



Reading Recovery® Council
of North America

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Gene Wilhoit to Receive Teacher Leader Award

WASHINGTON, DC – The Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA) will present educator Gene Wilhoit with its Teacher Leader Award for his leadership and work on behalf of first graders in Kentucky who have difficulty learning to read. Mr. Wilhoit is one of four recipients in North America this year. The award will be presented at the 2007 Teacher Leader Institute and North American Leadership Academy in Vienna, VA on Monday, June 4, 2007.

“Having a commissioner of education who understands the importance of early reading intervention was critical as Kentucky helped districts and schools define effective practices for reaching reading achievement,” said Susan Cantrell, Ed. D., Executive Director of the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development at the University of Kentucky. “Former Commissioner Wilhoit clearly articulated a vision for Kentucky schools that included early reading intervention as a component to implement an effective, comprehensive approach for reaching reading proficiency.”

Mr. Wilhoit has served as program director for the Indiana Department of Public Instruction, executive director of the National Association of State Boards of Education and chief state school officer for the Arkansas Department of Education. He was a supporter of Reading Recovery as an early intervention in Arkansas and brought that commitment to the state of Kentucky when he was named Kentucky’s third commissioner of education in October 2000. Under his guidance, the Kentucky Department of education has administered a competitive grant system providing additional funding for literacy instruction across the state.

Mr. Wilhoit was selected as executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in November 2006. Headquartered in Washington DC, CCSSO is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization of public officials who head department of education in each state. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy and technical assistance on major educational issues.

At the state level, Mr. Wilhoit’s work with Senator Dan Kelly and other key legislators have produced some outstanding legislation for early literacy intervention through the Read To Achieve Act. This legislation provides early intervention funds, currently \$23 million, to Kentucky’s most vulnerable children, those who cannot read and keep falling further behind their classmates.

Mr. Wilhoit guided the Kentucky Department of Education through discussions with Reading First officials concerning the use of Reading Recovery as an appropriate intervention in Reading First Schools. As a result of his stance, Reading Recovery remains an important safety net for struggling first graders in Kentucky.

When informed of his nomination for the Teacher Leader Award, Mr. Wilhoit responded, “What a wonderful and unexpected surprise that you would nominate me for a national award from Reading Recovery. As you know, from the early days in Arkansas through the years in Kentucky, I have been so moved by what I have seen and experienced in Reading Recovery programs that I had to be an advocate. I have talked to too many dedicated and talented Reading Recovery teachers and leaders and I have had too many one-to-one sessions with beaming readers to ignore the potential of Reading Recovery. I had to act in support and I trust that I have been able to play some small role in turning around the lives of our precious children. It has been a labor of love for me.”

The North American headquarters for Reading Recovery is located in Worthington, OH. The Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA) is an association of nearly 8,000 Reading Recovery professionals and partners that includes classroom teachers, Title I teachers, school administrators, university professors, parents and community members. The Council's mission is to ensure access to Reading Recovery for every child who needs its support.

For more information on the 2007 Teacher Leader Institute and North American Leadership Academy, call 614-310-7323 (READ) or go to www.readingrecovery.org.