

# An Editorial Introduction

## *Omnia Mutantur Nos Et Mutamur In Illis*

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The Latin phrase, “*Omnia mutantur nos et mutamur in illis*,” suggests that not only do all things change, we change with them. This phrase is very significant not only for the new direction that the *e-Journal of Balanced Reading Instruction* is taking, but also for the changes we are seeing in field of education today. A new challenge in the era of reform and accountability is balancing the sociocultural needs of reading instruction with the complex demands of the Common Core State Standards.– the focus for this first issue of the new *e-Journal of Balanced Reading Instruction*.

First we would like to introduce ourselves as the new editor’s of the journal. Our names are Kenny Varner and Stan Barrera, and we are both faculty at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. We each have a passion for literacy, and the delicate considerations of balanced approaches to reading instruction. Given our commitments to literacy, open access to knowledge, and what feels like the every growing costs associated with journals, we have decided to move from the print format that the journal has traditionally been published with, to a new electronic format. The new website, [www.balancedreadinginstruction.com](http://www.balancedreadinginstruction.com), not only will allow open access to the journal, but will also facilitate easy responses to articles. Not only do we encourage new submissions for future editions, we also welcome response articles to help facilitate more authentic dialogue between scholars and practitioners. The role of dialogue and communication is more important now than ever, particularly given how professionals and academics have been largely left out of important decision-making processes in the race to the top.

To help walk you through the new format we want to introduce you to several features of the journal:

1) **Two Annual Issues** – By moving to an electronic format, we have the ability to move from an annual journal to a bi-annual journal. Our spring issue will always center on a special topic and will always be published right before

IRA. The fall issue will come out in October and will be a general issue, not focused on a special theme or topic.

2) **Focus on Educators** – Beginning in the fall edition we will highlight a preservice teacher and an inservice teacher who are making impacts on the field. We welcome nominations, and once selected we will interview and profile the teachers in the journal.

3) **Invited and Peer Reviewed Articles** – Each edition of the journal will feature one invited article from a leading scholar and/or practitioner in the field. These invited pieces will help balance the thinking we engage with. We will continue to have peer-reviewed piece as well, featuring 3-5 piece in any given edition. We use peer reviewers with expertise in the field, and the feedback provided to authors not only helps in the selection process, but also helps authors to think deeper and more critically about their own work.

4) **Professional and Children’s Book Reviews** – Both the fall and spring editions of the journal will feature one professional and up to 5 children’s book reviews. We seek submissions for both categories. Please note, that if you do the review of children’s books we ask that you complete 5 short reviews and somehow try to link the chosen books around a common theme or perspective. These book reviews are also part of our peer-review process.

5) **Web Access** – The journal will be published in two ways digitally. First, each current edition will be available both as a whole journal as well as piece by piece, to allow you to focus on articles meeting your interests. When the next edition is published, the individual links will be removed, and the entire PDF from the previous edition will move to the archive section of the website.

6) **Past Issues** – We are currently in the process of digitizing past issues, and will continue to work diligently in the coming months to have old issues available in our effort to be fully digital.

7) **Language** – In an effort to be more inclusive, we are willing to accept bilingual articles written in Spanish not only to recognize the changing demographics within the United States, but also to give voice to scholars and practitioners we might not hear from often. We ask that bilingual articles be written both in Spanish and English so that readers can benefit across the board.

8) **Dialogue** – As mentioned earlier we are introducing dialogue as a feature of the journal. We invite you to respond to pieces with your own perspective. These response pieces will go out for review and when published will join the edition they are printed in, as a regular feature.

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As you can see, all things change, and we hope that you will join us as we engage in this process of change. As editors, we are also committed to dialoguing with you, the readers, and will use our editorial introduction not only to preview

the edition, but also to share some of our thoughts about the various topics brought to bear in each issue.

### Quid Nunc?

The Latin phrase, “*Quid Nunc?*” or “What Now?,” might aptly describe the position we are taking as editors with respect to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). CCSS have entered the parlance and practice of education with both ardent supporters and ardent critics. Despite support or critique, the CCSS exist and what may be lost in simply endorsing or critiquing the standards is that they are with us, at least for the time being, and our question should be, “what now?,” or in other words, what is being done, in theory and practice, and what are the possibilities with CCSS.

CCSS in themselves will not change outcomes for students, particularly those from underrepresented groups, nor will CCSS provide more resources to schools who feel all to under-resourced in the work they do, but the decisions practitioners make with CCSS have the potential to bring difference and transcend the status quo that has become very common place in many urban settings. While there are myriad perspectives on CCSS, we wanted to provide the space, in this first issue of the e-Journal, to begin thinking about balanced approaches to reading instruction that might help us better understand the realities of CCSS without necessarily endorsing or arguing against the standards themselves. Each piece either directly or indirectly gives us food for thought as we enter the era of CCSS, and is a larger invitation for you to think about the particularities of your contexts and the work that you do.

### INVITED PIECE

For the invited piece we asked Catherine Compton-Lilly to share her perspective on balanced literacy. Much of the dialogue in recent years, and in light of CCSS is the notion of ‘what children bring.’ In her piece, “Building on What Children Bring: Balancing Cognitive and Sociocultural Considerations,” Compton-Lilly challenges the idea that educators must choose cognitive or socio-cultural theories of literacy/reading, and instead argues for a construction of an enhanced view of “what children bring” that balances abilities and knowledges specific to literacy with knowledges about literacy practices and the social meanings of texts. The invited piece does not directly address CCSS, but instead provides a foundation by which we might understand a context where CCSS are operationalized.

### REVIEWED PIECES

As previously mentioned, our first issue of the *e-Journal of Balanced Reading Instruction* focuses on balancing the socio-cultural needs of reading instruction with the complex demands of the Common Core State Standards. With our contributors attending to this call it comes as no surprise that the four peer-reviewed articles in this issue all focus on interdisciplinary literacy. “Literacy Transformation Through Common Core State Standards” by C. Maderazo and

“Proverbs: Wisdom of the Ages in Contemporary Literacy Instruction” by B. Johnson address different approaches to implementing CCSS with respect to instructing diverse learners in the content areas. The third piece, “Effects of Increased Exposure to Informational Texts on Teacher Attitude in the Elementary Classroom” by H. D. Kindall and J. Penner-Williams looks into the shift towards more informational texts and the attitudes inservice teachers have towards these specific genres. The fourth piece by R. M. Giles and L. Kinniburgh, “Common Core State Standards and Text Complexity: An Invitation to Learn Language in STEM Disciplines using a Range of Quality Literature”, focuses on one of the newest issues brought to the forefront by CCSS—text complexity. In this piece, the authors discuss the benefits of using quality literature to increase vocabulary.

### BOOK REVIEWS

The first book review contribution, by Julie Parish, in this issue analyzes, *The Common Core Lesson Book K-5: Working with Increasing Complex Literature, Informational Text, and Foundational Reading Skills* by G. Owocki and is published by Heinemann. The second review, “Learning to Read: Picture Books That Enhance Understanding,” from Joanna Roberston-Eletto, is a series of five small reviews of children’s literature, along with some web resources for the authors and illustrators.

### CONCLUDING THOUGHT

This inaugural issue of the *e-Journal of Balanced Reading Instruction* attempts to strike a balance not only in scope and approach, but also in how we understand practice in the era of accountability and reform. We are grateful to our reviewers for their timely feedback that helped better shape the articles by providing careful insights into the submitted manuscripts. We look forward to the general issue slated to come out in the fall, and encourage colleagues to submit manuscripts for consideration. Looking ahead to Spring 2014, we are also eagerly awaiting submissions for our special issue on culturally relevant approaches to balanced reading instruction.

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