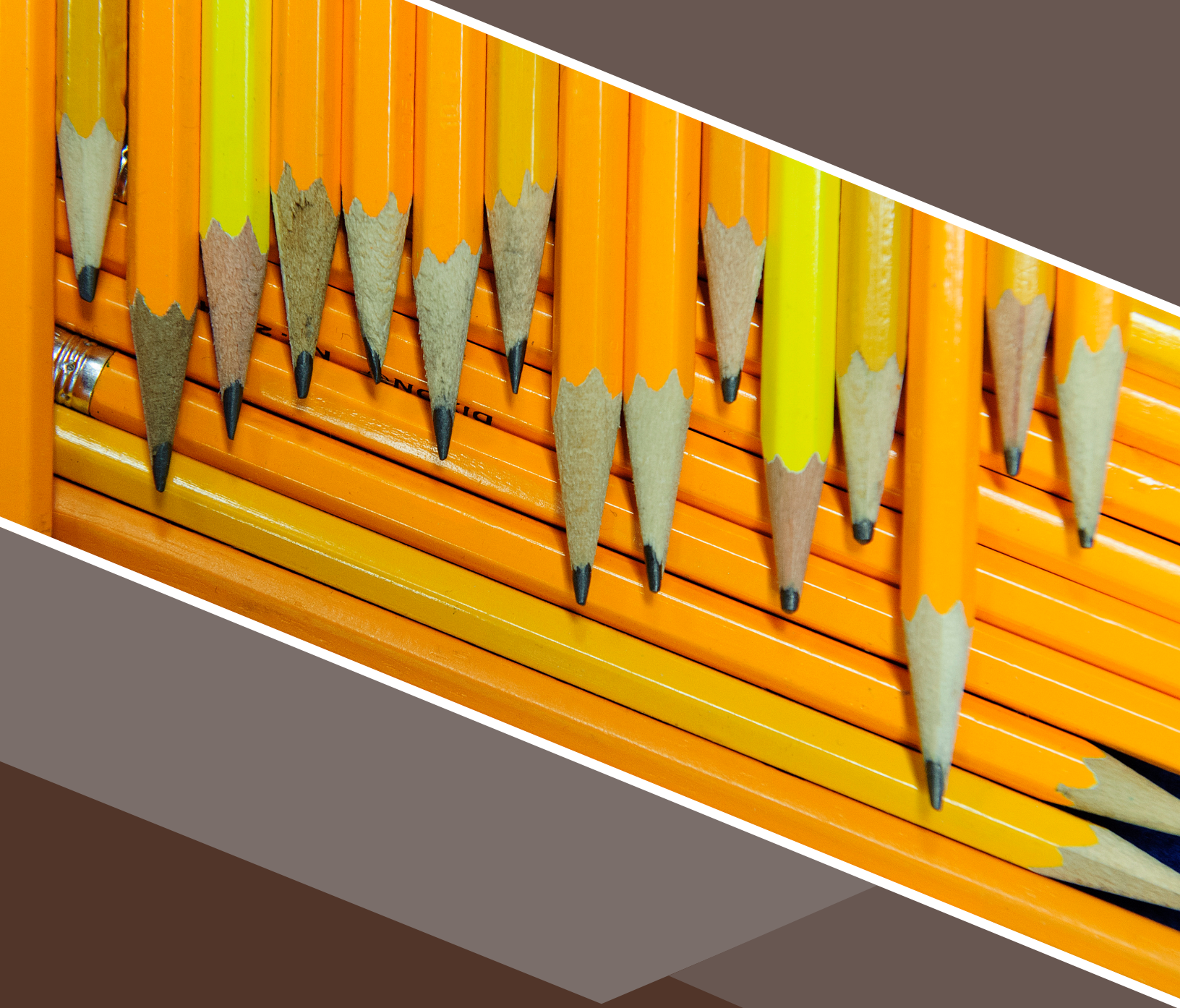




2023 ANNUAL REPORT



UNIVERSITY
OF WYOMING

College of Education
Literacy Research
Center and Clinic

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of Literacy,

I hope this letter finds you well. As I reflect on my nearly two years of service as the Interim Executive Director of the Literacy Research Center and Clinic (LRCC), I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude and pride. It has been a privilege to work with dedicated educators and witness their unwavering commitment to fostering literacy in Wyoming's schools.

Over the past two years, I have had the opportunity to traverse our beautiful state—visiting schools from Lyman to Cheyenne, Jackson Hole to Laramie, and numerous towns in between including Pinedale, Riverton, Burlington, and Cowley. The passion and dedication of educators across Wyoming have left an indelible mark on me. It is truly heartening to see the care they invest in their students, schools, and communities and the profound impact they have on literacy education.

Our journey wouldn't have been possible without the invaluable support of our numerous donors. Their generosity has been instrumental in enabling us to provide professional development and conduct needs assessments—reaching communities far and wide. We extend our heartfelt thanks to each donor for making this vital work possible.

As we approach the 10th anniversary of LRCC's statewide engagement, it is a momentous occasion for celebration. Over the past decade, the LRCC has evolved into the epicenter for literacy education, contributing to the advancement of the field through professional development, field-based research, and clinical services. This milestone is a testament to the collective efforts of our team, partners, and supporters.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has played a role in LRCC's success—educators, donors, staff, and community members alike. Your commitment and collaboration have shaped the LRCC into a beacon of excellence in literacy education.

Looking ahead, I am excited about the continued growth and impact of the LRCC as we strive to empower educators and to enhance literacy outcomes for students across Wyoming. Together, we can build on the foundation of the past decade and pave the way for even greater achievements in the years to come.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to the mission of the LRCC.

Warm regards,



Dr. Kimberly Gustafson
Interim Executive Director





LITERACY RESEARCH CENTER AND CLINIC

OUR VISION

Empowering literacy through evidence-based practices.

OUR MISSION

Teaching and researching how Wyoming students think with, acquire knowledge from, engage with, and produce a variety of texts as well as how teachers facilitate these processes. When students can more effectively process and produce texts and teachers can support students' abilities, then students are more likely to achieve personal, economic, and social fulfillment, which improves quality of life for students, their families, and their communities.

OUR VALUES

Literacy is achieved through the following values.

- **RESEARCH:** Rigorous research evidence applied in instruction to support students' comprehension and production of text.
- **ENGAGEMENT:** Collaboration and shared responsibility for students' comprehension and production of text among researchers, educators, parents, students, and the community.
- **EMPOWERMENT:** A demonstrable impact on Wyoming teachers' knowledge and skill of effective literacy instruction and on student learning.
- **EQUITY:** Instructional decisions that ensure equitable opportunities for all students to engage in active informed citizenship and succeed in a sustainable global economy.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FREMONT COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS #6 AND #38

The LRCC, the Region 11 Comprehensive Network, and the Wyoming Department of Education have partnered for the past four years to improve literacy education and instruction in Fremont County School Districts #6 and #38. The LRCC has been involved with providing professional development instructional practices and strategies for the past year and a half. Wind River Elementary is focusing on vocabulary instruction, and Arapahoe Elementary is focusing on writing instruction. Endowed Literacy Wyoming Excellence Chair, Dr. Cynthia Brock and Distinguished Teacher-in-Residence Sara Pommarane travel to Riverton once a month for onsite professional development in addition to regularly scheduled zoom meetings with the Literacy Leadership Teams in both schools as well as the Region 11 Comprehensive Network. There have been many successes and highlights to report about the collaboration. However, one of the high points to mention was the visit to Wind River Elementary by Dr. Linda Kucan, author of *Bringing Words to Life* (I.L. Beck, M.G. McKeown, and L. Kucan, 2013). This was the mentor text used by the faculty at Wind River Elementary and was a great opportunity for faculty to have rich conversations with Dr. Kucan about the vocabulary instruction that was taking place in their school. The LRCC have thoroughly enjoyed working alongside the dedicated educators in FCSD #6 and 38!

SUBLETTE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #1

The LRCC began working with Pinedale High School in spring 2023 to provide professional development in vocabulary instruction. Dr. Todd Reynolds and Abby Markley, literacy Ph.D. candidate, codeveloped vocabulary professional development with the Pinedale High School Literacy Leadership Team. Together, they developed professional development around vocabulary instruction that was uniquely tailored to meet the needs of the faculty and students at Pinedale High School. The Literacy Leadership Team chose to use *Words Their Way* (S. Templeton et al., 2015) as the mentor text to help guide instruction. The LRCC is continuing to work with Pinedale High School in fall 2023 as well as to begin work with the Pinedale Middle School. Dr. Todd Reynolds and Endowed Literacy Wyoming Excellence Chair Dr. Leslie Rush will be providing the ongoing professional development with both schools. This has been a wonderful experience working with the great folks in SCSD #1!

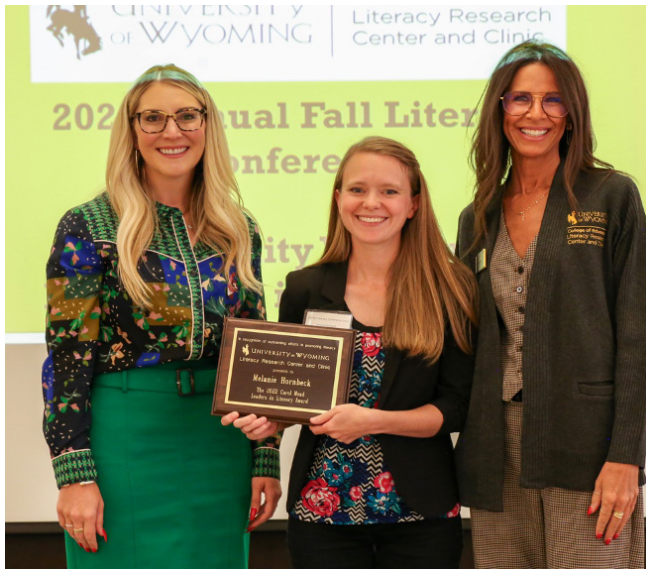


BIG HORN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #1

Beginning in fall 2023, the LRCC has begun working with the fantastic educators in Burlington and Cowley. Dr. Leslie Rush and Sara Pommarane are codeveloping professional development with the Literacy Leadership Team for grades 6–12. Together, they chose to focus on vocabulary instruction and are well on their way to providing professional development based in current research-based best practices. This is an exciting opportunity for the LRCC to work with BHCSD #1 and to help build capacity within the state. We look forward to our continued work with them.

TETON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #1

The LRCC has been working with TCSD #1 beginning in the summer of 2023 on district-wide leadership improvement. Working in collaboration and consultation with the District Literacy Team has been incredibly rewarding. As a collaborative group, the leadership team chose to do a book study on *Learning to Improve* (Bryk et al., 2021). This has been an enlightening study borrowed from the ideas of improvement science. The authors focus on six principles—make the work problem-specific and user-centered, focus on variation in performance, see the system that produces the current outcomes, we cannot improve at scale what we cannot measure, use disciplined inquiry to drive improvement, and accelerate learning through networked communities. We are excited about this work with TCSD #1 as we move forward.



Melanie Hornbeck



Jennifer Hayward

LITERACY CONFERENCE

The 16th Annual Fall Literacy Conference High Quality Vocabulary Instruction P-12 was a great success! Keynote speakers Dr. Dianna Townsend, Dr. Doris Baker, and children's author and poet Gary Soto engaged educators from all over the state. State Superintendent Megan Degenfelder presented this year's Carol Mead Leaders in Literacy Award Recipients to Melanie Hornbeck and Jennifer Hayward. We had educators from throughout Wyoming presenting in breakout sessions in the afternoon, followed by a book giveaway for everyone in attendance! There was great food, rich discussions, and sharing of ideas. We hope to see you there next year!



LRCC Tutors

TUTORING CLINIC

The goal of the LRCC is to provide individualized tutoring to school-aged students to students across the state and in Albany County School District #1. Our focus is helping children and adolescents who are experiencing difficulty learning to read and write. Clinic faculty, tutors, and coaches work collaboratively with parents, teachers, and school administrators to assess each child's strengths and needs and then implement appropriate research-based interventions.

The UW pre-service students who serve as tutors in the clinic work under the direct supervision of LRCC faculty to deepen their understanding of research-based assessment and instructional practices. Professional development experiences for tutors involve discussion and shared inquiry, participating and engaging in ongoing research projects, and engaging in weekly coaching and co-planning of intensive systematic instruction aimed at working within students' abiding interests while accelerating their learning gains. Tutoring sessions incorporate the research-based instructional principles of motivation and engagement, instructional intensity, and cognitive challenge.

WYOMING EXCELLENCE ENDOWED CHAIRS IN LITERACY EDUCATION

Wyoming Excellence in Higher Education Endowed Chair in Literacy Education Dr. Cynthia Brock is a professor in the College of Education. She taught elementary, middle, and high school for nine years in Oregon, California, Florida, and Michigan before returning to graduate school to earn a doctorate in educational psychology with a focus in literacy and an emphasis on second language learners. Before coming to UW, Dr. Brock was at Texas Woman's University, University of Nevada-Reno, and the University of South Australia. Dr. Brock's scholarly research agenda centers on the study of opportunity to learn, and her studies have explored children's learning,

pre- and in-service teachers' learning, and her own learning and the learning of her colleagues. Dr. Brock is particularly interested in exploring the literacy learning opportunities for elementary children from diverse cultural, linguistic, and economic backgrounds, and she explores ways to work with pre- and in-service teachers to foster the literacy learning opportunities of children from underrepresented backgrounds. She has conducted qualitative research in cross-cultural contexts including the United States, Australia, England, Fiji, Thailand, Laos, Spain, Chile, and Costa Rica. She has published her work in journals such as *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *The International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *Curriculum Inquiry*, *Urban Education*, *The Elementary School Journal*, *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, and *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*. She has also published her work in numerous book chapters, books, and handbooks.

Dr. Leslie S. Rush serves as Wyoming Excellence Chair in Literacy Education and is a professor in the College of Education at the University of Wyoming. Dr. Rush taught secondary school English for twelve years in locations including California, Texas, and Uganda. She earned a bachelor's degree in history and English from East Texas State University, a master's degree in reading education from Texas A&M University - Commerce, and a doctorate in reading education from the University of Georgia. She became a faculty member at the University of Wyoming in 2002 and for many years taught courses in English teacher education and in literacy pedagogy and served the college as an administrator from 2012–21. Dr. Rush has published scholarly work, which currently focuses on disciplinary literacy in English Language Arts, in journals such as *Harvard Educational Review*, *Journal of Literacy Research*, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, and *Literacy Research and Instruction*. Her co-authored book, *Secondary English Education in the United States*, was awarded the ELATE Richard A. Meade Award in 2018. During her time as a faculty member at the University of Wyoming, she received the Mary Ellbogen Garland Early Career Fellowship, the College of Education's Outstanding Research and Scholarship Award, the John P. Ellbogen Meritorious Classroom Teaching Award, and the Promoting Intellectual Engagement in the First Year (PIE) Award.



Dr. Cynthia Brock



Dr. Leslie S. Rush



Sara Pommarane

DISTINGUISHED TEACHER IN RESIDENCE

Sara Pommarane is an educator with a commitment to advancing the field of education. Currently serving as the Teacher in Residence at the LRCC, Sara brings 20 years of classroom knowledge and experience to the fields of literacy and mathematics education.

Sara is a National Board-Certified Teacher and holds a Masters of Mathematics Education K-6. She is committed to staying at the cutting edge of pedagogical practices and methodologies. Her understanding of mathematics and literacy instruction coupled with her extensive classroom experience equips her with the expertise needed to inspire and empower both students and fellow educators. Her journey in education has primarily been focused on the elementary setting where she continues to hone her skills and make a lasting impact on young minds.

Sara's contributions to the field of education extend beyond the classroom. As Teacher in Residence at the LRCC, she plays a role in shaping the future of education through research, professional development, mentorship, and curriculum development.

GRADUATE ASSISTANT

Thilina Wickramaarachchi is a graduate research assistant at the LRCC currently in his fourth year of Ph.D. studies in literacy education. He actively participates in research projects conducted by the LRCC and contributes to the work at the clinic. One of his recent accomplishments includes co-authoring a chapter on positioning theory with three other university academics: Dr. Cynthia Brock, Dr. Rick Fisher, and Dr. Pauline Harris.

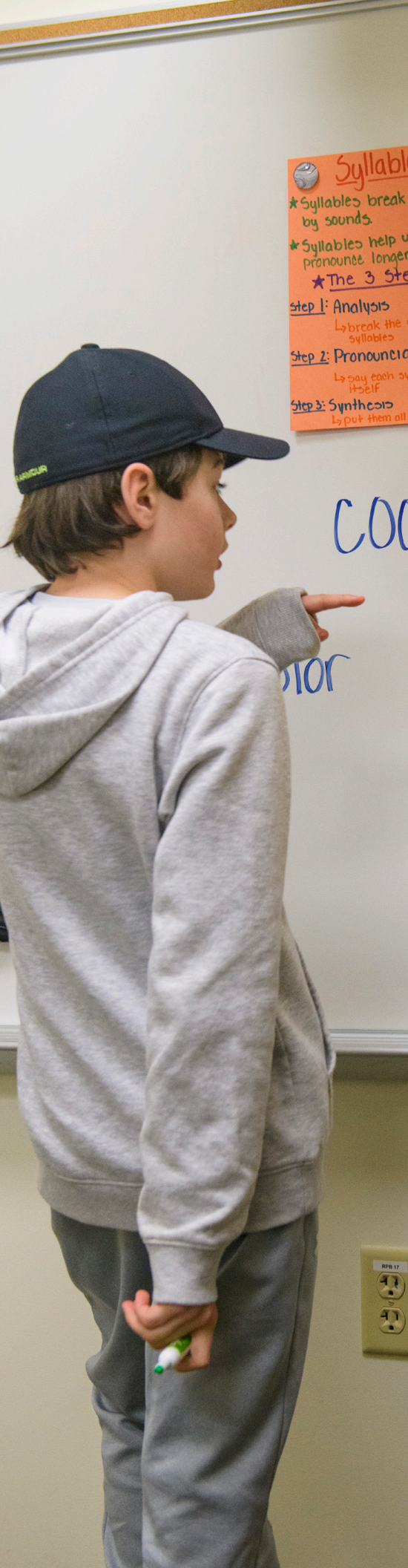
Thilina's research interests encompass literacy skills development of English as a second language (ESL) learners, multimodal and multilingual instructional

approaches, teacher professional development, and critical theory. Prior to pursuing his Ph.D. at the University of Wyoming, Thilina worked as an academic in the higher education sector in Sri Lanka, gaining extensive experience in teaching ESL to adult learners with diverse socioeconomic and educational backgrounds.

Notable conference presentations and publications by Thilina include the following.

- “Viewpoints, values, visions: Personal recollections and literacy reflections: Understanding and getting involved in LRA through oral histories,” a joint presentation at the 72nd Annual Literacy Research Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, November 26 – December 3, 2022.
- “Exploring member positioning during year three of a collaborative literacy professional development initiative,” a joint presentation at the 71st Annual Literacy Research Association Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, December 1-4, 2021.
- “Developing social presence in online teacher education programs: A review of literature,” presented online at the Innovate Learning Summit 2021, November 9-11, 2021.
- “Enhancing social presence in online teacher professional development,” presented online at the 2021 Wyoming Innovations in Learning conference, September 30 - October 1, 2021.
- “Online reading to the rescue: The use of online teaching platforms to develop the reading skills of ESL Learners,” presented at the 17th Asia TEFL International Conference and the 6th FLLT (Foreign Language Learning and Teaching) International Conference, June 27-29, 2019, in Bangkok, Thailand.
- “I Can’t Read This! It’s So Difficult!” – The Impact of the Difficulty of Texts on ESL Reading Comprehension. *The Asian EFL Journal - Professional Teaching Articles*, 102, August 2017, pp. 17-28.
- “Writing-reading relationships: Effectiveness of writing activities as pre-reading tasks to enhance L2 inferential reading comprehension.” *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 5(5), 2014, pp. 213-221.





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.

MEMBERS

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Hon. Jeff Wasserburger
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Kim Gustafson, LRCC Interim Director
Jenna Shim, Interim Dean, UW College of Education
Cynthia Brock, Wyoming Excellence Chair in Literacy
Leslie Rush, Wyoming Excellence Chair in Literacy

LRCG 2023 PROJECTS

STATE OUTREACH





PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FCSD #6 - Wind River Elementary School - Vocabulary Instruction
Dr. Linda Kucan visit to FCSD #6

FCSD #38- Arapahoe Elementary School - Writing Instruction

SCSD #1 - Pinedale Middle and High School - Vocabulary Instruction

BHCSD #1 - Burlington/ Cowley - 6-12 Vocabulary

TSCD #1 - District-wide Leadership Improvement

PCSD #1 - District-wide Professional Development



COLLABORATION

- Wyoming Department of Education
 - » LINC
 - ✓ Coaches and School Leader Book Study
 - ✓ Facilitating Monthly Webinars on Elementary
 - » American Indian Education for All
 - ✓ Modules for K-3 teachers
- McRel International
- Region 11 Comprehensive Center



LITERACY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

FCSD #1 - Lander

JCSD #1 - Buffalo



WYOLEARN COURSES

- Literacy Leadership I
- Literacy Leadership II
- Dyslexia Modules



LITERACY AWARDS

- Carol Mead Leaders in Literacy Award Recipients
 - » Melanie Hornbeck - Cheyenne
 - » Jennifer Hayward - Pinedale



LITERACY CONFERENCE

- 16th Fall Annual Literacy Conference - High Quality Vocabulary Instruction P - 12
 - » Dr. Dianna Townsend
 - » Dr. Doris Baker
 - » Gary Soto



TUTORING CLINIC

- Sara Pommarane, NBCT, Distinguished Teacher in Residence
- Fall 2023 Session
 - » 9 students from Albany County
 - » 7 tutors



CONSULTING

- LCSD #1 -Middle and High School ELA



FUTURE PROJECT IDEAS:

- Literacy Endorsement Cohorts
- Teacher in Residence Program





College of Education
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