

Illinois Reading Council



Empowering  
Lives  
Through  
Literacy

# Communicator

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“Reading is the sole means by which we slip,  
involuntarily, often helplessly, into another’s skin,  
another’s voice, another’s soul.”

~ Joyce Carol Oates

# #WhatIAmReading



I am reading *Dry* by Neal Shusterman and Jarrod Shusterman.

~ Julie Hoffman, IRC President



At first there are rules . . .

Don't water the lawn or water plants.

Take short showers.

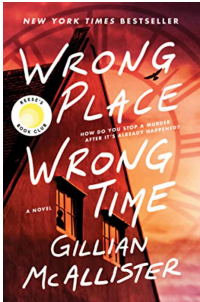
Then there comes the great Tap-Out, when there is no water.

At all.

This book is a page-turner! Neal Shusterman has me on the edge of my seat as I navigate the great drought of California through the point-of-view of a few different teenagers who are trying to survive.

## I am reading *Wrong Place Wrong Time: A Novel* by Gillian McAllister.

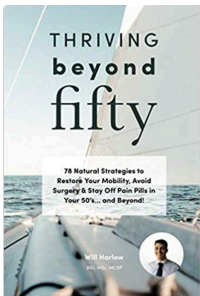
~ Carrie Sheridan, IRC Executive Director



The book begins with a mother waiting up for her seventeen-year-old son. As he approaches their home, she watches him meet up with a stranger and do something unthinkable from their window. Now, with her son in police custody, she goes to sleep in total despair. And, the next morning, she wakes up and it is the day before yesterday. And throughout the rest of the book, she continues to wake up a day and sometimes weeks or months earlier as she tries to resolve the mystery of her son's actions and how to stop them from happening. This book is a page-turner that I can't put down!

## I am reading *Thriving Beyond Fifty* by Will Harlow.

~ Marjorie Henseler, IRC Communicator Editor



As someone who has had two total knee replacements, broken an elbow and dealt with numerous back issues in the last three years since retirement, I have spent a lot of time in physical therapy. This book by a British physiotherapist is about restoring mobility, strength and endurance, with the goal of being fit, healthy and active as you get older. It's a super easy read, with good background information, explanations, pictures, and short sections on various body parts and their particular issues. If you want to know how to improve your ability to thrive in daily life activities, this is a helpful book.



## SHARING A SNAPSHOT OF A SUCCESS FROM THE CLASSROOM

By Julie Hoffman

Hero was a fifth grader who did not think of himself as a reader or a writer. He thought of himself as a football player and kid who sometimes got in trouble at school. In the fall, we talked about what he might want to be when he grows up, and he surprised me by saying he wanted to be an astronaut. After that I started calling him Lieutenant.

astronaut. After that I started calling him Lieutenant.

At the IRC conference, I had a few minutes with Jerry Craft. I handed him a copy of *New Kid* and asked him to sign it. I meant for Jerry to just write his name, as I hadn't yet decided who would receive the book.

"Give me a name," said Jerry.

"Lieutenant," my mouth responded before I had a second to think it over.

"Too hard to spell," jokes Jerry.

"Okay, Hero!" I decided.

When I presented the book to Hero the next week, his entire face lit up. He read it, and then asked for more books by Jerry Craft. After Hero read *Class Act*, he started reading other graphic novels. Lo and behold, he was becoming a reader!

One day, Hero came into my office and perused the books. "You know what?" Hero pointed out, "There are a lot of graphic novels with sports, but not really any with football." I considered this, and then responded with, "Well, Author Toni Morrison said, 'If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it.'" Hero smiled, selected a book to read, and walked out of my office. I thought that was the end of the discussion.

To my surprise, Hero came in the next day telling me all about his ideas for his new story. "I want this to be a graphic novel. Do you think Jerry Craft will illustrate it?"

By the end of the year, Hero had typed more than eight pages for the story, and two other fifth grade boys joined us for our writing session, which we now call Writer's Society.

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## FROM THE DESK OF THE IRC PRESIDENT

### By Julie Hoffman

Greetings IRC Members,

I hope you are enjoying your summer. This is an important time to rest, rejuvenate, reset, and reconnect. Summer is a great time for us to press pause on our career and spend time with our loved ones. We can get sleep and not worry about an alarm clock. We have the opportunity to catch up on some of the books in our To-Be-Read stacks. Being intentional about rest and recuperation is important for teachers, as we spend all of ourselves throughout the school year.

We need this time to reflect on the school year we just completed and prepare ourselves for the year to come. This summer, the work of reflecting and preparing will be more important than ever. As our country has moved away from focusing on Covid-19, we have begun to focus on literacy instruction and curriculum across the nation, and changes are ahead. As you reflect, think about the practices that have been successful in your classroom so that you can be committed to keeping those. You might think of some practices you can discard to be ready for new ideas. This year, let's revolutionize our literacy instruction. Do your students need more direct instruction and help with skills and strategies? Do your students need more access to diverse literature? Do your students need more opportunities to experience joy associated with reading? We want our students to have it all, so we want you to have what you need, too.

The Illinois Reading Council will be making some changes to the IRC Communicator, and you may notice some new features. We hope that you will contribute to #WhatlamReading and the Highlight Reel columns, as well as articles about various literacy topics. Your voice matters and we want to learn from you!

Here's to our investment in ourselves and our investment in our students. Let's grow!

Julie

***“Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”***

***~ John F. Kennedy***

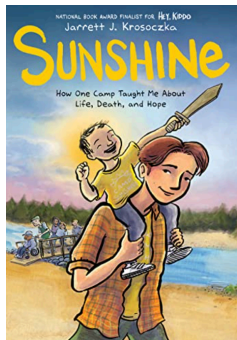
***“When patterns are broken, new worlds emerge.”***

***~ Tuli Kupferberg***

# Family Literacy Bookshelf

## By Barb Ashton

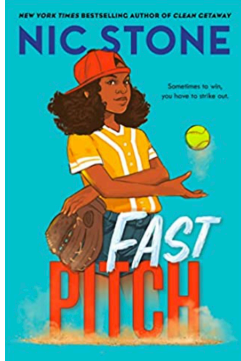
Summer is here and July promises to bring warm sunny days. We celebrate America's Summer Independence on July 4th with parades, picnics, and fireworks. It is also National Parks Month. Have a happy summer season with family and friends while having a hot dog and an ice cream treat as July is National Picnic, Hot Dog, and Ice Cream Month.



***Sunshine: A Graphic Novel*** by Jarrett J. Krosoczka is a memoir of when the author was a senior in high school and spent his summer working at Camp Sunshine – a camp for kids with life-threatening illnesses and their families. Along with five classmates, not knowing what to expect, Jarrett uses his art and various camp activities to help these kids to “be kids” and have fun in spite of their illnesses. Jarrett had a rewarding experience of volunteering, learning about the hope, determination, and life changing experiences of these amazing kids and their families, along with the difference he made in their lives.



***Cloaked in Courage: Uncovering Deborah Sampson, Patriot Soldier*** by Beth Anderson is the story of 18-year-old Deborah Sampson who joins the Continental Army (disguised as Robert Shurtliff) to fight for America's independence. Facing several challenges, she learns life as a soldier is hard work and can be dangerous. During a battle Deborah is wounded but runs away for fear of being discovered. As a result of her wound Deborah becomes ill and is taken to the hospital. Will her identity be discovered and will she be honorably discharged? Read *Cloaked in Courage* to find the answer and learn more about this historical figure.



**Fast Pitch** by Nic Stone is the story of Shenice, who's captain of her all black softball team – the Firebirds. As a winning team and headed towards the championship, the team faces discrimination and racism but they forge on and continue to win. At the same time Shenice learns about her great-grandfather who was framed for a crime he didn't commit and was denied joining the Major Leagues. Determined to solve the mystery about her great-grandfather, dealing with the pressure to win the championship, can Shenice lead her team to victory? Read *Fast Pitch* to learn the outcome of this engaging novel that will appeal to middle school readers and baseball fans.

## Looking Ahead

**2023 marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NASCAR Racing.** This year NASCAR is coming to Chicago on July 1-2 for racing. Read *Who Is Dale Earnhardt Jr?* to learn about a famous driver. Go to [www.nsta.org/nascar-kids](http://www.nsta.org/nascar-kids) for some great STEM lessons

**July 4: Independence Day** – Happy Birthday America!

**July 9: National Sugar Cookie Day** – Read a book while enjoying a sugar cookie

**July 11: Shark Week** – Do a Google search to learn more about sharks

**July 11: Baseball All Star Game** – Read about and cheer for a favorite player

**July 14: Bastille Day** – Learn about this day and enjoy some French treats

**July 20: National Ice Cream Soda Day** – Have a soda while reading an Illinois Reads Book

**July 23: Parents Day** – Give your parents a hug and thank them for all they do for you

**July 26: Aunt and Uncle Day** – Make a card or give them a phone call to show your love

# Illinois Literacy Plan

## By Nancy Oesterreich

The Illinois State Board of Education released its first draft of the Illinois Literacy Plan, as required by Senate Bill 2243, which is still awaiting the signature of Governor Pritzker. The plan can be found on the ISBE Website at: [Illinois Literacy Plan](http://Illinois Literacy Plan).

ISBE would like to gather feedback on the Plan. A listening tour is being conducted across the state, to include the following dates and locations:

- **July 10, 2023 from 12:00 to 3:00 pm:** Illinois State Board of Education, 4th floor, Peoria Room, 555 W. Monroe Street, Chicago, Illinois
- **July 11, 2023 from 10:30 am to 1:30 pm:** East Branch Rockford Public Library, Community Room, 6685 E. State Street, Rockford, Illinois
- **July 27, 2023 from 12:00 to 3:00 pm:** C.E. Brehm Memorial Public Library District, Community Room, 101 S. 7th Street, Mount Vernon, Illinois
- **July 31, 2023 from 12:00 to 3:00 pm:** Virtual Zoom Meeting, Meeting ID: 824 3607 1583, Passcode: 421877

According to a press release from ISBE, *“The plan explains the fundamental components of literacy, addresses the need for comprehensive and coordinated professional development for both current and aspiring teachers, and recommends detailed next steps to ensure all students receive equitable and effective literacy instruction. The plan gives special consideration to*



*English learners, whose unique needs and skills pose both challenges and opportunities for English literacy development.”*

ISBE will incorporate the feedback gathered during the listening tour into a second draft of the Illinois Literacy Plan. A second listening tour will be conducted in the fall. ISBE aims to finalize the literacy plan in early 2024.



# UPCOMING PD EVENTS

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

- **September 6, 2023: IRC Webinar** with **Zetta Elliott** from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **October 4, 2023: IRC Webinar** with **Kylene Beers** from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **October 22, 2023: Fall 2023 IRC Book Club** begins with choice of books: *Teaching Fiercely: Spreading Joy and Justice in Our Schools* by Kass Minor and/or *The Final Strife: A Novel* by Saara El-Arifi and/or *Bilingualism and Bilingual Education: Conceptos Fundamentales* by David Schwarzer, Mary Petron, and Clarena Larrotta.
- **November 1, 2023: IRC Webinar** with **Julia E. Torres** from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **December 6, 2023: IRC Webinar** with **Debbie Reese** from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **January 3, 2024: IRC Webinar** with **Kass Minor** from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **February 7, 2024: IRC Webinar** with **Becky Anderson** from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **March 6, 2024: IRC Webinar** with **Stephanie Renee Toliver** from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **March 14-15, 2024: IRC Conference**, Pillars of Literacy: Skills, Strategies, Joy, & Magic will be held in Springfield, Illinois.
- **April 3, 2024: IRC Webinar** with **Maria Walther** and **Katie Walther** from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **May 1, 2024: IRC Webinar** with **Vera Ahiyya** from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **June 5, 2024: IRC Webinar** with **Karen Biggs-Tucker** and **Brian Tucker** from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.

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](mailto:irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org).

**#WhatIAmReading:** Share a book that you are reading in 2 to 3 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:

- Why We Need to Read Banned Books
- Tips for Teaching Writing
- Board Games that Teach Literacy Skills
- Literacy Meets STEM
- And any other literacy topics that interest 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](mailto:irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org) or by phone at 309-454-1341.

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

