



College of Education
Literacy Research
Center and Clinic

2021 Annual Report



Dear Friends of Literacy,

I stepped into the role of executive director of the UW Literacy Research Center and Clinic on July 1, 2021, and I hit the ground running. I have been busy learning my new role, negotiating a transition, and learning all about the exciting work of the LRCC. I have had the opportunity to participate in some past projects as a faculty member, but my new perspective as director leaves me in awe of all that has happened and of all that lies ahead as we work to support schools, teachers, and students in literacy in our state.

There is much discussion in our state about K-3 reading this legislative session, and this reflects a national trend. I had the opportunity to support the reveal of a new guidance document for teaching reading K-3 from the Wyoming Department of Education. The LRCC was involved in drafting this document, and it will serve as a solid guide for working with literacy in the early grades. We are utilizing this document in our work with schools in the state. Several of us affiliated with the LRCC are working on state English language arts literacy standards revision. Finally, along with my dean and two endowed chairs, I was invited to present at a Joint Education Committee meeting to discuss best practices in K-3 literacy and UW's programs and commitment to sending out prepared literacy teachers. I was very appreciative of being included in this important conversation, and I'm excited that our state is focusing closely on preparing our youngest readers and writers for academic success.

Shared in this report is the highlight of my summer—the LRCC partnered with Albany County School District to offer a summer school session for K-5 students in reading and writing. Seeing sixty-two smiling student faces—and plenty of smiles from tutors and coaches—was a great way to start each morning in July. By offering small group instruction with layered teaching and coaching, we were able to meet many needs. I think the best outcome was a student who made her grandma get up in her pajamas to bring her to school in the middle of summer. Teachers and coaches offered feedback, and one teacher commented that it was the “best professional development I’ve ever had as a teacher so far.”

This summer I ran a fourth and fifth grade book club for a group of students who had been missing the social aspect of reading. It was a huge success, and we hope to use it as a pilot for small group work in our clinic. This semester, I am tutoring a third grader alongside our other one-on-one tutors. I love doing this. It's great working with a student and reminding myself of the many aspects of teaching and tutoring. I also enjoy sharing my work with the other tutors and collaborating and learning together. I am able to have sophomore-level practicum students from other courses observe my tutoring live via technology and then debrief with them and get their input on my teaching.

The work taking place at the LRCC is inspiring and constant. Our literacy faculty and affiliated faculty are the best in the nation, and I'm blessed to work alongside of them. I have found the LRCC to be a place of passion for supporting all readers and writers. I think you will see evidence of this passion in the sampling of projects on the horizon.

I started at UW way back in 1985 after graduating from Wheatland High School. I left for a few years and taught in New Mexico, Arizona, and Wisconsin, but when my family and I returned to Laramie, I was back home, and I'm proud to serve the state and the university in my new role.

Please reach out or stop in to see the clinic space. We welcome visitors and would love to connect.

Amy Spiker, Executive Director
aspiker@uwyo.edu

Completed and Ongoing Projects

THE PARTNERSHIP OF THE WYOMING DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, REGION 11, FREMONT COUNTY, AND THE LITERACY RESEARCH CENTER AND CLINIC

The Wyoming Department of Education, the University of Wyoming Literacy Research Center and Clinic, and the Region 11 Comprehensive Center have partnered for two years to improve K-3 reading for struggling readers by increasing the effectiveness of Tier 1 instruction so that all students gain foundational reading skills. This project is supported by a 5-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education awarded to McREL International and the Region 11 Comprehensive Center. Three districts and schools have participated in the on-site LRCC needs assessment process, including Fremont County School Districts #6, #25, and #38 and Wind River Elementary School, Willow Creek Elementary School, and Arapahoe Elementary School. The on-site needs assessment includes classroom visitations, teacher and principal interviews, data review, and analysis of teacher survey information. Meetings with school staff will be convened to discuss the needs assessment summary reports and identify reading improvement goals. The LRCC will work with school staff to begin selecting professional development activities to support each school's reading improvement goal. Professional development will include asynchronous, synchronous, and on-site training. Each school will develop a knowledge management site (SharePoint, Google drive, or Teams) to archive training modules and resources.

EARLY LITERACY MODULES AND TRAINING

Thanks to the work of Dr. Nikki Baldwin and Dr. Pauline Harris, a professional learning package based on inclusive evidence-based understandings of children's literacies learning and practices across diverse contexts and circumstances has been created and shared with early literacy educators across the state. This package contains 24 stand-alone modules that have been arranged in a sequence that is logical for coherence but is not prescriptive so that facilitators and educators may choose what modules with which they wish to engage and in what order. Along with the modules, educators will meet for workshops and will participate in site-based action inquiries. Educators will be encouraged to relate their literacy inquiries to their respective site's areas of thematic interest and concern—thereby encouraging and validating educators' agency and ownership in their own learning, ensuring the program's contextual responsiveness, and enabling differentiation according to educators' self-identified strengths and needs. Action inquiries will be supported within the modules and in workshops and may at the facilitators' discretion include site visits, face-to-face interactions, and online interactions.







COLLABORATION BETWEEN ST. STEPHEN'S INDIAN SCHOOL AND THE LITERACY RESEARCH CENTER AND CLINIC

The Arapaho language is on the verge of extinction. At present, only about 60 Northern Arapaho people—out of 10,000 Northern Arapaho people on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming—speak fluent Arapaho. Working with a grant from the Bureau of Indian Education, St. Stephen's Indian School is creating an Arapaho/English dual-language immersion school, St. Stephen's Northern Arapaho Language Culture Immersion Program, to help revitalize the Arapaho language and culture. UW College of Education Emeritus Professor Dr. Tim Rush is the grant coordinator for this project. Superintendent of St. Stephen's Indian School Frank No Runner wanted to document the process of making St. Stephen's Indian School into a dual language immersion school and sought a partnership with the LRCC. The purpose of the research partnership is to support, document, and inform the implementation of the program. In short, using a critical participatory action approach, the research team—which includes LRCC researchers and our grant consultant Professor Pauline Harris from the University of South Australia—is collaboratively studying with students, teachers, school administrators, families, and cultural mentors the process of creating the educational structure and process.

K-12 TUTORING

After a year of online tutoring, we have been able to move back to in-person tutoring in the clinic space. We currently have 17 students, ranging from 1st grade to 10th grade. We have eight tutors and an undergraduate intern working with students to support needs in reading and writing. We have a literacy coach present at each session for tutor support, and we plan to have several tutor informal gatherings this semester to share ideas and collaborate. This layering of support provides targeted tutoring based upon student needs and interests. It allows the tutoring to be truly individually tailored to each student. In addition, this year we have two undergraduate practicum students who will be observing tutoring and will share in reflection, planning, and assessment. They will each teach at least one session as well. It is exciting to see these layers of teacher preparation and tutoring come together.

DYSLEXIA ALEXA BRIEFINGS

Our work toward providing unique and long-lasting professional development specific to dyslexia has made a lot of progress, despite a few challenges and unexpected hurdles. Our first skill, Dyslexia Awareness, has gone through two full review processes by the Amazon Alexa skill approval team. Because our skill is more complex in content, length, and user engagement, the approval team has asked us to make several adjustments to our coding. These required alterations, although unexpected, have each improved and advanced the overall skill. Additionally, this experience has informed our development of other skills and will inevitably save time in all subsequent skill submissions. In addition to technical changes, Amazon has scrutinized our skill to see if it is endorsed by the University of Wyoming. It has the support of many administrators from within and outside the College of Education, and we have secured an official UW letter indicating that we have permission to use the UW logo and name. While under review, we are hopeful that this document will meet the approval team's expectations. Finally, we are in the process of correcting one final coding issue and expect full approval of our skill once this update is made.

Additional projects include the following.

- Our communications specialist on-deck to announce the publication of the Dyslexia Awareness skill once it meets final approval. This new professional development opportunity will be shared through multiple venues, including a College of Education news story, Facebook, Instagram, and so on. Additionally, we are in the process of securing a domain name and data hosting service to provide servers, automated backups, and additional storage, which will be beneficial as we continue expanding our work.
- We also have two additional skills that will be submitted for review shortly after the approval of the Dyslexia Awareness skill. One of these two skills has been completed and is in the queue for submission, and the other skill has a completed script and is midway through the coding process. We are particularly excited about this skill, as it will include video demonstration for those individuals using smart phones, tablets, or Echo shows to access the material.
- We have also been in conversations with the Professional Teaching Standards Board regarding the provision of professional development credit for re-licensure upon the completion of dyslexia skills. Because this new format does not align to typical professional development credit, determining number of credit hours to award has been challenging. The board is excited about this work, however, and is committed to helping us determine an appropriate credit value for each skill completed.
- Although not directly tied to the funding of these skills, faculty from this team and collaborative universities are in the process of analyzing data for a usability study, specific to professional development Alexa Skills. Preliminary data indicate that teachers enjoy interacting with these skills and are excited to use this methodology for professional advancement. Findings from this study will inform the development of new dyslexia skills, as well as determine needed updates for dyslexia skills that have already been published.





LITERACY LEADERSHIP MODULES

The Literacy Leadership Modules were born of a conversation between UW College of Education team members and Kenny Jones, executive director of the Wyoming Elementary School Principals Association. When asked what the university could do to support association and the principals in the schools, he responded that principals need help understanding quality literacy instruction so they can support teachers in their classrooms. In a timely response to that request, the LRCC, literacy faculty, school leadership faculty, and the Trustees Education Initiative began the work of developing the Literacy Leadership modules. The modules are designed to be delivered asynchronously and are all built to be stand-alone so principals can work their teachers to determine the greatest needs in their schools. Nationally recognized experts in literacy instruction have supported the work of Literacy Leadership by creating customized videos on a specific aspect of literacy instruction. The topics range from understanding a comprehensive framework for literacy instruction, vocabulary, writing, multi-tiered systems of support, and engaging with community to improve literacy proficiency in schools. There are 15 modules in the program. The first set of modules is set to be distributed to elementary principals as early as mid-October. Students in the literacy Ph.D. program will facilitate the principals' learning by providing support for participants as they learn and apply the ideas suggested in the modules. The modules are free of charge for schools to use for their professional learning and can be taken for license renewal credit through the Professional Teaching Standards Board.

ALBANY COUNTY K-5 SUMMER SCHOOL

In July 2021, the LRCC partnered with Albany County School District to offer a summer school session for students in kindergarten through fifth grades. We used our tutoring model to serve sixty-two students in small group instruction. Each small group had a teacher and support from a literacy coach. The small group instruction was tailored to individual student needs in both reading and writing. The four-week session was a huge success and has led to planning for future projects and follow up in the district.



ONLINE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The online professional learning project has concluded and was a big success. There were over 700 K-12 Wyoming teachers who participated and were able to learn new research-based approaches to providing reading and writing instruction in their classrooms. Teachers were able to access courses on demand and complete them on their own schedule providing them with freedom and choice in what they learned and when they learned it. Eighty-two percent of teachers preferred engaging in professional learning under this model. Collectively, teachers improved their knowledge of literacy research and instruction by an average of 48%. Courses are still available, and teachers can earn credits for them.

WYOMING STATE ELA STANDARDS REVIEW

Literacy Endowed Chair Dr. Cindy Brock and Executive Director Dr. Amy Spiker have been participating in the state standards review process for K-12 English Language Arts Standards. This work is critical for supporting reading and writing proficiency in our state.



Research Projects

MULTIFACETED VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

PATRICK MANYAK

My current research project involves working with 14 kindergarten teachers at the Aspen Early Learning Center in Riverton, Wyoming, to implement and test the effects of multifaceted vocabulary instruction. During the first year of 2020–21, I assessed approximately 140 kindergarten students in the fall and spring using a standardized measure of general vocabulary and my own assessment of target words, modeled vocabulary lessons in each of the 14 classes, conducted fidelity observations of vocabulary lessons, and met with the team of teachers by Zoom throughout the year to discuss the project. Overall, the fidelity observations demonstrated that the teachers were all implementing key elements of the vocabulary lessons to a high degree. Initial analysis of the student outcomes on a standardized measure of vocabulary indicates that the participating students made greatly accelerated growth in general vocabulary vis-à-vis the test's norming sample. Specifically, the mean score for the Aspen students at the beginning of the year showed that the group was at the 45% in vocabulary knowledge, and the end-of-year mean score for the group was 68%. To my knowledge, this kind of accelerated growth in general vocabulary knowledge is unprecedented in vocabulary research. This summer, I revised the vocabulary lessons based on teacher feedback. The teachers are excited for a second chance to implement the instruction beginning this fall, and I have identified a control school in order to conduct a quasi-experimental trial that will provide stronger evidence of the impact of the intervention.



DISCIPLINARY LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERACY CLASSROOMS, APPLICATION OF A HEURISTIC

LESLIE RUSH, TODD REYNOLDS (UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING), JODI LAMPI (UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN ILLINOIS), AND JODI HOLSCHUH (TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY)

Our in-progress study builds on a strong record of research on disciplinary literacy in English language arts to apply a heuristic to two sets of participants: preservice English methods students and developmental literacy students. We are attempting to determine the impact of the “Say Something Interpretive” strategy on both preservice teachers and developmental literacy students in college in terms of their use of interpretive moves when reading a literary text. We have received Institutional Review Board approval from both the University of Wyoming and Texas State University to conduct both parts of the study and are collecting data with preservice teachers during the week of September 20. Our data collection with college students in developmental literacy has been delayed until spring semester due to the pandemic, as the courses are currently being taught online. We will collect additional data with our preservice teacher participants as they move into classrooms for student teaching in the spring semester. We are grateful to the donors who have provided funding for this research and appreciate the opportunity to add to the scholarly literature in this area.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

AMY SPIKER, CHERILYN SMITH

This year, we are using a new assessment protocol in our tutoring sessions. It is allowing us to embed assessment into instruction and results in less time assessing and more time in teaching and supporting students. This protocol, called the Listening While Reading, Watching While Writing protocol, is being studied in a project to see if it is effective in identifying student needs for targeted instruction. If it proves effective for the needs of students and the tutoring context, we will share our results and continue to use it with students.

CAROL MEAD’S LEADERS IN LITERACY AWARD

John Jorgensen of Casper, founder of the Sue Jorgensen Library Foundation and Wyoming Reads Program, was the recipient of the 2020 Carol Mead’s Leaders in Literacy Award given by the University of Wyoming Literacy Research Center and Clinic’s Outreach Advisory Board.

Jorgensen has demonstrated a passion for promoting literacy not only in Natrona County but also across Wyoming and outside the state. He first established the Sue Jorgensen Library Foundation in 1996 in honor of his late wife to commemorate her commitment to literacy and books. In 2006, his work expanded statewide with Wyoming Reads. Every year, Wyoming Reads gives the state’s first graders an opportunity to choose one of six hardcover books to own without cost. Nearly 7,500 Wyoming first graders received a book last year, and the program has expanded to other states, including Oregon and Minnesota.

Carol Mead’s Leaders in Literacy Award is a way to recognize and honor Wyoming citizens, organizations, businesses, or communities that have made substantial contributions that enhance the literacy development among the Wyoming community. Formerly known as the First Lady’s Leaders in Literacy Award, the honor was established in 2016 by the LRCC Outreach Advisory Board to recognize the work of Wyoming’s former first lady, Carol Mead, to promote literacy education throughout the state. The award in 2019 was renamed to honor the legacy of the former first lady and her impact on the literacy and education of students in Wyoming.



INTRODUCING DEAN SCOTT THOMAS

The LRCC has been honored to work with our new College of Education Dean Scott Thomas, most recently the dean of the University of Vermont's College of Education and Social Services. Thomas is UW's first John P. "Jack" Ellbogen Dean of the College of Education. He began his position July 1, 2021. This endowed deanship is supported by the John P. Ellbogen Foundation.

Thomas held his previous position since 2016 at the University of Vermont, where he also served as interim dean of the university's College of Nursing and Health Sciences for almost two years. Before that, he was dean of the School of Educational Studies at Claremont Graduate University, where he also served as vice president of strategy and academic planning.

Thomas holds a Ph.D. in education policy, leadership, and research methods from the University of California – Santa Barbara, where he also earned his bachelor's degree in sociology. His areas of expertise include higher education finance, policy, and organizations; the sociology of education; and statistical modeling.

His career also has included faculty positions at the University of Arizona, the University of Hawaii – Manoa, and the University of Georgia. He has been editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Higher Education* and president of the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Dean Thomas has been supportive of the work of the LRCC and of literacy in the state, and we are excited for what is to come in the next few years under his leadership and guidance.

Looking Forward

Many new projects are on the horizon for the LRCC. This is a sampling.

INDIAN EDUCATION FOR ALL, K-3

Dr. Cindy Brock, Dr. Kim Gustafson, and Dr. Amy Spiker are working with the Wyoming Department of Education and other entities in the state to create training materials and instructional materials for K-3 teachers to support the Indian Education for All Act in schools in the earliest grade. The desire is to work collaboratively with teachers to support their professional learning and to create materials that are developmentally appropriate for K-3 students with a focus on integrating literacy into the content instruction.

LRCC PODCASTS

Dr. Leigh Hall is leading a project to create a weekly podcast from the LRCC to highlight work in literacy around Wyoming. It will feature voices from our state in a variety of contexts and on a variety of topics.

ALBANY COUNTY SUMMER SCHOOL FOLLOW UP

Plans are underway to support the fifth graders served by summer school as they transition to the middle school. Currently, leadership is meeting and planning ways to support struggling readers in the middle school and the work is hoped to begin in spring 2022.

BIG HORN COUNTY SCHOOLS

We are engaging in a partnership with Big Horn County #1 schools to support literacy instruction and assessment K-12. We hope to support the induction of literacy coaches in the district during the summer of 2022.

ANNUAL LITERACY CONFERENCE

After offering a virtual conference this fall, it is our sincere hope that we can begin planning a face-to-face offering on campus for next year with local and national literacy experts.

BE A VOICE IN POLICY AND SUPPORT FOR WYOMING'S P-20 STUDENTS

After appearing before the Joint Education Committee, it is the strong desire of the LRCC faculty to be a voice in policy in the state and to support literacy for all of Wyoming's students.



Board of Advisors

The LRCC Board of Advisors serve to guide the work of the Literacy Research Center and Clinic. Members spread our information and mission across the state, serve as an accountability agent for our work, and select the Carol Mead Leaders in Literacy award each year. We are excited to welcome two new members to the BOA this year, Tracy Pare and Tiffany Rehbein. Their voices from their school contexts will be a valuable addition to our work.

CO-CHAIRS

Senator Jeff Wasserburger
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Affie Ellis
Tracy Pare
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