



LITERACY  
RESEARCH  
ASSOCIATION

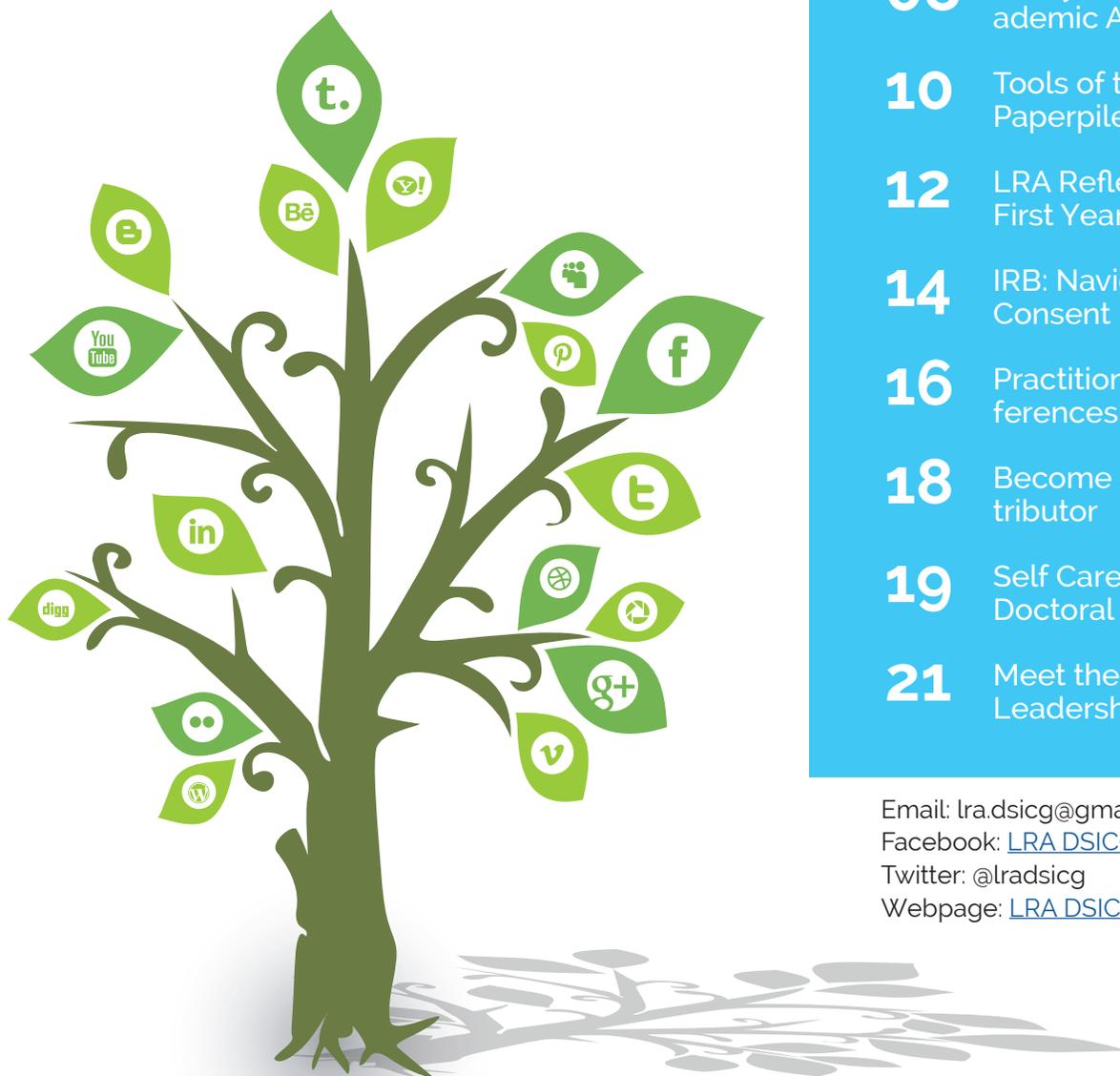
---

# DSICG Newsletter

## Spring 2017



**D**octoral  
**S**tudent  
**I**nnovation  
**C**ommunity  
**G**roup



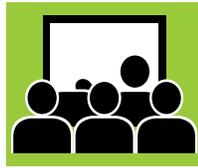
## Content

- 03** Mission Statement
- 04** Letter from the Editors
- 05** Doctoral Students & Political Issues
- 07** LRA 2016 DSICG Events
- 08** Demystifying Academic Advisors
- 10** Tools of the Trade Paperpile
- 12** LRA Reflections First Year Student
- 14** IRB: Navigating Consent
- 16** Practitioner Conferences
- 18** Become a Contributor
- 19** Self Care as a Doctoral Student
- 21** Meet the DSICG Leadership

Email: [lra.dsicg@gmail.com](mailto:lra.dsicg@gmail.com)  
Facebook: [LRA DSICG Group](#)  
Twitter: [@lradsicg](#)  
Webpage: [LRA DSICG Site](#)



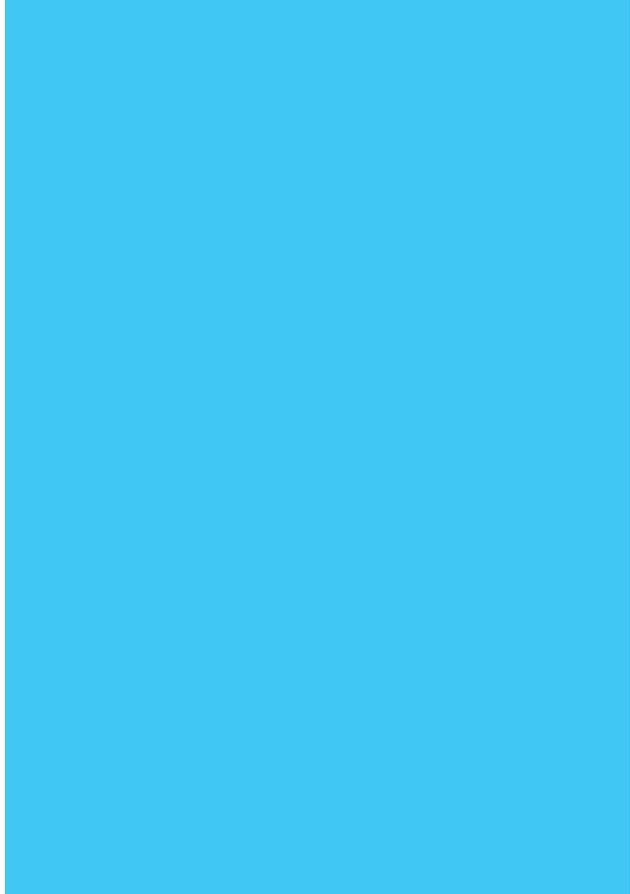
# Mission Statement

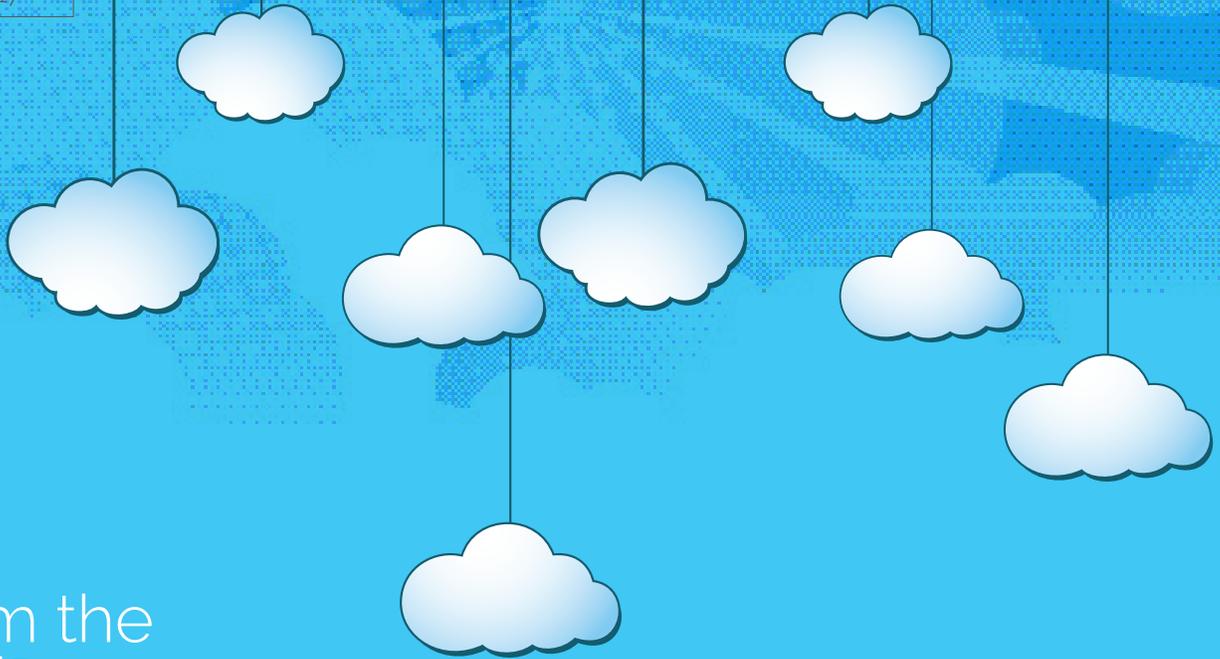


## Welcome to the Literacy Research Association's Doctoral Student Innovative Group!

We are a group organized by doctoral students to support doctoral students.

The mission of the Literacy Research Association's Doctoral Student Innovative Community Group is to facilitate doctoral students' development as exceptional researchers, scholars, and teacher educators in the field of literacy. This task includes purposeful efforts to (a) encourage doctoral students' participation in the LRA, including annual meetings and publications, (b) meet the unique needs of doctoral students, (c) support doctoral students' professional growth, and (d) create a collaborative community of scholars.





## From the **Editors**

---

We are thrilled to share the Spring 2017 edition of the DSCIG Newsletter. This is our first issue with expanded editorial and writing teams, and it reflects collaborations and partnerships between doctoral students from across the country. In this issue, you will find reflections, reviews, and interviews about many aspects of the doctoral student experience. We are pleased to share articles about topics like self-care, political engagement, and attending conferences. We also feature a review of PaperPile, a reference management application. Finally, we present the 2017 DSCIG Leadership Team. Be sure to click on the links to watch a video introduction from each member of the team!

As always, we hope that you will consider submitting an article, infographic, or alternative composition for an upcoming issue of the DSCIG Newsletter. If you have an idea for a piece, or are just interested in getting involved with the newsletter writing or editing teams, please feel free to contact our editorial team.

## Contact the Editors

---

**Emily Machado**

[machado2@uic.edu](mailto:machado2@uic.edu)

**Dani Kachorsky**

[danilynfield@gmail.com](mailto:danilynfield@gmail.com)

**Oona R. Fontanella-Nothom**

[orfmc9@mail.mizzou.edu](mailto:orfmc9@mail.mizzou.edu)

**Virginia Killian Lund**

[vkilli2@uic.edu](mailto:vkilli2@uic.edu)

# How Should a Doctoral Student Approach Political Issues in Education?

by **Alicia Kelley**

As a high school teacher and a doctoral student, the recent nomination proceedings for Betsy DeVos as the incoming U.S. Secretary of Education were an oft-repeated topic of conversation among my colleagues. Responses to her nomination ranged from indifference to outrage. But instead of jumping on the nearest bandwagon available, I found myself asking a self-reflective question: as a critical thinker, teacher, researcher, and student, what stances should I take toward the recent nomination?

## Concerned

The U.S. Department of Education affects both K-12 education and higher education policy. I cannot ignore the direction the department takes and who is confirmed as its senior leader; its policies will affect my students as well as my own educational pursuits. Nor can I be carried away with emotionalism. Instead, I take a stance of concern.

One reason given for why we should disapprove of the recent nomination is that Secretary DeVos's history with education is narrow; she has never attended or taught in a traditional public school or taken out loans for college. However, other well-regarded activists in education lack personal experience with public schools. Lack of experience in public education alone is not an immediate disqualification from being an effective leader in education, but it may

be a reason to dig deeper into an individual's beliefs about education.

## As a critical thinker, teacher, researcher, and student, what stances should I take toward the recent nomination?

DeVos's hearing before the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee could have been a meaningful chance to explore her views and experience. Unfortunately, the Republican committee members tossed her softball questions, and most of the Democrat members spent their time either asking for more time or drilling her on tangential issues. In addition, I found that the Secretary's vague or noncommittal responses to many of the written questions from the Senate were unsatisfying.

I still don't know where DeVos stands on many issues such as the future of K-12 and higher education, school accountability, and Title IX accountability. I also do not know how she plans to tackle the growing issue of student loan debt. All of these factors cause me concern for the future of the U.S. education system.

## Informed

Throughout the recent transition of power, my social media accounts have been understandably flooded with commentary and article-sharing on this topic. However, much of the discussion has centered around inaccurate or incomplete synopses of the primary issues. As a researcher, I am beholden to find and analyze the most accurate and unbiased sources before forming an opinion. As a teacher, why would I expect anything less of myself than I ask of my students?

I must spend the time necessary to gather accurate information and fact check accusations or commendations. I must be informed about the changes that will affect my students and me.

In an effort to take the stance of an informed member of society, I watched the full Senate committee hearing, read a large portion of her written answers to committee members, read DeVos's website, researched her foundation and her husband's charter school, and combed through studies of Michigan charter and traditional public schools. I cannot afford to leave my understanding of this critical issue up to a journalist or political pundit.

### Engaged

Finally, I must take the stance of an engaged advocate for education. I should get involved and ask others to get involved. For better or worse, our education system is inextricably intertwined with political and economic forces. It is tempting at times to feel that unfairness and chicanery are powers too strong to overcome. However, we have a voice; we can speak with our mouths, our pens, and our votes.

As doctoral students, let's choose to stay well-informed and passionately involved. Beyond all else, let us renew our commitment to pursuing the interests of students first and letting that interest inform how we approach political issues in education.



ALICIA KELLEY is a doctoral student at Clemson University in the Literacy, Language, and Culture program. Her research interests include literacy interventions for secondary students, technology in literacy pedagogy, and the intersection of education and social justice. You can email her at [aliciak@clemson.edu](mailto:aliciak@clemson.edu).

**We have a voice; we can speak  
with our mouths, our pens, and  
our votes.**

# LRA 2016 DSICG Events



## DSICG Study Group Sessions

In response to our 2016 Membership Survey, our daily study groups sought to meet the needs



of doctoral students at all phases of their program. These sessions on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday afternoons focused on the following topics: alternative paths to publication; the process of submitting manuscripts for publication and navigating reviewer responses; and the relationship between research publications, participant agency, and larger discourses of power. On Wednesday, Dr. Alfred Tatum offered several principals on writing pieces for publication, such as, "name your scholarly signature early on." Drs. Misty Sailors and Miriam Martinez discussed the publication process on Thursday. Our final study group session consisted of a panel discussion about Eve Tuck's call to "suspend

damage" when writing about participants from marginalized groups in our research. Drs. Fenice B. Boyd, Noah Asher Golden, Marcelle M. Haddix, Lamar Johnson, Gholnecsar Muhammad, and Yolanda Sealy-Ruiz provided powerful perspectives on honoring participants and colleagues from oppressed groups.



## Additional DSCIG Events at LRA 2016

We hosted a Happy Hour at Barlines on Thursday evening. Those who attended enjoyed appetizers sponsored by our DSICG and great conversations with new friends and colleagues. On Friday morning, we hosted a breakfast for students and faculty mentors who participated in the Proposal Mentoring Project, where faculty volunteer to support doctoral students in writing high quality LRA 2016 conference presentation proposals. We held our annual business meeting on Friday morning, electing a new leadership team using a QR code linking our membership to an electronic ballot.



# Demystifying Academic Advisors: Advantages, Benefits, & Seeking Advisors

by **Lori King**

My name is Lori King and I am currently in my third year of doctoral studies at the State University of New York at Buffalo. The aim of this piece is to support beginning doctoral students in understanding how to take advantage of the many benefits of having an advisor while engaging in doctoral studies and how to proactively seek what you need from your advisor to be successful. To strengthen this article I reached out to Dr. Fenice Boyd to better understand her position as a mentor to emerging scholars. Dr. Boyd has mentored many students throughout her 16 years at the University at Buffalo and was awarded the STAR award for advising in 2016.

As emerging scholars, our job is to stand on the shoulders of the giants within our field. It is to build upon and further conceptualize the work that has come before us. To understand this work we must lean upon the resources available to us, including the faculty at our institutions and conferences like LRA, but most importantly our academic advisors. As you know, when entering a doctoral program we are assigned an advisor to guide and support us in theorizing possible research trajectories. In the beginning you may not know what this trajectory is, and I assure you this is common. As you discover your own trajectory, you may need to shift academic advisors to find someone who more closely shares your research interests. It is our job to seek

out someone who is willing to support us in the ways we need. Switching advisors is common in academia and should not be taken as a personal matter.

As previously stated, I reached out to Dr. Boyd via email and asked her three

questions. I synthesized her responses below.

**If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.  
- Isaac Newton, 1675**

## **What are the main responsibilities and roles of an academic advisor at the doctorate level?**

In Dr. Boyd's response regarding the responsibilities and roles of an academic advisor, she emphasized that the overarching responsibility is to mentor students for their career. We all have different objectives for completing a Ph.D., which will lead to different outcomes. It is important that your advisor helps you explore options and then supports these varying goals. If a student decides to pursue a career in academia, advisors should provide guidance in the areas of research, teaching, and service. Your advisor should assist you in finding opportunities to gather and analyze data with the option of authorship if desired. Advisors should also support you in finding and successfully completing higher-level teaching opportunities. Lastly, your advisor should support you in not only understanding the importance of service, but also ways to get involved.

## **What should a student do if they feel as though their current advisor is not supporting them in the ways that they currently need?**

Dr. Boyd answered this question by expressing that students need to ask their advisors numerous questions about the main components involved in being a doctoral student (research, teaching, and service). We as students must take action and ask these questions. Dr. Boyd shared that if students feel they are not given space for these opportunities they should seek another advisor. Pursuing a new advisor could involve meeting with professors to see not only who is willing to work with you but also whose interests, experiences, and philosophy aligns with yours.

**Is there any piece of advice you would give to students seeking a new academic advisor?**

Dr. Boyd's major piece of advice was to seek an advisor who will support you on a trajectory leading to success. She emphasized that a good fit between an advisor and student is important.

My hope is that this article supports you in better understanding how to proactively develop a beneficial relationship with your academic advisor. Thank you Dr. Fenice Boyd for your time and knowledge on this topic.

**References**

Newton. I. (1675). "Letter from Sir Isaac Newton to Robert Hooke". Historical Society of Pennsylvania.



LORI KING is a doctoral candidate at the University at Buffalo. Her research interests focus around the inclusivity of the LGBTQ+ community within elementary classrooms, critical literacies, and social justice education.

# Tools of the Trade: Paperpile

by **Earl Aguilera**

I have to admit, when I first found out that Paperpile's reference management software was a paid application, I was pretty skeptical. "What could this new-fangled app possibly have to offer me that well-established and free competitors, such as Zotero, didn't?" I wondered. Eventually, my curiosity got the best of me, and I decided to take Paperpile's 30-Day free trial for a test run before making any commitments. Here's what I learned.

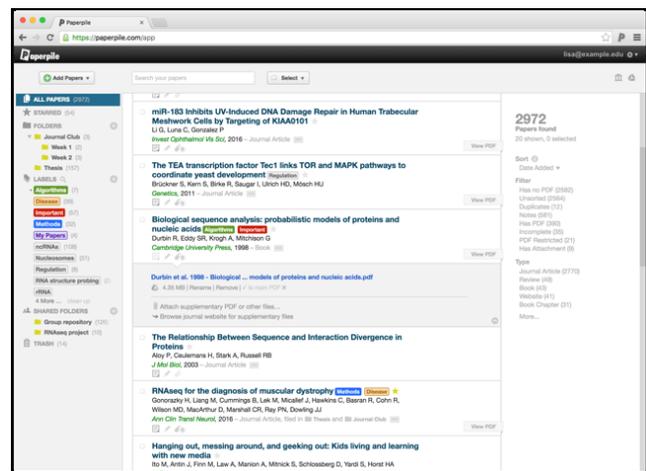
## Life Before Paperpile

Let me share my background with similar programs. I've been messing around with reference management systems since the early days of Zotero, which launched as free and open-source software during my undergraduate career. Since then I've bounced around between systems such as Evernote, which I felt allowed me greater flexibility in storing and annotating hard-to-find article .pdfs; Zotero, which was powerful for capturing article metadata, if not a little tedious to manage; and Microsoft Word's native reference management software, which was easiest to fold into my writing workflow, but offered the least amount of control. I wouldn't say I was actively seeking a new relationship with reference management software, but I was certainly not content with any of the options I was working with. I stumbled on Paperpile fairly early on in my doctoral career, and I must say, I was hooked from the start.

**More than just a reference manager, key features include cloud sync, folder sharing, and word-processor integration.**

## The Honeymoon Phase

Not too long into my doctoral program, the sheer volume of references to keep track of quickly got out of hand. Between as-



signed course readings, my research assistantships, and my independent study, the software I had just didn't offer the convenience, degree of control, or workflow integration that I needed. After signing on for a 30-day free trial of the then-new Paperpile software, I quickly became enamored with the app's smooth integration with Google Docs, my word-processing software of choice for collaborative writing. I also loved that once I installed Paperpile's extension to my Google Chrome browser, my Google search results were accompanied by a nifty "Add to Paperpile" button that gave me one-click options for adding new references to my database. Throw in a simple web-based interface that automatically links .pdfs when available, enables reference tagging and searching, and allows reference folders to be shared with selected users, and you've got what PC World hailed

as “an excellent reference manager you’ll want to pay for.” (Lancet, 2014).

### Taking the Plunge

At \$2.99 per month for an academic account, Paperpile seemed to offer a lot of bang for my buck, even alongside existing free options. What really makes Paperpile stand out from the crowd is how well it integrates with other applications commonly found in a doctoral student’s toolkit. For example, with Google Docs and the Paperpile Browser Extension, I can easily tab-jump between writing, citing sources, seeking out additional references, and updating my reference list on the fly. After a month of really finding my flow with Paperpile, I decided to take the plunge and upgrade to a monthly plan, and I haven’t looked back ever since.

### Facing Realities

Of course, no technological tool is perfect, and Paperpile comes with its own limitations beyond the price point. In my own experience, auto-formatting the reference list in APA 6th edition is still buggy and can be inconsistent, leaving me to scour my manuscripts to ensure appropriate capitalization. This is an extra step that could be avoided if I had access to the app’s back-end and could program the formatting changes myself. On the note of additional work, you’ll still have to be vigilant about checking reference metadata at somewhat regular intervals during your research/writing process; not all web-linked sources are created equal, and not saving all of this manual correction until the end may save you from a stress-inducing deadline crunch.

	<b>Google Chrome</b> – Paperpile currently only supports the Google Chrome Browser, so you’ll need it to access the full features of the software.
	<b>Google Scholar Button</b> – A Chrome Extension that allows one-click search of academic databases while browsing the web
	<b>Google Docs</b> – Free online word-processing software that syncs with Paperpile.
	<b>Paperpile.com site, Docs Extension, and Button</b> – The more ways you have to easily access your reference database, the easier you can build it into your workflow.

### The Bottom Line

If you’re looking for a new addition to your academic research toolkit, Paperpile is definitely worth a test-drive. While its integration with other apps seems to be its biggest strength, this will definitely vary based on the tools you already commonly use in your various academic project workflows. If you’re already deeply committed to an existing system, it might be better to just learn to love the one you’re with.

### References

Lancet, Y. (2017, March 4). Paperpile review: An excellent reference manager you’ll want to pay for. Retrieved from <http://www.pcworld.com/article/2089100/paperpile-review-an-excellent-reference-manager-youll-want-to-pay-for.html>

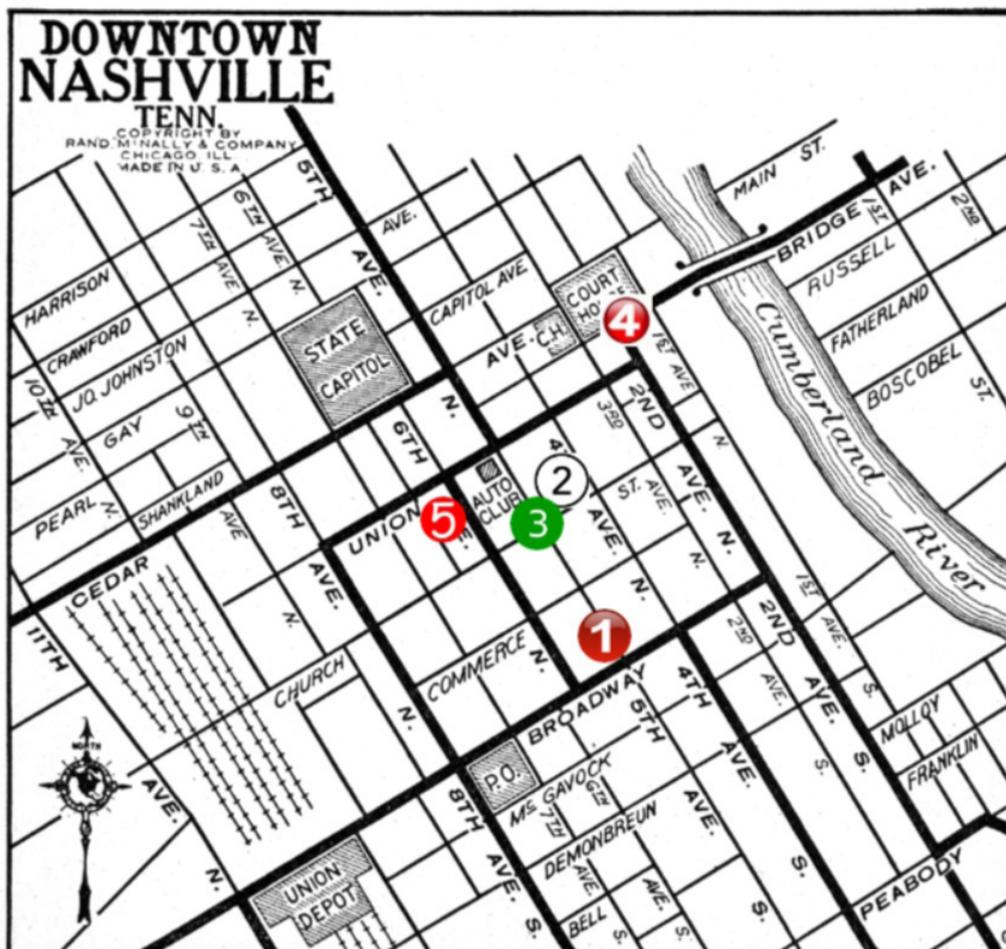


EARL AGUILERA is a doctoral candidate in the Learning, Literacies, & Technologies Ph. D. program at Arizona State University, studying digital literacy engagement in informal learning environments. He tweets at @mister\_ayyye and replies to all at [eaquile5@asu.edu](mailto:eaquile5@asu.edu).

# LRA Reflections From a 1st Year Participant

by **Rachael Gruen**

My first time attending LRA ended with a walking tour of Nashville, TN led by Dr. Kevin Leander. The reason for this tour was to help researchers, teachers, and other LRA participants to understand the historical context of Nashville. Taking the time to understand the historical contexts of the spaces we find ourselves in was a major theme for me to reflect upon during this conference and beyond. How are we, as researchers, representing and telling the stories of the spaces where we conduct research? What are the historical stories that influence that space? Without giving time to those thoughts, it is so easy to neutralize a space (especially if we are only occupying that space for a limited amount of time) to the point where the space loses meaning. So, our challenge is to go out and explore all the aspects of what the spaces we occupy can and do mean. What follows is a summary of our attempt at understanding the historical context of Nashville and why it was meaningful for us to have our annual conference there.



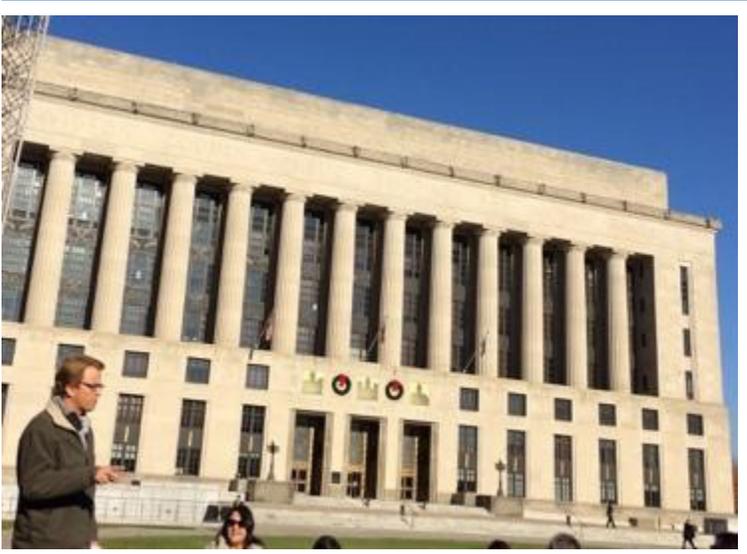
1. The Ryman – Musicians such as Johnny Cash would perform here. Since there was no lobby, musicians would congregate in the alley, occasionally sneaking into other bars to play a set.



# LRA Reflections

2. Woolworths Department Store (Now the home to Dollar General – not pictured) was the site of two sit-ins (February 13 and February 27, 1960).

3. Walgreens lunch counter was the site of a sit-in on February 20, 1960. During the actual sit-ins, groups of people would be waiting in at the Baptist Church. Runners would tell them when people were arrested so another group could be sent out to sit in.



4. City Court House – On April 19, 1960, a bomb was thrown at civil rights lawyer Z. Alexander Looby's home. That afternoon, protestors began a silent march that ended at the court house. Protesters confronted Mayor Ben West and someone asked him if he thought that segregation was right...the judge was so thrown off, but he said no.



5. The Hermitage Hotel – Hotel rooms were segregated until the 1960s labor segregation continued for even longer.



RACHAEL GRUEN is a doctoral student in Literacy, Language, and Culture at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research interests are focused around the integration of disciplinary literacies in Makerspaces in secondary and adult education settings.



# The IRB Runaround: Navigating the Consent Process

by **Susan J. Chambre**

One of the many steps required in completing a doctoral dissertation is obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent to conduct research with human subjects. Although it appears inconsequential, IRB approval can be quite time consuming and requires multiple steps. This article will outline tips for expediting the lengthy IRB approval process, particularly when working with large and small school districts.

Once you receive IRB consent from your home institution, you may apply for IRB approval from the school district in which you are conducting your research. In my experience, IRB consent from school districts falls into two categories: large districts and mid-to-small districts. Large school districts, such as New York City and Los Angeles, have standing IRB committees. These districts have online portals that explain procedures and accept applications. Large school districts also have their own submission windows that universities often do not have. Their IRB boards may only meet bi-monthly or have specific time slots for accepting applications. By aligning your institutional IRB application with their time frames, you can submit your application once you have defended your dissertation proposal. Following their review, your application will most probably require revisions. These revisions should be straightforward and hopefully approval will quickly follow. The last step before conducting research is to be fingerprinted by the school district. Inquire about this

**Although it appears inconsequential, IRB approval can be quite time consuming and requires multiple steps.**

process when submitting your application to save time once you have IRB approval in hand.

Receiving IRB approval for small-to-midsized school districts can be more difficult. My go-to first step is networking to find test sites and obtaining principal approval. Approach the principal, explain the purpose of the study, describe the process, and receive consent. Also be prepared to show the principal or administrator your sample materials such as questionnaires or testing materials. Have concrete answers about how much time your study will take and how your research will benefit the teachers and students of the school. Few principals will let you work with children during school time without a discernible benefit. I have told principals that my literacy pre-screeners will identify areas of need. For example, in one classroom I noticed that many first grade students did not know the sounds of particular letters.

Once you have the principal's approval you need to receive consent from the school district. Smaller school districts may only require superintendent approval. In my case, following approval from the principal, I was asked to draft a letter to the superintendent explaining my study. The administration also provided me with a sample letter which included specific language the district required. Once the letter was submitted to the superintendent, my study was approved within a week and I was sent a district consent letter.

Mid-size school districts may have lengthier IRB approval processes. Altho-

ugh these districts have larger school boards and more administrators, they often have no official IRB office. It can often be a case of guesswork to figure out who is in charge of granting consent. In my case, the IRB approval process began with the Office of Assessment. My advice is to go in person to the board of education office and not leave until finding the correct contact in the assessment office. I spoke with two secretaries and one administrator before clarifying that before verbal consent would be given I needed to go through fingerprinting process. Once my fingerprints cleared, I was given consent to begin my research. I did not have to write a letter to the school board or superintendent.

My final experience with another mid-size district also began with the Office of Assessment. I spoke with an administrative assistant and was transferred between several administrator's voicemail boxes. I left messages in each voicemail box and followed up with email to the head of the department explaining my experiment. After three weeks of waiting, my email was answered and I was directed to another administrator who emailed me a form to submit. I am currently waiting for approval and will probably be required to submit proof that I have been fingerprinted.

In this article, I have demonstrated how the IRB process can be time consuming when working with small-to-mid size school districts which do not have centralized IRB boards. Here is a summary of important steps to take:

1. Begin by calling the district's assessment office.
2. Even before you have institutional consent, visit the district office in-person with your IRB letter and locate the person in charge of approval.

3. Find out if you need to be fingerprinted and what that process entails. I had fingerprints on file with the state. One transferred easily, one took two weeks to be archived.

4. Draft letters ahead of time and have consent forms translated if necessary.

5. Finally, be persistent--go to the offices and speak to the staff professionally and respectfully.



SUSAN J. CHAMBRE is a doctoral candidate in Contemporary Literacy at Fordham University. Ms. Chambre has extensive training in early literacy and special education practices. Her dissertation work focuses on the effects of decoding and orthographic exposure on the vocabulary learning of first graders attending urban Title-I schools. She can be reached at [schambre18@gmail.com](mailto:schambre18@gmail.com).

# Practitioner Conferences: Worth Your Time or Nah?

by **Stephanie Schenck**

When I began my Ph.D. work at Clemson, assistantships were scarce and I had recently completed National Board Certification, which came with a financial bonus. I thought of a perfect solution; continue teaching high school Spanish full-time, use National Board money to pay for classes, and attend Clemson part-time! Little did I know how challenging it would turn out to be, and how isolating it can feel when it seems that everyone else is on campus all the time without you.

However, when I came to LRA for the first time in Nashville, I quickly learned that I was not unique in my situation and in fact many doctoral candidates were still keeping one foot in the classroom for myriad reasons. Research conferences are where we catch a glimpse of light at the end of the tunnel and begin to shape our own professional goals. Research conferences are also the place we get ideas for the looming dissertation that is quickly coming our way. However, as a full-time teacher, there will be times when you may have the opportunity to attend practitioner conferences that are by teachers, for teachers. What then? Is it a waste to continue to spend your time in that world? Or is it another valuable opportunity to present, network, and get new ideas for the future?

I, for one, am a huge fan of practitioner conferences. Even as I slowly back my way out of the classroom and face the reality of becoming a full-time doctoral student, I continue to love and enjoy them. Practitioner conferences are intended to be fun, entertaining, and useful for teachers who have little time and small budgets,

but endless amounts of creativity and passion for their subject and their students. This, I believe, is a great place to reconnect with why we do what we do. We do all of this research in order to contribute to the body of knowledge, which, in turn, should eventually trickle down to the teachers and students.

I enjoy practitioner conferences because I am able to see teachers' presentations with new eyes. When teachers share, "This is what I do in my classroom, and here is how my students responded", I immediately start jotting down notes in researcher mode. How could I turn that into a study? How could I help this teacher demonstrate that their idea works? Could I partner with that teacher and students in order to collect data? Most teachers would love the chance to get data that they can neatly serve up to their administrators and school boards, while also giving you, the graduate student researcher, valuable experience and potentially publishable results.

I have also found that many practitioner conferences even at the state level, not solely regional or national, include round table research sessions and also special research panels that are geared more towards professors and less towards K-12 teachers. This is a great thing for a number of reasons. It gives us as doctoral students another opportunity to see more research presentations. It also provides a smaller audience and more opportunities to get to speak to key figures in the field who would most certainly be swamped at a research conference. It is also, to me, less intimidating. At research conferences, the established leaders in the field are the first to speak up, ask questions, and carry

the conversation at discussions. This is a great place to watch and learn. However, at practitioner conferences, I felt more confident to speak up at round table sessions and introduce myself to leaders in the field. It was empowering to be able to say, "I am a teacher and a doctoral candidate" and to truly have the conference reflect both parts of my professional life at the moment. In fact, I saw many of the same faces at the Second Language Research Forum (a research conference that brings in presenters from all over the world) and at the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Conference (a national practitioner conference that attracts over 8,000 teachers). Seeing the leaders in the field of second language acquisition in both settings was yet another sign that we shouldn't abandon practitioner conferences.

As I dig deeper into second language literacy, I'm sure that what I gain from practitioner conferences will change once again. Attending LRA for the first time was an eye-opening experience and I left with many possibilities for directions of my future research. When I attend my next practitioner conference, those ideas I took from LRA will certainly shape what I take away from listening to my teacher friends and colleagues. The cycle continues, and yes, you should keep attending both!

**It was empowering to be able to say, "I am a teacher and a doctoral candidate" and to truly have the conference reflect both parts of my professional life at the moment.**



STEPHANIE SCHENCK is a doctoral candidate in the Literacy, Language, & Culture program at Clemson University and a Spanish teacher at Clover High School. She is National Board Certified and is the 2016 Sigma Delta Pi Spanish Teacher of the Year for the state of South Carolina. Her research interests include second language writing, task complexity, and bilingual education. To contact her, you can email here at [sschenc@clemson.edu](mailto:sschenc@clemson.edu) or connect with her on Twitter: @SraStephanie



# Become a Contributor



**We are currently looking for additional DSICG Newsletter writers.**

As we continue to evolve, the DSICG Newsletter staff hopes to include more voices from our community. We invite you to contribute!

**Propose an article, column, infographic, or alternative media composition to the editors.**

**We welcome all new ideas, and are willing to try new things! Or,**

**select from our pre-existing topics and columns. We are currently looking for articles for the topics listed here.**

Contact:

**Emily Machado**  
machado2@uic.edu

**Dani Kachorsky**  
danilynfield@gmail.com

**Oona R. Fontanella-Nothom**  
orfmc9@mail.mizzou.edu

**Virginia Killian Lund**  
vkilli2@uic.edu



# Self Care as a Doctoral Student: Next Generation Literacy Scholars

by **Kate Shands Haq**

Ten years ago, while on my morning run, I encountered an old family friend and current neighbor. She shared that she was preparing to defend her doctoral dissertation and supplied me with a mantra that continues to stay with me.

**“Kate,” she said, “You are going to turn 50 anyway. You might as well do it with a PhD.”**

“Kate,” she said, “You are going to turn 50 anyway. You might as well do it with a Ph.D.”

Having already survived my father's and then, many years later, my husband's dissertations, I had firsthand knowledge of the process and I wasn't convinced it was the path for me. As a longtime elementary school educator, I suppose this idea was part of my subconscious vision for myself, but at the time of my encounter with my neighbor Ruth, it was not one of my immediate goals.

Changing policies and neoliberal encroachment into my classroom in the form of scripted curricula forced me to re-evaluate my goals a few years later. I am proud to report that although I will not complete my PhD program by the age of 50, I am on track for graduation next year, in my 55th year on this planet. As an older Graduate Assistant (GA), I have seen many of my colleagues struggle with actual and perceived institutional, financial, social, and ethical pressures on their educational journeys. This article focuses on self-advocacy and self-care, for as we travel the graduate student path, each bringing our strengths, unique personalities, and cultural histories, we must be mindful of the basic human need to care and be cared for (Noddings,

1992). Below, I offer advice around self care practices that can help us all be successful in the academic world.

## Goal Setting and Self Care

When you enter a graduate program, you are no longer the expert, so it is imperative that you ask questions. Your advisor, your professors, and your classmates are all educators, so use their expertise. As a long time practitioner, I was lost in the theoretical world for my entire first year. One professor was particularly versed in connecting my classroom experiences and teaching techniques with the theories behind them and I often went to her office to ask clarifying questions.

Give yourself permission to be a learner. Remind yourself that this is your education, you own it, and you have control of your timeline. Set clear, realistic goals for yourself and do everything in your power to resist getting derailed. Granted, this means you must be responsible in terms of deadlines. But don't wait for your advisor to give them to you- make your own deadlines and stick to them.

Be sure you understand the process and the steps involved in your doctoral program. Your cohort is your best support system! Create a writing group, edit each other's proposals, get your families together and create a network of academic friends who will cheer you on, attend your conference presentations, tell you when you have written a crappy piece, and bring you Starbucks coffee when you are transcribing. These are the ways in which we care for ourselves- through community

and caring for others.

### Self Advocacy

There can be complicating factors around self care if you are a research or graduate assistant due to your work for and with your professors. Being part of a research team is the best way to get experience and prepare yourself for your own research projects (and there is so much to learn!), but be aware of the pitfalls that can occur. Respect yourself enough to work hard at your required tasks, but keep track of your own hours and do not work for free. Each of us has our own expertise and although we are not yet professors ourselves, we have much to offer our research teams. Did you know that many of you have a graduate student union that can advocate on your behalf? Educate yourself on your professional responsibilities, your graduate school requirements, and your support system so that you are your own best advocate.

Advocating for yourself in your personal life may also be challenging. Carving out time from your family responsibilities can create tension and opposition from family members who may not understand the commitment you have undertaken. Be open and honest about your needs and remind your loved ones that your absence is not permanent. When my husband attended a Masters program on Friday nights and Saturdays over a two year period while I had two toddlers and a full time teaching job, we played the resentment game. Try to spread that same care that you need over your significant other like a blanket that can cover you both and remind him or her that this, too, shall pass. Sharing your concerns and self-doubts can go a long way towards strengthening your relationships.

### Get Yourself Published

Finally, one of the most important things you can do to support yourself in your new career is to get published. Again, be proactive by reading through journal calls and choose a variety of possibilities you can write towards. Even if you have not completed your own IRB-approved study yet, you have a wealth of knowledge that you can pull from to begin your writing career, possibly in more practitioner-based journals. Read examples from each of the journals you are considering to get a taste of the requirements and themes. Reread papers you have written from class to see if you can craft a proposal that speaks to the journals at hand. Don't wait for your advisor to remind you about publishing--use your talents to control your academic destiny. I believe in you and look forward to working with many of you in the near future as we become the next generation of literacy scholars!

### References

Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.



KATE SHANDS HAQ is a doctoral student at the State University of New York at Buffalo. She is a veteran elementary school educator and social justice advocate. Currently serving as the secretary of the Buffalo Parent Teacher Organization (BPTO), she works towards equitable funding and culturally responsive teaching in her home district. Kate's research centers on critical contemporary young adult literature and its connections to adolescent civic engagement as well as the exploration of changing teacher identity in neoliberal times. She can be reached at [katehaq@gmail.com](mailto:katehaq@gmail.com).

DSICG is pleased to welcome new and returning members to our leadership team this year. Click the YouTube icon to see video introductions for the members of our leadership team.

# Meet the **Team**

**TIFFANY**  
NYACHAE  
Senior Co-Chair

**University at Buffalo (SUNY)**

tmnyacha@buffalo.edu  
@Tiffany\_Nyachae



**MELANIE**  
OBITZ-BUKARTEK  
Junior Co-Chair

**University of Wisconsin-Madison**

Melanie.ObitzBukartek@wisc.edu



**STEPHANIE**  
REID  
Assistant Co-Chair

**Arizona State University**

sfreid1@asu.edu



**COLLEEN**  
WHITTINGHAM  
Alumni Liaison

**University of Illinois at Chicago**

colleen.whittingham@gmail.com



**AMY**  
PERRIEN  
Conference Coordinator

**Michigan State University**

croelamy@msu.edu

**HANNAH**  
GRAHAM  
Conference Coordinator

**University of Wisconsin-Madison**

hannahhg@gmail.com



# Meet the **Team**

DSICG is pleased to welcome new and returning members to our leadership team this year. Click the YouTube icon to see video introductions for the members of our leadership team.

**SANDI**  
SUMERFIELD  
Historian

**Nova Southeastern University**  
ss3418@nova.edu  
@ssumerfield



**GREG**  
BARTLEY  
Conference Coordinator

**University of Wisconsin-Madison**  
gbartley@wisc.edu



**DANI**  
KACHORSKY  
Newsletter Editor

**Arizona State University**  
danilynfield@gmail.com  
@danikachorsky



**EMILY**  
MACHADO  
Newsletter Editor

**University of Illinois at Chicago**  
machado2@uic.edu  
@emilynmachado



**VIRGINIA**  
KILLIAN LUND  
Newsletter Editor

**University of Illinois at Chicago**  
vkilli2@uic.edu  
@virginiaklund



**OONA**  
FONTANELLA-NOTHOM  
Newsletter Editor

**University of Missouri**  
orfmcg@mail.missouri.edu  
@ohnoitsoona



DSICG is pleased to welcome new and returning members to our leadership team this year. Click the YouTube icon to see video introductions for the members of our leadership team.

# Meet the **Team**

**CASSIE**

J. BROWNELL

Technology Committee

**Michigan State University**

browne84@msu.edu

@brownellcassie



**KATARINA**

SILVESTRI

Technology Committee

**University at Buffalo (SUNY)**

knsilves@buffalo.edu

@k\_silvestri88



**KEITH**

NEVVINE

Technology Committee

**Syracuse University**

konewvine@gmail.com



**SARAH**

FLEMING

Technology Committee

**Syracuse University**

saflemin@syr.edu

**CHRIS**

BACON

Treasurer

**Boston College**

chris.k.bacon@gmail.com

**KRISTEN**

WHITE

Treasurer

**Michigan State University**

kwhite@msu.edu

@Kristen500



# Meet the **Team**

DSICG is pleased to welcome new and returning members to our leadership team this year. Click the YouTube icon to see video introductions for the members of our leadership team.

**RACHAEL**  
**GRUEN**

Membership Secretary

**University of Illinois at Chicago**

rgruen2@uic.edu



**MEGAN McDONALD**  
**VAN DEVENTER**

Membership Secretary

**University of Minnesota**

vand0952@umn.edu

@megvandev



**LORI**  
**KING**

Newsletter Writer

**University at Buffalo (SUNY)**

loripott@buffalo.edu



**KATE**  
**HAQ**

Newsletter Writer

**University at Buffalo (SUNY)**

kshaq@buffalo.edu



**EARL**  
**AGUILERA**

Newsletter Writer

**Arizona State University**

eaguile5@asu.edu

@mister\_ayyye



**SASHA**  
**BILLBE**

Newsletter Writer

**Arizona State University**

sasha.billbe@asu.edu

DSICG is pleased to welcome new and returning members to our leadership team this year. Click the YouTube icon to see video introductions for the members of our leadership team.

## Meet the **Team**

**SHAWNDR**

ALLEN

Newsletter Writer

**University of Illinois at Chicago**

sallen26@uic.edu

**MELLISSA**

GYIMAH

Newsletter Writer

**University of Illinois at Chicago**

mgyimaz@uic.edu

**AMANDA**

RAMIA

Newsletter Writer

**University at Buffalo (SUNY)**

amramia@buffalo.edu



Thanks for Reading!



LITERACY  
RESEARCH  
ASSOCIATION

---

## DSICG Newsletter

Spring 2017

