ILA’S 2019 LITERACY LEADERS

Our annual awards program honors excellence in the field of literacy education

By Charmaine Riley

Each year, the International Literacy Association (ILA) honors the exceptional work and contributions of educators and researchers around the world.

ILA’s awards and grants celebrate those who embody what it means to create positive change in the field of literacy—whether it is the educator who has traveled the globe to bring literacy resources to readers of all ages, the local teacher who fights for educational equity in their community, or the researcher whose relentless drive has led to a greater knowledge base in the field.

Although the 2019 awardees’ experiences and expertise span far and wide, they share the goal of improving literacy through education, research, and resources, resulting in an improved quality of life. Our 2019 leaders embody the spirit of ILA’s mission—literacy for all.
William S. Gray Citation of Merit

As the author of more than 230 refereed research reports, articles, books, book chapters, and monographs, and as an inductee of the Reading Hall of Fame, D. Ray Reutzel's contributions to the literacy field are immeasurable. Before he was appointed dean at University of Wyoming College of Education, Reutzel was the Emma Eccles Jones Distinguished Professor and Endowed Chair of Early Literacy Education at Utah State University for 14 years.

He is the coauthor or editor of several books including the best-selling textbook on the teaching of reading, Teaching Children to Read: The Teacher Makes the Difference (Pearson), as well as Handbook of Research-Based Practice in Early Education (Guilford Press) and Strategies for Reading Assessment and Instruction: Helping Every Child Succeed (Pearson).

Even with his accomplishments, he is humbled to receive ILA's top honor—the William S. Gray Citation of Merit, which honors a member who has made outstanding contributions to multiple facets of literacy development.

"There are so many other scholars in the field of literacy education worldwide whose published work has influenced my thinking, publications, and leadership over many decades now,” Reutzel says. “As I think of these 'greats' in my field, I feel like I am among the least of these, if among them at all. There are so many other potential worthy recipients for this award."

A longtime ILA member, Reutzel is a former member of the Board of Directors of the International Reading Association (IRA, now the International Literacy Association), past president of the Reading Hall of Fame, former coeditor of ILA's The Reading Teacher, and a current member of ILA's Literacy Research Panel.

Leaders Inspiring Readers Award

Stacia Derrick-Lewis, director of elementary education at Sevier County Schools in Sevierville, TN, is the recipient of the Corwin Literacy Leader Award presented by ILA.

As a district administrator, Derrick-Lewis is on a mission to see students learn, grow, and thrive. After she noticed a lack of progress in her district and state’s literacy instruction, she implemented the successful Model Classroom Project, an early literacy initiative to reverse the trend of students who struggle to read.

“I had an unstoppable desire to better the lives of students who struggle with reading and I genuinely believed that, with one student at a time and one teacher at a time, I could make it happen,” she says. “The implementation of the Model Classroom Project has further driven my desire to continue combating the trend that dramatically impacts the lifelong trajectory of students whose window of learning and opportunity beckons the call of best practice."

When looking to the future, Derrick-Lewis’s goals include strengthening policies for supporting effective literacy instruction, building the capacity of school leadership, and improving student access to quality programming and interventions.

“As above all, it is my hope educators create a classroom environment that enables students to understand the world around them and the talents within them so that they can become productive individuals and compassionate citizens,” she says.

Corwin Literacy Leader Award

Jan Wasowicz, founder, president, and CEO at Learning By Design in Evanston, IL, is the recipient of the Leaders Inspiring Readers Award, sponsored by Achieve 3000.

The year was 1995 when Wasowicz had a realization. Although it was the early days of software, there was a lack of educational software with actual educational value. This started her mind turning; she knew there was a better solution. With her unique combination of expertise in language, learning, teaching, and computer-based technologies, she released Earobics, a research-driven software program that provided structured, explicit, intensive, adaptive instruction that developed phonemic and phonological awareness skills. Despite obstacles, she didn’t stop there.

“Fourteen years ago, I created and launched SPELLTalk, a free professional listserv discussion group, to bring together researchers and educators across multiple disciplines for the purpose of advancing awareness of current literacy research and evidence-based best practices for teaching reading and writing,” she says.

As for the future, she plans to focus on Learning By Design’s word study professional development training and empowering all educators with the practical methods, materials, and tools they need to make a difference in the lives of the countless students who will enter their classrooms today, tomorrow, and in the years to come.
Erwin Zolt Digital Literacy Game Changer Award

**Margaret Hawkins**, professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was awarded the ILA Erwin Zolt Digital Literacy Game Changer Award.

Throughout Hawkins’s career, she has followed her passion for literacy. Her early work focused on languages, literacies, and learning in classrooms and schools, while striving for equity and social justice. As her career flourished, she became involved in teacher education initiatives at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and worked on the ground with schools and universities in many less developed countries to improve literacy instruction, create and sustain libraries in schools and communities, and provide professional development to teachers.

Her project, Global StoryBridges, has sites in underresourced communities in 17 countries across Asia, Central America, North America, Africa, and Europe. The program supports youth to develop technology, language, and literacy skills while sharing their lives and communities with other youth across the globe.

“I would like to see Global StoryBridges continue to expand, along with the newly formed international research team we have assembled,” Hawkins says. “I’m hoping that we can come to understand how youth from different languages and cultural backgrounds, living in disparate regions and communities, make sense of messages that travel between them, and thus of one another.”

Future educators should not forget to focus on global issues and citizenship, Hawkins says. Although educators cannot fix the world, they can keep social justice as the foundation on which they design their environment and practice and make decisions.

“It’s so easy to become immersed in the day-to-day routines and demands, and yet our students need to become citizens of the world,” Hawkins says. “It enhances their futures and it offers an excellent lens for understanding themselves and others.”

Maryann Manning Special Service Award

**Tilka Jamnik**, head and national coordinator of activities at Centre for Youth Literature and Librarianship in Slovenia, is the recipient of the Maryann Manning Special Service Award, which honors an individual who has demonstrated a lifelong commitment to exceptional and distinguished service in the field of literacy.

Jamnik has loved books ever since her mother read to her at a young age. Today, her work is motivated by every child who needs a fairy tale, students who are eager to read, and anyone who has literacy needs. Most of all, she loves sharing her enjoyment of reading with others.

“To promote family literacy and intergenerational reading, I do workshops in Slovenia and among Slovene people in other countries,” Jamnik says. “Younger generations can teach elder individuals modern literacy skills and elders can show younger generations what a joy it is to read books.”

In addition to running workshops, she has founded the Slovenian Library and Museum MEGA quiz, strengthened cooperation with teachers of Slovene language and culture around the world, and was awarded the Matija Čop Award, the highest library recognition in Slovenia.

Regie Routman Teacher Recognition Grant

Every day, **Kelly Palomeque**, first-grade teacher at Riverside Elementary School in Fond du Lac, WI, is motivated by her students. Whether helping them grow as readers, writers, or individuals, she’s inspired to learn more and work harder to help them succeed.

As most students are eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch, Palomeque’s goal for her literacy project is to get “just right” books into the hands of first graders to read and reread at home. Riverside Elementary implemented Academic Parent Teacher Team (APTT) meetings, which allow teachers like Palomeque to build relationships with families and teach them how they can work on a learning goal at home.

“Research has shown that reading just 20 minutes a day is equivalent to gaining an additional 3,600 minutes of a school year, which is equal to 60 extra school days,” Palomeque says. “Research has also shown that by reading 20 minutes a day, a child’s vocabulary can grow to 1,800,000 words a year.”

Thankful for the Regie Routman Teacher Recognition Grant, Palomeque looks forward to increasing the number of independent texts her students have available to read as she continues to promote reading growth and instill a love of reading.
Jerry Johns Outstanding
Teacher Educator Award

Amy McClure, professor emerita at Ohio Wesleyan University, was honored with the Jerry Johns Outstanding Teacher Educator Award.

“I was one of those kids who read all night under the covers with a flashlight because I just had to know how the story ended,” McClure recalls. “My sister and I catalogued all our books to create a neighborhood library to spread the joy of books to other children.”

McClure didn’t always want to be a teacher. However, while she was researching her undergraduate senior thesis as a law student in a cold and dusty library, she had an epiphany—she wasn’t meant to be a lawyer.

“I knew I just could not do that kind of work for the rest of my life,” McClure says. “Making a significant impact on the world actually meant working with children at the very beginning of their lives, helping them discover the world and all its possibilities. It meant teaching them to read so they too could experience the passion, delight, comfort, and insight that literature brings to those of us who take the time to truly embrace it.”

Although recently retired, McClure works with a charter school in Columbus, OH, and supports a summer program for 5-year-olds who are at risk of falling behind in literacy as early as kindergarten. She also looks forward to helping her four grandchildren become book lovers.

Timothy & Cynthia Shanahan
Outstanding Dissertation Award

Courtney Hattan, assistant professor of elementary literacy education at Illinois State University, Normal, was awarded the Timothy & Cynthia Shanahan Outstanding Dissertation Award for her dissertation, Prompting Rural Students’ Use of Background Knowledge and Experience to Support Comprehension of Unfamiliar Content.

Hattan started her career as a language arts and social studies teacher, where she spent six years working with elementary and middle school students. She quickly became fascinated by the ways in which students learn and how they are able to make sense of texts. Her drive to discover more about student learning led her to a PhD program in educational psychology at the University of Maryland.

“As a researcher, I have been focused on finding more meaningful ways for students to make connections and disconnections between a text and what they already know or have experienced, even if that text seems mismatched at first,” Hattan says. “My work seeks to help students understand how their background knowledge and everyday experiences do or do not fit with the text, and to help them grapple with those misconceptions rather than relying on what they thought they already knew.”

As a teacher educator, Hattan says her goal is to bridge the gap between research and practice and guide her teacher candidates to use research-based practices in their literacy instruction.

“This goal motivates me to stay up to date with recent research, discuss concerns or issues with practicing teachers, and use probing questions to help my teacher candidates think critically about their own learning philosophies and literacy instructional practice,” Hattan says.

Diane Lapp & James Flood Professional Collaborator Award

Richard L. Allington, former president of IRA (now ILA) and professor of literacy studies at the University of Tennessee, and Anne McGill-Franzen, professor and director of the Reading Center at the University of Tennessee, are the recipients of the Diane Lapp & James Flood Professional Collaborator Award, which recognizes an ongoing professional collaboration between two or more people who regularly contribute to the professional knowledge base of literacy educators.

Together, their work is far reaching. They not only coedited Handbook of Reading Disability Research (Routledge) and Summer Reading: Closing the Rich/Poor Reading Achievement Gap (Teachers College Press) but also received the Albert J. Harris Award for their studies addressing summer reading loss effectively with the distribution of self-selected books for summer reading to children from low-income families.

Allington and McGill-Franzen are active advocates for literacy. For Allington’s contributions to understanding reading difficulties, he is the recipient of numerous awards, including ILA’s William S. Gray Citation of Merit, and he is a member of the Reading Hall of Fame. He is the author of more than 100 research articles and several books.

In addition to McGill-Franzen’s awards and publications in several reputable journals, she is interested in exploring ways to use community knowledge to create meaning and purpose in school literacy curricula as well as ways to make families more aware of the expectations that schools have for entering children and how to develop such competencies. At the present time, she is project director for the THEC Teacher Quality grant, a program to build school capacity by developing teachers’ expertise in early literacy.
ILA National Recognition With Distinction

West Virginia University and the University of Texas at San Antonio are the recipients of the newly established ILA National Recognition With Distinction—the highest institutional honor awarded by ILA.

ILA National Recognition for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals recognizes outstanding literacy preparation programs in the United States with ILA National Recognition or ILA National Recognition With Distinction.

Both universities exceeded benchmarks set forth by ILA by adhering to a rigorous set of standards for preparing literacy professionals.

West Virginia University has a literacy specialist graduate program that exemplifies the best in literacy professional preparation. The faculty has revised their 30-credit hour, fully online curriculum to align to ILA's Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals 2017, says Diane Kern, ILA National Recognition and ILA National Recognition With Distinction coordinator.

“The university is serious about the need to prepare literacy specialists to work not only with students who need supports or intensive interventions but also with colleagues using a coaching mind-set,” Kern says. “They have an impressive 50 literacy specialist candidates enrolled in the program annually, who work in multiple practicum experiences over the course of their program.”

Sharing the honor is the equally esteemed program at the University of Texas at San Antonio. The well-respected faculty members are committed to providing the highest quality education. Much of their success is owed to the fact that both students and staff have a strong commitment to the program.

Charmaine Riley (criley@reading.org) is the communications and social media strategist at ILA and the editor of ILAs blog, Literacy Daily.

2019 AWARD AND GRANT RECIPIENTS

ILA recognized the outstanding achievements of all 2019 award winners during the ILA 2019 Conference in New Orleans, LA, in October. The full list of categories and recipients can be found at literacyworldwide.org/about-us/awards-grants. Following are some additional highlights:

**Primary Fiction Book Award**
Winner: *Julián Is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love (Candlewick Press)
Honor: *Alma and How She Got Her Name* by Juana Martinez-Neal (Candlewick Press)

**Primary Nonfiction Book Award**
Winner: *Let the Children March* by Monica Clark-Robinson (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)
Honor: *Prickly Hedgehogs!* by Jane McGuinness (Candlewick Press)

**Intermediate Fiction Book Award**
Winner: *Hope in the Holler* by Lisa Lewis Tyre (Penguin Young Readers)

**Intermediate Nonfiction Book Award**

**Young Adult Fiction Book Award**
Winner: *Dear Rachel Maddow: A Novel* by Adrienne Kisner (Feiwel & Friends)
Honor: *The Beauty That Remains* by Ashley Woodfolk (Delacorte Press)

**Young Adult Nonfiction Book Award**
Winner: *I Have the Right To: A High School Survivor’s Story of Sexual Assault, Justice, and Hope* by Chessy Prout with Jenn Abelson (Margaret K. McElderry Books)

**Constance McCullough International Research Grant**
Samuel DeJulio, University of Texas at San Antonio

**Dina Feitelson Research Award**
Dani Kachorsky, Lindsey Moses, Frank Serafini, and Megan Hoelting, Arizona State University

**Elva Knight Research Grant**
Shea Kerkhoff, University of Missouri–Saint Louis

**Helen M. Robinson Grant**
Stephanie Reid, Arizona State University, Phoenix

**Jeanne S. Chall Research Fellowship**
Shih-Yuan Liang, Vanderbilt University, Tennessee

**Nila Banton Smith Teacher as Researcher Grant**
Scott Storm, Harvest Collegiate High School, New York

**Steven A. Stahl Research Grant**
Blythe Anderson, Michigan State University

“University of Texas at San Antonio’s Reading Specialist Certification Program faculty work collaboratively to design course syllabi, activities, and evaluations, all of which align to ILA’s Standards 2017,” Kern says. “Faculty are held in high regard by candidates, graduates, and district personnel for their teaching and for attention to candidate needs and interests.”

These programs are a representation of what preparation for literacy professionals should be across the United States, and we applaud both universities for being at the forefront of excellence, Kern says.

For more information on these university programs, visit cils.wvu.edu/literacy-ed and education.utsa.edu/interdisciplinary_learning_and_teaching/admission_to_reading_specialist_certificate_program.