



RESPECTING NAMES IS RESPECTING IDENTITY

By Nancy Steineke

Over this past political season we had the opportunity to witness both candidates and commentators purposefully mispronounce candidates' names as well as assign derogatory nicknames. And before I go any further, I want to definitively say that both instances are examples of bullying, plain and simple. The only person who gets to determine name pronunciation or nickname affinity is the person who owns the name. So, what can teachers do to ensure that all students' names are respected? Here are some ideas.

First, instead of awkwardly mispronouncing names on that first day's roll call, take an extra minute, stop by each student's desk, and check them in privately (yes, I'm imagining a day in the future when we will all be in our classes together!). Now pass out index cards and ask students to write down the first name they prefer followed by their last name. Then ask students to rewrite their first and last names phonetically so that you can sound it out correctly. For example, here's my last name: Stine-uh-key. Finally, move to each student to quietly verify correct pronunciation. Collect the cards and practice!

Next, impress upon classmates that pronouncing names correctly is important. For younger students, you might use the picture book *The Name Jar*. It's a story about a Korean girl entering a new school who bravely decides to teach her class how to say her given name correctly. For older students, you might have them read this *Chicago Tribune* opinion piece written by Dahleen Glanton: "A member of Congress called out a colleague for saying her name wrong. As a Dahleen, I can relate." Ms. Glanton tells the story of a congress member who repeatedly mispronounced a colleague's name even though they had worked together on the same committee for two years. For either piece, pose this question to students: How might it make you feel if others didn't try to pronounce your name correctly?

Finally, give students the opportunity to explore, share, and celebrate their names. Senator Kamala Harris does a great job explaining how intertwined our names are with our identity. "It is the first gift that a child, when they enter the Earth, receives from their family. It is usually informed by tradition and love, and the hope and aspiration the family has for that child. It is something precious and sacred and it is a part of their identity."

Nancy Steineke is the author of nine professional books. Her latest is *Classroom Management: Strategies for Achievement, Cooperation, and Engagement*.

TWO SIMPLE MANTRAS TO GOOD TEACHING (PART I)

By Melissa Wheeler, IRC Secretary

This moment in history where we are currently living is ripe with the potential for change. It is time to act. In order to make profound change, though, we are going to need good teaching! My core beliefs about good teaching all come down to two simple mantras. Today, I'd like to share the first one with you in hopes that it will sink deeply into your teaching soul.

"Being a teacher means giving up my rights to having a comfort zone."

This shift in perspective is key in so many ways. When I, as the teacher, make everything about me, I am the one who benefits. I probably even enforce rules to keep things the way I like them with punishments of various kinds. That sounds cruel, doesn't it? Yet it's the way many of us run our classrooms. I worked with a kindergarten teacher once whose "Classroom Rules" posted at the front of the room included as #1 "Make the teacher happy." I hope you gasped when you read that. Now, most of us would never be so extreme, but if we examine our classroom tapestries more closely, we're likely to see threads of this

mentality running through them.

Cultural Relevance

I am a middle-class white woman. As such, I do not share the same race, culture, ethnicity, values, learning styles, communication styles, hopes, and dreams of each of my students; nor do they share mine. It is NOT my students' job to accommodate my identity - it is quite literally my job to accommodate and engage with theirs. When I look at the achievement gap, or more accurately, the opportunity gap, between my students, I need to look critically at my teaching. Am I frustrated by the behavior of a particular group within my student population? Do I find that I am sending students out of the room for behaviors? Are particular demographics performing at a lower level in my class? I need to ask why. My biases and cultural lens should not be a barrier to my students' achievements, and, it is my responsibility to address them.

I need to consistently educate myself in order to be an effective teacher. Our classroom does not need to feel just like my fond memories of the classrooms of my youth. The goal is not to replicate what worked for me as a student, but to find what works for the students I am working with right now. Is it possible that the behavior expectations in our classroom/school/district are racially biased? Could it be that the learning environment expectations favor white, middle-class behavioral norms? The answer to all of these questions is, of course, a resounding yes. Those norms are very comfortable to me, but may not be so for my students.

- Do I really need students to raise their hands before they speak every time? Or could I teach them to value the thoughts and ideas of their classmates and have a more open format for our discussion?
- Is it really necessary for students to sit still while they are working, or can I just get over being annoyed by what I perceive to be excessive movement?

This is such a huge topic to unpack that I cannot hope to address it thoroughly here. I only hope that this sparks ideas and thoughts about practices in your own classroom and what lies behind each of them.

TEACHERS IN THE TRENCHES: DON'T "PANDEMIC" ABOUT TIME MANAGEMENT

By Jaclyn Turner, Illini Reading Council

Distance learning has challenged the best type-A personalities this school year. I am not one of those type-A teachers, so it has been an additional challenge to navigate the responsibilities of work, two graduate classes, extracurriculars, newly hired content Chair, a part-time job, and most important of all, family.

There are a few things I want to share for successfully navigating or at least surviving time management during distance learning in the midst of a global pandemic. First of all, self-care is a real thing. This is coming from a person who neglects herself all the time. This year I was motivated with tips I learned from Dr. Hoffman's Workshop, *Maslow Meets Bloom: Bridging SEL Needs and Literacy Standards*. Self-care is essential because you can't succeed at your goals if you're having a nervous breakdown. Dr. Hoffman says to cater to your five senses. Personally, I incorporated burning good-smelling candles to decompress after a long day. My 6th graders taught me to eat candy like a child. Yes, it's bad for you, but you will feel better while you grade those assignments. Stretching every standing opportunity you get and sipping on strong spirits during your 4-hour remote graduate classes (substitute as needed) is probably my favorite.

Second, say no and remove things from your plate. I didn't anticipate building relationships with the students I tutored over the summer, so I have been gradually releasing them from my responsibilities. When you add more to your plate, think about what you must remove because your time, resources, and emotional investment are limited. Finally, you can't help everyone 100% of the time or support every school committee. Choose your priorities. I suggest participating in school events or committees with mutual benefits or ones where the work is applicable to other areas of your life. If it does not offer mutual benefits, then you probably need to say "no." For example, the staff at my school is expected to participate in School Improvement committees so I joined the Equity Committee in order to support the social justice club I co-sponsor.

Third, think, write-down, and revise your routine or schedule and utilize random free times throughout your day. I start every morning with my priority list and triage what must be done from what I would like to do. I do the same thing at the end of a workday that includes priorities for my family and any task that was not completed from the school day. 10 minutes of downtime is a great opportunity to progressively work. Keep your materials with you at all times. For instance, when I pick up a to-go meal for the family with a 10-minute wait period, I am reading my required texts in the car or answering emails on my cell phone. Also, take a tiny bit of time to reflect. If my choices did not support completing work or support my emotional health, then I changed my tactics the next day. Finally, have a cut-off. I refuse to start my day

before 6:30 am and I refuse to work after 10 pm. This is hard and takes practice because you are telling yourself no. Tell yourself to “STOP.” If all goes according to plan then the “triage” tasks were completed and everything else can wait.

The most important of all is time for your family. This of course goes without saying, but such stresses tend to steal our focus and impede getting to what we really want. Sometimes, just walk away knowing today is one of those days and resume later. DO NOT ignore those random magical moments. Pull the car over for a sunset, hug your partner when they aren't expecting it. Schedule time that is untouchable. Saturday mornings are for sleeping in, Dunkin Donut runs with my husband, and at least one Netflix movie. There is no work earlier than 12:30 p.m.

Remember to forgive yourself and celebrate the small things. Don't forget magical moments are for an instant and work is a revolving door, so embrace those moments whenever possible. Use these tips to make your own routine, then reflect and revise as needed. Most of all, take time for yourself and don't panic about time management.

AN EQUITY PRECEDENT

By Marygrace Farina

Classroom supply lists called for new requirements this Fall. Face masks, hand sanitizer, and digital conferencing platforms top the list. Educators strive to quiet the squeakiest wheels of a spinning train. A wrench in the engine brought the education system to a halt. Now, teachers and students struggle to chart a new path.

Distance learning widened gaps faced by underserved communities. Students struggled to acquire devices necessary for virtual learning. Face to face alternatives created new questions. Where can classroom space be created to ensure social distance? What virtual platforms serve the needs for distance learning? Will schools acquire high quality levels of internet service?

Consider an optimistic viewpoint. Methods of teaching begin with reasons for teaching. Teachers model attitudes of lifelong learners. Virtual and physical classrooms both rely upon this crucial component. These brave, motivated, and resilient teachers remain dedicated to their students and provide the best resources for solutions.

Theory derived from research provides a meaningful basis of practice. Equity emerges in dynamic classrooms. Teachers assess and customize methods daily. Actual data can be gathered from real student interaction. This custom data provides resources for powerful lesson plans. This school environment extends to open an ongoing dialogue at home. Libraries, local businesses and groups can be invited to provide an additional foundation of support.

Outdated learning materials result in irrelevant lesson plans. Rigid learning objectives do not account for diverse learning styles. Leadership of administration contributes insight and resources that teachers can rely on to affect change. Active training, mentoring, and open dialogue fosters teaching skills.

Students may have lost the ability to envision a future. Their ability to develop skills to blaze a new path starts with confidence and trust. When communities find ways to model the value of education, they embrace the belief in student success.

Lead with a model of resilience, empathy, integrity, and courage. Build trust. Learning follows next. No precedent exists during this time of unique obstacles. Open minds define a path to set a new precedent to overcome them.

No teacher stands alone. Detailed teacher support can be found in my chapters of [*The New Teachers' Guide to Overcoming Challenges: Curated Advice from Award Winning Teachers.*](#)

FAMILY LITERACY BOOKSHELF

By Barb Ashton, IRC Family Literacy Committee Chair

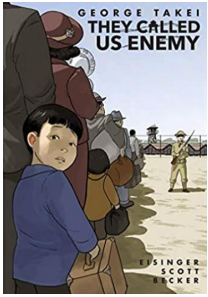
Hearing the Christmas music as we go shopping for groceries and other necessities we know that December and the holidays are here. December is the busiest time of the year as our thoughts turn to Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanza.

December is **Human Rights Month**. It commemorates the passage of the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights Document by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 guaranteeing everyone has basic rights and freedoms regardless of who you are.

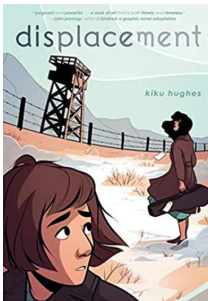
December is also **Read a New Book Month** which encourages everyone and especially families to take time out from this hectic season to spend some time reading -- a graphic novel, an eBook, an audio book, or finishing that book you started but never completed. Books also make nice gifts to give or receive.



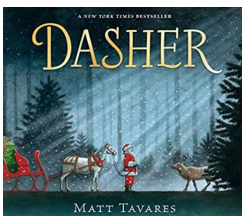
Ranger in Time: Attack on Pearl Harbor by Kate Messner is the story of a golden retriever named Ranger who travels back in time. This time it is the morning of December 7, 1941. While preparing for morning services Ben Hanson, a young sailor stationed aboard one of the ships docked at Pearl Harbor, meets Ranger and wonders which shipmate owns him. At the same time two young twins, Grace and Paul Yasmada, are traveling across the harbor to bring fresh vegetables from their family farm to the military market on the other side of the harbor. As the bombs begin to fall, Ben and the twins encounter grave danger. Will Ranger's training as a search and rescue dog help Ben and his shipmates, as well as Grace and Paul survive against all odds? Read *Ranger in Time: Attack on Pearl Harbor* to find out. This is a great story that includes historical facts, action and drama, heightened by the full page illustrations that will keep the reader interested and engaged.



They Called Us Enemy by George Takei, Justin Eisinger, and Steven Scott is a graphic memoir that tells of Mr. Takei's life as a Japanese American after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Following President Franklin D. Roosevelt's executive order to "round up" all Japanese Americans and place them in one of ten "relocation centers"/internment camps, George's family was taken to Santa Anita Racetrack where they lived in a horse stall for a time. Later they moved to a camp in Arkansas and finally to a camp in Northern California where they lived in barracks surrounded by barbed wire fences and military guards. After the war ended George's family and other interned Japanese Americans still had faith in America's values. With their patriotism they worked hard to rebuild their lives and educate their children. George eventually earned a college degree and his iconic role as Sulu in the Star Trek series. He also became an activist and was honored by President Clinton. *They Call Us Enemy* is a must read for teachers, librarians, parents, and students.



Displacement by Kiku Hughes is a great companion to George Takei's *They Call Us Enemy*. While traveling with her mother on vacation to San Francisco to search for Kiku's grandmother's childhood home, they hear about President Trump's ban on Muslims and the incarceration of migrant children at the Mexico – U.S. border. After getting the necessary information about her grandmother's home and going to the area, they find it has been redeveloped into a shopping mall. While her mother goes into the mall, Kiku waits outside. While waiting for her mother Kiku suddenly finds herself "displaced" in the Japanese American internment camp that her late grandmother was relocated to after Pearl Harbor. As the "displacement" sessions keep occurring, through discussions with her mother, Kiku learns more about her Japanese heritage and the living conditions, suffering and injustices the Japanese Americans endured. They also committed acts of resistance yet stayed together as a community in order to survive. Returning to modern times Kiku is more aware of the prejudices and injustices prevalent today. *Displacement* is an excellent graphic novel for middle grade and up students.



Dasher: How a Brave Little Doe Changed Christmas Forever by Matt Tavares tells the story of how Santa got his reindeer to pull his sleigh. The story begins with Santa and his horse Silverbell, who's having a difficult time pulling the sleigh due to the weight of the presents to be delivered. At the same time Dasher and her family are part of a traveling circus. Wishing for a different life like in the stories her mother tells her, Dasher leaves the circus one night when the gate to her pen is left open. Not knowing where she's headed but following the North Star and the light of the moon, Dasher finds a kind man in a red suit with a sleigh full of presents and a tired horse, Silverbell. Dasher offers to help and after all the presents are delivered, Santa returns to the North Pole. Dasher is happy with her new life even though she misses her family. Will Dasher ever rejoin her family? You'll have to read this beautifully illustrated book to find out. ***Dasher*** is surely to become a new Christmas favorite and addition to your Christmas book collection.

LITERACY LINKS

By the IRC Educational Media Committee

Take a moment to review some of the Literacy Links provided by the IRC Educational Media Committee to help Illinois educators in today's classrooms.

Reading Passage Resources

[The Learning Network](#)

This online resource from the *New York Times* provides articles about current events and other resources for teachers and students. It has the Lesson of the Day, writing prompts, quizzes, multimedia resources, questions for discussion, reflections and much more.

Interactive Resources

[Knowt](#)

This free online tool turns documents into flashcards, quizzes, and other review activities. The quizzes can include multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching, true/false, and sequencing. It also has a platform for creating classes for students that works with Google Classroom.

Web 2.0 Resources

[Dogonews](#)

This free online resource has fun articles on current events, science, sports and more. There are also videos, comprehension questions, vocabulary, quizzes, puzzles and much more. This is a great tool for online learning.

UPCOMING PD EVENTS

By the Illinois Reading Council

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

- **December 2, 2020: IRC Webinar** on Inspiring Lifelong Readers with Jon Scieszka.
- **December 2, 2020: Fox Valley Reading Council** will host a Wired Webinar Discussion following the IRC Webinar with Jon Scieszka at 8:00 pm via Zoom.
- **December 3, 2020: MID-State Reading Council** will host a Binge-Watch Book Talk with high school books from 7:00 to 7:45 pm via a virtual platform. Sign up today to attend
- **December 3, 2020: Prairie Area Reading Council** and **Anderson's Bookshops** will host the Illinois Reads Relaunch Party at 7:00 pm via a virtual platform.
- **December 8, 2020: Secondary Reading League (SRL)** will host Disruption EDU with Jim Roscoe and Jeff Schagrin from 6:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom.
- **December 12, 2020: National Road Reading Council** and the **Effingham Public Library** will co-host Stories with Santa at 10:00 am through the Effingham Public Library Facebook Page.
- **December 16, 2020: Central Illinois Reading Council** will host the monthly the CIRC Book Chats on alternating professional books and literature topics from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom.
- **January 6, 2021: IRC Webinar** on Dark, Absurd Humor...for Dark, Absurd Times with Crystal Chan.
- **January 6, 2021: Fox Valley Reading Council** will host a Wired Webinar Discussion following the IRC Webinar with Crystal Chan at 8:00 pm via Zoom.
- **January 12, 2021: Secondary Reading League (SRL)** will host Making Assessments that Matter with Kim Marshall from 4:00 to 6:00 pm via Zoom.
- **January 14, 2021: Will County Reading Council** will host an Author Discussion with Joelle Charbonneau on her latest book, *Disclose*, from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via a virtual platform.
- **January 20, 2021: Central Illinois Reading Council** will host the monthly CIRC Book Chats on alternating professional books and literature topics from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom.
- **January 21, 2021: Prairie Area Reading Council** will host the Book Gossip with Kathleen March from 6:15 to 7:30 pm via Zoom.
- **January 24, 2021: IRC Winter 2021 IRC Book Club** will begin on *Breathing New Life into Book Clubs: A Practical Guide for Teachers* by Sonja Cherry-Paul and Dana Johansen AND/OR *The Next Step Forward in Word Study and Phonics* by Jan Richardson and Michèle Dufresne.
- **January 25, 2021: Western Illinois Reading Council** will host Maslow Before Bloom with Bryan Pearlman from 7:00 to 8:30 pm via a virtual platform.

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



Join us for a Sneak Peek!
December 3, 2020 at 7pm

Prairie Area Reading Council and Anderson's Bookshops will host the Illinois Reads Relaunch Party via zoom!

Register today using the QR code or this link
<https://bit.ly/3kxLRsu>

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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:

