

THE INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION DEFINES UNIQUE ROLES OF SCHOOL-BASED SPECIALIZED LITERACY PROFESSIONALS

New position statement clarifies differences in expectations and preparations for literacy specialists

NEWARK, Del. (October 8, 2015) — The International Literacy Association (ILA) today issued a [position statement](#) based on recently published researchⁱ that organizes school-based specialized literacy professionals into three distinct roles: reading/literacy specialists, literacy coaches and literacy coordinators/supervisors. While responsibilities often overlap across these roles, there are specific distinctions in terms of the primary emphasis and professional qualifications required to be effective in each role.

In the past, literacy specialists who worked with students, coaches who supported teachers and supervisors who played an evaluative role at the school or within the district were often in a single position. “Our research findings indicated clear distinctions among the roles of these three types of literacy professionals,” said Rita Bean, professor emerita in the University of Pittsburgh School of Education’s Department of Instruction and Learning and lead investigator for the research that provided the foundation for ILA’s position statement and accompanying brief. “We also learned that the preparation they received did not ready them for these multiple roles.”

Bean added, “While each role is distinct, our research showed a commonality among these roles—the ability to lead and inspire is required by every literacy leader.” ILA’s position statement emphasizes this finding by noting that, regardless of role, “all specialized literacy professionals need leadership, facilitation and communications skills to perform effectively.”

Given the increasingly rigorous state standards, there is a tremendous need to help struggling students, support teachers in implementing these new standards and provide ongoing evaluative insights to ensure that schools have the right resources to advance literacy. “Declining test scores across the country indicate the need for increased emphasis on quality literacy instruction. Students, teachers and schools need the resources that specialized literacy professionals provide,” stressed Bean.

ILA’s position statement and accompanying [research brief](#) provides school administrators with guidance on how to define the role of each specialty and to clarify what type of literacy professional their schools may need to hire. The descriptions aim to help those hiring literacy professionals to better understand what skill set is required and which qualifications to look for in the hiring process. Further, the new definitions will support college and university teaching programs in developing curricula to better prepare teachers for these specific literacy positions.

To review the full report, visit: literacyworldwide.org/literacyroles.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION

The International Literacy Association (ILA) is a global advocacy and membership organization dedicated to advancing literacy for all through its network of more than 300,000 literacy educators, researchers and experts across 75 countries. With 60 years of experience in the field, ILA believes in the transformative power of literacy to create more successful societies, healthy communities and prosperous economies. ILA collaborates with partners across the world to develop, gather and disseminate high-quality resources, best practices and cutting-edge research to empower educators, inspire students and inform policymakers. The International Literacy Association publishes several peer-reviewed journals, including *The Reading Teacher*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* and *Reading Research Quarterly*. For more information, visit literacyworldwide.org.

Media Contact: For all media inquiries, please contact press@reading.org.

ⁱ Bean, R., et al. (2015). Specialized literacy professionals as literacy leaders: Results of a national survey. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 54, 83-114. Taylor & Francis, DOI 10.1080/19388071.2014998355.