



LITERACY
RESEARCH
ASSOCIATION

Zhihui Fang



Biography:

I am pleased and honored to be among the slate of candidates nominated for the Literacy Research Association (LRA) Board of Directors. I am currently Professor of Literacy and Language Education in the School of Teaching and Learning at the University of Florida. My research focuses on the role of language in literacy teaching and learning. I have explored (a) different ways knowledge and ideology are constructed through language in different school subjects, (b) the challenges these ways of using language present to reading comprehension and written composition in disciplinary learning, and (c) pedagogical strategies for addressing these challenges. This work recognizes language as the “hidden curriculum” of schooling and responds to the challenges of developing advanced literacy, critical literacy, and disciplinary literacies among students who struggle with reading and writing, who are learning English as an additional language, or who have histories of school failure. It describes tools for engaging students in close reading of text as part of a comprehensive literacy program that helps them build disciplinary knowledge and habits of mind and at the same time develop understanding of how language construes knowledge and value in discipline and genre-specific ways. I have authored over 100 publications, including 5 books, two dozen book chapters, and numerous articles in refereed journals such as *Journal of Literacy Research*, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Research in the Teaching of English*, *Journal of Teacher Education*, *Science Education*, *Journal of Mathematical Behavior*, and *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*.



Candidate Statement:

LRA has been my academic home for more than two decades. I attended LRA (formerly National Reading Conference, or NRC) in San Diego for the first time in 1994 as an international student pursuing a master's degree in reading education at Louisiana State University. I was overwhelmed with the rich array of scholarship presented at the conference and awestricken with the warmth and collegiality of scholars whose work I had read and admired. It was then that I knew I belonged in LRA. In subsequent years, I had the good fortune of working closely with many respected literacy scholars at LSU, Purdue (where I earned my doctorate in literacy and language education), and Florida (where I have worked since 1997). Their service and commitment to LRA and other professional organizations (e.g., IRA/ILA, AERA, AAAL, NCTE, AERA, TESOL) have instilled in me a strong sense of "giving" and inspired me to serve the profession community with honor, dedication, and integrity. Over the years, I have served LRA in a number of capacities, including field council representative, co-chair and chair of Area 4 (Assessment, Evaluation & Policy), co-chair of Area 3 (Literacy Assessment, Learning, and Teaching), reviewer of annual conference proposals, editorial review board member for Journal of Literacy Research and NRC/LRA Yearbook, and editorial advisory board member for the IRA/NRC Literacy Studies Book Series. I have also served IRA/ILA, NCTE, and other professional organizations in meaningful ways. These service activities have greatly enriched my professional experience, deepened my professional knowledge, broadened my scholarly horizons, and reshaped my thinking about issues that matter in literacy theory, research, and practice. I look forward to continuing my involvement with LRA for many years to come.

If elected to the Board of Directors, I promise to work diligently and collaboratively to help advance the mission of LRA. Specifically, I hope to contribute to the following five goals that I believe are critically important to maintaining the health, vitality, and relevance of LRA as a literacy professional organization: (1) attracting and nurturing emergent scholars (e.g., graduate students), scholars of color, and international scholars; (2) promoting educational equity and social justice; (3) encouraging and supporting interdisciplinary and international collaborations; (4) identifying and developing literacy leaders who are visionary and entrepreneurial; and (5) influencing and shaping literacy policy and practice. Accomplishing these goals is imperative at a time when education is facing unprecedented challenges across many fronts, including short/long-term effects of the pandemic, promulgation of fake news and disinformation, persistent racism, resurgence of xenophobia, and erosion of academic freedom. It will ensure that LRA has a membership that (a) is richly diverse and vibrant, (b) addresses critical issues in literacy education, (c) embraces multiple perspectives and methodologies, (d) conducts high-quality, cutting-edge research, (e) works productively across academic disciplines and national borders, (f) connects with the society and communities, (g) becomes agentive in engineering positive changes in society, and (h) provides steady stewardship of the organization. With such a



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membership, LRA will be well positioned to effectively respond to emerging challenges and seize new opportunities. As the foremost professional organization for literacy researchers nationally and internationally, LRA has the will, expertise, and resources to achieve these goals. I appreciate and support the many bold and meaningful initiatives that LRA has taken over the years to advance its mission. As an Asian American scholar with extensive international experiences and many years of involvement with LRA, I believe I can bring a fresh yet historically grounded perspective and make unique contributions to the development and implementation of strategic and action plans for these important goals.

Thank you once again for considering me for the privilege of serving LRA as a member of the Board of Directors.