



Editor: Ruth Berg

IRA Honors Massachusetts

The following local councils received HONOR COUNCIL status from the International Reading Association. Honor Council status is awarded to those councils that have conducted well-rounded programs serving their members and the community. Nine Massachusetts Reading Association councils received this award for the year 2010-2011.

- **Greater Boston Council** – 29 years
Jean L. Helstrom, President
- **Nobscot Council** - 28 years
Sherry Alleman, President
- **Central Massachusetts Council** –
27 years
Martha V. Strachan, President
- **South Shore Council** - 27 years
Mary Ellen Caesar, President
- **Phyllis Allen Smith North Shore Council** –
25 years
Pamela Lavochnik, President
- **Southeast Regional Council** – 23 years
Bonnie Standring, President
- **Cape Cod Council** – 16 years
Judith Werner, President
- **Massachusetts Association of College and University Reading Educators (MACURE)** –
13 years
Pamela Mason, President
- **Berkshire Reading Council** – 8 years
Catherine Salvini, President

In addition, **Greater Boston Council** is the only council in Massachusetts, and one of only 16 councils of the International Reading Council to have achieved Honor Council status since the program began.

The **Massachusetts Reading Association**, under the leadership of Lori DiGisi, has been granted the AWARD OF EXCELLENCE for the twenty-third year. This award was presented to MRA for organizing and implementing a wide range of activities that serve and support local councils and their members, contribute to education, and coincide with and support the programs and goals of the International Reading Association.



Back Row: C. Salvini, B. Standring, P. Mason, M. E. Caesar, G. LaPointe (for P. Lavochnik),
Front Row: T. Marr, IRA State Coordinator, S. Alleman, J. Werner, J. Helstrom
Not Shown: M. Strachan

Thanks to all of you. You have made these awards possible!

A Message from the President



It is with such pleasure that I write to all of you as I begin my year as President of MRA. First, I hope you enjoyed MRA's forty-second annual Conference, *Setting Sail for New Horizons in Literacy*. Our keynote and luncheon speakers, Irene Fountas, Marjory Lipson, Patricia MacLachlan, Regie Routman, Nonie Lesaux, and Vicki Risko, were fantastic and had so many insights to share. The President's dinner, the night before the conference began, was exceptional as then President Lori DiGisi and our current IRA State Coordinator Terrie Marr were able to highlight the hard work done by a number of our local councils who had put in so much effort to obtain Honor Council status. Congratulations to all of you! The conference is made possible by hundreds of volunteers, those who present, chair sessions, work the registration tables, etc. We are MRA, and we make it happen. Thanks to all of you. In addition, we must all applaud Past President Lori DiGisi for her wonderful leadership through the last year.

As I begin my presidency, it is important to share goals for this year that were defined through the strategic planning meeting. These goals evolve from five areas: Professional Development, Research, Publications and Public Relations, Advocacy for Literacy, and Organizational Structure. In considering the first area, that of Professional Development, Sherry Sausville is already hard at work planning the MRA conference: *Comprehension, Imagine That!* to be held on April 12 and 13, 2012. Other members of the board will begin planning a 2012 Fall Institute. In the area of research, our

Studies and Research Committee has been working diligently on identifying issues in vocabulary instruction, and that completed project will soon be sent out to everyone via email. In addition, the Sylvia D. Brown Scholarship will be redirected to its original purpose of supporting quantitative and/or qualitative research. In the goal of Publications and Public Relations, MRA is going wild through web-based connections such as the Ning, Twitter, Facebook and, of course, our redesigned and always current (thanks to Joan Tuttle) web page. Under the goal of Advocacy for Literacy, MRA is fortunate to have numerous members who support our goals of effective literacy instruction for all. Evelyn Wall and Cynthia Rizzo, with their tireless energy, keep us abreast of political happenings. But it takes all of us to advocate for literacy practices, policies and activities that promote learning for all students. Under the final goal, Organizational Structure, we are near completion of two areas that are of importance to MRA. The first is a Policy and Procedure Handbook that we are finding necessary to help members of the board understand the expectations of their roles. Clarifying these roles will ease the transition that occurs as new boards are formed. The second area involves the MRA archives. MRA has a rich past, which now includes 42 conferences! The board is happy to announce that we were able to secure archival space and aid from Bridgewater State University (BSU). Elaine Bukowiecki will be working with the archivist at BSU as we begin to place artifacts of MRA's past and future in their first permanent home.

The future of MRA is what we make it. I am looking forward to my year as MRA's president and getting to meet many of you at local council events. Please feel free to email me at nwitherell@bridgew.edu with any suggestions, questions, or if you'd like to join an MRA committee. I hope you have an easy end to your academic year and the best of summers. I like to think of summer as a time for personal and professional growth. I wish you the best in both!

Sincerely,
Nancy Witherell

Patricia MacLachlan Receives MRA Award

In October 2005, MRA established the Massachusetts Reading Association Children's Literature Award. This award is given annually to recognize an author or illustrator whose complete works have made a significant and lasting contribution to literature for children.

To receive this award:

- an author or illustrator must have received at least one major award;
- some of the books by the nominee must be notable and leading examples of the genre to which they belong; and
- the author's or illustrator's books must have been available to children for at least ten years.

Noted children's author Patricia MacLachlan has been awarded the 2011 MRA Children's Literature Award, which she accepted at the association's annual conference in April. She joins an illustrious group of previous winners, including Lois Lowry, Katherine Patterson, Marc Brown, Jerry, Gloria Jean, and Myles Pinkney, and Jane Yolen

In her keynote address, which she delivered as the kick-off to the conference's Authors and Appetizers Program, Patricia spoke of the importance of family in her life and writing and of her expanding definition of family. Her aptly entitled address, "The Family I Call Mine," described the growing, family-like connections she has developed over the years with readers, neighbors, and some others. She humorously illustrated how she uses the storyteller's prerogative to transform people and connections into ingredients of her tales.

From the very beginning, family ties are evident in Patricia's work. In her first picture book, *The Sick Day*, a doting father cares for his cold-stricken daughter, while in another, *Through Grandpa's Eyes*, a boy learns from his blind grandfather how to "see" the world with all his senses. Later books, such as *Sarah, Plain and Tall* and its sequels, *Skylark*, *Caleb's Story*, and

More Perfect than the Moon, also focus on the relationships that bind people and form the fabric of their lives.

Born in Wyoming, Patricia MacLachlan has lived most of her life in Massachusetts. She has a strong connection to the wide-open prairie, and says, "I carry around a little bag of prairie dirt with me, like a part of my past."

Patricia's writing career began over 30 years ago and includes both picture books and middle-grade novels. Along the way she has garnered many awards and accolades. These include the Newbery Medal for *Sarah, Plain and Tall* (1985), which also won the Scott O'Dell Historical Fiction Award and was named a *New York Times* Notable Children's Book of the Year; the Parent's Choice Award and Horn Book Fanfare citation for *the Facts and Fictions of Minna Pratt* (1989); the *Boston Globe-Horn Book Award* for *Unclaimed Treasures* (1984); a Golden Kite Award for *Arthur for the Very First Time* (1980); and the National Humanities Medal in 2002 for her body of work. She most recently published the middle-grade novel, *Word after Word after Word*, which received a starred review in *Booklist*. And she has taken her family ties to her writing one step further, as co-author, with her daughter, of *Painting the Wind*, *Bittle*, and *Once I Ate a Pie*.



From Left: C. Brown and M. Antonucci, Co-Chairs, Children's Authors Committee with Patricia MacLachlan

MRA Grants Literacy Award



Each year, the MRA Literacy Award recognizes organizations, institutions, and individuals that have made a significant literacy contribution at the local, state, or provincial level. The hope is that the celebration will familiarize the public with literacy activities in the community and call attention to the work that is being done by the schools and the International Reading Association (IRA) to promote literacy worldwide. The intent of the award is to recognize truly exemplary and outstanding contributions to literacy.

The 2010-2011 Massachusetts Literacy Award winner, Dr. Diane L. Lowe, has a long and distinguished career in education that began in 1964, her first year as a classroom teacher in Shelby County Public Schools, Memphis, Tennessee. She graduated from the University of Memphis with a B.S. in Elementary Education and Music, an M.A. in Curriculum and Instruction, plus Administration and Supervision, and an Ed.D. in Reading and Language Arts and Elementary Education, Special Education, and Administration and Supervision. In addition to supervising student teachers, she became a university instructor in 1969 and an assistant professor in 1972 at the University of Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee.

Dr. Lowe joined the faculty of Framingham State University in Framingham, Massachusetts in 1973. While at Framingham State University, Diane has received multiple honors for her many contributions to the school and its students. She has served and often chaired 26 committees. Her awards include; Christa Corrigan McAuliffe Center for Education and Teaching Excellence – Christa’s Teachers Honor Role (2008),

Anniversary Recognition (2008 for 35 years of dedicated service), Distinguished Faculty Award (2006), Distinguished Service Award (1988 and 1984), and Anniversary Recognition Awards (2003, 1998, and 1993).

Besides her hard work at Framingham State University, Diane has worked with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in many initiatives, including Literacy Professional Development Partnership Grants, the Scholastic Read Program, the Massachusetts Reading Leadership Team, John Silber Early Reading Initiative, Voyager U Pilot Program, Bay State Readers Initiative, MA Test of Education Licensure (MTEL), regulations for the Certification of Educational Personnel, Folio Review Team Member, and Program Approval Review Workshop. In addition, she has also performed work for the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education.

Diane also has worked as a consultant for many districts, helping write curriculum and providing professional development in literacy. Many publishers also have used Diane’s expertise as a reviewer for publications. Throughout her career, Diane has been an incredibly active member of the International Reading Association, New England Reading Association (NERA), Nobscot Reading Council, Alpha Upsilon Alpha, and Massachusetts Association of College and University Reading Educators (MACURE). In addition, she has been president of the Massachusetts Reading Association, Nobscot Reading Association, and MACURE. Along with Jeanne Chall, Diane is a charter member of MACURE.

Over the years, Diane has completed extensive research in the use of technology in reading instruction. In addition, she has presented at local, state, regional, and national conventions and conferences; public and private schools; colleges and universities; and in her home community. She has won numerous awards for her service as an educator, including the NERA Special Recognition Award, and the Massachusetts Association of Teacher Educators, Leader in Teacher Education Award.

Diane Lowe has had a significant impact on literacy and the profession, providing inspiration to her students, other educators, and the community. She has had a remarkable career, upon which she continues to build.

Denise Garlick Granted Reading Advocate Award



Evelyn Wall and Cynthia Rizzo, Co-Chairman of the Governmental Relations Committee, presented State Representative Denise Garlick with the Massachusetts Reading Association (MRA) Reading Advocate Award. The presentation took place at the Legislative Breakfast at the MRA annual conference on April 8, 2011, in Sturbridge. The award is presented annually to someone who works to affect educational policy, funding, and legislation through effective advocacy at the local, state, or national level. The award was given to Representative Garlick in recognition of her work to promote legislation and funding for high quality education for all children.

Throughout her career, Representative Garlick has advocated for effective policies to improve the academic performance for students in the Massachusetts schools. Currently she is a member of the legislature's Joint Committee on Education, as well as a member of the Joint Committees on Public Health and Health Care Financing. In her address, she updated those MRA members in attendance on current issues related to literacy learning, closing the achievement gap, and teacher evaluation. Representative Garlick cited several bills that have been filed, including an Act Relative to Third Grade Reading Proficiency, a funding bill

to reimburse towns half the money spent on special education, and a bill for a grant to expand the learning time for literacy and math.

Students need services, and Garlick suggested that the best way for them to receive these services is for teachers to contact both their state senators and their representatives. She stated that it was important to make a case to legislators as to why a bill or line item mattered to them, their community, and family. She stressed that once a line item is eliminated from the budget, it is very difficult to reinstate it.

Representative Garlick serves as Massachusetts State Representative for the 13th Norfolk District, which includes Precincts 1 and 2 in the town of Dover, the town of Medfield, and the town of Needham. She has been a member of the House of Representatives since 2003.

MRA members were inspired by Representative Garlick's address and her commitment and support in making the necessary tools and resources available to teachers so that they can provide all children with a high quality of education.

MRA congratulates Denise Garlick on her unwavering commitment to the education of all students in the Commonwealth.



From Left: E. Bukowiecki, MRA Past President, Denise Garlick, N. Witherell, MRA President-Elect, C. Rizzo and E. Wall, Co-Chairs, Governmental Relations Committee.

MRA Grants Donald L. Landry Scholarship



In 2009, the Donald L. Landry Scholarship was instituted in order to honor former MRA president (1972-1973) and treasurer Dr. Donald L. Landry, who dedicated 40 years of service to MRA. The scholarship provides a complimentary conference registration and lunches for the recipient of the award. To be eligible, the applicant must be a current undergraduate or graduate student. Applicants were asked to submit an essay addressing the following:

If you could choose a character from children's or young adult literature to be either a paraprofessional or a student in your class, whom would you choose and why?

This year's award went to Emily Capurso, a student currently enrolled in the Masters in Education and Reading Specialist program at Lesley University. Emily chose the character Wesley, from Paul Fleischman's book *Weslandia*. Below is her essay.

"Dear Wesley,

After reading about your summer project I would like to offer you a paraprofessional position here at our school. Although it is unconventional to hire someone so young, I am very impressed by your efforts to create your own civilization and actively engage the youth of your community in the regular activities of Weslandia. You celebrate your

uniqueness rather than succumb to pressure from peers and adults to be 'normal.' In the course of a few months you have taken it upon yourself to learn and teach such things as farming, handicrafts, language, and astronomy - no small feat! Rather than use your newfound knowledge to retaliate against your tormenters, you embrace them as allies and empower them with the knowledge to be contributing members of Weslandia.

Today the education field is filled with buzzwords including project-based learning, STEM curriculum, outdoor classroom, cooperative learning, and universal design. However, with an increased emphasis on standardized test-performance and AYP, teaching professionals often feel pressured to cover content at the cost of overlooking *true* learning and understanding. Your creative approach to language, math, athletics, arts, and especially the sciences incorporates all of the buzzwords that we know make for good teaching. Further, it empowers children with a working knowledge of content material that will serve them well, such as: time and money, logic, and environmental sciences. While it is unrealistic to think that we can or should replace our entire existing curriculum with Weslandian rhetoric at this time, I do hope that you can bring the same ingenuity to our classrooms and school. Your problem-solving skills, energy, and especially your passion will serve both our students and teachers well. With so much of the world becoming digitalized, your emphasis on learning through the environment and arts will contribute to a more balanced learning community. Lastly, the care for the environment that is implicit in everything you do will foster awareness and appreciation among our students so that we can live on this earth for many generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Emily Capurso

Sylvia D. Brown Memorial Scholarship Awards

Each year, the Sylvia D. Brown Memorial Scholarship awards are given in honor, and memory, of the founding secretary and treasurer of the Massachusetts Reading Association. Established in 1976, the memorial scholarships provide MRA members with financial support to carry out significant investigations, explore a chosen area in the field of reading, or conduct a specific reading project. This year, the Scholarship Committee, headed by Gail Laffer, has selected six deserving projects.

Denise Hall and Mary Beth Teebagy were selected for their project, *Creating Life-long Readers through Literature Circles*. This project creates a love of reading for students at the Indian Head School in Hanson, by challenging students in reading and literacy. Through the use of Literature Circles, students and teachers will demonstrate enthusiasm about reading as well as make gains academically.

Closing the Achievement Gap: Implementing a Summer Reading Program for Elementary Students, a project by Patricia Kelley, was awarded a grant by the committee. Through this venture, at-risk, low income elementary students will have the opportunity to obtain and read books during the summer months. Books in English, Spanish, and Portuguese will be purchased for this project.

Nancy Meagher was chosen for her project, *The Impact of Attitudes, Values, Beliefs, Desires, and Motivations on Literacy Learning*. The purpose of this research project is to determine the impact of these factors on literacy learning for students. Children can be taught strategies, content, and concepts; however, the intrinsic motivation is the key to lifelong learning and fulfillment. For this study,

the researcher will measure students' attitudes about themselves in a two-month project requiring students to read at least five selected books, write summaries, discuss the books with peers, and then vote on a favorite book.

Gail La Mothe and Karen Williams were selected for their project, *Rehearsing Recreational Reading*. This project will build a classroom library for 200 students at the Learning Prep High School. The students, who have various learning disabilities, will be able to borrow books based on their interests and abilities. By initiating in-school incentives, students will be motivated to read books outside of school for their own pleasure.

Stacey Pattou-Hammond was chosen for her action research project, *Increasing Students' Reading Engagement through Parent Partnerships*. The project is intended to increase at-home reading while creating parent knowledge, awareness, and appreciation of the crucial role reading plays. By choosing books at the child's current reading and interest level, students will have an enjoyable reading experience.

¡Nos Gusta Leer! (We Like to Read), a project which will be led by Linda R. Schwetz, Lucia Castineira, and Sarah Novogrodsky, will serve the youngest members of the Amigos School, a two-way Language Immersion School. The project will provide leveled books in both English and Spanish for at home reading. Bags will be available and will contain three books on the same reading level. Books may have a common theme, but they will offer students a large variety of authors and language structures.



Back Row: D. Hall, P. Kelley, L. Schwetz, G. La Mothe, G. Laffer
Front Row: M. B. Teebagy, N. Meagher, K. Williams

MRA Awards Minigrants

The Massachusetts Reading Association believes in the promotion of literacy across the state. We encourage local councils to expand and build upon their accomplishments by offering financial assistance. The goal is to provide funding for literacy projects that enhance educators' expertise in the field of literacy and/or promote literacy in local communities.

For the 2010-2011 year seven local councils were approved for funding.

- [Berkshire Reading Council](#)
- [Cape Cod Reading Council](#)
- [Central Mass Reading Council](#)
- [Greater Boston Reading Council](#)
- [Massachusetts Association of College and University Reading Educators \(MACURE\)](#)
- [Nobscot Reading Council](#)
- [Southeast Regional Reading Council](#)

Six of the seven proposals submitted are ongoing initiatives and one began now this year. Organizations to be served by the 2010-2011 MRA Minigrant Projects include: hospitals, doctors' offices, local communities, after-school programs, nonprofit organizations, and English Language Learners. It is estimated that these projects have the potential to benefit thousands of children and adults throughout the state.

[Berkshire Reading Council](#) -- *Dr. Seuss Night*

Council members will take turns reading and performing various Dr. Seuss books to the children in the audience. This will include a visit by *The Cat in the Hat* himself. During intermission, *Green Eggs and Ham* and juice will be served. Council members will distribute a Dr. Seuss book of choice to each child in attendance at the conclusion of the program. The event will take place in a local bookstore. Approximately 50-75 individuals will benefit from the project.

[Cape Cod Reading Council](#) – *Cool After-School Games: Promoting Children's Literacy Skills and Social Growth.*

Cape Cod Child Development is a community resource that provides childcare, educational and developmental intervention, and family support services to Cape Cod families. This grant will be used to purchase educational games for three of their centers located in Falmouth, Hyannis, and Yarmouth. Each day, children have about 45 minutes of unstructured indoor time after their homework has been completed. The games will be made available to students during this free block. The project will address part of the mission at the centers: children will learn language, reading, and vocabulary through interactive and fun activities. Council members will purchase, distribute, and explain the games. Approximately 60 children in grades 1 to 5 are enrolled in the after-school programs and will be served by this project.

[Central Mass Reading Council](#) -- *Spoonful of Sugar – Spoonful of Medicine*

This literacy project is presently functioning at a medical clinic housed in an economically depressed neighborhood in the Worcester area. It serves some of the area's newest immigrants. This project helps the Reach Out and Read program realize its vital mission, when every patient receives an annual book at his or her well visit. The Central Mass Reading Council wishes to continue to provide such books through individual member contributions, as well as from grant funds which allow it to purchase the more difficult-to-obtain books in foreign languages. In addition, the council has recently included child-life specialists (individuals working with seriously ill children within a hospital setting) in their community outreach program. These professionals utilize books to "normalize" the environment for young patients and provide a means to explain medical procedures and explore the emotional issues associated with illness. Approximately 100 families will be served by this project.

Greater Boston Reading Council --
Storybook Character Breakfast

This event, held at the McGlynn Middle School in Medford, a collaboration with the Medford Family Network. When families arrive, they first will be provided with breakfast. The children will participate in the various activities such as meeting with and having an instamatic photo taken with Curious George, creating a frame for the photo, enjoying stories read aloud, bookmark-making, having their faces painted, and other creative activities related to literacy. In addition, children are able to select a free book to take home, and parents receive informational literacy packets. Council members are available to answer any literacy questions parents may have. Approximately 100 children representing over 80 families are served by this project.

MACURE -- *Peck Community School Parents Support Learning at Home*

The Peck Full Service Community School in Holyoke is seeking funds to weave together two of the school's priorities – fostering family engagement and improving students' reading comprehension. Reading Comprehension is Peck's explicit school-wide instructional focus during the current academic year. This has been identified by faculty as the area of improvement that would have the greatest impact on overall student achievement. Some parents are bilingual (Spanish-English) and many are Spanish-dominant. All of the family programming that occurs at Peck has the overall objective of strengthening the bridge between home and school learning. A monthly bilingual reading circle will promote parents' own literacy while building awareness of effective strategies to reinforce their child's learning at home. A lending library will complement this effort, as well as introduce families new to Peck. Approximately 25 Peck parents will participate in the Reading Circle and approximately 50 others will be introduced to the new Family Lending Library.

Nobscot Reading Council -- *Project Just Because*

The Educational Year Round Children's Books Program is one of the programs offered by the non-profit agency "Just Because" as part of its commitment to promoting education and literacy to children and families. Providing age-appropriate books allows parents to read to their young children, as well as provide children with the opportunity to enjoy reading on their own. The goal is to help stimulate minds and give the gift of reading. Approximately 75-100 families from Metro West communities will be served.

Southeast Regional Reading Council -- *A Bookcase of Multicultural and Multilingual Books*

This project will add to the mini-library of diverse linguistic literature for the children and their families at Head Start in Taunton. The books will be placed in an existing bookcase with a nameplate bearing the name of the council. Taunton is an urban community with rich linguistic and cultural diversity. The languages and cultures represented are primarily Portuguese, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The books will allow these children, their families, and their teachers to interact with literacy materials representing these various languages and cultures.

You Can Find Us On

Facebook: www.facebook.com/MAreads

Our Website: www.massreading.org

The Ning: www.mraread.ning.com

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/#!/mra read>

Sister Madelon Morris Service Award

Each year, the Massachusetts Reading Association honors those local Massachusetts reading councils that have completed the requirements for the annual Sister Madelon Morris Service Award. This award has been named for an especially dedicated and longtime MRA member who worked tirelessly, year after year, at the registration table of our annual conference. Her countless hours of service and her unfailing devotion to MRA and to literacy make it very appropriate that our annual award for service be named in her honor.

The Sister Madelon Morris Service Award recognizes the concerted effort and hard work of many members from each local council that earns it. Council presidents coordinate local efforts to ensure that each of the eleven requirements is met. The Service Award is an important tribute to their work and dedication. The following local councils were presented the award for 2010-2011:

- **Central Massachusetts Council**
Martha V. Strachan, President
- **Greater Boston Council**
Jean L. Helstrom, President
- **Massachusetts Association of College and University Reading Educators**
Pamela Mason, President
- **Southeast Regional Council**
Bonnie Standring, President
- **South Shore Reading Council**
Mary Ellen Caesar, President



From Left: B. Standring, J. Eastep, M. Correia (for P. Mason), J. Thompson, Director of Membership, M. Strachan, J. Helstrom, M. E. Caesar

A Sneak Preview



Mark your calendar for MRA's 43rd Annual Conference on April 12 and 13, 2012 in Sturbridge! The conference committee is looking forward to an exciting array of presenters, and proposals are arriving daily. According to the state, these dates are after the MCAS testing. We do have some wonderful keynotes in place, so you can look forward to:

Thursday, April 12, 2012

- Morning Keynote:
Timothy Rasinski
- Sylvia D. Brown Luncheon:
To Be Decided
- Afternoon Keynote:
Rosemary Wells
(Children's Literature Award)

Friday, April 13, 2012

- Morning Keynote:
Jeff Wilhelm
- Leo Hanley Luncheon:
To Be Decided
- Afternoon Ending Keynote:
Carrice C. Cummins
(IRA's President-Elect)

The year 2012 is a time of change. Comprehension is in the forefront. Our conference, *Comprehension, Imagine That!*, will focus on this important area and its relation to the new federal Common Core standards.

Sherry Sausville
Conference Chair