

## **Alumna propels stronger readers, reading programs from state post**

**by Matt Hietpas - Thursday, January 03, 2013**

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/24180/alumna-propels-stronger-readers-reading-programs-from-state-post/>

A University of Wisconsin Oshkosh alumna is helping Wisconsin's K-12 schools improve their reading programs to help ready students for higher learning.

Barbara Novak '09, currently works for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) as a literacy consultant helping educators understand and apply the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English language arts. According to Novak, the standards prepare students for a higher-level learning by explaining what students should learn and understand.

“College and career readiness is at the heart of the CCSS. To this end, the standards lead students toward reading increasingly complex literature and informational text,” Novak said. “By grades nine through 12, 70 percent of the reading completed across a student's day should be informational text in preparation for the demands of reading in post-secondary studies and the workforce.”

Novak started at DPI in October 2012; she works closely with other DPI consultants in areas of social studies, career and technical education, students with disabilities or English language learners and public and school librarians to implement the Common Core Standards.

“State Superintendent Tony Evers created the Common Core State Standards Implementation Team to create and organize resources to assist educators with providing relevant and rigorous literacy and mathematics instruction to ensure academic proficiency and success beyond graduation for all Wisconsin students,” Novak said.

According to Novak, the team is currently working on numerous projects, including: creating professional development modules and materials for teachers, schools and districts relating to text complexity, disciplinary literacy and vocabulary.

Novak finished her master's degree in reading education at UW Oshkosh in May 2006 and then in 2009 she completed a master's in educational leadership and policy analysis through a cooperative program between UW Oshkosh and UW-Madison.

Patricia Scanlan, UW Oshkosh reading education associate professor, had Novak as a student at UW Oshkosh and has since collaborated with her for the Fox Valley Writing Project and on a Cooperative Educational Service Agency team to help create a tool for organizing instruction via the Common Core State Standards.

“Barb is an exceptional thinker. She is an avid learner and problem solver,” Scanlan said. “She thinks deeply and creatively about important issues like assessment, literacy learning, and learning in general, Barb is also a reader and writer herself, which makes her insights into issues around literacy all

the more powerful. She is brilliant.”

UW Oshkosh associate professor Joan Simmons also taught Novak while she was completing her master’s degree.

“Barb kept up with the latest research in literacy,” Simmons said. “She is also very good at sharing her knowledge with her colleagues.”

Novak worked as a literacy coach from 2006 to 2011 for the Oshkosh Area School District, and at the Menasha Joint School district from 2011 to 2012.

“In both jobs, I collaborated with teachers in all disciplines around providing research-based literacy instruction to all students,” she said. “Sometimes this collaboration took the form of school or district-wide professional learning during in-service days. More often, though, I worked one-on-one or with small groups of teachers to investigate practices, examine data about student learning, and scaffold instruction to meet the needs of all learners. In addition, literacy coaching in both Oshkosh and Menasha included working one-on-one or in small groups with the school’s most struggling readers.”

To add to the already many things Novak does, she also is an active member of the Wisconsin State Reading Association.

“She was recently elected to serve in the presidential cycle which is a multi-year commitment,” said UW Oshkosh professor Michael Ford. “She will serve as president of the organization in 2016.”

She will also serve as chair of the 2014 WSRA State Convention, which is a three day event that attracts more than 2000 educators.

“Barb is an alum of whom UW Oshkosh can be very proud,” said Scanlan. “We are pleased that she is continues serving the educational community in Wisconsin.”

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