



RUTGERS–NEW BRUNSWICK Center for Literacy Development Graduate School of Education

VOL XVI. NO. 3

Letter from the Director

Parents as Partners with Literacy at Home During the Summer

You may have tangible wealth untold, Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold, Richer than I you can never be – I have parents who read to me.

– Strickland Gillilan, "The Reading Mother," from Best Loved Poems of the American People

Parents are the first teacher a child has, and the teacher they have for the longest period of time.

During the summer, most families are together more than at other times of the year. Help parents use that time to enhance their child's literacy development. Schedule an in-person or webinar family night to discuss what they can do over the summer.

None of these ideas take a lot of preparation or time, and they are simple to carry out. Here is my top 15 list of things parents can do with their children to enhance literacy development when they are out of school in the summer.

Top 15 Activities to Enhance Your Child's Literacy Development – No Matter What the Age

1. Read to or with your child, or have your child read to you, for pleasure.
2. Make lists of things to do during the summer.
3. Cook together using a recipe.



Spring 2026 Newsletter

Letter from the Director:
PAGE 01

CLD Events and Services
PAGE 03

The Final Sprint: Using EOY
Data to Fuel Tier 1
Instruction
PAGE 11

The Power of "Playing
with a Plan"
PAGE 12



Continued

4. Play a video game together. Watch TV together and talk about the show.
5. Leave notes in your child's backpack.
6. Talk about each person's day, with an emphasis on something good that happened.
7. Discuss a current event that is happening in the news.
8. Be sure there are magazines, books, newspapers, etc. available in a space in the home.
9. Be sure there is paper, pens, markers, and crayons available to use at any time.
10. If you go on family outings, be sure to write about them in a family journal.
11. Keep a chart of chores to be done.
12. Discuss something interesting you read on a digital device.
13. Be sure children will feel successful in the activities you choose.
14. Let your children choose activities for the family to participate in.
15. ship in the year ahead.

What Did We Do This Year?

We coached teachers in early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school. We initiated Rutgers Reading Clubs, where children's scores on their post-tests showed 30% improvement over their pre-tests. [Speaker events to be named — e.g., Coaches Leadership, new family nights partnering with Pediatricians' Reach Out and Read initiatives, etc.]

What Does the Center for Literacy Development Have on Its Program for This Summer and for Fall 2026 Through Spring 2027?

We have so many exciting events and workshops coming up to enhance your teaching! As you explore this newsletter, you will find more information about our summer workshops on small group instruction and multilingual learners. We also have a conference specifically for literacy coaches — and don't forget to check out the lineup for our ever-popular speaker series! We hope to see you there.

Speaker Series Speakers and Dates (see attached flyer for more details)

- **Jennifer Serravallo - October 22, 2026**
- **Todd Glover, Deborah Lynam, Jennifer Bender & Dana Wilson - December 9, 2026**
- **Carl Anderson - February 11, 2027**
- **Cornelius Minor - March 11, 2027**
- **Valentina Gonzalez - April 22, 2027**

Wishing you a restful and joyful summer.

Warm regards,
Dr. Lesley Morrow
Director



Erin McBride
Director



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

Center for Literacy Development Speaker Series 2026-2027



JENNIFER SERRAVALLO
OCTOBER 22, 2026

Embedding Comprehension
Strategies Across Narrative,
Informational, and Content
Area Instruction



TODD GLOVER
W/ DEBORAH LYNAM, JENNIFER
BENDER & DANA WILSON
DECEMBER 9, 2026

MTSS: Using Assessments to
Plan and Organize Targeted
Instruction for Students in
Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3



CARL ANDERSON
FEBRUARY 11, 2027

A Current Look at Writing
Instruction for Narrative,
Expository, and Content
Area Texts



CORNELIUS MINOR
MARCH 11, 2027

Literacy Experiences
that Motivate, Engage,
Build Stamina and
Executive Functioning



VALENTINA GONZALEZ
APRIL 22, 2027

Building Language Rich Literacy
Classrooms for Multilingual Learners
using Translanguaging, Contrastive
Analysis and Other Strategies

**Registration
Opening Soon!**



RUTGERS-NEW BRUNSWICK
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Summer Institute: Impactful Small Group Instruction

Ready to transform your small group reading instruction? Join us for a fun, hands-on day designed to help you build powerful small group reading experiences — no matter what grade you teach. Walk away with practical tools, fresh ideas, and a plan you can use from day one.

What we'll explore

- Why small group instruction matters for readers
- Using assessments to form purposeful groups
- Selecting the right students for the right group
- What a small group lesson really looks like
- Keeping meaningful, manageable records
- What the rest of the class is doing — and why it works

July 9, 2025 | 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

**Virtual OR In Person
at the Rutgers GSE**



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Sheltered English Instruction for Multilingual Learners: Strategies for Inclusive Classrooms

Take our Summer Institute and enhance your strategies for MLL students. This three-day (15-hour) summer program is designed for teachers seeking to enhance their instructional practices for multilingual learners. Aligned with the NJ Department of Education's Bilingual Waiver requirements, completion of this program provides professional development hours for educators towards the option for the Bilingual Waiver under Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) option.

Topics Include:

- Principles of second language acquisition
- Overview of Sheltered English Instruction (SEI)
- Language objectives and lesson planning
- Scaffolding techniques for content and language
- Differentiated instruction for multilingual learners
- Culturally responsive teaching practices
- Formative and summative assessment modifications
- Building academic vocabulary across content areas
- Family and community engagement strategies

[Click here to register:](https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/ev/reg/6t6nt3d)

<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/ev/reg/6t6nt3d>

- **Format:** In-person with a Zoom option
- **Time Commitment:** 15 hours total (5 hours/day over 3 days, 7/21-7/23)
- **Eligibility:** NJ certified teachers
- **Outcome:** Fulfills NJDOE requirements for professional development hours that lead to Sheltered English Instruction option of the Bilingual Waiver



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LITERACY COACHING CONFERENCE

*Empowering Coaches. Strengthening
Teachers. Growing Readers.*

Join literacy coaches, instructional leaders, and administrators for a dynamic one-day conference dedicated to advancing the science and practice of literacy coaching.

What to Expect:

- Best practices in literacy coaching and instructional support
- Strategies for building and sustaining teacher capacity
- Research-informed approaches to accelerating student reading growth
- Collaborative conversations with like-minded literacy leaders across the region

Who Should Attend?

- ✓ Literacy Coaches
- ✓ Instructional Coaches & Leaders
- ✓ Curriculum Directors
- ✓ Building & District Administrators

September 24, 2026

Registration Coming Soon!



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Literacy Coaching & Professional Development

Our Services Support Schools with:

- Assessment
- Multiple forms of small group instruction
- Close Reading
- Comprehension
- Culturally Responsive Instruction
- Differentiated Instruction
- Digital Literacies
- Dyslexia
- Motivation
- Phonics
- English Language Learners
- Program Evaluation/Organization
- Family Literacy
- Fluency
- Foundational Skills
- Project Based Learning
- MTSS
- Data Based Instruction
- Social Emotional Learning
- Vocabulary
- Science of Reading
- Simple view of reading
- Active View of Reading

“Rutgers coaches guided us through the new NJSL standards, helped calibrate writing rubrics, and strengthened our vocabulary instruction —transforming how we teach literacy.”

*Betsy Smith,
Instructional Coach,
Holmdel*

Contact us:

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Reading Club for Struggling Readers

The Rutgers Reading Club is a summer club and After School Intervention during the school year for struggling readers that takes place in your school

- Evidence Based Small Group after school instruction twice a week for 12 weeks
- Professional Development provided for Club teachers
- Progress monitoring with collection of assessment data at the beginning and culmination of the program
- Data based instruction
- Participants and their families are invited to a celebration with a Rutgers certificate at the culmination

Reading club assessments before, during, and at the end of the program.

Pecce-AM Overall Attendance: 92%

Attendance Rate (%)	Sight Words December	Sight Words January	Sight Words March	Running Record December	Running Record January	Running Record March	Phonics Inventory December	Phonics Inventory January	Phonics Inventory March
100	136	258	296	E	G	H	42/74	67/74	74/74
76	60	122	--	C	--	--	39/74	54/74	--
100	135	252	296	F	H	I	40/74	63/74	72/74

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QR CODE
PLACEHOLDER



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START STRONG: FAMILY LITERACY AND GOOD HEALTH PROGRAM FOR PRE-K AND KINDERGARTEN



Research-Based & Expert-Led

A grant-funded program combining early literacy and pediatric health for families to build literacy skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, listening comprehension and fluency.



Interactive Family Evening

One in person session to introduce the family and children to school routines as well as learning self regulation. With the use of themes we engage the family in some art, music, and guided dramatic play to illustrate how they build vocabulary and knowledge. The themes we will use deal with exercise, nutrition, bedtime routines and social and emotional well being.



Extended Support with Virtual Sessions

Four follow-up online sessions continue the learning with literacy skills, and discussions about good health habits. Promoting discussion and interaction of parents and children will be emphasized. At each session a the family receives a picture story book about the theme and activity pages to continue the learning. The program is bilingual in English and Spanish or English only.

About Us

Dr. Manuel Jimenez MD, MS Principal Investigator of the Research, is an Associate Professor of Family Medicine and Community Health, at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and Children's Specialized Hospital.

Dr. Lesley Mandel Morrow, Ph.D. is a Distinguished Professor and coordinator of the Graduate Literacy Programs at Rutgers Graduate School of Education and the Director of the Center for Literacy Development. She has worked on the design the program.



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RUTGERS
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Leaders in Literacy Institute

Presented by:
Dr. Lesley Mandel Morrow
Alicia Drozd
Erin McBride

A networking and learning cohort for literacy coaches, supervisors and administrators.



WHAT'S INCLUDED



One in-person Rutgers Speaker Series PD of your choice



6 Zoom Topic-Based PD and Networking Events



2 privately scheduled consultations with a Rutgers Coach



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The Final Sprint: Using EOY Data to Fuel Tier 1 Instruction



Erin McBride
CLD Assistant Director and Literacy Coach

As the school year winds down, it's tempting to treat end of year assessments like the educational equivalent of cleaning out your junk drawer. We administer the tests, collect the scores, nod thoughtfully at the data charts, and check the box labeled "done." But what if we looked at EOY data a little differently? What if it wasn't the finish line at all?

End-of-year data can actually be one of the most powerful tools for setting a focused Tier 1 instructional goal that gives students one final push before summer break. Think of it less as "How far did they come?" and more as "What do they still need from us before they leave?" The beauty of EOY data is that patterns become crystal clear. Maybe your students grew beautifully in comprehension but still struggle to support responses with text evidence. Perhaps decoding improved, but fluency remains choppy. Instead of trying to tackle ten things at once, strong Tier 1 instruction says: ***Let's focus on the one thing that will make the biggest impact for the most students.***

This is where the magic happens. Teachers can use assessment trends to create short, targeted instructional bursts during those final weeks of school. Mini-lessons, shared reading, quick writing responses, partner work, and purposeful read-aloud discussions can all become intentional opportunities to strengthen that goal. Suddenly, those last few weeks stop feeling like countdown-to-summer chaos and start feeling purposeful again.

And let's be honest, students feel it too. There's something motivating about ending the year with momentum instead of simply coasting into June with field days, missing pencils, and mysterious sticky classroom floors.

EOY data shouldn't live in a spreadsheet graveyard until September. It should help us sharpen our instruction, celebrate growth, and most importantly, give students the confidence and skills they need to walk into summer feeling successful, capable, and ready for what's next.

The Power of “Playing with a Plan”



Stefanie Hoffman
Neptune Township Pre-K Teacher

In our classroom, play is serious business! We use the Tools of the Mind approach, which emphasizes Make-Believe Play Planning. This isn't just "free play"—it is a structured activity where children intentionally plan, organize, and execute complex, imaginative scenarios with peers.

What is Play Planning?

Before diving into play, children take a moment to become designers of their own world. They sit down and:

- 1 Decide what they will play (e.g., Hospital, Grocery Store, Space Station).
- 2 Choose a specific role (e.g., Doctor, Customer, Astronaut).
- 3 Draw and Write their plan on paper, creating a "play plan" that details their story.

How This Builds Literacy & Language

- **Meaningful Writing:** Children are motivated to write because they want to record their ideas. They use drawings, lines, and emerging letter-sound knowledge (using our classroom Sound Map) to create their plans.
- **Oral Language & Negotiation:** Children use complex language to negotiate roles and create scenarios, boosting vocabulary and social communication.
- **Reading the Plan:** Throughout the play block, children refer back to their plans to ensure they are sticking to their chosen roles, reinforcing that writing carries meaning.

