13th Annual Literacy Essentials Conference

April 6, 2019

Transformative Pathways to Diverse Communities Through Literacy

Conference Chairs
Jesse P. Turner
Michael D. Bartone
Central Connecticut State University
Welcome

Welcome to the 13th Annual Literacy Essentials Conference at Central Connecticut State University. A big welcome to those who are attending for the first time, and a particularly warm thank you to those who have been returning to the Literacy Essentials Conference each year.

Looking back over the past 170 years of public schooling in America, the research demonstrates we have had many reform movements. Never have we had equity and justice for all, Black, Brown, Low Wage Families, and Special Education children in our schools. In 2010, authors Catherine Y. Kim, Damon T. Hewitt, and Daniel J. Losen published their text The School-to-Prison Pipeline Structuring Legal Reform. It is common practice today during discussions on public education, the term “school to prison pipeline” often rears its head. Also, in 2010 Geneva Gay published Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice. Her work challenging teachers to become culturally responsive to the students they teach. Today it is common in critical educator communities to call out bias against Black, Brown, Queer, Latinx, Asian, and Indigenous communities. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy challenges teachers to decolonize our literacy lessons. At our conference today, the co-chairs, the speakers, and all the presenters attempt to address these very concerns.

People say, the hope for the present and the future is a pedagogy that is all-encompassing diversity. We encourage and celebrate innovative visions of effective literacy curriculum, instruction and assessment that affirms all communities; where all marginalized voices are respected, valued and affirmed in our literacy lessons. A pedagogy that advocates for a transformative framework that goes far beyond tolerance and acceptance. A pedagogy affirming, valuing and positively representing all diverse communities.

In keeping with the high caliber of presenters at our previous twelve Literacy Essentials Conferences, we are confident that this year’s conference will be intellectually stimulating and engaging for all attendees. Our keynote speaker, Dr. Denny Taylor is a ground-breaking Ethnographic Researcher who in 1983 coined the term Family Literacy. Her research in critical literacies is internationally renowned. She is currently the publisher of GARN Press, which encourages educators and researchers to be brave, be fearless, and not forget to imagine the extraordinary opportunities of being human in these most challenging times.

Our luncheon speaker, Dr. Cathy Toll, has authored numerous books on Literacy Coaching. She is one of the most influential voices on Literacy Coaching both here in the United States, and internationally. Here at CCSU she is simply referred to as the Literacy coach’s coach by our students. We have five special invited authors with us today as well. Barry Lane, reminds us that literacy provides joy and healing. We have three exciting new authors, Chemaj Morales-James, Genese Clark and Dr. Candace Barriteau-Phaire, all hailing from The Nutmeg State (Connecticut).

We shall recognize CCSU’s most renowned graduate Ebenezer D. Bassett for his indefatigable service to our professional community. He is posthumously the deserving recipient of the 1853-2019 Outstanding Connecticut Literacy Educator Award. We shall recognize and honor The Dance For Ana With Love, (DFAWL) with our Literacy Community Outreach award for their work collecting and delivering thousands of free books to children in Hartford, and the surrounding communities. Finally, we recognize a Central Connecticut Writing Project Fellow Michelle McKnight with our first ever Literacy Essentials Connected
Community Award for her work in the Manchester Public Schools as Math Coach. Michelle teaches Social Justice Mathematics using math and all the Language Arts. We have three special thanks to be given at this year’s conference. First to President Zulma Toro, who has encouraged and given our opening welcome since her arrival here at CCSU. Second to School of Education and Professional Studies Interim Dean Kimberly Kostelis for providing 75 scholarships to our teacher education candidates. We thank our Department Chair Helen Abadiano, and the entire faculty of the Literacy, Elementary, and Early Childhood Department for their support, and encouragement. Finally, we thank our break sessions presenters, who give their expertise and time freely to help inform, educate, and share solutions for changing our pedagogy.

During our breakout sessions, our presenters will further enhance our understanding of literacy by addressing issues relevant to our concerns for incorporating Transformative Literacy Pathways to diverse communities. The wide range of presentations on vocabulary, English language learners, critical literacy, children’s literature, and new literacies will provide us with strategies and ideas to facilitate our teaching and inform our research. The presenters will inspire and energize us to continue finding creative and transformative ways of supporting and enhancing all our students’ literacy experiences both in and out of the classroom.

It is both a privilege and an honor to serve as the co-chairs of the 13th Annual Literacy Essentials Conference and we are overwhelmed at the response, and the fact that you have chosen to be here today. We really and truly would like to encourage you today to be an active participant, by sharing your ideas and exploring how this conference helps provide better access to literacy learning for all.

Enjoy the conference!

MICHAEL D. BARTONE and JESSE P. TURNER 2019 Conference Chairs
**Program schedule**

7:00 am – 7:45 am
Alumni Hall Lobby

- Ongoing Registration/Breakfast

7:45 am – 8:00 am
Alumni Hall

- Welcome

Dr. Zulma Toro, President
Central Connecticut State University

Literacy Essentials Conference Awards
Outstanding Connecticut Literacy Educator: Posthumously 1853/2019
Ebenezer D. Bassett

Literacy Community Service Outreach Award
Dance For Ana With Love (DFAWL)

Connected Community Social Justice Leadership Award
Michelle McKnight

8:00 am – 9:00 am

Keynote Address: Denny Taylor: How Parents and Teachers Can Work Together to Make the Planet a Child Safe Zone

9:10 am – 10:00 am

Breakout Session I

10:00 am – 10:20 am

Coffee Break

10:20 am – 11:10 am

Breakout Session II

11:20 am – 12:10 pm

Breakout Session III

12:15 pm – 1:15 pm
Alumni Hall

- Lunch

Cathy Toll: 18 Years of Literacy Coaching: Here’s What We Know and What We Need to Do

1:30 – 2:15 pm
Semesters

- Education Salon: Our Roles and Responsibilities In Making Our Literacy Lessons Culturally Relevant

Panelists: Michelle McKnight, Chemay Morales-James, Geneses Clark, Candace Barrteau-Phaire.
Opening Keynote Speaker

Dr. Denny Taylor is Professor Emeritus of Literacy Studies. The concept of “family literacy” originates in her doctoral research at Teachers College, Columbia University, and she has received the 2019 TC Distinguished Alumni Award for her lifetime of scholarship. She has also received the 2019 NCRLD Distinguished Scholar Award for her research. Since 1977 she has been continuously engaged in research with families living in extreme poverty, and in regions of armed conflict and in the aftermath of weather-related catastrophes. Today, there are family literacy initiatives in more than 140 U.N. Member States to build more just, peaceful and inclusive societies. In recognition of the origination of “family literacy” in Dr. Taylor’s research, renowned scholars on four continents and in five countries nominated her for the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize, and she been nominated again this year for the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize. Family literacy has become a conduit for many local and regional initiatives to end poverty and hunger, respond to public health emergencies, and promote gender equality, climate action, peace & justice, and strengthen partnerships to address the U.N. SDGs. Most recently she has prepared a peer review of the 2018 U.N. High Level Political Forum, which is available on her website. Her books include novels as well as seminal research texts. Her first book Family Literacy (1983) is regarded a classic in the field; Growing Up Literate (co-researched with Catherine Dorsey-Gaines) received the MLA Mina P. Shaughnessy Prize (1988); and Toxic Literacies (1996) was nominated for both the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award. In 2004 Taylor was inducted into the IRA’s Reading Hall of Fame. She is the co-founder and CEO of Garn Press, which has published many award-winning books by teachers and scientists.

Luncheon Speaker

Dr. Cathy Toll supports teacher learning by guiding educational coaches, professional learning teams, and administrative leaders. She has been a consultant, keynote speaker, and workshop leader throughout the United States, Australia, and Canada. Cathy has served as a teacher at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, a reading specialist, a curriculum coordinator, a school principal, director of literacy research and development, grant director, state department of education consultant, and educational coach. Cathy has published widely for teacher leaders, including six books for literacy coaches and a book on learnership for principals and teacher leaders. Cathy is Chair of the Department of Literacy & Language at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. Cathy lives in Menasha, Wisconsin, with her husband David and their two cats.
7:45-8:00am
Alumni Hall
Welcome
President Toro

8:00-9:00am
Alumni Hall
Keynote Address
Denny Taylor

BREAKOUT SESSION I
9:10 am – 10:00 am

Alumni Hall
Featured Speaker: Denny Taylor
Creating transformative Literacy places in our classrooms, schools, and communities

Room: Carlton
Middle -High School

Unloading the Frustration of Gun Violence
Allison J. D. Fallon, Greenwich Public Schools
The most dangerous job in America is student. This is what my 8th grade students told me the day after Parkland. They sat there upset. They sat there angry. They sat there feeling hopeless. It’s time to let the students; the one in the line of fire dictate how education and society and empathy is portrayed in America. In a partnership with #UNLOAD, Fairfield University” and the CT Writing Project 200 8th grade students explored how gun violence art and expression can begin to heal. Come and experience what they did as a way to promote change.

Room: Blue and White
All Seeds That Grow Understanding
Mark Schmidek, Researcher, Author, Retired English Teacher, Speech and Language Teacher, Farmington
Participants will review seeded differentiated texts for the elementary, middle and high school classrooms to support comprehension and interpretation of fiction and non-fiction. Participants will be offered strategies to use “seeding” to promote the development rate. Seeding promotes an uninterrupted, read-on strategy that offers vocabulary support at the word/phrase level and connects contextual factual elements to increase background knowledge. Seeding is (1) context-based explanations of vocabulary words, (2) facts and historical information and (3) context-based explanations of expressions, phrases and multiple-meaning words embedded in text. Research results will be shared with participants. There will be hands-on “seeding” practice.
Building Equity Through Powerful Literacy Instruction
Kim Gilbert, Center for the Collaborative Classroom

A commitment to access and equity starts with the individual and is enacted through our daily interactions with our students. In this session we will utilize discussions, lesson experiences, and reflection to examine how culturally responsive teaching practices can enhance our literacy instruction and support access and equity for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

The Importance of Relationship, Representation, and Relevance within Literacy Curriculum: A critical examination of power, practices, and opportunities to enhance children’s literacy skill development through the intentional building of relationships, representation amongst staff and students, and the delivery of relevant curriculum and pedagogies.
Patricia Bellamy-Mathis, MSW; Cassandra Therriault; Anne Denerville; Bricherland Quinones; Jenna Stone; Joaneen Mata; Justin Evanovich, PhD; UCONN

Husky Sport (www.husksport.uconn.edu) has existed as a Campus-Community Partnership since 2003. While acknowledging limitations (i.e., housed within a university; not school/community-based educators; balance of power, identities, and socio-political realities), as an organization Husky Sport has learned valuable lessons over the last 15+ years. Workshop presenters will facilitate individual, small, and whole group examinations around opportunities to enhance relationships across diverse stakeholders; the power of representative staffing; practices and pedagogies that foster age-appropriate, student-centered, culturally and environmentally relevant teaching and learning associated with literacy skill building curriculum within an elementary school setting.

Celebrating Diversity Using Reading and Writing
Jim Johnston and Maria Peterson, Somers Elementary School

Have you noticed that students don’t come to the classroom with the same enrichment of life-experiences? We often think that this is a deficit that affects only urban areas. However, this does affect all areas of society. Students are lacking background knowledge to fully understand readings in cultures that differ from their own as well as experiences that vary widely in each classroom. It is our plan to share enrichment activities to reach learners with better understandings of the variety of backgrounds and experiences we all encounter. We will discuss teaching those of varied economic situations, race, culture, and various backgrounds.

Culturally Relevant Literature in our Classroom
Taina Hernandez and Katya Lagun Brando

This session will inspire classroom teachers to build classroom libraries that represent diverse communities. It’s our responsibility to provide all students with culturally relevant literacy experiences.
BREAKOUT SESSION II
10:20-11:10am

Alumni Hall

Featured Speaker: Cathy Toll
Literacy Coaches' Role in Advocating for Equity and Social Justice

Room: Carlton

Making Writing 3-D
Diane M. Leja, CREC Discovery Academy
Writing is the original makerspace. Teachers give blank pieces of papers (or screens) to students for them to design and create something new out of nothing. The worlds of Makers and Writers ebb and flow through the same processes that include brainstorming ideas, creating rough drafts, receiving feedback to make changes, and producing a final project. When children are encouraged to use their talents, creativity, and strengths, writing becomes personal and no longer follows a linear approach. Struggling writers who stare at blank paper (or screens) have an opportunity to create their story before they write. Using the Makerspace Writing approach with struggling writers can neutralize the idea “I can’t write, so why even try.” It embraces unconventional approaches that provide students with ownership, purpose for their writing, discovering new possibilities in their writing, and having spontaneous peer conferencing. Makerspace writing creates a collaborative and adaptive environment that all students can benefit from.

Room: Blue and White

Embracing Primary Discourses: Valuing the Expressive Oral Language Our Students Bring to School
Darcy A. Fiano, CARR and Windsor Public Schools
Research in the area of academic achievement, particularly literacy, shows a positive relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading achievement. Vocabulary development is situated in expressive oral language which goes beyond the academic conception of vocabulary words learned in order to develop academic competence in school. Our vocabularies are an extension of who we are and project a persona into society. From infancy, children are enculturated into ways of acting and talking by those they interact with during their formative years in their primary Discourse—their home environment. In terms of oral language, culturally specific vernacular language signifies who we are in the world and what we bring with us as a foundation into the local community and public sphere. As primary Discourses differ greatly across the United States in relation to cultural, economic, social, and regional groups, so too do home environments, each creating their own unique dynamic. Primary Discourses, therefore, should not be recognized as right or wrong, better or worse, rather, just different. With such diversity in children’s foundational oral language upon entering school, it is important for educators to acknowledge these differences and use them as the basis for instruction in expressive oral language growth and development.
This Book Changed Me
Jacqueline Leathers, Alton Central School

As teachers, we want our students to be changed by texts. We want texts to set them free, to liberate them from their former selves – their thinking, their feeling, their way of seeing aspects of the world. Reading can do that for our students if we invite them to approach texts with the expectation that they will be changed by reading them. Participants in this session will be invited to read short texts in small groups. Readers will be guided by the question, “What impacted you, what moved you as a reader?”

Beyond Non-fiction Reading: Fostering student empathy and understanding of perspective through literacy skills in the content area secondary classroom
Elisabeth Muller and Lauren Mojer, Fairfield Warde High School

This workshop focuses on content area literacy skills in the social studies classroom to build students’ understanding and empathy of varying perspectives. Discover how students’ visual literacy skills are developed and used to foster their understanding of perspective. In addition, participants will explore how photographs and the historical fiction genre can be used with diverse learners and serve as models for their own writings and creative projects. This activity can be applied to a variety of topics within English and Social Studies classrooms.

Learning Life & Literacy in the Living Room Classroom
Theresa Lynch, Independent Reading Consultant

The experts informed me that my son would NEVER learn how to read. I was in a quandary. I loved and respected public education, as I was a public school teacher, as well as a certified reading consultant, yet I was well aware that because of the system, my child might fall through the cracks. Therefore, for 15 years, I tried to weave love, life, literacy, and laughter into the fabric of each day in the comfort of our living room, where philosophies were challenged, odds defied, expectations surpassed, and lives transformed. Discover how you can do the same in your classroom!

Adopting Culturally Relevant Literacy through Literature
Amanda Lubin- Cromwell School District
Andrea Fenton- Simsbury School District

This session will learn how to build classroom libraries that represent diverse communities. It’s the teacher’s responsibility to provide all students with culturally relevant literacy experiences.
BREAKOUT SESSION III  
11:20 am – 12:10 pm  
Alumni Hall  
All

**My Reflection Matters**  
Invited Speaker: Chemay Morales James

Where do teachers who are Hungry for educational resources and practices that support positive racial and ethnic identity development of your kids go. Searching for guidance around creating educational products or services that speak to the hearts of communities of color. Ready to heal from the mark racism has left on you subconsciously. Find out how My Reflections Matter can help teachers, parents, and administrators become culturally relevant educators.

Room Carlton  
All

**Finding a Flow in Small Group**  
Michael Rafferty, Region 14 Schools

Want to learn a comprehensive approach to delivering small group reading groups? Find out how to structure and deliver effective and powerful small group teaching and techniques. Tiered teaching has great potential. Addressing the comprehensive literacy growth of all students can be a challenge for classroom teachers. It involves more than having a strong resource of text-leveled materials. Learning how to balance the five main components of reading proficiency (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension) is both a challenge and power. This workshop provides teachers with broad understanding of how to personalize small group reading for students based on key teaching moves.

Room: Blue and White  
Elementary

**Creating Challenge for Talented Readers, Writers and Thinkers**  
Susannah Richards, Eastern Connecticut State University

What are the qualities of an engaging and rigorous ELA program where highly able students are ignited, delighted and cultivated to be readers, writers and thinkers? This fast paced, energetic session will highlight books, materials and strategies to escalate English Language Arts for high ability learners that will extend the traditional ELA curriculum with depth and breadth.

Room: Philbrick  
All

‘Critical Literacy Happening’ Revisiting the Cultural Myths of Christopher Columbus –A Participatory Demonstration of Critical Discourse Analysis  
Katharine Covino and Sarah Desiderio, Fitchburg State University

Aligned with the theme of this conference, this ‘critical literacy happening’ is designed for reading teachers, reading specialists, and other literacy education professionals interested in engaging in a ‘real-time’ critical textual analysis of children’s books depicting the landing of Christopher Columbus in the Caribbean. In this session, the presenters will briefly define and explore both critical literacy and critical discourse analysis literacy instructors interested in using texts to engage their students in deep, evaluative discussion that privileges and empowers multiple viewpoints and perspectives.
Room: Clock Tower

Our Voices Matter
Invited Speakers: Candace Barriteau Phaire and Genese Clark
Black Educators and mothers have powerful narratives that can illuminate the learning and teaching. Genese Clark will share her outreach efforts to encourage positive literacy experiences, and Dr. Barriteau Phaire, Candace will share her work as a mother, early childhood educator, and author to prepare teachers to be culturally relevant teachers.

Room: Sprague

How Social Justice Mathematics Engages Students in Literacy by Promoting Writing and Discourse
Michelle McKnight, Math Specialist, Manchester Public Schools
Because of the Common Core, students are being asked to perform at higher levels of critical thinking. This has caused educators of mathematics to have to think differently about math instruction. The reorganization of traditional topics and new content aids in the progression and evolution of topics, and are designed to be connected. Students are given many more opportunities to make meaningful connections with material and its applications (Common Core - Mathematics). Students make meaningful connections in Mathematics when challenged to engage in discourse and writing about topics and/or issues that are relevant to them. Students who think about Social Justice issues and frame their thinking around math engage in more authentic, meaningful real world mathematical experiences. Having students then write about the math that helps to solve social issues, make math conjectures and reason through solutions to both the math and the issues, gives students the ability to communicate in a highly critical way.

Room: Semesters

Sing For Kindness: Creating a Culture of Kindness Through Song and Story
Invited Speaker: Barry Lane
The first step to creating a Culturally Relevant Transformative Classroom, begins with lessons rooted in a goodness that celebrate diverse communities. Teachers must value and affirm all students, all families, all communities, and music and kindness are the perfect bridges to meaningful literacy lessons affirming diverse communities.
Luncheon Keynote Address
Cathy Toll

12:15 pm – 1:15 pm
Alumni Hall

Cultural Pedagogy Salon
1:30-2:15
Semesters

Our Roles and Responsibilities for Making Our Literacy Lessons Culturally Relevant

Michelle McKnight, Chemay Morales James, Genese Clark, Candace Barritteau-Phaire

Our salon will feature teachers and authors from our program engaging our audience in an interactive town hall. Panelists are given 3 minutes to address one of the questions. After each question is quickly addressed by our panelists, they join tables to listen to audience members. We end with the panelists coming back up, and then open the salon up to questions, and end leaving us with some solutions.

Exploring Chemay Morales James’ “My Reflection Matter” questions

1. How are historically oppressed groups represented?
2. How does privilege bias one’s viewpoint?
3. Whose perspective dominates our literacy lessons?
4. Do the words and actions of others support the liberation of marginalized communities?
Save the date!

Saturday April 25, 2020
14th Annual
Literacy Essentials Conference

The Literacy Essentials Conference is open to individuals who are interested in advancing research, curriculum, and pedagogy in the areas of reading and language arts. Researchers, educators, administrators, and other interested individuals are invited to submit proposals for presentation at the 14th Literacy Essentials Conference. The proposal submission website will be available in fall 2019 at http://www.ccsu.edu/literacy/.

Special Thanks

President Zulma Toro for her constant support of our conferences
Special Thanks to our Sponsors:
Dean Kimberly Kostelis, Interim Dean School of Education and Professional Studies
Dr. Helen Abadiano, chair Department of Literacy, Elementary, & Early Childhood Education
Faculty of the Department of Literacy, Elementary, & Early Childhood Education
Judith Ratcliffe and Christa Sterling, Continuing Education, CCSU
Lisa Michaud Administrative Assistant Department of Literacy, Elementary, CCSUCopy Center