

WHAT IS RIGHT ABOUT THE NEW CCSS STANDARDS

by Dr. Kristina Elias-Staron



We are on the verge of major recovery from a love affair with or perhaps I should say a love/hate relationship with the CMT objective of connecting to text. In addition we are finally ending the eleven year torture of twisting our students into all sorts of knots, trying to get them to answer the open-ended question perfectly. During the last decade, we've narrowed our study of English Language Arts to Connecticut Mastery Test questions stems and aimed our writing instruction directly and yearly at single types of writing so our students will ace the de-contextualized prompt. We've paid little attention to audience and choice of topic and even less to the language of grammar which is the means by which we communicate with students about how to improve their writing.

The new CCSS brings an end to this CMT hysteria. First, the expectation is that the whole nation teaches to the same set of forty-two anchor standards, thirty-seven after fifth grade, when foundational standards discontinue. These standards, as opposed to our present frameworks, progress, that is, any single one of the thirty seven anchor standards grows in staircase fashion over a thirteen year period, kindergarten to twelfth grade. These standards make clear that the work one does in 4th grade, 7th

grade or 11th grade on a single objective differs, enlarges, becomes more sophisticated, and that assessments, which will be given to evaluate how well students are achieving, are aligned directly to those progressive standards. Finally, the fourth grade assessment will ask less of kids than the seventh grade assessment, as should be. The same questions will not be asked as we presently ask year

to year, grade 3-8 on the CMT.

The new standards guide the growth that expects to be manifested by student work within the assessment.

Writing workshop has literally been written into the standards. Teachers are required to plan all sorts of writing yearly, and are being asked to allow students choice in topic and audience.

There is a special emphasis on the writing of argument and informative texts which is the writing required in the world of work. And grammar is back, not in the traditional sense of identifying parts of speech, but as a means to improve writing and to better understand the grammatical decisions authors make when they write a particular text and which influence how the authors want their texts to be perceived and understood.

"We are at a moment in our history when what we do in the classroom that will either make or break our country."

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear CRA Colleagues,

It seems hard to believe that 2012 has arrived and the school year is almost half over. The winter that follows brings its own calendar of events and projects as everyone settles in for the cold months ahead. CRA has been busy since school began preparing for our fall events including the 60th annual conference, which was held as scheduled despite the unexpected November snowstorm. The keynote speakers, institute and session presenters, conference committee chairs and committee members all contributed to this outstanding professional event, and I thank you and all who attended for another successful conference!

As 2012 progresses, CRA's work continues on a variety of projects and initiatives. An ongoing goal for CRA is to offer members outstanding professional development sessions. Each local council provides wonderful workshops, gatherings and networking opportunities. Councils strive to offer professional development workshops to CRA members that are local, affordable and informative. As a CRA member, you are welcomed to attend workshops at any council event across Connecticut. Among the outstanding events planned for the coming months, Dr. Nancy Boyles will present a March workshop in Griswold for Eastern Council; Southeastern will host a Words Their Way workshop with Shane Templeton in New London on February 15; Nutmeg is hosting a social gathering on January 19; Greater Hartford is also hosting Dr. Nancy Boyles on January 18; Northwest is in the planning stages for an event on February 28, 2012; and Southern Fairfield is working on special events as well.

One CRA goal is to offer many professional development opportunities to members throughout the academic year. In addition to the previously mentioned workshops, a special Saturday morning workshop is being planned for January 21, 2012, with Dr. Kristina Elias Staron on the Common Core State Standards. The workshop will focus on the CCSS and critical information that all teachers should know.

CRA also has a direct link to the Connecticut State Legislation with Marilyn Scanlan-White, as CRA's Legislative Chair. She keeps CRA members informed and updated about events happening in Hartford. She often passes along information to local presidents and CRA board members about discussions and decisions that are being made in Hartford that affect all local school districts, and we appreciate her information and dedication to CRA and its members.

Technology continues to be an important part of every teacher's life, and that is no exception for CRA. Keeping in contact with members via the web page is an important goal for the organization. Our website www.ctreading.org helps to keep members informed, posts council events, and includes educational links and many updated features. If you would like to suggest some special features that the web page should include, please let me know!

On behalf of CRA, I invite members to become more involved in the organization at either the local or State level. Please consider volunteering for a committee, helping with a project or assisting at an event. We would appreciate your valued expertise in any way.

In closing, please feel free to contact me or any other CRA board member to assist us in making CRA the vital professional organization it deserves to be. I look forward to hearing from you and wish each of you a wonderful 2012 filled with professional success and personal happiness!

Sincerely,

Nancy G. Souza

CRA President

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Legislative News

Marilyn Scanlan White, CRA Legislative Chair

Connecticut News

CT Commissioner of Education Stefan Pryor

Governor Dannel Malloy joined the Connecticut State Board of Education (CSBE) at its September meeting to announce Stefan Pryor as Connecticut's new Commissioner of Education. The Governor stated that Commissioner Pryor will help move Connecticut education so that not only will students have an opportunity to learn but they will also be successful at doing so. Commissioner Pryor pledged to continue his work ethic with a mandate for change...with a unifying mission for excellence in education, directing efforts at increasing achievement.

In his Commissioner's Report at the November CSBE meeting, Commissioner Pryor reported that he has spent time meeting with members of the CSBE, members of associations, organizations, and districts to gather information relating to what can be done to move the state forward. Referring to CT's flat scores for reading and math on a recent NAEP report, he stated that CT's achievement gap data is disturbing. CT must focus on the performance of its students. Schools and districts that are persistently challenged need intervention. His suggestions include :

- Creation of new schools
- Freedom to innovate
- Attract a new level of talent in personnel searches
- Provide tools for administrations that align classroom instruction, PD, and assessment feedback

- Involve parents and the community
- Emphasize early intervention/early childhood
- Continue efforts through college/career

Early Childhood Education

Early Childhood Education has been a priority in CT's Five Year Plan. CT has moved forward in some areas in the past five years, however, better funding will help advance the program. The CT State Department of Education and members of the Governor's team have worked diligently to complete and forward its application for the Federal government's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge competition. The program aims to improve the quality of early learning and development and to close the achievement gap for children with high needs. If CT is chosen in December, it will be eligible for \$50 M over the course of five years. Readers can access information at www.ct.gov/sde/teachinglearning

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Dr. Marion Martinez, CSDE Associate Commissioner for Teaching, Learning and Instructional Leadership, Harriet Feldlaufer, CSDE Chief of the Bureau of Teaching and Learning, Amy Radikas, CSDE Language Arts Consultant, and Joanne White, CSDE Language Arts Consultant presented an informative update on the *State Implementation Plan for CT Standards* (CCSS) at the CRA Conference. Their presentation's PowerPoint should be accessible on CRA's website.

The CSDE reported to the CSBE that stakeholders who recently met to

review CT's CCSS noted that the Integration of Knowledge and Ideas Standard (i.e. *With prompting and support, compare and contrast personal experiences and knowledge with various texts.*) within grades K-5 was missing. The CSBE tabled the item in order to provide more time to study the proposal.

The CSDE plans to hold regional meetings to assist district curriculum personnel as they revise curriculum to align with CCSS. The information will then move forward to teachers. (www.sde.ct.gov- CCSS site is in left column)

Connecticut Commission on Education Reform

The CT Commission on Education Reform, formed to study CT's achievement gap and make recommendations on ways to alleviate the gap, presented an outline of its recommendations to the CSBE in September. The recommendations are divided into six categories:

1. Demand accountability at all levels
2. Set high expectations for all students
3. Foster excellent leadership in schools
4. Excellent teachers
5. Invest intelligently
6. Turn-Around Schools

The Council is willing to help the CSBE develop a five-year plan with legislative proposals and agendas devoted to turn around schools. (www.ctedreform.org)

"Legislative News" continued on page 16

“What Is Right...” continued from page 4

The new, and presently most under-taught standards, are those which aim at speaking and listening. The new standards require that students listen and take notes, that they use digital sources to research ideas, and again take notes, and that they come to discussions armored with those notes ready to listen to the ideas and grow by listening to the ideas of others and by proffering their own. Finally, academic vocabulary has its rightful place in the new standards. Marzano and Pickering asked us in 2005 to pay attention to domain vocabulary in their *Building Academic Vocabulary*. They encouraged us to determine which vocabulary was

We are on the right path.

taught at particular grade levels, warning us that without the study of such vocabulary reading capacity would be weakened. The new CCSS Language standards have given teeth to their prophetic request.

The performance task assessment drafts we have been provided by Smarter Balanced, the testing consortia to which Connecticut belongs, are possible assessments that we will be taking along with the thirty-one other States in our assessment consortia. They focus on two areas: student performance with literacy tasks and knowledge of English language Arts techniques, which students should be able to recognize in the literacy and informational texts authors write. It is not enough to literally be able to translate a text into our own words; beyond that, we have to explore through close reading how authors try to influence us or help us to understand their musings. The questions to be asked are no longer broad ones like “What is surprising about this text?”; or personal ones like “Whom do you know that is courageous like the person in this text?”, they instead demand that students have some mastery of an English concept. For instance a new multiple choice question might read “What is the effect of the author’s use of the extended metaphor in paragraphs one

through three?” That question requires a close look at text in order to be able to answer it. Lucy Calkins at the most recent NERA (New England Reading Association) conference in September in Sturbridge, Massachusetts suggested that reader response has gone too far. She said, “Now, any interpretation of a text, even if totally erroneous, becomes acceptable in the name of reader response.” She welcomed the new standards saying, “It’s time to rope in the ‘any answer will do’ type of English Language Arts study.”

These new standards also require a close look at a number of texts on the same subject, called Integration of Texts, a new reading dimension in the standards. What is

required is that students read a number of texts around a single subject and then make strong reasoned interpretations comparing what is being offered. Students are asked to deal with facts, with evidence, with some sense of certainty about what they are reading.

Finally, the most challenging of all of the changes required by the new Common Core is that students be reading texts of appropriate complexity, that curriculum directors and reading specialists determine English Language Arts skills that grow and progress year by year, that they help teachers choose readings that aim at specific skills, that they help students to read short texts closely and often over any academic year, and that the readings required at any grade level rise in progression of appropriate difficulty throughout a single year. At present reading often fall into the category of teacher or student favorites. Reading choices need to be made with growth in mind. Independent reading is for choice, for the exploration of favorites. Classroom reading according to the new standards must be designed with intellectual movement as a goal.

We are at a moment in our history when what we do in the classroom

“What is Right...” Continued on page 5

Meet Dr. Kristina Elias-Staron...



Dr. Kristina Elias-Staron is an Independent Consultant in the field of Literacy. Kristina

taught language arts, reading and English from elementary to university levels for twenty-one years, spent thirteen years as K-12 Language Arts Coordinator for three Connecticut school systems and served seven years as principal at RHAM Middle School.

Kristina has been a consultant for College Board and chaired their English advisory panel, sat on the secondary executive committee for the NCTE, and worked with the original BEST program committee. She was also president of CCTE (Connecticut Council of Teachers of English), NEATE (New England Association of Teachers of English), and CHED (Connecticut Heads of English Departments).

When serving as the Language Arts Consultant for the State Department of Education, Kristina was involved in developing the Reading and Language Arts section of the 4th Generation CMT for grades 3 through 8 and providing CMT and CAPT workshops. Kristina also served as Curriculum Director for the New Britain Schools.

Since retiring, Kristina works with RESCs and school districts statewide, presenting Literacy staff development and providing support. Presently, she also sits on the NERA (New England Reading Association) Board.

Start 2012 Out With A \$750.00 CRA Teaching Grant!

Calling all teachers, reading specialists, special education teachers and administrators! The Connecticut Reading Association is awarding up to four (4) \$750.00 teaching grants for innovative projects and ideas. The application process is easy! Download an application and proposal form from the CRA website and apply or use the application in this issue of CONNec-tion. Let's hear about those great ideas and projects you are implementing which promote literacy in your school or district. Previous finalists are not excluded from applying again.

A requirement is that the applicant must be a current CRA member or if you are applying as a team, at least one member of the team must be a current CRA member.

Please email me if you have any questions- joanna@ct.metrocast.net

Please mail your completed proposal form and application to-

Mrs. Joanne Bell
81 Jacques Road
Danielson, CT 06239

All completed applications must be received by January 15, 2012. I look forward to receiving your great ideas!

Joanne Bell
Teaching Grants Chairman

Please note that all Teaching Grant application forms, including the proposal and Scoring Rubric can be found at <http://users.ntplx.net/~ctread>.



"What Is Right..." continued from page 4

that will either make or break our country. American jobs requiring low-level skills are being out-sourced. The jobs remaining require a high level of skill, not the least of which is the capacity to read complex materials. Many of our current graduates have few or no skills to bring to the work that is available. They are not finding work, and if they do find a job, the financial remuneration, because of their paucity of skills, is not substantial enough to support an apartment, never mind a house, and a family. At present, we lose a student due to dropping out of school every nine seconds (Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio & Thompson, 2004). ACT; the Mid-Western counterpart of our College Board's SAT, reported in 2006 that only 25% of the students taking the college entry test, including male - female, all ethnic groups, and students from all income brackets, were able to read complex text. They also reported that only 19 of 100 students entering college in the United States finish.

The new standards have arrived at the right moment.

We are on the right path. Please join me and the CRA to explore the new standards, the definition of text complexity, an understanding of close reading and text dependent questions, new requirements of writing and look at drafts of the new assessments on Saturday, January 21, 2012 from 8:30-12:00 and a snow date or follow up again on Saturday morning March 10, 2012, from 8:30 to 12:00.

These are exciting and important times. I know that my Connecticut colleagues are intelligent, hard working, and committed and that we are up to the challenge. It is in our power to turn the tide of American prosperity. Let's join hands and begin to do so as soon as possible. Hope to see you there!

References

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2011 CRA Conference Recap For the Love of Literacy

Jackie Greene, Conference Chairperson

Connecticut Reading Association's 60th Annual Conference "For the Love of Literacy" was held November 2nd and November 3rd at the Crowne Plaza in Cromwell. Keynote speakers Steven Layne and David Booth, along with featured speakers Sharon Taberski, Donalyn Miller, Jeff Anderson, David Monti, Elizabeth Hale, Nancy Boyles, Brenda Overturf, and many others traveled from across the country to share their enthusiasm for reading and writing, their latest research and their insights with us. Attendees broadened their knowledge of how to better educate our students in the area of literacy by listening and learning from these professionals.

Our 60th Conference opening remarks were delivered by CRA's best friend, Dr. David Monti. Dr. Monti's commitment to literacy spans over many, many years. He has taught and mentored many. He is truly a literacy leader. Thank you, Dr. Monti.

Wednesday began with a very enthusiastic, motivating keynote, **Balcony People**, by Dr. Steven Layne. Dr. Steven Layne reminded us that teachers reserve a tremendous number of balcony seats in the lives of their students. This energizing and poignant keynote speech has been acclaimed by teachers internationally as one of Steve's finest addresses.

On Thursday, Professor David Booth inspired his listeners with his keynote,

What does a Book Look Like? How will we continue to engage readers in text that matter in the age of technology? Professor Booth is an internationally respected authority on the arts in education and literacy. He has authored many teacher reference books and textbooks in all areas of curriculum development: the arts, drama and theatre, early literacy, reading, writing, speaking and listening, and media. His keynote was engaging and reflective.



Thursday also brought greetings from the IRA (International Reading Association) via Dr. Brenda Joiner Overturf. As a representative of IRA, she spoke at the Joint Council meeting and updated board members about IRA's focus and work.

On both mornings, the keynotes were followed by fantastic workshops thanks to the dedicated professionals who presented for either one or two hours. Some of the presenters were well-known national speakers and many of our speakers were classroom

teachers, language arts consultants and college professors. The success of our reading conference is because of these presenters. The CT Reading Association appreciates their willingness to share their time with us. The noble profession of teaching is only enriched by their presence. Thank you, presenters.

Thank you to Eileen Simon and Joanne Mumley, our program chairs, for reading all of the proposals and creating a balanced conference program that met

the needs of all literacy teachers from preschool to high school. Eileen and Joanne's efforts were rewarded with outstanding evaluations from the attendees. Thank you Eileen and Joanne!

This year our two Grand Conversation Events were extremely popular. We had maximum attendance at both. Wednesday's conver-

sation featured Dr. Nancy Boyles, entitled, **Developing the Thinking Behind Written Responses**. Thursday's conversation featured the State Department of Education, lead by Joanne White and Amy Radikas. It was entitled **State Implementation Plan for CT Standards (CCSS)**. We would like to thank the presenters of both for graciously giving of their time to share such wonderful and important information.

"Conference Recap" continued on page 14

International Reading Association

Board Update

By Brenda Joiner Overturf, Ed. D.
International Reading Association Board of Directors 2009-2012

Hello, IRA members and potential members!

In this article I will give a brief update on information I shared with Connecticut Reading Association council leaders during my visit to the CRA conference on November 3-4, 2011.

All of IRA's work is being guided by strategic direction statements in the following areas: Professional Development, Partnerships, Research, Advocacy, Councils & Affiliates, and Technology. These areas were designated by a consulting group that did a study on IRA's mission and how to accomplish that mission.

The IRA board has formed board task forces to study certain aspects of IRA member needs and make timely recommendations. These Task Forces, appointed by IRA President Vicki Risko, are:

Professional Development Task Force: Bill Teale, chair. Professional development is considered the IRA "North Star." IRA staff has already been hard at work revising the website to take advantage of new tools and technology in professional development. The Professional Development Task Force is looking at additional new and innovative ways to provide members with professional development in literacy.

International Task Force: Heather Bell, chair. The International Task Force is working on better ways to make sure the "I" in IRA is fully represented.

Councils & Member Services Task Force: Brenda Overturf, chair. Councils and our members are the heart of IRA. The Councils and Member

Services Task Force is reviewing how to improve services for our members and council affiliates.

Conference Task Force: Joyce Hinman, chair. The Conference Task Force is reviewing ideas for the annual conference, and studying viable models for regional conferences and World Congress.

Two additional task forces, also appointed by President Vicki Risko, are preparing recommendations for the IRA board to consider. One is the *Formative Assessment*



ment Task Force with Peter Afflerbach as chair. The other is the *Common Core*

State Standards Task Force, Brenda Overturf, chair.

An exciting initiative is the Teacher Advisory Panel. TAP members are classroom teachers who advise the IRA board on classroom issues. TAP members sit on the board task forces, and are available via conference calls and email. The members of TAP serve a three-year term, and are supported with funds to attend the annual conference while serving IRA. An application is out for new TAP members, which can be accessed on the IRA website.

There are a lot of great reasons to be a member of IRA! Members of IRA have access to cutting edge information and practical applications of some of the hottest topics today. The website has a "members only" online community where members can access exclusive content, including Literacy Survival Tips for New Teachers, Resource Round-Up, and Ask the Expert, as well as a multitude of other resources.

The monthly *Reading Today*, IRA's newspaper for members, is now available online and in a magazine format. *Reading Today* is full of information on issues that affect literacy educators and items of interest in the literacy world, including a monthly column on the Common Core Standards.

An exciting new aspect of the website is the social platform called *Engage*. *Engage* was introduced at the annual conference in Orlando, and members are discovering its interactive and dynamic power. *Engage* can be used to create a collaborative community, post a blog, or participate in a book study with the author of the book. The possibilities are endless!

Please join us at IRA's 57th Convention in Chicago, IL, April 29- May 2, 2012 where you will meet and network with thousands of literacy educators from across the world. Register online today at www.reading.org!





Greater Hartford Area Council —2011-2012 Workshop Series



Developing Thinking Through the Common Core Standards: *Giving Comprehension a Voice*

Presenter

Dr. Nancy Boyles

*Professor of the Graduate Reading Program
at Southern Connecticut State University*



- Wondering how to modify classroom instruction to meet the Common Core standards?
- Interested in improving students' scores on open-ended comprehension questions?
- Hoping to improve comprehension mini-lesson content and improve classroom discourse?

Come discover the answers with Dr. Nancy Boyles!

Sign Up Today!



When: Wednesday, January 18th, 2012

Snow Date January 19th, 4:30 pm - 7:00pm

Where: Bennet Academy, Manchester

1151 Main Street, Manchester, CT

Parking on Wells, Vine and School Streets

or at rear of building. Please use Main Entrance

A light supper will be served

Contact: Sarah Martin, Membership Chair

ghac-cra@hotmail.com

CRA members \$20 ❖ non-members \$60 ❖ Fee Includes CRA membership!

Payment at the door ❖ Checks payable to GHAC

Representative from Alran Books & Teacher Created Materials will be present.

Council News

**Nutmeg • GHAC • CARR • Northwest • Eastern • Southern Fairfield
& Southeastern Reading Councils**

Nutmeg Council Susan Meaney & Catherine Mastrianna, Co-Presidents

The Nutmeg Reading Council celebrated Connecticut Loves to Read Day with our annual event at the Target store in Waterbury. We would like to thank Aaron Brown and all the volunteers from Target for making this event so successful. More than 250 children and parents were in attendance as they listened to local “celebrities” read stories and share goodies. Each child received a free book, made a fun craft and enjoyed a snack and juice. We were pleased to have principals, local legislators, Board

of Education members and others on hand to show their support of literacy in our community. Please contact us if you would like to get involved with this worthwhile event.

Our community service project this year involved the Early Childhood Services Department of the Women and Families Center in Meriden. The Nutmeg Council was pleased to support their efforts to encourage parents as reading role models. The WFC received funds to plan two “Everybody Reads”

events at their facility. We look forward to sharing their experiences and successes.

We would also like to take time out of our busy schedules to relax and unwind! We appreciate your membership and would like to say “thanks”. It is our pleasure to host a fun get together at Vasi’s Restaurant in Waterbury on the 19th of January from 4 to 6 pm. We will have terrific raffle prizes and some great appetizers to enjoy. A flyer will be on its way to you soon.

Northwest Council Aggie Burns, President

Northwest Reading is holding our second event of the year this coming Thursday, November 17th. Lauren Benjamin will be the featured speaker and her topic will be incorporating more nonfiction into our curriculums and how to meet the requirements of the Common Core State Standards. This presentation will be at Center School from 4:30 to 7:00 pm. All should have received a copy of the flyer and are welcome to attend.



We want to acknowledge the great job done by Dr. David Monti at our kickoff celebration at Mclaughlin Vineyards in Sandy Hook. Dr. Monti entertained the small crowd with his anecdotes and wisdom about taking the ten standards

in the Common Core and explaining them in simpler terms.

Northwest Reading is teaming up with Fairfield County to host a workshop featuring Dr. Nancy Boyles. This workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, April 25, 2012. The location and time as well as cost are yet to be determined. We will keep everyone posted.

Northwest Reading has donated 10 books to the Collection Nicaragua 2011. Whisconier Middle School has supported this cause for many years. School and health kits are collected for the children. Families donate backpacks and gently used clothing.

Please note that the Northwest Council is hosting an event with Dr. Barbara Ann Marinak, Associate Professor of Education at Mount St. Mary’s University on February 29th. Dr. Marinak

is returning to CT to share foolproof strategies for teaching nonfiction summary writing. She is amazing! More information is on the way.

Northwest would like to express its gratitude to Jackie Greene, chairman of the CRA Conference. Jackie and her team did an outstanding job of offering top-notch presenters, wonderful vendor displays and freebies, and a smooth registration process. We certainly hope that it was a success financially- we know that it brought great knowledge to those who attended.

Upcoming Workshops:

February 29th
Dr. Barbara Ann Marinak

April 25th
Dr. Nancy Boyles



Waterbury Schools Asst. Superintendent
Anne Marie Cullinan



Rep. Selim Noujaim kicks off Nutmeg's CLTR
with his grandson



Manchester Mayor Spadaccini and
Bennet Principal David Welch.



Representative Henry Genga

"The Greater Hartford Area Council (GHAC) held their Connecticut Loves to Read Day event on Saturday, October 15th at Barnes & Noble in The Shoppes at Buckland Hills, Manchester. Guest readers included Manchester Mayor Spadaccini, State Representatives Claire Janowski and Henry Genga, Manchester Police Officer Bernard Hallums, local school administrators Jenny Correa, Matt Daly, David Welch, and Manchester teachers Linda Bride and Laura Mullen. To celebrate the community's love of reading, CLTR day participants were encouraged to read with Jessie the dog, meet the Cat in the Hat, listen to classic and memorable stories by our guest readers, and design personalized book-marks. Additionally, each family received a free book to take home. Many participants also won Barnes & Noble gift cards at frequent drawings held throughout the event. A portion of the proceeds raised at this event will be donated to the Read to Grow Organization of Connecticut.

The Nutmeg Reading Council celebrated Connecticut Loves to Read Day with our annual event at the Target store in Waterbury. We would like to thank Aaron Brown and all the volunteers from Target for making this event so successful. More than 250 children and parents were in attendance as they listened to local “celebrities” read stories and share goodies. Each child received a free book, made a fun craft and enjoyed a snack and juice. We were pleased to have principals, local legislators, Board of Education members and others on hand to show their support of literacy in our community.



Robyn Henry, principal of Wilson School in Waterbury



Laurie Provost dressed as Mother Goose



Miss Wolcott 2011 engages students in a read-aloud



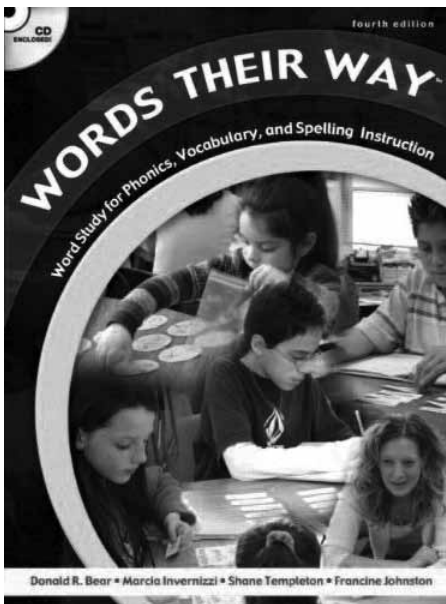
Northwest Council: We had a successful Connecticut Loves to Read Day Celebration at the Cyrenius H. Booth Library in Newtown. We had a guest reader who happened to be an awesome Dad!! The children enjoyed a dramatic presentation by the adolescent reading group of *The Little Old Lady Who was Not Afraid of Anything*. The Brookfield High School Robotics Team returned for another visit. The finale was a puppet show presented by Pumpernickel Puppets of *Sir George and the Dragon*. The kids loved it when the puppets came out and introduced themselves! Northwest Reading Council donated \$300.00 to be used to purchase books for the Children’s Department. Pictured are president Aggie Burns with Twyla Tweet, one of the puppet performers.

CLTR with the Southeastern and Eastern Councils





Don't Miss This Opportunity!



**A workshop with Shane Templeton,
an author of "Words Their Way!"**

**The Southeastern and Eastern Councils
of the Connecticut Reading Association,
present another innovative workshop**

February 15, 2012 4:00 - 7:00pm

Mitchell College

437 Pequot Ave.

New London, CT 06320

Workshop includes refreshments

Words Their Way is a developmentally-driven, hands-on, instructional approach that has been a phenomenon in word study, providing a practical way to study words with students

- Cost \$20 for CRA members,
- Cost \$45 for non-members, includes membership
- Registration must be received no later than February 1, 2012!!!
- If you are not a member, please complete both CRA MEMBERSHIP FORM
- AND your WORKSHOP REGISTRATION

**PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO -Southeastern Reading Council &
MAIL TO-Fred Souza, 19 Owen Drive, Stonington, CT 06378**

Questions?-Contact Andrea Sadler at andrea.sadler@eastlymeschools



Southeastern & Eastern Reading Councils Workshop
Shane Templeton (*Words Their Way*)-2/15/12

Registration Form

Name _____

Phone _____

Email _____

School or Company _____

Home Address _____

_____ I am a Connecticut Reading Association member
& I am including this registration form & a check for \$20

_____ I am not currently a member and will fill out the CRA membership form
attached & I am including a check for \$45

Please make check payable to Southeastern Reading Council
&
MAIL TO-**Fred Souza**, 19 Owen Drive, Stonington, CT 06378



Introducing CONNecTion's Guest Editor, Dr. Catherine Kurkjian...

Dr. Catherine Kurkjian is a professor in the Department of Reading and Language Arts at Central Connecticut State University. She earned her doctorate in reading from the University of Northern Colorado, and an M.Ed. with a concentration in reading from the University of Massachusetts. Her areas of specialization include children's literature and the intersection of literacy and technology. She has devoted her life to bringing children and their books together and to providing service to professional organizations. Dr. Kurkjian has been honored by Connecticut Reading Association with the Celebrate Literacy Award and received the New England Reading Association Special Recognition Award for exemplary service in the promotion of literacy.

PROFESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- Editor of Bookbird: A Journal of International Literature (IBBY)(2009-2012)

- Conference Chair, 5th Literacy Essentials Conference, CCSU
- President of NERA 2009/2010
- Conference Chair for the New England Reading Association (NERA) Annual Conference (Springfield, MA in September, 2008)
- Editor of the New England Reading Association Journal 2001-2008
- Research Co-Chair for the Connecticut Association for Reading Research (CARR) (2004-2008)
- Editor of Children's Book Department for The Reading Teacher (2003-2007), Journal of the International Reading Association
- Past president of the Children's Literature and Reading Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association and served as Editor and Associate Editor of its journal, The Dragon Lode

*Stay connected, visit the CRA Website
at www.ctreading.org*



"What Is Right..." continued from page 6

Marilyn Scanlan-White, has been CRA's Legislative chairperson for many years, puts together an annual institute to discuss the latest topics in education. This year's feature institute topic focussed on State Implementation Plan for CT Standards (CCSS). The panel consisted of members of the State Department of Education: Dr. Marion Martinez, Harriet Feldlaufer, Amy Radikas and Joanne White. Thank you to everyone!

Several awards were presented at this year's conference. On Thursday, Dr. Marion Martinez, Associate Commissioner for Teaching, Learning and Instructional Leadership at the State department of Education, presented CRA's Outstanding Reading

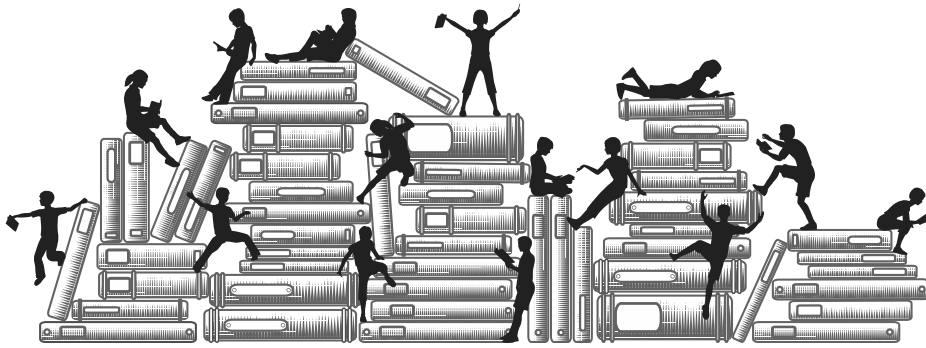
Educators award to Sharon Thompson of North Stonington Elementary School, North Stonington, CT., CRA's Nicholas P. Criscuolo Reading Award for Administrators to Principal Jerry Davis of Plainfield Central Middle School, Plainfield, CT., CRA's two Literacy Awards to Dr. Joanne Cunard, Professor of Education, St. Joseph's College, West Hartford, CT. and Cathy Patterson, Assistant Superintendent, Ledyard Public Schools, Ledyard, CT. All award winners and their guests were honored at a Recognition Breakfast Co-sponsored by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and Questar Assessment, Inc. Congratulations to all!

Another thank-you to our behind the scenes people: Eileen Simon and Joanne Mumley, for an outstanding

program, the Crowne Plaza Hotel and staff for catering to our every need and to Education Connection of Litchfield, Tony Sebastiano and his staff for an awesome job handling the registration and vendors. Thank you to all!!

Presenters for the 2012 conference are needed. Proposal forms will be available on our website: www.ctreading.org after January 15, 2012. We look forward to reading your proposal. Our 61st conference will be held Wednesday, November 7 and Thursday, November 8, 2012 at the Crowne Plaza in Cromwell, CT.

Again thank you to all for supporting the CT Reading Association and making our conference a success!!



Generating a Love for Literature by Promoting Wide Reading

By Catherine Kurkjian

By the time you read your CON-
Necton, an exciting annual
literacy event will have taken
place for students (grade 5-7) at Central Connecticut State University. For the second year in a row the Department of Reading and Language Arts has hosted the Kids' Lit Quiz™, an international literary event, designed to inspire wide reading within classrooms, schools and districts. This year the US winners will be eligible to participate in the Finals held in New Zealand in July.

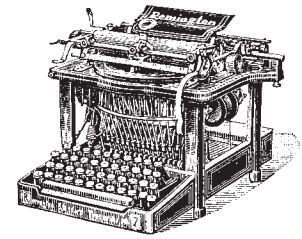
New Zealand quizmaster, Wayne Mills founded The Kids' Lit Quiz in 1991. Mills is past Chair of the Children's Literature Foundation of New Zealand. In 2008 he was the recipient of the Margaret Mahy Medal and in 2011 made a Member of the NZ Order of Merit. He conducts these quizzes all over the world. Quizzes are held in New Zealand, the UK, South Africa, Canada and China and now it is in its second year in the US. The winning team from each heat competes in a national final. National champions are eligible to compete in the World Final. Please visit the Kid Lit Quiz website at <http://www.kidslitquiz.com>

The Quiz is designed for 10-13 year olds (grades 5 to grades 7). Schools

are invited to enter 4 students per team (up to four teams per school) to participate. Children, teachers and parents come away from the quiz enthused and excited about books. However, the fun comes in the preparation as schools select their dream teams and their community cheers them on.

With so much current emphasis upon sport, science and mathematics, the Kids' Lit Quiz™ offers students the opportunity to take part in an event that is focused in the arts - but is also fun and very interactive. It is a splendid opportunity to extend literary knowledge and increase reading mileage of your students.

Please be on the lookout for news about our US Champions in 2012 and plan to involve your district, school and/or classrooms in next year's event.



Editorial Commentary:

It has been an honor to serve as editor for the winter issue of the CONNecton. In addition to Legislative News, and IRA Board News, you will be updated regarding the important work that CRA and Councils do to fulfill their important work in providing professional development and in generating a love of literacy within our Connecticut community. Look for flyers and registration materials for exciting PD opportunities.

Our feature article *What is Right about the New CCSS Standards* by Dr. Kristina Elias-Staron presents an articulate discussion highlighting why the new standards will put Connecticut on the right path. Her reasons are compelling. This is a fairly controversial and multifaceted issue. In the interest of presenting multiple viewpoints, we invite submissions that will inspire a critical conversation on this significant topic, and on others that impact our lives and the lives of our students.

Meanwhile, I hope you enjoy reading this issue of CONNecton, as much as I enjoyed editing it.

Catherine Kurkjian

Second CRA Legislative Literacy Advocate Award

The CRA Board of Directors and Advocacy Committee are seeking nominations for the Second CRA Legislative Literacy Advocate Award. The nominee must be a CT legislator who has supported literacy at the state and local district level. (For example, a legislator who has been a guest at a local school or a volunteer reader at a CT Loves to Read Day.) Nominations will close on January 9, 2012. Please contact Marilyn Scanlan White at atwmsw@sbcglobal.net

Federal News

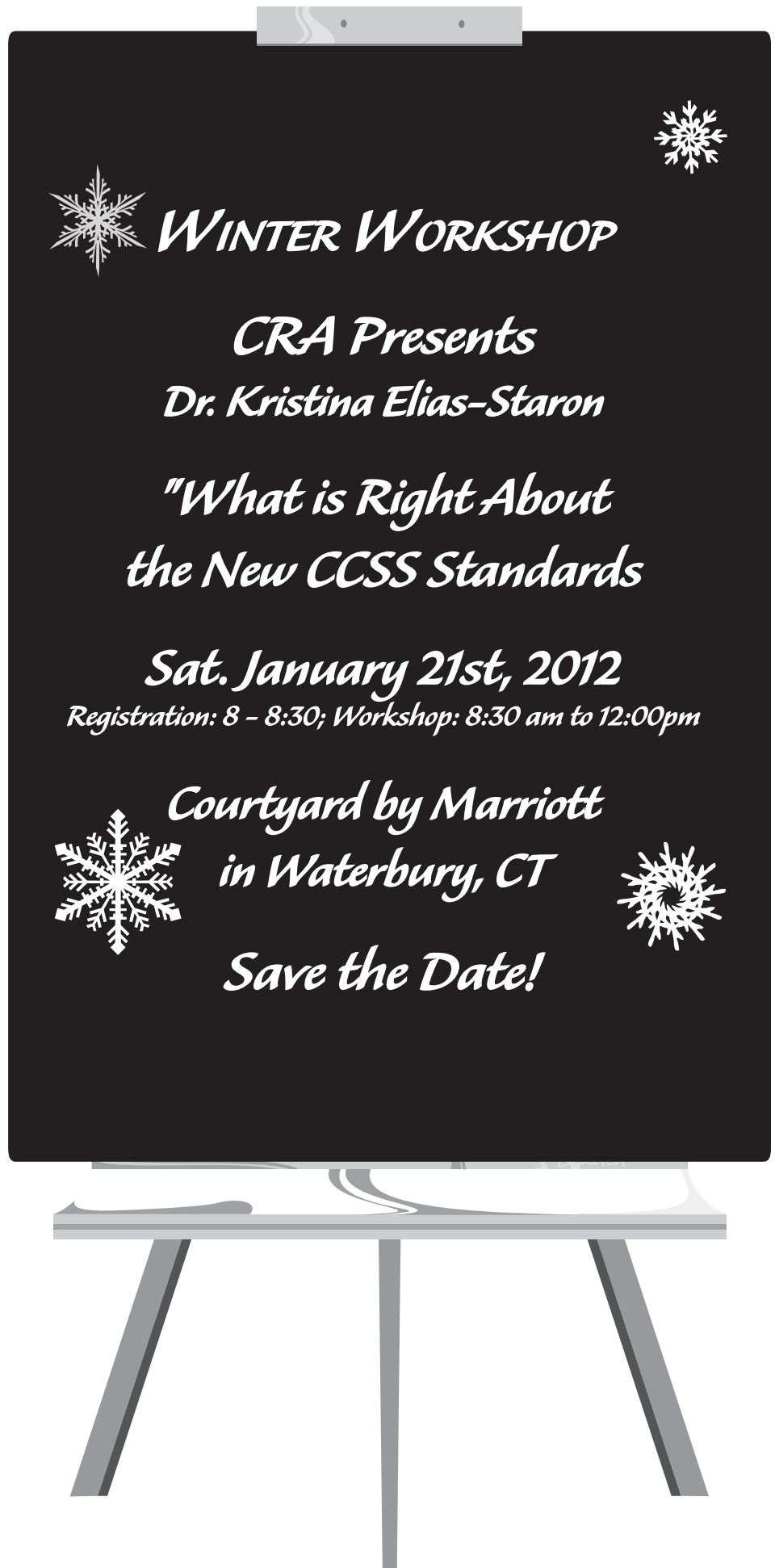
Rewriting the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

IRA's Director of Government Relations, Richard Long, hosted a webinar on November 10 entitled *What is Going on in Federal Regulations*. Rich reported that the Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP) has passed its plan 15-7. Among recommendations that the Senate should vote on in January are:

1. AYP Framework no longer the trigger in facing sanctions
2. Use of growth models- how individual students grow
3. CCSS/College and Career ready
4. LEARN Act which is now called *Literacy for All*
5. School Improvement Plans
6. Charter School bill passed by House of Representatives (Bills pending on teachers and accountability)

Other Federal News

States have two opportunities to apply for waivers related to meeting the demands of NCLB on November 14 and mid-February. A new office of Early Childhood Education has been created. The U.S. Departments of Education and Defense have launched a learning registry site to share information on programs that work: www.learningregistry.org



WINTER WORKSHOP

CRA Presents

Dr. Kristina Elias-Staron

**"What is Right About
the New CCSS Standards**

Sat. January 21st, 2012

Registration: 8 - 8:30; Workshop: 8:30 am to 12:00pm

**Courtyard by Marriott
in Waterbury, CT**

Save the Date!

CRA Calendar of Events



DATE	COUNCIL	TITLE	SPEAKER	TIME	LOCATION
1/18/12	GHAC	Developing Thinking through the Common Core Standards: Giving Comprehension a Voice	Dr. Nancy Boyles	4:30-7:00	Bennet Academy in Manchester
1/19/12	Nutmeg	Member Appreciation Gathering		4:00-6:00	Vasi's Restaurant, Waterbury
1/21/11	CRA	Winter Workshop What is Right About the New CCSS Standards	Dr. Kristina Elias-Staron	8:30-12:00	Courtyard by Marriott Waterbury
2/8/12	GHAC	TBD	Marta Diex, CREC	4:30-6:30	Smith Middle School Glastonbury
2/15/12	Southeastern & Eastern	Words Their Way	Shane Templeton	4:00 - 7:00	Mitchell College New London
TBD	Eastern	Family Literacy Night	Many Speakers and Guests	6:00 - 7:30pm	Brooklyn School, Brooklyn, CT
3/31/12	GHAC	Literacy, Learning, Thinking & the Classroom Community	Peter Johnston	9:00am - 12:00pm	King Phillip Middle School West Hartford

“The more you read,
the more things you will know.
The more that you learn
the more places you'll go.”

- Dr. Seuss, "I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!"



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2011 - 2012

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CRA is actively seeking individuals

who would be willing to fill the following open CRA Board positions?

CRA Treasurer * IRA Coordinator * Parliamentarian for CRA Board meetings

We also seek individuals would be interested in being part of the conference committee?

Interested in serving in any of these positions?

Please contact Nancy Souza at nsouza31@comcast.net



Why become a member of CRA??

1. Join Us in a Wide Array of Professional Development
2. Attend Events with Nationally-Recognized Speakers
3. Receive Priority Registration for CRA's Annual Conference
4. Stay Connected with Electronic Notification of Events
5. Network with Literacy Professionals
6. Keep Informed with National and State Legislative Updates
7. Read CONNECTION for Reading Research and Literacy News
8. Gain a Voice in Advocacy
9. Apply for CRA Literacy Awards and Grants
10. Support Family Literacy in Your Community



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