

Reading Advisory Committee Bios

The TEA Reading Advisory Committee includes practitioners and academic professionals with expertise in teaching, educational leadership, bilingual education, ESL, special education, and dyslexia. For further details, review our [Texas Reading Advisory Committee | Texas Education Agency](#) webpage.

Current Committee Member Bios

Dr. Stephanie Al Otaiba is the Patsy and Ray Caldwell Centennial Chair in Teaching and Learning at Southern Methodist University. She is also a Faculty Affiliate of the Florida Center for Reading Research, where she previously taught at Florida State University. She received her doctorate in special education from Vanderbilt University. A former special education teacher, her research focuses on early literacy interventions for students with or at risk for disabilities, response to intervention, multi-tiered systems of support, dyslexia, and teacher training. She is the author or coauthor of over 150 journal articles and book chapters. She is the editor of the *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, serves on review boards for many journals in education and psychology and was an Associate Editor for *Education Researcher and Elementary School Journal*.

Dr. Elsa Cárdenas-Hagan is a bilingual speech and language pathologist, certified teacher, dyslexia therapist, certified academic language therapist and qualified instructor. Dr. Cárdenas-Hagan is President of the Valley Speech Language and Learning Center in Brownsville, Texas. Elsa has had the privilege of collaborating in national research projects sponsored by the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development and the Institute of Education Sciences, a research arm of the United States Department of Education for the last 19 years. Each national project was related to the development of language and literacy skills among Spanish-speaking English learners. Dr. Cárdenas-Hagan is currently the Chairperson of the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, a Past Vice-Chairperson of the International Dyslexia Association, Past Chairperson of the Texas State Board for Speech Pathology and Audiology and the Texas State Dyslexia Advisory Board. She has written many scholarly articles and book chapters related to language and literacy development among English learners.

Rebecca De Leon is the Leadership Coordinator for the Bilingual/ESL & Migrant Department in San Antonio ISD. In her current position, Mrs. De Leon supports the implementation of holistic biliteracy instruction and assessment in the district's dual language programs. She coordinates and presents professional development for elementary teachers, leads the development of biliteracy frameworks and biliteracy units for district-wide use, and collaborates with the English Language Arts and Reading Department to ensure best practices in literacy are being utilized district-wide. She has also worked with different education partners, including TEA and Student Achievement Partners, to launch innovative pilots for effective biliteracy implementation. Mrs. De Leon brings 12 years of education experience to her leadership in SAISD. She began her career working as a dual language teacher at Storm Academy in San Antonio from 2005-2009. She then studied at the University of Texas at Austin, earning a master's degree in curriculum and instruction with a focus on bilingual education in 2012. She worked as a science coach in Colonial Hills Elementary, a dual language campus in North East ISD, from 2012-2014. Later in 2014, Mrs. De Leon became the founding assistant school leader at KIPP: Esperanza Dual Language Academy before serving as the Spanish Language Arts and Reading Content Specialist for KIPP San Antonio. She completed her master's degree in educational leadership at Trinity University in 2017. Since

2005, Mrs. De Leon has worked with dual language education and advocated for emerging bilinguals. She is proud to be serving San Antonio ISD and supporting the love of reading.

Dr. Jack M. Fletcher, Ph.D., ABPP (Clinical Neuropsychology), is a Hugh Roy and Lillie Cranz Cullen Distinguished University Professor of Psychology at the University of Houston, where he also serves as Associate Vice President for Research. For the past 35 years, Dr. Fletcher, a board-certified child neuropsychologist, has conducted research on children with learning and attention disorders, and brain injury. Dr. Fletcher directs a Learning Disability Research Center grant and has directed program projects involving neurobiological factors and learning in spina bifida and math disabilities, all funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. He served on the NICHD National Advisory Council, the Rand Reading Study Group, the National Research Council Committee on Scientific Principles in Education Research, and the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education. Dr. Fletcher was the recipient of the Samuel T. Orton Award from the International Dyslexia Association in 2003 and a co-recipient of the Albert J. Harris Award from the International Reading Association in 2006. He is the Past President of the International Neuropsychological Society.

Dr. Elizabeth "Liza" Garza is the Instructional Officer for Bilingual Programs in Katy Independent School District. Previously, she has served as a researcher, dual language teacher, ESL teacher, foreign language teacher, academic support teacher, dyslexia teacher, instructional coach, and campus administrator. As instructional officer, Dr. Garza has led the development of a biliteracy curriculum that meets the instructional needs of sequential and simultaneous bilingual students as well as for English speakers learning a second language. She is committed to helping educators plan, optimize, and implement instruction focused on growing bilingual, bi-literate students who can achieve high levels of academic proficiency in two languages. Additionally, Dr. Garza has fostered collaboration among surrounding Houston districts on various dual language initiatives by hosting campus visits, dual language teacher conferences, and a Dual Language Think Tank with Teacher's College. Dr. Garza received a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Texas at Austin and a masters and doctorate from the University of Houston.

Dr. Claire Hagen Alvarado is the director of Literacy First, an outreach program of the University of Texas that partners with elementary schools and community organizations to implement high-impact K-2 tutoring in English and Spanish. Claire has experience teaching reading to multilingual learners at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. She served as the Language Arts Supervisor for the Austin Independent School District and holds a Master of Education degree in Language and Literacy Studies from the University of Texas, Austin. Claire earned her Education Leadership Doctorate from the Harvard Graduate School of Education with her doctoral residency at the Texas Education Agency as the Statewide Early Child Fellow.

Dr. Susan Silva, Ed.D., is a transformational, visionary leader who inspires those she serves. She has a deep-rooted knowledge of curriculum, a history of success in implementing instructional vision and change, and the ability to build capacity in others. She pushes herself to be the one person who can change the course of a child's life each day. The love of teaching began early for Susan, as her mother was a long-time kindergarten teacher. Susan's brother and sister became teachers as well. She is married to an art teacher and enjoys

visiting his classroom to watch the creative energy of his students. Susan began her teaching career at Galveston ISD in 1993. After serving as a teacher for 11 years, she moved to Clear Creek ISD

where she has served as a third-grade teacher, instructional coach, assistant principal, principal, executive director for professional learning, and executive director for curriculum and instruction. Dr. Silva currently holds the title of assistant superintendent of teaching and learning in Clear Creek ISD.

Dr. Sharon Vaughn, Manuel J. Justiz Endowed Chair in Education, is the Executive Director of The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk, an organized research unit at The University of Texas at Austin. She is the recipient of numerous awards including the CEC Research Award, the AERA SIG Distinguished Researcher Award, The University of Texas 5 Distinguished Faculty Award and Outstanding Researcher Award, and the Jeannette E. Fleischner Award for Outstanding Contributions in the Field of LD from CEC. She is the author of more than 35 books and 250 research articles. Several of these research articles have won awards: one the A.J. Harris IRA award for best article published and another the School Psychology award for best article. She is currently the Principal Investigator on several Institute for Education Sciences, National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, and U.S. Department of Education research grants. She works as a senior adviser to the National Center on Intensive Interventions and has more than six articles that have met the What Works Clearing House Criteria for their intervention reports. She has conducted technical assistance in literacy to more than 30 State Departments of Education and has worked as a literacy consultant to more than 50 technical assistance projects over a 30-year career.

Dr. David Vinson has served as Superintendent for the Wylie Independent School District since July of 2011. Wylie ISD is a fast-growing district with 20 campuses located in southern Collin County. As a national leader in character education, Dr. Vinson created his own model of Achievement Education called “the Wylie Way.” Since taking the helm of Wylie ISD, the district has grown from 12,800 students to more than 17,200 students. Student performance exceeds both the state level and neighboring districts. During his tenure citizens approved three bond programs, allowing Wylie ISD to expand course and program offerings while maintaining functional equity throughout the entire district, without increasing the tax rate. The Texas PTA/PTSA named him the 2016 Superintendent of the Year. He holds three degrees from Texas Tech University, including a Doctor of Philosophy in curriculum and instruction. He and his wife, Cristy, have two children, Cal and Kate.