

**33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference**  
**Reading Association of Ireland**  
**Cumann Léitheoireachta na hÉireann**



**LITERACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY: PERSPECTIVES,  
CHALLENGES AND TRANSFORMATIONS**



**PROGRAMME**

**September 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

**St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9**

**[www.reading.ie](http://www.reading.ie)**

## THE READING ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND

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### Acknowledgements

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acknowledges the support of St Patrick's College*

*RAI also acknowledges the support of the  
Department of Education and Science  
through the TPN funding scheme  
for this year's Annual Conference*

## Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> September

6:30 – 7:30 p.m. **Registration**

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7.30 – 9.00 p.m. **Official Opening** **Room: D210**

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### Welcome and Official Opening of Conference

Dr. Martin Gleeson, President Elect, Reading Association of Ireland  
Dr. Pauric Travers, President, St Patrick's College

### Keynote Address 1

*'Real' Books: Keeping up with our Multi-Literate Kids*  
Siobhan Parkinson (author)

### Presentation of R.A.I. Children's Book Awards for 2009

Finian O'Shea, Chair, RAI Book Awards Committee  
See page 7 for shortlisted books.

***Presentation will be followed by a reception in the College Dining Room.***

## Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September

9:00 – 9:30 a.m. **Registration**

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9:30-10:30 **Plenary Session** **Room: D210**

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### Keynote Address 2

Teresa Cremin, The Open University, UK  
*Reconceptualising Reading: Teachers as Readers*

### Launch of RAI Publication

*The Changing Landscapes of Literacy: Building Best Practice*

CHAIR: MARTIN GLEESON

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10:30-11:00 **COFFEE**  **Dining Room**

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**Concurrent Sessions 1** **Room: D203** (40 Minute Sessions)

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11:00-1.00 Mary Roche, Scoil Niocláis, Frankfield, Cork  
*Questioning the Answer: Nurturing a Critical, Caring and Emancipatory Community of Practice Using Picture Books and Classroom Dialogue*

Ellen Reynor, University College, Dublin  
*Early Intervention in the Remediation of Reading Difficulties: Evidence for the Use of Rapid Naming Speed Measures in the Early Identification of Reading Difficulties*

Fiona Giblin, St Canice's G.N. School, Finglas, Dublin  
*Socio-Dramatic Play: An Opportunity for Developing Key Early Literacy Skills*

CHAIR: KAREN WILLOUGHBY

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**Concurrent Sessions 1**                      **Room: D204**                      (40 Minute Sessions)

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11:00-1.00      Deborah Neal Hollimon, Lincoln Parish Schools, Ruston, LA, USA  
*Adolescent Literacy: Classroom Practices that Motivate Adolescents to Read*

Cara Mulcahy, Central Connecticut State University, USA  
*A Transformative Literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

Israel Ananieje, Nonye Ikonta and Anthonia Maduekwe,  
University of Lagos, Nigeria  
*Using a Critical Literacy Method in Teaching Literature: Effect on Students' Communicative Competence*

CHAIR: AOIBHEANN KELLY

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**Concurrent Sessions 1**                      **Room: D205**                      (40 Minute Sessions)

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11:00-1.00      Anne-Marie Casserly, St Angela's College, Sligo  
*Children with Dyslexia: Their Experiences of Different Types of Special Education Provision*

Tracey Connolly, University College Cork  
*Literacy Development Then, Now and in the Future*

Siobhan Cahillane-McGovern, St Patrick's College, Dublin;  
Finian O'Shea, Church of Ireland College, Dublin; and Trinka Messenheimer, Bowling Green State University, Ohio, USA.  
*Student Teachers' Literacy Lives Within and Across Their Communities of Practice*

CHAIR: ROBBIE O'CONNOR

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**1:00-2:00**      **LUNCH**            **Dining Room**

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**2:00-3:00**      **Plenary Session**      **Room: D210**

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**Keynote Address 3**

Eithne Kennedy, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin  
*Lessons from a School Where Literacy Thrives: Transforming Outcomes through a Research-Based Approach to Underachievement*

CHAIR: GERRY SHIEL

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**Concurrent Sessions 2**                      **Room: D203**                      (90 Minute Session)

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3:00-4.30      Anne Courtney, University of Hartford, Connecticut, USA;  
Martin Gleeson, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick;  
Teresa Bowe, Scoil Oilibhéir, Cork;  
Lorraine Smith, Scoil Aiseirí Chríost, Cork;  
Finbarr Hurley, Greenmount National School, Cork;  
Deirdre Lehane, Scoil an Chroí Rí Naofa, Co. Cork  
*Comprehension: Taught not Caught!*

CHAIR: MARTIN GLEESON

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**Concurrent Sessions 2** **Room: D204** (45 Minute Sessions)

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3.00-4.30 David Wray and Jane Medwell, University of Warwick, UK  
*The Links between Handwriting and Composing in Primary Aged Children*

Brendan Culligan, Coláiste Mhuire, Marino Institute of Education, Dublin  
*Handwriting: Let's Begin the Beginning*

CHAIR: BRENDAN CULLIGAN

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**Concurrent Sessions 2** **Room D205** (45 Minute Sessions)

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3.00-4.30 Deirdre Kirwan, Scoil Bhríde, Blanchardstown, Dublin  
*Challenges and Opportunities Presented by ESL Learners in the Areas of Language and Literacy Development in Irish Primary Schools*

CHAIR: KAREN WILLOUGHBY

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## Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September

9:00 – 9:30 a.m. **Registration**

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9.30-11:00 **Plenary Session** **Room 210**

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### RAI Annual General Meeting

#### Keynote Address 4

Peter Afflerbach, University of Maryland, USA  
*Achieving Balance in Literacy Assessment*

CHAIR: MARTIN GLEESON

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11:00-11:30 **COFFEE**  **Dining Room**

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**Concurrent Sessions 3** **Room D203** (45 Minute Sessions)

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11:30-1:00 Lotta Larson, Kansas State University, USA  
*Reader Response Meets 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacies: Empowering Readers in On-line Literacies*

Claudia McVicker, Park University, Missouri, USA  
*Building Best Practice for Literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Using Comic Strips as a Text Structure for Improving Comprehension with Struggling Readers*

CHAIR: BERNADETTE DWYER

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**Concurrent Sessions 3**                      **Room: 204**                      **(45 Minute Sessions)**

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11:30-1.00      Brian Murphy, University College Cork  
*Participation and Achievement of Boys in Irish Language Learning in Schools: Time to Acknowledge the Gender Issue?*

Fiona Lyddy and Justé Koller, National University of Ireland, Maynooth  
*Interference from Reading in a Digit–Word Counting Task: The Role of Mathematical Experience in Digit Processing*

CHAIR: GERRY SHIEL

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**Concurrent Sessions 3**                      **Room: D205**

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11:30-1.00      Outstanding Thesis Award Presentations

CHAIR: EITHNE KENNEDY

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**Closing Address**                              **Room: D210**

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1:00-2:00      **Keynote Address 5**  
Kathy Hall, University College Cork  
*Contemporary Issues in Literacy Pedagogy*

CHAIR: MARTIN GLEESON

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# ABSTRACTS

## Keynote Abstracts

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### 1. Siobhan Parkinson, (author)

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#### ***'Real' Books: Keeping up with our Multi-Literate Kids***

Of all the artforms, literature is the most curricularized. It has a place at the heart of the curriculum, especially at second level, where it is a core element of a core subject, mandatory for all students, and more and more also in the primary school, with the use of 'real' books in the classroom.

*Siobhán Parkinson is a writer for children and young people. Her most recent book is Dialann Sár–R'unda Amy Ní Chonchuir (Cois Life). She is commissioning editor with Little Island, a new Irish children's imprint, which plans to include translated titles.*  
[www.siobhanparkinson.com](http://www.siobhanparkinson.com)

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### 2. Prof. Teresa Cremin, The Open University

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#### ***Reconceptualising Reading: Teachers as Readers***

In this presentation I will consider how, when teachers become more conscious of their own reading habits, processes and practices, they also come to re-conceptualise both what counts as reading in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and what being a reader encompasses within and beyond the classroom. Drawing upon the UKLA project *Teachers as Readers: Building Communities of Readers*, Phase II (2007-8), I will explore what happens when boundaries dissolve and teachers share their reading lives and reader identities with primary aged learners. In this Esmée Fairbairn funded project, some of the teachers developed as 'Reading Teachers: teachers who read and readers who teach' (Commeyras et al., 2004) and documented the new connections, stances and possibilities which opened up when they re-positioned themselves 'horizontally' as readers in their classrooms. The university based-research team, working from a socio-cultural perspective, also sought to understand the teachers' shifting positions and explored the new forms of participation offered to and created by children as a consequence. Alongside the salient issues of diversity, reciprocity and agency, I will examine the dynamic interplay between teachers' and children's positions and perspectives, and will also reflect upon the tensions and challenges involved in teachers' re-viewing, re-constructing and re-presenting themselves as readers in school.

*Teresa Cremin (Grainger) is a Professor of Education (Literacy) in the Faculty of Education and Language Studies at the Open University where she is the cluster director for Education Studies research. Teresa is currently President of UKLA, joint coordinator of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Special Interest Group on creativity, a Trustee of both Booktrust and the Poetry Archive and a member of the DCSF Sub-committee of the English Board on reading comprehension. Her research interests revolve around the concept of voice; the voice of the child as a creative thinker, writer and meaning maker, and the voice of the teacher, artistically and creatively engaged in literacy teaching and learning.*

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### 3. Dr. Eithne Kennedy, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra

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#### ***Lessons from a School Where Literacy Thrives: Transforming Outcomes Through a Research-Based Approach to Underachievement.***

A goal of the review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (2001) was to 'halve the proportion of pupils presenting with serious reading difficulties in schools designated as disadvantaged by 2006'. Despite significant government investment in these schools in terms of resources and staffing and the introduction of the revised Primary School English curriculum (NCCA, 1999) this target has not been realised. This paper offers some perspectives on why this goal

has remained elusive and will examine the challenges involved in reaching it. The lessons to be learned from a successful two-year mixed-methods longitudinal study in a high-poverty urban school designed to improve both children's achievement in reading, writing and spelling and their motivation and engagement in literacy will be presented. In that study, a multi-faceted professional development programme was provided which sought to equip teachers with the latest research findings so they could design and implement a research based integrated balanced literacy framework to suit their own context. Teachers were successful in raising achievement (by the end of the study, the children had significantly higher achievement in reading, writing and spelling than would be expected based on their pre-test scores) but also, just as importantly, they were successful in developing their classrooms into highly motivating, engaging and literate communities. The factors leading to the successful outcomes and their implications for policy in Ireland will be examined.

*Eithne Kennedy lectures in literacy education at St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. Her current research interests centre around the investigation of effective approaches to improving achievement in literacy in disadvantaged schools. She is particularly interested in working collaboratively with schools to implement research-based approaches to literacy instruction that motivate and engage children as readers, writers and thinkers.*

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#### **4. Dr. Peter Afflerbach, University of Maryland**

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##### ***Achieving Balance in Literacy Assessment***

This is an era of great promise and great challenge for reading assessment. Our evolving knowledge of reading and reading assessment help us conceptualize students' reading growth and determine appropriate assessment to measure and describe that growth. An array of reading assessment materials and procedures, including teacher questioning, performance assessment, portfolio assessment, checklists, reading inventories and quizzes and tests is available to help us best understand our students' reading growth and our teaching effectiveness. Each can contribute to the rich description of our teaching success in reading.

The promise of reading assessment is contrasted with the challenge created by the focus on high stakes test scores, unexamined habits of assessment and the lack of consistent professional development in assessment for teachers. Tests garner attention and school resources at the expense of reading assessments that provide more regular and richer information about our teaching and our students' learning (Afflerbach, 2007). When we carry on habit and tradition in reading assessment, we may be working with outdated ideas of both literacy and literacy assessment. We may fail to ask, "Is this the best we can do when it comes to assessing our students' reading?" Finally, teachers are central to effective classroom assessment, but their effectiveness emanates from expertise in assessment. Professional development must support teachers in developing this expertise.

*Peter Afflerbach is Professor of Reading in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Maryland. His research interests focus on reading assessment and reading comprehension strategies. He has published in numerous research and practitioner journals. He is the chair of the Reading Assessment Committee of the International Reading Association and has served for 14 years on the Reading Committee of the National Assessment of Educational Progress. His most recent book, *Understanding and Using Reading Assessment, K-12*, was published in 2007. He was elected to the International Reading Association's Reading Hall of Fame in 2009.*

**Contemporary Issues in Literacy Pedagogy**

The presentation will explore some contemporary issues in literacy pedagogy with particular reference to the compulsory phases of education in Ireland today. Among the very many influences on curriculum and learning is one constant and that is the significance of the teacher although it will be argued this is not sufficiently recognised, even by teachers themselves. Teachers have enormous power to influence the enacted and experienced literacy curriculum. Recognizing what learners bring with them in the form of values, taken-for-granted ways of being and knowing, especially in relation to representations of gender, class, ethnicity, and other social categories is fundamental, it will be argued. Teachers' own assumptions about, for example, how to be a boy, a girl are vital dimensions of pedagogy that challenge dominant models of teaching, learning and curriculum. The presentation will draw on various studies and examples to highlight the importance of enabling learners to bridge cultures and identities, and to negotiate the tension that often exists for them in developing and displaying competence in literacy.

*Professor Kathy Hall is Head of the School of Education in UCC. She supervises research students who are seeking to extend understanding of learning and pedagogy, using sociocultural perspectives. A former primary teacher, she has a long standing interest in learning with particular reference to literacy. Recent books include Listening to Stephen Read: Multiple Perspectives on Literacy (2003) and Literacy and Schooling: Towards Renewal in Primary Education Policy (2004). Edited books include Learning and Practice: Agency and Identity (with Murphy, 2008) and Pedagogy and Practice: Culture and Identity (with Murphy and Soler, 2008). A new book Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Learning to Read: Culture, Cognition and Pedagogy will be published later in 2009. She is Editor of the United Kingdom Literacy Association's journal Literacy.*

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**The 2009 RAI Children's Book Awards**

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**The RAI Book Award sub-committee has drawn up the following shortlist for the 2009 Award:**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author/Illustrator</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
The Poison Throne	Eddy Celine Kiernan	O'Brien Press
Hal's Sleepover	Maddie Stewart	O'Brien Press Panda Cubs Series
Move	Conor Kostic	O'Brien Press
Wild Dublin	Éanna Ní Lámhna	O'Brien Press
The Story of Ireland	Brendan O'Brien	O'Brien Press
Adolf sna hArda	Marvin Halleraker (Údar agus maisitheoir) / Treasa Ní Bhrua agus Magnus Vestvoll (Aistritheoirí)	Cois Life

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## Abstracts of Papers and Workshops

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### Concurrent Sessions 1 – Room D203

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Mary Roche, Scoil Niocláis, Frankfield, Cork

***Questioning the Answer: Nurturing a Critical, Caring and Emancipatory Community of Practice Using Picture Books and Classroom Dialogue***

E (aged 6): *God, I am going home today with just so many questions in my head! Millions!*

Teacher: *Great! Perhaps that's what learning is all about - asking lots of questions.*

A (aged 6): *'And ... if you go home with a question and you get an answer to it, you could always question the answer.* (Roche, 2007, Appendix C5 extract from transcript, *Rainbows and Reality* p13)

In this paper I suggest that young children participating in a community of enquiry with their teacher can engage in philosophical discussion. The pedagogy that supports such practice is grounded in educational values that are critical, caring and emancipatory, and is located in the idea of the 'other' as real and concrete (Benhabib, 1987). Teaching children to think for themselves, and to come to know in ways that are appropriate for them, is supported by a form of classroom dialogue known as 'Thinking Time' (Donnelly 1994). Drawing on the work of Fromm (1979) I argue that rather than 'having' – or teaching children to have – 'critical thinking skills', one learns instead 'to be' a critical thinker. Eisner (1999) says: "knowledge is ...a living process that occurs within the human mind. Books and other codified symbol systems are its prompts". Using multimedia, I explain how 'simple' picture books can be prompts for rich dialogue, and I show how, in an ordinary classroom, children and teacher can engage critically and philosophically with picture books – talking and thinking together with 'one big head' (Murriss 2000). Benhabib (2008) suggests that 'the best kind of journalism has the capacity of uniting the dignity of the generalised other with empathy for the concrete other'. Benhabib (1987) characterised the shift from thinking of the other as 'a rational abstract consciousness, disembodied and disembedded, possessing formal rights...', to the standpoint of seeing the other as a 'real, concrete' individual with needs and desires – in a mutuality of "equity and complementary reciprocity". I would argue that classroom dialogue prompted by the 'best kinds' of children's picture books, can have a similar capacity, when engaged with in a critical, caring and emancipatory community of enquiry.

Ellen Reynor, University College Dublin

***Early Intervention in the Remediation of Reading Difficulties: Evidence for the use of Rapid Naming Speed Measures in the Early Identification of Reading Difficulties***

Reading fluency is considered critical to skilled reading considering (a) it's connection to reading comprehension (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp, & Jenkins, 2001; National Reading Panel, 2000) and (b) evidence that at-risk and typically developing readers as early as seven years old demonstrate large differences in reading fluency skill (Biemiller, 1977-1978; Deno, Fuchs, Marston, & Shin, 2001). There is a general lack of a knowledge base on the development of fluency in young readers compared to phonological awareness skills. Reviews of fluency intervention research indicate that the bulk of this work includes children in third grade or higher (Chard, Vaughan & Tyler, 2003). Kuhn and Stahl suggest that this emphasis might reflect an implicit assumption on the part of researchers that fluency is a later developing skill. However, there is a growing body of research providing support for the importance of the predictive role of naming speed in the development of foundational skills in beginning reading (Kirby, Parilla & Pfeiffer, 2003; O'Conner & Jenkins, 1999; Wolf & Obregon, 1992) and the importance of early fluency skills (e.g. letter-name fluency and letter-sound fluency) in the prediction of reading fluency at a later age (Stage, Shepherd, Davidson, & Browning, 2001). These and other similar studies are reviewed and discussed in this paper with a view to providing evidence for the use of fluency measures in early identification and evaluation of remediation (Kame'enui, Simmons, Good & Harn, 2001) for children at risk of reading failure. The importance of naming speed, particularly for letters, is also discussed, as it represents an early approximation of reading speed for words, and is an important predictor of reading fluency (Denckla & Rudel, 1976b; Fawcett & Nicholson, 1994; Lovett, 1987). As naming speed develops before reading is ever taught, it can be seen as a "pre-reading window" on

how well the brain integrates verbal and visual processes and as such it can help children with reading difficulties to be identified early, before they acquire reading (Wolf, 1986). Information on and description and use of the Rapid Automatized Naming Test (Wolf & Bowers, 1999) is included, as is the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, Kaminski & Good, 1996).

**Fíona Giblin**, St Canice's G.N. School, Finglas, Dublin

***Socio-Dramatic Play: An Opportunity for Developing Key Early Literacy Skills in the Junior Infant Classroom***

This study investigated the contribution that socio-dramatic play makes to young children's acquisition and development of key early literacy skills in a junior infant classroom. Research (Spodek & Saracho, 1993; Pellegrini, 1985; Sawyer & DeZutter, 2007) has indicated a strong relationship between children's socio-dramatic play and emergent literacy. However, there is little research related to literacy development and its relationship to socio-dramatic play conducted within the Irish context. In order to investigate aspects of the relationship between play and literacy, a framework for recognising significant early literacy skills in socio-dramatic play was developed. A qualitative study was conducted, involving 25 girls, aged 4-5 years attending junior infants in a single sex disadvantaged school in Ireland. Four case studies were carried out which focused on four individuals participating in classroom episodes of socio-dramatic play as a means of seeking evidence of narrative co-construction and the literate behaviours that assist it. Data consisted of written fieldnotes, and transcripts of audio and visual recordings of peer-peer interactions.

During the socio-dramatic play episodes, the children worked collaboratively to improvise, negotiate, develop and communicate so as to co-construct a narrative or play script. In addition, the children spontaneously created scripts which often reflected a strong understanding of narrative elements such as tension, symbols, roles, language, time, space and plot. The data also highlighted the children's ability to develop representational functions by practicing the substitution of objects, roles and events with symbols during their socio-dramatic play. However, analysis of the data revealed that the children engaged in different degrees of narrative co-construction depending on their development, social competence and language abilities. Such findings have implications for classroom practice and curriculum policy in early childhood education, particularly in relation to the development and refinement of key early literacy skills through socio-dramatic play.

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**Concurrent Sessions 1 – Room D204**

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**Deborah Neal Hollimon**, Literacy Coordinator, Lincoln Parish Schools, Ruston, LA, USA

***Adolescent Literacy: Classroom Practices that Motivate Adolescents to Read***

Based on recent research in the field of adolescent literacy engagement and the personal experiences of a literacy professional in American public middle and high schools, this presentation will present several classroom practices that have been effective in motivating disengaged and/or disadvantaged adolescents to read. Targeted classroom practices include 1) allowing student choice, 2) providing access to a variety of interesting texts, 3) socialization involving reading, and 4) a focus on student learning goals. The session's materials and activities will equip participants with transferable practices and pedagogical understandings that have effectively transformed unmotivated, disengaged adolescents into lifelong readers. Unlike *extrinsic* motivation, where students rely upon teachers, computers, or systems outside themselves for rewards resulting from their reading activities, these practices are designed to increase adolescents' *intrinsic* motivation to read. Internally motivated students develop a pleasure connection with books, and have desires, interests, or needs that are satisfied through reading. Practitioners must identify what motivates their students to read, and then create classroom contexts in which all students will choose to read, and continue reading.

**Cara Mulcahy**, Department of Reading and Language Arts, Central Connecticut State University, New Britain, Connecticut, USA  
***A Transformative Literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.***

Because literacy operates within a sociocultural framework, the definition of literacy is a realm of struggle, a landscape upon which sociopolitical battles are fought (Christensen, 2000; Lee, 1997; Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002; McGill-Franzen, 2000; Peterson, 1999; Roller, 2000; Shannon, 1999; Shor, 1992; Teale, 1992).

The purpose of this paper presentation is to consider current ideologies of literacy education, to situate critical literacy in the context of literacy education and to consider the transformative possibilities of critical literacy.

Critical literacy is not only concerned with one's ability to read and write; it also examines the connection between language, knowledge, and power and the inequitable distribution of power (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gee, 1997; McDaniel, 2004). Furthermore, critical literacy advocates for social justice and social transformation. Such a perspective on literacy strives to move beyond functional, cultural, and progressive ideologies of literacy education (Cadiero-Kaplan, 2002; Lewison, Flint & Van Sluys, 2002; McDaniel, 2004). To demonstrate how critical literacy moves beyond the above mentioned ideologies of literacy attention will be given to the Readers'/Writers' workshop. As it currently exists, the Readers'/Writers' workshop is a student-centered, progressive approach to teaching the language arts.

The paper presentation will conclude by acknowledging possible spaces for moving towards critical literacy and transformation within the Readers'/Writers' workshop. Possible challenges that may emerge when attempting to implement critical literacy into classroom practice will also be considered.

**Israel Anaieje, Nonye Ikonta, and Anthonia Maduekwe**, University of Lagos, Nigeria  
***Using Critical Literacy Method in Teaching Literature: Effect on Students' Communicative Competence***

Critical literacy is a set of skills and disposition that promotes creative teaching and active learning. It is a socio-cultural approach to the teaching of literacy. It takes the learner beyond the development of basic literacy skills such as decoding, predicting and summarizing to become critical consumers of the information they receive. According to Green (2001), it is the thinking process involved when texts are approached with critical analysis of their content, structure, function and purpose. Herbeck and Beier (2003) see it as that field of endeavor that engages students in issues of ethics. It is a process that begins with reading texts and asking whose voices are being heard and whose voices are absent. It empowers students to question the status quo. It refers to efforts aimed at going beyond surface meaning of a text by questioning the who, what, why and how of its creation and eventual interpretation (Lohrey, 1998). Critical literacy shows us ways of looking at written, visual, spoken, multimedia and performance text to question and challenge the attitudes, values and beliefs that lie beneath the surface (Tasmania Office of Curriculum, 2003).

The study is hinged on critical literacy theory that is derived partly from the tradition of the Frankfurt school of social input which concerns itself with alleviation of human suffering and the formation of a more just world through the critique of existing social and political problems and the posing of alternatives (Cervetti 2001). The theory maintains the transformation of social inequalities and injustice as its objective (Kellner 1995). Critical literacy also draws from social constructivist theory developed by Vygotsky (1978) which emphasizes learning as a social process. In a social constructivist paradigm, the experiences and views of students and teachers within the classroom are at the fore front of learning and teaching. Knowledge is not dispensed from teacher to student or from text to student but is always under construction. Teachers therefore play the essential role of facilitator or guide, with teacher scaffolding diminishing in proportion to the students increasing knowledge to maximize self direction and autonomy (Alexander & Fox 2004).

Language learning has evolved and moved beyond seeing teacher as a dispenser of knowledge to a more recent method of allowing students to have voices of their own. But most teachers in Nigeria do not listen to their students and only give priority to factual knowledge of the subject matter as embedded in textbooks. This traditional form of education does not teach children how to reflect or how to verbalize the results of reflection. The effect

of this on language learning is that students do not develop communicative competence (Oega, 2003). Also the problem confronting ESL teachers today is how to make teaching child-centred instead of the current teacher-centred approach. Where the students see the teacher as the dispenser of knowledge, they often lose their voices and consequently their participation, which is a vital element in developing communicative competence. The question is: can critical literacy activities through literature teaching be used to develop students' communicative competence?

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### **Concurrent Sessions 1 – Room D205**

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**Ann Marie Casserly**, St. Angela's College, Sligo

***Children with Dyslexia: Their Experiences of Different Types of Special Education Provision***

This paper presents the findings of a two-phase longitudinal case study which examined the experiences of children with dyslexia in a two-year placement in specialised dyslexic settings (reading classes/schools) and subsequently tracked them for one year back in the mainstream classroom. While the sample comprised of 20 children, their parents and teachers in various educational settings, the importance of children's voice was central in determining experiences. The findings indicate that children enjoy positive educational experiences in the school environment of specialised dyslexic settings and make significant progress, particularly in literacy and in socio-emotional terms. While specialised dyslexic and mainstream teachers affirm and acknowledge the identification and labelling of dyslexia, children still believe that specialised dyslexic setting teachers are more dyslexia aware in their approaches. On return to mainstream, children continue to have difficulties with the curriculum and are conscious of their abilities relative to their peers. However, most children continue to make further reading progress. Overall, children have happier experiences on return to mainstream with increased levels of self-esteem.

**Tracey Connolly**, University College Cork

***Literacy Development Then, Now and in the Future***

This paper relates to the conference topic 'different perspectives on literacy development' Through a historical lens, this paper will trace developments in literacy in Ireland up to our current perspectives, challenges and transformations with projection on future development. Tying with development in literacy, the paper will in particular discuss the dynamic relationship between education and society and 'the need to ensure that the education system continues to develop and that it responds appropriately not only to other changes in society but also to our increasing understanding of the education process itself' (Kelly 2004:1). This will be in the context of literacy as a means to equip children to share in the benefits of the society in which they live and to contribute effectively to that society's sustenance and evolution.

Regarding current perspectives, challenges and transformations the paper will examine various interpretations and perspectives on literacy development and will discuss possible future directions for literacy development.

**Siobhan Cahillane-McGovern**, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin

***Student Teachers: Literacy Lives within and Across their Communities of Practice***

This paper presents findings from an ongoing longitudinal study of the literacy histories and practices of student teachers. The overall focus of this international research project is to look at the literacy lives of student teachers; it makes connections between their literacy communities, teacher education and building literate classroom communities. Data sets were generated using a questionnaire and interviews in year one; written narratives and interviews were collected in each of four locations in year two. At the end of year two we decided to deepen the focus of the research by tracking one particular cohort of student teachers through their full undergraduate programme and into their first year of teaching. This cohort is now in their final year of study. This year's presentation will focus on data analysis and findings from the written narratives across the three years. Themes arising from this analysis include:

- construction of their literacy identities as students transition from being students of literacy to being emergent teachers of literacy
- continuities and discontinuities between students' literacy lives within and across their communities of practice
- reading and writing as 'artefacts of literacy practices' and particularly students' understanding of the role of technology in these practices .

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### Concurrent Sessions 2 – Room D203

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**Anne Courtney**, University of Hartford, Connecticut, USA;

**Martin Gleeson**, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick;

**Treasa Bowe**, Scoil Oilibhéir, Cork;

**Lorraine Smith**, Scoil Aiseirí Chríost, Cork;

**Finbarr Hurley**, Greenmount National School, Cork;

**Deirdre Lehane**, Scoil an Chroí Rí Naofa, Co. Cork

**Comprehension: Taught not Caught!**

This presentation is designed:

- to promote research based comprehension strategy instruction throughout the primary school through the use of high quality fiction / non-fiction from contemporary children's literature
- to model the instruction of key comprehension strategies using think-alouds, comprehension process motions and anchor charts
- to demonstrate effective practice with authentic footage from a range of classes in an Irish setting;

Despite significant advances in research into the processes involved in reading comprehension particularly *metacognition* (Paris, Lipson & Wixon, 1983;) and *schema theory* (Anderson and Pearson, 1984; Rumelhart, 1981;) and appropriate instructional approaches to develop these processes (Pressley, Van Meter & Schuder, 1996; Keane & Zimmermann, 1997, 2007; Miller, 2002; Serafini, 2004, 2006;) the translation of theory to classroom practice presents a formidable challenge for policy makers and practitioners alike. Recent research (Dole, 2000; Pressley, 2000; Courtney, King, Pedro, 2006) suggests that teachers are not aware of the steps necessary to ensure rigorous, strategic reading in classrooms. Other researchers have suggested that without a paradigm shift in teacher thinking about reading and comprehension, classroom teachers would remain unable to change their classroom practice (Pressley et al, 1998; Courtney, King, & Pedro, 2006).

Recent literature shows that learners need to understand how to orchestrate, coordinate, and apply multiple strategies in order to improve comprehension (Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, & Schuder 1996; Courtney, King, & Pedro, 2006; Dole, J.A. 2000; Miller, 2002; National Reading Panel, 2000; Pressley, El-Dinary, Wharton-McDonald, & Brown, 1998b; Serafini, 2004, 2006; Keane and Zimmerman, 2007). Irish studies have found that the teaching of reading comprehension skills is one of the weakest aspects of reading instruction (Department of Education, 2005; Martin & Morgan, 1994; Shiel & Hogan, 1997; White, 2004). In the U.S. and in Ireland, there is a need for teachers to shift their current ways of thinking about teaching comprehension to include a specific focus on the explicit instruction of multiple comprehension strategies.

In the presentation a range of comprehension strategies including prediction, visualization, developing schema, comprehension monitoring, making connections, questioning, determining importance and synthesis will be modeled for the participants with appropriately chosen fiction and non-fiction from contemporary children's literature. Children's understanding of each individual strategy will be supported by the introduction of *comprehension process motions*. Such kinesthetic hand placements and movements that portray the physical and visual representations of abstract unseen comprehension processes such as making connections, inferring etc. have been shown to be of particular benefit to children. This will be further consolidated by the development of *anchor charts* in the children's own language as an aide memoire for the application of individual strategies. Through the use of video footage and transcripts participants will be enabled to observe the

depth of children's understanding, their ability to listen and respond to each other and accommodate diverse interpretations in their exploration of text.

Participants will be introduced to the independent application of these strategies in mixed ability groups through the process of ***Transactional Strategies Instruction***. This will enable participants to observe the gradual withdrawal of teacher guidance as children support each other in the processes of word identification, vocabulary development and the construction of knowledge through the application of strategies prompted by the individual members of the group. The presentation will be punctuated with examples of classroom practice in an Irish setting representing all levels within the primary school system. Participants will learn how the teacher and learner move back and forth between the what, why and how of strategy instruction and how learners actually use the strategies to comprehend text.

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## **Concurrent Sessions 2 – Room D204**

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**David Wray and Jane Medwell**, University of Warwick, United Kingdom  
***The Links between Handwriting and Composing in Primary Aged Children***

The complex nature of writing has been recognised not only in models of writing (e.g. Hayes, 1996) but also by teachers and young writers themselves. Handwriting has been seen as part of the translation of ideas, or transcription. However, in pedagogic practice this has often meant that handwriting is seen not as a part of the composing process, but as a presentation skill. Despite this, research (e.g. Berninger, 1994; Berninger & Graham, 1998) suggests that fast, automatic handwriting may have a significant effect upon children's composing. This research suggests that for writers who do not produce letters swiftly and automatically, the actual production of written letters may interfere with their ability to compose text. A key issue emerging from research undertaken over the last ten to fifteen years (e.g. Berninger et al, 2006; Berninger, 1994; Berninger & Graham, 1998) is the recognition that handwriting is far from a purely motor act. Berninger and Graham (1998) stress that it is "language by hand" and point out that their research suggests that orthographic and memory processes (the ability to recall letter shapes) contribute more to handwriting than do motor skills (Berninger & Amtmann, 2004). Handwriting is not just about training the hand; it is about training the memory and hand to work together to generate the correct mental images and patterns of letters and translate these into motor patterns of letters – automatically and without effort. If this is the case, then handwriting is an important and integral part of writing rather than just a motor act used to record writing.

Despite the success of many initiatives to improve children's composition, many still find writing difficult. The research reported in this paper was designed to take a new approach to composition by investigating some of the 'lower level' aspects of writing that may be hindering children's progress- in particular, aspects of handwriting.

This paper reports a study carried out in United Kingdom primary schools, a context in which no information about orthographic-motor integration and composition has previously been collected. The study explores the relationship between the orthographic motor integration, handwriting speed, and composition scores of 400 children, aged 7 and 11. The paper also reports the early findings of an intervention study of children aged 7-10, to investigate whether automaticity can be improved and the effect of such intervention on composition.

One conclusion of the paper is that current measures of handwriting, which focus on neatness rather than speed or fluency, do not enable teachers to identify children for whom lack of handwriting automaticity is a problem. Using alternative, simple measures, it appears that, at age 7, a great many children show poor orthographic motor integration and cannot successfully complete an alphabet writing task. The research has also identified children at age 11 and age 7 for whom a programme of handwriting intervention may be expected to produce improvements in composition. Findings have already been reported separately for 7 and 11 year old children (Medwell et al, 2007; Medwell et al, forthcoming). The intervention study has important messages for teachers of handwriting. The purpose of this paper is to bring these findings together to develop a more comprehensive theory about the relationship between handwriting and composition.

**Brendan Culligan**, Coláiste Mhuire, Marino Institute of Education, Dublin  
***Handwriting: Let's Begin the Beginning***

This paper examines the traditional approach to handwriting in Irish primary schools. In most instances, the traditional focus has been on penmanship – ‘the neater the better!’ To enhance handwriting skills, children are exposed to quite informal training in fine motor skills. For many children, it is only when competency in letter formation has been achieved that they are allowed to compose/create. The Teacher Guidelines accompanying the Primary School English Curriculum (1999) indicate that children should first master a print style of writing and then, in middle standards, change to a cursive style. Joss (2001) argues that this is bad timing as not only do the children have to master two styles of writing, but the change occurs at a time ‘when the child is expected to put expanded thoughts into writing.’ This paper argues that such a late changeover militates against both skill and creativity and proposes that schools should begin cursive writing from the beginning.

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### **Concurrent Session 2 – Room D205**

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**Deirdre Kirwan**, Scoil Bhríde, Blanchardstown, Dublin  
***Challenges and Opportunities Presented by ESL Learners in the Areas of Language and Literacy Development in Irish Primary Schools***

Much has been written in Ireland in recent years regarding the challenges presented by ESL learners. In this paper, I will highlight the opportunities created by newcomer children in relation to language and literacy learning.

#### *Perspectives*

- Changes in teaching and learning strategies that have occurred in relation to the areas of language and literacy in primary schools.
- Notions of different areas and degrees of language proficiency, the importance of mother tongue and strategies to enhance success in English language learning.
- Developing Irish language and literacy skills along with those of a modern language too.

#### *Challenges*

- Success in English language learning for our newcomer children.
- The crucial role played by mother tongue and L1 literacy.
- Engaging the parent body to aid maintenance and development of L1 language and literacy.

#### *Transformations*

- Reassess our view of language and literacy in the light of on-going change. Democratic, social and economic reasons for giving *all* our children the benefits associated with being bilingual/plurilingual.
- Analysis and exploration of the possibilities presented by our newcomer children to the interconnectedness of language and literacy learning.
- Strategies and methods used to develop English language skills and how these can be applied and/or adapted to enhance the learning of Irish and modern languages.
- Metalinguistic awareness, plurilingualism, content language integrated learning for *all* children using L1, Irish and modern languages, collaboration between primary and post-primary sectors to build an integrated approach to learning in general.
- Transforming our own abilities as teachers so that our pupils may take their place in a world where, increasingly, knowledge of languages and literacy skills are basic necessities for success.

**Lotta Larson**, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS, USA

***Reader Response Meets 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacies: Empowering Readers in On-line Literacy Communities***

This paper examines how the integration of electronic books and electronic message board discussions support reading comprehension, literature response, and the emergence of 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy skills within online reading/writing communities in a fifth-grade classroom.

This paper links traditional reader response theory to 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy research. The *Transactional Theory of Reader Response* (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995, 1978) supports that readers “make sense” of reading experiences as they apply, reorganise, revisit, or extend encounters with text and personal experiences. Central to this theory is the interaction of the reader, author, and text as the reader engages in personal meaning making of the text. While a reader may not physically change print text, digital texts can literally transform as the reader utilises tools and settings available within the digital text format (Eagleton & Dobler, 2007). This paper recognises the significance of past research of transactional reader response theory, while acknowledging that textual transformations continuously occur with the arrival of new literacies and instructional technologies.

Fifth-grade students participating in this study read quality literature in e-book format. They interacted with the text by using various e-book tools (highlighter, note tools, voice recorder, stamp tool, etc.). These tools allowed the participants to engage in a spontaneous response process as the plot unfolded. Analysis of students’ use of e-book tools revealed extended connections between readers and text, as the tools provided multiple opportunities for students to interact with and respond to the literature.

The students also engaged in conversational literature response by participating in asynchronous on-line message board discussions. Analysis of the discussion transcripts suggested five types of student-constructed prompts that were used to spark extensive discussions about the books: 1) experiential prompts, 2) aesthetic prompts 3) cognitive prompts, 4) interpretive prompts, and 5) clarification prompts. The five types of prompts will be defined and discussed during the presentation, along with implications for teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom (Hancock, 2008; Larson 2007; Larson, 2009).

**Claudia McVicker**, Park University, Parkville, Missouri, USA

***Building Best Practices for Literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Using Comic Strips as a Text Structure for Improving Comprehension with Struggling Readers***

Building best practices for literacy requires improving comprehension skills in students who are struggling with reading. Current definitions of literacy now includes the term viewing or visual literacy. This presentation asserts viewing, the newest “recognised” 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: a slide presentation, comics strip comprehension strategies, hand-out, and preview and access information for a very special website devoted to using comic strips for literacy development as well as a teacher’s section for downloading resources. A prize drawing for teacher gifts from the website developer/comic artist will be held at the end of the session.

**Dr. Brian Murphy**, University College Cork

***Participation and achievement of boys in Irish language learning in schools: time to acknowledge the gender issue?***

This paper seeks to address the gender equity issue in terms of participation and achievement in Irish language learning in Irish schools. It begins by framing the discussion within the general international concern regarding boys' underachievement in school and specifically within the language and literacy curriculum areas. A particular issue with regard to both boys' participation and achievement in foreign language learning internationally is discussed before data gathered by the State Examinations Commission is presented to illustrate the existence of this same phenomenon with respect to Irish language learning in Irish schools. The contention that the issue is officially unrecognised and unacknowledged is then put forward. Possible origins and reasons for the gendering of Irish language learning, gleaned from international literature, are then explored. The paper finishes with a call for the impact of gender on participation and achievement in Irish language learning to be immediately recognised and to form part of any debate and reform of education, language teaching generally and Irish language teaching within the country.

**Fiona Lyddy and Justé Koller**, National University of Ireland, Maynooth

***Interference from Reading in a Digit–Word Counting Task: The Role of Mathematical Experience in Digit Processing***

Cognitive interference occurs when two stimulus features are processed concurrently and processing of one feature slows down the processing of the other. Numerical Stroop tasks demonstrate cognitive interference by requiring participants to respond to one stimulus feature (e.g. counting the number of words presented), while ignoring the other stimulus feature (e.g. the meaning of the written words). The time taken to respond is measured across trials in which the two stimulus features are incongruent (e.g. THREE THREE; respond '2'), compared to congruent trials (TWO TWO) and neutral trials (CAT CAT). The processes of reading and counting are thus competing on incongruent trials, resulting in a slowed response. In the current study, adult participants (N=30) indicated via button-press how many items (1-4) were present on congruent, incongruent and neutral trials, for digit (e.g., 2) and word (e.g. TWO) stimuli. Participants formed two groups (Higher/Lower) on the basis of Leaving Certificate Mathematics performance. Greater interference was found for digit stimuli compared to word stimuli, for the 'Higher Math' group. Similarly, Stroop facilitation, that is relatively speeded responses on congruent trials, was only evident for the 'Higher Math' group. This study demonstrates processing differences on digits and number words that may reflect individual differences in mathematics experience. The role of reading automaticity in these differences is discussed.

## Conference Proceedings

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