Good evening!

I am Anne Anderson, and I am the director of blended and online learning in Eckerd College’s Program for Experienced Learners, or PEL. Thank you all for coming this evening to hear USF Tampa Associate Professor Dr. Jenifer Jasinski Schneider share her work in the field of Literacy Studies. I also want to thank:

* Ken Wolfe, director of the Academy of Senior Professionals at Eckerd College (ASPEC), for co-sponsoring with PEL Dr. Schneider’s talk this evening
* PEL Executive Director Amanda Hagood for graciously walking me through the CPS application process and for her help in making this evening run smoothly
* Chrissy Jackson, an IceHouse instructor, director emerita of the Florida Writers Association, a member of ASPEC, and a 2016 PEL graduate; and Dorice Michalik, who is the assistant director of project management for the Mediation Training Institute at Eckerd College, is a member of the Literacy Council of St. Petersbug, and also is a PEL student graduating this May. These women have information about various literacy organizations at the back.

Dr. Schneider was awarded a Fulbright to work for several months in the Spring of 2016 at the Waterford Institute of Technology in Waterford City, Ireland. Her project title was “Creating Life-Long Readers through Children's Literature: A Collaboration Between Adult Further Education and Literacy Studies.” We tend to think of illiteracy as a problem only in developing countries. But Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development statistics indicate that 18% of Irish adults are at Level 1 literacy or below. Ireland ranks 17th of 24 European countries in terms of literacy, 19th in terms of numeracy. We in the Tampa Bay area share similar troubling statistics, and St. Petersburg is home to five of the worst-rated elementary schools in Florida.

Imagining Justice, this year’s CPS theme, challenges the Eckerd community to explore the underlying causes of injustice, one of which is the inability to read and write at a functional level. Barely literate adults are limited in how they support their children’s schooling, further contributing to generational poverty, are less able to access and understand healthcare information, and are more likely to become incarcerated. But what exactly is a functional level -- under what circumstances and producing what outcomes can a person be considered literate? Few of us in this college setting would consider ourselves functionally illiterate, and yet how many of us found, when we entered college, that we really had to work at reading scholarly articles or at writing complex essays? How many of us have fumbled our way through writing a text in another language or through reading a play by Shakespeare – or in figuring out how to read a balance sheet or fill out scholarship and award applications? Gradually, we learned how to function in an academic environment, but it may have taken time and effort. In one sense, then, each of us is continually becoming literate, even in terms of standard written text.

In today’s highly visual, multimodal, and technologically mediated world, however, much of what people encounter is not formatted as standard written text. The ability to “read” websites, for example, with their very different structure, icons, terminology, and layers of information is as much a part of what it means to be functionally literate as is the ability to read a traditionally-printed instruction manual. Most job applications must be completed online, and workers are expected to navigate online training modules, use online forms, and manage their direct-deposit paychecks and healthcare benefits online. As a result, the word “literacy” has been tacked on to other words and we now talk about workplace literacy, financial literacy, healthcare literacy, media literacy, and other types of literacies. All of these niche literacies, however, involve the same basic questions of how to “read” and to respond to – or write to -- different types of information that use different vocabularies and symbols and which often are presented in varied formats. OECD statistics also indicate that 42% of Irish adults lack basic problem-solving skills in these kinds of technology-rich environments – and, again, our numbers are not much better.

In bringing Dr. Schneider to Eckerd College, we seek to help students, faculty, and community leaders working in or planning careers in education, or who are addressing literacy and education concerns in other ways, to re-conceptualize literacy and to reimagine a literacy and education framework that thinks outside current practices.

Thinking outside current practices has been part of Dr. Schneider’s work from the beginning of her academic career. After earning bachelor’s and master’s degrees in education from the University of South Florida, Dr. Schneider earned her doctorate from The Ohio State University where she studied children’s literature and the use of process drama as a means of bringing content across disciplines to life. In addition to her long-standing work in these two areas and in the area of writing development and writing instruction, Dr. Schneider was among the first educators to study digital literacies and multimodal composing practices of both preservice teachers and of children, and she studies arts-based inquiry and pedagogies. These interests and her out-of-the-box thinking are reflected in the titles of some of the articles she has written over her career:

Schneider, J.J. (1999). “I said that on purpose”: Using paranoid validity to examine the researcher and researcher effects. *Journal of Research in Education, 9*, 20-27.

Schneider, J.J. (2001). No blood, guns, or gays allowed!: The silencing of the elementary writer. *Language Arts, 78*, 415-425.

Schneider, J.J., (2015). iText, but iDon’t teach with it: An essay on i-literacy in teacher education. *Action in Teacher Education, 37*(2), 120-137. DOI 10.1080/01626620.2014.969850

Dr. Schneider is the author of USF’s first open-access, e-textbook *The Inside, Outside, and Upside Downs of Children's Literature* (USF Scholar Commons) – and if you download this, please download it as an iBook and not just as a PDF, so that you can experience it as a multimodal text – was editor for a 2014 book *Casework in K-6 Writing Instruction: Connecting Composing Strategies, Digital Literacies, and Disciplinary Content to the Common Core* (2014, Peter Lang), was co-editor for a 2006 book *Process drama and multiple literacies: Addressing social, cultural, ethical issues,* and is the author or co-author of many articles in peer-refereed journals such as the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, Action in Teacher Education* and *The Reading Teacher*.

Dr. Schneider teaches juniors and seniors in the College of Education’s elementary education program and graduate students in the literacy studies program, has developed a number of courses for both on-ground and online delivery, and is the creator of USF's first online digital collection, still in its beta form, of research methodologies developed to explore, analyze, and interpret multimodal texts including websites, films, still images, and performances. And, while I said it is USF’s first such collection, it may actually be the first such collection anywhere.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Jenifer Jasinski Schneider to Eckerd College ~~