



32nd Annual Conference
Reading Association of Ireland
Cumann Léitheoireachta na hÉireann

**THE CHANGING LANDSCAPES OF LITERACY –
BUILDING BEST PRACTICE**

ABSTRACTS

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ABSTRACTS

Plenary Abstracts

Jackie Marsh, University of Sheffield

Moving Stories: Moving Image Media and Literacy Education in the Digital Age

Children are, from a very young age, immersed in digital literacy practices in which multimodal, multimedia stories are enjoyed, constructed and reconstructed. In particular, the prevalence of moving image media in children's lives means that television, films, computer games and social software sites have become central to their meaning-making practices. This presentation will explore the place of moving image media and multimodal texts in children's out-of-school lives and will examine the range of texts they encounter on screens of all types. In particular, young children's engagement with Web 2.0 sites such as 'YouTube', 'Club Penguin' and 'Barbie Girls' will be explored and the affordances of these spaces for literacy learning considered. Schools are developing strategies to build on children's encounters with digital stories and texts outside of the classroom and the presentation will outline the ways in which some early years and primary educators in England are responding to the central place that digital moving image media have in children's lives. Drawing from a number of national and local research projects, I will examine pedagogical approaches that recognise and extend young children's knowledge of and experience with digital texts and practices and will reflect on the implications for curriculum development and approaches to assessment.

Maureen McLaughlin, East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, USA

Guided Comprehension – Helping Students Understand What They Read

Guided Comprehension is a context in which students learn comprehension strategies in a variety of settings using multiple levels and types of text. It is a three-stage process focused on explicit and guided instruction, application, and reflection. In this session, the research-base will be reviewed and practical ideas for teaching reading comprehension strategies will be shared.

Ideas for Teaching Comprehension-based Strategies

Good readers use comprehension strategies. In this session, three Guided Comprehension strategies, Making Connections, Monitoring, and Summarising, will be explained and demonstrated. Multiple ideas for classroom teaching will be presented.

Brian Murphy, University College Cork

Building Best Practice in Literacy Education Internationally and in Ireland: Gender Still on the Agenda!

Questions around boys' education and the achievement of boys in schooling have become a matter of public and political concern in a large number of countries worldwide. In this context, as well as in the debate on effective and best practice in literacy pedagogy, a particular issue and concern with the literacy achievement of boys has begun to occupy a prime position. Recent international comparative studies and national research in some countries have continued to show a clear delineation of literacy achievement along gender lines with girls consistently outperforming boys to a very significant degree on all literacy tasks. Evidence of this reality, particularly across the Anglophone world, will be presented and discussed. Some

current perspectives on how and why such a discrepancy appears to exist between the literacy achievements of girls and boys will be examined. Some of the actions proposed to address the issues of gender and achievement and underachievement in the literacy classroom will then be critically evaluated. Alternative proposals for action on the gender dimension of the effective literacy pedagogy debate, which acknowledge the complexity of the issues involved and proceed beyond 'back to basics' strategies, will then be proposed and discussed.

Mark Morgan, St Patrick's College, Dublin

Literacy: New Forms and New Issues

This paper will focus on a number of recent developments that can inform our thinking about literacy. The first is concerned with the broadening of the concept of literacy not only into cognitive domains (scientific, media and professional literacy) but also to non-cognitive domains, (e.g. emotional literacy). The second is around matters of how literacy problems can impinge on social development and on self-esteem in particular.

Mark Morgan is Head of Education in St. Patrick's College, Dublin. His research has been mainly concerned with educational disadvantage, prevention of substance misuse and, more recently, teachers' job satisfaction and strategies for overcoming adversity.

Abstracts of Papers and Workshops

Concurrent Session 1a

Professional Learning

Mary Ann Reilly, Manhattanville College, Purchase, New York

In this paper, the author reasons that as students are sometimes positioned as *being* low ability, average, or high ability—a like belief of teachers' and schools' "intelligence" undergirds decisions about professionalism and learning, and sanctions substituting "some inner resource" in lieu of sustained professional learning. She argues that professional development has largely become a matter of implementing "proven" programs and products produced by external developers. In examining these manifestations, she situates development as an epic construct using Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) delineation between epic and novel and suggests that meaning is understood here as a transferable commodity. The author suggests that implementation of literacy programmes as a substitution for professional learning undermines teachers' agency, obscures capacity to recognise anomalous situations, and diminishes thinking and learning. As a counter-model to development, she describes professional learning as rhizomatic (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), offers examples, and advocates for locally determined professional learning.

The Importance of Early Analysis and Feedback

Ann M. Courtney, University of Hartford, West Hartford, Connecticut, USA

This research study describes one primary teacher's process of transcript analysis in her journey of learning how to teach comprehension with 6 and 7 year olds. With the use of a professional quality recording device and the latest version of speech-to-text software, the efficacy of recurring timely feedback on practice will be described. The process and specific examples of insights that the teacher gained as a result of her analysis will be discussed. The research asked "how did timely feedback on reading comprehension instruction affect the practice of one first grade teacher?" The shorter span devoted to collection, transcription, analysis, reflection, and discussion allowed for multiple iterations of this process during a school year. The timeliness of this reflection enabled the teacher to recall the teaching event, providing a clear link between analysis and practice. Based on the analysis, the teacher was able to use the analysis of her language when she taught her next comprehension lesson allowing her to become metacognitive – able to respond to the moment-by-moment shifts (Duffy 2004) and make immediate adjustments to her teaching to support and move literacy learning for children forward. Transcript analysis enables teachers to see what happens when they are more thoughtful and aware of their teaching processes (metacognitive) and seems to offer a promising approach for encouraging and developing metacognition in order to improve reading achievement. Resources that teachers can use to engage in transcript analysis themselves will also be provided.

Concurrent Session 1b

Understanding Talk as a Tool for Learning

Caroline Colfer and Annie Fisher

This paper draws together the findings of two independent but complementary research projects (Fisher, 2007) and (Colfer, 2007), which have sought to understand how dialogue, thinking strategies, and language within the classroom can impact on the development of reading. Both studies draw upon observations of classroom practice in order to examine the use of talk as a cognitive stepping stone.

The first study evaluates the way in which primary school pupils engaged in collaborative problem-solving activities using descriptive, reflective and speculative language (Mercer, 2000; Alexander, 2001) and draws particularly on constructs of gender, language and identity

in the process of reflection. The second study examines the nature of dialogue in small group guided reading sessions where the teacher acts as a discourse guide, providing a bridge between what is known, and what is new (Rogoff, 1990). It looks particularly at the role of the teacher in developing critical literacy, and teaching inferential and evaluative comprehension strategies, and suggests ways of managing dialogic approaches to reading with fluent readers.

It is anticipated that the findings from both projects will be used to inform practice amongst lecturers engaged in the training of teachers. In addition, it is envisaged that data gained from this study will be used as a means of engaging students in developing their own understanding of the complexities of dialogue amongst boys and girls, and the possibilities that Problem Based Learning activities can offer for the development of literacy.

Becoming Literate: The EAL Learner in the Infant Classroom

Tara Concannon-Gibney

The school population in Ireland has undergone significant change in recent years. Currently there are whole schools and individual classrooms in which the majority of children are learning English as an additional language. While this poses significant challenges for educators, it also offers positive opportunities for the development of teaching and learning in diverse settings.

This presentation will explore the strategies employed by a classroom teacher in teaching literacy to an infant class where all children are learning English as an additional language. Teaching within a balanced literacy framework, the teacher focussed on the development of reading, writing and oral language using a variety of research-based approaches designed to enhance the learning of these young students.

In relation to reading, the teacher adopted an approach which focussed on the explicit teaching of essential early literacy skills within a meaningful context. The 'Writer's Workshop' was used to develop the children's spelling and composition abilities. Oral language permeated all reading and writing activities and was also a central element of instruction in all subject areas.

Concurrent Session 1c

In other words: Reading the visual

Jennifer O'Sullivan

With the advent of new technologies in media, images are becoming a dominant feature in our everyday lives; examples of visual images can be found in advertisements, newspapers, computer games, television, music videos, films, picture books, as well as on logos, clothes, graphs, and – of course – the Internet. Consequently, visual images are beginning to encroach upon more traditional forms of language and can be seen as a real threat to verbal literacy. Therefore, if we want children to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by visual media, it is vitally important to teach them how to read, comprehend, and criticise the visual images that surround them. In essence, we need to enable children to become visually literate.

Internationally, some countries have already recognised the importance of teaching children visually literacy: New Zealand has incorporated visual language into their English curriculum and made it one of their three core strands; both Australia and Canada have included a 'viewing' strand in their language curricula; and the United Kingdom has highlighted the importance of including a visual language component in their English curriculum. Ireland, however, does not have a visual/viewing strand in its English curriculum nor is there any dialogue around the importance of teaching children to become visually literate. Furthermore, no in-service is offered to teachers in the area and no policies exist. Overall, there is no sense of urgency regarding the lack of a visual component to our curriculum. There is a need, therefore, to address this shortcoming of the Irish language curriculum.

Before this can happen, however, we need to examine three questions in relation to visual literacy:

1. What does it mean to be visually literate?
2. What does it mean to read an image?
3. How can teachers help students to develop the skills to read an image?

This paper will try to address these questions.

Responsiveness to Intervention

Richard Reid

Responsiveness to Intervention (RtI) is a multifaceted school improvement initiative aimed at positively impacting the educational outcomes of all students. While RtI has far reaching potential, the current research, resources, and practice tend to focus primarily on the area of literacy instruction. An RtI model of literacy support is comprised of a number of essential components. These components include: the provision of research-based effective core reading instruction and supplemental reading interventions, universal literacy screening of all students, continuous student progress monitoring, data-based instructional decision making, increasing levels of literacy support, and lastly, but equally important, attention to the fidelity and integrity with which the aforementioned are implemented.

One of the central features of RtI is the early identification, through universal screening, of those students at-risk for reading failure. The administration of efficient curriculum-based assessments, with high reliability and predictive validity, allows for the early identification of those students in need of additional literacy support. Students who are determined to be at-risk are provided with additional services that are supplemental to those provided by their classroom teacher. Curriculum-based assessments are utilised to regularly monitor the students' progress while receiving supplemental services and these assessment data are used to inform decisions regarding the students' response to the reading intervention that is being provided. As an early intervening model, RtI has the potential to improve the educational outcomes for all students, while reducing the number of future adolescents and adults who experience literacy challenges.

Concurrent Session 1h

Pupil Self-Assessment in a Strategic Approach to Comprehension Instruction

Martin Gleeson, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick

A Collaborative Approach to the Provision of Research-Based, Balanced Literacy Instruction

Elaine McDonald, Scoil Mhuire gan Smál, Carlow

The proposed paper is based on an action research project completed for a Masters in Education. It explores the phenomenon of balanced literacy instruction as well as that of collegial collaboration. The inquiry investigates teachers' practice and opinions of collaboration for literacy provision in junior classes of the primary school. It examines the impact of an action research project on participating teachers' perceptions of collaboration and of balanced literacy instruction. The study also explores the impact of the project on participating children's perceptions of literacy in school. The study is primarily concerned with

the exploration of the potential of collegial collaboration to facilitate the implementation of research-based, balanced literacy instruction in a senior infant class.

The action research project involved both quantitative and qualitative research approaches and was conducted over a twelve week period in 2006. Questionnaire data highlight benefits and barriers that the respondents associated with collaboration as well as the need for education around the issue of collegial collaboration. They also indicate that teachers had a desire to improve literacy instruction and to work with colleagues in meaningful ways. Qualitative findings suggest that participating teachers gained fresh understandings of collaboration and of balanced literacy instruction and that they were convinced of the merits of both. The teachers appreciated the value of using research literature to inform their practice. They recognised the potential of collaboration to improve literacy provision within their school as well as the possibility of taking ownership of their own professional development in the area of literacy teaching. Participating children's perceptions of literacy in school were influenced significantly by the project, with interview data demonstrating fuller understandings and greater awareness of their literacy learning.

The data generated by this study, although context bound, may have implications for the wider educational community. Other teachers who share the desire to improve practice and who experience similar difficulties in their literacy teaching may find such a collaborative approach to literacy provision useful, exciting and potentially ground-breaking. The proposed paper offers an overview of the study and a discussion of the underlying issues of balanced literacy instruction and collegial collaboration. It extends an invitation to educators to become reflective practitioners and to embrace the notion of meaningful team work for the achievement of the common goal of excellent literacy instruction.

Concurrent Session 2a

The Essential Elements of Reading

Janet Coleman, Castleberry Independent School District, Forth Worth Texas, USA

All good readers begin with a strong foundation. This session will focus on the five essential elements research defines as needed to build this foundation - phonemic awareness, phonics, word study, comprehension, and fluency. For five years, a small district in the United States taught the core reading program with fidelity, using assessments and progress monitoring to drive the instruction. Many of the children were able to build a strong foundation with good daily instruction in the essential elements. However, for the children who still struggled, intervention was specific and explicit in additional small group instruction, with extra time built into the schedule. Lesson plans were developed for each child to ensure their specific needs were met during this intervention time. Summer programs were developed to help the children retain and even progress in their reading skills before beginning the next grade level. Yet, the students were not the only ones who needed specific and explicit help. Teachers were trained and coached throughout the year. Observations and modelling in the classrooms were in common use to aid in the professional development for the teachers. The results of the commitment from the district leadership to the teachers demonstrated that a strong reading foundation is achievable for any school. The number of students passing the state reading test improved each year, and there was a reduction of students who were not reading on grade level and being tested for Special Education. Knowing the importance of teaching the five essential elements of reading, using assessment and data to drive instruction and professional development, and having a strong understanding and commitment from all involved foster the building of a strong reading foundation for all students.

Convincing All Teachers to Use Reading and Writing to Learn in Their Classrooms – A Successful Paradigm

Mark Forget, University of Findlay, Ohio, USA

This interactive workshop models a successful paradigm of constructivist staff development in content area reading that helps to overcome the ubiquitous teacher objection, “*Our students are not motivated.*”

This workshop will model a framework of instruction (Forget, 2004; Forget, Morgan, & Antinarella, 1996) that staff developers can use to help all teachers realise their own efficacy in helping students to acquire literacy skills related to academic reading and writing.

Content to be presented:

- A paradigm for staff development in content area reading and writing instruction.
- Three essential elements of a content literacy classroom.

Methods of Presenting Content:

1. Modeling of constructivist staff development techniques that engage teachers in using reading and writing, using materials that enhance teacher understandings of how students learn,
2. Description of a staff-development paradigm that has successfully convinced numerous teachers across all disciplines to teach literacy skills in their classrooms,
3. Brief video footage of follow-up staff development instrumental in helping teachers see that their students are capable of using reading, writing, and higher-order thinking for the purpose of learning new subject matter.

Concurrent Session 2b

Formative Assessment in Process Writing – Peer and Self Assessment for Learning

Sinéad Lambert, Scoil Mhuire na Toirbhirte, Maynooth, Co. Kildare

This ten week action research study examined the potential of peer-and-self assessment to develop and enhance the quality of pupil writing. It focused on developing pupils’ abilities to write fiction while engaging in peer-and-self assessment. The study took place in an Irish primary school classroom. The 25 participants were in 4th class, aged 10 approximately, and in their 6th year of formal schooling. Pupils in the researcher’s class received explicit teaching of writing crafts along with instruction in peer-and-self assessment over the course of the study. Mini-lessons were used to focus on and develop key concepts and address problems that pupils encountered as they wrote. Instruction was an ongoing process; new learning was introduced while previously taught crafts were refined and reinforced. Specific learning targets and success criteria were introduced to pupils in the form of an evaluative checklist.

The findings of this study suggest that peer-and-self assessment can improve and enhance the quality of pupils’ writing. Peer feedback evolved over the course of the study from evaluative to descriptive in nature. Pupils provided more specific, reflective, detailed comments to peers, thus enhancing the quality of their peers’ writing. This study also found that self-assessment skills improved during the study and fostered independent learning. Pupils were enabled to analyse their writing critically and move towards becoming self-regulating writers.

Reading Assessment Challenge: Examining Student Development in Reading like an Historian

Peter Afflerbach, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, USA

Skills and strategies help readers construct meaning from text (Snow, 2002). Our assessment of these skills must be informed by the most current understandings of reading so that we may provide our students with appropriate instruction. Skills and strategies are typically considered as generic actions or moves that readers apply in the process of reading to

comprehend. As such, teaching developing readers to apply strategies including prediction, summarisation and generating inferences might be expected to help students achieve (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Our understanding of reading within particular content domains suggests that the more generic approach to strategy instruction will help readers, but that this approach will not necessarily focus on the specific reading strategies and stances that are required in particular content domains. Thus, our measures of student reading must follow sensible assessment practice (Black & Wiliam, 2005), while attending to established differences in reading within different content domains (Pellegrino, Chudowsky & Glaser, 2001).

Reading history demands particular strategies that are germane to reading and thinking like an historian (VanSledright, 2002; Wineburg, 1997; 1998). For example, accomplished history readers must be competent at determining primary or secondary source status for the texts they read. As well, readers of history texts must be adept at synthesizing texts that may present starkly different accounts of the same historic event. The particular strategic demands of history reading should be addressed in associated curriculum and instruction. Assessment of students' associated reading development must provide formative and summative information related not only to comprehension of history texts, but to how students grow in their ability to read and think like historians (Afflerbach & VanSledright, 2001).

As students learn and practice new, content domain specific reading strategies, it is imperative that assessments are capable of describing this growth (Davis, 1998). However, there is precious little reading assessment that is suited to providing information of this sort. This presentation focuses on formative, process-oriented assessments that provide detailed information on how students' reading strategies and stances develop. These assessments include performance assessments, checklists and portfolios. The presentation provides examples of assessments from innovative curriculum that help us understand not only student comprehension of text, but their ability to assign primary or secondary source text status to their readings. Further, these assessments describe students' ability to critically appraise the reliability and trustworthiness of the history texts and authors they read.

Concurrent Session 2c

Becoming a Writer: Teachers and Children Learning Together
Noella McKenzie, Charles Sturt University, NSW, Australia

When children begin formal schooling two worlds (prior to school and school) come together and teachers are faced with the challenge of 'nurturing the capacity' of each and every student. Children entering Australian schools come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds with varied home and community experiences. While some children enter schools with experiences that are closely matched to the pedagogy and practice of school, others do not. This creates a complex teaching and learning environment as teachers grapple with how to teach or reach all children and children wrestle with what the teacher is trying to say (Bruner 1996) with varying degrees of success. McNaughton (2002, p. 8) suggests that a new entrant and a teacher may be expecting different things of each other with the child possibly using a language 'that is not the language of the teacher'. Early success with school literacy often leads to future success and a positive attitude towards school literacy and school in general, while a poor beginning can lead to frustration, avoidance and a negative attitude.

This presentation will share the findings of the first three phases of a longitudinal study exploring the teaching and learning of writing in the first six months of formal schooling. Phase 1 was conducted in the first half of 2007 using case studies: three schools, three teachers and nine students. Phase 2 (late 2007) explored teacher beliefs and perspectives in regard to teaching writing. Phase 3, conducted in the first half of 2008, again utilised case studies: 12 teachers and 96 students.

Building Best Practice across Curriculum Strands
Lesley Dowding

The aim of this workshop is to explore how effective teachers can connect to each student's interests and experiences, identify next learning steps to improve student achievement. This can be achieved through building teacher content knowledge within a professional learning community. The workshop will identify that knowledge of literacy learning, knowledge of the learner, and engaging the learner with rich text, will raise student achievement. Effective writing involves an explicit knowledge of the steps of writing. The three C's, create, construct, and communicate, for various purpose and audiences, are very important. The building of a community of learners using shared learning intentions and feedback will require teachers to be confident in the conference process. The teacher student conversation provides the next learning step. How can a teacher with 30 children with diverse backgrounds and cultural needs acquire the knowledge needed to support each learner? By balancing explicit teaching with the children's capacity to understand, and expertise. In transferring the model of a community of learners to the classroom, through reciprocal learning and using instructional strategies, to activate prior knowledge, visualise and ask questions, children will become life long learners. This workshop will weave the theory with the practical. Teachers will be able to engage in professional dialogue, understand how to gather evidence about student achievement, and plan for next step learning. Use of rich text to enhance student achievement and transfer this knowledge across all curriculum strands will be stressed.

Concurrent Session 2h

Best Practice in Building Reading Vocabulary
Gene Mehigan, Coláiste Mhuire, Marino, Dublin

On Top of the World: Language, Culture and Learning to Read in Northern Canada
Julia O'Sullivan, University of Western Ontario, Canada

In 2007, the first research report focussed exclusively on early reading development in northern Canada was published. Funded by the Canadian government *Get Ready, Get Set, Get Going: Learning to Read in Northern Canada* (O'Sullivan & Goosney with the International Expert Panel) outlined the learning opportunities young northern Canadian children need to achieve reading success. Drawing on the extant research from around the world and on success stories from Canada and other countries surrounding the Pole, the authors identified evidence-based best principles to guide decision-making about frameworks that support early reading. This paper will focus on findings from that report related to: (1) the role of language and culture in early reading achievement; (2) the impact on reading of the match between children's language at home and the language in school; and (3) best principles to guide decisions about the language of instruction in the school.

Canada's north is an immense region extending from the northern Pacific to the Arctic Circle and from the Northwest Passage to the inlets of Labrador. It crosses all six of Canada's time zones. Canada's North has a young, culturally and linguistically diverse population living in communities that differ immensely in size and economic base from large cities to small isolated communities. In the north, 133,405 five- to nine-year-olds (6.7% of Canadian 5-9 year olds) attend over 1000 elementary schools (Kindergarten to Grade 3); most (99%) speak

one language – English is the most frequent followed by French and Aboriginal languages (Ojibwe, Cree, Inuktitut, and Dogrib). Findings from this study make clear that the timeframe for learning to read well must take into account the child's language of instruction, the language that is both the medium (that children learn through) and the object (that children learn about) of instruction in school. For many northern children the language of instruction is the language of their home and of the community. For others, especially Aboriginal children, it represents a second language, one that they are first exposed to in school; one that may or may not be the dominant language in the community. Decisions made by schools, parents and communities about the language of instruction in school are influenced by many factors including language rights, the centrality of language to culture and identity, the community vision of language and education and the role of literacy in the home, community and school. The availability of qualified teachers proficient in the language of instruction and of resources in the many northern languages (especially Aboriginal languages) limits options. The impact on children's reading must be considered in decisions about language of instruction. There are no easy answers and no "one size fits all" model.

Concurrent Session 3a

Helping Teachers to Teach Irish Reading

Tina Hickey, School of Psychology, University College Dublin

Most Irish children are taught to be biliterate from an early age, and teachers are engaged in the teaching of reading in two languages, one of which is better resourced than the other. This paper will look at aspects of Irish reading, and explore features of the orthography which differ from English. While Irish now uses the same script as English, its orthography differs significantly from English and poses considerable challenges, having been described by one linguist as 'bewildering' (Ó Murchú 1977). International research shows that the determination of the most effective methods for teaching reading in a particular language must take account of the orthographic system involved. One of the issues receiving particular research attention is reading fluency, identified by the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) as one of the five critical components of reading. However, relatively few empirical studies have addressed the issue of developing fluency among second language (L2) readers. The teaching of Irish reading to children learning the language as a second language has tended to be oriented mainly towards reinforcing language items learned orally, with relatively little systematic identification of the orthographic challenges involved, or of the differences between Irish and English orthography. Outcomes from this approach are reviewed, and consideration is given to ways of addressing the particular demands of teaching reading in Irish.

The Use of Authentic Irish Texts at the Upper End of Primary School

Séamie O'Neill

The approach to teaching Irish in *Curaclam na Bunscoile: Gaeilge* (1999) is based on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodologies. One feature of CLT is the use of authentic text in the classroom. The aim of this presentation is to discuss the use of authentic text in the teaching of Irish in the primary school classroom. First, the use of authentic text in the second language classroom, drawing on international perspectives and including the important factors in the choice of authentic reading material, will be reviewed. Second, recent changes in emphasis in the teaching of Irish in the primary school will be briefly described. Third, a project entitled *Eleathanach* that uses authentic text in the Irish language classroom will be presented. This project involved the creation of an electronic newsletter aimed at able students in senior classes in the primary school. The presentation will conclude with an examination of issues that emerged in the course of the project and will examine the conditions required for its long-term sustainability.

Concurrent Session 3b

Using Comic Strips as a Text Structure for Improving Comprehension

Claudia McVicker, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, Illinois, USA

Building best practices for literacy involves improving comprehension skills in students. Today's definition of literacy now includes the term viewing or visual literacy. This presentation asserts viewing, the newest "recognized" language art, is a crucial element for reading education. Clearly, visual literacy skills assist literacy development, particularly comprehension of text.

Comics are often used in elementary classrooms as popular teaching tools. Comics can hold a unique and powerful voice in the classroom by upholding the definition of visual literacy. Comics are a living, daily representation of real life, often representing the world as it changes. Naming them hybrid texts, Hatfield (2000) re-conceives these pictorial narrations in our daily papers as definite text structures for the literate: those who can read, write, and understand; the illiterate: those who cannot read, write and understand can view them and possibly comprehend through the visual representation; and the alliterate: those who can read, write and understand but choose not to, are drawn to them as an enjoyable brief form of reading. Using a comic strip as an alternative text structure for reading alters the child's view of traditional text structures such as books. Children who struggle with reading often report they do not read for pleasure. This can be attributed to the difficulty they experience when they approach the task of reading. Utilising comics, which are humorous, visual, and limited in text, can alleviate the negative view of reading for some children (McVicker, 2005).

The presentation will include slide presentation, comics strip comprehension strategies, hand-out, and special websites.

Inference, Synthesis, and Critical Thinking: Developing Students' Literacy with Comics and Graphic Novels

Kelly McNeal, Salika A. Lawrence, and Melda N. Yildiz, William Paterson University, Wayne, New Jersey, USA

This workshop will present a brief history of comics and graphic novels, and an overview of vocabulary relevant to this medium that spans across genres. Participants will be introduced to the various genres of graphic novels including both fiction and non-fiction works such as manga, "test prep" manga, historical fiction, memoirs, biographies (including biographies of philosophers, scientists, and artists), compiled histories, and graphic novels about the medium of graphic novels. Comics and graphic novels can be used to support traditional literacy practices as well as facilitate development of multiple and critical literacies. This workshop supports IRA Standard Two which urges teachers to "use a wide range of instructional practices, approaches, methods, and curriculum materials to support reading and writing instruction." This interactive workshop will commence with a multimedia presentation about the history of comics, also known as sequential art, and graphic novels. Vocabulary relating to this visual medium will be presented and discussed. After the formal opening of this workshop, approximately 50 graphic novels will be used for a book sort where participants will preview and read graphic novels across genres. The participants will then select a text and engage in 10 minutes of sustained silent reading of their selected text looking for examples of the vocabulary terms introduced during the whole group presentation. Once silent reading has concluded participants will engage in a small group discussions relating to both the reading demands, strategies used while reading and content encountered in the texts, and will brainstorm possibilities for incorporating the texts across curriculum areas.

Concurrent Session 3c

Dyslexia in Primary School

Therese McPhillips, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin

In Ireland, current provision for pupils with dyslexia is provided in three different ways: extra support from the learning support or resource teacher, enrolment in a special reading unit, or enrolment in a special reading school. This paper draws on the findings of a doctorate study (2007) which explored the effectiveness of each type of special support.

The main participants in the study were teachers and tutors supporting pupils with dyslexia, the pupils themselves and their parents. The survey methods employed included questionnaires, focus group discussions, interviews and quantitative data on pupils' reading attainment. Six case-study schools were also examined. The main findings focused on the teaching approaches and literacy skills taught in each of the settings. The identification and assessment of dyslexia in primary school and the organisation of support for pupils was also examined.

The picture that emerges from the special and mainstream settings is a skills based bottom-up approach to developing literacy skills. All of the teachers supporting the child with dyslexia had a dominant emphasis on teaching phonic skills. Writing ability and skill in spelling is not embedded in reading instruction and is not prioritised among teachers. The imbalance in skills taught raises questions about the model of literacy instruction understood by teachers and this has implications for teacher education and professional development.

Teachers are uncertain how to support the student with dyslexia in the classroom and believe there is a need for an individualised approach and specialist teaching for the dyslexic learner. However, there is a noticeable trend in the literature away from categories of special need and specialist teaching approaches and the research has also questioned whether there is a *specialist pedagogy* for pupils with dyslexia (Norwich, 2005). Factors associated with the effectiveness of the special placement for pupils with dyslexia could be transferred to all classrooms to build best practice for all learners.

The Development of Oral reading Fluency: Using the Repeated reading Technique with Children with Dyslexia

Ellen Reynor

Concurrent Session 3h

RAI Literacy Development Awards for Teachers 2008

Research Presentations by the Award Winners

Promoting Reading at Home

Una Murphy and Yvonne Mullan, Canal Community Partnership/NEPS

During the summer term of the academic year 07/08, teachers, parents and children in five neighbouring schools undertook a shared reading project that aimed to harness the untapped potential of parents to enhance children's literacy skills at home. It was hoped that the project

would increase the amount of time that parents spent reading to children and talking to children about story books. Teachers in the participating schools sourced books using funds from a grant awarded by the Reading Association of Ireland. Several copies of each story book were bought to facilitate in-class group discussions. Whenever possible, Large Books were sourced to accompany each set of small books. Questions about stories were devised and included in folders with story books. Short demonstration/ commitment meetings for parents were held in each school and then the project began in earnest. The most challenging part of the project was the preparation – choosing, sourcing and buying the story books and then organising the wallets and questions to go with stories. Although the third term was long, it was probably not the best term in which to begin such a project. However, enthusiasm for the project helped teachers over the hurdles and all five schools have decided to make the shared reading programme an annual event.

Improving Reading Comprehension at School Level (to be confirmed)

Mary Healy, Castaheany Educate Together National School