

GCBA Committees (2019-2020 Selection Process)

Picturebook (Gr. K-4) Committee Members



Jennifer Beaty

*Fourth Grade Teacher – Dacula Elementary, Gwinnett County
Third-term committee member*

I am currently a fourth grade teacher at Dacula Elementary in Gwinnett County. This is my 17th year teaching, and I absolutely love sharing literacy with children and getting them excited about learning. I am originally from Florida, where I received my Bachelor's in Elementary Education. I moved to Georgia in 2002 and began teaching first grade in DeKalb County. I received my Master's in Children's Literature from UGA in 2009. I love to bring my students' family funds of knowledge into my classroom through the use of family dialogue journals (I coauthored a book about it!) and through carefully selected read-alouds which mirror their cultures and expand their thinking. My coursework for my Master's, which included the Red Clay Writing Project, broadened my love for and knowledge of how to incorporate literacy in a meaningful way into everything I do in the classroom. I am beyond excited to serve on such an awesome committee! Yay books!



Tomiko Cobb

*Library Media/Technology Specialist – Dunbar Elementary, Atlanta Public Schools
First-term committee member*

I am a Library Media/Technology Specialist with over 18 years of teaching experience at the elementary school level. In my role, I work directly with students and support teachers as they plan and implement effective technology integrations into their curricula. I hold a Master's degree in Library Science and Educational Specialist degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Cambridge College, and I recently became certified in Instructional Technology. For many years, I have been the curriculum/technology advisor for staff members at my school. I have also been a facilitator for several face-to-face technology professional development workshops.



Laura Hoefener

*Youth Services Librarian – Northeast/Spruill Oaks Library, Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System
First-term committee member*

I am currently in my third year as the Youth Services Librarian at the Northeast/Spruill Oaks Library in Johns Creek, GA. I worked previously for the Cobb County Library System at the Mountain View Library. I count myself as incredibly fortunate and blessed to have the opportunity to read, sing, and dance with children as part of my job. I

received my BA in English from the University of Georgia and my MLIS from the University of Pittsburgh. I have a lifelong love of books and find great joy in sharing my passion for reading with the children at my library. I am thankful for the opportunity to serve on this committee, and I look forward to discovering some great picture books!



Nicole McGowan

*Second Grade Teacher – Newton County Theme School, Covington
First-term committee member*

I have taught for 21 years for the Newton County School System, and I teach second grade at The Newton County Theme School in Covington, Georgia. I have been a homeroom teacher for Pre-k-2nd grade and an EIP teacher for 3rd-5th grade. I have my BS.Ed and M.Ed in Early Childhood Education and an Ed.S in Children’s Language and Literacy from the University of Georgia. The highlight of my school year is reading and discussing GCBA nominated picturebooks with my students, and they enjoy their voices being heard when they vote. I am thrilled and honored to now serve on the GCBA Committee, and I am looking forward to working alongside other educators who share a love and passion for high quality picturebooks.



Jennifer Rice

*Media Specialist – Macedonia Elementary, Cherokee County
Third-term committee member*

I am currently the media specialist at Macedonia ES in Cherokee County. This makes my 25th year in education, seventeen years as a third grade classroom teacher and completing my eighth year in the media center. I earned my BS, MEd, and EdS in Early Childhood from Georgia College & State University (GCSU). I completed my library media add-on from GCSU as well. I've taught in Bibb County (Macon), Clark County, NV (Las Vegas), and Cherokee County (Canton). I believe that my classroom experience and love of children's literature has helped me become a teacher leader in my school. I look forward to reading lots of great books and sharing this experience with all of you! I have truly enjoyed this committee and will hate to see the end of my final year.



Ashley Saint

*Media Specialist – Schley County Elementary, Schley County
Third-term committee member*

I am currently the media specialist at Schley County Elementary. Prior to this opportunity, I served at Furlow Charter School in Americus as a second grade teacher, EIP teacher, and media specialist. I was born and currently live in Americus, Georgia. I am married, and we have two sweet daughters. I taught in a primary school for six years before becoming a media specialist my seventh year, though I returned to the classroom in order to help start the charter school. I earned my Bachelor’s, Master’s and Specialist Degrees from Georgia Southwestern State University in Early Childhood Education. In 2013, I returned to college and earned an add-on degree in Media and Technology from

Georgia College and State University. I always knew I wanted to be more involved with children's reading skills and help promote a love for reading. Nothing smells better than a new book, and I cannot wait to dive into great children's literature!



Genise Vertus

*Early Intervention Program (EIP) Teacher – David C. Barrow Elementary, Clarke County
First-term committee member*

My name is Genise Vertus. I was born in Haiti. When I was seven years old, my family moved to the United States. I grew up in Miami, Florida. I did my undergraduate studies at The University of Miami, Florida and have a Master's degree from the University of Georgia. The 2018-2019 school year will mark my 14th year of teaching. Currently, I am an Early Intervention Program Teacher at David C. Barrow Elementary School in Athens, Georgia. Teaching is my life's work! I am grateful for each day that I get to do what I love!

Book (Gr. 4-8) Committee Members



Rebecca Cooper

*Media Specialist – Trion City Schools, Trion City
First-term committee member*

I am so excited to serve on the GCBA Committee. I taught second and third grade before becoming the school media specialist at Trion City Schools. Growing up, I did not have many memorable experiences with school libraries. However, I always participated in the Summer Reading program at the public library. When I went to Berry College and took a children's literature course, I fell in love with reading again. I have taught twenty years and strive daily to foster a love for reading in my elementary and middle school students. I have a Bachelor of Science and Masters in Education from Berry College. I earned my Media degree from West Georgia College. When I'm not busy with all of my kids at school, I have two wonderful girls of my own and a husband who share a love of books!



Angie Embry

*Fifth Grade Teacher – Oconee County Elementary School, Oconee County
First-term committee member*

I will begin a new adventure in the fall as a fifth grade teacher of reading and social studies at Oconee County Elementary School. Previously, I taught fourth grade reading and social studies at Danielsville Elementary in Madison

County. As I begin my 18th year as an educator, I'm honored to be part of the GCBA Committee. I have a passion for reading, and instilling that passion in young readers is my mission. I enjoy sharing my love of literacy and techniques to engage readers with other teachers and the community and have presented at the SSTAGE Promising Practices Conference for English Language Arts and the Georgia Conference on Children's Literature. I look forward to working with the GCBA Committee to put more great books into the hands of our readers.



Roy Jackson

*Media Specialist – John Wesley Dobbs Elementary, Atlanta Public Schools
Third-term committee member*

I have a BA in English and Philosophy, a MEd in Early Childhood Education, and an EdS in Instructional Technology with an emphasis in School Library Media. I am endorsed in over eight content areas including reading and gifted. I have taught grades K, 1, 2, and 3 for fifteen years and was the 2012-2013 Teacher of the Year at Continental Colony Elementary School. I also have taught self-contained EIP and science lab to grades K-5. Currently, I am the library media specialist at John Wesley Dobbs Elementary and previously served as the media specialist at Springdale Park Elementary. In 2017-2018, I was the Atlanta Public Schools Library Media Specialist of the Year. In my spare time, I enjoy writing, reading, playing tennis, and traveling.



Sheri Pfeuffer

*Media Specialist – Warner Robbins Middle School, Houston County
First-term committee member*

I have been a special education teacher for the past 13 years in both the elementary and middle school setting. I have a passion to not only teach children how to read, but to see them grow into readers who love to read. Starting the 2018-19 school year, I will be the media specialist at Warner Robbins Middle School in Houston County, where I have been a special education teacher for the past seven years. I love my school and was honored to be the Teacher of the Year in 2015-16. Reading has always been an important part of my life, and I am truly looking forward to being on this committee. When I am not reading or teaching, I can be found playing cards, golfing, or traveling with my family.



Lynn Staples

*Third Grade Teacher – Wauka Mountain Multiple Intelligences Academy, Hall County
Second-term committee member*

I am an elementary teacher at Wauka Mountain Multiple Intelligences Academy in Hall County and have been teaching for 14 years. Growing up, I did not have a love for reading due to my inability to comprehend what I read. It wasn't until I went back to school to begin my second career that I fell in love with reading. While working on my

education degree, I took a children’s literature class and learned strategies to help me comprehend what I read. From that point on, I have been trying to make up for lost time in reading. I love children’s literature, and I have a passion to help students who struggle academically find a way to be successful in their educational journey. I love watching students who say they don’t like reading connect with a book. It’s like a quest for me to help connect students with the right book! I am married to an amazing man who supports my passion for children’s literature, and we have two incredible daughters.



Julie Trejo

*Fifth Grade Teacher – Berry College Elementary and Middle School, Mt. Berry
Second-term committee member*

As a fifth grade teacher at a private school, I have incorporated picture books and chapter books into every subject area. My students read twenty-five books per school year independently in addition to our book club titles and class read-alouds. I am thrilled when a student asks in their reading letter journal, “I liked this book, what are some others you think I might like?” Once, when I was covering a topic in history, I said, “And I have a book to share with you about this time period.” I overheard a student murmur, "I knew she was going to say that." I have read and recommended books to my husband, my two children (although not as often, now that they are teenagers), my niece and nephew, and neighbors. I am honored to be able to do the same for the children of Georgia.



LaRita Wiggins

*Principal – Henry County Middle School, Henry County
Third-term committee member*

I currently serve as the Principal of Henry County Middle School, and I have over 18 years of experience as an educator. Prior to my current administrator role, I had the privilege of working as the Assistant Principal at Austin Road Middle School in Henry County for seven years. Before becoming an administrator, I was a middle school language arts and reading teacher for gifted learners. I earned a B.A. degree from the University of Georgia, an MBA from Brenau University, and a Specialist in Educational Leadership from Walden University. I was honored by the Georgia Department of Education in 2013 for my leadership on effective practice with CCRPI. Most recently, I was honored with the 2016 Jaguar Pride Award for continued dedication to the scholars of Austin Road Middle School. I have presented multiple professional learning workshops, such as “Technology Tools for the Common Core Language Arts Classroom” at the 2013 GaETC Conference and at several other conferences and metro-Atlanta area schools. I’m a wife and the mother of three children: Shelby, Mariah, and Sean. Reading with my children is my favorite activity, and I believe in leaving a Literacy Legacy!



Todd A. Williamson

*Branch Manager – Milton Public Library, Atlanta Fulton Library System
Second-term committee member*

I am currently a senior librarian with the Atlanta Fulton Public Library System serving as the Branch Manager at the Milton Library in Milton, Georgia. I hold a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science from the University of Kentucky and a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Pittsburgh. Previous work experience includes work as the librarian at The Davis Academy in Atlanta and as the Collection Development Librarian for the Children and Young Adult Departments at the Williamsburg Regional Library. I have served on the Virginia Library Association's Jefferson Cup committee (2007). The Jefferson Cup was established in 1982 to honor a distinguished biography, historical fiction or American history book for young people, and I helped establish the Beacon of Freedom Award (2003-2008) working with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. I'm excited to serve on this committee and share books with the children of Georgia.



Book (Gr.4-8) Committee Chairperson:

Sara Kajder, Ph.D. – Clinical Associate Professor

English Education Program

Department of Language and Literacy Education (LLED), University of Georgia

[Click here for more information about Dr. Kajder.](#)



Picturebook (Gr. K-4) Committee Chairperson:

Jennifer Graff, Ph.D. - Associate Professor

Literacies and Children's Literature Program

Department of Language and Literacy Education (LLED), University of Georgia

[Click here for more information about Dr. Graff.](#)



Committee Assistant:

Ji Hyun Hong – Doctoral Student, Graduate Assistant

Literacies and Children's Literature Program

Department of Language and Literacy Education (LLED), University of Georgia

Among many reasons, elementary students in my five years of teaching at a private language institution in Korea mainly inspired me to take the plunge into children's literature. Thus, while I thoroughly enjoyed reading Victorian literature during my M.A. in Language and Literature at Yonsei University, I am eager to be challenged and gain insights into the world of children's literature through this fruitful opportunity to assist the GCBA committees and annual conference.