

NCRA Newsletter

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North Carolina Reading Association

September/October 2010

President's Message

Now that the yellow buses are running routinely again, early leaves crunching under the tires, I find myself reflecting on "how I spent my summer." I enjoyed some great travel adventures, caught up with many old friends, and, of course, I read.

Much of my reading time was spent on leisure materials-some great books: *The Madonna's of Leningrad* by D. Dean, *A Fine Balance* by R. Mistry, *Nature Shock* by P. Bronson, *Wait Till Next Year* by D.K. Goodwin, *Olive Kitteridge* by E. Strout, and *Thinking in Pictures*, by Temple Grandin.



Serving as NCRA President, yet long retired from the classroom, I knew I needed to visit some professional resources to refresh my understanding of today's literacy education. I tuned in to IRA publications. In *Creating Strategic Readers*, Valerie Ellery explains a comprehensive framework of routine strategies to cover the five areas of reading, adaptable to any elementary classroom. Students learn not only what, but why they do what they do to become competent readers. I love the way she incorporates simple items like empty frames, mirrors and flashlights within small group lessons.

Tim Ransinsky's *From Phonics to Fluency* (co-authored with Nancy Padak) reinforced for me the importance of partnering with parents to insure students have the best chance at success with new reading skills. In *Cracking Open the Author's Craft*, Lester Laminack strives to help teachers use well loved picture books to build students' writing skills. (Both Tim and Lester will be featured at the NCRA conference in March.)

I must mention my "aha" book-*Educating Esme: Diary of a Teacher's First Year*, by Esme Raji Codell (<http://planetesme.blogspot.com/>). I wish all teachers, new and experienced, had time to read this empowering book. In Katherine Patterson's foreword (2009 edition), she says of Esme, "As I read her diary, I found her intelligence, energy, and imagination thrilling, but was from time to time alarmed by Esme's acerbic honesty. Indeed sometimes she scared the living daylights out of me."

In the back of the book, Esme offers 25 sensible pieces of advice for aspiring and new teachers. My favorite five: 1) Read aloud every day. 2) Find a mentor. 3) Show your love through high expectations. 4) Be consistent. 5) Start and end each day with a good word.

My good word to end with today is "connection." It is important that we make a connection and stay connected with each other through local council work, through sharing of ideas, through conversations both written and in person. Have a wonderful year.

Ava Bevins, NCRA President

IRA Caribbean Project



NCRA President Ava Bevins and IRA Board member and NCRA legislative chair Marsha Lewis with the IRA International Development for the Caribbean committee.

Just prior to International Literacy Day, NCRA submitted the first set of IRA special memberships to Sakil Malik. As many of you may remember, Sakil, who works in the IRA Global Affairs Department, presented at the 2010 NCRA Leadership Conference and is actively assisting NCRA with this international project.

NCRA members interested in participating in this initiative should send their checks to NCRA Treasurer Margaret Inman, 600 Park Ave., Fairmont, NC 28340, by October 20. Margaret will submit the funds to IRA, who will identify the Caribbean teachers to receive the IRA memberships. The cost per special membership is \$25--(\$20 to IRA, \$5 to remain with NCRA to potentially conduct a Caribbean project). After October 20, at least one additional membership collection date will be announced.

To keep things as simple as possible for Margaret, please remember to include the name of the local council submitting the funds along with the list of individuals who are sponsoring memberships.

Thanks to all of you who are working to increase literacy in the Caribbean countries.

Marsha Lewis, Legislative Chair
Ava Bevins, NCRA President



Book Blogging with Students

by Teresa Carter, New Hanover County

One of my personal goals for last year was to use technology tools more effectively in my classroom, so when I suggested setting up a blog for our students to talk about books, the students were eager to try it. At first I was going to have one site, but I had an intern at the time and we were involved in doing some small group instruction, so we each set up our own blogs related to the novels we were teaching at that time.

I chose blogger.com after checking out several sites. It was easy to navigate and gave me some control over who responded and had access to our blog. I also liked its display features and options. The directions for set up were easy and the site was free.

I began with some general, anticipatory comments about our novel of choice. These pre-reading strategies I had used in the classroom before just not in the technological format of a blog. I had students respond from home or from school, but it was an expectation that all would comment. I had to spend a few minutes, with several repetitions taking my fourth graders through the process. My intern did the same, only she set her blog up in the format of a reading response journal.

My first novel study was *Liar, Liar Pants on Fire* by Gordon Korman. The story deals with a young girl who tells fantastical things. Here are excerpts from our first blogging experiences:

March 2010

Mrs. Carter said: Zoe, from *Liar, Liar Pants on Fire*, was either very creative or very dishonest. What are your feelings on the topic?

Harry said: I think Zoe is a big fat liar and needs to tell the truth more.

Claudia said: I think Zoe is a liar sometimes it is a good idea to lie but not always she is creative

Anna B. said: You are the best teacher ever. I love you Mrs. Carter. Zoe is a big fat liar.

I found that I had to get over the “English teacher” attitude that I brought to blogging and just respond to the students' thoughts and posts as they were given. I did file away important notes about who might need extra grammar help on certain things. So I guess you could say this was providing me with diagnostic information, too.

That was extremely hard though! I also had to keep students on track with the purpose of the blog...literacy comments related to our reading. Our efforts were simple at first but as the act of blogging became more natural, students were able to give deeper thinking to their comments.

April 2010

We returned to our basal series for one of my favorite units- Heroes. At this point in our blogging I was striving to get students to interact with other students on the blog as well as responding to my comments.

Mrs. Carter said: Our new unit is called Heroes. I want to know what you think about this topic. Read the comments of your fellow students. Do you agree/ disagree? State your thoughts and feelings...just do so in a respectful manner. What do you think makes a hero? Who are some of your heroes? What are some characteristics that a hero might have?

Ag said: I think that a hero is made up of courage and kindness. Some of my heroes are my mom, my grandma's, great grandma's, and the rest of my family for giving what I have today. Some characteristics that a hero might have are courage, kindness, strength, and curiosity.

May 2010

I was even able to communicate with my students during an emergency absence.

Mrs. Carter said: Well boys and girls...I am in Nashville with my daughter awaiting my new grandson. I miss you guys and hope to be back soon. I am seeing a lot of those everyday kinds of heroes that

we talked about in class. People are helping with the flooding here. One company came down to help people in their family and stayed and helped a whole church that had been flooded. Other neighbors are all out on every street helping people haul out wet, flooded belongings. All the country music stars are planning a concert called Nashville Rising. It is good to see so many people helping each other...kind of like our hurricanes and their hardships! Miss you guys.

I also attended a NC Reading Association work-

shop on book blogging at the state conference in March provided by Dr. Jennifer Olsen, and Pamela Nolan. They had fourth grade students blogging with pre-service teachers about books. I found that we shared some common experiences.

I found blogging was an experience that I enjoyed and I think the students did as well, based on their comments in my "Reflections of Fourth Grade." I will try it again this year, hopefully with even better results!

Council News

Robeson County Reading Council Service Project

The Robeson County Reading Council recently presented the pediatrics unit at Southeastern Regional Medical Center, Lumberton, NC with a donation of stuffed animals, print and audio books, educational games, videos and other audio-visual materials as part of its "Healing More Hearts with Books" project.

The donation also included reading materials for adults which will be shared with Southeastern affiliates. Pictured at the presentation were Council Project Chairman Marsha Tolbert, left, SRMC Pediatric Nurse Angela Monarca, Council Area Director Tommy Johnson, council member David Wagner, Council President Shane Fletcher, Young Author Chair Tonnye Fletcher, council member Jane Hoskins and Council Treasurer Judy Garner.



The NCRA Newsletter Needs Your Help!

The NCRA newsletter is about YOU, so please submit short articles and photos for NCRA newsletters throughout the year. These can include local council programs and events, information and resources about literacy, book reviews, legislative issues, sources of free or inexpensive materials, research findings on literacy, and more. Email submissions to Jean House: jhouse52@bellsouth.net.

Deadline for next issue: November 15

Newspapers in Education Update

National

For Newspaper in Education Week 2011 (March 7-11), the Newspaper Association of America Foundation will provide a new 20-page "core" curriculum that addresses civics, math and fine arts. Activities will apply to three grade levels, and each will include an activity sheet. On request, NIE managers can direct NCRA members to websites with other curricula.

State

NIE programs vary their offerings; some charge and some try to find sponsors to cover some of the costs associated with producing print and e-editions. Teachers should contact their papers to find out what NIE makes available.

Newspaper in Education teacher and representative to NCRA, Cynthia McFadden reports "rave reviews" for use of e-editions at West Lee Middle School. She continues to choose stories and write comprehension questions and have students lead discussions, emphasizing reading and writing and current events and varied school subjects.

For the 16-chapter serialized story, *Behind the High Board Fence*, McFadden prepared multiple-choice questions, similar to questions on end-of-grade tests and shared those through the state Newspaper in Education program. Click on "Get Details" about *Behind the High Board Fence* at: www.ncpress.com/ncpf/ncnie/newindex.html.

On the website for *Behind the Board Fence*, teachers will find additional curricula to use with the story and history about North Carolina that

provides context and builds background knowledge. Newspapers across the state will be publishing the story during the 2010-2011 school year. Author Helen Marley bases her book on stories offered by her mother about growing up in NC during the early 20th century when railroads and industry reshaped the state and its economy. ENCOURAGE local papers to PUBLISH the story. The story's available at no charge to NC newspapers through Sandra Cook at sandynie@unc.edu.

The "writing opportunity" for the serial story has students asking about and reporting on an adult's childhood memory, similar to *That's a Fact*, the prompt for Young Authors. Look for the writing opportunity on the website for the serial story. (Note: Health concerns may restrict Helen Marley's school visits.)

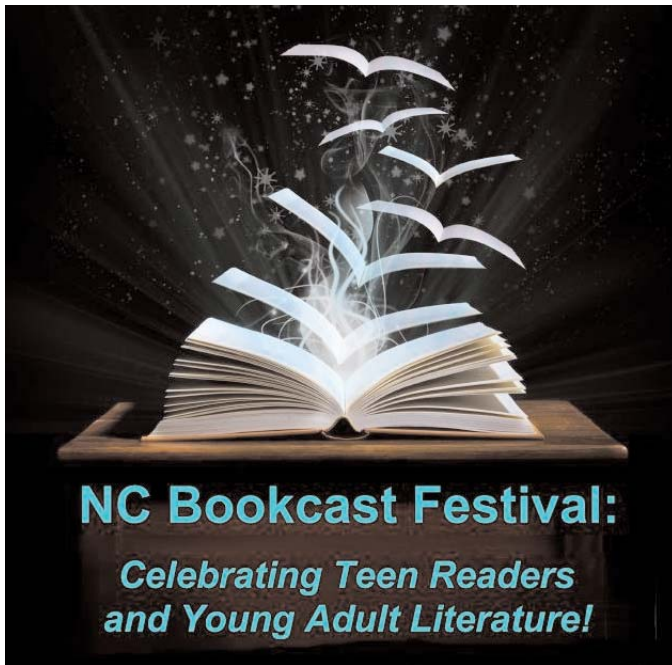
Other vendors provide serial stories that newspapers may choose to run.

Local

Tom Tufts will present strategies for using his book and making connections with current events at a workshop scheduled for Raleigh/Wake Reading Association on October 23. Sandra Cook will add emphasis to the overlap of fiction and non-fiction in the afternoon session. Food (and food poetry) will be provided by Lowes Foods. Tom wrote the poems.

Cynthia McFadden, NCRA Board NIE Representative & West Lee Middle School teacher, and Sandra Cook, NCRA Vice President, contributed to this article.





NC Bookcast Festival: *Celebrating Teen Readers and Young Adult Literature!*

Stay wired for the details coming October 17, the beginning of National Teen Read Week.

Project wiki:
<http://ncbookcastfestival.wikispaces.com/>

Brought to you by NCRA's Adolescent Literacy Committee in collaboration with the North Carolina School Library Media Association. -- Cris Crissman, chair

Scholastic News Interactive

After 90 successful years of publication, Scholastic News released a digital extension of the classroom magazine called Scholastic News Interactive. The digital platform can be used in classrooms to enhance the content found in the print version.

SN Interactive utilizes tools that engage all reading levels and types of learners, such as anchor videos that prep students for the content they are about to read, vocabulary pop-ups that give word definitions and pronunciation, and bonus activities and quizzes to reinforce learning.

The platform is available free to all subscribers to Scholastic News, which is used widely in classrooms throughout North Carolina.

To see demo videos of Scholastic News Interactive in action, visit www.scholastic.com/snidemo.



2011 NCRA Conference Raleigh, NC March 13-15, 2011

Speakers include: Lester Laminack, Tim Rasin-sky, Kathleen Krull, The Apron Ladies, Judy Sierra, Tom Angleberger, Lois Huffman, Tom Tufts, John Claude Bemis, Katie Garner, and more.

Look for conference and hotel registration forms soon on the NCRA website: ncreading.org.



EXPANDING HORIZONS:
READING ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES...

A Literary Jaunt - by Rosemary Enos

On April 24th, I took the “Hickory Hop” to Charlotte and flew to Chicago to attend the yearly conference of the International Reading Association. IRA has about 70000 members and is dedicated to world-wide literacy. This is the fifteenth straight year I’ve attended. I meet my friends from the board of the North Carolina Reading Association, and we just have a grand time.

Our keynote speaker this year was Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan. What an intelligent, beautiful, articulate speaker she is. She has written a picture book called *The Sandwich Swap* in which she trades her hummus on pita bread (she brought this sandwich to school every day) for a peanut butter and jelly with her American friend. It’s a lovely story about being different but still being friends. I heard several other children’s authors speak and went to a “Favorite Teacher” breakfast sponsored by Scholastic - which was absolutely wonderful.

About 12,000 educators attended the conference, and there were 300 vendors in the exhibit hall. I could have brought home three full suitcases of “stuff,” but since I only had one suitcase, I had to choose books and such very carefully. My suitcase still weighed 52 pounds, but they didn’t charge me extra! YEA!

Chicago is such a beautiful city. The tulips were in full bloom - breathtaking, and Lake Michigan sparkled in the sunlight. We visited the Field Museum and the Shedd Aquarium and rode around the city on a double-decker trolley in the rain. Also went to a reception on the 80th floor of this beautiful building looking over the lake. What a view! I wish I could have taken you all with me, but - I was really, really tired when I got home. Jerry guarded the house and maybe missed me just a little.

Thanks for letting me share my adventures. Just remember - from an old librarian - “You don’t have to read every day, - just every day that you eat.”

COUNCIL TREASURERS: TAX FORM DEADLINE LOOMS!!

Just a friendly reminder to all local council treasurers to file IRS form 990N online before October 15. It's a very simple procedure, but the IRS is really cracking down on nonprofit organizations that do not file. You can lose tax-exempt status and be fined for not doing so. Remember to print out the verification of filing once you have completed the process. A copy should be sent to IRA headquarters for their records, also. Feel free to contact me at 910.628.6412 or minman47@nc.rr.com if you have questions or call IRA at 1.800.336.READ.

Margaret Inman, NCRA Treasurer

NCRA Scholarship Information

Each year the North Carolina Reading Association is supportive of individuals through scholarships. If you are planning to pursue your Masters or Doctorate in Reading or you are interested in a Reading Certificate, please consider applying for a scholarship from NCRA. The purpose of these scholarships is to assist educators in pursuing graduate training in the field of literacy. Please go to the NCRA Website, ncreading.org, for information and the application.

Sharron Regan, NCRA Past-President



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NCRA 2010-11

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Upcoming Events

2011 NC Reading Conference
 Raleigh Convention Center
March 13 - 15, 2011

2011 Young Authors Celebration
 Raleigh, NC.....March 12, 2011

2011 NCRA Leadership Conference
 Boone, NC.....June 21-23, 2011

2012 NC Reading Conference
 Raleigh Convention Center
March 18 - 20, 2012

2013 NC Reading/SE Regional Conference
 Raleigh Convention Center
 March 10 - 12, 2013

Visit ncreading.org for up-to-date information.
2011 Conference & Hotel Registration forms coming to the website soon!