

# Mississippi Reading Association

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## From the Desk of the President

This is a time of reflection for us as one year ends and another begins. Of course, as educators we face this reflection at the beginning and ending of each school year. What has worked so far with your students? What do you wish to improve?

As an organization MRA is in the middle of its fiscal year. We have just completed a very successful reading conference. Now our focus turns to the next one in December, 2015. At our February board meeting we will discuss what worked and what improvements we need to make. Some things are beyond our control such as the dates our venue has available to us.

This year we seem to have reached more people than in recent years. You may have attended the conference to hear Joan and Gail, The Two Sisters. You may have heard about the conference for the first time through our website, Facebook, or Twitter outreach. Maybe having three days of professional development appealed to you-and being back at the Beau was definitely a plus for many.

MRA has one main goal: improve literacy instruction for students in Mississippi. The conference is our primary means to this end. But local councils are an important support to

our goal, too. I have been involved with the Jackson Area Reading Council for over twenty years. This is a teacher led group with a focus on promoting literacy-reading and writing-in our part of the world. It is great to have a time and place to be a literacy 'geek', as one friend puts it.

Do you have days when you feel that you are all alone in the pursuit of the best practice in literacy instruction? Do you wish for time to share the good things your students are doing? Are you tired of listening to depressing information about the sad 'state' of our schools? Band together with some like-minded educators. Find a time when you can brag about the good things that are going on in your classroom or school. Start a book club for educators and read the latest edition of *The Daily 5* by The Two Sisters. You will be surprised by how reviving this can be.

If you would like to share your literacy successes with MRA members, please email your information to Murray Collum or me. Our members would love to hear from you.

Janice Cate, NBCT  
MRA President  
misreading@yahoo.com

We at MRA wish you a Happy New Year in 2015!



# From the CORE GURU...

As English Language Arts teachers in Mississippi, we have been programmed to “teach to the test” in order to help our students succeed on the MCT2 and SATP2 assessments. We have had to teach grammar in isolation. We were able to teach students “tricks” to answer the questions on these tests. Let’s be honest: the MCT2 and SATP2 were not measuring student’s ability to read as much as they were measuring a student’s ability to figure out what the question was asking. That’s not a reading test. That’s a thinking test.

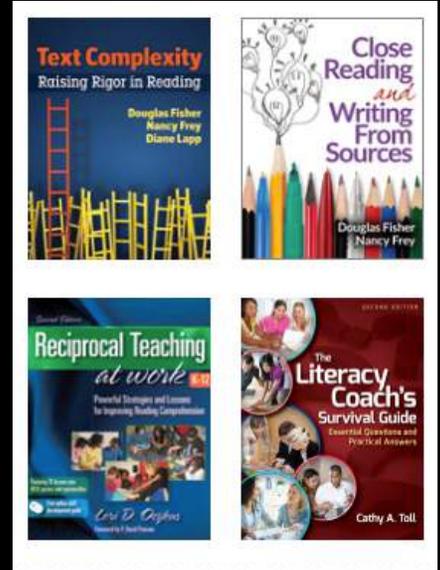
Our new assessment, the PARCC assessment, is a reading test. Students will be reading passages and answering questions and writing about these passages. The questions and writing tasks will require the students to be able to READ the text and determine the answers based on their READING ability, not their ability to interpret a question. For example, if the question asks a student to identify the central theme of a text, the student cannot use a “trick to answer the question. The student must be able to read the text and actually determine the central theme of that text. In other words, the student must master the standard to answer the question.

In my presentation during the Presidential Luncheon at this year’s MRA conference, I stressed how important it is to teach the standards. I realize how important the PARCC assessment is to us as teachers. I understand how much is dependent on our student’s success on this assessment. But, it is VITAL that our students master the standards. If they do not master the STANDARDS, they will not succeed on the test. What does this mean for us as teachers? Teach to the standards. If we do not teach to the standards, we cannot expect our students to succeed on the assessment. Period.

Vincent Segalini, MDE ELA Office Director

MRA Public Relations Co-Chair

With your last half of Christmas Break, curl up with one of IRA's Best of 2014!



## Speaker's Bureau for the Mississippi Reading Association

MRA is asking you to recommend people you know that are good speakers to invite to our Speaker's Bureau. We want to know something about the person, their presentation skills, and if they fit what we would want to put “OUR” name on.

Send Names with Emails to: [sopeets@yahoo.com](mailto:sopeets@yahoo.com)

A MESSAGE FROM THE

TEACH  
TO  
THE  
STANDARDS!!!

CORE GURU!

## MRA Awards Teacher Grants

Emily Sabree MEd

Four Mississippi teachers were awarded grants of \$500 each for literacy projects at their schools. Lois Crump and Richard Jones wrote proposals to enhance classroom learning with materials to supplement and organize their classroom libraries. They will be sharing more about their projects at the next MRA conference. Jennifer Baker, a media specialist, wrote her project to benefit her whole school with a summer reading kick-off to take place at the end of this school year. She will share her project in a future MRA Newsletter. Classroom teacher Murray Collum's project will promote literacy in his upper elementary classroom.

Mississippi Reading Association sets aside \$2,000 per year to award literacy grants and/or literacy scholarships to members. The grants and scholarships are announced each year at the reading conference. The next round of grant opportunities will open in the fall of 2015. Applicants must be members of MRA for at least one year to be eligible for a grant or scholarship. The other main requirement is that the awardee must write an article for the newsletter or present a session at the next reading conference sharing how the award promoted literacy in his/her classroom or school. Look for more information on the MRA website: [www.msreading.org](http://www.msreading.org).



(From L-R) Richard Jones, Murray Collum, Jennifer Baker, Lois Crump

LOCAL COUNCIL  
SPOTLIGHT

## Jackson Area Reading Council and Madison Reading Council News

Jackson Area Reading Council (JARC) had three meetings in fall semester. Our next meeting will be Thursday, February 12, 2015. We are having a combined meeting with Madison Reading Council. We will meet at 3:45 pm at the Barnes and Noble at Renaissance Center pending confirmation with Barnes and Noble. Emily Sabree will share "They Make Me Teach Math", a session about how math can be viewed and approached as a language. She will share tips for getting students to write more in math class. This is very timely since this year students will be expected to explain and justify their thinking on the end of the year tests. If you are in the area on February 12<sup>th</sup>, we welcome you to come to our joint meeting.

JARC and Madison Reading are affiliate councils of Mississippi Reading Association and the International Reading Association. Membership is open to all interested adults and college students. Each council meets at least 4 times per school year to present programs focused on literacy education. For more information contact Jennifer Baker, President, Madison Reading Council at [jebaker@jackson.k12.ms.us](mailto:jebaker@jackson.k12.ms.us).



## 2014 Conference Snaps



## WANT TO BE PUBLISHED IN THE MRA NEWSLETTER!

## EMAIL YOUR ARTICLES TO:

## MHCOLUM@YAHOO.COM



TRANSFORMING  
LIVES  
THROUGH  
LITERACY

Annual Conference & Exhibits  
July 18-20  
Institute Day  
July 17

