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Dr. Templeton is the foundation professor of curriculum and instruction at the University of Nevada, Reno and co-author of numerous books, including *Words Their Way*. His research focuses on spelling and word study. Templeton will be a keynote speaker at the ARA Fall Conference November 16-17, 2006.

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An Interview with Shane Templeton: About Literacy

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1. Your book "Teaching the Integrated Language Arts" is thought by some to be a classic. What prompted you to write the book and what, in your mind is so special about it?

I'm quite honored to hear that some folks may think of this text as a classic - thank you. I actually had not considered writing the book until the publisher, in turning down my proposal for a different book that later came out as "Words Their Way" with another publisher, asked if I had ever considered writing a Language Arts methods text. I had not, but jumped at this opportunity.

What is special about it? I would like to think that two aspects emerged from the text. First, when the first edition came out in 1990, there were few introductory texts in teaching the Language Arts that helped pre-service and experienced teachers really address *how* to inte-

grate the Language Arts in consequential and effective ways, and I hope that this text did that. Second, the text grounded integrated instruction in what several literacy scholars and educators have described as a "developmental model" of literacy development. While the concept of "developmentally-based instruction" was certainly not new, by the late 80s I think we understood better how to "actualize" that concept from the holistic down to the skills level. We could address skills in truly engaging and meaningful ways while not losing sight of the overall enterprise of reading, writing, thinking, communicating. I hope this emphasis emerged as well from the book, along with a solid, supportive foundation for teaching the Language Arts in an integrated manner.

2. Spelling is to Vocabulary as Ball is to Stick. What makes this analogy work?

An interesting analogy! For a good many years I have been interested in exploring, understanding, and helping to develop students' word knowledge.

The relationship between spelling and vocabulary knowledge is of especial interest, so I'm going to wade right in and mix some metaphors: If we think of the "stick" as the engine that drives the "ball" forward - assuming good contact is made - then a knowledge of words, their meanings, and how they function in sentences and in discourses can drive spelling knowledge forward.

But now I'm not only going to mix metaphors but turn them around: Vocabulary is to spelling as ball is to stick - spelling becomes the engine that can drive vocabulary knowledge forward. This relationship becomes particularly powerful in the intermediate grades and beyond.

This is because most new words that students encounter in their reading from this point on are created by combining meaningful word parts - prefixes, suffixes, and Greek and Latin word roots. *Spelling* represents these meaningful word parts most directly and consistently. When students become aware of and under-

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Shane Templeton Interview (continued from page 1)

stand how the spelling *visually* represents these meaningful word parts consistently, this knowledge becomes a powerful engine that drives word knowledge forward. For example, the Latin word root - *jud* - in the words *judge*, *prejudicial*, and *adjudicate* is pronounced differently, but the spelling of this word part does *not* change: It visually preserves the core meaning of "judge" in each of these words.

Students who know how to look for these meaningful word parts - cued by their consistent spelling - are better able to figure out the meaning of unknown words in their reading and *retain* these words in their vocabulary.

3. What is your definition of authentic reading?

There are two aspects to my definition of authentic reading. First, purposefully engaging print in ways that ensure we are constructing as best we can the meaning that the author intended. Second, resonating with that constructed meaning is the service of critical thought and/or purposeful action.

4. In your book "Children's Literacy" you focus on contexts for meaningful learning. What makes learning meaningful for children?

Learning is meaningful if children understand how whatever we are attempting to teach relates to them. *Children's Literacy*, in contrast to my earlier book *Teaching the Integrated Language Arts*, is more specifically a "reading methods" text. My objective in that text was to try to help teachers in turn help students develop the skills, strategies, and attitudes

that will empower them to engage printed material most effectively and efficiently. *What* students read is a critical aspect of meaningful instruction and contexts, and *how* teachers go about engaging children in materials that are of interest to them is of course critical.

All of this, however, will only work if children's *teachers* are also readers. If their teachers are not readers - if they do not read for pleasure, knowledge, and growth - then their students are not likely to develop the habits, attitudes, strategies and skills for lifelong reading that is meaningful, purposeful, and empowering.

5. Childhood is filled with memorable firsts (gee, I wish I had said that, but you did!). What exactly did you mean by that?

I honestly cannot remember writing that! It sounds more insightful than I usually am - perhaps I was in turn quoting someone else. Regardless, the insight in that observation rests with the lens through which younger children view their world. There is a strangeness and wonderment in the new, and it leaves a fundamental and lasting trace.

We know that this lens will change over time -- through physical, cognitive, social and emotional growth -- all of which are of course interrelated. Our recollection of those "firsts," and our reconstruction of the lens through which we viewed them, may change in ways both subtle and significant.

6. What is the "development of orthographic knowledge" and why is it important?

Orthographic knowledge is the "dollar-and-a-half" term for *spelling* knowledge - understanding and applying the knowledge of how and why letters represent the sounds

and meanings of the language. We use the term "orthographic" rather than "spelling," however, because the word *spelling* is usually understood more narrowly, referring only to the encoding of words. *Orthographic knowledge* underlies not only the writing of words but the decoding of words in reading as well: The more students understand "how words work" - their spelling - the more efficient and effective will their writing and reading be.

Orthographic knowledge develops over time and through experiences with writing, with reading, and through exploring words. I began investigating this development myself many years ago as a graduate student at the University of Virginia under the guidance of Edmund Henderson. Ed was a pioneer in developmental reading and spelling instruction, and a number of scholars and educators whose research has explored this developmental progression also studied with Ed. In the late 60s, he had the singular insight that by looking at how learners *spell* words we can better understand the types of information they use to *read* words as well. The assessment of spelling has subsequently assumed far greater importance than it previously held.

7. What does it mean to read and write? Particularly in this age of the Internet and Palm Pilots and Ipods and things like that?

There is certainly an exciting new literacy frontier stretching out through these new technologies. There are also unparalleled seductions and siren songs as we read and write the Web. How are reading and writing affected, and what will they mean in this new world?

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With apologies, I'll take a couple of paragraphs to scaffold my answer.

The essence, insight, and meaning of critical thinking have not changed at least since Socrates. And since Socrates' day, we have had at least four technological revolutions that have affected reading and writing directly and significantly: An alphabet that can represent all the sounds in a language, the development of the book, the invention of the printing press, and the Web. What we are seeing now in technology and telecommunications - those Palm Pilots, blackberries, and increasingly sophisticated Ipods and cell phones - are but way stations along the Web's evolutionary highway.

There is no question that, with each new technology, how people "do" literacy is significantly affected. Indeed, each technological advance arguably accelerated the arts, humanities, and sciences as well as social, economic, and political developments. I believe, however, that the true meaning and potential of reading and writing has remained and will continue to remain remarkably constant: *Thinking* critically and very often *feeling* deeply in the service of communicating with ourselves, with others, and with our world. That's what reading and writing have meant and will continue to mean.

8. "Words Their Way"- What is this all about?

In the early 90s, three very good friends and professional colleagues and I collaborated on the book *Words Their Way*. Our objective was to bring together within the pages of one book the theoretical and practical foundations for developmental word study - phonics, spelling, and

vocabulary - and help teachers engage students in word study *their way*, in ways that made sense to the students. We also wanted this book to be accessible to teachers.

My colleagues and I continue to be amazed, though delighted, with the success that *Words Their Way* has enjoyed. We were fortunate in the timing of the publication; the first edition came out at just the right time: Teachers were looking for a resource that would help them learn about the elements of phonics and spelling - elements not studied to a great extent in most teacher preparation programs - as well as ways to assess what their students knew about words, and to teach phonics and spelling in more engaging ways. At the same time, the field of literacy education was trying to balance effectively students' holistic engagements with reading and writing with instruction in the "basics." *Words Their Way* helped educators do this; we are pleased that the book is now in its third edition and continues to be a helpful resource for teachers, and that it has also generated a number of similar books and programs.

The basic premise of *Words Their Way* is that students' word knowledge develops along a continuum. This developmental continuum supports and is related to development in reading and writing. Once we determine where a student falls along this continuum, we know which spelling patterns that student is ready to learn and which words we can choose to best represent those patterns. Spelling therefore makes more sense to students; and knowledge of spelling patterns in turn supports students' fluency in writing *and* their fluency in reading.

9. What question have I neglected to ask?

You've covered the waterfront!



**ARA Annual Conference
Little Rock Statehouse
Convention Center
&
Peabody Hotel
November 16-17, 2006**

**Keynote Speakers
Timothy Shanahan
Shane Templeton**

Featured Speakers

Patty Anders
Isabel Beck
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Debbie Diller
Doris Walker-Dalhouse
Linda Dorn
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Jill Lewis
Debbie Miller
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Rebecca Sitton
Carla Soffos
Ken Stamatis
Jack Piluski

Children's Authors

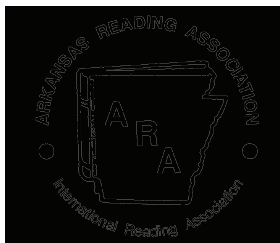
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Books by Dr. Shane Templeton

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ARA Conference Special Events

Wild About Writers Reception

Thursday, November 16—5:00 p.m.—7:00 p.m.

Cost—\$10.00

Have a wild time at the **Wild About Writers** reception! This book and autograph reception will provide the opportunity to enjoy roundtable chats with the authors of children's books and professional books featured at the conference followed by the storytelling of **Carmen Agra Deedy**, author of *The Library Dragon*. **Books will be available for purchase and autographing.**

Friday, November 17—1:00 p.m.—2:30 p.m.

Book and Author Luncheon

Cost—\$30.00

Elvira Woodruff, author of *The Ravenmaster's Secret* and many other children and adolescent favorites will delight the audience with her stories during the Book and Author Luncheon.

