

## RACING FOR READING REFORM

**O**n November 7, 2004 Reading Reform Foundation of New York held its twenty-third annual conference, "Effective Techniques for Teaching Reading, Writing, and Spelling." As hundreds of New York City Marathon participants congregated in the lobby of the New York Hilton & Towers, gearing up for the long race ahead, 600 educators gathered together for a different quest. Twenty-four workshops, eighteen speakers and twenty-nine publishers' exhibits all promised to fuel attendees' lifelong pursuit of better education for students.

Dr. Diane Ravitch, Research Professor of Education at New York University, delivered the keynote address, "Why Content Matters." During the day conference attendees participated in a wide variety of engaging and exciting workshops, among them: Acting out scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Patricia Chilsen from the Lincoln Center Institute; learning how to use writing activities to lead to a greater understanding of Greek art with Catherine Fukushima from the Metropolitan Museum of Art; and "reading" the natural world

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## DR. JUDITH HOCHMAN RECEIVES SPECTOR AWARD

**D**r. Judith C. Hochman was the distinguished recipient of this year's Leona D. and Dr. Philip J. Spector Award. For over thirty years Dr. Hochman has

been head of Windward School, and is now Superintendent of Schools, Greenburgh-Graham Union Free School District. In all of these positions Dr. Hochman has championed



*Dr. Judith C. Hochman's Conference Workshop*

electrified audiences all over the New York area with her rousing support of effective techniques for teaching reading, writing, and spelling. She is an experienced classroom teacher,

better teaching for all children, whether they have learning problems or not. The Windward Institute for Teacher Training is just one of her many legacies.

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## A FOCUS ON CONTENT IMPROVES READING COMPREHENSION

**D**r. Diane Ravitch, Research Professor of Education at New York University, spoke at the first Reading Reform Conference in 1981, so it was with pleasure and excitement that Reading Reform Foundation welcomed her back to deliver the keynote address, "Why Content Matters." Dr. Ravitch holds the Brown Chair in Education Policy at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., where she is a Visiting Senior Fellow. In addition, she is a director of the New York State Council for the Humanities.

From 1991 to 1993, Dr. Ravitch was Assistant Secretary of Education. Before entering government service, she was Adjunct Professor of History and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. The most recent of her seven books was published in 2003 and is entitled, *The Language Police: How Pressure Groups Restrict What Students Learn*. She has also edited fourteen books and written nearly forty articles and reviews for scholarly and popular publications.

Dr. Ravitch began her speech by praising Sandra Priest Rose, one of the founders of Reading Reform Foundation. "[Sandy] was the first person to teach me about why we have a reading crisis in this country, and she has continued to work diligently



*Diane Ravitch*

for this organization, and for sound principles of teaching reading, and for children and teachers, for a quarter century."

Dr. Ravitch went on to give a brief overview of the history of reading education in the United States. Beginning with the late Jeanne Chall and her landmark book, *Learning to Read: The Great Debate*, Ravitch traced the struggle that educators who understand the importance of phonics and phonemic awareness in reading programs have faced over the last thirty years.

Despite research-based evidence, student test scores, and federal legislation supporting systematic multisensory methods for teaching reading, in 2003 the new leadership of the New York City school system mandated a citywide reading program that, Dr. Ravitch contends, fails to embrace these principles. In 2004 New York City test scores reflected that, "Not only is the achievement gap growing between the haves and have-nots, but the population of excellent readers—level four—is rapidly declining." Faced with these dismal results, Ravitch believes that New York City policymakers will have to embrace proven systematic, multisensory methods for

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## QUOTES FROM THE WORKSHOP SPEAKERS

**Bonnie Lee Apple**, Ed.M., Teaching Consultant, Reading Reform Foundation

*The Writing Road to Reading: The Older Elementary Grades*  
“Active and motivated learners, critical listeners and thinkers, and skilled readers, writers, and spellers create life-long learners. That’s what a good, complete, phonetic program can help students become.”

*The Writing Road to Reading: The Early Grades*

“Learning to read with a total language arts program that is multisensory and phonetic paves the way for children to read and enjoy good books.”

**Amy Bailin**, M.S. Ed., PD; Fellow, Orton-Gillingham Academy; Educational Therapist, private practice  
*Fluency & Comprehension: The Real Pleasures of Reading*

“The development of reading fluency and comprehension begins on the first day of instruction. These are not “add-on” subjects to be taught later. It is the care and attention given to initial learning that leads to fluency and automatic retrieval of information.”

**Patricia Chilsen**, M.S.A., Theatre Teaching Artist, Lincoln Center Institute  
*A Midsummer Night’s Dream: Making Shakespeare Come Alive in The Classroom*

“Using Lincoln Center Institute’s experiential approach to all arts education, we can overcome teachers’ and students’ apprehension about Shakespeare by exploring the text in depth and playing with the words, thereby inspiring a love of Shakespeare’s language.”

**Elaine Fine**, Ed.D., Prof., Spec. Ed., Montclair State University, N.J.; Trainer, Strategies Intervention Model, Center for Research on Learning, Univ. of Kansas

*Learning Strategies Leading to Effective Reading Comprehension*

“The Strategies Intervention Model, developed and validated through 20 years of research at the Center for Research on Learning, University of Kansas, teaches students with learning difficulties to develop effective and efficient comprehension strategies which will enable them to become more independent and active learners and to meet the curriculum demands of general education classes. The purpose is to teach students how to learn and give them control over their learning.”

**Jeanne M. Fitzgerald**, Trainer, Wilson Program  
*The Older Learner: Beginning Anew*

“I was extremely skeptical using Wilson multisensory techniques with older students, but ‘Wilson Works’ and older students are receptive to starting from the beginning.”

**Samuel Fleisher**, Ed.D., Educational Diagnostician and Consultant  
*Improving the Level of Reading, Writing, Vocabulary and Comprehension*

“All children have the right to be taught those quick, memory-triggering strategies that make learning positive and lead to success.”

**Esther Klein Friedman**, Ph.D., Local Instructional Supt./Director of Intervention Services, Region 10

*Making Sense of Content-Area Learning: How Graphic Organizers Can Help*

“We have an obligation to provide good phonetic awareness instruction as an important part of a beginning reading program. Then we must go on to help readers understand the various text structures, and here is where graphic organizers can be useful.”

**Catherine Fukushima**, Associate Museum Educator, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

*Art Content Matters*  
“A work of art is a visual text that can be studied, analyzed and interpreted in much the same way as a written text.”

**Emily Goldberg**, Developmental Reading Consultant

*The Early Learner*  
“Teachers need to know how to structure the presentation of the English language developmentally with the easiest principles preceding the more difficult. Equally important is the knowledge of how to use all aspects of a multisensory, phonic approach to insure consistent, uninterrupted progress in spelling, writing and reading skills.”

**Judith C. Hochman**, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools, Greenburgh-Graham UFSD  
*Basic Writing Skills*

“Expository writing is a difficult but necessary skill to master in order to achieve success in school and in life. The strategies of an effective writing program require explicit, direct instruction and should be reinforced through the grades and in all content areas.”

**Jane Rohan Kloecker**, Director, Science & Nature Program, American Museum and Natural History; **Edward Chittenden**, Evaluation Consultant to the program

*Science Content Matters: “Reading” the Natural World*

“Investigating the natural world, and reading about the natural world, are complementary, but not comparable, experiences. ‘Doing’ science, whether child, parent or teacher, involves observing, playing with, and thinking about phenomena from the world around us. Understanding something better through first-hand encounters is the reward.”

**Rosalind W. Rothman**, Ed.D., Diagnostician and Educational Therapist; Dir., Language and Learning Assoc.

*Listen and Learn*

“Listen, my children, and you will hear information to last for many a year.”

### PICTURE THIS!

*We regret that we have no speaker pictures this year.  
We ask you to imagine these dynamic people who  
donated their time and effort to present  
electrifying lectures.*

**Lydia H. Soifer, Ph.D.,**  
Language and Speech  
Pathologist, Soifer Center for  
Learning and Child  
Development

*Oral Language and Its  
Relationship to Literacy:  
Reading is Language, Too!*

“Oral language is the foundation upon which literacy is built. It is so crucial that teachers understand that the process of language learning upon which reading is based begins much before children present themselves for reading instruction. Teachers and teachers of teachers must be knowledgeable of, and alert to, teaching all aspects of oral language as the precursor and underpinnings of literacy.”

**Esther Morgan Sands, M.S.,**  
Supervisor of Teacher Training,  
Reading Reform Foundation;  
Fellow, Orton-Gillingham  
Academy

*Multisensory Phonetic Instruction  
in The Elementary Classroom*

“Children thrive on step-by-step learning for beginning readers because they enjoy the fascinating logic, and, later, even the exceptions of the English language. Direct instruction hones their powers of analysis and curiosity.”

**Frederick W. Steitz, Certified  
Trainer in *Discover Intensive  
Phonics***

*How to Teach ‘Barebones’ Phonics*

“The road to meaningful comprehension and fluency is paved with sequential instruction, starting with decoding, moving on to phrase meaning, sentences, paragraphs and ultimately to exciting books.”

**Joanna Uhry, Ph.D., Professor  
and Chairman, Div. of  
Curriculum and Teaching,  
Fordham University, Graduate  
School of Education**

*The Phonetic Awareness-Phonics  
Continuum: From Speech Sounds  
to Books*

“Luckily, we now know an enormous amount about how to prevent reading failure through good instruction. This includes direct, systematic instruction in phonological awareness and phonics. It also involves helping children generalize these strategies to reading ‘real’ books. Most important, we want children to be skilled enough to love reading.”

**Lauren Wedeles, Exec. Dir.,  
Reading Reform Foundation**

*Reading Reform Foundation  
In-School Teacher Training:*

*Reports From the Field*

“Principals who use the Reading Reform Foundation in-school teacher training program to build teacher capacity find that the children’s reading competency steadily improves.”

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with Jane Rohan Kloecker and Edward Chittenden from the American Museum of Natural History.

While morning workshops were being held, twenty-eight school principals, Reading Reform staff, and workshop speakers gathered for the third annual Administrators’ Roundtable. Their discussion dovetailed with the theme of the day: the importance of content in teaching reading. Lauren Wedeles, Executive Director of Reading Reform Foundation, introduced Dr. Esther Klein Friedman, Local Instructional Superintendent/Regional Director of Intervention Services, Region Ten, who in turn introduced Anita Skop, Regional Instructional Specialist, Region 5.

Ms. Skop described a content-driven curriculum she had developed for a Saturday literacy program, encouraging administrators to build on her idea in their own schools. Skop emphasized that “School needs to be fun!” and that, “Weak readers are not necessarily weak thinkers.” Following Ms. Skop’s talk, principals shared success stories of content-based reading programs currently being employed in their schools and discussed ways to reach even more students.

During lunch, Lauren Wedeles thanked all the workshop speakers who generously gave their time as presenters, recognized the workshop chairmen and other volunteers who helped to keep the conference running smoothly, and praised the dedicated Reading Reform staff which spends months preparing for the conference to ensure that there are no

## DR. JUDITH HOCHMAN

### RECEIVES SPECTOR AWARD

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Three years ago the Leona D. Spector and Dr. Philip J. Spector Award was established in honor of Leona and her late husband, Dr. Philip J. Spector, both of whom gave so much to the Reading Reform Foundation and to numerous other organizations and individuals. In keeping with the Spector’s spirit of generosity in time and substance, this award is given to an outstanding leader who contributes to the community in which he or she lives.

Dr. Hochman accepted the award with great pleasure and thanked Leona and Reading Reform Foundation for their support and recognition.

## CON EDISON SUPPORTS CONFERENCE

Con Edison was not only a large supporter of the Reading Reform Conference, it also took a display table that was a big hit. The two men who represented ConEd at the table reported that they gave away over 600 gifts and that they will come back with more next year!



## QUOTES FROM CONFERENCE ATTENDEES

“I am so pleased by the level of professionalism and wide scope of workshops offered. This has been first-rate.”

“Today was a day filled with new and lasting experiences. I did not know what to expect. The workshops I attended were fulfilling and rich, with great ideas to enhance learning. Thank you.”

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## CONFERENCE COORDINATOR

 **Leona D. Spector**

## EXHIBITS COORDINATOR

 **Susan A. Spector**

### VOLUNTEERS

*Many volunteers assured the success of the conference. Those who chaired workshops were:*

Josephine Abrams, Teaching Consultant, Reading Reform Foundation; Diana Ambats, Resource Room Consultant; Third Grade Initiative Intervention Liaison, Region 9; Louise L. Arias, Secretary, Reading Reform Foundation; Barbara Ashby, Princ., PS 13, Region 5; Deirdre Budd, Princ., PS 178, Region 10; Ellen T. Dines, Trustee, Reading Reform Foundation; Jacqueline Edwards, Teaching Consultant, Reading Reform Foundation; Olga Iris Guzmán, Princ., PS 228, Region 4; Debby Hershkowitz, Speech and Language Therapist, Region 9; Rose M. Kornblau, Reading Teacher, CS 6, Region 2; Judith Frost Levine, Trustee, Reading Reform Foundation; Irene Livingston, Princ., PS 143, Region 4; Diana V. López, Trustee, Reading

Reform Foundation; Merle Chait Price, Honorary Trustee, Reading Reform Foundation; Joyce Silvershein, Coord. of Spec. Ed. Teaching Fellows, Hunter College; Caryl F. Spector, Financial Consultant.

*Other volunteers were:*

Lemekia Andrews, Bernice Arricale, Alice Brezak, Teaching Consultant, Reading Reform Foundation; Karen Cohen, Teaching Consultant, Reading Reform Foundation; Nicole Colwell, Trustee, Reading Reform Foundation; Elisabeth de Picciotto, Trustee, Reading Reform Foundation; Georganne Del Canto, Teaching Consultant, Reading Reform Foundation; Electra Freedgood, Teaching Consultant, Reading Reform Foundation; Aileen Lewisohn Godsick, President, Reading Reform Foundation; Bette Kessler, Teaching Consultant, Reading Reform Foundation; Nancy Kleinfeld, Phyllis

Koenig, Susan Koestler, Teaching Consultant, Reading Reform Foundation; Marjorie Kraut, Sharon Krauze, Judeah Lerner, Teaching Consultant, Reading Reform Foundation; Karen Moore, Teaching Consultant, Reading Reform Foundation; Judith Muniz, Teaching Consultant, Reading Reform Foundation; Sharon Paige-Lisenbee, Teaching Consultant, Reading Reform Foundation; Elaine Pollack, Teaching Consultant, Reading Reform Foundation; Merry Ann Rein, Linda Rosenheim, Teaching Consultant, Reading Reform Foundation; Diane Schwartz, Judy Schwartz, Jenny Solow, Mary Solow, Barbara Sommerfeld, Teaching Consultant, Reading Reform Foundation; Shari Stern Sonnenberg, Teaching Consultant, Reading Reform Foundation; Ruth Valcin, Teaching Consultant, Reading Reform Foundation.

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teaching reading. When this happens, educators will face a new challenge: advocating the importance of content in school curricula.

Ravitch explained that, "Doing the right thing for beginning readers is necessary but not sufficient. . . . Once children are ready to read words and sentences, content matters." She emphasized that reading comprehension is the next step in developing a better, more educated student, and a focus on content is a great way to readily improve reading comprehension.

Ravitch relayed the four most important principles of reading comprehension as

summarized by E.D. Hirsch, Jr. "Reading ability is knowledge dependent . . . vocabulary dependent . . . cumulative, and is dependent upon both general knowledge and language experience. Significant improvement in reading ability cannot be gained by practicing comprehension strategies." Hirsch concluded that these strategies of previewing, predicting, comparing, contrasting, summarizing and drawing conclusions focus too much on metacognition, while ignoring the far more important issues of knowledge and vocabulary.

Ravitch said, "Whether children start school with a big

vocabulary or a small one, all children need a coherent curriculum that builds their vocabulary and their knowledge incrementally and thoughtfully from day to day, from week to week, from month to month, from year to year." She lamented, "How much better it would be for students and their teachers if states or districts or schools were willing to identify the important knowledge that children at different grade levels need to know in science, history, and literature."

To further illuminate her point, Dr. Ravitch cited Hirsch's book, *Cultural Literacy*, in which "he argued that the surest path to social

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problems on conference day. Then Ms. Wedeles acknowledged the enormous talents of Leona Spector, Conference Coordinator for twenty-three years.

The final session, "Ask Questions! Get Answers! It's Your Turn," allowed educators to pose any last queries. Patricia Chilsen, Esther Klein Friedman, Rosalind W. Rothman, Esther Morgan Sands, Frederick W. Steitz, and Lauren Wedeles made up the knowledgeable panel which discussed a range

of issues, including the variations of the Orton-Gillingham system and the practices of Reading Reform Foundation. Patricia Chilsen's inspiring description of her success in exposing kindergarten, first and second graders to Shakespeare was the perfect end to a day dedicated to furthering the education of students by employing effective teaching methods and concentrating on content-based curriculum.



## EXHIBITORS FOR 2004 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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## CONTENT IMPROVES READING COMPREHENSION

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equality and educational excellence is to make sure that all children are introduced to important facts and knowledge about the culture they live in as well as other nations and culture and times."

Dr. Ravitch stated, "In most school settings ... students who come to school with the advantages bestowed upon them by educated parents and a literate home get educationally wealthier, while those who lack those advantages get poorer."

Ravitch believes that, "with early assessments, early interventions, and pedagogical methods that have been tested and found successful, the gap can be narrowed. But the gap will never be closed until we recognize the importance of content. Content matters because it is the stuff that makes comprehension possible." Ravitch called on

"teachers and schools [to] put together a rich program of content for students."

Ravitch concluded by lauding the members of Reading Reform Foundation for their efforts to train teachers in effective methods of teaching reading. She asked that now they "focus on the next frontier, which is the importance of content, the foundation of reading comprehension. I hope you will teach teachers about the strong connection between how children learn and what they learn. I hope that in time this principle too will gain wide acceptance."



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Reading Reform Foundation's  
24th Annual Conference

## READING REFORM FOUNDATION OF NEW YORK

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email: [info@readingreformny.org](mailto:info@readingreformny.org) and website: [www.readingreformny.org](http://www.readingreformny.org)

READING REFORM FOUNDATION OF NEW YORK is a not-for-profit literacy organization whose experience has shown that almost every child and adult non-reader, regardless of social and economic background, can learn to read, write and spell if taught by effective, systematic and phonetic methods that employ multisensory techniques for learning.

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