 1982); Volume II (begins with Applebee & Langer 1983 and ends with Dole, Duffy, Roehler & Pearson 1991); Volume III (begins with Anderson & Nagy 1992 and ends with Guthrie & Wigfield et al. 2004); Volume IV (begins with Leigh Hall 2005 and ends with Afflerbach 2016).

Flippo, R. F. (2017). *Reading: Major Themes in Education*. London and New York: Routledge.

Webpage for the 4 volume set:

<https://www.routledge.com/Reading/Flippo/p/book/9781138018945>

The ISBN is: 978-1-138-01894-5



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*Spotlight on:*

# The Jack Cassidy Award for Scholarly Contributions

The Jack Cassidy Award for Scholarly Contributions was awarded to Bethanie C. Pletcher and Alida H. Hudson for *Coaching on Borrowed Time: Balancing the Roles of the Literacy Professional*, a 2019 featured article in *The Reading Teacher*. This article highlights the experiences of four reading professionals who share strategies for balancing the many roles of reading professionals in schools. 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>



*Insights from first recipients Alida Hudson and Bethanie Pletcher:*

It is such an honor to receive this award, especially because it is named after a distinguished literacy professional, Dr. Jack Cassidy. Dr. Cassidy initiated the Specialized Literacy Professionals SIG with the intent that it serve and empower those who work with children and teachers as well as those who prepare teachers and reading/literacy specialists. We believe that our article, “Coaching on Borrowed Time: Balancing the Roles of the Literacy Professional,” for which we received this award aligns with this mission.

Our article also aligns with the most recent Standards for Preparing Literacy Professionals document in that its focus is the hybrid nature of the specialized literacy professional role for which many find themselves unprepared to take on.

When we wrote the article for which we received the award, the stories of many reading/literacy specialists were always with us, including our own. What makes us so passionate about the topic of the multifaceted roles of this group of school personnel is that we lived those roles and worked each day to meet the high expectations of students, teachers, administrators, and parents. During our year-long study of the coaching conversations between literacy coaches and teachers, the coaches’ celebrations and worries related to how they are pulled in many directions frequently surfaced. Thus, we felt compelled to write about this issue and provide suggestions to other literacy professionals based on our experiences and observations. We hope that our article finds those who need it.

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*Featured article on Literacy Leadership and Coaching...*

# Mentoring Aspiring Literacy Leaders

**Macie Kerbs, Assistant Professor, Sam Houston State University**

“You share in our joys with these kids like they’re your own kids,” exclaimed a teacher as she reflected on her experience working side-by-side through an entire unit of study in poetry writing with her team and myself as a coach. As a district literacy coach, I had the opportunity to lead and mentor dozens of classroom teachers, many of whom went on to become literacy leaders in our district. By partnering with these teachers, I became an honorary member of several grade level teams at multiple campuses. I celebrated the learning of both the teachers and their students and as a result, developed lifetime friendships with many of those teachers.

While many of these relationships began within the formal structure of coaching, several emerged into a more informal mentorship relationship that was mutually beneficial. At first, I worked with teachers in more of a systematic way to achieve their desired goal, but over time, the relationship evolved into more a conversation built around inquiry and active listening.

As a district literacy leader, I worked with my team and supervisors to establish model classrooms for each grade level around our district. These model classroom teachers were implementing instructional practices that aligned with the district vision and represented a wide variety of student population. The selection criteria for model classrooms was a natural result of our day-to-day work, as we spent ample time with highly effective teachers. Eventually, we began talking with those teachers about the possibility of

bringing other teachers from around the district into their classroom to observe their literacy instruction.

Most of the model classroom teachers did not seek out the opportunity and were surprised when we approached them to serve in this way. In fact, many of them said, “Are you sure?” and wondered if they were even doing anything special to learn from. This humility set them apart. They were not looking for opportunities to advance in leadership and simply teaching the students in their classroom in the best way they could. Not only did their classroom environment stand apart from many other classrooms

across the district, their results showed enormous gains from their teaching. We knew we needed to learn from them and use their structures in other classrooms across the district.

***“This relationship was mutually beneficial because my understanding of classroom instruction was enhancing with every model classroom I visited...”***

Establishing model classrooms was the first shift from formal coaching to informal mentorship. I began spending time with the model teachers, helping them become more reflective of their practice so we could verbalize some of the decisions they made inside their classroom. To many of them, they saw their daily decisions as just something they naturally do. My role was to help them name some of those teaching moves so others could more easily adopt similar practices. This relationship was mutually beneficial because my understanding of classroom instruction was enhancing with every model classroom I visited, while the model classroom teachers were growing in their own capacity to become a literacy leader.

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Over time, these model classroom teachers extended their leadership to outside of the walls of their classroom. They began helping facilitate professional development both at their campus and at the district level. We brought them into grade level specific trainings to serve as voices from the field. Many of them began asking about ways to move into the literacy interventionist or coaching roles we had throughout the district. Depending on the teacher, I either helped connect them to Master’s programs that aligned to their goals or discussed ways to gain the experience needed to be successful in these roles. When jobs became available, I served as a reference for those who I trusted would serve the students best in that capacity. While not every inside model classroom teacher moved into those positions, we did control the quality of those applying for those types of positions.

One important factor of this relationship was that it was ongoing. Over several years, we continued to grow in our relationship, whether that teacher remained inside of their classroom or moved into another leadership role. Regular check-ins were vital to both of our growth. I visited each campus on a weekly basis and reserved a time to visit with the literacy leaders on each campus. Oftentimes, we met briefly in the morning as we sipped our coffee and occasionally over lunch in their office. These meetings were informal, but powerful. I listened, celebrated, and advised as needed. The role of a literacy leader, whether interventionist or coach, can

*“I listened, celebrated, and advised as needed.”*

be quite isolation, and I could easily step in as their teammate.

Now that I have moved into a position outside of the district, I still remain in contact with several of those teachers and literacy leaders. Marco Polo (<https://www.marcopolo.me/>), a private video chat app, has allowed us to stay in contact and continue the conversation. Using this app, we record short videos discussing issues or sharing celebrations for each other. Since the videos are recorded, you have the option to listen to it live or wait and listen when

time allows. This app has allowed me to pay closer attention to body language and listen to what the speaker is really saying, as well as consider my response in a more thoughtful manner.

While we used this app when we worked together in the same district, it has become even more important to the relationship now that we are hundreds of miles away.

Mentorship is something that can occur organically in a system that values the individuals they hire. I was fortunate to work in a district that invested in their own people, and as a result, developed strong literacy leaders.

The relationships established through this culture of mentoring are ones that have blossomed into lasting friendships, even as our paths have taken us into different roles. By noticing, building capacity, and leveraging the strengths of classroom teachers, we can mentor the future of literacy leaders.

**Macie Kerbs** is a new member to the literacy higher education community and to the ILA Specialized Literacy Professionals where she focuses on teaching literacy methods and sharing the passion of coaching.

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*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.

**Mentoring Committee Update.** The SLP SIG recently connected with the Reading Hall of Fame to permit interested members who seek mentoring, whether in research endeavors or school literacy practices, to be paired with appropriate experts spanning the literacy spectrum. For any SLP member who is interested in receiving mentoring or providing mentoring to others, please contact [ortliebe@stjohns.edu](mailto:ortliebe@stjohns.edu) for more information. After receiving your request, we will pair you with a mentor that has similar interest.

## 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?

*Highlighting....*

# Member's Impact on the Community

**Stephanie Grote-Garcia.** received a small Interfaith grant to build a guided reading library focused on "compassion". The idea is that children will learn about becoming compassionate global citizens through reading.

**"Islanders Helping the Early Acceleration of Readers Together (IHEART)"** is an in-school tutorial program for first grade students who struggle

with literacy tasks. The mission is to provide children with early reading intervention and give teacher candidates opportunities to implement strategies learned in their university reading courses.

Teacher candidates work with small groups of students for 30 minutes twice per week. The tutors are trained to deliver research-based reading instruction. The IHEART coordinators (three faculty members at TAMU-CC) visit

the tutors frequently to coach and provide feedback and to ensure that lessons are being implemented with fidelity.

**Dr. Bethanie Pletcher,** IHEART coordinator, was recently awarded with a TAMU-CC Impact Multiplier Grant in the amount of \$5000 to continue research in the program and purchase materials for its emergent readers.

**Our “Mystery Member”.**

**Funda Wandé** is a foundation funded literacy project focused on increasing student literacy achievement by training literacy coaches for foundation level teachers (Gr. K-3) in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Catherine Snow and I spent a week with the Funda Wandé staff collaborating on the design of the RCT, consulting with the

Rhodes University faculty on their professional development "short courses" for teachers, and visiting the literacy coaches in their school settings. After co-observing teachers with a literacy coach, I modeled a coaching session with a teacher for my host coach. I conducted a one day training with the 8 Funda Wandé coaches, using the

ILA Literacy Leadership Brief on Literacy Coaching for Change as our "text." I continue to consult with them on their work, as they are expanding to other cities in South Africa.

<https://fundawande.org/>

**\*\*If you are this mystery member, please reply to us with your full name so we can give you that proper credit.**



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*Become a member or renew today!*

# Membership option

**Membership is also available online:**

Membership registrations and renewals are available online at <http://www.literacyprofessional.org/join.html>.

The following three options are available: one year (\$10.00), two years (\$15.00), or four years (\$30.00). Please encourage a colleague to join our SIG this year.

**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

<b>MEMBERSHIP FORM - Specialized Literacy Professionals</b>	
_____ \$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: _____

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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 continues 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.** Members of the Specialized Literacy Professionals Research Group led by Evan Ortlieb, Stephanie Grote-Garcia, Bethanie Pletcher, Alida Hudson, Annalisa Perfetto, and Susan Schatz are embarking on the second phase of its diversity. A survey aimed to determine the relative preparedness of literacy teachers to address topics of diversity, multicultural perspectives, and culturally responsive instruction in K-12 classroom settings. Stemming from a national survey of 266 respondents, this phase aims to supplement data collected with input from literacy coaches in the field who will provide their perspectives of what they see, what is needed, and how we might improve upon addressing diversity in literacy instruction. It is envisioned that this study will be finished prior to summer 2020.

**Awards Committee.** The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Jack Cassidy Award for Scholarly Contributions Award recognizes scholars whose research is not only timely but also has the potential to impact specialized literacy professionals. The Awards Committee currently seeks nominations for scholarly works from the year 2019 that have the potential for immediate impacts and widespread implications for specialized literacy professionals.

Nominees must be a member of ILA and SLP as well. Please consider submitting a nomination to Evan Ortlieb at [ortliebe@stjohns.edu](mailto:ortliebe@stjohns.edu) before March 1, 2020.

**Social Media Committee.** Specialized Literacy Professionals is working on increasing the reach of our social media presence in an effort to disseminate more of the amazing work our members and researchers are doing in the literacy professional field and to help draw in new members.

In addition to our Facebook page Specialized Literacy Professionals, we have added a Twitter page, @specializedlit. Be sure and follow us on both Twitter and Facebook to stay up to date on SLP news, information and research our members are putting out into the community.

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*Highlighting....*

## Member's Publication

- Bean, R. M., Ippolito, J., Kern, D., & Miller, C. (2019). *Research brief: Right to knowledgeable and qualified literacy educators*. Newark, DE: International Literacy Association. Retrieved from <https://www.literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/where-we-stand/ila-right-to-knowledgeable-qualified-literacy-educators.pdf>
- Bledsoe, C., Pilgrim, J., Vasinda, S., & Martinez, E. (2019). Making connections: An analogy between traditional and online text. *Texas Journal of Literacy Education*, 7(1), 10-24.
- Cassidy, J., Grote-Garcia, S., & Ortlieb, E. (2019). What's hot in 2019: Expanded and interconnected notions of literacy. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 58(1), 1-11. <http://doi.org/10.1080/19388071.2019.1665786>
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- Kern, D., Ippolito, J., Swan Dagen, A., & Bean, R. (2019). ILA standards 2017: Five key notions. *Specialized Literacy Professionals*, 26(1), 4-7.
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- Pletcher, B. C., Robertson, P., & Sullivan, M. (2019). A current overview of ten university-based reading clinics. *Reading Horizons*, 58(3).
- Pilgrim, J., McLaughlin, L., & Trotti, J. (2019). Get your mind IN the gutter: Inferencing with graphic novels. In E. Hendrix, & H. Pule (Eds.), *The Texas Association for Literacy Education Yearbook*, vol. 6. Discover the Heart of Literacy (pp. 41-48). Retrieved from [http://www.texasreaders.org/uploads/4/4/9/0/44902393/2018\\_tale\\_yearbook.pdf](http://www.texasreaders.org/uploads/4/4/9/0/44902393/2018_tale_yearbook.pdf)
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