Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the 67th Annual Conference of the Literacy Research Association. For those of you attending the LRA conference for the first time, I encourage you to explore the range of opportunities available this week. I want to draw your attention first to some major events you will not want to miss:

- On Wednesday, November 29 at 4:45 p.m., be sure to attend the annual Presidential Address. **LRA President Rebecca Rogers** will present “Literacy Research, Racial Consciousness, and Equitable Flows of Knowledge,” and following her talk, she invites you to join her at the Presidential Reception, which will be held waterside, on the patio.

- Mark your Thursday morning schedule for the annual Oscar S. Causey Address, to be given by last year’s winner, **Kris Gutiérrez**. We will also learn the new winner of the prestigious Oscar S. Causey Award, which is given every year for outstanding contributions to reading research.

- The Annual Integrative Research Review will be presented during the Thursday afternoon plenary time. **Judy Lysaker**’s address, “Expanding Meaningfulness in Literacy Research: Possibilities of a Relational Perspective,” is sure to be both engaging and informative. Longtime attendees will notice the schedule change, as this address is typically given on Saturday morning.

- On Friday afternoon, you will all want to join me in welcoming **Anna Stetsenko** to our conference. Her plenary address, “Infinite Potential: Disrupting Inequality in Education and Beyond,” will undoubtedly give us much to think and talk about this week and well into the future.

- The Distinguished Scholar Lifetime Achievement Award will be presented on Saturday morning at our final plenary session. This year’s recipient, **Shirley Brice Heath**, will present “Challenge, Creativity, and Curiosity: A Mix Made for Minds Across the Age Spans.”

First-time attendees and doctoral students are also warmly invited to wake up early on Thursday morning and attend the **Newcomers' & Graduate Students' Breakfast**, sponsored by the LRA Field Council. This is an excellent opportunity to meet other attendees, chat with LRA leaders, learn more about the organization and how you might become more involved, and have breakfast on us. Doctoral students should check the schedule for the many opportunities offered by the Doctoral Student Innovative Community Group, including a happy hour on Friday evening.

At the heart of our program is the vast array of research to be presented during concurrent session times. I want to thank the Area Chairs, reviewers, and all of you who submitted proposals for this year’s conference. The accepted sessions represent a range of topics,
theories, and methodologies. I invite all participants to join me in a concerted effort this year to seek out perspectives that are unfamiliar to you or that offer contrasting possibilities. Then let’s have robust and productive discussions of difference over lunch, coffee, and especially during Vital Issues, a casual gathering each evening in the hotel lobby bar.

Saturday morning’s concurrent session time (8:45-10:15) is devoted this year to informational and professional development opportunities. Be sure to check the schedule for some really useful presentations, several of which are intended to help mentor newer scholars, for instance, proposal writing and reviewing, planning and presenting scholarly talks, and publishing from your dissertation. There are also several policy-related sessions that will be of interest to a wide range of attendees.

Across the week, consider joining a Study Group or visiting the meetings of one of our Innovative Community Groups (ICG’s).

Plan to attend this year’s Town Hall Meeting on Thursday evening. We invite you to bring to the LRA community the issues you find significant. This is a time for members to guide the discussion and ask questions, and although traditionally, LRA elected leaders do not participate (or answer questions during this time), your perspectives are heard and are taken up in ongoing and future discussions. Also, please attend the Annual LRA Business Meeting on Friday evening. Your participation in the governance of the organization is vital to its future.

I am indebted to so many people who have helped plan and support the development of this conference. First, I would like to thank the Area Chairs for the countless hours devoted to the review process. I thank Conference Co-Chair, Marcelle Haddix, for her assistance across the year, and I also thank Rebecca Rogers for mentoring me in the process last year, as well as Pat Enciso. Gwen McMillon, LRA Treasurer, is a wise and consistent source of guidance. I owe a lot to all of the Past Presidents for their wisdom, and in particular for this year, Janice Almasi and Arlette Willis. We are all indebted to Jerry Harste for the beautiful and meaningful cover art. I thank our headquarters staff at KWMG, especially Lynn Hupp, Briana Melnick, and Lyndsay Nicholson. University of South Florida’s Danielle Dennis, Jim King, Janet Richards, and Jenifer Schneider were a great help with local arrangements. I have appreciated this year the support of my former colleagues at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and my new colleagues at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. I thank friends who have given me sound advice, reassured me, and most of all, made me laugh a lot this year, particularly Peter Johnston. I also count among those keeping me sane and energized my current doctoral advisees—Greg Bartley and Hannah Graham, and former doctoral students now out blazing trails—Erin Quast and Brooke Ward.

This year’s conference theme, Literacy Research for Expanding Meaningfulness, was inspired by research I have been involved in during the past few years that centralizes the idea that literacy and literate practices take on new meaning when people come to experience them as tools to enrich their lives and relationships. Engagement in literacy and with others potentially changes the nature and consequences of learning, the landscape of teaching, and perhaps even how we
assess these things. I think, though, we still have quite a bit to learn about this. I hope this week’s events help to fuel our thinking, and that new questions begin to take shape.

Sincerely,

Gay Ivey
University of North-Carolina-Greensboro
LRA President-Elect and 2017 Conference Chair