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**2016 IRC CONFERENCE**  
**September 29-October 1**  
**in Peoria, Illinois**



**Program Proposals are  
due by March 1, 2016**



**From the IRC President**

*Lou Ferrol*

**The Best State Reading Council in the  
ILA Is Our Own IRC: Here's Why**

I hope a great many of our IRC members were able to go to the International Reading Association (oops, still adjusting) Convention this year in nearby St. Louis. Having made the round-trip drive to New Orleans last year, I can testify that going to good old St. Louis was easy. ILA took some chances by moving the convention to a smaller Midwestern city and holding it during the summer when teachers wouldn't have to negotiate release time to get there. Kudos to the ILA for thinking outside the box and for the fabulous convention they put on.

I have to tell you, though; your IRC was quite the buzz. "You Illinois folk have your stuff together," seemed to be the most popular refrain of the week. Maybe it was because the IRC won this year's ILA Distinguished Council Award which documents the advocacy achievements of state councils. That drew a lot of attention. It was especially nice to win the annual award this year because last year's winner was ... well, we won it last year, too.

Maybe "Illinois has its stuff together" was a popular refrain because other state councils were getting attention for drawing 1500 teachers to their state conference while we draw around 3000. Maybe it was because other very successful state councils were celebrating their 2500 members while we run between four and five thousand. Or maybe it was simply the number of testimonials I heard that said the state conference in Illinois is as good as the International Convention. (By the way, the IRC Conference is coming up again at the end of September. See you in Peoria.) In the end I got pretty good at taking credit for our council's achievements. Somebody has to, no?

It all caused me to ask why. Why are we the preeminent state reading council in the country? I think I know.

I'm an old man, and I've been around the IRC as long as anybody you can name, so I know some relevant history. Do you know where the IRC headquarters was located in the late 70's and early 80's? The Illinois Reading Council existed in cardboard boxes which were kept in the trunks of Board Members (mostly local



## From the ILA State Coordinator

Roberta Sejnost

***“You’re off to Great Places! Today is your day!  
Your mountain is waiting, So... get on your way!”***

*~ Dr. Seuss, Oh, The Places You’ll Go!*

Greetings and welcome to another IRC year. Having just returned from our Leadership Retreat at Grand Bear and heading off to new places as the year progresses, it is time to focus on what we can do to keep our councils active and progressing.

Two proven ways to keep our councils strong are (1) Encouraging IRC members to become members of the International Literacy Association and (2) Encouraging council members to become involved in statewide councils and literacy projects.

### **Become an ILA member**

ILA provides many value-added opportunities available only for members. These are:

#### ***ILA Bridges: Instructional Units for the Engaging Classroom***

Features cross-curricular units published quarterly and created by a team of at least one classroom teacher and one researcher. The units focus on highly engaging, research-based classroom practices which lead to rich student learning.

#### ***ILA E-ssentials***

Provides quick-read digital publications downloadable in a PDF format that feature new teaching strategies from top literacy experts.

#### ***Literacy Today***

In a magazine format, this publication presents current literacy news and trends.

#### ***Get Inspired***

This monthly e-newsletter archive shares proven, new instructional techniques and creative tips for hands-on

instruction found in select journal articles, book excerpts, and podcasts.

These are all available free for ILA members at [https://marketplace.reading.org/Memberships/IRA\\_NewMember.aspx](https://marketplace.reading.org/Memberships/IRA_NewMember.aspx)

Join now to select your payment option

- Online membership - \$29.00
- Basic membership - \$39.00
- Student membership - \$24.00

### **Become Involved in Statewide Councils and Projects**

Illinois Reading Council has five statewide councils which provide activities and opportunities relevant to their specific focus. These are:

- CIRP - College Instructors of Reading Professionals
- ITA - Illinois Title I Association
- ICARE - Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education
- ILLC - Illinois Language and Literacy Council
- SRL - Secondary Reading League

Check them out at <http://www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org/images/membershipform.pdf>. Remember you can join more than one council, and membership in each additional council is only \$15.

In addition, IRC supports Illinois Reads and Read and Feed. Your council can participate in Illinois Reads, an initiative that encourages people to read books by Illinois authors by launching an Illinois Reads program in your town or region or by participating in a Family Reading Night. For more information, access <http://illinoisreads.org> or contact [info@illinoisreads.org](mailto:info@illinoisreads.org).

*Continued on page 3*

ILA State Coordinator's Column continued from page 2

Read and Feed was born of a partnership with the National Association of State Title I Directors (NASTID) and the International Literacy Association (ILA) to develop a community based program to combine volunteer led literacy and/or instructional programs with existing Title I school programs to improve literacy skills and foster student engagement. Programs are held over school holiday vacation times or the summer and may consist of providing books and/or literacy activities or library based book clubs/reading sessions for students to prevent "literacy slide." For more information, contact rsejnost@gmail.com.

I truly hope you take the opportunity to peruse these resources and use them to help build your councils and launch them "off to Great Places."

**And, some reminders:**

**November 19, 2015** - Illinois Reads Family Reading Night  
Participate in the annual statewide event that encourages families to spend quality time reading together.

**December 1, 2015** - Speaker grant applications  
Contact your Regional Director or me if you have thoughts, ideas, questions or concerns; we are your voice to the Executive Committee and the IRC Board of Directors.

**January 4, 2016** - Deadline for ILA's Honor Council Award. All activities/ accomplishments for the award must have occurred between July 1, 2014-June 30, 2015.

Yours in Leadership,  
Bobbie Sejnost

President's Column continued from page 1

council presidents). In those days when one attended a Board of Directors meeting, the scene in the parking lot was something to behold. A whole line of cars with their trunks popped open reminiscent of a military unit prepared for an inspection of the ranks. SUVs hadn't become popular yet and people drove sedans with trunks. The records of the IRC were in file folders in cardboard boxes being carried from the cars into the cafeteria of some small school we were lucky to have access to on a Saturday morning.

So, how did we get from there to the preeminent state reading council in the country? Somebody (and I do not know to whom to give the credit) had the wisdom and the vision to decide that we needed office staff. Almost all of the IRC is made up of volunteers, but volunteers, for all our great work and intentions, have other things to do. What we did correctly back then and are reaping the rewards for now was to start office staff. To this day, most other states have not taken this step.

The second event that caused us to become who we are is that we hired for the office position first Arlene Pennie and then Carrie Sheridan. From the original staff position more hours were added. Then it became a full-time position, and ultimately it became a full-blown Executive Director with a staff of her own. That's why we are who we are. I encourage you to find out for yourself. Call the IRC office for any reason whatsoever or for no reason at all. Call and see how members get treated, and you'll experience how a top-tier professional organization, one that has its stuff together, operates.

In the meantime, I've got another eleven months of credit-taking to do. Thanks for electing me.

## MISSION

The mission of the Illinois Reading Council is to provide support and leadership to all who promote and teach lifelong literacy.



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 Join us on Facebook  
 Twitter @ILReadCouncil

## IRC Announces 2015-2016 Grant Recipients

### REGION 1

Northern Illinois	Jennifer Peterson	\$2,000	Summer Reading “You’ve Got Mail”
Northwestern	Keta Foltz	\$1,250	Author & Me

### REGION 2

CARA	Karen Thomson	\$1,000	Cafe Literacy Collaboration
SCIRA	Casey Todd	\$650	Enhancing Reading for Reluctant Readers: Classroom Library Advisory Board Program

### REGION 3

Fox Valley	Suzanne St. John	\$1,000	Reading in the Great Outdoors
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### REGION 4

Black Hawk	Susie Smice	\$1,000	Morning Coffee Club
Illinois Valley	Pam Ritter	\$750	Feeding Through Reading
Illinois Valley	Samantha Alvarado	\$700	Chew and Chat
Illinois Valley	Pam Ritter	\$950	“Y Not Read?” Book Club for Adult New Readers
Western Illinois	Juanita Scott	\$2,000	Reading @ the Crossroads 5: Overcoming Obstacles to Achieve Your Dreams
Western Illinois	Bailey Cavanah	\$900	Movie Makers Book Club
Western Illinois	Jennifer Young	\$500	I Survived Book Club
Western Illinois	Ashley Shinn	\$400	Reading Takes You Places (Family Reading Night)
Western Illinois	Anita Lovell	\$400	Camp Read A Lot! (Family Reading Night)

### REGION 5

Two Rivers	Christina Basham	\$600	Camp Out with A Good Book!
Two Rivers, CIRP	Roxanne Forgrave	\$800	Middle School Motivation
Will County, SRL	Alan Holtz	\$550	Huff Fluff and Other Great Stuff

### REGION 6

Central Illinois	Kay Mason	\$1,600	Digging Deeper into History Through Literature: A Book Club for Middle School Students and Parents
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### REGION 8

Lewis and Clark	Darryn Diuguid	\$200	Catch, Move, Tumble: Promoting Vocabulary Acquisition through Movement Activities
Lewis and Clark	Kristin Heap	\$500	Reading is a Thrill
Lewis and Clark	Cheryl Walker	\$1,000	Writing Builds Everlasting Friendships
Lewis and Clark	Cheryl Walker	\$400	Together We Read
National Road	Carol Hoelscher	\$1,000	Readers Soar High with the 2016 Monarch Award Nominated Books!
National Road	Amy Hewing	\$600	Bluestem Books and Breakfasts

### REGION 9

Southern Illinois	Pamela Turner	\$450	The 2016 Caudill Campaign!
South Eastern	Tambree Krouse	\$800	South Eastern Illinois Reads!
South Eastern	Tambree Krouse	\$1,500	Love of Reading Starts At Home
South Eastern	Tambree Krouse	\$1,500	Teen Read Book Club

***Literacy Support Grant applications for the 2016-2017 school year are due May 1, 2016. Visit the IRC Website for more information.***

## Illinois Vision 20/20 Initiative

*Julie Hoffman, IRC Advocacy Committee Chair*

The Illinois Reading Council has the opportunity to partner with the Illinois Vision 20/20 Initiative. At this point, organizations involved in the partnership are: Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA), the Illinois Principals Association (IPA), the Illinois Association of School Business Officials (IASBO), the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB), the Superintendents’ Commission for the Study of Demographics and Diversity (SCSDD), and the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS).

In considering this partnership, we must tread carefully, being ever mindful of: our own mission, the possibility of power in numbers, the voice of our members, how the initiative will be implemented, and what it means for our state. Because we will not move forward without first hearing from our members, we are asking you to fill out the online survey available at the following link by October 15, 2015.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2Z6DPWX>

Please read the following and consider the pros and cons of our possible affiliation with the initiative.

The Illinois Vision 20/20 Initiative is based on the premise that Illinois public education is effective. The initiative also recognizes that achievement gaps throughout the state are aggravated by shortcomings in the Illinois funding system. The organizations involved have isolated four priorities to focus on: shared accountability, highly effective teachers, 21st century learning, and equitable and adequate funding.

Overall, Vision 20/20 is an attempt to restructure education in Illinois, following an evidence-based process.

### PROS AND CONS TO CONSIDER

- The 21st Century learning priority will focus on the “Whole Child” and early childhood education.
- The Shared accountability priority intends to “expand the educator’s role and responsibility in state governance.”
- The fund priority intends to distribute funds to areas of higher need, and provide autonomy to school districts.
- The initiative is in its early stages, so it is difficult to read intentionality and progress.

- The six organizations currently involved make the partnership administrator-heavy.
- No teacher voices have been consulted/involved.
- This could be an opportunity to add voices directly from the classroom.
- Partnership could affect our autonomy.
- Partnership could enable IRC to provide professional development opportunities.

### SURVEY QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

- Should IRC partner with Illinois Vision 20/20?
- Should we let school districts partner, as they see fit, and have IRC refrain from committing?
- Should we partner with the initiative, with limits?
- What limits should IRC consider in exploring partnership with Vision 20/20?
- Should we wait and revisit the option in:
  - 1 month?
  - 2 Months?
  - 6 months?
  - 1 year?

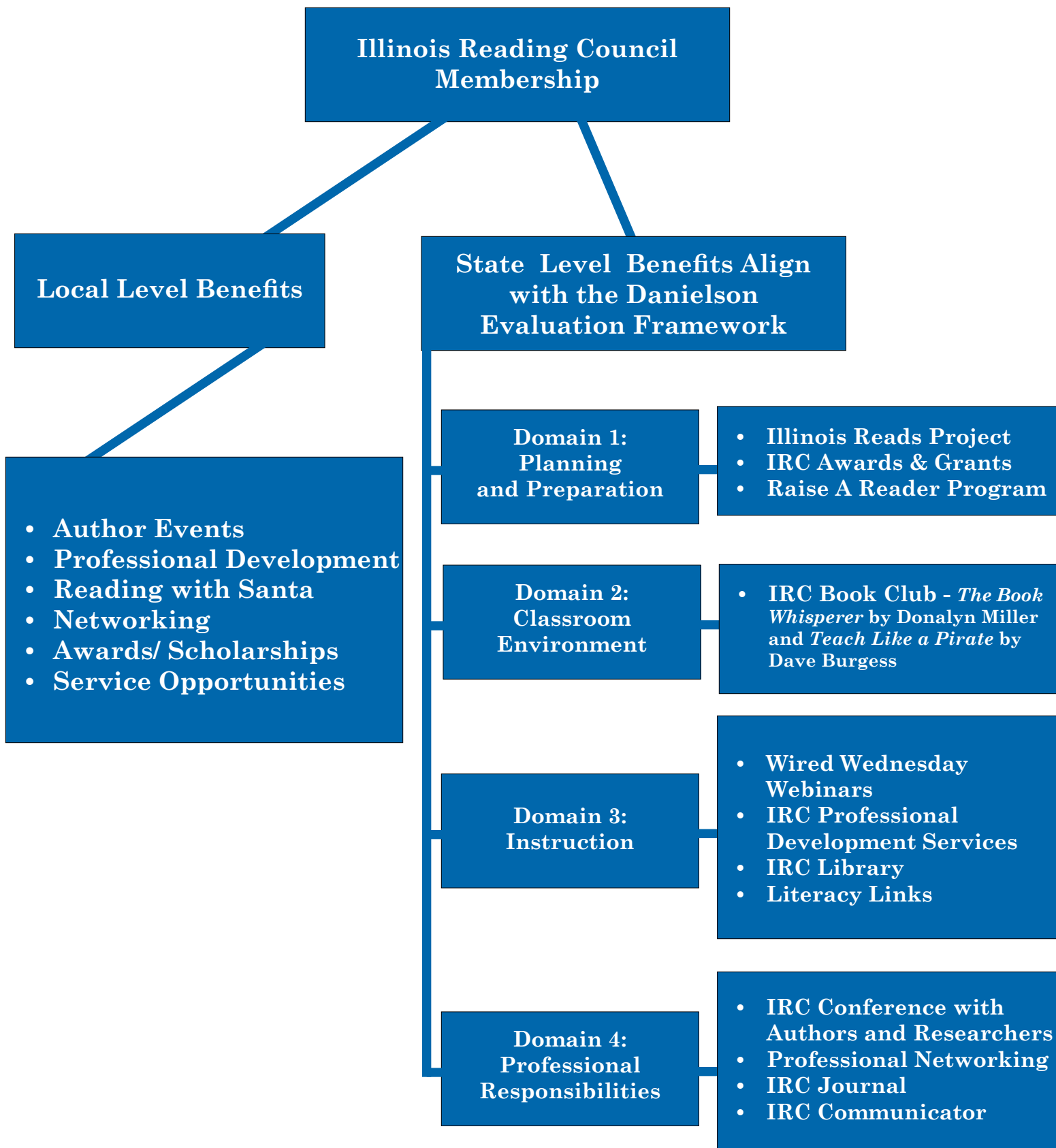
Thank you for sharing your voice! The online survey is available at the following link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2Z6DPWX>.

### Vision 20/20 Priorities

<b>Highly Effective Educators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit and Retain High-Impact Educators</li> <li>• Provide Relevant Professional Development</li> </ul>
<b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the "Whole Child"</li> <li>• Preserve Instructional Time</li> <li>• Invest in Early Childhood Education</li> <li>• Link Students to College and Careers</li> <li>• Expand Equity in Technology Access</li> </ul>
<b>Shared Accountability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand Educator Role and Responsibility in State Governance</li> <li>• Implement a Differentiated Accountability System</li> <li>• Restructure Mandates</li> </ul>
<b>Equitable and Adequate Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund Education Based on Local Need</li> <li>• Stabilize State Funding for Education</li> <li>• Enhance District Flexibility to Increase Financial Efficiency</li> </ul>

## Benefits of IRC Membership

Christy Ziller, Director of Membership



## Educational Resources

*Gail Huizinga, Educational Initiatives and Professional Development Co-Chair*

In an effort to centralize educational electronic resources for IRC members, the Educational Initiatives and Professional Development Committee has created a **LiveBinder**.

The site serves as a “virtual file cabinet” of current sites which support instruction, initiative implementation, and educator best-practice. There are websites, professional books suggestions, and even links to additional LiveBinders on specific topics created by the committee members.

The LiveBinder can be accessed using the site’s address or the QR code below.

IRC EI/PD Committee Resources

<http://www.livebinders.com/play/play?present=true&id=1146416>



The committee continually updates and adds new resources to the binder, so visit it regularly.

IRC members are also invited to contribute resource suggestions that have been found to be of value. Send suggestions to the EI/PD Committee at [pd@illinoisreadingcouncil.org](mailto:pd@illinoisreadingcouncil.org).

The IRC EI/PD Committee has also started a new blog as part of their mission promoting understanding of and advocating for effective literacy practices.

The blog will host a variety of articles, links, videos, and websites to help you integrate effective literacy instruction and assessment into your classrooms, districts, and communities. Check it out and feel free to add comments to keep moving important literacy conversations forward.

<http://www.ircedpd.blogspot.com/>

## IRC Receives ILA Awards at the 49th Annual Convention in July 2015

### ILA Distinguished Council

*Presented to the Illinois Reading Council for their work in Teacher Empowerment (Professional Development), Community Engagement (Community Service/International Projects, and Public Awareness (Advocacy).*

### ILA Award of Excellence

*Presented to the Illinois Reading Council for providing programs and activities that contribute to education and support councils, members, and ILA.*

### ILA Advocacy Award

*Presented to the Illinois Reading Council for working to affect educational policy and legislation through advocacy.*

## ILA Honor Council

**Chicago Area Reading Association  
East Central-EIU Reading Council  
Illinois Title I Association  
MID-State Reading Council  
Northern Illinois Reading Council  
Prairie Area Reading Council  
Secondary Reading League  
South Eastern Reading Council  
South Suburban Reading Council  
Starved Rock Reading Council  
Suburban Council of IRA  
Two Rivers Reading Council  
West Suburban Reading Council  
Will County Reading Council**

## ILA Maryann Manning Outstanding Volunteer Service Award

### Carol Owles

*Honors a dedicated volunteer who has made a lifelong commitment to a local or regional council within North America.*

**2016 PROGRAM PROPOSAL**  
**49th Illinois Reading Council Conference**  
**September 29-October 1, 2016**



**PROGRAM FORMAT**

The Illinois Reading Council is accepting Program Proposals for the 49th Annual Reading Council Conference from September 29-October 1, 2016 in Peoria, Illinois. Proposals are encouraged for small group sessions which will be scheduled for 60-minutes. A few proposals requesting a double session will be considered.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTION**

- Proposals that emphasize interaction across disciplines, interaction across roles, new issues or topics, innovative or novel ways of viewing traditional issues, topics, materials or methods and evidence of familiarity with current practice and/or research will be given priority.
- Proposals that promote commercial materials or programs will not be accepted.
- Proposals that contribute to the achievement of an overall program balance in the range of topics, the grade levels covered, and the professional and geographic distribution of the participants have priority.
- The Program Committee reserves the right to disqualify proposals that are not legible, concise, well-worded, complete, and submitted on time.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

- Teachers, researchers, librarians, administrators, and others interested in promoting reading and related literacy areas are encouraged to submit program proposals.
- Presenters may submit more than one proposal.
- As a professional, nonprofit organization, the Illinois Reading Council is unable to provide honoraria to program participants or to reimburse for materials, travel, meals, or hotel expenses.
- All presenters whose program proposals have been approved must pre-register and pay conference fees no later than the last day designated for pre-registration (**September 1, 2016**). If not, name and presentation may be removed from the final Conference program due to printing deadlines.
- The person submitting the proposal must receive advance consent from each listed presentation associate.
- Each presentation room will be equipped with an LCD projector and screen. All other audio-visual equipment is the responsibility of the presenter(s).
- Using the Internet in a presentation can create technical complications that may disrupt a session. Unlike an office or school environment, Internet in convention centers and hotels is not 100% reliable due to numerous temporary users connecting at any given time. Please download and save video to your computer if you are using it in a presentation.
- Please observe the word limits for presentation titles and abstracts. Only concise, clearly worded proposals will be considered.
- Proposals must be submitted online at [www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org](http://www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org) or postmarked **no later than March 1, 2016**. Each person submitting a proposal will be sent an acknowledgment by email when the proposal is received. Subsequent correspondence will also be sent by email.
- Applicants will be notified of the Program Committee's decisions by May 1, 2016. It is the responsibility of the person submitting the proposal to relay the committee's decision to each presentation associate listed on the program.

**Individuals seeking conference information should contact:**

**Illinois Reading Council, 203 Landmark Drive, Suite B, Normal, IL 61761**

**Phone: 309-454-1341**

**Toll Free: 888-454-1341**

**Email: [irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org](mailto:irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org)**

**Web: [www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org](http://www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org)**

**Submit Program Proposals Online at [www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org](http://www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org)**



## Read and Feed

*Barb Ashton and Kathleen Sweeney*

Read and Feed was a summer pilot project that provided literacy activities to do at home for students in Title 1 schools. It was a joint project of the International Literacy Association and the National Association of State Title I Directors.

Illinois was one of three states to participate in this pilot project. Having met the requirements for this project, Maywood District 89 was selected. The third grade summer school students were chosen to be the targeted grade. West Suburban Reading Council was asked to coordinate the project. Illinois teachers across the state were asked to help provide third grade literacy activities that could be done at home. Activities for the program focused on writing and fluency with an emphasis on poetry, book reporting and vocabulary. Resources for parents were also included. These activities were placed in binders for the teachers to use throughout the program. Independent leisure reading was another component of the program. Funds were obtained to purchase books so each student could receive a “mini library” of fiction and nonfiction books at the end of summer school. With monetary donations from the Illini Reading Council, IRC’s Family Literacy Committee, West Suburban Reading Council, and donated Scholastic Bonus points, the books were purchased.



At the conclusion of summer school a special celebration was held for the third grade students who had participated in the Read and Feed pilot project. Students performed various poetry readings. Literacy

activities from the binders were displayed along the walls and in the classrooms. Lou Ferroli, IRC President, and Roberta Sejnost, ILA State Coordinator, joined Barbara Ashton and Kathleen Sweeney, Read and Feed Co-Coordinators, to present each student with their own bag containing a “mini library” of fiction and nonfiction books. Upon receiving their books, the students quickly opened the bags and began to talk and share the books they received with their parents and teachers.

To determine the success of the Read and Feed project, evaluations were given to parents and teachers. The results at this time are pending. If student, teacher and parent enthusiasm are any indications, the project was a success. Read and Feed projects will probably expand throughout Illinois. Watch for information from IRC on how to implement a Read and Feed project.

A Literacy Conference *Exclusively* for Grades 6-12



## The 39<sup>th</sup> Day of Reading

Saturday, November 14, 2015

Tinley Park Convention Center,  
18451 Convention Center Drive, Tinley Park, IL

### Matt de la Peña

Young Adult Author

- Author of *The Hunted*, *The Living*, *Ball Don't Lie*, *I Will Save You*, *Mexican White Boy* and others
- YALSA pick for Best Books for Young Adults and Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers

**Luncheon Address – Reading (and Writing) from the Wrong Side of the Tracks**

### Dr. Mary Ehrenworth

Researcher & Author

- Deputy Director at Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, Columbia University
- Author of *Pathways to the Common Core*, *The Power of Grammar*, *Looking to Write*, and others

**Keynote Address – Key Practices for Raising the Level of Writing and Teaching Writing as a Transformative Force: For the Child, For the School, For the World**

### Pre-Conference Workshop

Friday, November 13, 2015

### Dr. Mary Ehrenworth

“Raising the Level of Close and Critical Reading of Fiction and Nonfiction Texts – Reaching and Moving Beyond Standards”

*Graduate Credit Available through University of St. Francis*

For more information, contact:

Barbara Chrz-White [bchrzwhite@comcast.net](mailto:bchrzwhite@comcast.net)

Terry McHugh [tmchugh@dayofreading.org](mailto:tmchugh@dayofreading.org)

**\*Team Discounts Available\***



Secondary Reading League

@SecondaryRead

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[secondaryreadingleague.org](http://secondaryreadingleague.org)

## **Drawing on Diverse Students' Out-of-School Language, Literacy, and Cultural Practices for Literacy Education**

*Allison Skerrett, Featured Webinar Presenter – November 11, 2015*

The landscape of student diversity is continuously evolving in response to linguistic and cultural changes in established communities, upsurges in migration flows across world nations, and technological innovations. Classrooms today include students from multiple racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds who are citizens of one nation; immigrant youths who bring their own cultural and linguistic heritages to their new homeland; and transnational students who live and sometimes attend school across two or more countries, and thus claim multiple national affiliations (Skerrett, 2015). These forms of student diversity are represented in the rich language, literacy, and cultural practices youth engage within their families and local and global communities, practices that are often assisted by digital tools (Christenbury, Bomer & Smagorinsky, 2009; Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009). The dynamic and interconnected nature of student diversity and literacy practices offers exciting opportunities for expanding our practices of culturally responsive literacy education.

### **Expanding Approaches to Culturally Responsive Literacy Education**

A first step in expanding our approaches to culturally responsive literacy education is to learn more from our students about their literate lives outside school. Teachers have created assignments such as self-portraiture and mini inquiry projects that lead students into investigating and describing their language, literacy, and cultural practices in and across their homes, local and global communities, and digital worlds (Skerrett, 2014, 2015). Students engage in journal writing; collect significant artifacts of language, literacy, and culture; use digital tools such as their cell phones to record real-time examples of themselves engaged in literate life; and prepare and share multimodal reports on their findings. As such, these learning activities further build students' reading, writing, inquiry, and discussion skills. Through this work, teachers and students come to see one another from an appreciative, strength-based perspective (Bomer, 2011) that contradicts the shadow of standardized curriculum and testing that often casts students in a light of what they lack and cannot do.

Moreover, the knowledge teachers gain from investigations

into students' literate lives can inform curricular and instructional choices. For example, learning that we have transnational students in our classrooms will guide us to expand our curricular texts to include transnational literature—stories with characters, themes, and events that cut across national and cultural borders. We can also strengthen our methods for teaching reading based in knowledge of our students' literate lives. Research has shown many connections between the cognitive work students conduct with their outside-school literacies and the cognitive processes they must use for academic reading and writing. For instance, young people read, compose, and critically evaluate multilingual, multicultural, and multimodal texts such as rap, graffiti art, tattoos, fan fiction, videogames, and movies (Gee, 2007; Kirkland, 2013; Yi, 2008). This means we can use examples of students' meaning-making processes in literacy activities outside school when teaching reading strategies such as envisioning, making inferences, and monitoring comprehension (See Skerrett & Bomer, 2011 for a classroom example of a literacy teacher and her students engaging with such work).

Similarly, in teaching writing, we can encourage students to use their local and global cultural knowledge, multiple languages, and multimodal literacies as composition tools. Having illustrative mentor texts in the classroom library provides a seamless connection between reading and writing instruction. Teachers can use a process writing approach that supports students in making sophisticated choices in language—for example, code-switching; in topics and settings—such as writing transnational stories, and in multimodality—combining written and pictorial forms (See Skerrett, 2013 and Skerrett and Bomer, 2013 for classroom examples). This instructional approach also includes student reflection and discussion about their writing process which assists students (and teachers) in becoming more aware of the sophisticated nature of the literacy work and learning occurring in our classrooms.

Drawing more deeply on our students' outside-school literacies, languages, and cultures for learning in school will produce a more complex and satisfying form of culturally responsive literacy education. Our educational

*Continued on page 11*

Drawing on Diverse Students' continued from page 10

practices will also serve students' literate lives outside school because students will continuously recognize how they can use what they learn in school to benefit their self-selected literacy practices outside school. Finally, talking with our colleagues, administrators, parents, and other stakeholders about the academic gains our students enjoy from this approach to culturally responsive literacy education will be critical for sustaining and advancing these practices in standardized school contexts.

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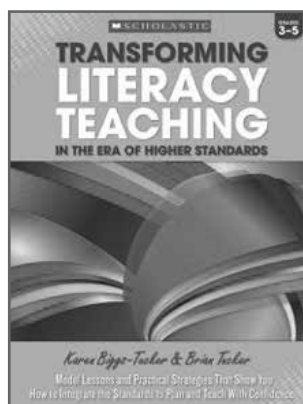
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Welcome to the Illinois Authors' Corner, showcasing new releases from our fabulous Illinois Authors and IRC members. If you'd like to include your new release, please visit the IRC website to find out how to submit information.

## *Transforming Literacy Teaching in the Era of Higher Standards*

Written by Karen Biggs-Tucker and Brian Tucker  
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In this comprehensive resource, Karen and Brian describe the teaching shifts that teachers need to implement with their students to meet the rigor demands of the ELA Common Core Standards. Readers will find a practical approach to help build upon their current classroom instruction while infusing research-based best practices to address higher standards, while differentiating for the needs of their students. Filled with ready-to-teach lessons, student-friendly learning targets, and plenty of practical tips, this book will support teachers as they transform their literacy instruction. This resource includes a wide range of book titles, downloadable teaching resources and CCSS planning guides, as well as videos of lessons being taught in real classrooms with actual students, just like yours!

## The Music-Literacy Connection

Ralph Covert and Roxanne Farwick Owens

Nod your head if you agree with the following statements:

- Alphabetic knowledge and oral language development are key to eventual literacy success.
- Early childhood curriculum is increasingly driven by academic skill development.

As an IRC member, you are likely nodding your head vigorously at this point. You aren't surprised by the first statement, but might be dismayed that attempts to enhance skills/abilities associated with literacy success have resulted in accelerated curriculum in the early grades. (You should stop nodding your head now if you haven't or you might get a headache. Ralph learned that early in his days as a rock band musician.)

We all know about the pressures of accountability and testing. It is understandable that teachers become stressed about the limited amount of time available to make sure no child is left behind as we are racing to the top. Is an accelerated curriculum the best answer, or can we advocate for an alternative approach to meet the same goals?

The National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) of The National Center for Family Literacy emphasizes the importance of particular activities to foster the development of early literacy skills and abilities. Specifically, NELP recommends that children:

- Create sounds by singing and participating in music making.
- Listen and respond to music, stories, and discussions.
- Listen for various purposes: for enjoyment, to follow directions, to engage in dialogue with others and to attend to patterns in language.
- Engage in oral language activities that are linguistically, cognitively, and verbally stimulating.
- Work with rhymes and play language games with letter sounds (Strickland & Shanahan, 2004, p. 77).

Several more recent studies (Richmond, et al., 2015; Hansen, et al., 2014; Kraus, et al., 2014; Hallam, 2010; Yopp & Yopp, 2009) support these recommendations. Look closely at the words included in the bullet point statements above: *create, sing, make music, respond to music, listen*

*for enjoyment, engage in activities that are stimulating in various ways, play language games...* Why, it almost sounds like teachers are encouraged to help children ENJOY literacy. That is music to our ears.

As a songwriter, musician, and entertainer over the past decade, Ralph has had the pleasure of watching children literally throw themselves into the music. Most children don't need much prodding to dance, clap, sing, follow the song pattern, create their own rhymes, and ENJOY the experience provided to them by using music in the classroom. The fabulous thing about their engagement with music is that it has value beyond its inherent production of joy. The skills and abilities they learn through their engagement with music transfers well to their literacy skills and abilities.

A music listener's brain develops the tools to identify and recognize different sounds, pitches, and instruments. The same skills are applied to identifying sounds and tones employed in language. Similarly, the skills that are developed to perceive rhythms in music apply as well to the cadences of the spoken word. Auditory working memory supports a reader's ability to retain and organize the internalized sounds of the words as they are decoded. Sound pattern learning improves the reader's ability to decode the written word into recognizable and familiar sounds, syllables, and words. This is essential to transforming visual symbols into language. Speech-in-noise perception is the degree to which the listener can prioritize the sounds that have value vs. those which are background noise; in reading comprehension, the child has to determine the degree to which particular details in the reading have value and those that provide background but non-essential information.

When children fall in love with a bedtime story, they request it night after night, memorizing the words, feeling the comfort of the familiarity of the story, enjoying the cadence of the caregiver's voice. When children fall in love with a song they sing it over and over, internalizing the words, the melody, and the sounds of the instrument. They are essentially dancing and singing their way to brain growth. Many things teachers and children do during the school day require hard work, but for

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teachers and children alike, music entertains as it enhances learning. Listening to songs, writing new verses, dancing to the rhythm, interpreting themes in the music, and identifying types of patterns open wonderful opportunities for thinking, creating, imagining, and playing. Isn't that what learning is all about?

**About Ralph Covert** – A Grammy-nominated, nationally touring and performing artist, Ralph has appeared on the Disney Channel and other TV and radio shows. His newest release is *Ralph's World Rocks and Reads*. The "Illinois Reads" ambassador and Chicago-based father is also the author of four picture books. Visit [www.ralphsworld.com](http://www.ralphsworld.com) for more information.

**About Roxanne Farwick Owens** – Dr. Owens is the Chair of Teacher Education at DePaul University and a former president of the Illinois Reading Council.

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# LITERACY LINKS

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. These links and past links will be available on the IRC Website under "**Literacy Links**" on the homepage.

## Reading Passages

**Storybird:** This online tool lets anyone make visual stories in seconds. Artwork from illustrators and animators around the world inspires writers of any age to turn these images into fresh stories. These stories are then posted online for others to read and make comments in a safe environment.

## Comprehensive Resources

**OpenEd:** This online resource has an assessment that is available both online and to print. It can also be graded automatically. These assessments provide feedback in a detailed mastery chart, which is linked to individual lesson plans, videos and resources for students that are aligned to the learning standards.

## Web 2.0 Tools

**Trading Card Creator:** This online tool allows students to create trading cards for story elements, using different templates that are available, incorporating all of the analysis necessary to make an authentic trading card.

## Assessment

**Quizizz:** This online questioning tool can be used with any device with a web browser. There are quizzes already made or you can create your own.

## Interactive Resources

**News In Levels:** This online resource has news articles available in three reading levels. There are also online learning games and opportunities to chat and Skype with others.

## Videos

**Vidionary:** This online resource is a video dictionary. It is a collection of short videos devoted to defining words by showing various example scenes illustrating a word's meaning and presenting the text of the word itself in a visually meaningful way.

## Flashlight-Literacy: Getting Kids Crazy About Reading

Barclay Marcell

### What's in YOUR Flashlight? The Motivation To Read Checklist

Slouching behind whatever second grader was waving her hand, I lived in fear of being called on. These were the days of round robin reading and I was due. How I dreaded the muffled giggles once I began chopping my way through a paragraph. There were no labels on classroom doors at Green Vale Elementary, but I knew I was in the buzzard room. Our book spines were emblazoned with the word EASY. I pictured my best friend, Anne, in the bluebird room next door, reading chapter books.

I hated reading. And no one seemed to notice. Not my parents and certainly not my teacher, Mrs. Shubert, whose recommended reading list consisted of Dick and Jane and a dog named Spot.

That summer, however, everything changed. While on a beachside vacation, my dad picked up a book at the local library. I don't remember sandcastles, movies, or ice cream from those ten days on Fishers Island. What I do remember is that each night my dad read aloud from *Lassie, Come Home* and that together, we endured the collie's impossible travails over miles of hardship as she trekked back to her beloved Timmy. I remember crying when this once magnificent dog, now emaciated, drew herself off the ground and limped toward her boy, returning from school -- walking, then running down the lane, disbelieving his eyes. Lassie's ribs were protruding; her fur was matted. Yet, her straggly tail thumped the sidewalk as she plopped at Timmy's feet. This scene played in my mind again and again, more vivid than anything at the local theatre.

For reasons unknown, once our vacation ended, my dad returned to his work life and discontinued our reading routine. It turns out *Lassie, Come Home* was the only book he ever read to me. But that was all it took. The minute our station wagon pulled into the driveway, I was off to the library scanning the shelves for dog books. *Lad, A Dog*, though arguably an 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, filled my late summer imagination. From there, I went into a horse phase -- galloping with the Black and Misty. Never mind that I was terrified of horses. Come December, I had befriended a pig named Wilber and a mangy dog named Yeller.

I was a reader. In fact, I had become what we teachers desire most for their students -- I was under the covers, flashlight in hand, hearing Travis reprimand Old Yeller, little knowing they'd soon be best friends, sitting at the breakfast table with Fern, staring out the window in horror at the sight of her father walking briskly toward the pig barn, ax in hand.

Travis, Fern, Timmy, Wilber are imprinted in my memory forever, more so than Anne who soon gave way to other best friends. Their adventures opened the reading-door for me, providing motivation that Dick and Jane and red-checked phonics workbooks could not muster.

So, what's *your* reading story? What characters kept *you* awake under the covers? Perhaps your reading-door was opened by a nightly ritual with a caring parent.

But maybe, just maybe, your door was opened by the hand of a special teacher -- the kind who chuckled at Wilber's antics while reading aloud *Charlotte's Web*. The kind who cradled a book as if it were a delicacy. The kind who, in the words of Linda Gambrell, "blessed" books so enthusiastically, you wanted to grab them out of her hand and read them that very second.

We want to be *that* kind of teacher. We want to transform back-row buzzards into Flashlight-Readers who are crazy about reading.

But how *do* we instill motivation in our students?

In her 2011 article, *Seven Rules of Engagement: What's Most Important to Know About Motivation to Read*, Linda Gambrell speaks of the correlation between reading motivation and reading achievement. She goes on to name the non-negotiables: choice, access, relevance, time for sustained reading, appropriate praise.

With apologies to Dr. Gambrell for such a simplistic distilling of her "rules", here is a checklist in the form of the acronym, BATTERIES.

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- B = Bonding;** Know the profile of each reader
- A = Affirming;** Point out what readers are doing well
- T = Text Matching;** Provide choice and appropriate complexity
- T = Targeting Instruction;** Know the What's and Why's; goal setting
- E = Enticing;** Got a Marketing Plan? Make it relevant.
- R = Read Aloud! Read Aloud! Read Aloud!**
- I = Intrinsic Rewards;** Good-bye, prize box; hello, reading rewards
- E = Engaging with Peers;** Provide sharing time; reading is a social affair
- S = Safety;** Success-Reading; Conferring with each student

Amid the preponderance of standardized testing, the deluge of data, and the sobering overhaul of the teacher evaluation system, we cannot lose sight of the big ideas. Do we know the reading profile for each student? Are we highlighting what students are doing well? Do our readers have choice and are we providing them with good fit books? Are we marketing books with engaging book talks? Are students aware of the end game – comprehension – or do they still think reading fast is reading well? Are we guarding the read-aloud time with a passion, not allowing interventionists to pull struggling students during their only time to hear higher level text?

Remember the legacy of Lassie, Wilber, and Travis. There are no buzzards or bluebirds, only the door to lifelong reading and learning which we have the opportunity to open. A privilege like no other.

### References

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## About the Author



Barclay Marcell is a literacy teacher at Roosevelt Elementary School in Park Ridge, Illinois. She graduated from Wheaton College with a major in literature and thereafter earned her MBA at DePaul University, followed by her MAT and Reading Specialist degree from National-Louis University.

She has authored articles for *The Reading Teacher*, *Educational Leadership*, *Reading Today*, *Teaching K-8*, and the *Illinois Reading Council Journal*. She is a freelance writer for Mailbox publications and a contributor to Choice Literacy. She is certified in the Wilson Reading System and is the originator of the widely used Beanie Baby Reading Strategies. She is passionate about reading motivation and engagement.

## IRC Election Ballot Results

Thank you to all members who voted in the 2015 Illinois Reading Council Election Ballot.

Congratulations goes to the following candidates:

**Vice President - Priscilla Dwyer**

**Secretary - Joyce Jenning**

Special thanks also goes to all candidates who participated in the election. Your support of IRC is greatly appreciated!



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## 2015 - 2016 Wired Wednesday Webinars on Culturally Responsive Instruction Webinars will begin at 7:00 p.m.

### **September 23, 2015 ~ Pedro A. Noguera** **Schooling for Resilience: Lessons from Single Sex Schools**

Learn about findings from a three-year study of seven single sex schools. The study did yield interesting insights about the theory of change utilized by these educators and the strategies they employ to counter the perceived risks and to promote resilience among this highly vulnerable population of students.

### **October 14, 2015 ~ Catherine Compton-Lilly** **Reading Lessons from Martin: A Case Study of One African American Student**

Hear how cultural differences in experiences and expectations affect learning and awareness of times when teachers and students are out-of-sync. It gives pause for reflection and subsequent changes that can enhance learning for young children.

### **November 11, 2015 ~ Allison Skerrett** **Drawing on Diverse Students' Out-of-School Language, Literacy, and Cultural Practices for Teaching and Learning in the Literacy Classroom**

Through participating in this seminar, teachers will strengthen their knowledge and practices of making classroom environments more culturally and academically fulfilling for today's diverse student populations.

### **January 13, 2016 ~ Dana Stachowiak** **Reading and Writing with a Critical Social Justice Literacy Framework**

Obtain an understanding of teaching through a critical social justice literacy framework. Examples of teacher dispositions, how to close with an anti oppression lens, and how to write for social action will be shared.

### **February 10, 2016 ~ Althier Lazar** **Teaching for Social Equity in the Literacy Classroom**

Social equity literacy teaching is a model that fuses literacy teaching with concepts of social equity. The webinar will explore each dimension of social equity literacy teaching and will profile teachers whose work reflects this model.

### **March 9, 2016 ~ JoEllen McCarthy** **Best Practice Writing in Culturally Responsive Classrooms**

### **April 13, 2016 ~ Becki Cohn-Vargas and Dorothy Steele** **Identity Safe Classrooms: Places to Belong and Learn**

Hear about research results of the Stanford Integrated Schools Project, demonstrating that students in identity-safe classrooms were stronger academically and felt more identity safe. We will highlight the ways the kinds of literacy: reading, writing, speaking, and listening, can incorporate strategies drawn from the four Cs of identity safety: Child-centered classrooms, Cultivating Diversity as a Resource, Classroom Relationships, and Caring Classroom Environments.

### **May 11, 2016 ~ Doris Walker-Dalhouse & Victoria Risko** **Identity, Equity, and Literacy: Focusing on Struggling Readers**

We will promote educational equity for struggling readers by supporting their acquisition of foundational English Language Arts skills and higher order thinking abilities. The strategies presented can be integrated into the classroom in ways that support all students.

### **June 8, 2016 ~ Rebecca Powell** **Implementing the CRIOP Model**

The Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (CRIOP) model is grounded in the work of multicultural and equity educators, literacy scholars and second language acquisition theorists, the CRIOP provides a comprehensive model for realizing culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning practices. Participants will be introduced to the six elements of the model and will be presented with many practical ways for implementing these elements in their classrooms.

*Sponsored by the Illinois Reading Council and the Wisconsin State Reading Association for members only!*

Register online at [www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org/wiredwednesdaywebinars.html](http://www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org/wiredwednesdaywebinars.html)