

The Newsletter of Reading Reform Foundation of New York

## Spotlight On Our Wonderful Principals

Reading Reform Foundation works in 80 classrooms in 16 schools in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, six Mt. Vernon schools, and one Port Chester school. We chose eight of our stellar principals with whom we have worked the most number of years to highlight them and the fine work that they do. The unifying theme for every one of them was the pride they expressed in their staffs. Theirs is an example of superb leadership.

### **THERESA DOVI PRINCIPAL, P.S. 102**



Theresa Dovi, Principal of P.S. 102 in Brooklyn, after many years of experience in special education, became assistant principal of P.S. 102 in 1990 and principal in 1999. P.S. 102 has been named a High-Performing/Gap-Closing school under her leadership. She was named Educator of the Year by the Council of Supervisors and Administrators and also a Cahn Fellow in 2009. Mrs. Dovi has instituted a visual-arts program in every grade. Musical arts and theatrical arts are also encouraged. There is a school chorus.

Professional development is important to Mrs. Dovi, who said, “We were looking for something like Reading Reform Foundation to match the high expectations of the school.”

### **OLGA IRIS GUZMÁN PRINCIPAL, P.S. 228**



Olga Iris Guzmán, Principal, P.S. 228 in Queens, graduated with honors from Hunter College, earned a Masters degree in linguistics and bilingual education and another Masters in administration and supervision. She served as assistant principal at P.S. 199 and P.S. 19. She became the first principal of P.S. 228 when it opened its doors in 2001. Walking into the school full of sprouting “trees” and “plants” fashioned by the children and staff gives proof of the learning-through-the-arts approach of the school, which has been named a Magnet School of the Arts.

The recipient of 15 awards ranging from Outstanding Teacher of the Year (twice) to a Delta Kappa Gamma Society International Award, Mrs. Guzmán said that as an immigrant

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child she knew how important education was. She also knew as a professional that phonics was essential to learning language and reading. “That was the ingredient that was missing and which Reading Reform provides in its training... Children can come from any neighborhood and still learn.”

### **EDWIN IRIZARRY PRINCIPAL, P.S. 150, BRONX**



Edwin Irizarry, Principal of P.S. 150 in the Bronx, told us this was his ninth year in the school and that he has spent 33 years in education. A graduate of Fordham University, Lincoln Center Campus, his motto is, “Every child can learn.”

He modestly described his role as a ‘band leader’. “If things are out of tune, I fix them.” He made a point of mentioning the academic achievements of the students in the past eight years, which he attributed to his fine staff developers. When asked about the beautiful animals painted on doors and walls throughout the building, he said that a talented paraprofessional had done them.

Mr. Irizarry also described the three-times-a-year assemblies and a dance program of many different kinds of dances for all the children in the school. He said, “the Reading Reform program, in which most of the lower-grade teachers have been trained, not only teaches how to teach reading, but also the nuances of the English language and how to comport oneself as a teacher in the classroom.”

Mr. Irizarry’s interests are reading, music and the Yankees – clearly an appropriate team choice for a Bronx principal!

### **CELIA KAPLINSKY PRINCIPAL, P.S. 216, BROOKLYN**



The first thing that Celia Kaplinsky, Principal, P.S. 216, said was, “We focus on the arts: painting, dance, music. Every child in the second grade gets a musical instrument to play. The music turns some children to the academics.”

Mrs. Kaplinsky also talked excitedly about a program she is doing with Alice Waters, of restaurant fame, called “The Edible School Year.” Three-quarters of an acre of the schoolyard will be turned over to growing food. A greenhouse and kitchen schoolroom are proposed as part of the plan.

Mrs. Kaplinsky turned the conversation back to the Reading Reform Foundation program, saying, “You’re the ones that save children. Your program should be required in every classroom... Without reading the children have no life.”

Mrs. Kaplinsky is supplying that and more to the children of P.S. 216.

### **THERESA LUGER, PRINCIPAL P.S. 189, WASHINGTON HEIGHTS**



Theresa Luger is the principal of the largest elementary school in Manhattan, with a population of 1,072 children. Mrs. Luger worked in two schools in District 2, and earned a Master’s Degree in Reading. Her emphasis is on promoting reading in

kindergarten and first grade and therefore, all her kindergarten and first-grade teachers are trained in Reading Reform’s approach. She added spiritedly that her school scores well in reading and math. Consonant with her philosophy of the importance of reading, her school has a beautiful, large and well-stocked library that encourages reading in all subjects.

Her outside interests are, by her own admission, constantly remodeling a house in Pennsylvania, friends and gardening.

At the end of the interview she said, “The more kids read and get to practice, the better they will do. Reading Reform Foundation gives them the tools to be successful early on. Success breeds success.”

### **ZIPPORIAH MILLS PRINCIPAL, P.S. 261, BROOKLYN**



When we visited Zipporah Mills, Principal of P.S. 261 in Brooklyn, she was standing in her outer office covering for her staff, who were all at lunch. As she calmly handled telephone calls and parent and student requests, we talked.

The school has a little more than 800 children: 25% Black, 25% White, 25% Latin, 25% Asian/Chinese. She is most proud of enhancing the curriculum by using project-based learning. Ms. Mills felt that the Reading Reform Foundation direct-instruction model, combined with balanced literacy, worked effectively for the children. Presently her third grades study China and Japan.

Her future vision is to work in partnership with a museum, designing projects for each grade. One of her teachers has proposed to follow the grade-two children who have had Reading Reform teaching to see how they progress as they move along through the grades.

It is this kind of broad planning on the part of the principal and the freedom she gives her teachers to innovate that makes this a fine school.

## ELSA NUÑEZ PRINCIPAL, P.S. 28, WASHINGTON HEIGHTS



This is the seventh year as Principal of P.S. 28 for Elsa Nuñez. Of the 902 students in the school, 89% are Hispanic, mostly of Dominican, Mexican and Puerto Rican background. Before her current position, Ms. Nuñez was a bilingual teacher, then

served as a director of bilingual education, and eventually served as an assistant principal.

She said her school “is in good standing.” She attributes much of its success to teamwork and staff development. There is a great deal of parent involvement, which she encourages. Ms. Nuñez said that the parents are very aware of their children’s reading improvement.

This very pretty, dark-haired principal looked too young to have two sons ages 18 and 10.

Her parting words were that everyone had been trained in the Reading Reform Foundation approach in the kindergarten through third grades.

## KENNETH THOMAS PRINCIPAL, C.S. 134, BRONX



Mr. Thomas, Principal of C.S. 134 in the Bronx, said that he must be the only principal who lives where his students do. “My students are my neighbors.” The 678 students in his school are 54% African-American, and 32% Hispanic, with the

rest from the Caribbean Islands or Central America. Some are African refugees who bring a set of new challenges to teaching. “Lots of good things come out of this neighborhood,” he asserted.

A graduate of Baruch and Lehman Colleges who holds a Masters in Administration from the College of New Rochelle, he now teaches on the college level himself. After six years of teaching, he went to the District 12 office and became Arts Coordinator, Math and Science Coordinator and Social Science Coordinator. He became principal of C.S. 134 eleven years ago.

He laments the time that testing takes away from learning. When asked his vision of what this school should provide, he declared, “When students leave here, they should be able to pick up a newspaper and use their minds for critical thinking.”

Asked what he is proudest of: “My staff.” His school is rated in good standing. He also said, “You can’t teach kindergarten, or grades 1, 2 and 3 here unless you are trained by Reading Reform Foundation!”

“Why do they call it Reading Reform? It should be Reading *Intelligence*—because that’s how it makes me feel.”

**SECOND-GRADE STUDENT, P.S. 261, BROOKLYN**

## Sounding Off About Spelling

BY SYLVIA GOLDSMITH  
AND EMILY GOLDBERG

**T**his series of articles was first published about twenty years ago. Look on our website for the complete article. It is as timely as ever.

### Teaching the Sounds of C

**C** is a strange letter. It has no sound of its own. Usually, **c** sounds like /k/ as in cut, cap, or code. However, when it is followed by **e**, **i**, or **y**, as in cent, city, or cyst, **c** always has its “soft sound” and sounds like /s/.

Figuring out the correct sound of **c**, (decoding) presents very little difficulty in *reading*. Simply keep in mind that normally

it is sounded as /k/, and only when it is followed by e, i, or y does it sound like /s/. With this in mind, it is easy to *read* words such as bicycle or success.

*But how does one know whether to use c or k in spelling?*

Making a choice between **c** and **k** in spelling must be presented to young children in an orderly and systematic way. We recommend the following sequence:

1. Introduce **c** with its regular sound first (/k/). This means using **c** only as the initial letter in a word, or as part of an initial blend, making sure that it is only followed by **a**, **o**, or **u**. (Examples: cat, cot, cup, scalp, scum)
2. When the child is secure with the regular sound of **c**, and has learned at least

nine other letters (**a**, **t**, **m**, **s**, **l**, **c**, **d**, **i**, **g**), introduce the letter **k**. . . which has the same sound as **c**. Instruct the student that now that he has two letters with the same sound, he should use **c** at the beginning and **k** at the end. (Examples: cod, clam, ask, milk, cask)

3. Teach the soft sound of **c** (**c** followed by **e**, **i**, or **y** has the sound of /s/) and then show how in words such as kid, kit, or kelp the letter **k** *must* be used. If you were to use **c** in these words, you would be required to pronounce them with the soft sound of /s/: cid would sound like /sid/, cit would sound like /sit/ and celp would sound like /selp/.



## Comprehension Begins on Day One

**Y**ou love words. One of your favorite books is the Oxford English Dictionary, or is it Webster's? One of your goals is to pass this love of words on to your students and, believe me, your enthusiasm is very contagious and will pay off tenfold.

Easier said than done? Certainly, but when you see the light go on in your students' eyes, you will be rewarded with a group of students whose vocabulary has grown and who can read fluently with enthusiasm and understanding, whether it be on a Kindle or the old-fashioned page-bound book. How do we get to that stage? The answer – “Go back to Day One.” If we are lucky, Day One might be the day a student steps through the preschool or kindergarten door or it might even refer to a teenager or adult who slid through the system year after year without collecting the tools necessary for reading for information or pleasure. Whoever the student is or whatever level the student is on, Day One is the day we first encounter her and the day she begins to climb the ladder to success.

Language development and word meaning are important steps to a successful academic future. Learning new words is an on-going process and is the precursor of efficient comprehension in all subject areas. Just make sure that the words and activities you choose

to teach are age-appropriate and, if you are using an Orton-Gillingham-based program, that you follow the recommended sequence. For example, if you have taught short *a* and short *i*, limit your choice of words to those containing only /a/ and /i/.

When we think about comprehension, the first picture that comes to mind is the student reading a para-

graph and answering questions to check understanding of its content. For example, “What is the main idea?” However, without accurate understanding of individual words, comprehension will be limited and can become a guessing game.

The suggestions here are just the tip of the iceberg. Language development involves a multitude of skills beginning on that mythical Day One. What I mean to impart in this letter are my thoughts about the earliest stages of comprehension, beginning with the meaning of isolated words and proceeding to the meaning of phrases and sentences using both receptive and expressive approaches. Hopefully, this will give the student the necessary tools for becoming an avid reader.

To sum up, be dramatic. Make your students sit up and listen. Verbalize all procedures. To quote Abigail Adams, “Learning is not attained by chance. It must be sought with ardor and attended to with diligence.”

Once again, we all salute you who are on the firing line every day.

—LEONA D. SPECTOR,  
EDITOR-AT-LARGE 

### *Following are a few suggestions for word-meaning activities.*

1. Multiple-meaning words: mat, tack, sham have between six and ten definitions each
2. Categories: Is a mat a person or a thing? Is a tan pan a person or a thing?
3. Question words: Dan is on the mat. Who is on the mat? Where is Dan? or, The goat is in the boat. What is in the boat? Where is the goat?
4. Words that are both noun and verb: fan, tap
5. Subject-area words: Manhattan, sampan, math, cash, sum
6. Idioms: This is the last “straw.” Can you “dig” it? Did you and Bill “hit it off”?

### *And:*

1. Have a box of real “things” on hand to illustrate word meaning. For example, a hat, a map, a fan, a pan, a napkin, a radish, a twig, etc.
2. Have a box of miniatures on hand. For example, a toy van, a rubber duck, a toy ship, etc.
3. Have a picture file. For example, man, sampan, cabin, caftan, chipmunk, etc.
4. Act out/pantomime words like ran, dig, mad, rip, etc.

## WE'RE OFF TO THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST AND EGYPT

The Metropolitan Museum of Art has just published a new kit titled, "Art of the Ancient Near East." It is for educators and includes maps, illustrations with explanations of many of the objects in the Museum of ancient Mesopotamia and Assyria, posters and lesson plans for K-12 on a disk (requires Adobe Reader), and an interactive storybook, "Marduk: King of the Kids."

### THINGS TO DO:

Look in the Nolen Library in the Uris Center of the Museum for books on Mesopotamia for children.

There is also a free guide for children called "King Wings," which parents and teachers can pick up at the information desk to help look for things in the Ancient Near Eastern galleries.

## MESOPOTAMIA

*Gods, Goddesses and Monsters: An Encyclopedia of World Mythology*  
by Sheila Keenan  
New York: Scholastic Inc., 2000.

A wonderful compendium of all areas of the world's mythology, including the Near East.

*Empires of Mesopotamia*

by Don Nardo  
San Diego, California: Lucent Books, 2001.

**Grade 5**

*The Sumerians*, by Elaine Landau  
Brookfield, Connecticut:  
The Millbrook Press, 1997.

**Grades 4, 5**



*The Babylonians*, by Elaine Landau  
Brookfield, Connecticut:  
The Millbrook Press, 1997.

**Grades 4, 5**

*Mesopotamia: Discover the Cradle of Civilization – the birthplace of writing, religion and the rule of law*

by Philip Steele  
London, New York: DK Publishing, Inc., 2007.

This book is part of the Eyewitness Book Series that would be fascinating for parents, teachers, students of all ages. Beautifully illustrated, it contains a disk for clip art and a large map. This is about the various civilizations that grew up in the land "between the two rivers," the Tigris and the Euphrates: Sumerian, Assyrian, Babylonian in present-day Iraq and the Persians in present-day Iran. Games, music, sports, transportation, agriculture, arms, are some of the topics covered.

Because there aren't as many books on Mesopotamia for children, we are also including a few readers for students in the lower grades on another ancient civilization: Egypt. We'll cover Ancient Egypt more fully in a future issue.

## EGYPT

*Ancient Egypt: Discover the Nile Valley Civilizations – from Pharaoh's court to the daily lives of workers*

by George Hart  
London, New York: Eyewitness Books, 2008.

These wonderfully illustrated books come with a poster and a DVD of Clip Art.

*Mummies Made in Egypt*, written and illustrated by Alikei. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1979.

**Ages 8-12**

*The Egyptian Cinderella*, by Shirley Climo. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1989.

A slave girl comes to be chosen by Pharaoh to be his queen.

**Grade 3**

*Life and Times in Ancient Egypt*  
New York: Kingfisher. Published as an imprint of Henry Holt & Co., 2007.

**Grades 2, 3, 4**

*The Times of the Pharaohs: Great Story and Cool Facts*

San Anselmo, California: Half and Half Books, published by Treasure Bay, Inc., 2008.

Partly for a child to read on his own, partly to read with a parent or teacher. **Grades 2, 3**

*Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*

by Henry Barker  
New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1999. **Simple Grade 2**

*Secret Worlds: Mummies*

by John Malam  
London, New York: DK Publishing, Inc., 2001.

Fully illustrated

**Grades 5, 6**

# The Death and Life of the Great American School System:

*How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education*  
by Diane Ravitch

This book should be sent to every lawmaker, politician, educator, superintendent of schools and mayor in the United States.

Dr. Diane Ravitch, Research Professor of Education at New York University, served as Assistant Secretary of Education under President George H. W. Bush and was appointed to the National Assessment Governing Board by President William J. Clinton.

In her book Dr. Ravitch criticizes today's movement towards privatization of public schools, excessive testing and punitive accountability as ways to improve education in America. She bravely distances herself from ideas she once held, such as competition from charter schools, having seen their wide range of quality. Her careful research shows that the business model put forward by big-city mayors has failed in New York City, Philadelphia, Chicago, Denver and San Diego.

Dr. Ravitch asserts that "every state should make sure that every child receives an education that includes history, geography, literature, the arts, the sciences, civics, foreign languages, health and physical education" in a curriculum "that is rich in knowledge, issues and ideas."

Dr. Ravitch brings everything back to the essence of what is important: the students and what they are learning.

—reviewed by S. P. R.

## AMERICAN EDUCATOR

The finest and most useful quarterly on education is the [American Educator](#), published by the American Federation of Teachers.


It is consistently well-written, well-researched, well-edited. The topics are not only timely, but always deal with core subjects such as the teaching of reading, math, the arts and science. The current issue deals with the importance of curricula with deep and full subject-matter for grades K-12. Its articles are essential for teachers, parents, administrators, and legislators. It costs only \$10 a year to non-union members: the greatest intellectual bargain in the U.S.

## DR. MICHAEL V. MCGILL SUPERINTENDENT, SCARSDALE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*Brief Quotes from Comments Made at Superintendent's Conference Day, November 2, 2010.*

To address the problems of public schools, Dr. McGill posited that the critics said, "Metrics and free-market competition are the answer. Improve learning by forcing the failing educators to comply with the regulatory demands of federal and state bureaucracies...Set standards, test to see if children are meeting them, hold schools, teachers and administrators accountable when they don't. Promote competition and school choice."

Dr. McGill then described how this corporate strategy took away valuable teaching time for test preparation and narrowed learning. "First, corporate reform creates obstacles to meaningful education in a Scarsdale, but its consequences can be worse for children who have fewer resources to draw on, are more vulnerable and depend more heavily on school for inspiration and motivation. Second, regardless of where schools may be located, we will have much to learn and share about our craft..."

In summary, he said, "But what I know is that instead of helping us educate children better, the corporate reform agenda is an obstacle...I fear that the current direction of our state and our nation will leave children uneducated in any broad sense and that as a result, they'll be ill-prepared for contributing citizenship or for life. I don't despair because I can't afford to. We go forward because we must. We will find a way to prevail because there is no other option...Together, we will continue the work and discover solutions and act for the Good." 

## IN MEMORIAM SYLVIA GOLDSMITH

Reading Reform Foundation of New York records with profound sadness the death of one of its founding Board members, Sylvia Goldsmith. She was an inspiration and mentor to many teachers and to us. Her gentle, graceful ways belied her incisive brilliance in understanding the learning needs of all children.

Sylvia brought her great knowledge of education in general, and children in particular, to all the deliberations of the Board of Trustees. To watch her teach children was a thrilling experience. One morning when Sylvia Goldsmith and Emily Goldberg were working with children who accompanied their mothers to a welfare center, one little boy started to shriek out loud. We rushed to see what was the matter. He was shouting, "I can read! I can read!" Sylvia brought him that light of recognition.

# RRF-Trained Teachers Help Students Become Better Readers, Writers and Spellers

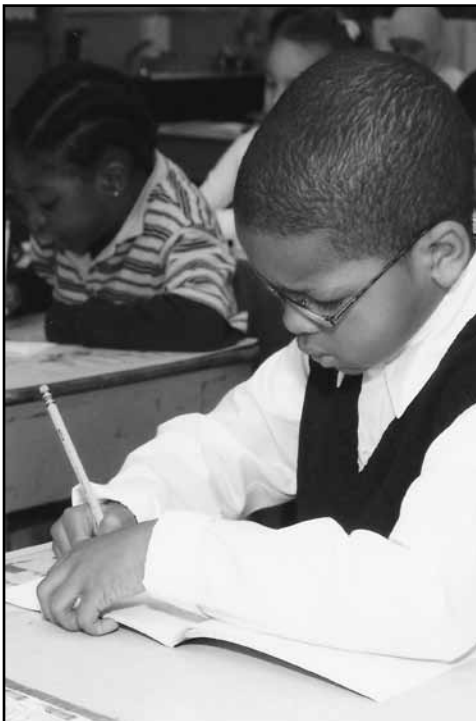
This year Reading Reform Foundation's in-school teacher-training program takes place in 69 public-school classrooms. The goal: to leave teachers able to use their new knowledge for the rest of their teaching careers.

## THIS SCHOOL YEAR:

- Over 2,000 NYC students are benefiting
- 71 teachers are receiving Reading Reform training, in 16 schools in four boroughs; 6 Mt. Vernon schools, and 1 Port Chester school
- 300 teachers completed Reading Reform courses

## SINCE READING REFORM'S FOUNDING:

- Almost 30,000 students have been taught, using RRF methodology
- More than 20,000 teachers have attended Reading Reform Foundation's annual conference and taken graduate-level courses
- Almost 1,200 teachers have been part of the in-school teacher-training program



## COSTS:

- It costs \$12,500 for a consultant to work with one teacher in the classroom for an entire school year. This fee includes books and materials for implementing the lessons with the children. We charge a school \$2,500 per classroom, and raise the remaining \$10,000 from generous contributions from individuals, corporations, foundations, as well as public sources.

Invited by principals and superintendents, Reading Reform Foundation teaching consultants meet with teachers approximately 60 times over one school year, providing them with information on how to teach reading, writing, and spelling using RRF's multisensory approach. The teachers have students simultaneously see, say, hear and write everything they are being taught. This multisensory teaching makes learning much easier. Students are taught to examine words for their roots and meaning, allowing more thoughtful reading and understanding.

## Reading Reform Foundation Gratefully Acknowledges

the Council of the City of New York as well as individual members with whose support we received discretionary allocations for the in-school teacher-training program for fiscal year 2011: Gale Brewer, Daniel Garodnick, Ydanis Rodríguez, Speaker Christine Quinn and the City Council. We also deeply thank Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer for a grant through his office's Borough Needs Program.

## MISSION STATEMENT

Reading Reform Foundation of New York is a not-for-profit literacy organization that trains teachers to teach reading, writing and spelling effectively.

Since 1981 we have been committed to providing high-quality, low-cost professional development to New York City area public-school teachers by direct training in their classrooms and courses in our office.

Reading Reform Foundation's experience has shown that almost every child, regardless of social and economic background, can learn to read, write and spell, if taught well.

## THE READER

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Editor-at-large

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## READING REFORM FOUNDATION OF NEW YORK

333 West 57th Street, Suite 1L  
New York, NY 10019  
TEL 212-307-7320  
FAX 212-307-0449  
[www.readingreformny.org](http://www.readingreformny.org)

**Jessica Weber Design, Inc., NYC**  
Newsletter Design  
**Maja Kihlstedt**  
Photography

# Did you know

that writing and the wheel were invented in the Ancient Near East? Did you know that Sargon, a powerful leader of the Akkadian Dynasty in 2334 B.C.E., (in present-day Iraq) was said to have been abandoned as a baby in a reed basket, and in spite of humble beginnings eventually seized the throne and became King? This was about 1,000 years before Moses also was found in a basket!

## UPCOMING COURSES

*This winter  
Reading Reform Foundation  
will offer:*

**Reading, Writing and Spelling:  
A Multisensory Approach**

taught by Esther Morgan Sands

**FEBRUARY 21-26, 2011**

*Summer courses  
in 2011 include:*

**The Writing Road to Reading:  
A Comprehensive Introduction**

taught by Bonnie Lee Apple

**JULY 11-15; JULY 18-22, 2011 (10 WEEKDAYS)**

**Reading, Writing and Spelling:  
A Multisensory Approach**

taught by Esther Morgan Sands

**JULY 25-SATURDAY, JULY 30, 2011 (6 DAYS)**

*All are available for graduate credit.  
For further information please visit our website at  
[www.readingreformny.org](http://www.readingreformny.org)  
or call us at (212) 307-7320.*