

President's Message: Margaret Lally Queenan

What a joy to be president of the Connecticut Association for Reading Research. We are all consumers of research as we read IRA journals, *The Reading Teacher*, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, and *Reading Research Quarterly*; CARR's journal, *CARReader*; and other journals that investigate the ways we can assess students informally (sometimes without their even knowing) to discover how to help them excel. I'd like to propose that we become producers of research, as well, as we identify a problem, investigate it, and share our findings with colleagues as part of an action research initiative that brings us to our students' side.

When a reading specialist, classroom teacher, or administrator researches, we find a problem—or, more accurately, a problem finds us—that bothers us so much that we read all we can about it and conduct a hands-on investigation to learn about it. We interview students or colleagues to discover their perceptions of the problem and study artifacts, usually students' work and our own, to help us analyze the problem. For example, every Monday I am privileged to teach in the classrooms of five colleagues who are fourth grade teachers in a priority school district. I model the reading comprehension strategies that the National Reading Panel recommended. While some of the students learn the strategies, some students do not. More worrisome, while some of the students learn the science content, some do not. Obviously, a problem has found me; so I will conduct action research to investigate it.

Next year when I return to the same classrooms, I will apply the ideas I have read in research articles. For example, Lauren Aimonette Liang and Janice A. Dole in their May 2006 *Reading Teacher* article, "Help with teaching reading comprehension: Comprehension instructional frameworks," described five frameworks, two for teaching comprehension

strategies, two for teaching content, and one for teaching both, “Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI),” described at www.cori.umd.edu/index.php. In CORI students concentrate on a topic for several weeks and learn content and strategies as they read many different texts.

Since I tried to implement CORI over the past few years and haven’t been successful in producing an entire classroom of readers who learned both content and reading strategies, next year I will interview students and teachers while I examine my lesson plans, anchor charts, and students think sheets and writing to find out which of the components of the program are working—and which are not—and why:

- the direct experience part of the program? (What hands-on science projects engage fourth grade students—and how do I find them?)
- the gathering information part of the program? (What trade books exist on the topics at students’ reading levels—and where can I find the money to buy them? What Internet texts on fourth grade topics exist at students’ reading levels? What experts can join us?)
- the comprehension part of the program? (What comprehension strategies are effective for which science topics? Or are all of them pertinent for all topics? Is one sequence for learning and applying the strategies better than another? Do some children already know the strategies and when to apply them and if so, what then?)
- the presenting-information-to-peers part of the program? (Which publishing opportunities are exciting for fourth grade students—their teacher’s web page? school hallways? letters to next year’s fourth graders? class magazines? other venues? Would parents sponsor a school magazine?)

- and where do whole class and small group discussion fit in? Or do they?

I can't wait to ask my new questions of next year's students and of my colleagues and their ELL and special education partners. I know that I will enjoy interviewing students and having lunch with teachers because that's the part I've enjoyed most in the past. I also know I'll learn most from examining students' work and bringing questions to them so they can help me find answers: *What comprehension strategy did you use as you were reading about the rain forest? Why that one? What did you learn? Where did your comprehension break down? What did you do? What do you do when a text is too hard for you?* I also know I will find themes to share with colleagues when I comb through the data. For example, one year I discovered that the same comprehension strategies, like visualizing, question generation, synthesizing, inferring, and making connections, that mark powerful readers can make writing audience friendly.

Action research is to professional learning as hands-on experience is to student learning—indispensable. I hope you will join me in letting a problem find you and in conducting action research to investigate it. I hope you will join me, too, in appreciation for Betsy Sisson and Diana Sisson's scholarship in reviewing the literature on Response to Intervention (RtI) and Susan Lynch, et. al.'s research on SIOP published in this CARReader and in anticipation of another researcher's presentation at the Hawthorne Inn in Berlin on October 8 at 4:30: Janice Almasi, IRA Board Member and author of books and articles on comprehension strategies, early literacy, and classroom discussion and who was lucky enough to research with Michael Pressley. It will be wonderful to hear her ideas about the importance of and ways to make classroom discussion more powerful. It will be wonderful to hear your ideas, too. You can write to me at mqueenan@bridgeport.edu.