

# *The Exchange*

Winter 2016

A Newsletter of  
the Secondary  
Reading Interest  
Group of the  
International  
Literacy  
Association



<http://www.pachd.com/free-images/nature-images/winter-14.jpg>

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## ***Inside this issue:***

- ❖ **Message from the President...1**
- ❖ **Nominees for the 2016 Thought Leader in Adolescent Literacy Awards...3**
- ❖ **Student-Driven Questioning Using Heuristics...4**
- ❖ **Community Reads: Why Bother?...4**
- ❖ **Meeting Minutes: July 18th SRIG Meeting in St. Louis...7**

## ***Message from the President***

by Julie Meltzer, SRIG President

Dear Colleagues,

Greetings from Maine! Until the last snow, the colors here were dark greens and dull browns and lots of gray. Trees, rocks, and mountains, all stark and angular, made it seem as though we lived in an Ansel Adams photograph. But now the curves of the landscape are gentle and muted and the white and blue are sparkling, startling the eyes. What a difference a snow makes!

I am so pleased to announce the nominees for the 2016 Thought Leader in Adolescent Literacy Award: Doug Fisher and Nancy Frey. I have long been impressed with Doug and Nancy's abilities to integrate research and practice, using research to design a response to a problem of practice, facilitating collaborative teacher professional development, and then studying the practice that results. Along with numerous others, I have used their insights to improve my own practice and to ground my own design of teacher

## **SRIG Membership**

The SRIG has close to 200 members. Every member counts when it comes to our ability to getting a large enough room for our annual SRIG session. Please let anyone who might be interested know that they are welcome and encouraged to join! At \$10 per year, it is a bargain! Please let Rita Noon know that you want to be a part of us: [ritanoon@gmail.com](mailto:ritanoon@gmail.com) or fill out the form on our new website and we will be in touch: <http://adolescentliteracyinterestgroup.weebly.com/>

## **Secondary Reading Interest Group Officers 2014-2016**

**Julie Meltzer, President**  
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**Debra Franciosi, President-Elect**  
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**Rita Noon, Treasurer**  
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professional development. Doug and Nancy share an extraordinary commitment to the literacy development of teens, as exemplified by not only their academic work but by their work as founders of Health Sciences High and Middle College (<http://hshmc.org/>) where Doug is dean of faculty and Nancy is dean of academic affairs. If you find yourself in San Diego, go visit!

Our new website is very basic but it is up on the web and will serve as a placeholder until we are able to officially change our name and link to the ILA site. For now, this is what we have! Visit the new SRIG website at <http://adolescentliteracyinterestgroup.weebly.com/> and let us know what you think! What would you like to see on our site? Let me know at [secondaryreadinginterestgroup@gmail.com](mailto:secondaryreadinginterestgroup@gmail.com).

I am excited that the 2016 ILA Conference will be in Boston! That is just a 5.5 hour drive for us up here in the corner of the country and many of my teachers will be able to attend what I personally think is one of the best professional development opportunities out there. I hope to see many of you in Boston in July. Doug Fisher and Nancy Frey will be presenting at our SRIG Session on Sunday, July 10 - don't miss it! The SRIG is also co-sponsoring a great Adolescent Literacy Institute on Friday, July 8.

Thanks to President-Elect Deb Franciosi for her article on using heuristics to coach readers to be more meta-cognitive. I have also included short bios of Doug and Nancy for those of you who do not know their work, an article about our district's 8th grade Common Read, and an update on our name change. You will find the meeting minutes from our July Business Meeting in this issue as well (thanks Kathy).

Finally, if any of you are interested in finding out more about what it takes to be a SRIG officer, let me know. Our longtime treasurer Rita Noon is thinking seriously about retiring and while we cannot hope to replace her, we will need a new treasurer! If you are interested, please contact me at [Secondaryreadinginterestgroup@gmail.com](mailto:Secondaryreadinginterestgroup@gmail.com). I hope you find many articles of interest in this issue of *The Exchange*. The next issue will be coming out in June.

Sincerely,  
Julie

**Do you know about <http://www.read.gov/teens/>?**



## Nominees for the 2016 Thought Leader in Adolescent Literacy Awards

### ***Doug Fisher***



Douglas Fisher, Ph.D., is Professor of Educational Leadership at San Diego State University and a teacher leader at Health Sciences High & Middle College. Earlier in his career, Dr. Fisher was an early intervention teacher and elementary school educator. He is the recipient of an International Reading Association Celebrate Literacy Award, an Exemplary Leader award from the Conference on English Leadership of NCTE, as well as a Christa McAuliffe award for excellence in teacher education. He has published numerous articles on reading and literacy, differentiated instruction, and curriculum design as well as books, such as *Better Learning Through Structured Teaching*, *Rigorous Reading*, and *Text Complexity: Raising Rigor in Reading*.

### ***Nancy Frey***



Nancy Frey, PhD, is a professor of literacy in the Department of Educational Leadership at San Diego State University. Through the university's administrative credentialing and doctoral programs, she teaches courses on literacy leadership and research. Dr. Frey is also a teacher-leader at Health Sciences High and Middle College in San Diego. She is a past board member of the California Reading Association, a credentialed special educator, reading

### ***Thinking About a Name Change...Update***

During our Business Meeting on July 18, we floated a non-binding referendum to change the name of the Secondary Reading Interest Group (SRIG) to the Adolescent Literacy Interest Group (ALIG). When looking over past issues of *The Exchange* and the SRIG sessions offered over the past five years, we realized that we have had a broader literacy discussion not limited to reading. SRIG sessions have been as likely to focus on writing, engagement, teacher practice, and school-wide adolescent literacy initiatives, as they have on reading fiction, non fiction, reading instruction, or reading research. Now, given the shift in the name of our parent organization, we think the time has come.

It was clear from the response to the nonbinding referendum that our membership agrees with this decision. At this time we are waiting to get the green light from ILA. Because of legal and fiscal issues related to the name change from IRA to ILA, ILA is asking SIGS and Councils to wait before making name changes official.



## **Adolescent Literacy and Adult Literacy are, well, Different**

Another referendum put before those who attended the SRIG meeting was in response to a request from ILA. The ILA Board wanted to know if we thought that adult literacy should be added to the SRIG mission when we changed our name to the Adolescent Literacy Interest Group (ALIG). The consensus was that SRIG members feel that while some of the issues faced by those working on basic literacy with adults are the same as the challenges faced by adults who work with middle and high school students, many of the issues are actually quite different. Middle and high school teachers are working to develop students' literacy levels to be successful in college and career. While some strategies used with struggling readers may overlap, the contexts, maturity and interests of adolescent vs adult learners are generally dissimilar. SRIG members also said that the audience for materials and resources is quite different. The vote was to keep adult and adolescent literacy separate at this time.

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

**-Dr. Seuss**

specialist, and administrator in California.

Before joining the university faculty, Dr. Frey was a public school teacher in Florida. She worked at the state level for the Florida Inclusion Network, helping districts design systems for supporting students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

She is the recipient of the 2008 Early Career Achievement Award from the National Reading Conference and the Christa McAuliffe Award for excellence in teacher education from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. She was co-recipient of the Farmer Award for excellence in writing from the National Council of Teachers of English for the article "Using Graphic Novels, Anime, and the Internet in an Urban High School."

Dr. Frey is coauthor of *Literacy 2.0, RTI for English Learners, Teaching Students to Read Like Detectives*, and the CCSS-ELA series, all published by Solution Tree. She has written articles for *The Reading Teacher, Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, English Journal, Middle School Journal, Remedial and Special Education*, and *Educational Leadership*.

For more about Doug and Nancy's work, plus lots of great resources, please see: <http://fisherandfrey.com/>



## **Student-Driven Questioning Using Heuristics** by Debra Franciosi

With implementation of Common Core reading and writing comes the expectation that students will get quickly and deeply into text using close reading strategies. There is an assumption the students are being actively metacognitive as they approach reading and writing about text, which may or may not be the case. What the standards do not do is help teachers understand HOW to teach students to be metacognitive.

In order to achieve what the CCSS ask, teachers must also be teaching students how to think, question, and analyze. We need to teach our students how to delve into text through interaction with the author, with the subject, with the characters, with the craft; this interaction starts with asking – not answering - good questions.

Without direction, students tend toward superficial questions – the questions about content that are “right there” (QARs al a Taffy

## **Community Reads: Why Bother?**

by Julie Meltzer

In the literacy community we repeatedly emphasize the power of sharing literacy experiences to build community and to engage readers with books. A Community Read, where teachers, students, and community members all read and discuss the same book and then get to meet the author, is one way to do this.

This approach is being used increasingly by public libraries, in schools at specific grade levels or whole school, in freshmen orientation programs at colleges/universities, or as part of a "one book, one community" experience where partners come together to support wide reading of one book across a city or town (see, for example, <http://saginaw.cyberschool.com/District/Department/3-Community-Education/1569-Book-Reads.html>). A particularly inspiring aspect of Community Reads is when the author comes after the book has been shared and read (see, for example, <http://firoozehdumas.com/community-reads/>). The goal is to create community through engagement in a common literacy experience.

A grade level Common Read can be a powerful way to address the needs of middle school readers because of its social nature, interactivity, and authenticity (Irvin, Meltzer & Dukes, 2007). This type of experience is specifically being explored across the country with middle schoolers (see, for example, <http://edublog.scholastic.com/pos>

Raphael) – onto which the reader can place a finger or two, “Look! Here’s the answer!” But the good questions, the essential questions, allow readers to dig in and peel back successive layers of meaning, and they depend on the specific text and its context for the reader.

Students learn these through teacher modeling, “think alouds,” and strategic use of tools such as heuristics. Simply defined, a heuristic is a process or tool that helps the learner learn or discover something for herself and is a scaffold best implemented using a gradual release of responsibility. The use of a questioning heuristic, in its various forms, is modeled by the teacher such that the student gets a sense of how to use the tool to guide questioning of text during deep readings. Students then practice using the tool with different types of text so they can see that questions change as the conversation changes, both in deepening levels of comprehension and exploration of a single text, and also across texts. The end goal isn’t to have students copy questions from the heuristic as they read, but for them to flex and mold questions to each text they explore. Eventually, the scaffold is removed and the student reads and questions naturally, peeling, questioning, and comprehending the nuances of the text as they read and reread.

The heuristic is also useful in that it removes the teacher dependency and requires multiple readings of the same text. The teacher doesn’t say, “Read this text at least three times.” The teacher explains and demonstrates the heuristic process, and then steps back and lets learning happen.

My first exposure to heuristics was through the “Deep Viewing” work of Kelly Sassi, a professor of English at North Dakota State. In a 45 minute presentation, she guided participants through deep analysis of a television commercial using a heuristic appropriate for the content. Based on Sassi’s work, I have created heuristics to help readers explore different genres including primary documents and poetry.

The heuristics for engaged reading using questions employ three levels of depth: observation, or surface level cataloging, inference and meaning-making, and evaluation. Through successive re-readings, the learner explores several categories of analysis at each of these levels of depth. Each category has a selection of questions that can be used by the reader to explore the text, and to delve deeply into the meaning, intention, and quality of the text. Keep in mind that the questions are suggestions and the levels of depth are relative; the lines may blur as learners start asking questions and making meaning. I believe it is far more important for students to delve into content and ask questions that assist them in understanding than it is for students to adhere to strict rules.

Remember to explain to students why you are reading a particular

t/value-community-reads-experiences;http://www.weareteachers.com/lessons-resources/details/community-reads-program) with reported success.

In order to be successful, common read experiences require a lot of set-up and engagement on the part of many people – teachers, community members, partner organizations, administrators, and students. Is it worth the effort it takes to make them happen? Based on the responses of teachers, community members and students to our 8th grade read this fall, the answer was a resounding, “Yes!” Below I describe what we did, what roles everyone played and feedback we got from students.

### A Community Project

We are a small rural school district with approximately 110 students per grade, K-12. Our eight K-8 schools, three of which are tiny island schools and require a ferry to reach, feed into our regional high school. Our incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders have no sense of being a “class” and have few experiences in common. An 8th grade Common Read seemed a good way to promote literacy, provide a shared experience, reinvigorate a past tradition, and support students to meet one another.

Teachers identified criteria for book selections including appropriateness and interest for 8th graders, some connection to Maine, reading level accessibility, and author availability. Teachers selected the book, *Trouble* by Gary Schmidt, developed and shared possible “book

text, and then model the process for each aspect of the heuristic (level and category). Let students practice using the tool to help them dig into the content, and then help them go beyond it. Don’t get stuck on the “proper” use of the tool. If students are reading and rereading the text asking their own questions, peeling back layers of meaning, and sorting through the author’s claims and evidence, then they are practicing the skills set forth in the Common Core.

The goal is for students to be able to consciously, deeply read text and not only understand it, but dissect it through thoughtful analysis, as well as evaluate the quality, credibility, and effectiveness of what they read. When we move beyond reading a text to answer some questions to student-driven thinking about ideas and structures, we open doors to greater possibilities for our students as thinkers in the 21st century.



**Sample Heuristic:** Here’s an example of a heuristic structure for analyzing content. The specific wording and amount of questions, as well as the number and types of categories, can and should vary depending on grade level and type of text. A heuristic for analyzing literature may include questions regarding literary elements and devices, whereas a tool for primary documents may emphasize context, etc. Students read the text first to get a general sense of it before applying the heuristic.

**Level I: Observe: Catalogue what’s on the surface**

**Level II: Interpret: Make meaning**

**Level III: Evaluate: Judge quality and effectiveness**

#### A. Appearance

Look at the text. What do you see? What does the appearance tell you? Describe the visual design and style of the text, the layout, paper, font, etc. Is the genre immediately apparent?

#### B. Form & Structure

What kind of work is this? Genre? What is/was its purpose? What are the units of meaning? How is the text organized? Are there any patterns or repetition? What is the structure and how is it communicated to the reader? What is emphasized or downplayed?

#### C. Information

What information is contained in this text? What’s the point? Summarize the thesis. What knowledge do you need to understand it? What are the key concepts? Are concepts



encounters,” created the small groups, met with partners, distributed books, facilitated class reading and learning, dealt with logistics (permission forms, etc.), and provided support on the day of the author visit.

We are fortunate to have good relationships with two wonderful partner organizations. [Island Readers and Writers](#) supplied copies of the book for students, teachers, and community members; helped organize the event; recruited and trained the community facilitators; and managed all costs, communication, and logistics related to the author visit. [Camp Beech Cliff](#) gave us a facility discount as we have no place big enough for everyone involved. They also provided staff support and made it possible for students to engage in cooperative games during the afternoon. Having the event off-site was extra special.

Community members recruited by Island Readers and Writers read the book, attended a facilitator training, and supported the Gallery Walk and small group discussions on the day of the author visit. Students were able to interact with scientists, librarians, business owners, and others.

Administrators arranged for food, transportation, and subs, liaised with the partner organizations, and communicated with parents. The district curriculum coordinator hosted work meetings with teachers from different schools and co-ran the event in partnership with the program director from Island Readers and Writers.

explained? What do the concepts mean? Are there any unusual or obscure terms?

#### **D. Writer**

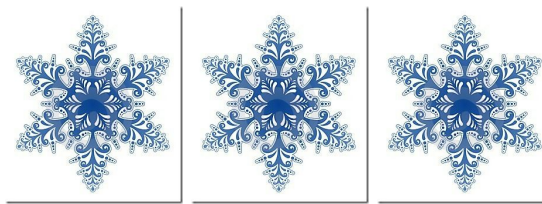
Who is the writer of this text? What does the text tell you about the author? What is the author’s attitude? If there are any claims, how are they supported? What evidence is provided? Is support (text/images) relevant, appropriate, and believable? Are opposing viewpoints acknowledged and/or explored? What assumptions underlay the argument?

#### **E. Reader**

Who is the intended reader of this text? What can you tell about the audience from this text? What is the reader supposed to take away from this text?

#### **F. Connections**

Describe the interaction of reader and writer. How does this text focus on and/or connect to the audience? How does the writer keep the reader engaged in the content? What action does the author expect the reader to take? What other related texts support the credibility, viability, and call-to-action of this document? What questions does this document raise?



## **Regular Meeting of the Secondary Reading Interest Group of the IRA**

July 18, 2015 from 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Room 105 – America’s Center Convention Complex, St. Louis, Missouri

### **MEETING MINUTES**

**Call to Order:** Julie Meltzer, President, convened the regular meeting of the Secondary Reading Interest Group of the IRA on July 18, 2015 at 3:00 p.m. in St. Louis, MO.

#### **Old Business**

Reports: The Treasurer’s report and the Secretary’s minutes of the May 2014 SRIG meeting were accepted and approved. Reports were made available for those interested.

Introduction of the 2014-2016 Officers:

- President – Julie Meltzer
- President Elect – Deb Franciosi
- Secretary – Kathy Galvin
- Treasurer – Rita Noon
- Past President – Kelly Gallagher

Students read and discussed the book in their English language arts classes during the first month of school. They completed character analyses, did repeated readings, discussed point of view and completed book-related projects to delve more deeply into the context and content of the book (Khmer Rouge, Mt. Katahdin, prep schools), and came prepared to the event. Students were assigned to small, cross school groups so they could meet others in a structured but informal way. They participated in a number of highly engaging activities such as a Gallery Walk where they shared opinions, a Four Corners Activity where they voted with their feet, and small group discussions where they developed questions for the author. They attended the author presentation and received signed copies of *Trouble*.

In this case, the author, Gary Schmidt, was a known entity who had been the featured author once before. His engaging style and forthright answers to questions were well-received by the students. He signed every book, chatting with each student individually.

### **Student Feedback**

Eighty percent of those who attended completed a feedback survey. Of those who responded, three out of four students rated the 8th grade read event as “fantastic” or “good” and 94% of respondents said that we should do an 8th grade Common Read for students next year. This was despite the fact that more than half said they either did not like to read or only sometimes liked to

### **New Business**

- The Exchange Newsletter
- Nonbinding referendum with regard to name change - SRIG name change request to ALIG – Adolescent Literacy Interest Group: Motion passed.
- Nonbinding referendum with regard to inclusion of Adult Literacy: Motion failed.
- Future website – status update
- Adolescent Literacy Thought Leader Award Nomination Forms shared with audience
- Introduction of the 2015 Adolescent Literacy Thought Leader Award recipients: Carol Jago, Doug Buehl, and Jeff Wilhelm

### **Close of Business**

#### **SRIG Session**

The two hour session focused on the 2015 recipients of the new Thought Leader in Adolescent Literacy Award: Carol Jago, Doug Buehl, and Jeffrey Wilhelm. Each spoke briefly on his/her current work, current thinking, and beliefs about what is important for educators to be thinking about in the field.

#### *Carol Jago – Making Learning Blissfully Productive*

Jago argued the digital world offers benefits but also pitfalls for education at all levels. Among the latter is the sheer amount of time young people invest in chatting online, playing video games and other digital diversions. Jago stated online gaming discourages students from reading deeply and analytically. To overcome that, Jago said educators must find ways to use the things that make gaming, texting, and Facebook so compelling to rethink their instructional methods and make school more meaningful. What makes gaming so compelling? Blissful productivity and hard, meaningful work; a reasonable hope of success; challenges that are within the student’s zone of proximal development; a sense of community; and epic meaning and inspiration. How can we make the student’s time in school blissfully productive? How can we bring individualization, interaction, and integration into our classroom? “Education isn’t something we do to students, it’s a journey we invite them to take with us through compelling texts.”

#### *Doug Buehl – Tracking Argumentation in Complex Disciplinary Texts*

Informative texts need to be perceived as more than just packed compendiums of “stuff”. Exploring the nature of argumentation, and how arguments are central to assembling, examining, questioning, and organizing disciplinary knowledge, is an essential component in studying a subject. Literacy practices that prompt and guide the analysis of argumentation can be especially valuable scaffolds for mentoring students in tracking and evaluating argumentation as they engage with comprehending informational texts. As students



read. Many said that talking about the book again, after discussing it so often in class, had pros and cons. Some activities got mixed reviews with some students enjoying the same activities that others did not care for.

#### Student comments:

*"I liked the fact that everyone could connect to the book. Getting a free book was so generous and nice. Getting the book signed was awesome too."*

*"My favorite part of the morning was...reading the book, the Gallery Walk and 4 Corners Activity, meeting new people who had read the same book, listening to Gary Schmidt's presentation."*

*"I would want more time to talk about what I thought of the book with the other eighth graders. Just some group time, with or without a facilitator, to talk about our favorite parts, twists that surprised us, parts we hated, favorite characters, etc."*

#### Conclusions

In general, the 8th grade Common Read experience got high marks and the vote is to continue the tradition. Teachers and students refer back to the book, another reason why doing it at the beginning of the year, a departure from prior practice, was powerful. The toughest part, quite frankly, was deciding on the book!

*Irvin, J., Meltzer, J., Dukes, M. (2007) Taking action on adolescent literacy; An implementation guide for school leaders. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.*

*Guidance for planning is available from the American Library Association (<http://www.ala.org/programming/sites/ala.org/programming/files/content/onebookk/files/onebookguide.pdf>).*

become increasingly knowledgeable in recognizing variations of argumentation in their study of disciplinary texts, they will in turn be increasingly prepared to use their learning to explain, interpret, conclude, generalize, theorize, and critique with well-reasoned justifications as speakers and writers. Understanding the nature of argumentation, and how arguments are developed and supported in different disciplines, is an essential component in studying a subject.

*Jeff Wilhelm* (not able to be present in person - see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKZS50tAlkA&feature=youtube>) Wilhelm discussed his most recent area of study called "Reading Unbound" about the power of pleasure and how it motivates reading. All research is reported and discussed in Reading Unbound: Why Kids Need to Read What They Want – And Why We Should Let Them. He explored the nature and variety of the pleasures avid adolescent readers gain from their out-of-school reading. These pleasures include: the immersive pleasure of play, work pleasure, inner work pleasure, intellectual pleasure, and social pleasure. These pleasures play out in particular ways in particular genres and provide very specific benefits to the student as a reader, learner, and person. Educators were encouraged to endorse and foster these pleasures with all texts, both inside and outside of school. Participants were also urged to make pleasure more central to their practice by: providing the opportunity for students to talk and share, giving students choice in what is read, and providing a context in which students can read a wide variety of genres.

*Panel Discussion* featuring Doug Buehl, Kelly Gallagher, and Carol Jago provided the audience an opportunity to further interact with panelists.

#### Drawing for Prizes

Adjournment: President Julie Meltzer adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Galvin, Secretary



