

Candidate Statement – Jennifer Jones Powell

Throughout my career, NRC/LRA has nurtured and enriched my professional life and relationships. It is certainly our field's flagship organization for timely, cutting-edge scholarship. But, to me, it is more. It is a vibrant intellectual community that facilitates collaboration and learning and that connects me with my research colleagues and friends. It is also a professional organization where many seasoned scholars give generously of their time and insights to mentor doctoral students and new scholars. Inspired by their example, I have tried to emulate that graciousness and selfless service to the organization.

Service to LRA

During my 16 years as a member of NRC/LRA, I have been privileged to accept diverse opportunities to serve the organization, which I believe has prepared me for this nomination. Within LRA, I have followed an evolutionary path of increasing responsibility and leadership experience, which has taught me the importance of collegial collaboration and thoughtful innovation.

Like many LRA members, I started as a reviewer for the conference program. It impressed on me the breadth and depth of theoretical and methodological diversity within the organization, a respect for that diversity, and the need for rigor and ethical responsibility in conducting and reporting research. Those insights were amplified when I was appointed Co-Area Chair for the Literacy Instruction and Literacy strand (2008-2010) with the responsibility for managing the review process.

I also served on the Field Council (2009 – 2011), a role which focused on recruitment, retention and reclamation of membership. In this setting, I worked with diverse LRA colleagues with various interests.

From 2011-2014, I again advanced to a leadership role with an appointment to serve as Chair of the Field Council. The Field Council was an active team during these years, and we accomplished much. Responsibilities included organizing/hosting the annual Newcomers' Breakfast. I also spearheaded the development of a new LRA Lunch/Dinner Hosts program during the conference, which matched new and seasoned members for informal interactions over meals. Under my direction, Field Council created new documents for the LRA website. Finally, Vital Issues, a long, but dormant, conference tradition, was revitalized via Field Council.

Currently (2016-2019), I serve as Chair of the Albert J. Kingston Committee, which recognizes individuals who exhibit distinguished service to the LRA. I collaborate with committee members to seek nominations, organize the review process, and introduce award recipients at plenary sessions.

Looking Ahead: Ideas and Contributions to LRA's Future

Fortified by my wide range of experiences within the organization and my commitment to its mission, I readily embrace the opportunity and challenge to serve on the Board of Directors. My anchor is a firm belief in and commitment to our organizational identity, eloquently expressed in the operative phrases of our mission statement: *"promoting research that enriches the knowledge, understanding, and . . . in a multicultural and multilingual world . . ."* and supporting *"the next generation of scholars . . ."* with a commitment to *"ethical, rigorous, methodologically diverse and socially responsible research."* We need to know clearly who we most fundamentally are to forge a path to the future.

With these goals as guiding principles, I would support existing LRA initiatives that instantiate them such as the STAR mentoring program, the Doc Student ICG, the Field Council, to name a few.

Yet, LRA is poised to expand and further explore new, innovative ways to support our members. LRA has taken important steps toward embracing socio-cultural diversity, but there is always work to do. We must not retreat from that progress, and build thoughtfully and strategically on it. But, I advocate for some organizational re-centering in regard to *diversity of thought*. How do our actions and conference programs reflect diversity in regard to theoretical, methodological, practical and policy-oriented matters? What types of literacy content are now missing? Whose research no longer has a home or voice in our organization?

I am committed to open, purposeful, and respectful dialogue and discussion that includes all perspectives. Communication and uninhibited expression is key to positive change. But, conversations must also include the stakeholders we serve: practitioners, education leaders, policy makers. In doing so, we remain relevant, connected and embrace a lens in which to view the future. LRA must include all voices, even those with whom we disagree. We must be ever vigilant to prevent the development of silos, echo chambers, and camps.

Finally, our LRA identity statement showcases a commitment to advocacy for research-informed improvements in education. I am committed to advocacy through our research for those most closely aligned with practice including teachers and our members from smaller institutions whose work is more directly connected to practice. We must use our voices as scholars to speak in ways relevant to their worlds.

Affiliation & Accomplishments

I currently serve as program leader and Professor of Literacy Education at Radford University (RU). At RU, I serve with a team of colleagues dedicated to high quality teacher- and literacy professional education. However, I am proud of my success in engaging in and making substantive contributions to research. For example, I have served as co-director of numerous competitive grants. I have published in *Reading Research Quarterly* and *The Reading Teacher*,

and have co-authored books and book chapters focused on literacy practice. Through these scholarly activities, I regularly learn alongside and collaborate with teachers and leaders.

My research interests reflect my institutional calling to translate research into practice. My research is collaborative, addressing areas such as core reading programs/comprehension, literacy leadership within systems such as RTI/MTSS, and interdisciplinary literacy. Reflecting my translational role, I recently served on the International Literacy Association Revised Standards 2017 Project (assessment strand).

Final Statement

LRA holds great promise as we move into the future. In remaining true to our rich research roots, our support for emerging scholars, providing spaces for open dialogue, and embracing diversity of theoretical, methodological and practical thought, we will rise to even greater heights. I humbly welcome this opportunity to give back to the organization that has given so much to me.