

American Reading Forum (ARF) Annual Conference
Wednesday, December 11 - Saturday, December 14, 2024
The Dolphin Beach Resort, St. Pete Beach, FL

Mindful Literacy: Literacy as an Umbrella for the Whole Person

Program Co-Chairs: Dr. Megan Adams, Kennesaw State University; Dr. Allison Garefino, Kennesaw State University; Dr. Paula Guerra, Kennesaw State University; Dr. Virginie Jackson, Kennesaw State University; Dr. Sanjuana Rodriguez, Kennesaw State University

A recent *New York Times* article described how somatic experiences, or a focus on the physical, may be the key to improving mental health and addressing emotional needs (Dominus, 2023). Experts in psychology and trauma-sensitive teaching and learning have known this for years (Payne et al., 2015; Treleaven, 2012). Many books for young children provide space for teaching somatic experiences (i.e., *The Happiest Tree: A Yoga Story*, *Kiyoshi's Walk*). Following the upheaval and isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the immediate concerns of the education community have changed. Trauma-sensitive teaching and understanding the mental health needs of all children is more than a moral imperative; it is now needed to sustain teachers and maintain systems of education (Fisher et al., 2020; Kuhfield & Tarasawa, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have an adverse effect on the literacy environments in which children learn and grow. Teachers noted that the pandemic had a profound impact on the social and emotional growth of students, putting their development at risk (McGee et al., 2022). UNESCO also notes that the school closures associated with the pandemic have negatively affected learning by depriving children of opportunities to grow and develop socially. Studies note that skills gained from SEL, including self-management, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills extend far beyond the classroom (Varghese & Natsuaki, 2021). In literacy classrooms, self-management and relationship skills are necessary for successful small-group literacy instruction but are also needed for students to do the independent work necessary to gain new literacy skills (Pressley et al., 2023).

Teacher educators and colleagues come together annually to discuss how to make the lives of literacy teachers and children better. However, many mental health experts encourage us to consider self-care prior to caring for others (NIMH, 2023). With this in mind, our team envisions ARF 2024 as a time to spend time thinking about not only “whole child” wellness through literacy, but “whole system” wellness. What might a joy-sustaining literacy classroom look like? A joy-sustaining school? A joy-sustaining teacher education program? We envision ARF 2024 as a time for discussion and healing.

References

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Focus on Mindfulness

This year's meeting seeks to consider literacy as a vessel for engaging the "whole person." As a place where discussion occurs within and without sessions, the co-chairs envision ARF 2024 as a place for healing for ourselves, teachers, students, and communities. A focus on self-care through collaboration will be evident. The conference chairs and keynote speakers will offer healing practices and dialogue opportunities while encouraging participants to continue collaborations and healing work beyond the conference.

Themes and Subthemes

The conference co-chairs 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:

- Social work tenets in literacy education
- Trauma sensitive literacy teaching
- Healing spaces in literacy classrooms
- Critical literacy
- Culturally relevant phonics instruction
- Critical pedagogy in literacy
- Culturally Sustaining Literacy Pedagogies
- Social/emotional learning in literacy education
- Creating/sustaining trauma-sensitive communities through literacy

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

Keynote Speakers 2024



Dr. Rachelle Savitz is an associate professor of reading/literacy at East Carolina University. She was previously a K-12 literacy coach/interventionist and high school reading teacher. She was the recipient of the 2020 Clemson Graduate Student Government Outstanding Graduate Student Advocate Award, the 2019 Association of Literacy Educators and Researcher's Jerry Johns Promising Researcher Award, and the 2018 Early Career Literacy Scholar Award from the American Reading Forum. She explores critical inquiry, culturally sustaining pedagogy, trauma-sensitive practices, and teacher self-efficacy related to disciplinary literacy and the use of equitable literacy materials and curricula.



Dr. Mandie Bevels Dunn is an assistant professor of English Education at the University of South Florida and a former high school English language arts teacher. In her scholarship, she centers teachers' lives and well-being by studying the relationship between teachers' emotions and their pedagogy, including teachers' relationship-building efforts with students. In particular, she has been studying how teachers who were grieving a death managed their emotions in the context of reading, writing, and thinking with students. In this work, she identifies the challenges grieving teachers face as well as the supports that will help sustain them following the death of a loved one.



Karla Montgomery-Ramirez is the co-Director of Energy Works Atlanta and Clinical Case Manager in the Academy for Language and Literacy at Kennesaw State University. Karla is a psychologist who graduated from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, a Licensed Master of Social Work (LMSW) from Kennesaw State University, and a co-founder of Energy Works ATL. She utilizes her knowledge and training working in the intersection between mental health, education, and culture. Her focus is to provide trauma-informed and culturally competent direct and group services through psychosomatic methodologies, but also understands the importance of enacting change at the community and policy levels as a way to enhance every individual's wellbeing.

Tentative Program Schedule

Wednesday, December 11th

- 5:00pm – 6:30pm | Board Meeting
- 7:00pm – 9:00pm | Registration and Welcome Reception

Thursday, December 12th

- 8:00am – 8:30am | Registration
- 8:30am – 9:00am | General Session: Welcome and Introductions
- 9:00am – 10:15am | Keynote Presentation
- 10:15am – 10:30am | Break
- 10:30am – 11:45am | Breakout Session A
- 11:45am – 1:15pm | Lunch (on your own)
- 1:15pm – 2:30pm | Breakout Session B
- 2:30pm – 2:45pm | Break
- 2:45pm – 4:00pm | Breakout Session C
- 5:00pm – 6:30pm | Spirit of the Time Reception (included with conference registration)

Friday, December 13th

- 8:30am – 9:00am | Registration
- 8:30am – 9:00am | Graduate Student Meeting
- 9:00am – 10:15am | Keynote Address
- 10:15am – 10:30am | Break
- 10:30am – 11:45am | Breakout Session D
- 11:45am – 1:15pm | Luncheon (included with conference registration)
- 1:15pm – 2:30pm | Breakout Session E
- 2:30pm – 2:45pm | Break
- 2:45pm – 4:00pm | Breakout Session F
- 4:00pm – 5:30pm | Business Meeting (members are invited to attend)

Saturday, December 14th

- 8:30am – 9:00am | Registration
- 9:00am – 10:15am | Keynote Address
- 10:15am – 10:30am | Break
- 10:30am – 11:45am | Breakout Session G
- 11:45am – 12:00pm | Closing Remarks and Adjournment

Award Opportunities

Graduate Student Scholarship Award

Graduate students presenting at the annual conference are eligible for consideration for a scholarship. The amount varies from year to year. The scholarship may only be awarded to a person once.

Recipients are selected based on ratings obtained during blind reviews of their session proposal, slide decks, and a nomination letter from a current ARF member. Those who accept the award are expected to consider submitting an article describing their conference session to the *American Reading Forum Yearbook*.

Nomination materials should be sent to Nance Wilson (nance.wilson@cortland.edu).

Gary Moorman Early Career Literacy Scholar Award

The Gary Moorman Early Career Literacy Scholar Award is given to junior American Reading Forum members who are at the early stages of their career (generally defined as the first five years post doctorate). This annual award was established in 2017 and is named after Dr. Gary Moorman, Professor Emeritus, Appalachian State University, in honor of his leadership and mentoring of young scholars. The award includes both a monetary prize and a commemorative plaque.

The award targets early career ARF members. The primary criterion is engagement in innovative reading/literacy research that addresses critical questions about policy, theory, and/or instructional practice. Active participation in professional organizations, particularly ARF, will also be considered.

Nominations materials include:

- A nomination letter (maximum 1000 words) submitted by a current ARF member (self-nomination letters will not be accepted)
- A statement about the importance of the applicant's research for the reading/ literacy field (maximum of 1000 words)
- A current curriculum vitae
- Sample publications (maximum 2)

Nomination materials should be sent to Vicky Zygoris-Coe (vzygouri@ucf.edu).

Brenda S. Townsend Service Award

The Brenda S. Townsend Service Award is given to one American Reading Forum member for their dedicated service to the organization. Awardees must have been a member for 10 consecutive years and have served the organization in multiple capacities.

Only a Brenda S. Townsend Service Award recipient may nominate a member for this award by submitting a letter of nomination.

Nomination materials should be sent to Enrique Puig (Enrique.Puig@ucf.edu).

Important Dates

August 2, 2024 – Deadline for session proposals

September 6, 2024 – Feedback on proposals will be sent out via email

October 4, 2024 – Deadline for graduate student proposals

November 1, 2024 – Feedback on graduate student proposals will be sent out

November 15, 2024 – Early bird conference registration ends

December 11-14, 2024 – Conference @ The Dolphin Beach Resort, St. Pete Beach, FL

Proposals

Proposals for papers, symposia, problems court, and advancing literacy roundtables will be considered for inclusion in the 2024 American Reading Forum Annual Conference Program if they are received by August 2, 2024. Conference proposals are peer-reviewed, and all presenters are expected to register and attend the conference to present. The membership of the American Reading Forum has consistently requested that people submit proposals only if they fully believe presentation obligations can be met. All presenters are invited to submit their papers for consideration for publication in the *American Reading Forum Yearbook*. Discussants and members of the audience are also invited to write reactions for such consideration.

Session Types (Note: all sessions run for 75 minutes)

- **Paper Presentation:** The program committee will schedule two to three 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.
- **Symposium:** 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 Roundtable:** 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 to four so that related topics will share a space. Presenters will share for 12 minutes with 30 minutes for discussion.

Submitting a Presentation Proposal

All proposals must be submitted electronically by **August 2, 2024** via this [Google Form](#).

Graduate students interested in a Graduate Student Scholarship do not submit through the provided Google Form link. Instead, they should submit their proposals by October 4, 2024, to Nance Wilson (nance.wilson@cortland.edu).

All proposals should be two to three double-spaced pages (exclusive of references). Please ensure that proposals do not include author names or identifying information. See below for specific expectations for each proposal type.

Paper Presentation

Paper proposals should include:

1. Objectives and/or research questions
2. Perspectives or theoretical framework
3. Methods and/or techniques
4. Data source(s)
5. Results, findings, or interpretations
6. Educational or scientific importance

Advancing Literacy Roundtable

Advancing Literacy proposals should include:

1. Objectives or research questions
2. Perspectives or theoretical framework
3. Methods and/or techniques
4. Questions for discussion

Advancing literacy sessions are designed for presenting ongoing studies, work in the planning stages, or theoretical work. As such, any of the above items may be tentative or developing.

Problems Court

Problems Court proposals should include:

1. Statement of the problem/opportunity for growth in the field of literacy
2. Historical context, including perspectives or theoretical framework
3. Educational or scientific importance
4. Key questions for discussion or ideas for facilitation
5. Initial ideas for “next steps”

Symposium

Symposium proposals should include:

1. Overall description of the symposium
2. Objectives and/or research questions (for the full symposium or for each paper within)
3. Perspectives or theoretical framework (for the full symposium or for each paper within)
4. Educational or scientific importance (for the full symposium or for each paper within)
5. Questions for discussion or other method of audience involvement that ties the symposium together

As noted above, your proposal may present the symposium as a series of connected papers, each with its own objectives, perspectives, and significance OR you may choose to present an overall set of objectives, perspectives, and significance that applies to the entire session.

NOTE: Data projectors will be provided; however, laptops, dongles, or other computer equipment will not be provided. Presenters are responsible for additional equipment, including adapters unique to their laptops. Audiovisual equipment is not provided for the Advancing Literacy sessions.

About the Conference Co-Chairs

Dr. Megan Adams is an Associate Professor of Reading Education in the Department of Secondary and Middle Grades Education and the co-Director of the Academy for Language and Literacy at Kennesaw State University. Megan is a Qualitative methodologist and is passionate about serving teachers and learners in various ways. Megan's research can be found on Research Gate and Google Scholar.

Dr. Allison Garefino is a Research Scholar in Wellstar College of Health and Human Services at Kennesaw State University and Clinical Director of the Children and Family Programs. She brings over 20 years of experience in training, implementation, and evaluation of psychosocial interventions. Trained in Participatory Analysis for Community Action (PACA) as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer, her interests include clinical implementation and research, focusing on the intersection between well-being and pedagogy. She has significant experience implementing randomized controlled trials in both laboratory and community settings.

Dr. Paula Guerra is a Professor of Mathematics Education in the Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education at the Bagwell College of Education (BCOE) at Kennesaw State University. Her research interests include teaching and learning math for social justice, comparing pre-service teachers' experiences and reactions to teaching math for social justice, the experience of girls, especially Latinas learning mathematics, and the experiences of Latinx pre- and in-service teachers in the US.

Dr. Virginie Jackson is an Assistant Professor of Literacy Education and Program Coordinator in the Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education in the Bagwell College of Education (BCOE) at Kennesaw State University. She teaches undergraduate and graduate reading methods, reading assessments, and pre-school curriculum courses. Virginie's research focuses on culturally responsive early literacy practices and critical literacy development of young learners. Her work centers on the preparation of preservice teachers to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students in engaging, multi-model, and multifaceted ways.

Dr. Sanjuana Rodriguez an Associate Professor of Reading and Literacy Education and Co-Director of the Academy for Language and Literacy at Kennesaw State University. Her research interests include early literacy development of culturally and linguistically diverse students, Latinx children's literature, and the experiences of Latinx pre-and in-service teachers.