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& Jack Cassidy
(see above)An Interview with Paul Kropp:
A Renaissance ManBy Jack Cassidy, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi

(Paul Kropp is a teacher, writer, publisher, staff developer, pianist, runner, husband, father, and cook. He lives in Toronto with his wife Lori Jamison, a former IRA Board member. Paul has written over 50 books for children and young adults as well as professional texts for parents and teachers. His company, High Interest Publishing, produces quality books for reluctant readers. He is a relatively new member of the Specialized Reading Professionals Special Interest Group. For more information on Paul Kropp, go to his website, www.paulkropp.com.)

1. I think it is the dream of many educators to write books for children and young adults. How did you get started?

I was fortunate that I started in 1970. I followed the usual process – sending out query letters to many publishers.

Everybody was looking for the new Beverley Cleary or Paul Zindel. I had a young adult novel entitled *Wilted*, and I also had a concept for a series of books aimed at reluctant readers. I sold the concept first. The publisher was impressed that I had sent in a market analysis along with a few chapters. Then I got a contract and an agent. These days you need a finished book and an agent. Of course, you can't get an agent without a publisher. It's become a vicious circle.

2. Of the many books you have written for children and youth, do you have a favorite or favorites?

Of the young adult novels, I guess the two *Moonkid* books are my favorites; *Moonkid and Liberty* (1988) and *Moonkid and Prometheus* (1997). Those are the two books which got the most critical attention; they have also been translated into many languages. I also like *Amy's Wish*; a novel that made the girls cry in 1972. But the new hi/lo books from HIP Books are technically better. Of the current crop, *Avalanche* and *One Crazy Night* are probably my favorites.

3. You often speak about reluctant readers. Assuming you developed a numbered list of guidelines for teachers on dealing with reluctant readers, what would be number one?

I'm with Dick Allington on this topic: give the kids lots of books that they can read. Those books should be at their independent level, usually two or three grades below their level on those standardized tests. Dick Allington has been harping on this for years; I've been harping for decades.

Continued on next page.

4. **You are a teacher, writer, publisher, staff developer, pianist, runner, husband, father, and cook? What other talents do you have?**

That list seems pretty complete. Actually, I just dabble at some of the things that you mention. My Beethoven sonatas are abominable and my marathon time is slow, but I make an excellent white sauce for tortellini.

5. **What are you reading now?**

I just finished *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini, author of *The Kite Runner*. Now, I am reading *The Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafon. It's magical.

6. **You have a beautiful home in a fascinating part of Toronto. Tell us about it.**

The house was built in 1889 and valued at \$1,014. These days, it would sell for about \$1,000,000. As with all old houses, you are either remodeling or restoring. For instance, the original nursery is now an enormous bathroom. This year, we restored the front of the house to the way it looked in 1889. When I went to school in New York City, I always wanted to live in Greenwich Village. This is as close as I could find in Toronto. It's a neighborhood of three hundred Victorian houses that have been miraculously preserved.

7. **What's your favorite food?**

I love Italian food – Northern Italy - especially Tuscany. We go to Italy with some frequency. I love the real cheeses, the real pasta, and the red veal, but I'm just a trattoria-level cook.

8. **You were born in the U.S., but have lived most of your adult life in Canada. What do you see as the major difference between the two cultures?**

Canada is really a kinder, gentler nation. Canadians, as a whole, have a deep niceness; sometimes I think they are almost hobbled by their niceness. It might be better for this country if we could develop some of the forthrightness of New Yorkers. There are two big bonuses about living in Canada. We don't have to worry about healthcare, and we don't need a ton of money to live comfortably. I appreciate both.

✓ Check the Red Check

Do you have a red check on the mailing label on the front of this newsletter? If you do, it means, your membership in our SIG is about to expire. If you have two red checks, it means, your membership has already expired. In either case, it is time to RENEW your membership. Our SIG includes as its members many prominent leaders in the field including present IRA Board members, Linda Gambrell, Maureen McLaughlin, Maryann Manning, Taffy Raphael and Ray Reutzel as well as former Presidents Ira Aaron, Richard Allington, Mary Austin,

Jack Cassidy, Jerry Johns, Walter MacGinite, Kathryn Ransom, Doris Roettger-Svoboda, and Timothy Shanahan. Many former IRA Board members also belong.

Maryann Manning Sponsors Awards

Maryann Manning (University of Alabama – Birmingham), a longtime member of the Specialized Reading Professionals Special Interest Group, is sponsoring a Volunteer Service Award through IRA; The IRA Maryann Manning Outstanding Volunteer Service Award. This non-monetary award will be given annually to four dedicated volunteers within North America and one dedicated volunteer outside of North America.

Guidelines and application forms are available from the Executive Division, International Reading Association, P.O. Box 8139, 800 Barksdale Road, Newark, DE 19714-8139, USA. They can also be downloaded from the IRA website, www.reading.org.



Maryann Manning

In addition to being an IRA member, there are three other guidelines for the award. First, the candidate must be a dedicated volunteer who has made a lifelong commitment to a local, state or provincial council within North America or to a local or regional council, or national affiliate outside of North America. Second, candidates must have contributed significant volunteer service and been active for at least ten years. Lastly, candidates must be nominated by an IRA council or affiliate president or coordinator.

Maryann hopes councils will nominate individuals who have been active in their councils; those who have “worked in the trenches.” Such nominees may not have doctoral degree or a long list of publications. Most likely, they may not be well known outside of their state, province or country. Although IRA has many awards, such individuals are often overlooked. This new award will fill that void. The deadline for nominating candidates is January 31, 2008. This year, IRA's Special Service Award Committee will determine the winners.

SIG Members Nominated for Prez

The Specialized Reading Professionals special interest group (SIG) is honored that two of its members have been nominated for President of the International Reading Association. While Reading Today will highlight the professional qualifications and contributions of both candidates, we thought we would look at the more personal backgrounds of the candidates.



Patricia A. Edwards

Patricia A. Edwards is a Distinguished Professor of Language & Literacy at Michigan State University and the 2007 President of the National Reading Conference. She is also a former member of the Board of Directors of the International Reading Association. She grew up in Albany Georgia. She was the middle child of three sisters, but for the first eight years of her life she had the advantage of being the youngest. Her older sister just retired after 35 years as a kindergarten teacher, and her younger sister is a nurse. Pat is not the only member of her family to rise to prominence. Her second cousin was named Ray Charles Robinson; he later dropped the “Robinson” and became the immortal “Ray Charles.” Pat’s uncle

Joseph Plummer was the first member of her family to graduate from college and later became the first black principal in Milwaukee. In Albany, Pat was part of the second group of black students to attend a formerly all white high school. There were 24 black students in a high school of 2500. Later, she ran for the girl’s president of her class (there was also a boy’s president). Despite the fact that there were only 12 black girls in the class, Pat won the election. Pat later went on to Albany State University where she helped with voter registration. After completing her undergraduate education in 3 years, she went to North Carolina and received her masters degree at North Carolina A&T; Jesse Jackson and Astronaut Ronald McNair are also alumnus. In North Carolina, she was a full-time elementary teacher, an active member of her local IRA Council, and a teacher educator.

Pat loves all kinds of movies, but her favorite is probably *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*. While studying for her doctorate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Pat had the pleasure of meeting the movie’s star, Cicely Tyson. When I asked Pat to tell us something about herself, Pat responded “I love life and I love meeting all different kinds of people.”

Betsy Baker is an elementary principal in a pre-K through 5 Title One school in Columbia, Missouri. There are 475 students in the school. In addition, she is the president of her local council and the president of the LEADER special interest group. She is a past president and past coordinator for the Missouri State Council of IRA, and is still the Professional Development Awards Chair for the state council. In the past, she also served with former IRA President, Doris Roettger-Syboda, as co-president of the LEADER special interest group. Betsy was born in Richmond, Virginia, and like Pat Edwards, she is the middle of three sisters. Also, like Pat Edwards, there was a gap before the youngest sister arrived. In Betsy’s

case, the gap was ten years. Betsy was a “PK” – preacher’s kid, and the service orientation was ingrained in her family for generations. Her grandparents were missionaries to China and were interred by the Japanese during World War II. Growing up, Betsy remembers being surrounded by books. Her father was an avid reader. Betsy remembers that on vacations, he would retreat in the mornings with a stack of books. No



Betsy Baker

one disturbed him. The afternoons were for the family. Betsy graduated from Stephens College in Missouri and went on to get her masters and educational specialist degrees from the University of Missouri-Columbia. She was a sixth grade teacher, a teacher of the gifted, and assistant principal before assuming her present position.

Betsy also found time to have a family. Her older son is a flight paramedic in Arizona, and her younger son is in the army reserve. Her younger son is now stationed in Boise Idaho, although he recently completed a tour of duty in Iraq. While he was there, his son lived with Betsy. After years of being an

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empty-nester, Betsy found it fascinating, frustrating, and rewarding having a toddler running around the house. Altogether Betsy has three grandchildren.

When not working, Betsy loves to travel, read and work with plants. She is looking forward to having more time to do all three of these things.

Regardless of the outcome of the IRA elections, both of these candidates have demonstrated that they are true leaders in every sense of the word. Our SIG is honored to have them as members.

Reading Recovery Recovers (Sort of)

By Jack Cassidy, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi


Reading Recovery, an intensive one-on-one tutoring program for struggling first graders, had fallen out of favor in recent years because of its expense and (supposedly) because of the lack of scientific evidence-based research on its effectiveness. Reportedly, federal officials tried to discourage states and districts from using Reading Recovery in schools that received federal Reading First monies. However, the federal What Works Clearinghouse (also dubbed the “nothing works” clearinghouse) found that Reading Recovery was the only supplemental program of the 36 reviewed to have positive effects across all four of the domains in the review—alphabetic, fluency, comprehension, and general reading achievement. The federal What Works Clearinghouse, which was formed in 2002 to take the place of the ERIC clearinghouses, only sanctions programs that have rigorous scientific research support.

Despite the seal of approval from the federal agency, the Reading Recovery program has not regained the same level of approval that it had in the late eighties and early nineties. It was once the “hottest” early intervention program in the United States and the rest of the English-speaking world. Authorities speculate that the extreme cost of the program prevents many districts from adopting or re-adopting the program. Still, there are a great many educators and districts that continue to participate in Reading Recovery.

The Beginnings

Dame Marie Clay, a former IRA President, whose research has been widely acclaimed, developed Reading Recovery in New Zealand. Dr. Clay and her associate came to Ohio State University in 1984 to train faculty in implementing Reading Recovery. Ohio State quickly became the “mecca” for Reading Recovery in the United States. It still is! It is estimated that 1.6 million children have benefited from the program. In the years after 1984, Dr. Clay continued to travel throughout the United States and other countries helping educators who wanted to adopt the program.

Ironically, in the same year that the Reading Recovery program was validated by the federal agency, Marie Clay died at the age of 81. In the future, it is hoped that educators worldwide will once again recognize the validation of Dr. Clay’s legacy - Reading Recovery.



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RtI: Tier 3

Primum non nocere (First, do no harm)

By Barbara Marinak, Ph.D.
Pennsylvania State University – Harrisburg
& Susan Mazzoni, Ph. D.

(This is the third in a three part series on response to intervention (RtI) a very “hot” topic, mandated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004. The most common implementation of RtI is a three tier model. Tier 1 which was described in the first article (The Literacy Professional, Summer 2007) involves differentiated instruction in the classroom. Tier 2 of RtI (The Literacy Professional, Fall 2007) generally involves short-term small group instruction. Generally, Tier 3 involves more intensive instruction on a more individualized basis. All of these tiers are “steps” in the “early intervening services” designed to prevent the degree of school failure that results in special education.)

Primum non nocere is a Latin phrase meaning, “First, do no harm.” Commonly associated with one of the most important learnings in medical school, it reminds a physician that he or she must consider the possible harm that any intervention might do. The phrase recognizes that human acts with good intentions may have unwanted consequences. It is a sobering recommendation, but as RtI evolves in school buildings, those planning Tier 3 interventions would be well served to remember the words of Hippocrates-- **primum non nocere**.

Some Problems

Research indicates that strengthening core reading instruction and providing daily intervention are two emerging benefits of RtI (Vaughn & Klinger, 2007). However, the literature (and our own experience) indicates there are more questions than answers associated with Tier 3 support. For example, teams are struggling with the difference between Tier 2 and Tier 3. Definitions of “responsiveness” and “substantial progress” are being debated.

Unfortunately, we have seen and heard about Tier 3 implementation efforts that could violate our obligation to **primum non nocere**. The two ways “harm” appears possible have been described by our teacher colleagues as (a) piling on with no plan, or (b) having no commitment to a plan. In other words, at-risk readers are either placed in numerous disconnected interventions or are moved from one intervention group to another based on isolated data. Both scenarios hold little hope of accelerating students closer to grade level proficiency. In our districts, there is evidence that these somewhat random efforts are actually eroding reading proficiency.

To make matters worse, our teacher colleagues are becoming frustrated and cynical with Tier 2 and Tier 3 of RtI. In addition, new intervention methods are adopted weekly with teachers being trained in the morning and expected to--quite literally-- implement in the afternoon. As one exasperated teacher said recently, “I don’t think throwing stuff against the wall to see what sticks is a wise way to construct evidence-based intervention.” As



Susan Mazzoni (right) and grade two teacher Penelope Carboni level text during RtI planning in the Bensalem Township School District

Allington and Walmsley (2007) suggest, RtI teams must resist the search for a quick fix, and commit to an evidence-based Tier 3 plan.

Recommendations

Below are several tenets we find helpful in our Tier 3 planning and coaching:

- **Plan Tier 3 intervention based on individual differences** that are present in most struggling students. Consider all the data (test scores, classroom performance assessments, etc.), choose a comprehensive method (not methods) that is congruent with core classroom instruction, and make a commitment to the child (and the method) for months-- not days or weeks.
- **Avoid scripted programs**, especially for Tier 3. However, if a scripted program is considered, it is imperative that the adoption be a team decision. All the literacy stakeholders responsible for the student (classroom teacher, reading specialist, interventionist, etc.) must agree on several points, including that the program:
 - a) is pedagogically sound,
 - b) meets the needs of the student,
 - c) is congruent with the methods used in core reading instruction, and,
 - d) most importantly, is flexible enough to allow modifications based on professional judgment.
- **Plan to teach transference**. The most “successful” interventions fail because struggling readers often have difficulty transferring newly acquired strategies from text to text, classroom to classroom, etc. Tier 3 teams need to discuss just how transference will take place. How will the children in Tier 3 transfer the skills they learned in the intensive instructional setting provided by Tier 3 to their work in the regular classroom?

RtI teams are working very hard right now to construct effective models of early intervening services. Clearly, no one intends to harm students. However, transitioning students within the tiers of RtI is a

Continued on next page.

challenge. Educators need to confront the challenge by being critical consumers of the ever-changing body of intervention research and by investing in people-- not products.

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(Barbara Marinak is an Assistant Professor at Pennsylvania State University – Harrisburg. Susan Mazzone is an independent literacy consultant. Barbara and Susan Mazzone consult with districts on effective literacy practices and the implementation of RtI.)

SIG Membership Soars

Membership in the Specialized Reading Professionals Special Interest Group (SIG) has soared to 257 members, the highest number in the group's 19 year history.



P. David Pearson, Dean of the Graduate School of Education

Linda Gambrel (Clemson University, SC), the present President of IRA, is a member as are present IRA Board members Maureen McLaughlin (East Stroudsburg University, PA), Maryann Manning (University of Alabama-Birmingham), Taffy Raphael (University of Illinois – Chicago) and Ray Reutzel (Utah State University). Many former IRA presidents are also members including Ira Aaron, Richard Allington, Mary C.

Austin-Baehr, Jack Cassidy, Bernice Cullinan, Susan Mandel Glazer, Jerry Johns, Dale Johnson, Walter MacGinite, Delores Malcolm,

Kathryn Ransom, Doris Roettger-Svoboda, Timothy Shanahan and Dorothy Strickland. Former IRA Board members who are in the SIG include Patricia Anders, Betsy Baker, Charline Barnes, Rita Bean, Cathy Collins Block, Carrice Cummins, Patricia Edwards, James Hoffman, Adria Klein, Diane Larson, Susan Lenski, Jill Lewis, Mary Marockie, Rebecca Olness, Jeanne Paratore, Ethna Reid, Victoria Risko and Doris-Walker Dalhouse.

Member Number 257

P. David Pearson, Dean of the Graduate School of Education, University of California- Berkeley is the 257th member of our SIG, and he has joined until 2010. Dr. Pearson is considered by many to be the premier literacy scholar of his generation. He is a former President of the National Reading Conference, a former member of the IRA Board and author or editor of countless books including the Handbook of Reading Research, now in its third edition. His honors include the William S. Gray Citation of Merit from the International Reading Association, the Oscar Causey Award for Contributions to Reading Research from the National Reading Conference, and the Alan Purves Award from the National Council of Teachers of English.

Goals of the SIG

The Specialized Reading Professionals SIG has long been proactively campaigning for a number of issues including: open IRA Board meetings; more advocacy for reading specialists; more representation of K-12 professionals on the IRA Board; and closer scrutiny of accrediting bodies such as NCATE.



Membership Form – Specialized Reading Professionals

Checks should be made out to **Specialized Reading Professionals** and sent to:

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- \$10.00 (one year)
- \$15.00 (two years)

Please share copies of this form with others who might be interested.

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