



# The Reading League Conference Abstract and Biography Listing

Conference Live Date: October 27, 2020

<https://thereadingleague.uscreen.io>

Page 1 of 13

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## Clark Janell Davis

### Opening Session Keynote



**Speaker Biography:** In 2015, at the age of 17, she became the youngest woman crowned Miss Kentucky in competition history. After representing the Bluegrass state on the world stage, she spent her year traveling the country raising awareness for Dyslexia. Graduating from the University of Kentucky in 2019, she moved to Nashville with her fiancé to begin her post-college career and build her business. A certified life and wellness coach, Clark motivates and encourages women to confront their relationship to food, their health, and their bodies. Today, she continues to follow her passion of raising Dyslexia awareness and women's empowerment.

**Session Abstract:** Dyslexia is no easy foe and Clark Janell Davis knows this first-hand. Diagnosed at age 6, she used her frustrating battle as motivation to overcome.

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## Pamela Snow

### Closing Session Keynote



**Speaker Biography:** Pamela Snow is a Professor of Cognitive Psychology in the School of Education at the Bendigo campus of La Trobe University, Australia. In addition to experience in teacher education, she has taught a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate health professionals. Pamela is a registered psychologist, having qualified originally in speech-language pathology. Her research has been funded by nationally competitive schemes such as the ARC Discovery Program, ARC Linkage Program, and the Criminology Research Council, and concerns the role of language and literacy skills as academic and mental health protective factors in childhood and adolescence. She has conducted research on the profiles and needs of high-risk groups such as youth offenders, children and adolescents in the state care system and flexible

education systems, as well as research advancing evidence in the language-to-literacy transition in the early years of school.

Pamela's research has been published in a wide range of international journals and in early 2017 was a member of the National Year 1 Literacy and Numeracy Panel, convened by the Hon. Simon Birmingham, Federal Education Minister. She is a Fellow of the Speech Pathology Association of Australia and is a past Victorian State Chair of the Australian Psychological Society. She has over 170 publications, comprising refereed papers, books and book chapters, monographs and research reports. In addition to these academic outputs, Pamela writes a popular blog for teachers, parents, and clinicians: The Snow Report and is a founding Associate Editor of The Reading League Journal.

**Session Abstract:** In twenty-first century industrialized, first-world nations, population-level effortless and competent reading ability is more important than at any prior period in history. Reading skills and academic achievement are inextricably linked, laying the foundations for post-school training, education and employment in early adulthood.



# The Reading League Conference Abstract and Biography Listing

Conference Live Date: October 27, 2020

<https://thereadingleague.uscreen.io>

Page 1 of 13

---

Secure employment is a path to secure housing, and engagement with the economic mainstream in ways that promote positive mental and physical health and a strong start to life for the next generation. However, employment for unskilled workers is rapidly disappearing and/or becoming more unstable, due to the impact of technological advances and the onward march of artificial intelligence into manufacturing and commerce. This has dire implications for students who exit school with poorly developed reading, writing, and spelling skills.

Ironically, in spite of being one of the most widely researched aspects of child development since the latter part of the twentieth century, reading has suffered from a severe knowledge translation paralysis in the last fifty years. This reflects ideological resistance to the science of reading in some influential academic and policy circles, in favour of a focus on sometimes vague notions of “twenty-first century skills” which have popular media appeal and resonate with so-called “progressive” education agendas.

In this presentation, Professor Snow will examine these historical factors through a public health lens, with an emphasis on the social determinants of health model and lessons that education academics, policy-makers, and practitioners can draw from evidence-based population-based decision-making. Implications for teacher pre-service education will be emphasized, as this is the workforce that can mobilize to effect population-level change in reading, and hence improved quality of life outcomes.

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*Session speakers listed in alphabetical order.*

## Anita Archer

### Improving Written Compositions -- One Sentence at a Time



**Speaker Biography:** Dr. Anita Archer serves as an educational consultant to state departments, county agencies, and school districts on explicit instruction and literacy instruction. She has taught elementary and middle school students and is the recipient of ten Outstanding Educator awards. Dr. Archer has served on the faculties of San Diego State University, the University of Washington, and the University of Oregon. She is internationally known for her presentations and publications on instructional procedures and literacy instruction and has co-authored numerous curriculum materials with Dr. Mary Gleason, including the REWARDS reading and writing intervention programs (Voyager Sopris). With Dr. Charles Hughes, Dr. Archer has co-authored, *Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient*

*Teaching.*

**Session Abstract:** While students’ essays may have an introduction, body, and conclusion, and stay on topic, their compositions are often weak due to the weakness of the sentences. In this session, Dr. Archer will present procedures for teaching and refining written sentences across grades and domains. Leave this session with instructional procedures that you can share with your colleagues.



# The Reading League Conference Abstract and Biography Listing

Conference Live Date: October 27, 2020

<https://thereadingleague.uscreen.io>

Page 1 of 13

---

## Wiley Blevins

### Decodable Readers: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly



**Speaker Biography:** Wiley Blevins is an author, educational consultant, and researcher. He completed his graduate work at Harvard Graduate School of Education and has taught both in the United States and South America. Wiley has written over 16 books for teachers, including *A Fresh Look at Phonics* and *Phonics from A to Z*. He has authored several phonics and reading programs (Scholastic, Sadlier, Benchmark Education) and wrote the recent phonics brief from the International Literacy Association, *Meeting the Challenges of Early Literacy Phonics Instruction*. Wiley's current focus is on adaptive technology, differentiated professional development, and children's literature. Wiley has written over 75 children's books and is Editorial Director at Reycraft Books, a new imprint focused on publishing books by authors and illustrators from under-represented groups.

**Session Abstract:** This session examines the critical role decodable text plays in early phonics instruction. Participants will examine the current research around this type of text; what separates strong from weak decodable texts; why some teachers dislike these texts; and how to extend the use of these readers to build phonics fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary.

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## Suzanne Carreker

### Why It's Worth It to Teach Grammar



**Speaker Biography:** Suzanne Carreker, Ph.D., CALT-QI, joined Lexia Learning in 2015 as Principal Educational Content Lead, where she spearheaded the curriculum design of a ground-breaking reading program for adolescents. Her career includes 28 years at Neuhaus Education Center, a nonprofit organization offering professional development in evidence-based reading methods to more than 60,000 teachers. Dr. Carreker served as Senior VP of Innovative Solutions at Neuhaus and just recently completed 10 years of service on the board of The International Dyslexia Association (IDA), where she led the development of a teacher certification exam. In 2009, Dr. Carreker was the recipient of the HBIDA Nancy

LaFavers Community Service Award for her contributions to students with dyslexia and other related learning differences in the Houston community. She was selected as the 2018 recipient of the Margaret Byrd Rawson Lifetime Achievement Award by the International Dyslexia Association.

**Session Abstract:** Do you get sweaty palms or experience a rapid heartbeat when you hear the word grammar? If you do, you're not alone—all those parts of speech, parts of sentences, and labels! Although grammar can seem overwhelming, it's worth teaching. It's a key underpinning of written composition. And, it's a great support for comprehension! This session will present hands-on activities for teaching the functions of the parts of speech and parts of sentences as well as their labels. Knowledge of grammar better equips students for comprehending complex text and writing.



# The Reading League Conference Abstract and Biography Listing

Conference Live Date: October 27, 2020

<https://thereadingleague.uscreen.io>

Page 1 of 13

---

## Susan Chambre

### Show Me the Spellings: Promoting Vocabulary Growth Through Attention to Spelling and Decoding



**Speaker Biography:** Dr. Susan J. Chambre received her PhD in Contemporary Literacies from Fordham University.

After over a decade of classroom teaching experience as a special education teacher, Susan will be joining the faculty of Marist College's School of Social and Behavioral Sciences as an assistant professor of Special Education. Her research interests center on emergent readers' vocabulary learning and the effects of orthography on vocabulary development. She has presented on these topics at both national and regional conferences. Her work has been published in *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, *The Reading Teacher*, and *The Language and Literacy Spectrum*.

**Session Abstract:** Traditional vocabulary instruction centers on teaching students word meanings. During the school day, teachers provide definitions of words and offer context-based examples. However research findings reveal that teachers are not spending nearly enough time during the instructional day teaching vocabulary. One reported barrier was the lack of observable instruction that was grounded in research-based best practices. Within the last decade researchers have noted an underutilized factor associated with vocabulary learning: orthography or word spelling. Benefits of orthographic exposure support vocabulary learning for a wide array of learning populations and age ranges. This session will present current research on how orthographic exposure (seeing word spellings) facilitates vocabulary acquisition for early learners. Suggestions for implementing orthographic exposure routines into every day classroom instruction will be demonstrated.

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## Steve Dykstra

### The Dirty Dozen (or so): Myths, Mistakes, and Misunderstandings that Plague Our Efforts



**Speaker Biography:** Dr. Dykstra is a psychologist from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he works with children and adolescents. He is also on the advisory boards of both the International Foundation for Effective Reading Instruction, and the Consortium on Reaching Excellence in Education. Known for his bold style, he uses his knowledge of science generally and his decades of experience with children to help unravel the mysteries and complexities of both reading science and child development. Always up for a debate, he tries to be right, might sometimes be wrong, but is never boring.

**Session Abstract:** A fast-moving review of more than a dozen (the list is always changing) myths, mistakes, and misunderstandings that keep getting in the way of doing better. This isn't just "their" mistakes, "we" have plenty of our own. From definitions of dyslexia, to what major studies and books actually said, and when the three-cues are good science; let's shine a light in some dusty corners and maybe slaughter a few sacred cows.

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# The Reading League Conference Abstract and Biography Listing

Conference Live Date: October 27, 2020

<https://thereadingleague.uscreen.io>

Page 1 of 13

## Esther Geva

### Assessing Reading and Language Skills of Struggling ELs: From Research to Practice



**Speaker Biography:** Esther Geva studied in Israel, the US, and Canada. She is a full professor in the Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development, OISE/University of Toronto, and a licensed psychologist. Esther's work spans the broad areas of educational psychology, cross-cultural psychology, and bilingualism. Her work relates to: how language and literacy skills develop in children, adolescents and young adults learning to read in a second language (L2; EL); the nature of the relationships between oral language skills and the development of reading and writing skills in L2/EL learners; transfer issues in EL literacy development; the contribution of cognitive, linguistic, and background factors to literacy development of typical and atypical L2/EL learners, approaches to effective intervention with

at-risk and vulnerable learners; and cross-cultural psychology pertaining to the well-being of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners. She has published numerous chapters and articles in these areas, presented her work internationally, and served on various advisory, policy, and review committees in the US and Canada. She is the co-author of *Psychological Assessment of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Children* (2015), and *Key Concepts for the Language Classroom: Focus on Reading* (2015).

**Session Abstract:** This session will provide general education teachers, ESL teachers, special education teachers, educational administrators and school psychologists with a better understanding of: (a) Recent, evidence-based factors that matter for understanding the aspects that contribute to second language (L2/EL) language and reading development in typically developing children and adolescents, (b) Learning and cognitive characteristics of ELs with persistent reading and language difficulties that cannot be simply attributed to being an EL, and (c) Evidence-based approaches that support ELs with learning difficulties. The presenter will discuss some myths and misconceptions regarding the language and literacy development of ELs that have been recently dispelled by research, address specific strategies for conducting assessments of EL children and youth, and illustrate the applications of these strategies through discussion of case studies.



# The Reading League Conference Abstract and Biography Listing

Conference Live Date: October 27, 2020

<https://thereadingleague.uscreen.io>

Page 1 of 13

---

## Deb Glaser

The Five Components of Reading: Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, and For You!



**Speaker Biography:** Deborah R. Glaser, Ed.D., received her doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction with a specific focus on reading and school reform from Boise State University. During Dr. Glaser's 40 years in education she has been a classroom and learning disability instructor and administrator, has assisted universities with the development of research-based reading curricula, and has established training and consultation programs to support the success of state and local reading initiatives. Dr. Glaser's publications include *LETRS Foundations: Introduction to Language and Literacy* (co-authored with Louisa Moats), the online reading course *The Reading Teacher's Top Ten Tools*, among others.

**Session Abstract:** We have been married to the five components of reading now since the National Reading Panel designed their report in 1999. Twenty years down the road, it is time to update the old with something new. Every marriage benefits from stepping back and taking a broad look at where we have been and where we are going. This session for reading teachers K-6 will present current research in each of the 5 component areas and update our knowledge and understanding. It will borrow and share effective practices developed by other teachers, and present several classroom instructional tools to lend a new perspective on reading instruction for you. The practices presented can easily be incorporated into, and used to support, any reading program.

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## Margaret Goldberg

Escaping Old Ideas: Why It's Difficult and How to Coach Through It



**Speaker Biography:** Margaret serves as a literacy coach in Oakland Public Schools. Her work leading a grant-funded project to align instruction with reading research was featured in the APM Reports documentary *At A Loss for Words*. She is the co-founder of The Right to Read Project, a group of teachers, researchers, and activists committed to the pursuit of equity through literacy. Her writing is published on The Right to Read Project blog and on Reading Rockets.

**Session Abstract:** For all the attention learning receives, the process can be a breeze compared to the unlearning process. When we add new ideas and strategies without reconsidering remaining practices, the ensuing cognitive dissonance can keep teachers and students from experiencing the benefits of change. This session will focus on why escaping old ideas about reading can be challenging, why we must do it, and how to help our colleagues through the process.



# The Reading League Conference Abstract and Biography Listing

Conference Live Date: October 27, 2020

<https://thereadingleague.uscreen.io>

Page 1 of 13

---

## Lucy Hart Paulson

### “But Teacher, I Don’t Know How to Write...” Helping Young Students Develop Foundational Writing Skills



**Speaker Biography:** Dr. Lucy Hart Paulson, Ed.D., CCC-SLP, is a literacy specialist, author, and speech-language pathologist with many years of experience working with educators, young children, and families, serving in public schools, Head Starts, and private clinics. She was a tenured faculty member teaching and researching in areas of language and literacy development and disorders. Lucy presents a broad-based perspective blending areas of language and literacy together resulting in effective, appropriate, and engaging language-based literacy instruction and intervention for all children. She has provided professional development for a variety of audiences across the United States and internationally. Lucy is the lead author of the *Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS)* for Early Childhood Educators, 2nd Edition, *Building Early Literacy and Language Skills*, a

resource and activity guide for young children, and also of *Good Talking Words*, a social communication skills program for preschool and kindergarten.

**Session Abstract:** A focus on teaching writing has not had the same level of traction as reading in literacy instruction. A solid body of research supports the importance of intentionally teaching writing and guides best practices in instruction. This session describes the writing process including developmental expectations, assessment strategies, and evidence-based instruction techniques to help young children build foundational writing skills facilitating literacy learning.

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## Nancy Hennessy M. Ed

### The Inference Knowledgeable Educator: Implementing an Informed Instructional Framework



**Speaker Biography:** Nancy Hennessy, educational consultant and past president of the International Dyslexia Association (IDA), is an experienced teacher and administrator. While in public schools, she provided leadership in the development of professional learning systems and innovative programming for students with special needs. Nancy has consulted on varied topics ranging from professional practices to effective student instruction and assessment. She has designed and delivered keynote addresses, as well as virtual and live workshops and training courses, for educators nationally and internationally.

Nancy’s book on comprehension, *A Blueprint for Reading Comprehension Instruction: Helping Students Make Meaning from Text*, is scheduled for publication in 2020. She also wrote *Working with Word Meaning: Vocabulary Instruction*, in *Multisensory Teaching of Basic Skills* (4th edition). Nancy was a national trainer for *Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS)* and co-authored Module 6 of *LETRS, Digging for Meaning: Teaching Text Comprehension* (2nd edition) with Louisa Moats.



# The Reading League Conference Abstract and Biography Listing

Conference Live Date: October 27, 2020

<https://thereadingleague.uscreen.io>

Page 1 of 13

---

In 2011, Nancy received the International Dyslexia Association's Margaret Byrd Rawson Lifetime Achievement Award.

**Session Abstract:** Reading comprehension is complex and depends on multiple language and cognitive skills. The skilled educator recognizes the essential roles of inference and knowledge in constructing meaning. To understand texts at deeper levels, readers must be able to make meaning of the words and sentences, connect ideas and then integrate background knowledge to comprehend what is implied in the text. Designing and delivering effective instruction requires an understanding of inference itself, its contributions and connection to knowledge as well as evidence-based instructional principles and practices. This session will explore a framework for classroom-based strategies and activities purposefully focused on developing necessary knowledge and supporting inference-making.

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## David Kilpatrick

### Addressing Word-Level Reading Difficulties: Assessment, Instruction, and Intervention



**Speaker Biography:** David A. Kilpatrick, PhD is a professor of psychology for the State University of New York College at Cortland. He is a New York State certified school psychologist with 28 years of experience in schools. He has been teaching courses in learning disabilities and educational psychology since 1994. David is a reading researcher and the author of two books on reading, *Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties*, and *Equipped for Reading Success*, and is a co-editor of a third, *Reading Development and Difficulties: Bridging the Gap Between Research and Practice*.

**Session Abstract:** This presentation builds on the presenter's earlier TRL presentations with a focus on applying the findings about word-level reading to the practical issues of assessment, instruction and intervention. The first third of the presentation provides a review of key findings as well as many details about assessing (and screening for) the key skills needed for proficient word-level reading. The remaining two thirds focuses on instruction and intervention ranging from foundational teaching approaches and structuring a lesson to discussion of specific elements and skills upon which to focus instruction and intervention efforts.

## Gail Lovette

### Instructional Leadership Counts: Why Administrators Need to Know the Science of Reading





# The Reading League Conference Abstract and Biography Listing

Conference Live Date: October 27, 2020

<https://thereadingleague.uscreen.io>

Page 1 of 13



**Speaker Biography:** Gail E. Lovette, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor, Research Faculty in the Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education (CISE) and core faculty in the Supporting Transformative Autism Research (STAR) initiative at the University of Virginia. Her research interests focus on the preparation of teachers and administrators in literacy development, instructional leadership in literacy, and preventing and remediating reading difficulties and disabilities. Dr. Lovette teaches graduate courses for preservice and in-service reading specialists, classroom teachers, and special education teachers in reading assessment, instruction, and remediation. She was a teacher and administrator in Title 1 public schools for over a decade and holds current Virginia licensure as a K-12 school administrator, Reading Specialist, ESOL teacher, and K-6 elementary teacher.

**Session Abstract:** Despite intensifying attention surrounding the effectiveness of the reading instruction that students receive and the preparation of the teachers delivering this instruction, the role of school, district, and state leaders has largely been overlooked. However, it is instructional leaders across all levels who have the authority to implement the major curricular and assessment overhauls necessary in order to align classroom instruction and intervention with the science of reading. This session will explore why it is critical that all school, district, and state leaders demonstrate knowledge of the science of reading, if any state educational agencies currently require this knowledge to obtain or renew administrative licensure, and how these requirements can be enacted to ensure that all administrators can truly act as instructional leaders in reading.

## Mandy Nayton

### Reducing the Impact of Poor Reading on Mental Health



**Speaker Biography:** Mandy Nayton is the CEO of DSF Literacy and Clinical Services and President of AUSPELD (the Australian Federation of Specific Educational Learning Difficulties Associations). She is an educational and developmental psychologist and qualified primary school teacher with extensive experience in the field of literacy education. Mandy supports schools with literacy planning and provides professional development in the areas of literacy acquisition, vocabulary development, working memory, learning difficulties and the assessment of learning disorders. Mandy is an Adjunct Research Fellow at Curtin University's School of Psychology and Speech Pathology, has conducted research in collaboration with UWA, Curtin and Macquarie Universities, and was recently awarded an

Medal of the Order of Australia for her services to education.

**Session Abstract:** Children with reading difficulties are at elevated risk of emotional and behavioural problems. This is true in terms of both externalising (e.g., conduct and behaviour problems) and internalising (e.g., anxiety and depression) symptoms. In order to support children more effectively, it is important to identify the risk and protective factors associated with the mental health of children with reading difficulties - and look at ways we can increase the resilience of those students who do struggle.



# The Reading League Conference Abstract and Biography Listing

Conference Live Date: October 27, 2020

<https://thereadingleague.uscreen.io>

Page 1 of 13

---

In this session, Australian psychologist, researcher and educator Mandy Nayton will provide an overview of a pilot program for elementary school students with reading disorders that focused on the improvement of self-esteem through the teaching of positive coping strategies and the reduced use of unhelpful strategies.

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## William Van Cleave

Two Sessions:

Morphology Matters: Using Bases & Affixes to Build Vocabulary & Spelling, and  
Handwriting in the 21st Century: Why It Matters & What to Do About It!



**Speaker Biography:** William Van Cleave is in private practice as an educational consultant whose specialties include morphology and written expression. An internationally recognized speaker with an interactive, hands-on presentation style, William has presented on effective teaching practices at conferences and schools both in the United States and abroad since 1995. Recent projects include consulting with three schools as part of a literacy grant in Montana; participating on the MTSS Writing Standards Committee for the State of Pennsylvania; implementing several Trainer-of-Trainers projects using his sentence structure approach; and writing a series of workbooks and a companion book on developing composition skills to complement his sentence approach. The author of three books, including *Writing Matters* and *Everything You Want To Know & Exactly Where to Find It*, as well as a number of educational

tools and activities, William has served as a classroom teacher, tutor, and administrator in the private school arena at various points in his career.

**Morphology Matters: Using Bases & Affixes to Build Vocabulary & Spelling Session Abstract:** An understanding of morphology, or the meaning parts that comprise words, is invaluable for developing students' vocabulary and word attack skills. It also makes for a fascinating study! In this interactive, hands-on workshop, Van Cleave delves into a study of meaning parts, with particular attention to deep, meaningful word study. He helps participants explore the origins of our language and characteristics of the major languages of influence, an introduction to morphemic awareness, and then a study of hands-on teaching strategies. Participants examine the components of an effective morphology lesson, practice with each concept, and leave with strategies they can use with their students the very next day!

**Handwriting in the 21st Century: Why It Matters & What to Do About It Session Abstract:** Current research indicates a clear connection between fluent handwriting and students' writing, reading, and spelling skills. In this hands-on, interactive workshop, participants understand the importance of handwriting as a key literacy component with a brief study of current research linking handwriting fluency to better writing, reading, and spelling skills. Then, they move into hands-on practice with handwriting, including proper positioning and grip, hand and eye dominance,



# The Reading League Conference Abstract and Biography Listing

Conference Live Date: October 27, 2020

<https://thereadingleague.uscreen.io>

Page 1 of 13

---

and letter formation. Choosing between manuscript and cursive as well as when to develop word processing skills are also addressed. Participants leave this workshop with strategies they can use the very next day with their students.

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## Amy Vanden Boogart and Julie Sealine

### 5 Keys to Helping Adolescents with Decoding Issues: Best Practices and Resources



**Speaker Biography:** Amy Vanden Boogart, Ed.D., is the Director of Curriculum and Product Development for Really Great Reading. She manages the development of foundational reading skills curricula (print and online) for emerging and struggling readers, creates and tests new assessments, software, and workshops, and trains educators to help them maximize student success. Amy is also an adjunct professor at George Washington University, where she teaches graduate-level literacy courses. Amy began her career as an elementary teacher. She is a member of The Reading League and the International Dyslexia Association, the Secretary of the Board of Directors of the DC Capital Area Branch of the International Dyslexia Association, and a member of the editorial board of the International Dyslexia Association's Perspectives on Language and Literacy publication.



**Speaker Biography:** Julie Sealine, M.S., is an Implementation Specialist for Really Great Reading. She began her career as an instructor at the Horace Mann Laboratory School at Northwest Missouri State University, teaching students from kindergarten all the way through pre-service teachers. After moving to Iowa, she spent years in Iowa public schools as a teacher and reading specialist. She also provided professional development and consulting for the Iowa Department of Education throughout the state. Now with Really Great Reading, Julie is honored to be able to continue working with teachers and students to grow decoding skills in schools across the nation. She is a member of The Reading League.

**Session Abstract:** Decoding quickly and effortlessly is a basic skill evident in readers who comprehend well. Struggling readers who have gaps in their basic reading skills will likely face frustration and difficulty in multiple subjects. Millions of students in grades 3-12 experience undiagnosed decoding (or word-level) difficulties that hamper fluent reading and make reading a source of frustration. This presentation will help educators understand and implement five keys to helping adolescents with decoding difficulties. We will pinpoint many free resources that are critical to success. Educators will leave this session empowered to diagnose and begin to correct their adolescent students' decoding difficulties with techniques that are age-appropriate, effective, and fun!



# The Reading League Conference Abstract and Biography Listing

Conference Live Date: October 27, 2020

<https://thereadingleague.uscreen.io>

Page 1 of 13

## Julie Washington

### Culturally Relevant Texts: What is Their Place in Improving Reading Outcomes for Minority Students?



**Speaker Biography:** Dr. Julie Washington, PhD is a Professor and Chair of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders in the College of Education and Human Development at Georgia State University (GSU) in Atlanta, GA (USA). She is also Co-Director of the Center for Research on the Challenges of Acquiring Language and Literacy, a unique Center focused on language and literacy research in high risk urban, and impaired populations. Currently, Dr. Washington's research is focused on the intersection of literacy, language variation, and poverty. In particular, her work focuses on understanding the role of cultural dialect in the identification of reading disabilities in school-aged African American children and on disentangling the relationship between

language production and comprehension on development of reading and early language skills for children growing up in poverty. Dr. Washington directs the Georgia Learning Disabilities Research Innovation Hub funded by the National Institutes of Health, Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute on Child Health and Human Development.

**Session Abstract:** Every year for many years now a list of children's books representing diverse populations is published by a major U.S. university. Each year the verdict is the same: there are not enough books being published that reflect the diversity of classrooms in the U.S. How much does diversity in books and culturally relevant stories really matter for the development of reading? This presentation will focus on the current state of thinking about the impact of culturally relevant texts for improving reading outcomes of African American students.



# The Reading League Conference Abstract and Biography Listing

Conference Live Date: October 27, 2020

<https://thereadingleague.uscreen.io>

Page 1 of 13

## Natalie Wexler

### The Knowledge Gap: What It Is and How to Narrow It



**Speaker Biography:** Natalie Wexler is an education writer and the author of *The Knowledge Gap: The Hidden Cause of America’s Broken Education System—and How to Fix It* (Avery 2019). She is also the co-author, with Judith C. Hochman, of *The Writing Revolution: A Guide to Advancing Thinking Through Writing in All Subjects and Grades* (Jossey-Bass, 2017), and a senior contributor to the education channel on Forbes.com. Her articles and essays on education and other topics have appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Atlantic, and other publications. She has spoken on education before a wide variety of groups and appeared on a number of TV and radio shows, including Morning Joe and NPR’s On Point and 1A. She lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband and has two adult children.

**Session Abstract:** Despite massive efforts, the gap between students at the top and bottom of the socioeconomic scale hasn’t narrowed in 50 years. One overlooked reason: elementary schools spend hours every week on decontextualized reading comprehension “skills,” like “finding the main idea,” leaving little or no time for social studies and science. This is especially true in schools where test scores are low. Evidence from cognitive science shows that reading comprehension depends far more on how much knowledge the reader has about the topic than on abstract skills. The more general knowledge you have, the better you do on reading tests—and often, in life. To narrow the gap, we need to immerse all children, in content-rich subjects, building their knowledge beginning in kindergarten if not before—exactly the opposite of what most schools have been doing.