

GCBA Grades 4-8 Committee (2016-2017 Book Selection)



Committee Chairperson:

Denise Davila, Ph.D. – Adjunct Assistant Professor

Literacies and Children's Literature Program

Department of Language and Literacy Education - The University of Georgia



Committee Assistant:

Adam Crawley – Graduate Assistant

Literacies and Children's Literature Program

Department of Language and Literacy Education - The University of Georgia

I am excited to serve as the assistant for the GCBA committees. Prior to becoming a doctoral student, I earned a B.S.Ed. in Early Childhood Education and M.Ed. in Children's Literature and Language Arts at the University of Georgia. As an elementary teacher for twelve years in various Georgia public school districts, connecting students with a wide array of children's literature and incorporating such texts within content areas were passions. Some of my current research interests include historical fiction, culturally diverse children's literature, and digital literacy. I have been involved with UGA's annual Conference on Children's Literature for several years as a presenter and volunteer, and I enjoy continued involvement serving in this position.

Committee Members:



Traci Blackstock

Media Specialist – P.B. Ritch Middle School, Paulding County

First-term committee member

I am currently the Media Specialist at P.B. Ritch Middle School in Paulding County. I previously worked at Hutchens Elementary and P.B. Ritch Elementary. I taught reading and math for 6th grade and 7th grade in the beginning of my career. I am beginning my 20th year in education. I love to share books with my students as well as get recommendations from them. I am married with three children. I love to travel and spend time with family and of course read.



Joy Frerichs

School support and public library volunteer - Cedar Ridge School, Antioch Elementary, Dalton Public Library, Dalton County

Third-term committee member

I have been the coordinator of Young Adult Choices and Teacher's Choices of the Southeast. I have reviewed YA books for years. I have presented at conferences and taught staff development. I love sharing books with students.



Terrie Gribanow

Media Specialist - Dearing Elementary, McDuffie County

Second-term committee member

I am the mother of two, wife of one, and the media specialist of 500+. I have been the media specialist at Dearing Elementary (a PK-5 elementary school) for the past 14 years, and I LOVE my job. I love teaching my students how to read and how to enjoy reading. I help the students at Dearing Elementary learn how to develop healthy reading habits and find books that interest them. I help my students know how to decide what they like to read. I can do these things because I read all of the time, and I take the time to get to know my students...yes, all 500+ of them. I feel it is my duty to provide, via my school's media center, books of all genres, topics, interests, and walks of life to the students at Dearing Elementary. It is that sense of duty that I bring to this committee. I am on a mission to find the best that is out there, not only for my students, but also for the GCBA Gr. 4-8 nominee list. I look forward to the journey this mission will bring.



Donna Jones

Media Specialist – Avondale Elementary, Dekalb County

First-term committee member / Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl Representative

I have been a media specialist for nine years, and I love working with children. It is because of my love for reading that I began to work in the media center where I would have access to as many books as possible. Reading can take you anywhere in the world without leaving home. I have been a member of the Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl (HRRB) for seven years. I was the East Regional Coordinator for four years, and I am currently the Co-Chair of the DeKalb Steering Committee. This is my first year on the GCBA Gr. 4-8 nominating committee representing the HRRB. I am excited and look forward to the challenge of selecting the best books for our students to read.



Bev Kodak

*Sixth Grade Teacher - Ola Middle School, Henry County
Second-term committee member*

I'm a sixth grade Language Arts teacher and Department Chair at Ola Middle School in Henry County. This will be my twentieth year teaching, but I have been a voracious reader my entire life. In fact, I've kept a record of all the books I've read since I was a teenager. I share my love of books with many people. At my school, I'm a teacher and the coach of the Reading Bowl team. In 2009, my team won the middle school State Championship. It was an amazing experience to watch my students bond with students they'd never met about books. Even though it's a competition, they recognized that they had so much in common with their competitors. In addition to working with students, I also volunteer with the largest fan-run science fiction convention in the United States. I'm the director of the Young Adult Literature track at DragonCon which allows me to spend four days talking to authors, readers, librarians, teachers, and other science fiction and fantasy fans about the books we're so passionate about. This will be my second year serving on the GCBA Gr. 4-8 committee. I really have enjoyed being part of the process, and I'm ready to get started on this year's list!



Melinda Melvin

*Media Specialist – East Laurens Middle School, Laurens County
First-term committee member*

It has been said that "Education is not filling a basket, it is igniting a flame." This year marks my 26th year in middle grades education at East Laurens Middle School in Dublin, Georgia. After teaching in all academic disciplines at one time or another for sixteen years, I became a media specialist, and I have served in that capacity for the past ten years. Reading is one of my personal hobbies and my passion for educating students. I truly feel it is the basic building block from which all other disciplines originate. The greatest career accomplishment that I will ever attain is to create a spark in a person's life which ignites a lifelong love of reading and learning.



Leslie Olig

*Teacher of the Gifted – Cedar Ridge/North Harlem Elementary, Columbia County
First-term committee member*

I am currently an elementary gifted teacher in Columbia County schools. Before that, I was a media specialist for two schools in Richmond County and coached two Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl teams. Both have been opportunities to read and share a lot of literature with students. I taught high school English for 15 years and started a monthly book club with community speakers who shared their love of books. I am also serving on the steering committee for the Georgia Literary Festival to be held in Augusta, GA November 2-8, 2015.



Amie Pilla

*Access Services Librarian - Dekalb County Public Library, Decatur Branch
Third-term committee member*

After spending years as a Children’s Librarian in public libraries in Illinois and Georgia, I now run the circulation department at the Decatur Branch of the DeKalb County Public Library where I work on connecting people of all ages to quality books.



Erin Rehberg

*Media Specialist - Thomas County Upper Elementary and Middle Schools, Thomas County
Second-term committee member*

I have been an avid reader since my preschool years. As a child, I was likely to be located at either the public library in my neighborhood or reading to dolls and stuffed animals. This early love of language, literacy, and learning led me to a career in education. After teaching high school English at Thomas County Central High School for seven years, I am now in my fourth year as the media specialist at Thomas County Upper Elementary and Thomas County Middle School in Thomasville, Georgia. I enjoy coaching two Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl teams, connecting kids with books they will love, and helping students learn how to do better research. I have a Bachelor’s degree in English Education from The University of Georgia (2005), a Master’s degree in Instructional Technology (Library Media) from Valdosta State University (2009), and Specialist's degree in Instructional Technology from Valdosta State (2014). I’m also the mother of three young readers!



Julie Stokes

*Media Coordinator Gr. 6-8 – Dalton Middle School, Dalton, GA
First-term committee member*

I am the Literacy Coordinator at Dalton Middle School, and I actually get paid to work with teachers in connecting students to books and authors. What a blessing! We have over 1,700 students, and I am always reading and looking for new titles to hook our students. I LOVE books, and I LOVE sharing new books with students and teachers and igniting a fire that can never be extinguished.