

Illinois Reading Council



Empowering
Lives
Through
Literacy

Communicator

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*"You may read by yourself,
but you never do it alone."*

~ P. David Pearson



Join the Illinois Reading Council at the [2024 Illinois Reads Book Festival!](#)

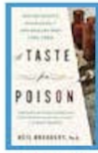
Saturday, February 3, 2024

Westmont High School
909 North Oakwood Drive
Westmont, Illinois
10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Plan now to bring your families, students, and all book lovers to this FUN and FREE event. The authors listed below will be joining us at the book festival. Bring your books and have them signed at the event. Books will also be available for purchase from Anderson's Bookshops.



Adi Alsaid
Grades 6-8



Neil Bradbury
Adult



Amelia Brunskill
Grades 9-12



Lindsay Currie
Grades 6-8



Darcy Day Zoells
Grades K-2



Zetta Elliott
Grades 3-5



Candace Fleming
Birth to 4



Jacob Grant
Birth to 4



Claudia Guadalupe Martinez
Grades K-2



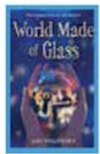
Kate Hannigan
Grades 3-5



Mary Winn Heider
Grades 3-5



Laurie Lawlor
Grades 6-8



Ami Polonsky
Grades 6-8



Jean Reidy
Birth to 4



Dave Scheidt
Grades 3-5



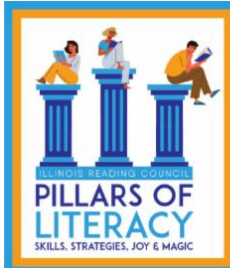
Ruth Spiro
Grades K-2



John Sullivan
Birth to 4



Emi Watanabe Cohen
Grades 6-8



2024 IRC CONFERENCE

March 14-15, 2024

Springfield, Illinois

Early registration ends on February 5th for the **2024 IRC Conference**, *Pillars of Literacy: Skills, Strategies, Joy & Magic*, on March 14-15, 2024 in Springfield, Illinois.

To find out all about the conference and the featured speakers who will be joining us, check out the [2024 Preliminary Program](#) that is available online now.

Featured speakers include: **Jennifer Serravallo, Nic Stone, Timothy Rasinski, Clare Vanderpool, Lesa Cline-Ransome, John Schu, A.S. King, Pam Muñoz Ryan, Kimberly Brubaker Bradley, Jan Burkins, Becky Anderson**, and so many more!

We hope to see you at the 2024 IRC Conference!

2024 IRC CONFERENCE

PRELIMINARY PROGRAM



ILLINOIS READING COUNCIL
PILLARS OF LITERACY
SKILLS, STRATEGIES, JOY & MAGIC

March 14 - 15, 2024
Springfield, Illinois

Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan

By Laura Beltchenko, IRC PL&D Chair

On January 24, 2024, the Illinois State Board of Education approved the [Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan](#). This “Plan” is intended to support core literacy instruction across the state of Illinois. According to the presentation provided by the Department of Standards and Instruction for the State Board of Education members,

“The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan acts as a roadmap to enhance and unify core literacy instruction efforts statewide. Its purpose is to delineate necessary supports and resources for literacy reform, ensuring all students receive developmentally appropriate and evidence-based literacy instruction.” ISBE, 2024.

The Plan is based on [Public Act 103-0402](#). It provided the guidance and direction for the ISBE to create and implement the Public Act. Noteworthy in this legislation is in Section 1, Page 3, (9) Lines 7-10 ... “there is **no one size fits all approach to literacy** as learners will require differentiated strategies or methods and dosages within different areas of the literacy instruction to meet their individual needs.”

The Plan is based on three overarching goals:

- **GOAL 1: Every student receives high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.**
- **GOAL 2: Every educator is prepared and continuously supported to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.**
- **GOAL 3: Every leader is equipped to create, maintain, and sustain equitable conditions for high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.**

To implement these goals each district has the **Flexibility and Local Autonomy** to use the plan to its own specific needs.

*“The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan offers a **flexible** approach, **aligning with state standards** while allowing district-specific adaptations. It **avoids prescribing specific materials or assessments**, while instead **promoting data-informed choices** by districts. This plan cannot address all district-specific contexts and challenges, and, therefore, ISBE encourages each district to carefully consider **district and school-level data to make decisions related to literacy instruction.**” p. 9.*

Each of the 5 Sections of the Plan provides guidance for the development of literacy learning with an asset-based approach for core literacy instruction. This information is located on pages 16-19.

It is important to understand that this Plan does not utilize two specific terms that have been pervasive in the media and the ISBE has provided a rationale.

*“This plan **refrains from referencing the “science of reading” or “balanced literacy”** in favor of describing current understandings of literacy development and evidence-based*

instruction.

The **science of reading** represents decades of interdisciplinary research that collectively informs how proficient reading and writing develop and emphasizes practices demonstrated to be effective through study. **However, some see it as a political agenda and ideology, or a new front in the reading debates.**

Balanced literacy includes both foundational and language comprehension instructional features, such as phonemic awareness and phonics (understanding the relationships between sounds and their written representations), fluency, guided oral reading, vocabulary development, and comprehension. **However, some interpret the term as akin to whole language instruction with little focus on basic skills instruction.”** p. 15

To further understand the Plan and its focus on evidence-based instruction and how it attends to the claim found in the statute that literacy is not a one-size-fits-all curriculum, explanations for instructional methods have been provided:

- **Explicit and Systematic Instructional Methods:** “The significance of explicit and systematic instructional methods is paramount, especially in developing key reading skills such as phonological awareness, and phonics.”
- **Constructivist Methods and Discovery-based Approaches:** “While explicit and systematic approaches provide a robust foundation, it is important to recognize that there are situations in which alternative methods, such as constructivist or discovery-based approaches can contribute meaningfully to the learning process.” p. 24.

Although referencing the work of the National Reading Panel 2000, the Plan in the final iteration has moved away from using the “Pillars” to include the “7 Components of Literacy.” Each of these 7 Components has a full explanation of their meaning, as well as what is and what is not aligned with evidence-based practices. Important to this iteration is the alignment of each of the 7 Sections to the Illinois ELA Standards and where applicable the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards. Each of these components is explained on pages 34-61 of the Plan.



Each of the 7 Components of Literacy has a section devoted to Considerations for Multilingual Learners, Advanced Learners, Learners with Special Needs, Assessment, and Intervention Considerations. Literacy Learner expectations are also outlined in each component section to include expectations in grade level bands: Young, Elementary, Middle Level, and High School Learners.

According to the ISBE Office of Standards and Instruction, the following items were realigned in the definitive version of the Plan. Page numbers are indicated for your reference of these items.

- **Included the ESSA Tiers of Evidence to provide context to the *aligned* and *not aligned* instructional practices** p. 23.
- **Enhanced The Development of a Reader** p. 26-30
- **Expanded information regarding the 7 Components of Literacy** p. 33-61

- Further enhanced considerations for Multilingual, Advanced, and Learners with Specialized Needs p. 62-76
- MTSS Intervention Framework across resources p.70-72

Although the Plan itself is 192 pages long, it contains Goal Workbooks for Sections 1-3 (the three overarching goals), and Section 4 provides a Support and Implementation Goal Workbook document. Each Goal Workbook provides Implementation Considerations, Reflective Questions and Next Steps for Teachers, Teacher Leaders, School Leaders, District Leaders, Regional Leaders, State Leaders and Community and Family as means to document progress toward literacy learning and to work in concert with one another.

Happy Free Comic Book Day!

By Alan Holtz

Did you know that the busiest day of the year at a comic book store is the **first Saturday in May**? Why is that? Well, that is **Free Comic Book Day**.

Now, I know you are asking why are we reading this now in February? The short answer is this is when you need to order the giveaways for your library. It takes time to get the comic books to you and the local comic book stores only have a limited quantity. Normally the comic book stores only order what they use in their store, but many are willing to help. Over the past few years, an *Illinois Reading Council Literacy Support Grant* has been awarded to my school. We used the funds to purchase copies of the special editions for *Free Comic Book Day* from our friends at Graham Cracker Comics. This has grown into a partnership with them over the years.

If you're asking why we need to purchase comic books if they're free, the simple answer is that comic books are free for our patrons/students, but we as a school or a public library need to pay for what we give our students. This is a classroom supply.

At Brooks Middle School we order about 1,500 a year. That's about one and a half per student. In their English Language Arts classrooms, the teachers briefly do a short lesson on reading comic books and then the students spend 15 minutes reading the comics and selecting one or two to take home. My favorite moments are when students stop by my library and ask for additional comics. Yes, I give more comics away. One of my students even wanted copies for younger siblings. Thanks to the IRC's generosity, we have my students reading.

If you have the funding, place your orders today. **Happy Free Comic Book Day!**

Pictures below are from Mrs. Chavez-Miranda's ESL 1 class.

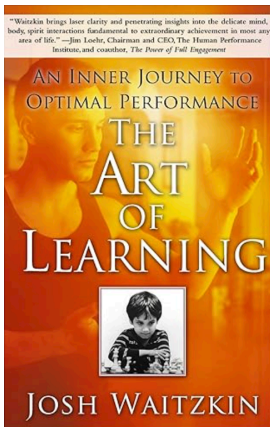


#WhatIAmReading



I am reading [The Art of Learning: An Inner Journey to Optimal Performance](#) by Josh Waitzkin.

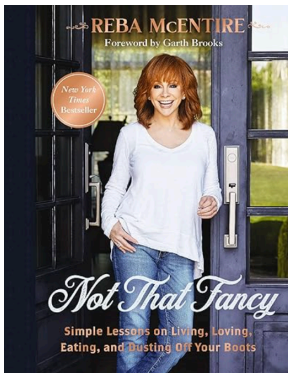
~ Julie Hoffman, IRC President



The Art of Learning: An Inner Journey to Optimal Performance by Josh Waitzkin is the subject of the book and movie, *Searching for Bobby Fisher*. In the book, Josh Waitzkin unpacks the inner journey that takes place during learning. As I read, I am learning more about how my mind works, feeling inspired, and planning my own next steps.

I am reading [Not That Fancy: Simple Lessons on Living, Loving, Eating, and Dusting Off Your Boots](#) by Reba McEntire.

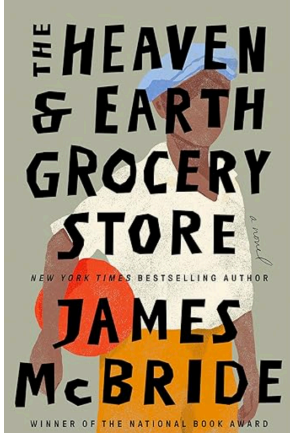
~ Jennifer Gratteau, Shiloh Village School District #85



As she is one of my all-time favorite country singers, I could not wait to get my hands on the book, *Not That Fancy: Simple Lessons on Living, Loving, Eating, and Dusting Off Your Boots* by Reba McEntire. (Thank you, Santa.) This is a great story about Reba's life then and now and even includes some recipes from her restaurant, Reba's Place.

I am reading [The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store: A Novel](#) by James McBride.

~ Lynn Keck, IRC Regional Director 4



I'm reading *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride who also wrote *The Color of Water*. I received it as a Christmas gift. The first sentence convinced me to read on: "...and when Pennsylvania State Troopers found a skeleton at the bottom of an old well..." I wanted to know more about the skeleton, Chicken Hill, and its grocery store!

IRC ELECTION BALLOT

By the Illinois Reading Council

The **Illinois Reading Council Election Ballot** will open on February 1, 2024. IRC Members will receive an email with a direct link to the online ballot provided by Balloteer, Inc. The email will contain a **Voter ID Number** and **Password**.

This will be your opportunity to vote for the **Vice President** of IRC, to become President-Elect in 2025-2026 and President in 2026-2027, **Secretary** of IRC, who will serve until July 2026, and the **Membership Director** of IRC, who will serve until July 2026. The election will run from February 1, 2024 until March 1, 2024.

The voting site will close at **5:00 p.m. CST on March 1, 2024**.



UPCOMING PD EVENTS

Don't forget to take advantage of some upcoming PD opportunities planned throughout Illinois.

- **February 3, 2024: Illinois Reading Council** will host the **Illinois Reads Book Festival** from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at the Westmont High School, 909 Oakwood Drive, Westmont, Illinois.
- **February 6, 2024: MID-State Reading Council** will host **How to Love Teaching Again Book Club** at 4:30 pm at Gill Street Restaurant, 3002B Gill Street, Bloomington, Illinois.
- **February 7, 2024: IRC Webinar on Discovering the 2024 Illinois Reads Books** with **Becky Anderson** from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **February 10, 2024: Illini Reading Council** and **Vermilion Valley Reading Council** will co-host **Literacy as a Tool for Healing from Trauma** with Julie Hoffman from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm at Douglass Branch Library, 504 E Grove St, Champaign, Illinois.
- **February 22, 2024: Sauk Valley Reading Council** will host **March Madness Book Tournament** with Britney Pitzer in the Classroom from 4:00 to 6:00 pm at the Dixon Park District Facility, 1312 Washington Ave, Dixon, Illinois.
- **February 22, 2024: Secondary Reading League (SRL)** will host **AI in Writing** with Jill Rogers and Shannon Smith from 7:00 to 8:00 pm virtually by the SLD Support Project.
- **February 23, 2024: College Instructors of Reading Professionals (CIRP)** is accepting applications for **Student Conference Stipends** for education majors who attend the 2024 IRC Conference.
- **February 24, 2024: East Central-EIU Reading Council** will host the **Literacy and Learning Conference** with Maria Walther from 9:00 am to 12:30 pm at Eastern Illinois University, Buzzard Hall, 1920 9th Street, Charleston, Illinois.
- **February 27, 2024: Northern Illinois Reading Council** will host **K-8 Reading Communities: A Book Exploration** with Maria Walther from 5:30 to 8:00 pm at PJ's, 202 W State Street, Sycamore, Illinois.
- **February 27, 2024: Suburban Council of IRA (SCIRA)** will host **Implementing the New K-12 Illinois Literacy Plan** from 4:30 to 6:00 pm at National Louis University, 1000 Capitol Dr, Wheeling, Illinois.
- **February 28, 2024: Secondary Reading League (SRL)** will host **No More Telling as Teaching/Engagement Book Study** from February 28 to March 20, 2024.
- **February 29, 2024: Southern Illinois Reading Council** will host **Leap into the Eclipse** from 5:15 to 7:30 pm at Route 51 Brewery, 18967 N US Hwy 51, Elkhville, Illinois.
- **February 29, 2024: Will County Reading Council** will host the **Winter PD Event** with Briana Morales from 5:00 to 8:15 pm at Lewis University, Lewis University, 1 University Parkway, Romeoville, Illinois.

To view the full **IRC Events Calendar**, please visit the [IRC Website](#).

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Members are encouraged to submit articles at any time to irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org.

#WhatIAmReading: Share a book that you are reading, in 3 to 4 sentences. Creative pictures of you and your book in your favorite reading spot are encouraged.

IRC Highlight Reels: Share snapshots of successes in your classrooms in 100 to 300 words. Remember no success is too big or too small to share and pictures welcomed!

Other Literacy Topics:

- Strategies for Struggling Readers
- Building the Reading and Writing Connection
- Increasing Equity & Opportunity for All Learners
- Diverse Books for Your Classroom
- And any other literacy topics that interests you!

Thank you for helping to inspire your fellow educators! Posts will be shared on social media too!

QUICK LINKS

[Visit the IRC Website](#)

[Full IRC Events Calendar](#)

[Latest on the IRC Conference](#)

[Available IRC Awards and Grants](#)

[Bring IRC PD to your School District](#)

[Learn more about the Illinois Reads Program](#)

Questions? Please feel free to reach out to the Illinois Reading Council by email at irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org or by phone at 309-454-1341.

See what's also happening on our social media sites:

