

I am honored to be nominated to be Vice-President of the Literacy Research Association. I am excited at the possibility of drawing on my research and involvement with NRC/LRA and other professional organizations that are devoted to understanding literacy development.

I am the Margaret Cowan Chair of Education and Associate Dean for Research at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College. I received my BA from Oberlin College, was certified as an elementary school teacher at Temple University and spent five years in primary grade classrooms. I received my EdD from Harvard's Graduate School of Education. I have been on the faculty of several universities and spent eight years at a not-for-profit organization where my colleagues provided technical assistance to Head Start programs.

Throughout my career, I have been devoted to helping ensure that all children receive classroom instruction that sets them on a pathway to becoming successful readers and writers. I have focused on the early childhood years and programs that serve families that are dependent on schools to supply the knowledge and skills their children need for success in our technological world.

My first major study was a longitudinal investigation with Catherine Snow in which we sought to identify home and classroom experiences that lead to academic success among children from low-income homes. We believed that support for academic language in the years prior to formal schooling would be associated with enhanced long-term improvement in language and reading comprehension. That is what we found. I led our investigation of classrooms, the first study to chronicle in detail language interactions in classrooms and relate them to later development. Analyzing hundreds of hours of transcripts I was disheartened to find a lack of intellectual or linguistic stimulation. That realization challenged me to develop methods of describing classroom language environments, and developing effective and efficient ways of improving them. Also, our evidence of the impact of language on early reading encouraged me to understand more fully the connections between language and literacy development.

Throughout my career, I have sought to devise methods of helping teachers provide the engaging educational experiences that enable children to thrive. I led the first large-scale effort to deliver literacy-related professional development to preschool teachers. Later, with Judith Schickendanz, I co-authored a preschool curriculum that Debbie Rowe and I implemented as part of a highly successful Early Reading First project. More recently, I have developed methods that preschool teachers can use to teach vocabulary through book reading, games and music. I am also helping to devise an e-book that will encourage conversations between parents and young children. Finally, with other colleagues, I am in a University-school collaboration in which we are attempting to identify the sources of low reading comprehension in a primary grade school that serves immigrant families.

I have contributed to policy-driven initiatives to enhance the quality of education. I played a key role on the team that developed the Early Childhood Generalist certificate of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the first NBPTS certificate offered. When NAEYC developed its new accreditation system and program standards, I chaired the Curriculum

subcommittee. Also, over five years I led the development of a bilingual Arabic-English preschool and a primary grade school in Abu Dhabi.

I have over 100 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, I co-edited three volumes of *The Handbook of Early Literacy Research*, and edited or co-authored three other books. I have served on the editorial boards of *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Child Development*, and the *Journal of Educational Psychology* and review for many journals. I am a member of AERA, SSSR, SRCD and NAEYC in addition to LRA. I am a long-time member of NRC and LRA. I co-edited the *NRC Yearbook* in 2007, 2008 and 2009, I have delivered 15 papers at conferences and my students have attend LRA and deliver papers.

POSITION STATEMENT

Children in families that face challenges associated with poverty and marginalization due to race, ethnicity and home language are reliant on schools to provide them access to the knowledge and skills required for success in our technological society. There are many organizations for professionals interested in education, several of which focus on literacy, but LRA is unique. As stated on our website, “We advocate research-informed *improvements in education*. We seek engagement with high-quality *research* and discussions of important *theoretical, methodological, practice and policy issues*.” Many of us have been classroom teachers, many are dedicated to helping children learn to read and write, and many train teachers to build children’s literacy skills. We are passionate about the need to create classrooms in which all children can learn. Our members are a unique constellation of professionals with applied experience, research expertise, and passion to improve education for all children.

I call us to attend more fully to reporting and discussing the practical and policy-related issues associated with school-based instruction. I would strive to spark collaborative discussions about research that examines pedagogy that draws on children’s cultural and linguistic funds of knowledge; that enriches children’s spirits and pride in their culture; and that results in measurable gains in reading and writing skills and academic knowledge. If elected, I would encourage us to ask questions such as, “How can we draw on community funds of knowledge to foster literacy growth when our classrooms include children from diverse language backgrounds?” “What are metrics for describing our effects?” “How might these methods be implemented in other classrooms and communities?” “What evidence do we have that could be persuasive to policy makers?” “How do we prepare students from privileged, homogenous backgrounds to be effective in such classrooms?”

I would join you as a Vice-President who is eager to understand better the research of our members, to engage in examinations of current programs and initiatives, to continue efforts to support scholars from diverse backgrounds, and to pursue new initiatives if needed. I would foreground LRA’s commitment to high quality research conducted using multiple methodologies that addresses theoretical, applied, and policy-relevant issues related to literacy development and literacy instruction in pre-k to grade12 schools.