NRC President’s Report

Peter Mosenthal
Syracuse University
Syracuse, NY

... like gazing at a Flemish tapestry with the wrong side out; even though the figures are visible, they are full of threads that obscure the view and are not bright and smooth as when seen from the other side.

–Cervantes, Don Quixote

Dear NRC Colleagues,

Just when we have finished December’s NRC conference, we must flip the tapestry and think of Side II: NRC at San Antonio, Texas. Indeed, for most of us, that doesn’t leave much time to rethink our research, conceptualize bold new studies, clear Institutional Review Board requirements, meticulously conduct observations, cull data, discern those tricky trends and patterns, put it all together into a new NRC proposal format, and have the perfect proposal postmarked by February 9, 2001.

No doubt, with that short of a time frame, there will be a few loose threads here and there in the process. But wayward threads aside, hopefully “the figures” will still be visible for the reviewers to discern. And then again, we have until December 2001 to recraft our work so that the right side of our research shows when it comes time to present. (In this vein, I’m reminded of one of the reviews that I received several years ago when my proposal was written with greater emphasis on haste than on data: “Your proposal is both good and original, but the part that is good is not original and the part that is original is not good.” A second reviewer’s comment was, “Nothing should permit this proposal, least of all space!”)

Highlights From the December Board Meeting: Looking to the Future

With the close of Karen Wixson and Sheila Valencia’s superb Review of Research address on Saturday, the Executive Board, the Board of Directors, and the Committee Chairs assembled in the Arizona afternoon to contemplate not the discernible tapestry of NRC’s past 50 years but rather the tapestry of the “future 50.” Indeed, far out, everyone found many more threads than “visible figures.” Closer to home, however, numerous ideas for modernizing NRC were discussed. Among the ideas contemplated were the following:

• Redefine the six Award Committees (i.e., the Oscar Causey, Albert J. Kingston, Early Career, Student Research, Ed Fry Book Award, and the new Distinguished Scholar Award) as service committees to be headed by members who are not current NRC Board Members (these members do not hold voting privileges) but whose membership is limited to ensure timely response;
• Redefine the Publications, Technology, and Field Council Committees as standing committees wherein the Chair of each has voting privileges but whose membership is limited to ensure timely response;
• Open up membership in the Publications, Technology, and Field Council Committees to anyone who is interested in participating to ensure the broadest representation possible within the organization;
• Disentangle the Newcomer/

Welcome Committee from the Field Council Committee and the Diversity Committee from the Multicultural Committee so that the roles of these different committees are streamlined and made more precise;
• Turn existing advisory committees (including International, Multicultural, Diversity, Newcomers/Welcome, Policy and Legislative, Ethics, and Long Range Planning) into Special Interest Groups (SIGs) (again open to all NRC members interested in participating), whose Chairs would not have voting privileges but who would attend Board Meetings in an advisory capacity;
• Create a set of procedures for creating new SIGs depending upon the interests of NRC members so that all concerns are duly represented at Board Meetings;
• Post all Board Minutes on the web so that the NRC membership can see exactly what progress (if any) is being made at the Board level;
• Develop a set of procedures whereby NRC moves from being “reactive” to issues and becomes much more strategically “proactive”; and
• Promote much greater cooperation with organizations whose focus is on aspects of literacy research, practice, and policy.

In addition to putting these points up for discussion at the May Board Meeting, two other issues were voted on and passed. First, the NRC Board approved to support the NCTE position on standards and high-stakes testing (brought forth by Richard Beach, see in this issue).

NRC 2001 Conference Proposals Due Soon

This is reminder that proposals for the 2001 conference are due February 9th, 2001. Proposal forms are available at NRC Online (http://nrc.oakland.edu/conference/conference.asp)
Second, the Board voted to give voting privileges for elections to graduate students who were members of NRC (brought forth by Josephine Peyton Young).

Two other noteworthy points were raised at the Board Meeting. For one, Deborah Dillon reported that the Executive Committee visited 10 sites for the 2002 conference and selected the Intercontinental Hotel on Biscayne Bay in Miami, Florida. The conference will be held there on December 4-7, 2002. Second, the Multicultural Committee reported that it is developing guidelines to award grants supporting individuals from under-represented groups so they can participate at NRC conferences. (Hopefully these grants will be available for participants at the December 2001 conference.)

Many of the issues raised at the December Board Meeting will be put to a vote at the Spring Board Meeting that will be held on Saturday, April 28, 2001, at IRA in New Orleans, LA. Before the April Board meeting, I, along with the help of the Executive Board, the Board of Directors, and the Committee Chairs, will share our ideas over the NRC Listserv for your input.

In closing, let me thank all of you who made the December conference such an enjoyable experience. In assuming my new role as President within NRC, I look forward to the privilege of working with you to add "Revitalized" as the second R in "RNRC." Please provide feedback along the way (As Ralph Waldo Emerson once noted, "Sometimes a scream is better than a thesis." I’ll take that!)

Best wishes for an enjoyable February.

Peter Mosenthal
NRC President

NRC President - Elect’s Report: NRC 2001 Program Information

Deborah Dillon
Purdue University
West Lafayette, IN

We had a fantastic conference in Scottsdale. I am sure you join me in thanking Peter Mosenthal for all of his hard work in constructing a meaningful and memorable 50th Anniversary Conference and celebration. The evaluations of the program were overwhelmingly complimentary and my program co-chair, Lee Gunderson, and I accept the challenge to plan an equally spectacular meeting in 2001. Let me outline a few important points related to our next conference.

Important Dates
The conference will be held in San Antonio, Texas, December 5-8, 2001. Please begin to work on your proposals now, as the postmark deadline for submitting materials to respective Area Chairs is FEBRUARY 9, 2001. This new postmark date will allow us to work quickly with individuals submitting proposals who may be missing particular materials necessary for a complete proposal. This time frame will also allow Area Chairs time to assign appropriate reviewers to examine proposals and carefully assess the quality. Finally, Area Chairs will also have time to acquire late reviews and adjudicate the reviews—all before the AERA Conference (April 6th). After AERA and before the IRA Conference I will be working with the materials provided by the 14 Area Chairs to begin organizing the program and in mid-May (after IRA) we will put the program together at NRC headquarters. Following the meeting to construct the program at NRC Headquarters, decision letters will be mailed and the typesetting of the program will begin.

The Site
The 2001 conference site is the Adams Mark Hotel, 111 Pecan Street, East, San Antonio, Texas. (The phone number is 210-354-2700.) The hotel is beautiful and a perfect setting for our conference in terms of space and location. The hotel is only 10 minutes from the airport and is located on the Riverwalk in downtown San Antonio. This means that not only will you be able to attend lots of interesting meetings, but you can also enjoy many cultural and historical sites nearby such as The Alamo, the El Mercado/Market Square, the Majestic Theatre, the Children’s Museum, the Riverwalk Mall, and many shops and restaurants that line the river itself. You may walk or take a rivertaxi (available right outside the back entrance of our hotel). Also of interest are Sea World and Six Flags Fiesta Texas (only minutes away from the hotel). The hotel has a fitness club with sauna and Jacuzzi, an outdoor heated pool with a large sundeck, and three restaurants and lounges (a large area in the lobby where folks can see and meet up with colleagues).

The Conference Program
We guarantee a stimulating program for the 2001 conference. We are in the process of lining up interesting and thoughtful speakers, informative meetings where colleagues can come together to grapple with the challenges we face in literacy now and in the future, and lighter moments where we enjoy our surroundings and each others’ company. For example, we will have a special reception planned after one of our plenary speaker’s presentations at the Southwest Arts and Craft Center. This unique 5-acre site is listed on the National Historic Register and used to serve as an Ursuline Academy (young women’s school) and Convent. The Center, set on the banks of the San Antonio River, is a five minute walk from our hotel and has a wonderful garden, limestone patio, and a gazebo which will be perfect for a reception for all NRC members. Of course, the heart of our conference includes the insightful and compelling scholarly work that colleagues bring to share with one another and we are counting on another year of excellent submissions for the program.
The Call for Proposals for the 2001 Conference

The Call can be found on NRC Online — the NRC website (http://nrc.oakland.edu). Once you arrive at the website click on the live link “NRC 2001” and you will see the Call. You can read the call on screen and print off the pages you need for submission purposes using Adobe Reader. There are some new guidelines in the 2001 Call that I want to draw to your attention in addition to the new submission deadline.

- First, please note that individuals should appear on the program no more than four times (including serving as a discussant, chair or presenter). Exceptions include serving in an official NRC capacity or as an invited speaker.
- Second, we are asking for your help in ensuring that all proposals are prepared so that reviewers can actually engage in a blind review of the materials. This means that we need you to use APA style guidelines for blinding when listing your name within the body of the article and in the reference list. We have also made some changes to how the title page of the proposal should be prepared (no author identifying information on any copies) so please read these instructions carefully. Proposals will not be reviewed if they are not blinded.
- Third, we are requesting that all proposals adhere to the 2-3 page, single-spaced, typed summary guidelines with the addition of an attached reference list. The reference list is needed by reviewers to ensure that a current and appropriate research base exists for the proposal. Other attachments or appendices are not appropriate, however.
- Fourth, Symposia and Alternative Format Session submissions require a 50-word abstract that provides a concise yet clear explanation of the overall session. Examples of several abstracts are on page 10 of the Call. Please know that the exact wording you choose for your abstract will be used in the program, so we need your help to ensure that you adhere to the space limitation and that your abstract is error free.
- Fifth, we are piloting an electronic submission procedure for Area #13 this year. Thus, no hard copy proposals for the Technology and Media Area will be reviewed. Instead, electronic submissions will be posted from the NRC 2001 electronic submission page. Reviewers will also review the proposals online. This submission format is only available for Area #13 this year—all other areas require hard copy submissions as specified in the 2001 Call for Proposals. Please contact Dennis Mike (mikedg@buffalostate.edu) or John McEneaney (mceneane@oakland.edu) if you have any questions about submitting to Area #13.
- Sixth, please alert your graduate students and new colleagues to NRC Online and encourage them to submit a proposal. We also urge you to mentor graduate students and new faculty as they prepare proposal materials for the first time. It is very clear from the quality of the proposals received in past years that those colleagues new to our organization who did not receive mentoring, often had difficulty crafting high quality proposals and thus were not able to present at the conference. We want to include new colleagues in our conversations at NRC and they typically cannot attend unless they are part of the program. Invite them to coauthor a proposal with you, chair a session, or craft a roundtable presentation that allows for a less formal style of presentation (but still requires a high quality proposal grounded in research).

Call for Reviewers

Also located on NRC Online with the 2001 Call is a call for volunteers to review proposals for the 2001 conference. If you have not offered your help to an Area Chair, please find the form on the website, complete it, and send it to the appropriate Area Chair ASAP (you will see a Dec. 20th, 2000 due date for the form but Area Chairs may still require help even in January).

The Conference Program (hard copy)

An electronic version of the 2001 NRC Program will be placed on NRC Online as soon as it is possible in late summer—at about the same time the printed version of the program goes to press. This will allow conference attendees to see when they are slotted to present and note sessions they would like to attend. This advanced information should help conference attendees make travel plans and arrange their conference schedules. A new procedure for the 2001 program has been adopted by the NRC Board, based on input from the Technology Committee, our webmaster, and others dedicated to moving us forward in the use of technology to save expenses and trees. This new procedure is as follows: We will not be sending a hard copy of the program to conference attendees prior to the conference. Instead, conference attendees will pick up their copy of the program at the registration desk when they arrive at the conference. We are instituting this new process to see if it helps those individuals who may forget their programs at home (over 50% of our attendees at this year’s conference did not have their program upon arrival at Scottsdale). In addition, we hope to continue to lower the costs associated with the program (mailing) while still providing the professional document many view as an important artifact of the conference. For those members who really insist on having the professional hard copy of the program prior to the conference, we respectfully will request that you pay the cost of postage and replacement cost of the program if you forget your copy at home (more information will be forthcoming about this process).

Submit Your Current Email Address

Please go to NRC Online (http://nrc.oakland.edu) and submit your email address so that we have accurate information about you in our files. Specifically, this information ensures that we can send you important electronic notices about the conference and program.
Please contact John McEneaney (mceneane@oakland.edu) if you have any questions about submitting this information.

In summary, I want to continue to build on the outstanding work of past Program Chairs in preparing the 2001 NRC Conference, yet meet the challenges posed to our organization in terms of using new technologies to our advantage without sacrificing those elements of our organization we hold dear. These elements include the opportunity to see each other at least once a year; engage in stimulating interactions during the conference; and access compelling research-based presentations and follow-up conversations. We also have the opportunity to mentor new scholars, encouraging them to attend our conference and engage in professional activities and the chance to enjoy our friendships and collegiality during lighter moments in the conference. I welcome your suggestions for the conference and I look forward to seeing you in San Antonio.

NRC Past President’s Report: Management Search Committee

Taffy Raphael
Oakland University
Rochester, MI

Our contract with BMI management company ends in May 2001, and we have formed a search committee to explore options. So far, options include: (a) identifying a management company, (b) identifying an executive director, (c) identifying a university or professional organization, and (d) continuing with BMI under a new contract. The chair of the search is Taffy Raphael, with committee members drawn from the NRC Executive Board (Peter Mosenthal, Deborah Dillon, Lee Gunderson, and Peter DeWitz), a representative from the NRC Board of Directors (Don Leu) and a member-at-large (Trika Smith-Burke). We held our first meeting in December during the conference and will be developing a call for proposals to go out this winter or early spring. We are working with Judi Burnison at BMI headquarters to ensure that we have a smooth process throughout the search, and if a new organization is selected, a smooth transition. Suggestions are welcome, so feel free to email, write, or call the chair or any of the committee members.

Student Research Award

Maribeth Schmitt, Chair

The NRC Student Research Award Committee was pleased to have so many outstanding candidates for the 2000 Student Outstanding Research Award. The papers from this cadre of new researchers represented a cross-section of topics and research methods. There were five finalists for the award in addition to the winner. The winner received a plaque commemorating her accomplishment and an honorarium of $500.

The finalists (and their sponsoring faculty members) were:

- Gwynne Ellen Ash, University of Delaware (James F. Baumann, University of Georgia)
- Melanie R. Kuhn, Rutgers University (Steven Stahl, University of Georgia)
- Patrick Manyak, University of Southern California (Robert Rueda, University of Southern California)
- Brenda Joiner Overturf, Gheens Academy, Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, KY (Ellen McIntyre, University of Louisville)
- Sue E. Stadler, Evergreen School District in Vancouver, WA (Maribeth Schmitt, Purdue University)

The winner of the 2000 Student Outstanding Research Award was Rebecca Rogers from Washington University in St. Louis. Her sponsoring faculty member was Peter Johnston from the University at Albany (SUNY). Her paper entitled “Ethnographic Intentions: Multi-Vocal Representations of Literate Subjectivities” was presented on Thursday morning at the conference. Congratulations to Rebecca and all of the finalists!

Oscar S. Causey Award

Donald J. Leu, Chair

Dr. Oscar S. Causey was the founder of the National Reading Conference and served many years as Chair of the Executive Committee. The Oscar S. Causey Award is given each year for outstanding contributions to reading research. Dr. Michael Pressley received this prestigious award in 2000 at our annual conference. Congratulations, Michael for this important recognition of your many significant contributions to reading research!

The committee would like to thank Doug Hartman for chairing this committee in 1999-00. Don Leu will chair the committee for the 2001 nomination and selection process.

We invite our membership to nominate worthy recipients for the 2001 Oscar S. Causey Award. All nominees will remain in the candidate pool for a total of three years. If you wish to nominate a candidate for the 2001 Oscar S. Causey Award, please send a letter of nomination and the candidate’s current vita, by September 15, 2001, to:

Students are encouraged to submit proposals for conference papers, which is the first round of review for the student award. Please contact Maribeth Schmitt, 1442 Liberal Arts and Education Building, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907 (765-494-5683, mschmitt@purdue.edu), for information regarding application procedures for the award competition. The research paper must be solely student-written (i.e., not co-authored with a faculty member), and the research must have been conducted in part after August 1, 1999. The deadline for submission of the paper is September 5, 2001.

The committee is comprised of: Patricia Alexander, Diane Allen, Camille Blachowicz, Amy Seely Flint, Elizabeth Moje, David O’Brien, Ray Reutzel, Mary Roe, Emily Rodgers, Lawrence Sipes, Josephine Young, and Maribeth Schmitt (chair).
Albert J. Kingston Award

Richard Beach, Chair

Congratulations to Lee Gunderson, winner of the 2000 Albert J. Kingston Award. The Albert J. Kingston Award is given each year for outstanding contributions of service to NRC over an extended period of time.

Nominations for the Albert J. Kingston Award for outstanding contributions of service to NRC should be submitted by April 15, 2001. Members nominating candidates should submit a letter of no more than 300 words describing the nominee’s contributions to NRC and reasons for why the nominee deserves the award, along with the nominee’s curriculum vita. Nominations should be sent to:

Richard Beach, Chair
359 Peik Hall, 159 Pillsbury Dr., S.E.
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455
E-mail with attachments: rbeach@umn.edu

Edward Fry Book Award


The Edward Fry Book Award committee is seeking nominations for books about literacy research and practice authored or edited by current members of the National Reading Conference. The award carries a monetary remuneration of $500. The criteria for the selection include (a) advancing knowledge about literacy; (b) displaying inquiry into literacy; and (c) showing responsible intellectual risk taking. The publication date for nominated books must be from 1996 to 2001. To nominate a book, an individual should send one copy of the publication accompanied by a letter of nomination describing why the book is nominated. The letter of nomination can be self-authored or other-authored. Nominations should be submitted by May 15, 2001. Nominations should be sent to:

Linda Kucan, Chair
10 East 29th Street
New York, NY 10016.
E-mail: linda.kucan@teachscape.com

Early Career Achievement Award

Jeanne Paratore, Chair

NRC has recently initiated the Early Career Achievement Award to recognize members who have made significant contributions to knowledge in the field of literacy and literacy education early in their research careers. This new award fills a void within our organization because it acknowledges those beginning scholars who are already making contributions to our field. Winners receive a plaque and $500.00. Congratulations to Elizabeth B. Moje, winner of the 2000 Early Career Achievement Award.

The committee would like to encourage nominations for next year’s award. Nominees should: (a) have recently received a Ph.D. (within the last 10 years), (b) have been a member of NRC for a minimum of 3 years, (c) have made a significant contribution to the field through the publication of substantial, significant, original research that has generated new knowledge, and (d) demonstrate promise to be a leader in the conduct and promotion of research. When submitting such a nomination, please include a letter explaining why the nominee deserves this recognition and a recent copy of the nominee’s curriculum vitae. The nominations are due May 1, 2001 Nominations are to be sent to:

Jeanne R. Paratore, Ed.D.
Chair, Early Career Achievement Award
Boston University
605 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 02215
Phone: 617-353-3285
E-mail: jparator@bu.edu

Publications Committee

Lesley Mandel Morrow, Chair

The publications for NRC have been excellent this year. Thanks to the superb work of the *JLR* editors, David Reinking, Cyndie Hynd, Penny Oldfather, and Donna Alvermann, the selection of articles was excellent and the managing of the journal was efficient. We thank these editors for the outstanding work they have done for the organization. We also applaud the work of Tim Shanahan and Flora Rodriguez-Brown for their excellent job with the NRC Yearbook. The editors have worked diligently to enhance the quality and visibility of the publication. We are very grateful to them. Thank you to the outgoing Publications Chair, Susan Neuman, who did an excellent job, especially in the search for new editors for both NRC publications. We are pleased to announce the new *JLR* editors. They are: Tim Rasinski and Nancy Padak from Kent State University along with Wayne Linek from Texas A & M University, and Elizabeth Sturtevant from George Mason University. These editors will serve for a three-year term. We also welcome new editors for the NRC Yearbook. They are Jim Hoffman, Diane Schallert, Colleen Fairbanks, Jo Worthy, and Beth Maloch all from the University of Texas at Austin. This is a very strong and experienced group of editors who will serve for a three-year term. We look forward to an exciting year of excellent publications. We also look forward to some new ideas mentioned at the NRC Board meeting by our president, Peter Mosenthal. His ideas should bring stronger connections between publications and technology and his leadership will allow NRC to take a stronger role concerning current issues in literacy through published position statements.
NRC Board Supports NCTE Resolution on High Stakes Testing

The NRC Board voted to support the following NCTE resolution on High Stakes Testing: RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English affirm the following statement: The efforts to improve the quality of education, especially in underachieving schools, are laudable, and the desire for accountability is understandable. However, high stakes tests often fail to assess accurately student knowledge, understanding, and capability. Raising test scores does not improve education. Therefore, the use of any single test in making important decisions—such as graduation, promotion, funding of schools, or employment and compensation of administrators and teachers—is educationally unsound and unethical.

High stakes testing often harms students’ daily experience of learning, displaces more thoughtful and creative curriculum, diminishes the emotional well-being of educators and children, and unfairly damages the life-chances of members of vulnerable groups. We call on legislators and policymakers to repeal laws and policies that tie significant consequences to scores on single assessments. We further call on legislators and policymakers to join with professional organizations to develop better means of improving public education.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCTE invite other organizations to support, publicize, and promote a reconsideration of high stakes testing.

The NCTE Task Force on High Stakes Testing, chaired by NRC member, Randy Bomer, is seeking to develop a coalition of professional organizations that will address this issue. In addition to this resolution, the International Reading Association and the American Educational Research Association have passed resolutions related to high stakes testing. President Peter Mosenthal has also recommended that conference sessions be devoted to research on issues related to literacy assessment.

A Message from the Vice President-Elect

Lee Gunderson
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, BC

Greetings. The Board has agreed that the Call for Proposals for the 2002 conference in Miami should be re-conceptualized so that “Areas” are more precisely defined. The number of proposals submitted to different Areas differs dramatically. Area 7 (Teacher Education-Early Childhood/Elementary Education), for instance, received 89 proposals for the 2000 Conference, while other Areas varied from 7 to 53. Members of the Board have agreed that one of the contributing factors to this unequal distribution is the Area Descriptions. There is Board consensus that the Area Descriptions should be changed and should be included in the Call for Proposals for the 2002 conference. This re-conceptualization may include combining, eliminating, and/or re-defining some Areas. I seek your help in this process. The present Areas are: (1) Children’s, Young Adult, and Adult Literature, (2) Literacy Processes: Long Standing NRC Emphasis, Elementary, Secondary, (3) Literacy Processes: Long Standing NRC Emphasis: College/Adult Reading, (4) Literacy Processes: Focusing on Pre-School, Early Childhood, and Elementary-Age Learners, (5) Literacy Processes: Middle School, High School, and Adult Learners, (6) Learning/Teaching Processes, (7) Teacher Education-Early Childhood/Elementary, (8) Teacher Education-Middle School/Secondary, (9) Emergent Literacy, (10) Special Populations, (11) Literacy and Language Diversity, (12) Assessment, Evaluation, and Policy Issues, (13) Technology and Media, and (14) Unique Topics.

Please help. If you have suggestions, e-mail them to me at lee.gunderson@ubc.ca. I would like to bring a preliminary proposal for reorganizing the Call for Proposals to the May 2001 board meeting. Thank you, in advance, for your assistance.

Next Issue

Send articles and announcements for the Fall, 2001 NRC newsletter via e-mail to:

Rachel A. Karchmer rkarchmer@hotmail.com or Marla Mallette mmallette@siu.edu

If you prefer to send your information via regular mail or by fax, please send it to:

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