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Biography:

Sharon Walpole, PhD. is Professor in University of Delaware's School of Education and Director of the Professional Development Center for Educators. She earned the International Literacy Association's Jerry Johns Outstanding Teacher Educator in Reading award in 2018, the University of Delaware's Excellence in Teaching Award in 2016, and the National Reading Conference Early Career Achievement Award in 2007.

Her research on literacy coaching, on professional learning for teachers, and on design of flexible interventions for students who struggle is published in 10 books and 50 book chapters and articles. Her research has earned funding from the US Department of Education and the Institute of Education Sciences. She is the author of *Bookworms K-5 Reading and Writing*, an open education resource published by the nonprofit Open Up Resources and offered to teachers for free. She designs and provides direct support for teachers and leaders in schools whose students struggle in reading and writing.

Candidate Statement:

The core work of LRA is the support of its members as they pursue their scholarly interests. LRA has been my academic home since my first presentation as a graduate student in 1995. LRA is where I first linked faces to names, engaged with national colleagues, and brought my students in to broader academic circles. I want my students to do the same. To ensure that, as an organization, we must strive for theoretical and methodological rigor and inclusiveness.

I am currently Professor in Education and Human Development at University of Delaware and Director of its Professional Development Center for Educators. My Center colleagues and I provide direct service to schools. I have a cognitive orientation to literacy development and a pragmatic orientation to instructional design and to work with teachers.

I have had many collaborative relationships with LRA members. I was a graduate assistant at CIERA, working with senior scholars to understand the instruction of successful teachers. I designed professional learning for Reading Excellence Act, Reading First, and Striving Readers. I have reviewed for IES, and I am currently on the editorial boards of *Reading Teacher*, *Reading Research Quarterly*, and *Elementary School Journal*. I have studied the effects of literacy coaching on teaching and learning and the implementation of tiered instruction on achievement. In 2018 I was named the ILA Jerry Johns Outstanding Teacher Educator in Reading.

Our nation's schools can perpetuate inequities by denying excellent instruction to children whose families are poor. I have decided to battle inequities that leave teachers with outdated resources and prevent students from reading real children's literature. My most recent work, begun with my late colleague Mike McKenna, is the design of a full OER for elementary reading and writing. In a partnership



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with the nonprofit Open Up Resources, I have released a full curriculum, complete with lesson plans, for free. Bookworms K-5 Reading and Writing is important here as evidence of two things: my equity orientation and my interpretation of evidence-based reading and writing instruction nested in high-quality, engaging children's literature. The original Bookworms district in Delaware, Seaford School District, has realized important equity outcomes and been featured in a recent podcast by EdTrust. Students learning English, students with disabilities, students living in poverty, and African American students have all outperformed others in the state. Instruction matters. We can and must collaborate to support the work of teachers and improve the achievement of students, especially those consistently underserved.

Literacy advocacy is always political. Many LRA members want the organization to engage in political action. But we are a wonderfully diverse group, and forcing us to agree on political stances might be counterproductive. To me, the best way for LRA to influence literacy policy is to increase the quality and utility of our varied and individual research efforts, using the conference itself to sharpen and share ideas, forge collaborations, and push theoretical boundaries. I believe students and their families need the best of all of us if teachers are to provide school experiences that foster a healthy democratic society.

I have been saddened by the current "new" focus on beginning reading in the popular press and with the The Reading League's advocacy for evidence-based practice. I see the work of both groups as falling squarely within LRA's mission. We are teacher educators who must continue to ensure that students in our teacher preparation programs are prepared to teach foundational skills and access challenging standards with strong pedagogies. We are also applied researchers who should be leading efforts to contextualize and extend the range of evidence-based practices within diverse communities and across the lifespan. While our most recent conference program had almost no sessions focused on beginning reading, the national discussion of the need for teachers to have better understanding of it was raging.

Election as Vice President is acceptance of four years of intense service. I understand the commitment because I have participated over time. I have served on committees (Technology, Early Career Achievement, Field Council, and Oscar Causey). I have worked in the proposal review process as Area Co-chair for Policy and Assessment. I earned the Early Career Achievement Award in 2007 and was the invited speaker for the Integrative Research Review in 2008. I was elected to the Board of Directors in 2014. I have seen improvements to our Bylaws, policies and procedures, website, and management company first hand. I have supported formalized support for newcomers and doctoral students, collaborative spaces for policy discussions, and direct support for scholars of color. We need to continue those initiatives, but we still have a long way to go. In our most recent conference, I co-sponsored a Saturday-Sunday Research to Practice Forum, inviting LRA members and school and district professionals to actually talk about barriers to applied research and to propose potential solutions.

The Vice President you elect will be conference chair eventually. If it is me, I will push for quality. I support opportunities to present works in progress, as posters, so that we can restrict paper sessions to finished projects, as our call for proposals requires. I would also like to see the return of a wide variety of theoretical and research methodology sessions, so that we can all leave the conference with new

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ways of thinking and new methodological tools. To me, the conference theme should always be the same: What did you learn last year that will make us better researchers and teacher educators? Perhaps that seems simplistic, and it may not make for a good cover for the conference program, but it pushes back on hasty work designed to link to a conference theme that has just been announced. My own best work is years in the making; it may or may not link to the theme. If I am elected, any actions I take will be influenced by a commitment to fiduciary responsibility for the organization and a bias toward demanding that the conference be a venue to share high quality research of all kinds.