

Rutgers Center for Literacy Development Newsletter Fall 2019 Edition

Volume X, No. 6



A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Make Professional Development a Priority

At the beginning of the new school year we think about new activities and strategies to implement in our literacy program. We think about creating literacy-rich environments in our classrooms, rules and routines to improve our reading programs. Seldom do we think about professional development as a major agenda item. This year make professional development a priority. Based on research children's chances for learning are significantly increased with excellent teachers. Students from marginalized populations have a better opportunity for success when their teachers have had strong preparation and on-going professional development (PD).

Creating a Successful Professional Development Plan.

Prior to beginning a PD program conduct a needs assessment survey to find out what your teachers, supervisors and administrators feel they need and want to study. Create a strategic plan for the PD including the length of the plan, the topic of study, strategies to learn, and the assessment tool to measure results of the plan. When teachers observe changes in student learning as a result of them changing methods, their beliefs and practices will follow.

According to Standards for Staff Development, (1995) to be effective 80 to 100 hours per school year or three hours per week need to be spent on PD to be effective. Essential characteristics of effective professional development include:

- administrative support for the project prior to beginning
- goals set by teachers and administrators
- readings for all involved to provide new ideas
- motivating and knowledgeable consultants
- workshops that provide research-based strategies
- lessons modeled by a coach to support and help put the plan in place
- accessible materials
- teacher discussion groups to foster collaboration and reflection
- time to change
- assessment of the results of the professional development

The Role of the Reading Coach

Reading coaches are a must for PD to be successful and cause change. They provide information and resources for teachers. Reading coaches model and co-teach lessons using new strategies. They do workshops about innovative practices. Coaches observe teachers trying new ideas and provide feedback. They reflect with teachers upon successful lessons and upon issues of concern. They help to organize Study Groups and Professional Learning Communities. They present workshops to parents that explain programs and offer information about helping their child at home. Coaches do not evaluate teachers; they offer constructive comment. Most of all they build trust and positive relationships with teachers.



Literacy Study Groups Foster Reflection

Study Groups are composed of teachers at any grade level who have an interest in making similar changes in their classrooms. The group selects a topic of mutual concern and reading material that complements the PD. Reading is done outside of the study group and discussions about the readings occur during study group sessions. Teachers try some of the new methods in their classrooms. When they meet in study groups, the teachers discuss how they implemented the new practices and how the outcomes might be improved. When they are ready, the teachers move on to another topic. They read about it, try it out, reflect on it, and refine it. In addition, teachers set personal goals for the year and discuss their progress toward those goals during study group meetings.

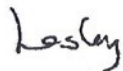
Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

PLCs consist of teachers at similar grade levels. They meet to assess student performance in literacy, such as comprehension. They decide on actions to take to improve student performance in this area. They may choose PD articles or books to read to enrich their knowledge. The teachers try the practices they discussed and when they meet later, determine how well the new practices worked and if they improved student performance.

New information about learning is constantly being generated. Teachers must stay abreast of the constant stream of available literature after they complete their formal education. They must engage in multiple forms of PD and stay up to date with the latest research, theory, policy, and practice. There are many ways in which PD can take place. Teachers can continue their education and receive a master's or doctoral degree. Teachers can pursue additional certifications. They can also take courses to strengthen their knowledge in a particular area of concern. It is important for teachers to join professional organizations locally, in the state, and nationally. These groups have conferences that present new ideas. They publish both practical and research journals with the most current information available. Through these organizations, teachers connect with others and have the opportunity to talk and reflect. All teachers need to work on PD in their schools. The plan can involve the entire school or focus on a certain grade levels.

The following are the goals for a professional development program in a school:

- Change classroom practices when necessary to improve.
- Change teacher attitudes toward professional development.
- Create a school that is composed of a community of learners.



Lesley Mandel Morrow, Ph.D.
Distinguished Professor
Director of the Center for Literacy Development
Rutgers Graduate School of Education

Center for Literacy Development

52nd ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON READING AND WRITING



OCTOBER 25, 2019

**Hyatt Regency
New Brunswick, NJ
Registration Fee: \$180**

2019 KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



**Cornelius
Minor**
Educator and Author

*What are we Missing
in Literacy? -- Why
We Keep Walking
Even Though We
Know How to Fly*



**Ralph
Fletcher**
Author and Educator

*Helping Students Write
Memorable Memoirs*



**John
Schumacher**
Ambassador of School
Libraries
for Scholastic Book Fairs,
lecturer, and blogger

*The Reading Life:
Connecting
Classrooms, Libraries,
and Communities
through Story*

Conference Registration website:
<http://rutgerscenterforliteracydevelopment.cvent.com>

Setting Up a Literacy Rich Classroom

By Ali Zafar Steffner

It's finally September! You've been organizing and planning for the past two weeks (if not the whole summer). Your decorations are on point. You can't wait to see your students' faces as they walk in and see your color coordinated *EVERYTHING*! You dream of the perfect class, where students are engaged, and self-directing their learning. They are so invested in their learning that, "Can I go to the bathroom?" is a question seldom heard. Sounds too good to be true, right? Well, it really isn't! This can all come to life if we first set up a literacy rich classroom.

A literacy rich classroom encourages and supports speaking, listening, reading, and writing in a variety of authentic ways. Students are able to direct their own learning because the environment is predictable and fosters independence. This allows the teacher to work with students individually and in small groups to ensure effective and strategic instruction.



Here are some tips to get you started in setting up a literacy rich classroom:

- Create a classroom library that includes a variety of genres, text types, and reading levels. Set up book displays that change frequently to match the learning target or current events. Label and organize books so students can easily find books using print.
- Hang content posters and anchor charts (teacher-made and co-created with students) that reinforce current lessons. As a rule of thumb, 20-50 percent of wall space should be kept clear to avoid distractions. Create mini anchor chart stands to allow students access to posters and charts from previous units. Create smaller replicas of posters and charts to hang on metal rings and attach to a stand (PVC piping works well).
- Create a word wall *with* students that includes high frequency and content words on a wall or bulletin board. Individualize word wall words by giving students their own list to keep in their folder for easy access. Students can continue to add words to their list throughout the year. Use a notebook or binder that is alphabetized like a dictionary.
- Labeling items within the classroom helps students recognize that words have meaning and contribute to self-directed learning. Be sure to use upper and lowercase letters properly and print words in the same size, font, and color.
- Provide a comfy area to browse, read, discuss, and listen to books. Include various seat choices (e.g. pillows, rocking chairs, scoop chairs, bean bags).
- Create a writing center with tools for every writer. Items can include: various types of writing paper, pencils, pens, markers, highlighters, sticky notes, materials for making book covers, dictionaries, thesauruses, iPads or laptops with access to online resource sites, posters and charts (in a binder or on a mini anchor chart stand), mentor texts, and checklists. When introducing the writing center ask students, "What can writers do with these tools?" This will give students choice and hold them accountable for their learning.
- Display student work. It creates a sense of community where students learn from each other and appreciate the work of others. Students can learn to reflect on their work by choosing the work they want to display.
- Provide opportunities for students to listen and speak. Dedicate time throughout each day for students to engage in collaborative conversations. Some ideas to foster collaborative conversations are: collaborative projects or presentations, listening and buddy reading stations with follow up activities/questions, and reciprocal teaching activities. Post conversation starters to help students (e.g. "I wonder why...", "I think___because...", "I agree with ___because___")

*For younger students and English language-learners, labels and print should include pictures.

A literacy rich classroom allows teachers to relinquish some of the control as students become independent learners. It is the first step towards that perfect classroom every teacher dreams of.



Ali Steffner is currently a first grade special education teacher in Warren, New Jersey. She has been an educator in kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms over the past 10 years. She is a dually certified general education and special education teacher. She has a Master's degree in Counseling Psychology from Rutgers Graduate School of Education and is currently working towards her second Master's degree with certification for Reading Specialist and Supervisor.

Changing the Game with Choice

By Meredith Gnerre

Student choice in writing is a familiar idea, but it's on my mind in a new way as I prepare to start this new year, and the reason why is a fifth grader I'll call Gabriel.

In class, Gabriel always has a connection. He always knows a juicy piece of background knowledge, poses a thoughtful question, or cracks a joke. Gabriel also freezes up when we start writing, and after a year together, I hadn't found a way to support him. He has a very hard time with spelling, and seems paralyzed by not knowing how to write the words he wants. Then, during extended school year this summer, we had a breakthrough, entirely because of choice.

For summer writing, the kids chose their own topics each day. To help spark ideas, I made an anchor chart with a quadrant for each genre and common topics inside. One day, Gabriel, a history buff, started telling me all about the Titanic and its two sister ships. When I steered him back to writing, he exclaimed, "Wait! Can I write about the Titanic?" When I said yes, it was like the floodgates opened. Every day for the rest of the summer, Gabriel picked a historical topic each morning...and *wrote* and *wrote*. Suddenly, he felt free to pick a topic that genuinely excited him. Talking through his thoughts first helped, too. It got him excited about his ideas, and when he started writing, he was so invested that he didn't get stuck in the mechanics that usually limited him. With every piece, his confidence grew.

As we move into a new school year, let's throw the doors of choice wide open.

Let's mine our students' interests, and find the things that they can't stop talking about. Once they're talking, let's get their words down on paper.

Let's release our own expectations, and truly let our kids write whatever they want. Really. Even if what they want is to write the plot of every Marvel movie they've ever seen, or all of the details of their Minecraft village. It's okay. They won't write about Marvel and Minecraft forever, but when we give them the freedom to choose, we're sending two critical messages. One is, simply, you matter. Your opinion and your voice and your ideas matter. What you care about matters. The other message is,

you can write. Like my Gabriel, kids need to have success with writing to really know that they can do it, and once they feel the accomplishment of filling a page with their words, nothing can stop them.



As teachers, investing in choice is a huge win, because what we have now are *students who are writing*. *Students who know they can write*. Now we have words on paper, and the possibilities are endless! We can teach revising and editing. We can teach powerful leads, figurative language, and grammar, all inside their own passionate writing.

Now, I'm not saying that we should abandon our writing lessons, stop teaching in the genres, and never structure writing projects or assign topics. We need to keep doing those things to help our students learn and grow as writers. Let's just consider *starting* with wide open choice. The beginning of the year is the perfect time to try this, while we're introducing writing class and talking about how we live as writers. Once we have confident writers and words on the page, we can lead our students to new places, towards everything we want them to know about writing. More importantly, instead of being stuck on a blank piece of paper, they'll have a notebook full of their own words. They'll be writing.



Meredith Gnerre is a special educator with 11 years of experience teaching 2nd through 5th graders in a self-contained setting. Meredith has an MA from Teachers College in Intellectual Disabilities and Autism, and is currently pursuing an M.Ed. as a Reading Specialist and Supervisor in the Rutgers Graduate School of Education. Meredith writes about practicing literacy and freedom at TheLiberatoryLibrary.org

Get an Early Start with your Struggling Readers as They Transition to Middle School and High School

By Mary Hough

Transitioning to middle school and high school in September will be a big change for students on many levels, socially, emotionally and academically. As you help them to transition, it is especially important to identify and support your struggling readers. This will ensure they can achieve better preparation for more rigorous courses; can thrive in the least restrictive environment; and that they can ultimately achieve college and career readiness. Sometimes students' struggle with literacy will emerge, or re-emerge, as textbooks and course concepts become increasingly more complex as students delve more deeply into subject-based literacies in the upper grades. As a result, the reading gaps for students can become more pronounced, especially for students with disabilities.

How can schools help struggling readers as they transition into their new environments in middle school and high school to better ensure their academic success? It is key to provide multiple levels of support for students based on their individual needs. Utilizing multiple forms of assessment as well as articulating with the teachers at the lower grades can help to identify the areas where students need support. One way to support students as they transition is to provide a support reading class which can help address their reading deficiencies and provide strategies which can be applied in all classes as well as tutoring support after school in multiple subject areas that require content reading, such as science and social studies.

Helping students to learn content related vocabulary and addressing students' decoding skills and fluency through exposure to rich readings across the curriculum is key to improving their comprehension of new subjects. For example, providing students with background knowledge on unfamiliar topics and previewing difficult vocabulary and concepts prior to reading can help struggling readers as they are introduced to new passages of complex text.

Providing professional development for all teachers on how to scaffold struggling students in their classrooms is also important. When literacy skills are addressed by all teachers in the school, students are supported throughout the day in all subject areas.

My district has been proactive in supporting students as they transition to high school and throughout their high school career to ensure they have the tools necessary to achieve their passions and goals. This has included providing support classes for struggling 9th grade students, removing boundaries and scaffolding students to more rigorous courses, and providing professional development to teachers, including in literacy, to continually improve instruction. We utilize multiple forms of data to provide insight into students' continued progress which helps us to address student needs through our curriculum and classroom instruction.

While there is much emphasis on teaching students to read in the primary grades, it is just as essential to continue to support students in the upper grades as they continue to read to learn. If the needs of struggling students are not addressed, the gaps will continue to widen as students are continuously exposed to increasingly complex texts in middle and high school courses. Identifying struggling students and their needs and having all teachers take explicit action to improve their reading skills in all content is vital. It is important for middle and high schools to have a support plan in place to identify and provide support for these students in order to ensure their continued growth and academic success.



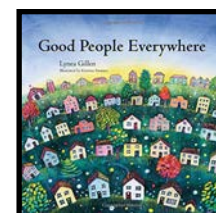
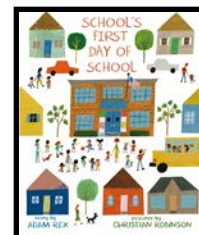
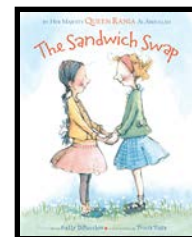
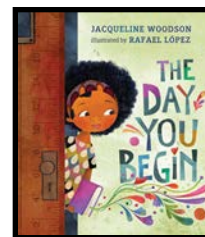
Mary Hough received her Ed.D. in Literacy Education and her Reading Specialist certification from the Teaching and Learning Department of the Rutgers Graduate School of Education. She began her career as at high school English teacher and taught for 14 years before becoming an English Supervisor and then Assistant Principal in the Freehold Regional High School District.

Fresh Read Alouds for Building Classroom Community

By Leah Carson

In those first days of school, there's something magical about gathering everyone on the carpet and watching your new students get lost in a book. Reading aloud has many purposes. It's a rich opportunity to model fluent reading, practice comprehension skills, learn vocabulary, and build background knowledge. These literacy skills are reason enough to pull out a book but stories can also be tools to help establish and foster a warm, inclusive classroom community. At its heart, the simple act of coming together to enjoy a book is an act of community building. This sense of togetherness will deepen as students find connections between their lives and the stories you choose. Themes in picture books offer jumping off points for discussions about diversity, fairness, friendship and respect. Here are **five suggestions** for fresh, thoughtful books to bring into your classroom this September.

1. *The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson is a perfect first day of school read aloud. The author deftly illustrates how we can find joy in our uniqueness and also come together in celebration of our commonalities. The beautiful language will captivate kindergarteners and resonate with upper grade students.
2. Before heading to the cafeteria, pull out *The Sandwich Swap* by Queen Rania Al Abdullah and Kelly DiPucchio. All your students will be able to identify with this important lesson about friendship and acceptance told through the lens of a simple interaction in the lunchroom.
3. Favorite characters can become members of your classroom that students talk about all year. *The Bad Seed* by Jory John is a clever first-person tale about a misbehaving seed who turns over a new leaf. The humor will appeal to all age groups and the premise creates a valuable opportunity to build empathy for students who may struggle to follow the rules.
4. Learning to take care of the school environment is a key goal for those first days. *School's First Day of School* by Adam Rex shows the excitement of the first day of school from the building's perspective. The author brings the school itself to life and the result is a fun, playful exploration of point of view. Discussing the ways the school itself supports learning is a great conversation starter for the importance of respecting our surroundings.
5. As your students create goals for their upcoming year, there is no better time to talk about helping others. *Good People Everywhere* by Lynea Gillen will inspire young and older students with simple text and colorful illustrations that reveal glimpses of people helping others all over the world. The closing question will leave students thinking about how they can positively contribute to the global community.



All teachers have favorite books they love to share with students on those first days of school. This year, as you embark on the creation of a caring classroom community perhaps you will find space in your classroom for some of these fun and engaging read alouds.



Leah Carson has nearly twenty years of experience in public schools teaching students in kindergarten through fourth grade in both general education and special education settings. She is currently an instructional support teacher and a graduate student in the Rutgers Reading Specialist/Supervisor program. Leah is deeply invested in social-emotional learning and works for the Center for Responsive Schools as a presenter and certified consulting teacher. She has also co-authored the book "Doing Social Studies in Morning Meeting."

Professional Development Coaching - What I Do and How It Works

By Maureen Hall

I don't know about anyone else, but for me the new year does not begin in January. Every teacher knows that a whole new year happens each September! Oh, glorious days, having prepared our rooms and our plans for the new year and eagerly anticipating the bright, shining faces of our new students! Another year, another chance to mold young minds; another opportunity to put into practice those ideas in which we believe so passionately. But where do those ideas come from? How do we know what new practices to put into place and which to ignore? Can we trust every cute idea we see on Pinterest?

Those answers come from many places. We take courses, attend lectures, read professional books and go to conferences. We come away excited about implementing innovative practices in our classrooms. Sadly, the sparkling motivation gained from a one-day workshop can rub off and we may end up abandoning these new concepts when they don't seem to take hold with our children on our first or second attempt in class. This is where systemic and planned professional development can help.

Professional Development is not, of course, a new idea. I've been in education for a very long time, and there was always something new for me to learn each September. The body of educators would sit in the library, cafeteria, or gym to listen to a presenter promise that since we had purchased their literacy program or if we inserted the study of this new topic, the changes would be life-altering. Difficulties, however, often set in later in the school year, when the person who had presented to us was long gone, and none of us felt expert enough to keep trying.

In most of my work for the Rutgers Center for Literacy Development I am embedded within a district for ten to twenty days during one school year. Sometimes districts know exactly where their teachers need support; other times they ask me to bring innovative, research-based practices to their teachers after I have observed for a day or so. In both cases, the key is that I'll be around when things don't go as planned. There will be continuing support for the staff as they move forward in the implementation of new and exciting concepts.

The first and most important thing I do when I enter a school is to get to know the teachers and administrators, and to allow them to know and trust me. We don't expect our students to learn from a person whom they have no reason to trust; the same is true of teachers. If my first meeting with educators is in a whole-school presentation, I am sure to ask that the next session be in small groups, maybe PLCs. We approach things differently, ask questions more freely, and grow used to new ideas in small groups.

And so, as September rolls around again, I'm ready. Ready to forge ahead in new school districts with new practices that will help teachers, eventually aiding children, and prepared to re-engage with old friends and new topics. After all, it's a new year!



Maureen Hall has spent 42 years as an educator. She taught in elementary, middle and high school, and spent eleven years as an elementary principal and central office administrator. She earned a B.A. in English from Hartwick College, an M.A. in Counseling from Montclair State University, and completed doctoral coursework at Seton Hall University. She currently works as a literacy consultant for the Rutgers Center for Literacy Development. This work embeds her in elementary and middle schools throughout New Jersey, where she works as a professional development specialist with teachers to increase their understanding of and ability to use research-based strategies. She is a member of the International Literacy Association and serves as Co-President of the New Jersey Literacy Association. Maureen is an avid reader and writer, and her lifelong passion has been to help teachers bring the joy and power of reading and writing to succeeding generations. She believes that literacy and education can solve the world's problems, and hopes to be a part of those solutions.

Other Information

The Center for Literacy Development's 2019-2020 events brochure is available online at <http://rutgersliteracycenter.org/>.



Rutgers Graduate School of Education
Center for Literacy Development



Center Events for 2019-2020

- 52nd Annual Conference on Reading and Writing
Friday, October 25, 2019 - Register Now!
- Onsite Professional Development
- Rutgers Reading Club for Struggling Readers
- Speaker Series Workshops
- National Writing Project Conference

Lesley Mandel Morrow, Ph.D. Center Director
lesley.morrow@gse.rutgers.edu

Kelly Clarida, Program Coordinator
kelly.clarida@gse.rutgers.edu

Sharon Masso, Program Coordinator
sharon.masso@gse.rutgers.edu



Celebrating successful literacy development at the end of Rutgers Reading Club experience for children in a Springfield NJ public school.

Find us on



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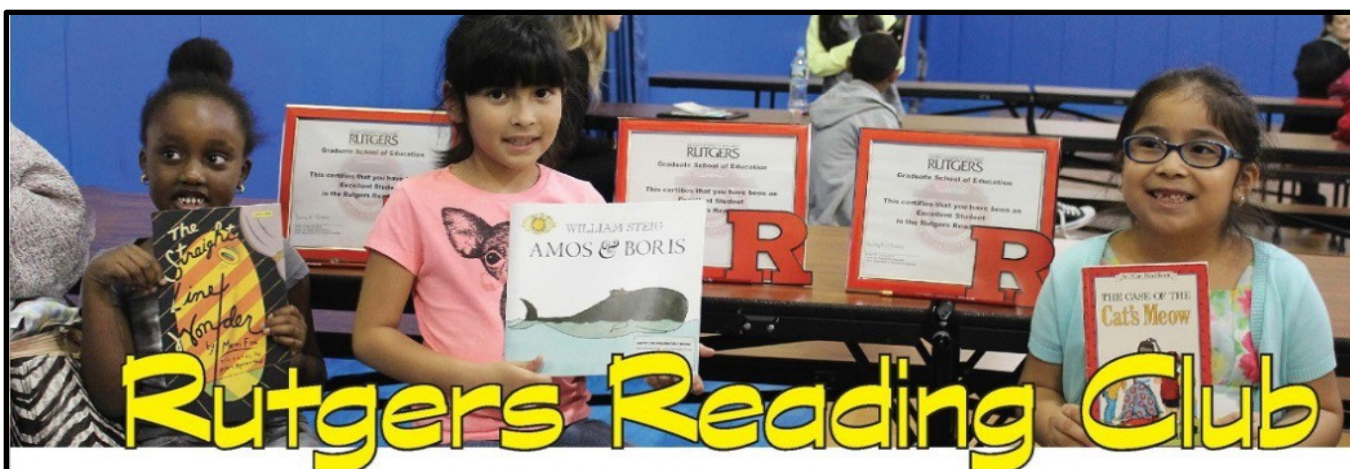
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The Rutgers Center for Literacy Development has partnered with the Reach Out and Read National Center, Eric B. Chandler Pediatric Health Center to help put books into the hands of every child. Your book donations at our events go to this clinic and have made family literacy possible for these children. The Center will collect new or gently-used books at each of our events.



AN AFTER AND BEFORE SCHOOL LITERACY PROGRAM FOR STRUGGLING READERS

CENTER FOR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT RUTGERS READING CLUB

Instruction focuses on the child's needs however the basic teaching plan includes the integration of the language arts with developing: word work, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and writing.

Along with enhancing literacy development, motivation is a major goal in each teaching session. For example the child can choose a book for the teacher to read to them that is too difficult for the child to read themselves. Literacy games are also played.

Each child is taught twice a week for 12 weeks for 45 minutes to an hour by a teacher who is certified. In addition to literacy development, teachers work on building a relationship with the child.



RESEARCH BASED PRACTICES THAT MAKE THE READING CLUB SUCCESSFUL

- + Motivating and Engaging children
- + Building Self-esteem
- + Creating time for socializing and snacking
- + Building relationships between teacher and student
- + Allowing for success
- + Differentiating instruction
- + Providing additional literacy instruction
- + Allowing for practice

FOR MORE INFORMATION LESLEY MANDEL MORROW, PH.D

TREATMENT GROUP

DEC	JAN	MAR	DEC	JAN	MAR	DEC	JAN	MAR
Sight Words	Sight Words	Sight Words	Running Record	Running Record	Running Record	Phonics Inventory	Phonics Inventory	Phonics Inventory
128	171	255	E	H	J	42/74	63/74	68/74

CONTROL GROUP

DEC	JAN	MAR	DEC	JAN	MAR	DEC	JAN	MAR
Sight Words	Sight Words	Sight Words	Running Record	Running Record	Running Record	Phonics Inventory	Phonics Inventory	Phonics Inventory
134	144	170	E	E	F	42/74	44/74	50/74



CENTER FOR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT COACHING IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

COACHING TOPICS

- Reading workshop
- Guided Reading
- Writing Workshop
- Common Core
- Use of Informational Text
- Assessment
- Project Based Learning
- Close Reading
- Differentiated Instruction
- Dyslexia
- Mentoring New Teachers
- Literacy and technology
- Struggling Readers
- Parent involvement Programs and More

OVER

50

SCHOOL DISTRICTS
SERVED

The center provides experienced coaches to do workshops, coaching, and modeling strategies to enhance teacher performance and student achievement. Professional development is tailored to your school's need. We can also offer on site Rutgers courses for credit (additional fees apply).



[MORE INFO](#)



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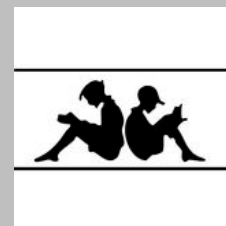
www.rutgers.literacycenter.org
lesley.morrow@gse.rutgers.edu
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Advancing Excellence and Equity in Education



Center for Literacy Development 2019-2020 Speaker Series Workshops

Register at

<http://rutgerscenterforliteracydevelopment.cvent.com>



Colleen Cruz

*Unstoppable Writing Teacher: Tools and
Tips to Create Classrooms Filled with
Unstoppable Writers*

December 11, 2019

Busch Student Center

Registration Fee \$155



Jennifer Serravallo

Complete Comprehension

January 29, 2020

Busch Student Center

Registration Fee \$155



Nancy Frey

*Engagement By Design: Creating
Learning Environments Where
Students Thrive*

March 12, 2020

Busch Student Center

Registration Fee \$155



Kelly Gallagher

*Moving Readers and
Writers From Compliance
to Engagement*

June 3, 2020

Rutgers Student Center

Registration Fee \$155