School Literacy & Culture
Early Literacy Conference
January 19, 2013

Are We Doing What’s Right for Kids?
On behalf of the School Literacy and Culture Project (SLC), we’d like to welcome you to our 14th annual Early Literacy Conference. This year, for the first time, our conference is a full six-hours in length. It will include the opportunity to attend three breakout sessions and a lunchtime session. We are also pleased to offer a session honoring the late Bernie Mathes, a former SLC director whose dedication to the socio-emotional growth of children continues to guide us today.

This year marks Rice University’s centennial and as SLC participated in the many celebrations, we found ourselves thinking about statements made by both Edgar Odell Lovett, the first president of Rice University, and David Leebron, the current president. President Lovett believed that Rice should be an institution devoted, “quite as much to investigation as to instruction,” while President Leebron more recently noted that “Rice University has made, and must continue to make a distinctive contribution to K-12 education in this city, through the training of teachers and by providing opportunities for students from underrepresented populations.”

We at SLC are indeed proud of our commitment to making a distinctive contribution to early childhood education in Houston, and we agree wholeheartedly with President Lovett as to the importance of investigation walking hand-in-hand with instruction or, as we like to call it, understanding “why we do what we do.” We hope that today’s conference will challenge you to think deeply about the choices you make as you prepare children to become successful 21st century learners. Cognitive skills, socio-emotional competence, self-regulation and creative thinking must all be critical components as we examine the crucial question: “Are we doing what’s right for kids?”

Karen Capo
Director, School Literacy and Culture Project

Brooke Brown
Conference Co-Chair

Debbie Lingrey
Conference Co-Chair
Early Literacy Conference Schedule

8:00 - 8:30 a.m.  Check-in, light breakfast, vendors

8:30 - 9:45 a.m.  Opening General Session
  Introductions
  Karen Capo, Director, School Literacy and Culture Project
  Welcome from Rice University
  Jennifer Gigliotti, Associate Dean, Glasscock School of Continuing Studies
  Keynote Address
  The Baby and the Bathwater: A Critical Look at Early Childhood Education in the 21st Century
  Dr. Patsy Cooper, Associate Professor of Education, Queens College, The City University of New York

10:00 - 11:00 a.m.  Breakout Session I

11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.  Breakout Session II

12:25 - 1:25 p.m.  Lunchtime Session

1:35 - 2:45 p.m.  Breakout Session III and Evaluation
Keynote Presenter: Dr. Patsy Cooper

Dr. Patsy Cooper will deliver our conference’s opening address, “The Baby and the Bathwater: A Critical Look at Early Childhood Education in the 21st Century.” Dr. Cooper has long been an articulate and outspoken advocate of early educators. Often provocative and always entertaining, she consistently challenges teachers to imagine educational possibilities rather than simply respond to today’s educational mandates.

Dr. Cooper is the founding director of Rice University’s School Literacy and Culture Project. She earned her MS in Child Development from the Erikson Institute in Chicago, Ill. and her PhD in Educational Studies from Emory University in Atlanta, Ga. Currently, she is Associate Professor of Education at Queen’s College, The City University of New York.

An author of two books, including When Stories Come to School: Telling, Writing, and Performing Stories in the Early Childhood Classroom and The Classrooms All Children Need: Lessons in Teaching from Vivian Paley, Dr. Cooper has published widely in her field. She is the current editor of the Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Educators and recently won the AERA Award for Exemplary Research in Teaching and Teacher Education.

Session underwritten by Center for Education and the Hazel Creekmore Fund

Honoring A Legacy: Bernie Mathes

Bernie Mathes was, first and foremost, a strong and sensitive advocate for children. A graduate of Carleton College who earned her Master’s of Social Work from Michigan State, she worked as a clinical social worker for a children’s rehabilitation clinic in Virginia before beginning a career as an early childhood educator when she and her family moved to Houston in 1982.

Ms. Mathes joined with Patsy Cooper and Connie Floyd to bring the Teachers Network for Early Literacy to Rice University’s Center for Education where it became one of the Center’s founding programs. Eventually, she assumed the directorship of what is now the School Literacy and Culture Project. Under her steady leadership, SLC expanded its work with teachers based on the firm belief that effective early education must go beyond curriculum instruction to include child development and cultural issues. Her vision is one that all of us who work with SLC today are proud to carry on.

After leaving SLC to move to Harrisonburg, Va. in 2005, Ms. Mathes continued to work in the mental health field; at the time of her death in May 2012, she was a social worker at the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Free Clinic. Bernie will be remembered as a loving wife to Lincoln Gray, a devoted mother to daughters Emily and Katherine, a compassionate educator and a caring friend.

To honor Ms. Mathes’ commitment to the socio-emotional development of children, we are pleased to present the following featured session, led by Dr. Patsy Cooper, during today’s third breakout: “Recognizing and Responding to the Social/Emotional Truths in Stories Young Children Tell.”
Breakout Session I: 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Introduction to Dictation and Dramatization

Presenters:  
Michelle Luna  
Kindergarten Teacher, Cora Thomas Elementary, Lamar Consolidated ISD  
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

Julie Clarke  
First Grade Teacher, Cora Thomas Elementary, Lamar Consolidated ISD  
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

Audience: All Participants, especially first time attendees

Location: Auditorium

All children have stories to tell. Mentor teachers with the School Literacy and Culture Project help participants learn to use the stories children dictate as a powerful piece of their literacy curriculum. We invite all interested teachers, administrators and parents to learn more about our year-long program. Child-authored stories (by children from toddler-age through first grade) as well as a dramatization will be shared. (This presentation will be repeated in Breakout Session III with an emphasis on children pre-K and older.)

The Tried, the True and the Brand New ... Take Two:  
Books, Baskets and Dramas for Young Children

Presenter: Sherry Dubin  
Literacy Coordinator and Dyslexia Specialist, The Shlenker School  
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

Audience: Teachers of toddlers through kindergarten

Location: Room 1049

Revisit old favorites and discover new titles that are engaging and amusing. We will enjoy books that beg to be read ... from dramas and read-alouds to books that enhance classroom libraries. Come read, dramatize and enjoy books that inform and delight children from toddlers to age five. (This presentation will be repeated in Breakout Session II.)
Keeping It in the Zone

Presenter: Debbie Lingrey  
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

Audience: Teachers of three-year-olds and pre-K  
Location: Room 1046

Does your calendar say January while your centers still say September? It’s easy to forget that activities that were appropriate at the beginning of the year must be modified regularly to match your students’ abilities. We’ll quickly review Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development and then explore practical ideas for updating activities to meet your students’ ever-changing needs throughout the year.

Toddler Room Makeovers

Presenters: Jennifer Gutowsky  
Accreditation and Curriculum Coordinator, Becker Early Childhood Center  
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

Barbie Freedman  
Older-Toddler Teacher, The Shlenker School

Audience: Teachers of toddlers and two-year-olds  
Location: Room 1042

Wouldn’t it be wonderful to create a toddler classroom that you and your students would love coming to every day? Join us for a lively, interactive presentation about creating a literacy-rich toddler environment in every area of the classroom. Participants will leave with ideas to make over their classrooms the following week!

Writing Throughout the Day, Inspiring Young Authors Along the Way: Practical Writing Instruction in K and 1 Classrooms

Presenters: Karen Gillaspia  
Kindergarten Teacher, Jeanette Hayes Elementary, Katy ISD  
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

Emily Tantillo  
First Grade Teacher, Jeanette Hayes Elementary, Katy ISD  
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

Audience: Teachers of kindergarten and first grade  
Location: Room 1075

Come and hear practical yet meaningful ideas that encourage all children to view themselves as writers. From composing the morning message to creating class books, you will see how to write for, write with and write to children. You will be encouraged to move beyond a writing block and incorporate story and writing throughout your entire day.
The ABC’s and 123’s of Using Music in the Classroom

Presenter: Veronica Butler
Music Therapist, The Rise School of Houston
Administrator and Co-Founder, Music Therapy Center of Houston

Audience: Teachers of toddlers through kindergarten
Location: Room 1070

This will be an interactive roundtable session showing ways to incorporate music in the classroom for transitions, learning and groups. Bring your questions and stories as you will get samples of songs that can be used for different times in the classroom. You will get to see, hear and participate in live demos so be ready to sing and move! In addition, if you have certain songs that you need, bring those ideas since we might even do some on-the-spot songwriting. (This presentation will be repeated in Breakout Session II.)

Session supported in part by Music Therapy Center of Houston

Engaging and Empowering the Families of English Language Learners

Presenters: Debbie Paz
Associate Director, Literacy and Bilingual Programs, School Literacy and Culture Project
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

Lori Espinoza
Teacher, Rice Oral Language and Literacy Lab at Mistral Center for Early Childhood, Houston ISD
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

Audience: Teachers of bilingual and ESL students of all ages
Location: Room 1064

The parents of English language learners (ELL) come to us from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, often with educational experiences very different from those of their children today. How can we best engage these families and empower them to recognize the strengths they already possess to help their children succeed in school? The Rice Oral Language and Literacy Lab at Mistral Center for Early Childhood has added a parent component this year and our session will look at the current research surrounding ELL parent involvement and share some of the ways we are trying to truly impact the interactions between ELLs and their families.

Literacy and the Arts
Emphasizing the direct relationship between the arts and such academic goals as creative thinking and problem solving.

literacy.rice.edu
Art Smart: Visual Thinking

Presenters: Pansy Gee
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project
Teacher, Literacy Development Center, Mark Twain Elementary School, Houston ISD

Sara Foley Edwards
Public Programs Coordinator, Education, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston - Rienzi

Audience: Teachers of kindergarten and early elementary
Location: Room 3076

Join one of our Writing and the Arts presenters and the Public Programs Coordinator of Education with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston - Rienzi, as they show you ways to inspire an appreciation of both art and story. Teachers will be given easily accessible art resources and book titles as well as activities and strategies that will help students develop their own critical thinking by “reading” art and story.

Session supported in part by Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Teaching the Youngest Scientists

Presenters: Coreen Samuel
Literacy Coach and Lead Teacher, University of Houston Charter School
Teacher, Virgin Islands School Writing Project/Young Writers, Inc.

Amber Denton
First Grade Teacher, University of Houston Charter School

Audience: Teachers of three-year-olds through elementary grades
Location: Room 3092

When should students be introduced to the subject of Science? As early as two years old, children are already becoming aware of their physical world and already noticing the changes they encounter in their everyday lives. In this session, teachers will explore the Constructivist approach to teaching science to even the youngest of children. This particular approach to teaching helps to promote a quest for scientific inquiry and develops a love for the subject. Participants will learn how to engage the very young and how best to promote mental relationships using high-level prompting which further develops critical thinking. (This presentation will be repeated in Breakout Session II.)

Cultural Conversations
Creating a safe place for teachers to talk about race, ethnicity, gender and culture.

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Breakout Session II: 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Featured Session: Building Creative Minds

Presenters: Margaret Immel
Mentor Teacher and Literacy Consultant, School Literacy and Culture Project

Linda McNeil
Director, Center for Education, Rice University

Liz Rodriguez
Dance Specialist, Neff Elementary School, Houston ISD

Audience: Teachers of pre-K through second grade
Location: Auditorium

How can you be sure that young learners are developing the creative thinking and problem-solving “habits of mind” necessary for 21st century life? Join us for a sneak peek at a new curricular framework being developed by Rice’s University’s Center for Education in collaboration with creativity expert Dr. Anthony Brandt. Learn how to integrate the concepts of bending, breaking and blending of ideas into your existing pre-k to second grade curriculum.

Session supported in part by Center for Education and the Hazel Creekmore Fund

The Tried, the True and the Brand New ... Take Two: Books, Baskets and Dramas for Young Children

Presenter: Sherry Dubin
Literacy Coordinator and Dyslexia Specialist, The Shlenker School
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

Audience: Teachers of toddlers through kindergarten
Location: Room 1049

Revisit old favorites and discover new titles that are engaging and amusing. We will enjoy books that beg to be read ... from dramas and read-alouds to books that enhance classroom libraries. Come read, dramatize and enjoy books that inform and delight children from toddlers to age five (repeated from Breakout Session I).

School Literacy & Culture

In addition to our annual programs, the School Literacy & Culture Project is available to provide a variety of services to teachers, administrators and parents.

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Children should have literature that helps them feel a sense of belonging in our early childhood classrooms - books that act as mirrors to reflect and affirm their ethnic, racial or cultural identities. Children also need literature that acts as a window to give them views of families, groups and situations they might not otherwise meet. In this session, we will look at many wonderful books that help create mirrors and windows for young children while we also consider what we bring to our understanding of multicultural children’s literature.

School Literacy & Culture

The Classroom Storytelling Project

This course offers mentored learning for teachers of young children. Through this year-long program, teachers will learn how to use child-initiated storytelling, quality children’s literature, theater and other meaningful activities to promote early literacy development and creative thinking in children from two years to second grade. Participants work hand-in-hand with an experienced mentor teacher who provides practical support in implementing research-based literacy practices. Participating teachers also visit demonstration classrooms and participate in monthly seminars at Rice.

September 2013-May 2014

literacy.rice.edu
YOU Make the Difference:
Teacher-Child Interaction and Infant/Toddler Learning

Presenters: Alyssa Countryman
Early Childhood Director, River Pointe Church
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

Autry Bowers
Manager, Early Head Start, Ridgemont Early Childhood Center, Fort Bend ISD

Jennifer Lenardic
Three-Year-Old Teacher, St. Martin’s Episcopal Children’s Center
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

Audience: Teachers of infants and toddlers
Location: Room 1042

You are the most important part of the learning environment. Come find out why in this hands-on session. Learn how to make the most of your everyday interactions with kids.

Bring Back Play to the K-1 Day:
What Does Play Look Like in Kindergarten and First Grade Classrooms?

Presenters: Brooke Brown
Early Literacy Specialist, School Literacy and Culture Project
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

Sharon Dworaczyk
Special Projects Coordinator, School Literacy and Culture Project
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

Audience: Teachers of kindergarten and first grade
Location: Room 1075

Come and discover ways to encourage children to express their creativity and use their imaginations while you balance child-initiated play with standards-driven choices during work stations. We will look at ways to keep play in the classroom and still meet the Texas Standards. Walk away equipped with the research and rationale to keep play in the K-1 day.
The ABC’s and 123’s of Using Music in the Classroom

Presenter: Veronica Butler
Music Therapist, The Rise School of Houston
Administrator and Co-Founder, Music Therapy Center of Houston

Audience: Teachers of toddlers through kindergarten
Location: Room 1070

This will be an interactive roundtable session showing ways to incorporate music in the classroom for transitions, learning and groups. Bring your questions and stories as you will get samples of songs that can be used for different times in the classroom. You will get to see, hear and participate in live demos so be ready to sing and move! In addition, if you have certain songs that you need, bring those ideas since we might even do some on-the-spot songwriting! (This is a repeat of the Breakout Session I presentation.)

Session supported in part by Music Therapy Center of Houston

Honoring Children’s Voices at the Rice Oral Language Lab
Chapter 2

Presenters: Debbie Paz
Associate Director, Literacy and Bilingual Programs, School Literacy and Culture Project
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

Lori Espinoza
Teacher, Rice Oral Language and Literacy Lab at Mistral Center for Early Childhood, Houston ISD
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

Audience: Teachers and administrators of three-year-olds and Pre-K, including ELL and bilingual classrooms
Location: Room 1064

Come learn about the spring semester activities that took place at the Rice Oral Language and Literacy Lab at Mistral Center for Early Childhood last year. We will be sharing new ways to use quality children’s literature, dramatic play scenarios and children’s own interests throughout the classroom to get children talking and sharing their stories. The materials and activities presented can be used with second-language learners in a variety of settings including bilingual and ESL classrooms, but can also help develop vocabulary and oral language skills in English speakers. This session will be a sequel to the presentation at last year’s conference.

Creative Writing Camp
Offering a supportive environment where children engage in writing stories, poetry, essays and plays.

literacy.rice.edu
That Which We Value We Talk About

Panelists: Laura Alaniz  
Principal, Mistral Center for Early Childhood, Houston ISD

          Nick Cantu  
Manager, Ridgemont Early Childhood Center, Fort Bend ISD

          Jennifer Gutowsky  
Accreditation and Curriculum Coordinator, Becker Early Childhood Center

          Kathie Hartzog  
Program Director, Small Steps Nurturing Center (Jensen Campus)

          Debbie Weymouth  
Director, St. Luke’s Day School

Panel Moderator: Karen Capo, Director, School Literacy and Culture Project

Audience: Administrators and Literacy Leaders  
Location: Room 3076

How do school leaders create campus climates that empower classroom teachers to “do what’s right for kids”? Some of our findings might surprise you! This interactive, problem-solving session will feature perspectives from area public, private and charter school leaders as well as an update on current research in the field.

Teaching the Youngest Scientists

Presenters: Coreen Samuel  
Literacy Coach and Lead Teacher, University of Houston Charter School
Teacher, Virgin Islands School Writing Project/Young Writers, Inc.

          Amber Denton  
First Grade Teacher, University of Houston Charter School

Audience: Teachers of three-year-olds through elementary grades  
Location: Room 3092

When should students be introduced to the subject of Science? As early as two years old, children are already becoming aware of their physical world and already noticing the changes they encounter in their everyday lives. In this session, teachers will explore the Constructivist approach to teaching science to even the youngest of children. This particular approach to teaching helps to promote a quest for scientific inquiry and develops a love for the subject. Participants will learn how to engage the very young and how best to promote mental relationships using high-level prompting which further develops critical thinking.

(This is a repeat of the Breakout Session I presentation.)
Lunchtime Session: 12:25-1:25 p.m.

Houston Playback Theatre

Location: Room 1064

The Houston Playback Theatre dramatizes children’s literature and stories to develop students’ understanding as well as their sense of community. Experience that yourself as you relax and enjoy the true stories of audience members come to life through Houston Playback Theatre’s unique form of improvisational theatre.

Storybook Opera

Location: Grand Hall

What could be better than combining a great book and the joy of music? Join Sandra Campbell from Storybook Opera as she demonstrates the magic of engaging children with storytelling through song.

School Literacy & Culture

Eight Books Young Children Should Not Live Without

Parents often wonder if they are making the most of time spent with their children. Mentor teachers from the School Literacy and Culture Project will explore eight genres of quality children’s literature and discuss ways to use books at home with toddlers to first graders.

February 21 and 28, 2013

literacy.rice.edu
Breakout Session III: 1:35-2:45 p.m.

Featured Session: Recognizing and Responding to the Social/Emotional Truths in Stories Young Children Tell

Presenter: Dr. Patsy Cooper  
Associate Professor of Education, Queens College, The City University of New York  
Founding Director, School Literacy and Culture Project

Audience: All Participants  
Location: Auditorium

This workshop will focus on recognizing and responding in a healthful manner to the social and emotional themes in the dictated stories told by children aged 18 months-6 years. Special attention will be paid to “difficult” stories that suggest a child in crisis or contain content teachers consider inappropriate for classroom life.

Session supported in part by Teachers Network for Early Literacy

Introduction to Dictation and Dramatization

Presenters: Michelle Luna  
Kindergarten Teacher, Cora Thomas Elementary, Lamar Consolidated ISD  
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project  

Julie Clarke  
First Grade Teacher, Cora Thomas Elementary, Lamar Consolidated ISD  
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

Audience: All Participants, especially first time attendees  
Location: Room 1046

All children have stories to tell. Mentor teachers with the School Literacy and Culture Project help participants learn to use the stories children dictate as a powerful piece of their literacy curriculum. We invite all interested teachers, administrators and parents to learn more about our year-long program. Child-authored stories (by children from toddler-age through first grade) as well as a dramatization will be shared. (This is a repeat of the Session I presentation, with an emphasis on the role of dictation and dramatization with children pre-K and above.)
Individualizing Infant and Toddler Curriculum with Teacher-Made Books:  
*A Discussion and Make-and-Take*

**Presenter:** Connie Floyd  
Director, The Littlest Ones  
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

**Audience:** Teachers of infants, toddlers and two-year-olds  
**Location:** Room 1046

How do we plan intentionally for literacy development in infant and toddler classrooms? Join us as we discuss the literacy developmental milestones of infants and toddlers and explore how best to incorporate wonderful age-appropriate books into their learning environment. Participants will leave with three books and many more ideas for bookmaking.

**Fostering Learning and Autonomy Through Choice**

**Presenters:** Valerie Coyle  
First Grade Teacher, Annunciation Orthodox School  
Catherine Yüksek  
First Grade Teacher, Annunciation Orthodox School  
Annie McDaniel  
First Grade Teacher, Annunciation Orthodox School

**Audience:** Teachers of first and second grade  
**Location:** Room 1075

How does choice fit into your daily schedule? Find out how to infuse choice throughout the school day and why it is so important. You will walk away with practical ideas that will increase student autonomy and motivation.

**What’s in a Name?**

**Presenters:** Sharon Dworaczyk  
Special Projects Coordinator, School Literacy and Culture Project  
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

**Audience:** Teachers of three-year-olds and pre-K  
**Location:** Room 1070

A child’s name is a wonderful developmentally appropriate tool for individualizing literacy learning. Come learn how to use “Name Curriculum” as a springboard to meeting a variety of objectives including phonological awareness, letter recognition, print awareness and more.
Do you imagine a world where creativity is valued across all areas of the classroom curriculum? Join a writer from WITS and the director of Houston Grand Opera’s HGOco as they share their perspectives on the importance of infusing classrooms with daily opportunities for creative growth. In this session, you will put your own imagination to work and leave with practical ideas for providing your students with opportunities to develop their creative thinking.

Session supported in part by Hazel Creekmore Fund, Center for Education, WITS and Houston Grand Opera, HGOco

School Literacy & Culture

Summer Institute on Reading, Writing and Cultural Connections

This week-long institute will challenge teachers of young children to think deeply about best practices in early literacy instruction. A variety of award-winning presenters will create an engaging environment where participants learn about new approaches, interact with other teachers and explore hundreds of practical, research-based materials designed to promote speaking, listening, reading and writing with children from two years to second grade.

July 29-August 2, 2013
Registration begins March 15, 2013

literacy.rice.edu
Making Circle Time the Right Time:

A Discussion and Make-and-Take

Presenters:  
Monica Binkley  
Pre-K Teacher, Children of the Woodlands Preschool

Mary Beth Nolan  
First Grade Teacher, The Woodlands Methodist School

Vicente Hernandez  
Bilingual Pre-K Teacher, Bear Blvd. School, Spring Branch ISD  
Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project

Audience:  
Teachers of two-year-olds through pre-K, including ELL and bilingual classrooms*

Location:  
Room 1046

Circle time in the classroom is a special time for sharing and building literacy skills. It provides a time for listening, promoting oral communication, socialization and fun. Experienced teachers will discuss various group activities to enhance literacy during circle time. These activities will give teachers the power to make group time more effective and enjoyable for all involved. The session will include a make-and-take tote of activities to use during circle time.

*SESSION LIMITED TO 50 PARTICIPANTS
(downstairs to exit to Inner Loop, Grand Hall, and central parking lot)
A special thanks to our vendors whose books, puppets and other educational materials are available for purchase before and after the conference as well as during break times.

Hannah Lucia’s Puppets
Lynette Tello
713-691-1270

Richardson’s
2014 Lou Ellen Lane
Houston, TX 77018
713-688-2244

Books Westside Learning Spot
Cynthia King Mannes
713-691-1270
Early Literacy Conference
January 19, 2013

We would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to our conference co-sponsors and session underwriters.

Co-sponsors

Session Underwriters