

American Reading Forum (ARF) Annual Conference Proposal Template

Theme—*The title of the conference*

Program Chair/Co-Chairs & Bios--*Include a bio, institutional affiliation, and history within ARF for each*

Rationale & Research Base for Theme with References—*Why is the conference theme significant to the ARF membership? How is it situated in the research literature?*

Relevance of the Topic to Current Events/Climate (as applicable)—*In what ways is the conference theme relevant to current trends and issues in education as well as the larger social and political contexts?*

Vision & Focus for Conference—*What do you hope to accomplish as a result of this program? Around what ideas do you want ARF members to engage during the conference? What do you hope they take away?*

Themes and Subthemes—*What subthemes might proposals address? Will participants be allowed to submit proposals outside of the theme/subthemes?*

Possible Keynote Speakers & Bios—*Include a list of the scholars you believe would contribute to the program theme, and what you anticipate their focus to be. Include brief bios and indicate whether you have contacted them/they are interested.*

Important Dates-*Include a timeline for important dates related to the conference. These have been the standard dates used in ARF for previous conferences.*

August 1, 20XX – Deadline for session proposals

September 1, 20XX – Feedback on proposals will be sent out via email

October 1, 20XX – Deadline for graduate student proposals

October 15, 20XX – Early bird conference registration ends

November 1, 20XX – Feedback on graduate student proposals will be sent out

November 15, 20XX – Graduate Student early bird conference registration ends

December X-XX, 20XX – Conference @ Sundial Resort, Sanibel Island, FL (Bylaws state that the conference will always be held the first full week of December in south Florida).

Session Types – *The following are standard session formats and the descriptions that have been historically present at ARF conferences. If you would like to propose a non-standard session format that is unique to your theme, provide a title, description, and rationale.*

Paper Sessions

The program committee will schedule two to four papers on related topics in a session. If individuals submitting the proposal have not named a discussant, the program committee may appoint a discussant who will start the session and facilitate a 15-minute discussion about the papers, including comments and questions from the audience. The timing of sessions may be adjusted based on the number of presentations scheduled for the session.

Symposia

Those proposing a symposium should assemble a session on one topic or multiple but related topics focused on the conference theme. Symposium proposers should name their own chairs, discussants, and any others who may have a specific role in the program. Novel approaches, ways of presenting, and/or ways of involving the audience are welcome in the symposium sessions. If additional time is needed, please request additional time on the proposal cover sheet.

Problems Court

In the first 20-30 minutes of an open forum, the presenters should pose a persistent problem of practice or opportunity for growth in the field of literacy research and instruction, supported by theoretical and/or empirical evidence and connected to the conference theme. The next 20-30 minutes should be reserved for a facilitated, critical conversation with the audience about the ways in which this problem or opportunity has been treated in the past, what has advanced our progress, and what has hindered it. In the final 20-30 minutes, the emphasis of the discussion should move toward developing concrete actions items that individuals or small groups can continue to pursue in their own contexts. These might include directions for research, research-practice partnerships, or other steps to be initiated once the conference is completed.

The session should close with a 5-10 minute wrap-up of the discussion by the presenters. Problem Court proposals should identify how many presenters will be involved in the session and their specific roles (e.g., presenters, discussion facilitators, timekeepers).

Advancing Literacy

Advancing Literacy presentations should describe an ongoing study, work in the planning stages, or theoretical work. The program committee will organize the papers into groups of three so that related topics will share a space. Presenters will share for 15 minutes with 10 minutes for follow-up discussion.

American Reading Forum (ARF) Annual Conference Proposal Example

Theme: Investing in Literacy: Examining Who Profits from Literacy Curriculum, Research, Policy, and Practice

Program Chair/Co-Chairs & Bios:

- Dr. Brittany Adams, SUNY Cortland
Brittany Adams, PhD, is an assistant professor of Literacy Education at SUNY Cortland, where she teaches reading and literacy courses to pre- and in-service teachers across educational contexts. She has been involved in ARF since 2018 and is currently a member of the executive board. Her research interests include critical literacy, children's and young adult literature, content area literacy, and new literacies. Her work has been published in *Journal of Literacy Research*; *The Reading Teacher*; *Literacy Research and Instruction*, and *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice*.
- Dr. Angela M. Kohnen, University of Florida
Angela M. Kohnen, PhD, is an associate professor of English Language Arts Education at the University of Florida, where she coordinates the English Education and Media Literacy programs and teaches courses on literacy and literacy education for students at all levels, undergraduate through doctoral. She has been a member of ARF since 2017. Her research interests include digital and media literacy, teacher preparation, and the intersections of literacy and identity. Her work has appeared in *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, Practice*, *English Journal*, and the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*.

Rationale & Research Base for Theme with References:

As we approach the quarter point of the 21st century, profit, literacy education, and literacy itself are more entwined than ever before. In 2021, the American Reading Forum grappled with literacy and agency. This year, we invite our community to re-focus those conversations around ideas of profit. The idea that the literate individual automatically profits from literacy learning has been explored in our community for decades (e.g., Gee, 1996; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984). If the “autonomous” model of literacy assumes that all literacy acquisition is value-added and the “ideological” model raises questions of power, we extend Street’s (1984; 2005) inquiry to questions of profit. Considering “profit” as both a noun (a gain) and a verb (deriving benefit), we see questions of who profits from literacy and literacy education swirling around nearly every aspect of our work.

Major corporations, private foundations, and other profit-driven companies have increasingly greater influence over what is taught and learned in public schools (Kohn & Shannon, 2002; Larson, 2014; Moore & Zancanella, 2014), as well as how that learning is measured (Au, 2016; Leistyna, 2007). Alternative teacher certification pathways actively compete with traditional college and university teacher preparation programs (Pasternak et al., 2018; Zeichner, 2016). For university faculty, the potential to generate external funding is a factor in hiring and promotion decisions at many institutions, often to the detriment of those whose research does not require funding and/or appeal to funding agencies (Gallup & Svare, 2016). As literacy scholars, we are challenged to examine who profits from our research and its dissemination, particularly when our work engages underrepresented populations as research participants (Fine, 2017). Furthermore, online experiences are increasingly advertiser- and algorithmically-controlled, with hidden forces shaping what we see and read (Noble, 2018). Yet, simultaneously, we see a push for open learning, open access to publications and teaching resources, and the democratization of communication (e.g., Albers et al., 2015; Beetham &

Sharpe, 2019; Lieberman & Mace, 2010; O'Byrne et al., 2015; Roach & Gainer, 2015; Stornaiuolo & Nichols, 2018).

With these tensions in mind, we invite discussions of questions such as: Who profits or benefits from literacy education, research, and policy? What resources are taken up and why? This theme will appeal to stakeholders interested in literacy policy, research, and practice in p-20 contexts. Given the theme's conceptual contouring that all literacy teaching and research is, to a certain extent, a conversation around profit, we hope the conference theme will appeal both to stakeholders who explicitly centralize these issues in their work and challenge other stakeholders to consider the conspicuous and subversive ways in which their work shapes and is shaped by ideas around profit.

We invite and support complicated conversations on the role and influence (dare we say necessity?) of profit in literacy research, policy, and practice.

References

- Albers, P., Turnbull, S., & Angay-Crowder, T. (2015). Questions of matter: Critical conversations in online spaces. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 59(2), 171-181.
- Au, W. (2016). Meritocracy 2.0: High-stakes, standardized testing as a racial project of neoliberal multiculturalism. *Educational Policy*, 30(1), 39-62.
- Fine, M. (2017). *Just research in contentious times: Widening the methodological imagination*. Teachers College Press.
- Gallup, G.G., & Savre, B.B. (2016). Hijacked by an external funding mentality. *Inside Higher Education*.
- Gee, J. P. (1996). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourse*. Taylor & Francis.
- Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kohn, A., & Shannon, P. (Eds.) (2002). *Education Inc: Turning learning into a business*. Heinemann.
- Larson, J. (2014). Operationalizing the neoliberal common good. In P. Shannon (Ed.), *Closer readings of the Common Core: Asking big questions about the English/Language Arts Standards* (pp. ix–xv). Heinemann.
- Leistyna, P. (2007). Corporate testing: Standards, profits, and the demise of the public sphere. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 34(2), 59-84.
- Lieberman, A., & Mace, D. (2010). Making practice public: Teacher learning in the 21st century. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(1/2), 77–88.
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- O'Byrne, W. I., Roberts, V., Labonte, R., & Graham, L. (2015). Teaching, learning, and sharing openly online. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 58(4), 277-280.
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- Stornaiuolo, A., & Nichols, T.P. (2018). Making publics: Mobilizing audiences in high school makerspaces. *Teachers College Record*, 120(8), 1-38.
- Street, B. V. (1984). *Literacy in theory and practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Street, B.V. (2005). Recent applications of New Literacy Studies in educational contexts. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 39(4), 417-423.

Zeichner, K. M. (2016). *Independent teacher education programs: Apocryphal claims, illusory evidence*. National Education Policy Center. <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/teacher-education>

Vision & Focus for Conference:

The focus on profit will invite stakeholders to consider who benefits in literacy curriculum, research, policy, and practice. As we interrogate capitalistic endeavors within educational contexts, our intent is not to isolate or attack individuals who participate in these systems, but rather to push back the commercialization of education. These conversations are intended to compel participants to examine the ways in which their own work, understood broadly, shapes and is shaped by ideas around profit.

At American Reading Forum 20XX, we seek to create a space for discussion and exchange among classroom educators, researchers, and policy writers and makers. While papers, open forums, keynotes, and other standard conference attributes are certainly part of that conversation, they constitute merely an opening for discussion. Throughout the week, at various points, the conference chairs and keynote speakers will offer moments to reflect and build on the discussions that are occurring. Finally, ARF will provide an ongoing forum to continue the conversation until we are able to meet again next year

Themes and Subthemes:

Given the entangled ties that bind literacy and profit together, we invite participants to reflect on the ways in which literacy curriculum, research, policy, and practice prioritize, enable, intersect with, or disrupt profit. Considering that the American Reading Forum values the work and perspectives of a diverse array of stakeholders in the literacy field, we encourage practitioners, administrators, literacy coaches, researchers, and scholars to submit proposals that speak to the overall conference theme including but not limited to the following sub-themes:

- Curriculum
- Disciplinary literacy
- Diversity and representation
- Equitable learning opportunities
- High stakes standardized testing
- Information literacy
- Institutions of higher education
- Instruction across P-20 settings
- Intervention across disciplines
- Policy
- Publishing
- Reading and writing
- Teacher preparation and certification
- Teacher professional development

Participants would also be encouraged to submit proposals that may not match the theme but address literacy topics.

Possible Keynote Speakers & Bios

- **Dr. Rebecca Rogers, E. Desmond Lee Endowed Professor in Tutorial Education and Curators' Distinguished Research Professor, University of Missouri-St. Louis**
Dr. Rebecca Rogers is an educational researcher who specializes in literacy studies, teacher learning, and critical discourse studies. She is the author of eight books including the 2018 book "Reclaiming Powerful Literacies: New Horizons for Critical Discourse Analysis." Her publications have appeared in national and international journals such as *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, *Linguistics & Education*, *Journal of Literacy Research*, *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, and *Urban*

Education. Rebecca is the Past-President of the *Literacy Research Association* and a Fulbright Fellow. She is a publicly engaged scholar and former elected school board member, co-founder of a social justice group for educators, anti-racist facilitator, and involved with parent organizing for racial justice.

Dr. Rogers has been contacted and is interested.

- **Dr. Amy Stornaiuolo, Associate Professor of Literacy, Culture, and International Education, University of Pennsylvania**

Dr. Amy Stornaiuolo is an associate professor of literacy education at the University of Pennsylvania and director of undergraduate education programs. Her research examines people's digital literacy practices, particularly adolescents' multimodal writing online and people's uses of digital technologies for cross-cultural collaboration. She has led several large-scale research projects related to the integration of digital technologies in schools, studying school makerspaces, online composing tools and student-facing analytics, adolescents' data literacy practices, and teachers' facilitation of literature discussions online. With an explicit focus on designing equitable and humanizing conditions for learning, Dr. Stornaiuolo centers her work around building sustainable, long-term partnerships, collaborating with communities and partners to enact meaningful change for educational justice, and designing and engaging in participatory and innovative digital methodologies. She is currently the past chair of AERA's Writing and Literacies Special Interest Group and co-editor of NCTE's flagship research journal, *Research in the Teaching of English*. She has received numerous grants and awards for her research on digital literacies, including a 2017 National Academy of Education/Spencer postdoctoral fellowship and a 2020 Teachers As Learners grant from the McDonnell Foundation. Her peer-reviewed work has been published in leading education, literacy, and media journals, such as *Harvard Educational Review*, *Teachers College Record*, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *Educational Researcher*, *Journal of Literacy Research*, *Language Arts*, *Media & Communication*, and *Learning, Media & Technology*.

Dr. Stornaiuolo has been contacted and is interested.

- **Dr. Lisa Scherff, English and AP Research Teacher, Community School of Naples**

Dr. Lisa Scherff teaches English and Advanced Placement Research at the Community School of Naples (FL). Lisa began her teaching career in 1996, and after earning her Ph.D. she moved to the college level, working 11 years as an English educator at the University of Tennessee, the University of Alabama, and the Florida State University. In 2013, she returned to her hometown of Fort Myers to teach full time. Lisa has been active in the literacy community, mostly through NCTE: co-editor of *English Education*, a member of several Standing Committees, Chair of the Amelia Elizabeth Walden Book Award, and most recently as Chair of the Secondary Section Steering Committee. Her research interests include teacher preparation and mentoring, classroom discussions of young adult literature, and opportunity to learn. She has co-authored/co-edited numerous books including *Teaching YA Lit Through Differentiated Instruction*, *International Perspectives on Teaching English in a Globalised World*, and *New Directions in Teaching English: Reimagining Teaching, Teacher Education, and Research*. Her work has appeared in journals such as *Journal of Literacy Research*, *Research in the Teaching of English*, *Journal of Teacher Education*, and *Teaching and Teaching Education*.

Dr. Scherff has not been contacted yet but is a regular attendee of ARF's annual conference.

- **Dr. Gillian E. Mertens, Postdoctoral Associate, STEM Translational Communication Center, University of Florida**

Dr. Gillian Mertens is an experienced educator and literacy researcher passionate about educational equity, information literacies, and innovative methodologies. As an interdisciplinary literacy researcher, her primary research foci are new and critical literacies, credibility assessment, and intervention design. Her past research projects include explorations of credibility evaluations, historical analysis of community trauma resulting from desegregation, and practice-based identity curriculum development. Her current research centers health literacies and cancer prevention. Her work has appeared in journals such as *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Research in the Teaching of English*, *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, and *The Reading Teacher*.

Dr. Mertens has been contacted and is interested.

Important Dates

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Session Types (all sessions run for 75 minutes total)

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