

Annenberg/CPB  
Professional Development Workshop Guide

# Engaging With Literature:

A Workshop for Teachers, Grades 3–5

A nine-part professional development workshop  
for grades 3–5 literature and language arts teachers

Produced by Maryland Public Television

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# About the Workshop

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## Overview

Students in the upper elementary grades (third through fifth) are beginning to grow into their roles as thinkers and learners. They have accumulated skills as readers throughout their schooling and now crave an opportunity to use their growing mental muscles to attack texts of all kinds. Many at this level start reading chapter books for the first time. Others may not have felt confident enough to experience these kinds of texts on their own. Still others have enjoyed these texts for many years.

Despite these experiential differences, most children enter grade three excited about learning. This passion can continue throughout these years and beyond—if they encounter teachers who trust and empower them and texts that continue to intrigue and challenge them as readers and thinkers. Years of research by Dr. Judith Langer, Director of the National Research Center on English Learning & Achievement (CELA) and chief content advisor for this workshop, have shown this. Observing readers of all ages, she found that the most effective of them were those who were actively engaged in the world of the story, using their logic, common sense, and intuition to take in its new information and make sense of it. In doing so, they replicated a pattern that all people use in taking in, assessing, and processing new information. Dr. Langer refers to the process of creating this involved and rich interaction with texts as the process of building envisionments. Envisionments are complex and evolving personal tapestries readers create and refine as they read, talk, and write about a work of literature. If students are supported as they actively build personal envisionments, Dr. Langer asserts, and are encouraged to do so, they grow as highly competent readers and thinkers.

***Engaging With Literature: A Workshop for Teachers, Grades 3–5*** features eight teachers from around the country who are working to make sure their students remain excited about learning. They share their practical and philosophical advice through intimate conversations that take into account issues every teacher faces—such as high-stakes assessments and dealing with differently abled students—as they explore various ways to encourage students to actively engage with the texts they are reading. They also invite the audience into their diverse classrooms to show the benefits everyone gains as students immerse themselves in a text and write and talk about it in the literary community their classrooms have become.

*Engaging With Literature: A Workshop for Teachers, Grades 3–5* is part of the ***Envisioning Literature*** series of workshops and libraries. Other projects in the series, available through Annenberg/CPB at [www.learner.org](http://www.learner.org), include:

- Conversations in Literature
- Making Meaning in Literature: A Video Library, Grades 6–8
- Making Meaning in Literature: A Workshop for Teachers, Grades 6–8
- Engaging With Literature: A Video Library, Grades 3–5

## Workshop Descriptions

### Workshop 1. Foundations

In this introductory workshop session, you will meet the eight teachers who will be part of this workshop and find out what kinds of literary experiences have had the most meaning for them. The group talks about ways in which they have brought a love of literature to the students in their classes and the reasons and benefits for these kinds of experiences. You will see the teachers in their classrooms, where you can observe how this love of literature directly informs their work. They enumerate the kinds of books you would find in their classrooms, and the reasons they are there. In a think-aloud, the group shares their impressions of a selection from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, demonstrating the habits and processes that successful readers employ.

# About the Workshop, cont'd.

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## **Workshop 2. Looking at Literature**

A love of literature begins with a love of story, and teachers shown in this video start by talking about ways in which story affects their lives and the lives of their students. From this background, they move to talking about selecting texts that encourage students to interact with the stories there. Some issues that impact that choice include age/interest appropriateness, text availability, reading texts online, working with basal readers, and presentations that span reading levels, including book read-alouds. Classroom visits punctuate the discussion, showing practical ways to implement the suggestions the teachers discuss.

## **Workshop 3. Starting Classroom Conversations**

Since class discussion is such a vital part of a classroom that celebrates interacting with literature, two sessions in the workshop are devoted to this topic. This introductory session concentrates on the basics: defining “good” questions, identifying those who should have an opportunity to ask questions, and explaining the goals for this technique. The discussion continues to address ways in which teachers can evolve a classroom where everyone feels comfortable in contributing to a literary discussion, including classroom setup and expressed and implicit expectations. The group also talks about ways in which teachers can help students as they begin to discuss, and gives strategies for involving reluctant participants. Practical suggestions for bringing these ideas into the classroom are foregrounded by numerous classroom visits.

## **Workshop 4. Classroom Dialogues**

In this session, you will see teachers further refine their impressions on issues of classroom discussion, including whole-class discussion vs. small-group discussion. Elements from traditional language arts curricula are incorporated seamlessly into the discussion, and, most important, the various roles open to a teacher as the class discusses a text are explored. These roles are clearly demonstrated as the audience returns to the teacher’s classrooms to observe authentic discussions as they develop and proceed.

## **Workshop 5. Using Art and Other Disciplines To Enrich Classroom Conversations**

In this workshop session, you will hear a discussion about using arts and other disciplines to enhance individual literary experiences for each student. Footage gathered in classrooms around the country shows these strategies in practice. Teachers point out that the key to these experiences is a student’s ability to transmediate information from one genre of expression to another. The group talks about drama, drawing, and music as adding depth and dimension to literature, as well as offering students alternative ways of expressing their understandings of the text. The group also talks about integrating writing into an ongoing literary conversation, and various ways to encourage students as writers.

## **Workshop 6. Beginning the Year**

The kind of literary community every teacher wants in his or her classroom begins with seeds sown from the first few days in which students meet together. The assembled teachers share their thoughts on specific ways to set the tone for the year, talking about text choices and ways they choose to first interact with them. They also share their goals as they begin, how they communicate these with their students, and how they get to know the people in their class in order to tailor literary experiences to meet their needs. You will visit classrooms throughout the nation on the first few days of school, to see how these theories come to life.

## **Workshop 7. Many Students: Many Voices and Abilities**

Each student is an individual, with an individual perspective to share with the world. In this video, teachers talk about ways to celebrate their uniqueness, providing an atmosphere in the classroom in which each plays a respected and respectful role in conversations surrounding literature. Validating the rich classroom that results, the group acknowledges background, reading levels, language acquisition levels, and other personal characteristics that allow for the formulation of multiple perspectives that add significantly to a group’s interaction with literature. Interwoven with their thoughts are actual classroom examples of ways in which teachers invite many voices to participate in the ongoing literature discussions.

# About the Workshop, cont'd.

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## **Workshop 8. Reacting to Students' Work**

In this workshop session, the teachers talk about the various ways in which they evaluate their students and translate the information they gain to evaluate themselves and their work. They offer various suggestions for communicating their expectations to students and families. Other topics the assembled group touches on include dealing with high-stakes assessments, deciding when to assess and when to evaluate, and suggestions for helping students assess their own work and the work of their peers. Classroom visits present examples of a variety of situations in which assessment and evaluation are taking place.

## **Workshop 9. The Professional Teacher**

There are enormous benefits that teachers can draw from a rich and varied professional life. In this video, the teachers talk about the ways in which they nurture themselves as professionals: their mentors and heroes, their activities, and the ways they reach out to their peers as they all grow in their chosen career. They define what being a professional teacher means to them, and enumerate and showcase—through documentary-style footage—the myriad ways in which they maintain their professional edge—learning from their students as well as other professionals.

# Workshop Components

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This guide provides everything you need to know to conduct this workshop, either with colleagues or on your own. The workshop consists of activities carried out with your colleagues on-site (Workshop Sessions) and those to do on your own (Between Sessions). See Helpful Hints for Facilitators on p. 6 for more information on preparing for group workshop sessions.

## Workshop Sessions (On-Site)

Weekly workshop sessions may be scheduled around live broadcasts, in which case you will want to begin at least 30 minutes before the scheduled broadcast. You may prefer to pre-record the programs on videocassette and schedule the sessions at a time that is more convenient for all participants. Sessions work best when scheduled for a minimum of two hours.

Each session consists of three parts:

### Getting Ready

In preparation for watching the program, you will engage in approximately 30 minutes of discussion and activity.

### Watch the Workshop Video

Then you will watch the 60-minute video program. Within each program, there are opportunities to pause the tape for discussion. If you are watching a real-time broadcast, you may want to consider the questions posed while viewing the program, and discuss them later.

### Going Further

Wrap up the workshop with an additional 30 minutes of discussion and activity.

## Between Sessions (On Your Own)

The following will help you to practice, read more about, and share ideas about the techniques demonstrated in each workshop session.

### Homework Assignment

You will be assigned exercises and activities that put into use practices learned in the last workshop, or prepare you for the next one.

### Ongoing Activities

You may want to carry on these activities throughout the course of the workshop.

#### Keep a Journal

You are encouraged to keep a journal, including thoughts, questions, and discoveries from the workshop itself and learning experiences that take place in your own classroom.

#### Visit the Web Site: [www.learner.org/envisioningliterature](http://www.learner.org/envisioningliterature)

Go online for materials and resources to deepen your understanding and implementation of the practices shown in the workshop.



# Workshop Components, cont'd.

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## **Share Ideas on Channel-TalkLit3to5@learner.org**

You can subscribe to an email discussion list and communicate with other workshop participants online. To subscribe to Channel-TalkLit3to5, visit:

**<http://www.learner.org/mailman/listinfo/channel-talkLit3to5>**

## **Extension: Classroom Connections**

We provide activities that can help you put the practices you learn in this workshop into use in your own classroom.

## **Additional Reading**

Go online to find more resources and suggested readings to deepen your understanding and implementation of the practices shown in this workshop. Go to the *Engaging With Literature: A Workshop for Teachers, Grades 3–5* Web site at **[www.learner.org/envisioningliterature](http://www.learner.org/envisioningliterature)**.

# Helpful Hints for Facilitators

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## Successful Workshop Sessions

These guidelines will help you conduct successful workshop sessions, particularly the Getting Ready and Going Further segments. These 30-minute, pre- and post-video group discussions will help participants better understand the video programs and enhance the workshop experience. Getting Ready prepares participants for what to focus on during the video programs and Going Further provides the opportunity to analyze and reflect on what they saw.

### Designate Responsibilities

Each week, someone should be responsible for facilitating the workshop sessions. This may be a professional facilitator or a volunteer from among the participants, or you may choose to divide and rotate duties among several participants.

### Prepare for the Session and Bring the Necessary Materials

The facilitator should review the entire session in this guide prior to arriving for the session, as well as reviewing the Materials Needed (see page 7) for that session. The facilitator will be responsible for bringing enough materials for the participants. If you are viewing the video programs on videocassette, the facilitator may want to preview the programs.

### Before the First Session

You may want to photocopy this guide for all participants so they may follow along, refer back to ideas covered in the session, or have their homework assignments handy. Or, you may direct them to the workshop Web site at [www.learner.org/envisioningliterature](http://www.learner.org/envisioningliterature) to print the guide themselves (direct them to “Support Materials”). Either way, you will want participants to have the guide prior to the first session, so they will come prepared. Be sure participants know:

- They should bring a journal and a pen or pencil to each workshop session, including the first;
- There are suggested reading assignments prior to the first session (see Background Reading for Workshop 1); and
- It would be helpful if they were to review the first session in the guide before arriving.

### Keep an Eye on the Time

We have suggested the amount of time you should spend on each question or activity. While these times are merely guidelines, you should keep an eye on the clock, particularly if you are watching a live broadcast. You may want to set a kitchen timer before you begin Getting Ready to ensure that you won't miss the beginning of the video. If you are watching the workshops on videotape, you will have more flexibility if your discussions run longer.

### Record Your Discussions

We recommend that someone take notes during each discussion, or even better, that you tape-record the discussions. The notes or audiotapes can serve as make-up materials in case anyone misses a workshop.

### Share Your Discussions on the Web

The workshop sessions serve as a starting point to share and think about the workshop ideas. Encourage participants to continue their discussions with participants from other sites on Channel-Talk at the workshop Web site at [www.learner.org/envisioningliterature](http://www.learner.org/envisioningliterature).

# Materials Needed

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You will need to assemble the following materials for this workshop:

- A VCR and viewer (television set or monitor) to show the video programs
- Notebooks or paper, and pencils or pens
- Other materials may be needed for activities suggested for individual workshop sessions. Consult the appropriate chapter of this guide to find out the scope of these activities and plan your session accordingly.

Note: A supplementary resource is *Engaging With Literature: A Video Library, Grades 3–5*. While not required for the workshop, viewing of the videos from the library can provide additional insight into envisionment-building classrooms. Visit the Web site at **[www.learner.org/envisioningliterature](http://www.learner.org/envisioningliterature)** and select *Engaging With Literature: A Video Library, Grades 3–5* for more information.

# About the Contributors

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## Featured Teachers and Schools

### **Katherine Bomer, Grade 5, Pleasant Hill Elementary School, Austin, Texas**

Katherine Bomer received her professional education at Teachers College, Columbia University, where she had the opportunity to work at the nationally renowned Reading and Writing Project. During her career, she has sought out challenging teaching assignments in New York City, Indiana, and Texas—choosing this past year to lead a fifth-grade classroom at Pleasant Hill Elementary in Austin.

Ms. Bomer has coauthored two books: *The Writer's Bookshelf*, with Lucy Calkins, and most recently *For a Better World: Reading and Writing for Social Action* with her husband, Randy. As elementary representative-at-large for the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), Ms. Bomer acts as the liaison between the Executive Committee and elementary classroom teachers. Her goal is to ensure that uniquely elementary-level concerns are heard and teacher interests are protected when voting on the NCTE's national policies.

At heart, Ms. Bomer loves watching individual children experience their own strength, their ability to collaborate, and their passion to make the world better. She strives to make her classroom a place where children learn kindness and intense involvement with each other every day.

Ms. Bomer believes her students should take charge of their own education. Students call on each other in discussions and take notes of story features and their own observations during read-alouds. Later, the students use their notes to discuss their wonderings in-depth in "conversation clubs" while Ms. Bomer takes notes on their discussion. Her input doesn't focus on directing their ideas; instead, she offers advice on how the group can improve and diversify their own discussion. Ms. Bomer creates the opportunity for discussion—it is up to the kids to decide if they want to discuss, draw, write, or create. During independent reading, students use sticky notes to mark observations they made and to make recommendations to other readers in the class. Ms. Bomer takes this time for assessment, visiting individual students to note their understandings as they read. If students are having trouble with some aspect of school—be it listening to each other during discussions or respecting others' ideas—the class works together to create a poster full of ways they can all improve.

**School Snapshot:** During the 2001–2002 school year, Ms. Bomer taught fifth-grade students at Pleasant Hill Elementary, an urban school located in Austin, Texas. It is largely a neighborhood school. Most students walk to and from the building each day. The staff works hard to support this concept in small ways, such as visiting their new students and families in their homes before school begins in August. More than 80% of the 510 students are of Latin American or Mexican descent. About 70% of the students are classified by Texas as "economically disadvantaged," and more than 83% of the student body qualifies for free lunches.

Ms. Bomer's classroom is fairly representative of the general population. She works with 20 children, including six special needs students, reading on a low-second to mid-third-grade level. Due to their complex lives and daily stressors, Ms. Bomer says her students are often "locked inside themselves," especially the struggling learners.

Like other Texas schools, Pleasant Hill is subject to the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), a high-stakes test covering reading, writing, mathematics, and science in grades 3–8. The test determines whether children will pass out of the third, fifth, and eighth grades. It also determines state funding for the school and district, putting pressure on teachers and administrators to consistently increase scores.

### **Jonathan Holden, Grade 4, Nathan Hale Elementary School, Boston, Massachusetts**

Jonathan Holden is a third-year educator teaching fourth grade at Boston's Nathan Hale Elementary School. He holds a bachelor's degree in arts and science from Tulane University in New Orleans and a master's degree in urban education from Boston College's Urban Teaching Program. While earning his master's degree, Mr. Holden worked for two years at East End House in Cambridge, Massachusetts, as director of a small, year-round community center for 52 school-aged children. Here, Mr. Holden experienced the gamut of the educational field, as he was responsible for hiring and training staff, grant writing, curriculum development, parent communication and

# About the Contributors, cont'd.

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billing, and even collaboration with social service agencies. His student-teaching experience was at the Lee School in Dorchester, Massachusetts, where he worked as a full-time para-professional.

Mr. Holden strives to improve and deepen his instruction each year, feeling the best part of teaching is the ability to improve and innovate from increasing experience. One of his primary goals is to increase students' oral fluency, feeling that the ability to discuss and explain carries over into reading and writing achievement. To this end, Mr. Holden encourages a love of literature in his classroom, hoping the excitement generated will promote comprehension through spirited, interested conversation.

Mr. Holden attempts to balance structure with freedom and open discussion in his classroom. Students in discussion groups collaboratively attack a passage from different assigned roles, such as discussion leader, passage picker, and connector. After independently reading, students go through several rounds of pair-sharing, talking about their observations with different members of the class. A believer in the power of reading to inform writing and oral literacy, Mr. Holden has students read and explain their essays as they are editing.

**School Snapshot:** Nathan Hale Elementary School serves the culturally diverse neighborhood of Roxbury in southwestern Boston. Of the 199 students enrolled, nearly 84% are African American; 12% are Hispanic, 3% Asian, and less than 1% are Caucasian. Classes average around 20 students of varying reading levels.

The building has three floors and no gym or large meeting area, meaning the schoolwide assemblies held every Friday must take place in the hallways. School time is highly structured: all students eat a free breakfast from 8:15–8:45 each morning, followed by block periods devoted to literacy. The day concludes with schoolwide Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) time. Students are required to get a signature from a parent or guardian every night confirming they have read at least 30 minutes.

Like other Boston public schools, Nathan Hale is subject to the high-stakes Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) that tests mathematics and English language arts in grade four. Additionally, the school's own improvement plan calls for testing of all grades in September, February, and June in reading, writing, and math. Over half of the student population reads below MCAS standards, but the school has worked hard to cut its failing rate in half in the past two years. Mr. Holden feels balancing the need for structure and classroom management with the pressures of high-stakes testing and the desire to promote the love of literature is the primary challenge he faces in teaching.

## **Barry Hoonan, Grades 5/6, The Odyssey School, Bainbridge Island, Washington**

Barry Hoonan has over 20 years of experience in public school classrooms. He currently teaches the 5/6 cluster at The Odyssey School, an alternative school for grades 1–8 on Bainbridge Island, Washington. Odyssey features multiage classes and a high level of parent involvement. Although Hoonan teaches all subjects in his cluster, his true passions are literature and writing.

Mr. Hoonan, a two-time participant in the Fulbright Teacher Exchange to Great Britain, has a master's degree in education from Lesley College in Massachusetts. Winner of the 1990 Christa MacAuliffe Award for teaching excellence in Washington State, he has recently seen his works published in *Beyond Reading and Writing* by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and *Literature Circles and Response* (Christopher-Gordon Publishers, 1995). He is also a member of NCTE's Reading Commission, and he serves as a consultant for school districts conducting workshops on integrating reading, writing, poetry, and the arts into instruction. Mr. Hoonan's teaching style has been influenced by such notables as Judith Langer, Linda Rief, Nancie Atwell, Donald Graves, and Jerome Harste.

Mr. Hoonan keeps a daily journal on the progress of individual students and targets five or six students a day for individual assistance. He has children maintain a portfolio of their work, and actively involves them in establishing the criteria on which they will be evaluated. In addition, he asks families to conduct formal interviews with their children at various points in the year, using a sheet of questions designed to show students the progression of their thinking over time.

# About the Contributors, cont'd.

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**School Snapshot:** The Odyssey School is an alternative public school on Bainbridge Island, eight miles from Seattle by ferry. It is one of four elementary schools serving the island's community of 20,000 people. When it opened five years ago, it had 75 students in grades 1–6, organized into multi-grade groupings known as clusters. Two years ago, the school grew to 125 students with the addition of a 7/8 cluster. Class size at Odyssey is on a par with that at other island elementary schools. Students are looped, staying with the same instructor for two years. Although approximately 80% of older family members commute to Seattle, the school represents a wide range of incomes and includes artisans and local farmers as well as stockbrokers and lawyers. Families must agree to volunteer between five and 10 hours a month at the school before they may enroll their child. With twice as many applications as available spots, the school has a lengthy waiting list and is currently evaluating whether it needs to undertake further expansion—and if so, how to achieve that growth while maintaining the current sense of community.

Odyssey is located in a spacious old elementary library building and is designed to have the nurturing feel of a one-room schoolhouse. Students call teachers by their first names. The elementary grades spend part of each morning together, and they share computers and other resources as needed. Each elementary cluster has one teacher who is responsible for all instruction. Within such a small environment, families are a vital resource, sharing their skills and expertise in the classroom. For instance, since Barry Hoonan's expertise lies primarily in language arts, he recruits family members who are strong in math and science to help teach advanced concepts to his cluster. Teachers of grades 1–6 coordinate a three-year cycle of instruction together. Although the state mandates that children must know certain concepts by certain grade levels, it has been supportive of Odyssey's alternative approach to education.

Like all public school students in Washington, children at Odyssey must take the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in grades four, seven, and 10. However, for Mr. Hoonan, assessment is far more than a measure of what students have accomplished; it is also a tool to help them grow.

## **BJ Namba, Grade 3, Punahou School, Honolulu, Hawai'i**

BJ Namba received a B.A. in psychology and a professional diploma in elementary education from the University of Hawai'i. Twenty-one years of teaching experience later, she teaches third grade at the prestigious Punahou School, a private school in Honolulu. In the interim, Mrs. Namba has worked as an English as a Second Language teacher for Hawaiian public schools, a master teacher of fifth, sixth, and seventh graders in Majuro, Marshall Islands, and a teacher of first, third, and fourth grade at The Kamehameha Schools, a private school for children of Hawaiian ancestry.

Growing up in Hawai'i and Japan, Mrs. Namba has flourished within the unique cultural challenges of the Hawaiian Islands. At Punahou, she teaches a curriculum with an emphasis on Hawaiian studies, integrating songs and native language into everyday activities. Ms. Namba is constantly learning from the 25 "amazing and exhausting" children in her classroom each year, stretching her teaching with their insights and observations.

Professionally, Ms. Namba has studied the nuances of literature groups with experts like Kathy Short, Ralph Peterson, and Karen Smith. Her desire for constant innovation led Ms. Namba to form The Literacy Group, a teacher interest group where colleagues meet to talk about best practices in literature and writing groups. Ms. Namba has presented workshops on techniques shaped by this group and her classroom at state conferences on literature circles and multi-genre writing.

**School Snapshot:** Punahou School is an esteemed private school located on a 76-acre campus in Honolulu, Hawai'i. Its 3,700 students are divided into two schools: the Junior School for grades K–8 and the Academy for grades 9–12. The Junior School is further divided into four self-contained sections to accommodate age differences. The campus, founded in 1841, has over 30 buildings, including a 60,000-square-foot Science Center, a theater dating to 1929, a 1,800-seat gymnasium, and a library housing rare books and magazines over 100 years old. The school's neighborhood-like landscape and community atmosphere creates an open feeling. With temperatures ranging from 70 to 90 degrees year round, the importance of incorporating outdoor learning environments into the classroom is visible in buildings across the campus. Students leave their backpacks in cubbies on the patio that spills out to a grassy courtyard outside of Mrs. Namba's classroom which is also used to support the Hawaiian studies curriculum.

# About the Contributors, cont'd.

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Students are accepted into the school in kindergarten and later grades through scholastic performances, test scores, and personal observations. Punahou's student body reflects Hawai'i's rainbow of ethnicities and cultural and socioeconomic diversities. Though the school does offer scholarships to deserving students, most students here come from very supportive middle or upper-middle class families. Study-abroad programs to Europe and Asia through the Wo International Center emphasize these cultural heritages and lend a global perspective to learning.

Students at Punahou School are considered life-long learners and are challenged to look outside the classroom for educational experiences. To facilitate this, students in third grade take about 12 field trips a year to locations around Hawai'i. Founded as a Christian school, students attend chapel once a week and are involved in a wide variety of activities such as community service, performances, and outdoor education.

## **Tim O'Keefe, Grades 2/ 3, The Center for Inquiry, Columbia, South Carolina**

Tim O'Keefe has spent the past 23 years expanding the lives of elementary-age children. With a B.S. and an M.S. from Indiana University in elementary education and continuing coursework in educational administration, Mr. O'Keefe draws upon a rich base of educational principals and techniques. He has taught in all elementary grades (K through 5) in Michigan, Indiana, and South Carolina, and was a visiting professor at the University of Hawai'i. Since 1996, Mr. O'Keefe has served as a teacher of the 2/3 cluster at the Center for Inquiry in Columbia, South Carolina, a school he helped co-found.

Mr. O'Keefe has co-authored or co-edited three books, including *From the Ground Up: Creating a Culture of Inquiry*, which describes the birth and evolution of the South Carolina Center for Inquiry. He has published articles in journals like *The Reading Teacher*, *Young Children*, and *The Whole Language Catalog*. A recent issue of *The New Advocate* contained an article he co-authored with his wife Heidi Mills that focused on literacy instruction. He has presented at numerous workshops throughout the country, speaking on subjects such as fostering genuine inquiry and communicating through language and mathematics.

O'Keefe encourages his students to think critically about all aspects of literature. Besides discussing stories, characters, and connections, students are asked what their favorite books are and what contributes to making them favorites. At times, groups have written discussions about texts, forcing students to both critically interact with a book and polish their writing skills.

**School Snapshot:** Co-founded by a group of teachers in a partnership with the University of South Carolina and Richland School District II, the Center for Inquiry is a community of 132 K–5 students from around the Columbia area. As a "center for inquiry," the school highlights hands-on learning experiences, high-interest studies, and a curriculum that integrates all areas of study. The goal is to encourage students toward independent critical thought and interest via the ideas and inquiries they have about the world and their studies every day.

The Center for Inquiry has a symbiotic relationship with the University of South Carolina. Researchers from the university study the school's population and often send graduate students to student teach in a working model of their educational theories; in return, the Center for Inquiry receives constant curriculum advisement on all aspects of the educational process.

The school is actually a small village of portable trailers located on a middle school campus—students eat at the middle school cafeteria, and use the local public library as their own. Students come from all backgrounds and ability levels, with roughly 30% being minorities. Classes average 22 students per classroom, which mirrors the district average. Students apply to enter the school, which is part of the Columbia public schools system. A lottery is held to select among the applicants for the one class per grade level. Parents must provide transportation for this "school of choice," which tends to promote greater parent involvement. To keep their professional edge, teachers meet to discuss best practices and new ideas on a regular basis, sometimes watching videotapes of their classrooms to critique and expand their teaching.

In line with the goals of inquiry education (which promotes student-based learning through their own wonderings, discussions, and creations), the Center for Inquiry promotes interclassroom interaction for students and teachers. Teachers loop with their children for two-year clusters, meaning Mr. O'Keefe teaches the same group of students for both second and third grade. Students meet with Book Buddies from another grade level (Mr. O'Keefe's third graders meet with a fifth-grade class) to read, discuss, and even teach each other about the literature in their classes.



# About the Contributors, cont'd.

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## **Latosha Rowley, Grades 4/5, Indianapolis Center for Inquiry, Indianapolis, Indiana**

After earning an undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice and spending six years as an insurance underwriter, Latosha Rowley decided to change careers. For years, she had served as a camp counselor, preschool teacher, and tutor, earning the Americorps National Service Award in 1997 for tutoring and implementing a community service program for eighth graders. Drawing on these experiences, Ms. Rowley returned to school, earned a B.S. in elementary education in 2000, and began teaching. During the 2001–2002 school year she taught the 4/5 cluster at the Indianapolis Center for Inquiry. Recently, she added the title of author to her diverse accomplishments, publishing "Plan for Making Meaning" in NCTE's *Primary Voices K–6* January 2002 issue on *Inquiry in the Classroom*.

Ms. Rowley's classroom practices are based on the belief that every student's background and experiences should be heard so that multiple perspectives can be encountered. To this end, she has integrated hands-on activities to accommodate multiple learning styles and has introduced and included Spanish in the curriculum. Ms. Rowley acts as the director of the school's Be Against Drugs (BAD) Club, educating students about the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol, and as an assistant coach of the girl's volleyball and basketball teams.

Ms. Rowley's classroom is active and student-centered. Students meet in small groups to discuss books they have read, with one student acting as a discussion leader. Ideas are written on large sheets of paper so they can be shared with the entire class later. Students are encouraged to ask questions and debate, and then arrive at a consensus opinion, which they put on paper. Ms. Rowley, in the true spirit of inquiry-based education, uses the texts to encourage children to delve into deeper social issues such as poverty and race in their discussions.

**School Snapshot:** The Center for Inquiry in Indianapolis, Indiana, is an alternative magnet program drawing students from across the metropolitan area. Its nearly 300 students are part of a literature-based educational facility that offers students a large degree of choice in what they read, focusing on broad guiding questions for the semester. The innovative approach won the school the 2000 Exemplary Reading Program Award, presented by The International Reading Association and the Indiana State Reading Association. Students apply to come to the school; while no one is turned down, there is a long waiting list due to the limited number of spaces in the school.

Ms. Rowley's class, a grade 4/5 cluster of students, is comprised of a diverse blend of learners from various socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. Drawing students from all over the city, the class has 15 African American, 6 Caucasian, and 1 Asian student. Several students have learning disabilities, while one is part of the Gifted and Talented program. Students are grouped around tables of four, which change multiple times throughout the year to promote multi-perspective discussion. The classroom is active, colorful, and full of expression—students are encouraged to add to its diversity throughout the year with their thoughts, words, and creations.

## **Bileni Teklu, Grade 5, Fair Oaks Elementary School, Marietta, Georgia**

Bileni Teklu is in her third year of teaching—and her first as a fifth-grade teacher—working with students at Fair Oaks Elementary School in Marietta, Georgia. She holds a master's degree in early and elementary education from Baruch College in New York.

The road to Ms. Teklu's teaching career is diverse and unique. For over seven years, she worked as a legal assistant for some of the nation's most prestigious law firms, handling liability claims, tracking royalty statements, and analyzing witness depositions. In 1996, while considering going to law school, she had a change of heart and chose instead to pursue her master's in education. Despite a rewarding student-teaching experience at P.S. 11 in New York City, Ms. Teklu then chose to spend a year interning at the United Nations Bureau for Policy and Development. Torn between a career in law and policy and education, she felt drawn back again and again to the students who most needed love and encouragement. After two years as a computer teacher at P.S. 11 in New York City, Ms. Teklu moved to Marietta and took her first independent teaching assignment at Fair Oaks Elementary.

Ms. Teklu is dedicated to teaching in an at-risk urban environment. Though she realizes her background is vastly different from her students', she feels she can offer them a chance to see the opportunities of a much larger world through her experiences and perspective.



# About the Contributors, cont'd.

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**School Snapshot:** Fair Oaks Elementary School in Marietta, Georgia, is an urban school with a high-risk population. A Title One school, Fair Oaks' 500-plus population consists mainly of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds that have varying degrees of English fluency. Some students are the children of migrant workers where only Spanish is spoken at home; others are from families that only recently arrived in America and have virtually no English language background. Seventy-nine percent of students get free breakfast or lunch.

One of the foremost challenges at Fair Oaks is the high transience rate. Ms. Teklu's class averages about 21 students; however, that number can range as low as 19 and as high as 26 during a typical year. Nearly 60% of the students will change classes or schools during the course of a year, creating an extremely challenging forum for sustained teaching and growth. While the class roster can change daily, Ms. Teklu strives to motivate each student to buy into her learning "product," feeling that success in her class will translate into further academic and social success later in life.

Ms. Teklu's heterogeneous class hosts an even blend of African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian students, including six ESOL students and two students with speech or language disabilities. Students in Ms. Teklu's class sit in clusters of desks to facilitate discussion. During independent reading time, students are allowed to sit or lie wherever they want in the classroom, provided they remain silent. After reading, students "buzz" about what they read with a fellow student, discussing inferences and connections with their own lives before meeting in a circle to discuss their ideas with the whole class. Because new students are constantly coming into the room, Ms. Teklu often has her class reiterate the key objectives of independent reading and sharing together.

Ms. Teklu believes that one of her strongest tools in inspiring the intrinsic motivation many of these students will need is teaching them how to appreciate literature. For some students, class represents the only quiet time in their noisy, crowded lives. Children are offered a choice of reading materials suited to their widely varying reading levels and are encouraged to make reading a steady aspect of their often chaotic lives.

## **Rich Thompson, Grade 4, Canyon Elementary School, Hungry Horse, Montana**

Rich Thompson has taught elementary school for 27 years, the last 13 of which have been at Canyon Elementary School in Hungry Horse, Montana. Holding a B.A. in elementary education from the University of Montana and an M.S. in education from the University of Montana—Northern, Mr. Thompson has spent his entire career educating in the Treasure State. His primary interests are language arts and education via the Inquiry Model, focusing on the reading process, comprehension strategies, shared and guided reading, and literature study groups.

Mr. Thompson's thirst for professional knowledge has led him to both state and national conferences, where he has trained and presented on writing workshops, content area literacy, and state standards. In 2001, Mr. Thompson was honored as the Montana Association of Teachers of English Language Arts' Distinguished Educator and the Northwest Montana Teacher of the Year.

Mr. Thompson's teaching strategies have been featured in NCTE's *Livewire* magazine, *Ideas and Insights*, and *Whole Language Strategies for Secondary Students*. He recently published an article in *Primary Voices* on "Working With Agencies/Community in Inquiry Studies." Since 1998, he has served as a member of the Primary Voices review board, and he will continue to serve on the NCTE's Elementary Section Steering Committee until 2004. More locally, Mr. Thompson serves as a representative for the Montana Association of Teachers of English Language Arts and works with teachers in his school district during staff development sessions for NCTE's Reading Initiative.

**School Snapshot:** Canyon Elementary School in Hungry Horse, Montana serves a remote valley community about 10 miles from Glacier National Park. The Hungry Horse Dam, the largest in the state, and the open terrain of the million-acre national park provide the main attractions to the area, which averages 45 inches of snow per year. The town of 900 is largely employed by the logging industry, an aluminum plant, and the park service. Students are also drawn from two Native American reservations within Flathead County.

The school is K–5 and houses 150 students this year, down from the 200-plus it has held in years past. While some might see limitations in Canyon's remote location and small student body, Mr. Thompson uses the school's unique attributes to his advantage. Focusing on inquiry science and social studies that hits close to home, his classes study revegetation, wildlife concerns, wildfire behavior, and watershed and water quality projects. Mr. Thompson's cross-curricular lesson plans coordinate activities with the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, and specialists from the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Park in the *Learning About Montana Project*.

# About the Contributors, cont'd.

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During language arts periods, the class splits time between whole-class, independent, and small-group reading sessions. Read-alouds in Mr. Thompson's class quickly become whole-class activities. Student readers help the teacher read, and there are frequent stops before, during, and after each section to discuss connections with other texts and the world around them. While reading independently, students are asked to keep a reader's log and note "reader thoughts" about surprises, questions, or connections. For small-group discussions, the class splits, with half of the group going to discuss their literature logs and observations while others continue to read independently. Later, the class creates a story trail on a bulletin board, taping observations from various points in the text to solidify a collective history of the work.

## Advisory Board/Content Advisors

### Judith A. Langer, Ph.D.

Judith A. Langer is Distinguished Professor of Education at the University at Albany, State University of New York. She specializes in studies of language, literacy, and learning. Her research focuses on how people become highly literate, on how they use reading and writing to learn, and on what this means for instruction.

Her major works examine the nature of literate thought—the knowledge students use when they "make sense" and the ways in which their learning is affected by activities and interactions in the classroom. She has studied reading and writing development, the ways in which understandings (envisionments) grow over time, how particular literacy contexts affect language and thought, and the contribution of literature to literate thought.

She is presently studying the professional and classroom features that accompany English programs where students are "beating the odds" in literacy. Her work on envisionment building has had a major impact on literature instruction and assessment. She serves on many advisory boards and national reform groups involved in reconceptualizing literacy education.

Dr. Langer has published in a wide variety of journals and collections. Her books include *Reader Meets Author/Bridging the Gap*; *Understanding Reading and Writing Research*; *Children Reading and Writing: Structures and Strategies*; *Language, Literacy, and Culture: Issues of Society and Schooling*; *How Writing Shapes Thinking: Studies of Teaching and Learning*; *Literature Instruction: A Focus on Student Response*; *Literature Instruction: Practice and Policy*; and *Envisioning Literature: Literary Understanding and Literature Instruction*. *Effective English Instruction* will soon be published.

Dr. Langer is director of the National Research Center on English Learning & Achievement (CELA) funded by the United States Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement. She is also chair of the Department of Educational Theory and Practice.

Dr. Langer serves as the chief content advisor for all the Envisioning Literature workshops and libraries, including *Conversations in Literature* and the *Making Meaning in Literature* video library and workshop.

### Dale Allender

Dale Allender currently serves as the associate executive director of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). A former teacher in the Iowa City Community School District, Mr. Allender has lectured at Grinnell and Coe Colleges. He has also served the language arts community as an editorial board member of *The New Advocate*, as representative-at-large for the Alliance for Curriculum Reform, and in his current position as the NCTE liaison to the Iowa Council Teachers of English and Language Arts Executive Board.

A recipient of the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute for Native American Literature fellowship and numerous other awards, Mr. Allender has served as a consultant and curriculum developer for a number of media projects. These include *Songmasters: The American Road*, a music recording of traditional socially conscious songs performed by contemporary popular music artists; *Tutu and Franklin: A Journey Towards Peace*, a dialogue between Desmond Tutu and John Hope Franklin and 21 international, multicultural high school students; and *Regret To Inform*, an award-winning documentary on widows from the Vietnam War, featured on PBS.

# About the Contributors, cont'd.

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Some of Mr. Allender's recent publications include "Deep Reading: Building a Schematic Bridge Across World Mythology and Multicultural Literature" which appeared in *Multicultural Review*, "The Myth Ritual Theory and the Teaching of Multicultural Literature," "Standing on the Border: Issues of Identity and Border Crossing in Young Adult Literature," and "African and African American Voices and Experiences" which is included in *Adventuring With Books*.

## **Arthur N. Applebee, Ph.D.**

Arthur N. Applebee is professor in the School of Education, University at Albany, State University of New York, and (with Judith Langer) is director of the federally sponsored National Research Center on English Learning & Achievement. The Center has an active research and development agenda in elementary and secondary instruction, in effective uses of technology, and in teacher education.

During his varied career, Dr. Applebee has worked in institutional settings with children with severe learning problems, in public schools, as a staff member of the National Council of Teachers of English, and in research and professional education. He joined the faculty at the University at Albany from Stanford University in 1987, as part of a SUNY-wide graduate research initiative designed to place the University at Albany at the forefront of literacy research in the United States.

With degrees from Yale, Harvard, and the University of London, Dr. Applebee's work focuses on how children and adults learn the many specialized forms of language required for success in school subjects, life, and work. His numerous books and articles focus in particular on issues in curriculum and instruction in reading, writing, and the English language arts. Since the early 1970s, he has also worked with the National Assessment of Educational Progress, helping to design, implement, interpret, and report a continuing series of evaluations of the educational attainment of U.S. students.

An internationally recognized expert, Dr. Applebee consults at the national, state, and district level on effective approaches to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Dr. Applebee is a former editor of *Research in the Teaching of English*, a past president of the National Conference on Research in Language and Literacy, and a recipient of the David H. Russell Award for Distinguished Research in the Teaching of English, from the National Council of Teachers of English.

## **Corrine Falope**

For over 30 years, Corrine Falope has dedicated her life to expanding the minds and worlds of her students. After teaching in Ohio for a short time, Ms. Falope came to New York's Guilderland Central School District and Lynnwood Elementary School. When not in the classroom, she spends the lion's share of her time developing curriculum for county projects and professional organizations, such as the New York State Reading Association and the Children's Literature Connection. In her current position as social studies teacher leader at Lynnwood Elementary, her role is to facilitate the unique and involved teaching of social studies in the school and around the county.

At Lynnwood, Ms. Falope has helped the love and appreciation of books and literature cross curricular boundaries, bringing what she calls "authentic learning experiences" to all students. For example, she has arranged for her students to become Book Buddies with kindergarten students so that her students might feel more confident by helping younger readers. At the other end of the spectrum, Ms. Falope arranged for older middle school students to come into her class and talk about books they've enjoyed. In another activity, the art teacher, the district coordinator of special education, and even the assistant superintendent of schools visited Ms. Falope's classroom to share the books from their nightstands and coffee tables with her students. Ms. Falope also supervises the school's most ambitious experience for students, the Iroquois Longhouse Project. In this multi-curricular fourth-grade unit, Lynnwood students visit Iroquois museum exhibits, learn and play native games like lacrosse in physical education, and read and write about Native American lifestyles, practices, and beliefs. As a culminating activity, students (with a little help from parents) actually construct an Iroquois longhouse near the school, where they then give tours to other students to share what they have learned. From Ms. Falope's perspective, activities like this that engage multiple intelligences and make students an integral and active part of the learning experience are what education is all about.

# About the Contributors, cont'd.

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## **Cora Lee Five**

Cora Lee Five is a fifth-grade teacher at Edgewood School in Scarsdale, New York. She holds degrees in education and writing from Harvard and Northeastern Universities, respectively, and has been teaching in New York for over 20 years. Ms. Five serves on the Language Arts Standards Committee of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and has served in the past on the NCTE Executive, Elementary Section Steering, and Elementary Section committees. In 2002, she was presented with the distinguished Edwin A. Hoey Award for Outstanding Educator in the English Language Arts by the NCTE.

Ms. Five authored *Special Voices* in 1992 and coauthored *Bridging the Gap* with Marie Dionisio in 1996. She has contributed over a dozen book chapters and several published journal articles on topics ranging from catering to special needs and ADHD children to dramatization and writing workshops as effective teaching techniques.

In all of her writings, Ms. Five focuses on centering the educational process on the child no matter what his or her ability level or circumstances may be. In all cases, she advocates creating a learning atmosphere where mistakes are viewed as "signs of learning in progress, not as failures," and where students are given time to think, take ownership of their learning experiences, and are free to respond to each others ideas.

## **James Flood, Ph.D.**

James Flood is professor of reading and literacy development at San Diego State University's School of Teacher Education. His past research has examined literacy instruction in preschool, elementary, and secondary school and the effects of broadening conceptualizations of literacy to include the visual and communicative arts. More recently, he has turned his attention to the instruction and implementation of literature discussion groups, or book clubs. Working with Diane Lapp, Dr. Flood studies the path of preservice teachers as they first learn about book groups, then practice techniques with other teachers in a seminar setting, and finally attempt to institute book groups in their own classrooms.

Dr. Flood's educational and professional experiences have touched every part of the country. While earning degrees in English and education from Catholic University, New York University, and Stanford University, Dr. Flood taught preschool, elementary, and secondary school in New York, New Hampshire, and California. His university teaching career has taken him to La Guardia Community College, the University of San Francisco, and Boston University as an associate professor of reading and language. His college courses specialize in techniques and methods in reading, language arts, and literacy research. Dr. Flood was also honored as a Senior Research Fulbright Scholar at the University of Lisbon, Portugal.

A former member of the Board of Directors and President of the National Reading Conference, Dr. Flood has also chaired numerous committees for the International Reading Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the American Educational Research Association. Dr. Flood is a prolific author, penning over 100 articles, book chapters, and books. He has co-authored and co-edited with Dr. Diane Lapp a number of college and scholarly texts, including *The Handbook for Literacy Educators: Research on Teaching the Visual and Communicative Arts* and *Content Area Reading and Learning*.

## **Michele Anderson Goady**

Michele Anderson Goady is reading specialist for the Maryland State Department of Education and a faculty associate at The Johns Hopkins University. In directing statewide curriculum efforts in reading for pre-K through grade 12, she facilitates conferences, workshops, and other activities to assist Maryland school systems in keeping up with the latest reading practices and research.

Ms. Goady's experience touches all aspects of public and private educational service. Her earliest experiences were as a staff development specialist, an assistant principal, and an elementary classroom teacher in California and Texas. Prior to her work at the MSDE, Ms. Goady served as the director of the Easter Seals Children's Center in Washington D.C. and, from 1993 to 1997, served as director of Early Childhood Education in the Dallas Independent School District—the 12th largest district in the nation. Building on her earlier work as a Head Start project director, Ms. Goady helped design and implement intervention services for elementary teachers, including new reading and literacy resources, teacher workshops, and technology-based instruction materials.

# About the Contributors, cont'd.

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Ms. Goady has presented on all aspects of early literacy, from self-directed reading and learning to assessment standards for administrators. She has given workshops and seminars both locally and nationally, most recently speaking on the Reading Excellence Act at the United States Department of Education's Improving America's Schools Conference. As an administrator and educator, Ms. Goady believes that the teacher holds the key to instructional excellence and success for every learner and that reading empowers individuals to explore and participate in all aspects of our culture.

## **Taffy E. Raphael, Ph.D.**

Taffy E. Raphael is currently professor of curriculum and instruction at the University of Illinois-Chicago. With a background as an elementary teacher in North Carolina and Illinois and degrees from Michigan State, North Carolina-Greensboro, and Illinois-Champaign/Urbana Universities, Dr. Raphael has spent her career exposing the cogs of a literature-based classroom. Her courses at Oakland University, Michigan State University, the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, and currently at Illinois-Chicago have focused on the methods and practices of reading instruction, especially those related to curriculum.

Author or co-author of over 25 articles, 20 book chapters, and four books, Dr. Raphael's works are internationally known and respected. She recently completed work on *Book Club for Middle School*, an exploration of the theory and practice of engaging students in meaningful discussion about literature. In addition to the Book Club project, Dr. Raphael has served as co-principal investigator on the Early Literacy Project, examining alternative contexts for literacy instruction of those labeled as learning disabled. In 1992, Dr. Raphael led a delegation to Beijing, China for the U.S./China Joint Conference on Education—a role she revisited in 2000, when she traveled to Havana for the U.S./Cuba Joint Conference on Education.

Dr. Raphael's work has been published multiple times in *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Research in the Teaching of English*, *The Reading Teacher*, and *Language Arts*. She has served on the Board of Directors and as president of the National Reading Conference and has been an active member of the American Educational Research Association. A former consultant to school districts in Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Michigan, she has presented on all aspects of literacy education to conferences and workshops across the country. Dr. Raphael continues to serve on the editorial boards of the *Michigan Reading Journal*, *The Reading Teacher*, and *Reading Research Quarterly*.

## **Karen Smith, Ph.D.**

Karen Smith serves as associate professor of curriculum and instruction at the College of Education of Arizona State University, Tempe. Dr. Smith began her career teaching for five months in Mexico City before moving to third- through seventh-grade classrooms in Michigan and Arizona. From 1991 to 1999, she was associate executive director and representative-at-large of the National Council of Teachers of English, representing the views and perspectives of the classroom teacher in meetings with executive committees.

Dr. Smith has published numerous books, book chapters, and scholarly articles, including *Teachers Are Researchers: Reflections and Action* with Leslie Patterson and Carol Santa, *The NCTE Reading Initiative: Politics, Pedagogy, and Possibilities*, and *Critical Conversations in Difficult Times*. Her acclaimed professional development program for elementary reading teachers, *NCTE Reading Initiative Materials: Year One*, is being implemented in sites across the country, including over 300 schools in South Carolina.

Dr. Smith has presented to the NCTE, International Reading Association, National Reading Conference, International Whole Language Umbrella Conference, and Global Education Conference, among others, in sites from Louisiana to Montana, South Carolina to Alaska, and Moscow, Russia. She has served on the advisory boards for *The New Advocate*, the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, and the Middle Grades Curriculum Guide Project. Dr. Smith continues to focus on innovative literature-based educational methods in all her teaching and advisory endeavors.

