SPEAKER BIOS

**Dean Bragonier**

Dean Bragonier is the Founder and Executive Dyslexic of NoticeAbility. Shaped by the challenges associated with his dyslexia, Dean became a diligent and successful college student after struggling through the traditional secondary education system. It wasn’t until he enrolled at Bates College that he developed a true love of learning, fostered in large part by the institution’s unique approach to education and its support of students with learning differences. Upon graduation from Bates, Dean embraced his entrepreneurial instincts and acquired a small seasonal restaurant on Martha’s Vineyard Island that he transformed into a successful full-scale enterprise (see Boston Magazine, July 2001). It was through this endeavor that he was able to contextualize his years of laborious academic learning and discover the true gifts of his dyslexic mind. As a social entrepreneur, Dean has founded his own nonprofit organizations and served as board member and advisor to a number of others. NoticeAbility is the culmination of Dean’s passion for education and his conviction that the advantages of dyslexia far outweigh its associated challenges. **Saturday PM Plenary Session**

**Kelly Butler, M.Ed.**

Kelly Butler is The Barksdale Reading Institute’s (BRI) managing director for policy and partnerships. She brings BRI’s research knowledge and teaching expertise to improve reading instruction in Mississippi public schools at all levels – teacher preparation, K-3 classrooms, instructional coaching, and school leadership. Kelly also develops partnerships with state and national organizations that promote evidence-based practices in early literacy instruction. Kelly spearheaded BRI’s development of The Reading Universe®, a detailed scope and sequence for training teachers on how to deliver sequential, systemic, explicit reading instruction; and the development of a Social/Emotional Literacy project for pre-K through 8th grade. She is the project coordinator for a BRI-sponsored statewide initiative to improve teacher preparation programs focused on early literacy instruction in Mississippi’s 15 public and private universities and is lead author of Mississippi’s Statewide Study on Teacher Preparation for Early Literacy Instruction. She has active partnerships with the Governor’s Task Force on Teacher Preparation for Early Literacy Instruction, the Higher Education Literacy, and the Advisory Board of the Southeast Regional Educational Lab. Previously, Kelly was a teacher in the Greenwich, Connecticut public schools; served as special assistant to the Region IV Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare; and worked extensively with a variety of nonprofit organizations in social service, health care, and education in the areas of program development, support, and evaluation. Kelly holds a bachelor’s degree in special education, and a master’s degree in administration, planning, and social policy from Harvard University. **Saturday PM 2 Workshop**

**Kelly Cartwright, Ph.D.**

Kelly Cartwright is a professor of psychology, neuroscience, and teacher preparation at Christopher Newport University where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in cognitive development, language, and literacy processes and instruction. She mentors and advises undergraduate students in psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, and teacher preparation; and graduate student pre-service educators. Kelly has provided professional
development for teachers across the US and throughout Virginia. Her research focuses on the nature of skilled reading comprehension and the factors that underlie comprehension difficulties from preschool through adulthood in order to find appropriate interventions to serve those who struggle to understand text. Her articles have appeared in journals such as Journal of Research in Reading, Contemporary Educational Psychology, the Journal of Literacy Research, the Journal of Child Language, Early Education and Development, and the Journal of Educational Psychology. Her most recent book, Executive Skills and Reading Comprehension, was published with Guilford in 2015. **Saturday Keynote & Saturday AM 1 Workshop**

**Steve Dykstra, Ph.D.**

Steve Dykstra is a clinical psychologist in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he has worked in public sector community mental health for more than 25 years. He is a founding member of the Wisconsin Reading Coalition, and vice president of the Coalition for Reading Excellence, but he has never tutored or taught a child to read. Except for parts of one or two courses in graduate school, he has no formal training on the topic. Instead, through the course of his work and life, he has come to see the role of reading, reading struggles, and reading failure in the lives of the thousands of children he has served, as well as in their families, schools, and communities. Building on knowledge and training he sought for himself, he brings together the science of reading he has discovered, with the lessons he has learned from the children he serves, and what he knows about people to understand how we got to where we are, and how we might change that. Steve is a member of the advisory board of the International Foundation of Effective Reading Instruction. **Friday Evening Keynote & Saturday AM 2 Workshop**

**Linda Farrell, MBA, M.Ed.**

Linda Farrell, is a founding partner at Readsters, where she is immersed in the world of beginning and struggling readers. Linda designs and presents workshops, writes books, and develops instructional materials for effective reading instruction. She has coauthored several publications with her business partner, Michael Hunter, including *Phonics Plug-In, Phonics Blitz, Phonics Boost*, and the *Diagnostic Decoding Surveys*. She is also a coauthor of the *Teaching Reading Essentials Program Guide and Coach’s Guide* (coauthored with Louisa Moats), and *DIBELS: the Practical Manual*. Linda was a National LETRS Trainer for seven years. Linda has been presenting workshops and giving speeches on reading instruction throughout the country since 2000. She taught junior high English and was a high school and elementary school counselor. However, it was only when Linda volunteered to teach adults to read that she understood older struggling readers’ needs for explicit phonics and phonemic awareness instruction at the most basic levels. Linda keeps her skills fresh and innovative by working with struggling readers of all ages whenever she has time. **Saturday AM 3 Workshop**

**Michael Hunter, M.Ed.**

Michael Hunter a founding partner of Readsters. Michael found his passion for teaching struggling readers by volunteering to teach adults to read in Washington DC. In 2001, Michael left his job as president of a concrete construction company to pursue a career helping students learn to read using the most effective methods available. Michael is co-author with his business partner, Linda Farrell, of *Phonics Plug-In ONE, the Practice Packets to Fix Common*
Confusions, Phonics Blitz and Phonics Boost lessons, and the Diagnostic Decoding Surveys. Michael presents professional development workshops nationally and advises schools and districts on implementation of effective reading instruction. He also continues to create assessments, lessons and other materials to help beginning and struggling readers. He enjoys working with and learning from struggling readers of all ages whenever he finds time. Michael’s work has even taken him to the Republic of Gambia and Rwanda in Africa to train and advise on early reading instruction for the Global Partnership for Education. Saturday PM 3 Workshop

**Monica McHale-Small, Ph.D**

Monica McHale-Small is currently Director of Program Accreditation for the International Dyslexia Association and an Adjunct Associate Professor at Temple University. She retired from public education after twenty-seven years of service in Pennsylvania. Monica started her career as a school psychologist but spent the last fourteen years in a variety of administrative positions including, most recently, Superintendent. She earned her doctorate and masters’ degrees from the University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education. Dr. McHale-Small has long advocated bringing sound research into practice in public schools and serves on the advisory committee for Pennsylvania’s Dyslexia Screening and Early Literacy Intervention Pilot. This pilot is designed to support researched based structured literacy instruction and intervention beginning in Kindergarten. Dr. McHale-Small is an advocate for responsible inclusion and equity for historically underserved students including racially, culturally and linguistically diverse students and students with disabilities. She co-founded the Greater Lehigh Valley Consortium for Equity and Excellence and she currently consults with the ACLU of PA on School to Prison Pipeline issues. She has served on the Board of Directors of the Learning Disabilities Association of America, the International Dyslexia Association, and the National Association of Pupil Services Administrators. Monica serves her own community as a board member and volunteer advocate for Coatesville Citizens Who Seek Educational Equality. Saturday PM 5 Workshop

**Laura Stewart**

Laura Stewart is an educator and organizational leader. She has served as a classroom teacher, building and district administrator, adjunct professor, and director of numerous professional development initiatives around the country. She also served as the Vice President of Professional Development for both Rowland Reading Foundation and Zaner-Bloser. In her current position as the Chief Academic Officer, Professional Development for the Highlights Education Group, she works across several companies to offer high-quality professional development which will empower educators and positively impact children’s lives. She presents nationally and internationally and has written for numerous organizations and publications; she recently co-authored The Everything Guide to Informational Texts, K-2: Best Texts, Best Practices. Laura is a certified LETRS trainer and was recently appointed to the advisory board of the International Foundation of Effective Reading Instruction. Saturday AM 5 Workshop

**Alice Thomas, M.Ed.**

Alice Thomas is the founder, president and CEO of the Center for Development and Learning (CDL). Alice’s work is guided by a steadfast belief that all children, regardless of how they look, where they come from or how they learn, can and will achieve school success when provided with highly effective teachers and positive, supportive learning environments. In addition to
executive duties, she facilitates professional learning for school leaders, teachers, and related specialists. Alice previously served as a teacher, counselor, and intervention specialist. She has taught university graduate courses on differentiating instruction for struggling students. She is a Learning Forward Academy graduate. She is the creator and director of the annual evidence-based Plain Talk About Literacy and Learning Institute. Alice is coauthor of the Plain Talk About Learning professional learning curriculum, the Right from Birth parent/caregiver training curriculum, and the Teens & Tots curriculum; and editor of CDL’s online blog. Alice completed a fellowship in neurodevelopmental variations at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, and doctoral level studies in change leadership at the University of Toronto. She is the recipient of the New Orleans Children’s Defense Fund’s Champions for Children award and the International Dyslexia Association’s 2013 Presidential Award for Excellence. Saturday AM 4 Workshop & Saturday PM 1 Workshop