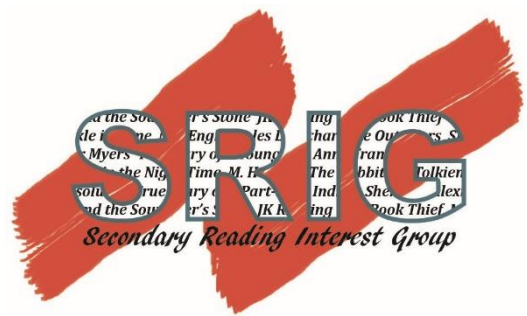


The Exchange

Spring 2017 Volume 29, Issue 2

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



Message from the SRIG President Debra Franciosi, Ed.D.

In Anticipation of ILA 2017 Orlando

Last fall, I wrote about how fast time is flying and the busy pace of our lives. That hasn't changed – it's amazing we're already well into the month of June! At this point, most educators across the country are breaking for well-deserved summer vacations. For many of us, the warmest months are a time to recoup our energy and reinvigorate our minds with some escapist as well as professional reading, and participate in professional development conferences, academies, and workshops.

This is also a time for reflecting on successes and challenges in our curricula, the growth of our students as learners, and our deepening experience as professional educators. Never far from our minds are the upcoming changes. In the fall, most of us will have new students, new lessons, etc. Potential changes in national education policy await budget negotiations and department (or court) decisions. My message from the fall remains the same: our Secondary Reading Interest Group members offer a wealth of experience and knowledge for each other as colleagues in adolescent literacy education.

As 2017 continues to unfold, the Secondary Reading Interest Group will offer more connectivity through social media (an ongoing goal for our leadership team), and high quality professional development opportunities through our newsletter and ILA SRIG conference session next month. In the fall, we introduced our Adolescent Thought Leader nominees for 2017. In this issue of *The Exchange*, read about our world-renowned nominees' on-going projects in adolescent literacy. Dr. Judith Irvin delves into content knowledge and comprehension, and Cris Tovani explores what it's going to take to keep our students from giving up.

Enjoy, and be sure to say hello when you attend our events (keep reading!) at the 2017 ILA conference in Orlando!

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ILA Preview: Adolescent Literacy Thought Leaders 2017

It's almost time for us to come together in celebration of our hard work as adolescent literacy educators! This year, we are thrilled to recognize the many contributions of two adolescent literacy greats: Judith Irvin and Cris Tovani. Keep reading for a preview of their thought-provoking presentations, scheduled for our **Secondary Reading Interest Group session on Sunday, July 16th in the Orlando Convention Center, Room W105B, from 3:00 – 5:00 PM.**

Come early, and enjoy an Afternoon Tea from 2:00 – 3:00 PM across the hall from our session (info below)!

Who do you think should be our next Adolescent Thought Leader award nominees? Use [this nomination form](#) on our website to share your thoughts!

The Role of Content Knowledge in Reading Comprehension

by Dr. Judith L. Irvin

Anyone who has attended one of my workshops over the past forty years knows Jim. I was introduced to Jim early in my career and happened to tape him struggling through a fifth grade *Reading Miscue Analysis* passage titled "Space Pet" (which was an excerpt from the short story "Feathered Friend" by Arthur Clarke). Jim was 15 years old at the time of the recording and in the 10th grade. True to *Miscue Analysis*, Jim read the story cold. The fact that he could not pronounce the word "canary" (the main character in the story) severely hampered his comprehension. He stumbled over "fors" and "froms" and other simple words. He was trying to make sense of this story using his limited phonetic ability (initial sounds of words) and sense of syntax (substituting the correct part of speech) and semantics (he was reading about peeps, whistles, feathers, and wings). When he finally got to page three, he pronounced "canary" – putting all of the clues together and became much more fluent. On the tape, you can even hear him mumble "that's what that dern word was."



As with most 10th graders, I suspect Jim wasn't all that interested in the Space Pet story. But he was not without interests. In a conversation with Jim, I discovered that he had a long-standing interest in guns, hunting, and being in the woods. Below is an excerpt from our conversation regarding the guns he and his dad had in their collection.

The Hawkins had a heavy barrel on it and really what that was good for was the mountain men always kept getting knocked off their horses by trees and stuff and the stocks kept breaking on them – or they would break a barrel or something. They had to have a gun heavy enough and sturdy enough to really go out and knock down some of this North American big game like grizzly and moose and stuff. And the little 45 caliber Kentuckian flintlock wasn't heavy enough. And it was too long to navigate through brush and thick undergrowth so they had to have a gun heavy enough and short enough to get the job done.

Given his struggling performance on “Space Pet,” I was curious to know how he would read a passage about a topic that he had high interest and high knowledge about. I found an excerpt from a code book about gun use in hunting. Here is a transcript of his reading which, by the way, is at the 12th grade level.

The legal weapon is a 12 gauge, 16 gauge, and 20 gauge shotgun loaded with spurs and a flintlock or percussion capped muzzle loader. This is a 44 caliber or larger load with a silver ball split or corrugated bullet (means like a minie ball). Only one deer may be taken by a person during a season and with a shotgun and it must be a buck with legal antlers.

The “means like a minie ball” was Jim’s addition to the reading, presumably to explain what he thought I did not know about the topic. He was right; I never heard about a minie ball. After I looked it up, however, I learned that it was named after its co-developer, Claude-Etienne Minie who also invented the Minie rifle. The development of the Minie ball was significant during the civil war because it was the first bullet that was small enough to be easily put down the barrel of a long gun. This interaction with Jim was my first experience as a young teacher with how much students knew about topics that rarely came up in a school setting. It is true, we teach the content we want kids to learn and rarely ask them what they know.

The role of content knowledge in reading comprehension is still a pertinent discussion today. Certainly, the essential ability to make inferences depends on content knowledge. In 1988, Donna Recht and Lauren Leslie conducted a study on the role of background information in reading comprehension. They separated a group of 7th and 8th graders into 4 groups as shown below in the table.

Group 1: High reading achievement and high knowledge of baseball	Group 2: High reading achievement and low knowledge about baseball
Group 3: Low reading achievement with high knowledge of baseball	Group 4: Low reading achievement with low knowledge of baseball

Predictability, Group 1 scored the highest on measures of comprehension and group 4 scored the lowest. A close second place, however went to group 3. These baseball savvy, but struggling readers, outperformed their peers who were stronger readers. Other researchers (such as Lemov, Driggs, & Woolway, 2016; Willingham, 2012) confirmed these findings. If you “know a lot about a topic, the text adds more knowledge and detail to your framework – easily and naturally deepening your understanding and building connections to existing knowledge while still leaving you enough processing capacity to be able to reflect on the nature of the ideas in the text” (Driggs, Lemov, & Woolway, 2016, p.2).

When Common Core was released with the associated instructional shifts, I embraced the standards and higher demands on student learning. The part that has always caused me some discomfort, however, was the insistence on having all kids read complex text. “Space Pet” was complex for Jim since he had so little interest and little knowledge about it. But the 12th grade code book posed no problem for him. So, what constitutes complex text? Common Core says that what makes a text

complex is the structure, the language, cohesion, or purpose. That's all well and good, but how do we help students understand complex text and build content knowledge?

Teachers are the key—not computers or YouTube or Twitter. I've seen teachers hand students a piece of text and offer little support in navigating the text. But that's not the norm anymore. Teachers at every level are learning to open the door to reading proficiency for students. In a world of increasing uncertainty and incivility, teachers continue to make the connections young people need to enduring ideals, thoughts, discoveries, and creative endeavors. Teachers cajole, convince, and care. They offer the world of knowledge and understanding; in return they expect students to learn and put their learning to good practice. Content knowledge is the foundation. Responsible citizenship is the purpose. Education is the key.

References

Driggs, C., Lemov, D., & Woolway, E. (2016). *Why background knowledge is crucial for literacy*. EdNext Podcast, March 16, 2016.

Lemov, D., Driggs, C. & Woolway, E. (2016). *Reading reconsidered: A practical guide to rigorous literacy instruction*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Recht, D. R. & Leslie, L. (1988). Effect of prior knowledge on good and poor readers' memory of text. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 80, 16-20.

Willingham D. (2012). *School time, knowledge, and reading comprehension.* Daniel Willingham (blog), March 7, 2012, <http://www.danielwillingham.com>

Keeping Kids from Quitting

by Cris Tovani

The last student of the day, Manny walks in, a junior with sagging pants and big brown eyes. After quickly surveying the room, his eyes look to the floor as he says, "Hi Miss."

"Hi, you must be Manny," I say.

"Ah huh, am I in trouble?"

I reassure him the best I can, "No, you're not in trouble. I just want to know a bit about you as a reader and writer so we can do a better job helping you with your reading and writing."

Manny, looks up and says, "Miss, it doesn't really matter if I can read and write. I'm not going to college."

"Well, that's ok," I say. "You don't have to go to college. Being able to read and write well will help you graduate."

"I doesn't matter if I graduate or not. I'm probably going to quit school and get a job."

Unfortunately, I hear this comment far too often. I'm obsessed trying to figure out how to keep kids from quitting—not just school but giving up on themselves as learners.



Fortunately, in Manny's building teachers aren't quitting. They want to raise graduation rates, and believe that developing a course for students to recoup credits and improve their literacy is a way to provide support. This is where I come in. I've been tasked to help them design a literacy course that is engaging, relevant and content based. Interviewing students to assess their interests and literacy strengths and needs will help me design an engaging course.

I learn that many are English language learners. Surprisingly, a good portion of them admit they are undocumented and have no hope of education after high school. Several say they once liked to read and write but when all the testing started, that changed. Some tell me they can read the words, but they don't know what to do when their mind wanders. Most tell me that school has little relevance to them and that quitting to get a job would be more beneficial.

What Else Can Teachers Do?

I'm kept awake at night thinking about student conversations of quitting. Classroom disengagement is a problem that I think teachers can mitigate. There are so many reasons adolescents quit school. The issue of relevance is one I recently tackled with my co-author Elizabeth Moje in *No More Telling as Teaching*. The cost of lecture-only approach to teaching isn't just bored teenagers but students who don't learn what they need and, because of that, they drop out and miss the opportunity to develop the skills and understandings that will give them more power in the world outside of school. In the book, I dig into the challenge of helping teachers re-engage kids who are tempted to quit by focusing on three different types of engagement: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. When classes go awry as they sometimes do, I reflect on these three types of engagement and ask myself a few questions that might help me meet more needs of students.

Behavioral engagement targets learners' sense of competence. Students who are behaviorally engaged participate. They know the behaviors that will help them succeed in academic situations. Behaviorally engaged students turn work in on time and apply strategies that enable them to persist when the going gets tough. They ask questions in class and volunteer their thinking.

- Are students disengaged because they don't know how to get unstuck?
- Do students need a model of process or product to get back on track?
- Do students need to see criteria of success to know they're on track?
- Do students know the systems and structures of the room?

Emotional engagement targets individuals' need to connect. Learning is sustained when students have connections to the teacher, their peers, and/or the topic. We cannot underestimate the influence that feelings and emotions have on students when it comes to learning. When we create a sense of belonging in our students to a community or project, students work harder and longer.

- Is the topic engaging or is it boring?
- Is the text interesting to students?
- Do students have opportunities to talk and collaborate with peers?
- Do students have a real audience to share their thinking with or is it just me, the teacher?

Cognitive engagement targets the need to know. When students are cognitively engaged, they see a purpose and a need to uncover information and master concepts. Cognitively engaged learners see how what they are learning is connected to the world outside school. They aren't doing the work for the grade but for the gratification of knowing. Cognitively engaged students are invested in their learning.

- Is the purpose for learning the material authentic?
- Do I need to get more feedback to inform my planning? What more can I find out about students that will help address their needs?
- Do students have time in class to cognitively engage in the reading, writing, and discussing or am I talking all period?

Reflecting on these types of engagement helps me get back on track so I can get students' learning back on track. When I anticipate and actively try to avoid student disengagement, my kids have more reasons to learn.

I look forward to meeting and sharing my new thinking with teachers at this summer's ILA conference. Manny's comment "I'm probably going to quit school and get a job," haunts me. Even if we don't all consider ourselves as activists, we have to work to actively engage our students. To me, that's what makes teaching joyful, purposeful work. I am excited for this year's conference to learn with participants about what we can do to re-engage learners before they quit. See you in July!

References:

Tovani, C. Moje E. (2017). *No More Telling as Teaching*. Portsmouth: NH Heinemann.

**International Literacy Association
2017 Annual Conference
Secondary Reading Interest Group
Membership Meeting &
Adolescent Thought Leader Awards
Sunday, July 16, 2017
3:00 – 5:00 PM
Orlando Convention Center
Room W105B**



SRIG Business

Thanks to the many people who paid their dues at the last ILA session, or have sent in their \$10 membership or used our new PayPal feature on the website (<http://www.secondaryreadinginterestgroup.com/>) since. We know that there are only a few months until the conference but it would be great if more folks would send in \$10 by check or through the website to make sure we are solvent! We will send you the Newsletter anyway and we ARE in a year of transition as ILA is, but it would be great to confirm a big number of paid members going into the July conference. THANKS!

An email went out to current and past members in an attempt to update and clean the list. The content of that email is included here.

Thanks for your patience while we figured out how to set up a PayPal account, reconfigured SRIG webpage, and changed bank accounts. This is a transition year. We expect that ILA will be making changes that will allow co-registration in Interest Groups and Affiliates when people join or renew but that is still a year or so off in the future. In the meantime....

- IF you did renew at the SRIG session, you are all set. We have your info and we know you are paid up! Thank you!
- IF you did NOT renew at the SRIG session, and would like to renew, please go to the [SRIG website](#) and complete the form so our membership records are accurate. Please use PayPal or send a check as indicated. Thank you!
- IF you want to JOIN, please go to [our website](#) and fill out the form and use PayPal or send a check as indicated. Thank you!

Dues keep things going! Expenses associated with a SRIG session or the website or to thank people for their service or to purchase the plaques for the Adolescent Literacy Thought Leader Awards. At \$10/per year it is a bargain! You get to be part of a network of likeminded professionals, support the work of the SRIG and get all communication related to the SRIG, two newsletters, etc., plus access to resources, etc. Remember, you have to be an ILA member to be a member of the SRIG.

Please share information about ILA and the SRIG with adolescent literacy students and professionals you know, and encourage them to join. A membership form is included at the end of this issue of *The Exchange*.

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Reflections from a High School Writing Intervention Teacher

by Rebecca Leamon

The following excerpt is from the article “What is Working and Why? Insights from a High School Writing Interventionist in the Age of Proficiency-Based Diplomas” which will appear in this summer’s *Journal of Maine Education*.

As I contemplate my work this year, I realize that my strongest role is that of a “supportive aunt,” removed enough to speak the truth, but caring enough to help address the situation. I’m not grading anything, I’m not assigning anything, but I have deep knowledge of the subject matter and the reality of the standards, teacher expectations, and students’ work habits and struggles. I call students on their bluffs or evasions, and I also encourage communication, suggest ways to catch up on missing work, and celebrate successes in a personal, direct way. This kind of interface is especially useful for students who don’t have the skills or the family support to advocate for themselves. I end up modeling ways to “do school” that many of our struggling students have never learned. For most of these students, education is not yet the conversation and process that proficiency-based education visualizes and demands. However, as one system-savvy adult working with a small pool of students, I can be encouraging but also insistent that students take the steps necessary to improve their own self-advocacy skills and work habits as well as their literacy and communication skills.

Rebecca Leamon is a Writing Intervention Teacher at Mt Desert Island High School in Bar Harbor, ME.

AR³C: A Strategy for High Level Thinking by Debra Franciosi

Have you ever heard a speaker talk about something that resonates? If you're like me, when that happens, I'm inspired to fill my graph paper notebook with ideas. Sometimes they are direct applications of what's offered. More often, the speaker's ideas are a launchpad for new ways to approach teaching and learning. After listening to Rick Wormeli speak at a local in-service about higher level thinking, I sat down with a colleague and developed a process called AR³C that incorporates close reading, discussion, collaboration, ranking, comparison, and evaluation skills. The acronym stands for Analyze – Rank – Rationale – (re)Rank – Compare. When I developed this strategy, teachers were the students. The feedback received from several classes tells me I'm on to something, and so I offer you this practical, higher level thinking process as a learning activity for your secondary classrooms.

In using this in sessions where students were exploring new content, I found that the learners picked up the process quickly, engaged with each other and the content, had focused and lively discussions, and constructed their own understandings. Each participating teacher agreed that the process is well within the realm of adolescents' capabilities, allows each learner to approach the content from their own starting point, provides students with the benefits of what I call +Group Think (contrary to "pack mentality", +Group Think capitalized on group members planting the seeds of ideas that, through peer discussion and deliberation, nourish everyone's growth in learning).

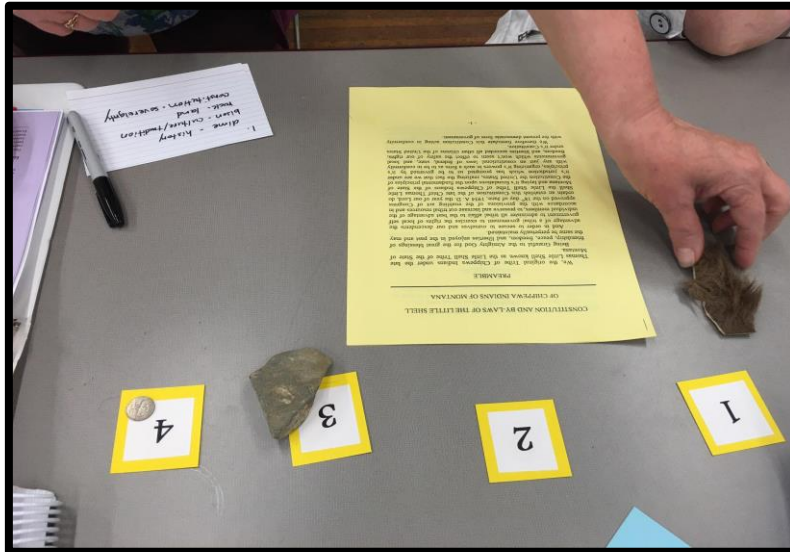
The AR³C process is as follows:

Learners are given a small collection of related artifacts and a set of numbered cards. The artifacts can be objects, text passages, video snippets, etc. What you choose as the facilitator of learning is important; ideally, you want students to discover new ideas for themselves.

Implementation notes: As part of a study of a landless and federally unrecognized tribe of Native Americans in Montana, the Little Shell Chippewa, the artifacts are meant to direct thinking toward the concept of sovereignty for Native Americans in general, and the Little Shell in particular. Everyone read a brief overview article that provides historical and cultural background on the tribe. Each group of students received a set of artifacts which included a dime (the Ten Cent Treaty), a rock (the reserved land, tribal homeland, place, and recognition that comes with land ownership), a piece of buffalo hide (the past, as well as the role of buffalo in the tribe's survival), and a copy of the Little Shell Constitution.

1. Analyze. Students examine each artifact by reading, observing, and thinking about the symbolism and relationships between and among them. This can be done independently with some form of notetaking that is then taken to group discussion, or the whole group can work together to analyze each artifact.
2. Rank. This is another opportunity for the teacher to direct student discovery. Students are asked to rank each artifact according to a particular perspective or through a specific lens. Again, individuals can do this alone first, but the group must come to consensus regarding the rank of each artifact. At this point, students put the numbered cards in order (1 to 4), and placed each artifact next to its corresponding rank. This helps make the students' thinking visible. On a piece of paper, each student records the rank order of each artifact.

Implementation notes: In the Little Shell lesson, students were asked to rank the artifacts in order of significance from the perspective of the Little Shell tribe members. Note that the directions for ranking (order of significance) are intentionally vague; there is no right answer here – the power is in the thinking the students do. The students will bring their own biases to the process, and this makes for engaging discussion. In the case of the classes who completed this AR³C, several students were themselves tribal members who brought thoughtful insights to the group discussions.



3. Rationale. Discussion and writing clarify thinking, so it's important not to skip this step. As a group, the students must provide a written rationale for the rank placement of each artifact. Each student must understand and be able to communicate the rationale to the broader group. The teacher cycles through the groups, encouraging thoughtful discussion and clear rationale development. This is an opportunity to assess student thinking through probing questions and prompts (e.g., "Tell me more about why you think..."). Once each group commits their ideas to paper, each group shares their rank order and rationale. Other groups can ask questions to clarify ideas. You may choose to have students record the rationale of the other groups using an appropriate focus strategy. Often, groups with stronger ideas will want to go first; during this round, that is fine – other students have peer models with which they can frame their own responses (but they cannot change their rankings, as they've committed them to paper!).

Implementation notes: Students were encouraged to use specific vocabulary as they gave their rationale. In our study of Native Americans, sovereignty, treaties, values and cultural priorities, historical perspective and natural resources surface repeatedly.

4. (re)Rank. After groups share, it's time to revisit the artifacts – this time from another perspective or lens. The students have to think through what the artifacts mean from a different angle and provide their rationale. Again, they commit their group ideas to paper and all students must understand and be able to communicate these ideas. During sharing this time, reverse the group presentation order to allow reluctant students the opportunity to express their ideas first.

Implementation notes: In this second round, students were asked to rank the significance of the artifacts from the perspective of the U.S. government. For some groups, the order of the artifacts remained the same, while the rationale changed.

5. Compare. Using a comparison strategy (e.g., Venn Diagram), students compare the results of the two rounds of rankings. Where is there overlap? What does that tell you about the two perspectives/lenses? After discussion and brainstorming, individual students then take that information and write a brief summary of their findings.

At the end of every major activity set in the course, students are asked to reflect on both the content (tribes of Montana) and process (the learning strategies used to comprehend content). Participants had a good sense of the issue of Little Shell sovereignty – a complicated issue! – and the AR³C strategy as a means to explore content.

In the Project CRISS & Indian Education for All classes in which it was piloted, the participants spent many hours building a toolbox of strategies for close reading, writing, and discussion; at this point in the course, suggestions were made, but students chose the strategies with which they wanted to read the content.

With literacy standards which expect the development of student comprehension of multiple perspectives, AR³C provides a structured process and small groups in which students can explore ideas beyond their own. AR³C allows for significant differentiation, language and vocabulary practice, writing, and collaboration beyond the initial reading and analysis of the artifacts. Students processed the information deeply and developed new understanding as a result.

Deb Franciosi, Ed.D., is Director of Empower Lifelong Learning, Project CRISS and the President SRIG

ILA Institute on Friday, July 14

Blending Inquiry and Literacy: Engaging Students While Improving Literacy and Learning in Grades 6-12

We are very excited that the SRIG will be sponsoring the Adolescent Literacy Pre-Con Institute on Friday, July 14. We have an exciting program planned focused on Literacy and Inquiry with interactive keynotes from **Carol Jago** and **Marcelle Haddix** and workshops and presentations from professional developers Debra Franciosi (Project CRISS) and Joan Sedita (Keys to Literacy), secondary literacy coaches Terry McHugh and Julie Scullen, and three practicing middle and high school teachers, Kate Meyer, Amy Philbrook and Liz Rabasca.

We know that inquiry engages middle and high school students and deepens learning. Coaching literacy within the high motivation context of inquiry can be a win-win. The two combined create a strong instructional model that supports effective differentiation.

[Here's a link to the institute program.](#)

We hope you will join us in Orlando to learn practical strategies for embedding inquiry and literacy learning consistently throughout the curriculum as well as how to design and implement larger inquiry projects while coaching literacy development along the way.

Sunday Afternoon Tea



Join us!

Sunday, July 16th

2:00 – 3:00 PM

Room OCCC -109A

(across the hall from our SRIG session in W105B)

If you've ever been to a national conference, you know that finding a snack to fuel your brain can be a challenge. Before our Secondary Reading Interest Group session, relax, enjoy some free food and beverages, and then join us for the Adolescent Literacy Thought Leader Awards with Judith Irvin and Cris Tovani! SRIG membership is NOT required, but it IS encouraged 😊

This Afternoon Tea is sponsored by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

The Secondary Reading Interest Group is YOUR professional learning network for adolescent literacy practice and issues. Contact us with ideas, questions, and contributions to share with your peers!

<http://www.secondaryreadinginterestgroup.com/>

dfranciosi@projectcriss.com



Secondary Reading Interest Group of the International Literacy Association

Membership Form

Name _____ Today's Date _____

Position _____

Institution _____

Email _____

Mailing address _____

ILA Membership Number _____

Please send completed form with a check for \$10 made out to Secondary Reading Interest Group to Julie Meltzer, PO Box 151, Bass Harbor, ME 04653. Thanks!



Canadian Network of IRA Councils (CNIRAC)
&
Canadian Special Interest Group (C-SIG)



You are cordially invited to
The 19th Annual Canadian Reception



at the 62nd Annual Conference of the
International Literacy Association

Friday, July 14, 2017
6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Plaza International Ballroom D & E
The Hyatt Regency Orlando Hotel
9801 International Blvd.
Orlando FL 32819



Light Refreshments & Cash Bar

Sponsored by:

Canadian Provincial Associations and Local Reading Councils

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**Canadian Network of IRA Reading Councils (CNIRAC)
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Secondary Reading Special Interest Group (SRIG)**

*****CNIRAC AGM to Follow*****

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&
THE LEADER AWARDS RECEPTION**