

CARA News

Spring
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2010-2011

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Chicago Area Reading Association
www.CARAreads.org

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President's Message

Dear CARA members,

This has been an incredible year for Chicago Area Reading Association. We really have been involved in so many important literacy events for our teachers, our local communities as well as international projects. I can't help but smile at the work we've done and continue to do to promote literacy in Chicago and the surrounding areas. Last month, our winter conference titled *Charting Our Own Path to Literacy* was extremely informative. Our guest speakers and presenters did a fabulous job and we had rave reviews from each session. We will be planning more conferences with break out sessions in the future, so stay tuned.

We are really looking forward to the 2011 Illinois Reading Council's Conference *Literacy Outside the Box!* in Springfield, IL March 17-19. IRC's conferences are truly the best and I encourage all of you to attend if you are available. On May 19th CARA will host an evening event featuring author, educator and story teller W. Nikola-Lisa. This exciting event gives us the opportunity to network with our colleagues, visit some of our vendors and be informed and entertained by this inspirational author. Mark your calendars and stay tuned for more information.

CARA is constantly staying up to date with the latest technology. We invite you to visit our webpage and become a fan of our Chicago Area Reading Association page on Facebook. We work very hard to keep you informed and provide you with pictures from our latest events. On Facebook, we also have open message threads where we can communicate on all the latest topics in reading and language arts education. Don't forget, we are always looking for people to get involved in CARA and our many committees. Please email me if you'd like to take a more active role in our organization.

See you on May 19th!

Amy M. Zaher Ed.D
CARA President



Response to Intervention: Seeing a Literacy Opportunity and Seizing it For Our Kids

Timothy M. Daly and Julie Price Daly

The conviction that Frederick Douglass, Dr. Seuss, and literacy leaders across Chicago have in common is the belief that children's reading successes are the keys to freedom and participation in our democratic society. While most educators share this conviction, too many of our children do not become motivated and proficient readers as demonstrated by stagnant national reading data (NAEP, 2009). Despite these negative trends, there are teachers and students who show us what is possible by closing the reading achievement gap every day.

Educational leaders from around the world fill our professional libraries with literacy tools that help us grow readers. Literacy leaders now need to engage colleagues in conversations about how to best use these tools to serve all students, in all classrooms, so that they all achieve reading proficiency.

Response to Intervention (RtI) may be the greatest opportunity educators will ever encounter to promote literacy on a broad scale with a direct impact on students. RtI provides educators with a framework to identify students' reading challenges, provide targeted interventions, and monitor students' progress. Many teachers already implement these steps. The RtI framework promotes opportunities for educators to build an authentic professional community focused on students' reading. Further, RtI creates a space for building-level conversations about how to best utilize a school's resources so that all students receive the interventions they need to foster sustained reading growth.

RtI carries the weight of federal law and is designed to ensure literacy growth for all students. Literacy professionals must capitalize upon RtI as the template for cultivating school environments that support literacy growth for all of our kids.

As of the authors' last check, the federal government spent roughly 30 billion dollars on public education. Because democracy does not work when its public cannot read, it is logical that the federal government has made such strong attempts to improve the educational outcomes for the kids we serve.

The most current changes to federal education law inextricably link education funding to RtI work. States, districts, and schools must comply with the requirements that these changes have brought to our profession, and it is up to literacy leaders to make RtI work for teachers and students.

Federal law requires states to develop RtI plans that detail how schools will implement the major components of RtI

including a universal screener, tiers of intervention, and progress monitoring. Much of the responsibility for defining what RtI is lies with schools, as law makers have wisely charged districts and schools with giving shape to RtI. In Chicago, the district has placed authority over RtI planning in the hands of area offices, which in many cases have handed this authority directly to schools themselves.

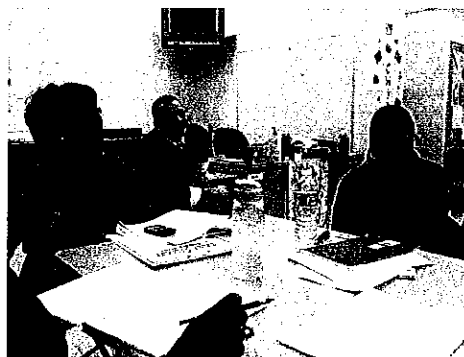
Educators who engage in this RtI planning will impact the direction of literacy instruction and school improvement efforts which will support growth across entire school buildings. As professionals dedicated to improving the outcomes of the children we serve, it is imperative that we get involved in these RtI planning discussions.

The scope of RtI planning is broad and encompasses every piece of instruction and support taking place in our schools. Here is what we need to do to lead the RtI discussions in our buildings and areas:

- Find out who is in charge of RtI planning in our areas and schools;
- Join the RtI planning conversations;
- Keep the discussions focused on our kids growth;
- Integrate the literacy needs of students who are English Language Learners, Special Education students, struggling readers, and readers who excel.

Literacy leaders are essential to improving the literacy outcomes for all students. We have an exciting opportunity to help shape how our schools will proceed with school improvement through RtI planning, and it would be tragic to let this opportunity pass us by.

The authors of this article welcome comment via e-mail.
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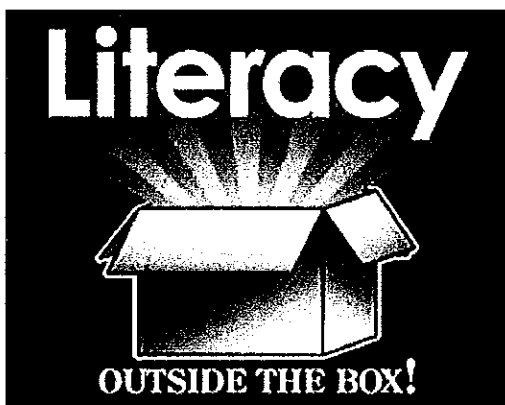
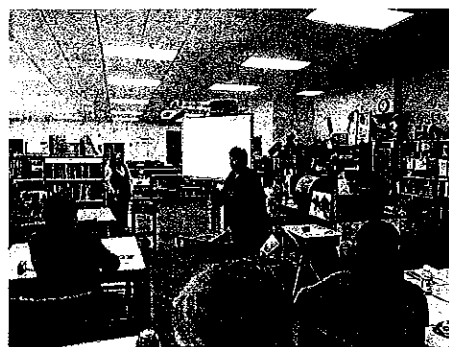


Tim Daly presenting at CARA's Winter Conference



Charting Our Own Path to Literacy ***Photos from CARA's Winter Conference***

CARA's Winter Conference was a huge success! Educators from the Chicago area came together to share professional knowledge, learn from one another, and grow as educators. Roxanne Owens, professor at DePaul University and Past-President of the Illinois Reading Council shared an empowering message with educators in attendance. She suggested that educators consider the national and local dialogue and in decision-making, to see a wholistic view of what was going on in their classroom. Reflective questions she suggested included asking yourself what works in your classroom, what doesn't, and examining how success is measured in your classroom. She shared the powerful quote, "leaders don't force people to follow, they invite them on a journey," written by Lauer. Attendees also selected breakout sessions that shared information regarding Response to Intervention, reading strategies, vocabulary instruction, and brain-based teaching. What a great conference!



Literacy Outside the Box!

The Illinois Reading Council's Annual Conference will be held in Springfield, Illinois from March 17th to March 19th. Check out www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org for registration and housing information. This excellent conference brings together educators from across Illinois through energizing sessions led by national and local educators. Check out the program on the IRC website and read over the session topics available this year. Don't miss this great opportunity!

**Chicago
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JOIN CARA TODAY AT www.CARAreads.org

Membership in the Chicago Area Reading Association provides the following valuable literacy opportunities:

- State Organization:** Join CARA and you are also a member of the Illinois Reading Council (IRC)
- Four quarterly newsletters and journals from IRC**
- CARA sponsored conferences and workshops throughout the year to promote reading and literacy**
- Networking:** Meet and share information with other professionals who are interested in promoting literacy in the Chicago area.
- CARA NEWS - Newsletter four times per year**
- Discount rates on all CARA conferences and functions**
- Opportunities for grants and scholarships to fund school and community literacy projects**

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