

**Summer Institute**  
**June 24-25, 2026**  
9:00-3:00 CDT, Zoom

**Transformational  
Teaching Model:**



Elevating Teachers' Professional Knowledge  
to Ensure Success for Every Student

# **Growing Stronger Readers and Writers**

## **Bringing Research into Daily Literacy Instruction**

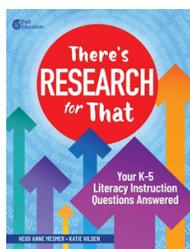
Ready to sharpen your literacy instruction? Join us for an energizing institute focused on turning research and theory into **practical classroom impact**. Dive into powerful sessions on decoding, comprehension, fluency, writing, and metacognition — and discover how these pieces work together to strengthen everyday teaching. Walk away with clear next steps, ready-to-use strategies, and renewed confidence. Whether you teach primary or upper grades, you'll leave equipped, inspired, and ready to grow stronger readers and writers.

### **Heidi Anne Mesmer**

Professor, Literacy Education, Virginia Tech  
School of Education

### **Katie Hilden**

Professor of Literacy Education at Radford University



### **There's Research for That! How Reading Research Answers Teaching Questions for K-5 Literacy Instruction**

Drs. Hilden and Mesmer will provide an interactive, teacher-centered overview of their new book *There's Research for That: Your K-5 Literacy Instruction Questions Answered*. This opening presentation connects reading research to actionable classroom strategies. Audience members will participate in a “choose your own adventure” format by digitally selecting questions frequently asked by teachers about their reading instruction. Each topic will highlight key studies, classroom applications, and infographic slides with practical teaching tips and resource links. The session concludes with teacher input, gathering questions and experiences to inform future work translating reading research into practice.



### **Leah Mermelstein**

International Literacy Consultant/Coach, Author, and Instructional Partner

### **10 Essentials for Impactful Writing Instruction**

This thought-provoking opening session explores the productive paradoxes at the heart of strong writing: rigor and joy, structure and creativity, explicit instruction, and authentic voice. Rather than offering simple solutions, Leah invites participants to engage in nuanced thinking that strengthens practice across classrooms and leadership roles. Through real stories and student work, she demonstrates how small, intentional shifts can deepen instruction and create lasting impact. Participants leave with clarity, practical insight, and a framework for advancing writing with confidence and purpose.



Register at [www.transformationalteaching.org](http://www.transformationalteaching.org)



## Maria Nichols

Author, Consultant. Former Director of School Innovations for the San Diego Unified School District  
**Engaging Hearts and Minds Through Purposeful Talk**

What becomes possible when students are engaged in and through a curriculum of talk? This session explores the transformative potential of teaching and learning that floats on a sea of talk. We'll begin with a glimpse into classrooms where students are actively engaged in meaningful dialogue, examining what makes these interactions powerful and productive. We'll draw on this to define purposeful talk and consider what distinguishes it from more traditional classroom talk. From there, participants will think through practical approaches to launching, sustaining, and strengthening purposeful talk through thoughtful instructional design and responsive facilitation moves. Throughout the session, we'll note how this constructive form of talk deepens students' understanding, increases engagement, and builds stronger classroom communities. Attendees will leave with concrete strategies and a renewed vision for what becomes possible when purposeful talk is positioned as a foundational aspect of teaching and learning.



## Katie Hilden

Professor of Literacy Education at Radford University

### **Empowering Strategic Readers with Intentional Instructional Routines**

As teachers, we know that moving students from accurate decoding to independent readers who actively comprehend can be challenging. In this session, the co-author of *There's Research for That: Your K-5 Literacy Instruction Questions Answered* will share lessons learned from decades of research on comprehension strategies. We will focus on adapting and applying these practical tips and lessons into teachers' everyday comprehension instructional routines. We will explore common teacher questions such as:

- How many different strategies do my students really need?
- Is it better to teach one strategy at a time or teach them all together?
- How do I get my students to use the strategies when they're reading independently?
- How do I adapt my comprehension instruction for my striving readers and multilingual learners?



## Julia Lindsey

Independent consultant and author

### **Small Groups and the Science of Reading: Helping Students Get Unstuck**

In this session, Dr. Julia B. Lindsey explores how to rethink small-group reading. Participants will learn how to use targeted routines to address common challenges children face while learning to read, such as blending, decoding in text, high-frequency words, and fluency. The session focuses on practical, data-driven moves teachers can use to give students more practice and feedback when they need it most. How many different strategies do my students really need?

### **Advancing Decoding: Helping Students Read, Spell, and Understand Multisyllabic Words**

In this session, Dr. Julia B. Lindsey shares practical routines for helping students move from single-syllable decoding to reading longer, more complex words. Participants will learn how specific instructional strategies can build students' ability to break apart multisyllabic words using syllables, morphemes, and flexible phonics knowledge. The session highlights simple, research-aligned routines teachers can use to strengthen word recognition and support reading of increasingly complex texts.



## Carla Soffos

Clinical Literacy Coach, Author, and Co-Developer of the Comprehensive Literacy Model and Comprehensive Intervention Model (CIM)

## Brian Reindl

Director, Comprehensive Literacy Model, Wisconsin, and trainer for Literacy Coaches, Classroom Teachers, and Comprehensive Intervention Model Specialists



### **The Active View of Reading: Metacognition as the Coordinating System with Early Readers**

Metacognition is the driving force behind self-regulated reading. This session explores how to teach and support students in planning before reading, monitoring and adjusting their strategies during reading to obtain meaning, and reflecting after reading on how their thinking and adjustments led to success. Participants will learn practical ways to help young readers become more independent and successful readers.



## Leah Mermelstein

International Literacy Consultant/Coach, Author, and Instructional Partner

### **Designing for Impact: Managing the Sentence-Genre Paradox**

Building on the keynote's Ten Essentials, this session focuses on the sentence-level essential as a big lever for improving writing instruction. We will explore how to manage the paradox of working intentionally and slowly on sentences while also supporting students in writing sustained genre-based pieces. Through practical instructional playbooks and curriculum decisions, participants will learn how to strengthen sentence syntax from all angles, in writing and in reading, making instruction both effective and efficient.



## Lester Laminack

Professor Emeritus, Western Carolina University; Author and Consultant

### **It's in the Details**

I've been taken by the way student writers are using details. It seems that in many of the classrooms I have visited, children are thinking of detail as a way to make their writing longer. It's as if they are thinking that a string of adjectives and physical descriptions scattered throughout the text makes it stronger. That has prompted me to return to my stash of picture books with attention to how writers use details. Let's revisit a few familiar texts with attention to where the details matter and consider how that can inform our writing instruction.



## Nancy Akhavan

Associate Professor Emerita, Fresno State. Author and Consultant, Nancy Akhavan Consulting.

### **Ensuring Student Reading Success through Small Group Instruction and Independent Reading**

Whole-group instruction lays the foundation for student reading success, but small-group instruction ensures that students can decode and comprehend effectively. In this session, participants will learn easy-to-implement steps for small-group instruction to help all students become strong readers who can read independently. Proven lesson sequences using these steps will be discussed to illustrate how to easily get started with small groups and also implement independent reading practice.



## Lynn Newmyer

Reading Specialist; Reading Recovery Teacher Leader, Rochester Community Schools, MI

### **From Talk to Text: Supporting K-2 Students in Writing About Reading**

Young readers often talk about what they read before they can write about it. In this session, explore practical routines that help K-2 students move from discussion to written responses about text while strengthening comprehension and language development.



## Jake Downs

Assistant Professor in the School of Teaching and Leadership at Utah State University. He also hosts the Teaching Literacy Podcast.

### **Shake Up Your Fluency: From Stagnant to Soaring!**

Is it time to shake up your fluency instruction? This session replaces stagnant routines with high-impact "stretch" texts to build genuine reading stamina. Content will focus on two evidence-backed strategies: Synchronous Paired Oral Reading Techniques (SPORT) and Read Like Us. Attendees will leave with a menu of easy-to-implement strategies to build oral reading fluency and stamina during core reading, intervention, and in the content areas.

## Alysha Lester

Literacy Coach, School District of Menomonee Falls, WI

### **Promoting Literacy Through Diverse Read-Alouds**

Looking to bring more joy, equity, and intention to your read-alouds? Inclusive read-alouds are essential for nurturing early literacy skills while affirming students' diverse identities and experiences (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Nash et al., 2025). Hear about a group of educators who collaborated to advance rightful presence and create a practical tool for analyzing and planning inclusive read-alouds using diverse picture books. Grounded in the framework of rightful presence, this session offers hands-on experience with the tool and examples of how to center students within shared reading. You will leave equipped with strategies and resources to design developmentally appropriate, inclusive, and identity-affirming early literacy experiences.

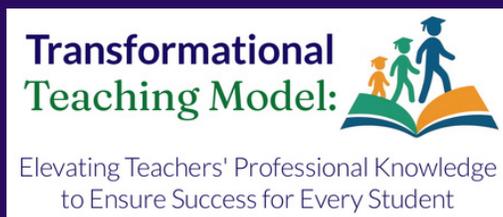
# Wednesday, June 24, 2026

## Session Schedule

Eastern	Central	Mountain	Pacific	Opening Session	
10:00-11:15	9:00- 10:15	8:00-9:15	7:00-8:15	<b>Heidi Anne Mesmer and Katie Hilden</b> There's Research for That! How Reading Research Answers Teaching Questions for K-5 Literacy Instruction	
				<b>Grades K-2 Breakout Sessions</b>	<b>Grades 3 and Above Breakout Sessions</b>
11:30-12:30	10:30-11:30	9:30-10:30	8:30-9:30	<b>Maria Nichols</b> Engaging Hearts and Minds Through Purposeful Talk	<b>Katie Hilden</b> Empowering Strategic Readers with Intentional Instructional Routines
12:30-1:30	11:30-12:30	10:30-11:30	9:30-10:30	<b>Lunch</b>	
1:30-2:30	12:30-1:30	11:30-12:30	10:30-11:30	<b>Julia Lindsay</b> Small Groups and the Science of Reading: Helping Students Get Unstuck	<b>Maria Nichols</b> Engaging Hearts and Minds Through Purposeful Talk
2:45-3:45	1:45-2:45	12:45-1:45	11:45-12:45	<b>Carla Soffos and Brian Reindl</b> The Active View of Reading: Metacognition as the Coordinating System with Early Readers	<b>Julia Lindsey</b> Advancing Decoding: Helping Students Read, Spell, and Understand Multisyllabic Word
3:45-4:00	2:45-3:00	1:45-2:00	12:45-1:00	<b>School/District Sharing and Summarization of Learning</b>	

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# Thursday, June 25, 2026

## Session Schedule

Eastern	Central	Mountain	Pacific	Opening Session	
10:00-11:15	9:00- 10:15	8:00-9:15	7:00-8:15	<b>Leah Mermelstein</b> 10 Essentials for Impactful Writing Instruction	
				<b>Grades K-2 Breakout Sessions</b>	<b>Grades 3 and Above Breakout Sessions</b>
11:30-12:30	10:30-11:30	9:30-10:30	8:30-9:30	<b>Leah Mermelstein</b> Designing for Impact: Managing the Sentence-Genre Paradox	<b>Lester Laminack</b> It's in the Details
12:30-1:30	11:30-12:30	10:30-11:30	9:30-10:30	<b>Lunch</b>	
1:30-2:30	12:30-1:30	11:30-12:30	10:30-11:30	<b>Nancy Akhavan</b> Ensuring Student Reading Success through Small Group Instruction and Independent Reading	<b>Jake Downs</b> Shake Up Your Fluency: From Stagnant to Soaring!
2:45-3:45	1:45-2:45	12:45-1:45	11:45-12:45	<b>Lynn Newmyer</b> From Talk to Text: Supporting K-2 Students in Writing About Reading	<b>Alysha Lester</b> Promoting Literacy Through Diverse Read-Alouds
3:45-4:00	2:45-3:00	1:45-2:00	12:45-1:00	<b>School/District Sharing and Summarization of Learning</b>	

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