



**IRC**  
ILLINOIS  
READING  
COUNCIL

# Communicator

Volume 35, Number 2

November 2011

## In This Issue:

### BOARD BRIEFS

President's Column . . . . . 1, 4  
IRA State Coordinator . . . . . 2-3

### IRC ACTIVITIES

ICARE Writing Project . . . . . 3  
Thank You! . . . . . 4  
2012 IRC Conference . . . . . 10  
2012 Prairie State Award . . . . . 16

### FORMS

ICARE for Reading Award . . . . . 5  
IRC Conference  
    Registration . . . . . 8  
    Housing . . . . . 9  
Static Stick Decal Contest . . . 11-12

### FEATURES

ILLC's 38th Annual Young  
    Authors Conference . . . . . 3  
Illinois Authors' Corner . . . . . 6  
Virtual Author Visits . . . . . 7  
Red, White, and Blue Quilt . . . . . 7  
Technology Tips . . . . . 10  
Meet an IRC Researcher . . . . . 13  
Newspaper in Education . . . . . 13  
Cool Studies . . . . . 14-15  
Seymour Science . . . . . 15

I had the November article just about finished and ready to send when we got the news that Steve Jobs had died. His accomplishments were all over the news, which led me to wonder... who taught Steve Jobs? What was he like as a student? Did his mind work so fast that he ended up being a troublemaker in school? Did he teach his teachers a thing or two because he's just that brilliant? Was he a joy to teach? So of course I googled him. You might be surprised at what you can find if you search for Steve+Jobs+teacher. As a result, there are four things in particular I wanted to share with you.



**IRC**  
**President**  
*Cindy Wilson*

First of all, a blog entry on fastcompany.com (by Adrian Slywotzky) categorized Jobs' approach to business around four elements, and it was striking to me how closely these elements paralleled the Illinois Reading Council. There is the product design itself: that would refer to the council's structure and make-up as a body in general. The second element is the customer's experience. Many individuals put forth enormous effort toward creating friendly and productive environments for board meetings, the leadership retreat, the conference, and at council events. Where Jobs' products were designed to work "glitch-free" as much as possible, IRC events follow proven designs to also operate in such a way to provide a smooth experience. Third would be the message. Slywotzky says "An Apple ad is never about the device. It's about what the device represents and what it enables someone to do." I'd have to do some pretty close analysis here to see if IRC's "advertising" follows this pattern, but that actually sounds like fun to me. He also says that "Word of mouth and free publicity do a lot of the marketing work," and I would have to say that this does describe the work of IRC to a "T." Our reputation as a first class professional development organization is truly known far and wide, although I am always thinking about ways to throw the net even wider. The last element is the business model. Our Illinois Reading Council has a central office, which not every state organization has. If you've been involved in the council for long, you might already know and appreciate how well our office operates and just how much the folks working there do to make the rest of our lives go smoothly in our volunteer work with the state, local, and special interest councils. Arlene, Carrie, Brenda, and Kendra are symphony conductors when it comes to making sure the necessary entities

*Continued on page 4*

**2012 IRC Conference**  
**March 15-17, 2012**



**Registration**  
**and Housing is**  
**available now!**



**IRA**  
**State Coordinator**  
*Roberta Sejnost*

*“You will never win if you never begin.”*

~ Helen Rowland,  
English-American  
writer (1876-1950)

Suddenly it is November; school routines have settled in, and many terrific local council meetings

have been planned and implemented. Now, as you look toward the future, be sure to pencil in **March 15-17, 2012** for the IRC Conference, *Literacy in the Land of Lincoln*. It is during this conference that we honor past and present presidents at the Saturday Presidents’ Breakfast and when we honor local and statewide councils with the **IRC’s Council of Excellence Award** and a \$100 check. Last year 85% of our local and statewide councils received this award. Was your council one of these excellent councils? If not, remember, *“You will never win if you never begin.”* So begin today by checking out the Council of Excellence guidelines in the Presidents’ Leadership binder or on the IRC website at [www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org](http://www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org). As you examine those guidelines, be aware of the following item changes:

**Required item 1: Officer Report must be submitted to the IRC Office by April 15<sup>th</sup>.** The IRC office will then submit the report to IRA

**Required item 6: Submit both a description of the IRC/IRA display and a picture.**

**Optional item H: Submit a copy of the Membership Grant**

**Optional item N: Representatives on all IRC committees**

It would be truly exciting if every single one of our local and statewide council presidents could walk across the stage to receive the Council of Excellence Award at the Presidents’ Breakfast.

Then, while working on the Council of Excellence, think about using some of these same requirements to gain **IRA’s Honor Council Award**. Like our own Council of Excellence Award, IRA’s Honor Council Award recognizes local and special interest councils that organize and conduct well-rounded programs serving the council members, the community, the state/provincial association or affiliate, and the International Reading Association between March 1 of one year and March 1 of the next.

As you know, this year the IRA annual convention will be held in Chicago. Wouldn’t it be extraordinary if all of our local and statewide councils were awarded the prestigious Honor Council Award? And, this year IRA has made it easier than ever to do just that by instituting the following changes:

*“Was your council one of these excellent councils? If not, remember, you will never win if you never begin. So begin today...”*

1. Intent to Participate form is not required.
2. All submissions are electronically sent to IRA:
  - a. No artifacts are sent to IRA
  - b. Merely scan and attach relevant documentation such as emails, flyers, etc.
3. Membership must simply increase; no % is stated!

A basic requirement is that the council must be in good standing according to IRA Bylaws. Specifically, the council must demonstrate that (a) all reported council officers are members of the International Reading Association, and (b) at least 10 council members are also members of the International Reading Association. Council officers for the year may be counted in this total. To make it easy to determine who the new members are, any new member who joined the International Reading Association after March 1, 2011, can be identified by a membership number **greater than 1060465**. Other requirements, as well as a detailed explanation of each and a work sheet and checklist to help you monitor your progress, can be accessed on the following website <http://www.reading.org/AccessFor/CouncilLeaders/CouncilLeaderAwards.aspx>. When you examine these requirements, you will see how many of them are exactly what your councils are already

doing, such as having or carrying out a/an:

- A. Image Brochure
- B. Website/Social Networking
- C. Newsletter
- D. PD for Future Educators
- E. Community Literacy Project
- F. Family Literacy project
- G. Young Authors project
- H. Community Service Project
- I. Membership Campaign

And, you do not need to do all of these, but merely pick and choose according to the guidelines listed.

Finally, mark your calendar to attend **brief** Council of Excellence and Honor Council work sessions after the November and January Board of Directors' meetings to get help and questions answered about these two awards. Above all, remember, *"You will never win if you never begin."* So, do begin!

Yours in Literacy,

*Bobbie Sejnost*

## Books Created For Illinois Students, By Illinois Students

The Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education (ICARE) in conjunction with IRC is again sponsoring this popular classroom writing project. Illinois students and teachers are invited to participate in this unique literacy project that is designed to gather information about statues, memorials, or monuments in communities throughout Illinois. The books will be printed into two volumes. Volume 1: Who Is That? Statues Across Illinois. Volume 2: What Is That? Monuments and Memorials Across Illinois.

Manuscript entries are due **December 16, 2011**. Please see IRC website for details at [www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org](http://www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org).

### Mission

The mission of the Illinois Reading Council is to provide support and leadership to educators as they promote and teach lifelong literacy.



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

Phone: 888-454-1341

Fax: 309-454-3512

E-Mail: [irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org](mailto:irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org)

Website: [www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org](http://www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org)

Ning: [illinoisreadingcouncil.ning.com](http://illinoisreadingcouncil.ning.com)

and join us on Facebook!

The Illinois Language and Literacy Council  
and the Illinois Reading Council  
will co-sponsor the

## 38th Annual Young Authors Conference May 19, 2012

at Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois.

The 2012 Guidelines and Registration packets will be available in early November.

Please visit the IRC Website at [www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org](http://www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org) for more information. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Christina Podraza at [cpodraza@bsd2.org](mailto:cpodraza@bsd2.org).

*President's Message continued from page 1*

interface successfully in carrying out the business end of IRC. All four elements—product, customer experience, message, and business—work together to create the well-oiled machine that is the Illinois Reading Council.

So what can teachers learn from Steve Jobs, besides how to engage students and provide access to knowledge and skills by using technology? One of the best blog entries I found is from edSocialMedia.com and is titled “What Steve Jobs Can Teach Teachers,” written by Steve Valentine, an English teacher from New Jersey. He points out that Jobs developed his products from the perspective of prospective users, which makes sense. Then Valentine approaches that concept through his teacher lens. He points out “...Jobsian teachers would have to be great learners themselves, and they would have to design every classroom experience *as learners, for learners.*” He asks himself the question, as a teacher, “What is my iMac? What is the key product that I extend to students, and does it have a user focus?” He describes this as a shift that many teachers might consider, to think about what they

would have to do to prepare students to learn in addition to what they would have to do to prepare themselves to teach. Part of this preparation refers to knowing our students well, how they learn best, what is most comfortable for them in terms of communication, and what topics grab their interest. Of course we all want to believe that our classrooms are learner-centered, but it's also easy to lose sight of that, when we're trying to meet AYP, convert to the Common Core, keep track of data, provide the right interventions, get Celine to the bathroom on time and make sure Gerard has his backpack sealed up in his lice bag before school starts.

The third topic I wanted to remind you of is the educator award that Jobs created: the Apple Distinguished Educator Award. Nominations closed just before this article went to press, and I wish I'd thought to address the topic with you earlier in the year, but there's always next year. Winners are announced in March, although I'm not sure exactly when. Wouldn't it be fun, though, for us to get to announce an Illinois teacher or professor as a recipient while we are at the conference in 2013? Just a little FYI on the side: the ceremony for the 'class' of 2011 is taking place in Bali. Wonder where it will be next year....

## THANK YOU!

A million thanks to all the Illinois Reading Council members who generously donated books during Summer Leadership for the school libraries in Joplin, Missouri. Hundreds of professional and children's literature books were boxed and shipped to the tornado devastated area of Joplin. Special thanks to Pam Farris for the idea, Pam Nelson for coordinating the recipients of the books in Joplin, the Northern Illinois Reading Council for facilitating the project, Arlene Pennie, and Greg Carter of Blue Ribbon Book Fairs for transporting the books, free of charge, to Joplin. Once again the Illinois Reading Council leads the flock in literacy. Thank you!



So what's the takeaway? First of all, we all need to take a moment to look around our classrooms and wonder: is the next 'Steve Jobs' sitting in my classroom? One article described him as “quite turbulent” and “indifferent towards school for long periods of time” ([www.ibtimes.com](http://www.ibtimes.com)). You really never know: is that kid whose behavior you just don't understand, or the one who won't offer something up in a discussion, or the one who never brings homework back someone who will contribute something amazing to the world in time? It would take a huge amount of patience, but I wonder if all of our students would turn out a little better if we could somehow see each individual as though she or he were going to be a life-changer for the world some day. Secondly, it's nice to know that IRC is following the same model as someone as highly successful as Steve Jobs did; perhaps local council leaders can take a fresh approach to their council structures in light of the four elements (product, customer experience, message, and business). Next—and I know you probably already do this, but if not, try to carve out a moment or two each week to take a breath and think about your planning to teach in terms of preparing your students to learn—flip your perspective to see where and when you are designing classroom experiences built from their needs and perspectives as learners. And last, but certainly not least, take some time to think about nominating someone for the Apple Distinguished Educator Award next year—how about yourself? I'm sure you deserve it!

**Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education**  
**GENE CRAMER ICARE FOR READING AWARD**  
**NOMINATION FORM**

The Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education (ICARE) is accepting nominations for the annual Gene Cramer ICARE for Reading Award. This award was renamed in 2008 to honor Gene Cramer, the founder of ICARE. ICARE recognizes the importance of educators in modeling the love of reading and the printed word for today's students who are constantly presented with a vast array of other media. Thus, the purpose of the Gene Cramer ICARE for Reading Award is to honor an educator who has performed in an outstanding manner to show concern for the affective domain and who has promoted lifelong reading habits among students. The award is given annually at the March meeting of ICARE to be held in conjunction with the Illinois Reading Council conference in Springfield.

**PROCEDURE**

1. Inform IRC members of the award. (Note: The person nominated NEED NOT, however, be a member of IRC.)
2. Distribute Gene Cramer ICARE for Reading Award forms.
3. Return form by January 1, 2012 to Christine Boardman Moen, ICARE President-Elect, 12754 Lake Pointe, Winnebago, Illinois 61088 or attach to an email and send to moencb@aol.com.
4. The winner, after careful consideration, will be informed by February 1, 2012.
5. The award will be presented at the IRC Conference in March 2012.

**CRITERIA**

1. Educator in good standing in the profession.
2. Educator who contributes to the spread of the joy of reading and promotes reading habits among students.
3. Educator who serves as an exemplary model for others in promoting the affective domain of reading.
4. Educator recommended for the award by other educators.

**CANDIDATE FOR NOMINATION**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**REASONS FOR NOMINATION**

Please submit your reasons for nominating this educator on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to this form. Provide specific details that illustrate your nominee's qualifications.

**NOMINATOR**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for helping ICARE circulate the message about this award. Please feel free to make copies for your colleagues. We are confident that your enthusiasm and participation in this program will help ICARE and IRC foster the love of reading among all our children here in Illinois.

**Return form by January 1, 2012 to Christine Boardman Moen, ICARE President-Elect, 12754 Lake Pointe, Winnebago, Illinois 61088 or attach to an e-mail and send to moencb@aol.com.**



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.

### ***Chigger***

Written by Raymond Bial raybial.com  
Illustrated by Anna Bial  
MotesBooks November 2011  
Category: Novel Ages: 6-9

### ***Dear Tabby***

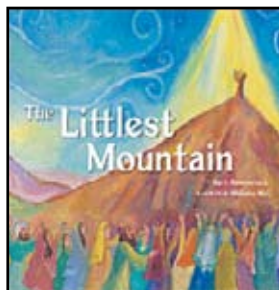
Written by Carolyn Crimi carolyncrimi.com  
Illustrated by David Roberts  
HarperCollins February 2011  
Category: Picture Book Ages: 4-8

### ***Akata Witch***

Written by Nnedi Okorafor nnedi.com  
Penguin April 2011  
Category: Fantasy Ages: 12+

### ***The Littlest Mountain***

Written by Barb Rosenstock barbroosenstock.com  
Illustrated by Melanie Hall  
Kar-Ben March 2011  
Category: Bible Ages: 4-8  
God needs to find a special place where he will tell all people the ten rules for peace. The mountains of the world compete for this great honor, bragging of their beauty and importance. Little Mt. Sinai knows it's not important enough to be God's special place. Could the littlest mountain be just what God is looking for? Based on an ancient story about the Ten Commandments.



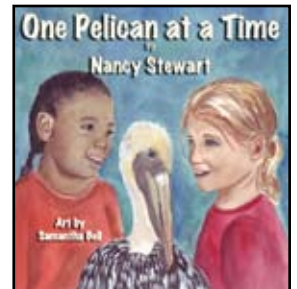
February 2012 IRC Communicator and Illinois Authors' Corner deadline for submissions is December 1, 2011!

### ***One Pelican at a Time:***

#### ***A Story of the Gulf Oil Spill***

Written by Nancy Stewart nancystewartbooks.com  
Illustrated by Samantha Bell  
Guardian Angel March 2011  
Category: Picture Book Ages: 7-10

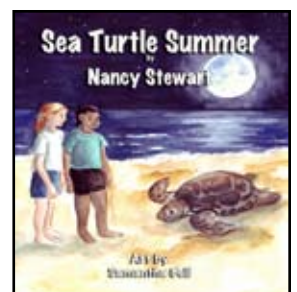
Bella and Britt love living by the beach. When they find oil washing to shore from a gulf spill, they want to help but are told there is nothing for kids to do. But when their friend, the old crooked beak pelican, becomes covered with oil, the girls take action no matter what adults say. They help save his life by their quick thinking and action. *One Pelican at a Time* was on Amazon's Bestseller List for Children for 18 weeks.



### ***Sea Turtle Summer***

Written by Nancy Stewart nancystewartbooks.com  
Guardian Angel December 2011  
Category: Picture Book Ages: 7-10

Bella and Britt think living by the beach is the coolest thing ever. When they discover a Loggerhead Sea Turtle laying her eggs in broad daylight, the girls go into action to help. No one, though, seems to care about the nest. The beach is a busy place and is getting busier by the minute on such a beautiful summer's day. What can they do? Who will help, and what do they learn about themselves? As a bonus, *Sea Turtle Summer* contains cool kid appealing facts about sea turtles.



## Virtual Author Visits

By Suzanne Slade

An author visit is a great way to get students fired up about reading and writing. But what if you don't have the funds to pay an author to come to your school? Well, I've got great news. There's an awesome new way to bring authors into your classroom for little to no cost—virtual author visits!

Virtual visits are easy (really!) and reasonable. The amazing part is that these live author visits are interactive and go much like regular classroom visits—even better in some ways. For example, during my virtual visits students get to meet my adorable dog, Corduroy, which isn't possible when I go to schools. They can see my writing office (aka, my dining room!). I also share the “show-and-tells” I use during my regular school visits: a sloppy story I wrote in first grade, the various stages of book production, a letter I received from Beverly Cleary when I was in 4th grade, plus I read one of my books. Then I wrap up with a question and answer time where students ask all sorts of interesting questions!

If you'd like to give virtual author visits a try, you only need two things. A computer equipped with a camera and speakers (most newer computers have these built in), and Skype software. The software is free and only takes a few minutes to download. You can get the Mac or Windows version at <http://www.skype.com>.

Once you're ready to invite authors into your school, one of the best places to find authors is the Skype an Author Network at <http://skypeanauthor.wetpaint.com>. This website lists hundreds of authors, and provides a page about each one where you can find out the author's books and type of presentations. Some authors even offer free, short “meet the author” visits. So what are you waiting for? Shake off your technophobia (or call in the techy wizard at your school to help you out) and have fun meeting new authors!

[Suzanne Slade is the award-winning author of 85 children's books. On Read-Across-America Day 2011 she visited classrooms in 13 states via Skype, all in one day! Recent picture books include *Climbing Lincoln's Steps* (winner 2011 Paterson Prize for Books for Young People, 2011 Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People), *Multiply on the Fly*, *What's the Difference?*, and *What's New at the Zoo?* (2011 Teachers' Choice Children's Book Award.) Find out more about the author at [www.suzanneslade.com](http://www.suzanneslade.com).]

## Red, White, and Blue Quilt

By Carie Ramirez

At the Illinois Reading Conference back in March, I had the chance to go to a session with Author/Illustrator/Song-writer, Debbie Clement. It was in her session that she introduced me to a book that will now and forever be a favorite! The book is titled *Red, White and Blue*. The book is about our country and what represents our country and how to say thank you for all those who have fought for our freedom. The author did all of the illustrations by making a quilt piece for each page. This prompted me to have my class make their own quilt to go with the book. We started by marble painting (white paint on red and blue paper and then white paper with red and blue paint). Then I cut out the stripes and the stars and then my students glued the stars and stripes onto the other pages. Along with making the quilt, they have learned words by singing them (there is a CD in the back of the book) and they have also learned to sign the song. My students didn't do all of the quilting work on their own though. There were several teachers who did marble painting for us so that we could get our quilt finished in time for the end of the year and big enough to cover the majority of one wall in the classroom! All of this work was a great lesson for my students. Although I teach about patriotism daily in my classroom, this was the ultimate lesson and tied in perfectly with Memorial Day! Here are the blogs the author Debbie Clement has written about our quilt!

<http://rainbowswithinreach.blogspot.com/2011/05/marvelous-marble-master-pieced.html>

<http://rainbowswithinreach.blogspot.com/2011/05/carie-my-heroshero.html>

<http://rainbowswithinreach.blogspot.com/2011/06/concluding-kinder-quilts.html>

<http://rainbowswithinreach.blogspot.com/2011/06/red-white-and-blue-by-quilt.html>





Illinois Reading Council

**ONLINE HOUSING RESERVATION SYSTEM**

Conference Dates – Thursday, March 15; Friday, March 16; and Saturday, March 17, 2012

Over 1,200 rooms have been reserved for the 2012 IRC Conference. Because of the large number of rooms needed each year, IRC utilizes the assistance of the Housing Bureau at the Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau. Special room rates have been negotiated at the hotels/motels listed below. To obtain these special rates, reservations must be made through the Online Housing Reservation System by February 22, 2012.

Go to [www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org](http://www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org)  
Select **Conference** on the menu,  
then click on **Reserve Housing Online!**

**ON-SITE HOTELS**

**President Abraham Lincoln Hotel.....\$106**  
701 East Adams St., Spfd., IL 62701  
*Located adjacent to the Convention Center*

**Hilton Springfield Hotel.....\$121**  
700 East Adams St., Spfd., IL 62701  
*Across the street from the Convention Center*

Meetings and meal functions are held at both the Abraham Lincoln and the Hilton Hotels.

**MOTELS NORTHEAST OF DOWNTOWN**

**Northfield Inn.....\$81**  
3280 Northfield Dr., Spfd., IL 62702

**Ramada Springfield North.....\$82**  
3281 Northfield Dr., Spfd., IL 62702

**MOTELS SOUTHEAST OF DOWNTOWN**

**Candlewood Suites.....\$70**  
2501 Sunrise Drive, Spfd., IL 62703

**Hampton Inn East.....\$105**  
3185 S. Dirksen Parkway, Spfd., IL 62703

**Crowne Plaza.....\$130**  
3000 S. Dirksen Parkway, Spfd., IL 62703

**Hilton Garden Inn.....\$106**  
3100 S. Dirksen Parkway, Spfd. IL 62703

**Comfort Suites.....\$89**  
2620 S. Dirksen Parkway, Spfd., IL 62703

**Holiday Inn Express.....\$110**  
3050 S. Dirksen Parkway, Spfd. IL 62703

**Drury Inn & Suites.....\$105**  
3180 S. Dirksen Parkway, Spfd., IL 62703

**Microtel Inn & Suites.....\$84**  
2636 Sunrise Drive, Spfd. IL 62703

- **Housing Reservations** will only be processed online with a credit card until **February 22, 2012**. After February 22nd, all rooms that have not been reserved will be released for general sale.
- **Advance Deposit** of one night's room and tax will be charged to your credit card by some of the hotels. If you would like to pay by check, please forward your **deposit check** to your assigned hotel and your credit card will be credited. Do not send any checks to the Illinois Reading Council or the Springfield Housing Bureau.
- **Confirmation** will be emailed to you from the Housing Bureau upon completion of your housing reservation, as well as any changes or cancelations. Please keep this email for your records.
- **Cancelations** or changes to your arrival/departure must be made before February 22, 2012 to receive a full refund. The advance deposit charge is non-refundable after February 22, 2012. Please note that some hotels charge for early departure and some require a two-night minimum stay. After February 22nd, please make changes directly with the hotel.
- **Double Rooms** (2 beds) are at a premium. Please do not reserve a double room (2 beds) unless there are 2 or more attendees.
- **Free Shuttle Service** will be provided by the IRC between all the hotels except the on-site hotels listed and the Prairie Capital Convention Center on Thursday and Friday. Shuttles run approximately every 45-60 minutes from 6:15 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Night shuttles run every 90 minutes from 6:15 p.m. until 10:30 p.m. On Saturday, there are many parking options available and on-street metered parking is FREE!

## 2012 IRC Conference Literacy in the Land of Lincoln

By Pat Braun, Conference Chair



Come to the conference ready to engage and enjoy these special events:



**Storytelling:** Bring your own stories, listen to others, and participate in interactive stories with Donna Stone and Linda Tammen



**Poetry Coffeehouse:** Visit the home of Springfield's "second most famous son," Vachel Lindsay, where the poet composed "*Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight*." Go back in time and listen to poetry, share your own, and enjoy light refreshments.



**Lincoln Museum sessions:** Learn about Lincoln, and how the museum can support your literacy lessons.



**The Lincoln Banquet:** Visit with the President and Mary Todd Lincoln and hear Linda Gorham read James Haskins' accounts of African-American Civil War heroes.



**Illinois Authors/Illustrators Luncheon:** Converse with an Illinois Author/Illustrator and receive one of their signed books.



Included in addition to these special events are over 35 featured speakers, author Gary Paulsen, and over 300 sessions by teachers, professors, and literacy experts.

For more details, please visit the IRC website.

## Technology Tips

By Tracy Tarasiuk, IRC Technology Chair

The Illinois Reading Council's technology committee has two purposes: To assist local councils with technology support and encourage the integration of technology in the classroom. As part of our second purpose we plan to share websites and technological tools that teachers can use in the classroom. We want to share information here that members of the committee have used and value, so you know that these websites and tools are useful and tested by teachers. We also hope to support teachers by being available through the IRC NING. At the NING you can message our committee or individual members.

For this issue of the *IRC Communicator*, we would like to encourage you to log on and try out a website called Edmodo (edmodo.com). Edmodo is a social networking site developed specifically for education. It appears and acts a lot like Facebook; in fact, that's one aspect of the site that has motivated and excited our students who have used it in our classrooms. To begin an Edmodo site for your own classroom you need to go to the site and sign on as a teacher; you don't need to set up a school or district site, or bother your technology coordinator to get this started for you. Once you are logged on, your students can log on. You will be given a private code for each group you create. This is what your students will enter when they sign up. This ensures that your Edmodo group is private. Only those to whom you give the code will have access.

The benefits of using Edmodo with your class are endless. First, we hear stories in the news about children who misuse or abuse social networking sites, bully others, and give out too much personal information. Using Edmodo allows you to model good Internet behavior for your students. Second, Edmodo is a great site to have discussions about classroom readings. Students learn how to evaluate others' opinions and arguments, and synthesize information. Finally, Edmodo is a site for teachers. At the site you can connect with other teachers, set up calendars and grade books, and join other online educational communities in your subject area. Overall, Edmodo is engaging for the students and time saving for you. Give this site a try.

**The Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education  
and  
The Illinois Reading Council**

# STATIC STICK DECAL CONTEST

The Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education (ICARE) and the Illinois Reading Council (IRC) invite **YOU** to design a STATIC STICK DECAL that encourages children to read.

## QUALIFICATIONS

You must be a student in grade 4, 5 or 6 in a school in the state of Illinois.

## GUIDELINES

Make your original design in the 4 inch square on the back of this sheet.

(Teachers may copy the application form as many times as needed.)

Invent an **original** character(s) to include in your design. You may **NOT** use any published cartoon or comic characters (including characters such as Snoopy, Bart Simpson, Power Rangers, Garfield, Barney, etc.) nor any computer-generated art.

Develop an **original** saying or slogan.

**You are limited to three colors plus black and white.** The label with Illinois Reading Council and Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education must be on the STATIC STICK DECAL design but it may be moved from the location on the application form.

Complete the application form on the back of this sheet. Mail it with your design to:

Kathleen Sweeney  
c/o Illinois Reading Council  
1210 Fort Jesse Road, Suite B2  
Normal, IL 61761

**ENTRIES MUST BE POSTMARKED NO LATER THAN JANUARY 15, 2012!**

## THE STATIC STICK DECAL CONTEST WINNER WILL RECEIVE:

An autographed book by a well-known children's author.

An invitation for the winner and his/her parents to be our guests at the Illinois Reading Council Conference Author Luncheon on Saturday, March 17, 2012 in Springfield, Illinois. The winner will sit in a place of honor and be introduced during the luncheon.

30 STATIC STICK DECALS with the winning design to distribute to classmates.

## TIPS

Don't forget – The work MUST BE ORIGINAL. You may not use any published trademark, cartoon, comic characters or computer-generated art.

**Keep the art work simple. Too much detail within the space provided may result in a smeared look when it is reproduced on the STATIC STICK DECAL.**

Fine line markers, pens and pencils work the best. Crayon is usually difficult to read.

Spelling must be standard and correct.

The Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education and The Illinois Reading Council

# STATIC STICK DECAL CONTEST APPLICATION

Illinois Reading Council Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Name \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

School Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

School Phone Number (with area code) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone Number (with area code) \_\_\_\_\_

Mail entries no later than **January 15, 2012** to:

Kathleen Sweeney  
c/o Illinois Reading Council  
1210 Fort Jesse Road, Suite B2  
Normal, IL 61761

## Meet an IRC Researcher

By Katie Ludes, IRC Studies and Research Committee



Educators always strive to enhance their teaching through reading the educational research. Some, however, actually delve into the world of researching so others may utilize the information found.

Tracy Tarasiuk, Reading Specialist for Park Campus School, is one who is delving

into the world of research through *The Creation of a Self-Efficacy Scale of Adolescent Literature* (actual title pending). As a Reading Specialist for the last 12 years, Tracy has great insight to help her through her research, which is at the beginning stages. Uniquely enough, Tracy did not begin her master's program thinking she would end up in the world of reading. Now she cannot imagine not being a part of it. She also currently teaches for Northern Illinois University's Reading Program. Tracy is working on this dissertation to find a self-efficacy scale, which may be utilized with adolescents so their own voice is heard. She is currently working on ways to have students' input be a part of the data used to provide interventions to struggling readers. So often students are placed into interventions without being consulted. Tracy believes by giving a voice to the students, interventions might become more beneficial for struggling adolescent readers. Through this scale, Reading Specialists or other educators will be able to more appropriately place students into an intervention for the student.

The creation of this scale, mostly geared towards 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, requires looking into many aspects of reading. Instead of focusing always on the objective testing data, the concept is to take an effective look into the students' feelings towards reading. Also, the goal is to look into the adolescents' perceptions on many different reading materials including but not limited to, cell phones, magazines, newspapers, online articles, etc. The research is in the beginning stages so conclusions cannot yet be drawn. Right now, Tracy is creating focus groups of students and teachers. Within the student groups, Tracy will be looking for insights into what the students are reading and writing. She will be doing the same with the teachers to see if there are differences in the ideas expressed by the two parties. These focus groups will help in developing a pilot testing which then will eventually lead to a final testing.

## Newspaper in Education

By Leslie Forsman, NIE Committee Co-Chair

As a new co-chair of the Newspapers In Education Committee, I spent some time this summer looking for ways to use the newspaper in classrooms. My Title I students and I enjoyed reading the "serial story" feature. It is simply a story that has been divided into time released (often weekly) chapters for publication; many are written specifically for this format. (In trying to research these, I found that a quick search often led to stories of serial murders rather than stories for children and young adults, which is why I have cited one of the companies here.)

"Breakfast Serials" is one company that provides stories to newspapers. They have recently launched an interactive website ([www.instantserials.com](http://www.instantserials.com)) through which you can subscribe (for a fee) to several different stories.

The Newspaper Association of America Foundation ([www.naafoundation.org](http://www.naafoundation.org)) site has several ideas and activities. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click on the NIE tag under Curriculum to find these. You can also click NIE under Research to find information about various studies regarding using newspapers as teaching tools. Almost everything at this site is available to you free of charge, including a serial story that you may use between now and November 30.

The Illinois Newspapers In Education page ([www.illinois-nie.com](http://www.illinois-nie.com)) has two larger documents and several one page activity files. In "300 ways to use the newspaper in your classroom with Illinois Learning Standards" learning standards and sample activities are presented. All of the materials this site offers are free of charge. Two examples are:

**Elementary Language Arts, 1 A 2a 12:** Have the students make 3 columns on a sheet of paper, and mark them "Prefixes," "Suffixes," and "Root Words." Have the students read through the newspaper to find examples of each to cut and paste or write them into the correct columns.

**Secondary Language Arts, 5 C 4a 7:** Find, keep and classify examples of figures of speech found in the newspaper. Make a poster to illustrate these findings.

As you use newspapers in your classroom, please share your ideas so that others might benefit also. Emails may be sent to: [newspaperineducation@illinoisreadingcouncil.org](mailto:newspaperineducation@illinoisreadingcouncil.org).

(\*NAAFoundation approved their paragraph for publication, 8-2-11.)  
(\*IPA/IL-FAC approved their paragraph for publication, 8-3-11.)

## Cool Studies: LCPM

By Lou Ferrolì

So, do primary-grade teachers have time these days to work on handwriting? Do upper-grade teachers give even a passing thought to teaching penmanship? Steve Graham observed a decade ago that “[I]n recent years, there has been a tendency to downplay or even eliminate handwriting instruction as part of the writing program.” Maybe the de-emphasis was because approaches like process writing and whole language placed great emphasis on content and process and not so much on form. Maybe we assume handwriting skills can be ignored because we can compose in other ways, such as word processing and speech synthesis. And we Illinoisans are told that handwriting doesn’t impact on ISAT, so who really cares anyway?

This bothersome current handwriting non-curriculum led me to discover a line of serious research that says that this handwriting stuff might be pretty important after all. One of those studies, done in 2000 by Graham, Harris, and Fink, asks if handwriting is causally related to writing skill. They’re not talking about the virtues of D’Nealian versus stick-and-ball versus Handwriting Without Tears. They’re talking about students’ development as writers. The researchers offer three reasons why we should care about handwriting, and I find each one of them compelling. First, in writing assessments, higher marks or scores are given to neatly written compositions. They cite as evidence a couple studies done in the 1980’s. Or you can see the Cool Studies column from February 2008. Second, if writers have to devote conscious attention to handwriting while composing, it taxes memory. It’s like automaticity in reading. Decoding effort drains attention away from comprehending. Likewise, if I have to think about how to make my letters, I can’t be thinking about composing. The mechanical part has to be automatic. And third, handwriting difficulties can lead to kids’ avoiding writing, having a mind-set that they can’t write, and becoming slow in their development as writers.

To communicate the demands of a seemingly simple thing like writing letters, the researchers unpack the activity. They say that producing a letter requires 1) retrieving an

image of the word and holding it in working memory; 2) accessing the corresponding motor program; 3) setting the parameters of size and speed; and 4) executing the task. So, if teaching handwriting seems a little mundane, think about it, instead, as teaching kids to “retrieve images from memory and access motor programs.” Kind of brings a new level of respect to the phrase “Zaner-Bloser.”

The researchers screened 310 kids who were halfway through first grade and gave them a timed handwriting test where they copied a sentence as many times as they could in a minute and a half. They included subjects if they scored in the bottom quarter and were confirmed by their teachers as having handwriting difficulties.

The 38 kids were randomly assigned to a handwriting instruction group or a phonological awareness instruction group. In addition to the screening measure, the students took pretests in Writing Fluency (Woodcock-Johnson), compositional fluency (Letters Correct Per Minute when composing), and writing quality. They even modified the old Elementary Reading Attitude Scale, the one where kids chose which Garfield the Cat

drawing was expressing how they felt, to see if handwriting instruction causes kids to like writing more.

Then came the instruction, and this is the coolest part of the study. The phonological awareness instruction was really good, high quality instruction. Space doesn’t permit detail about that here, but as I read this section I was saying to myself, “If my own child was involved in this study, I would want her in the control group!”

The handwriting instruction procedure was based on Virginia Berninger’s research about how to effectively teach letter formation. The description is so complete that one can actually turn the “Method” section directly into lesson plans. Some colleagues and I did just that. If you want the lessons, send me an email.

The section of the study on fidelity of treatment (Was the

*“So, if teaching handwriting seems a little mundane, think about it, instead, as teaching kids to retrieve images from memory and access motor programs.”*

*Continued on page 15*

*Cool Studies continued from page 14*

instruction actually delivered as described?) is Graham at his best. First, they gave the instructors intensive training in the procedures. Then the teachers met weekly with the researchers to work out any “glitches.” (How’s that for scientific terminology?) Then the teachers were given step-by-step directions for each lesson, and they checked off each step as it was completed. One-third of all the lessons were recorded to see whether the steps were executed as intended. Across the four instructors 98% of the steps were correctly executed for the handwriting treatment, and, get this, 99.9% for the phonological awareness control condition. Now that’s fidelity! By the way, can we quit using the word “fidelity” in reference to how intervention programs are delivered or to things as complex and multi-dimensional as basal reader instruction? It seems a kind of silly use of the word by comparison to fidelity of treatment in an experimental study. How about this? New rule: use of the word “fidelity” is prohibited unless we’re talking about excellent research methodology or our marriages.

In the handwriting treatment they did not just teach the kids correct formation, they taught them to write at a faster pace. They had the kids graph their progress and set goals for increases in Letters Correct Per Minute, or LCPM. At first blush LCPM sounds scary. Is that like Words Correct Per Minute in reading? Could this lead us to AIMS webbing their handwriting? “Write faster, kid. Write faster!” You know, on second thought, I kind of like the idea. Where we pretend WCPM is the same as reading, letters correct per minute isn’t a pseudo-measure, it is the actual thing. We do want them to be better at LCPM. Yahoo! Progress monitoring, here we come!

Did handwriting instruction make them better writers? They post-tested after 27 fifteen-minute sessions and again six months later to see if the results stuck. They did. While there were no differences between the two groups at the onset of the study, the handwriting group ultimately did significantly better on the handwriting measures that were used on the original screening test. They also did better, impressively, on the standardized test of Writing Fluency. And they even did significantly better than the control group on the Compositional Fluency measure. There were no differences between the groups on Writing Quality nor on Attitude toward Writing.

In the end Graham and his colleagues assert that this study adds to the growing body of evidence that says that handwriting is, indeed, causally related to writing. They

think that it is ill advised to emphasize writing content at the expense of attention to form. “Thus, if educators want to improve the writing of these students,” they conclude, “they need to focus not just on the content and process of writing, but on transcription skills such as handwriting as well.”

I’m a believer. I know it’s dangerous to generalize from adult literacy to kids or from what kids do in reading and writing to adults, but I’m going to anyway. There’s a reason why when I write this column I have to write it by hand and type it later. My “transcription skills” at the keyboard drain too much of my attention. I have to write by hand so my writing speed can keep pace with what I’m thinking. Hmm. Is keyboarding causally related to learning to write? You can find the study at Graham, S., Harris, K., & Fink, B. (2000). Is handwriting causally related to learning to write? Treatment of handwriting problems in beginning writers. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92, 620-633.



Award-winning children’s science author Seymour Simon is coming to Springfield to speak at the Illinois Reading Council Conference on March 16 & 17, 2012. He is interested in speaking at local elementary and/or middle schools earlier in the week (Monday

through Thursday, March 12-15). Mr. Simon suggests that you look at his website ([www.seymoursimon.com](http://www.seymoursimon.com)) to see the multitude of resources there for both students and educators. While you are on his website, click on the BLOG header to read frequent postings about previous school visits. He is an in-demand speaker, and you will see why when you see all the student reaction (and interaction) on his website!

Seymour Simon charges \$3000/day which includes airfare and most travel expenses, and does three large group speeches spread out through the morning and afternoon of a single day in one school, plus signing books as desired. Many districts decide to split the day and share the fee (half day at two different schools, one large group assembly at each), and he is open to this arrangement. Please contact him at [seymour@seymoursimon.com](mailto:seymour@seymoursimon.com) if you are interested in a visit to your school.



## Congratulations to Carolyn Crimi, the 2012 Prairie State Award Winner!

IRC is proud to announce that Carolyn Crimi is the 2012 recipient of the Prairie State Award for Excellence in Writing for Children. Carolyn is known far and wide for her humorous books and for her engaging presentation style.

Her publishing credits include *Pugs in a Bug*, *Rock and Roll Mole*, *Dear Tabby*, *Principal Fred Won't Go To Bed!*, *Henry and the Crazy Chicken Pirates*, *Where's My Mummy?*, *The Louds Move In*, *Henry and the Buccaneer Bunnies*, *Get Busy, Beaver!*, *Boris and Bella*, *Tessa's Tip-Tapping Toes*, *Don't Need Friends*, and *Outside, Inside*. Her stories have also appeared in *American Girl* magazine. Her books have garnered over twenty state awards and award nominations, including The Kentucky Bluegrass Award, The Arkansas Diamond Primary Award, Chicago Public Library's Best of the Best and now the prestigious Illinois Prairie State Award. When she's not writing, Carolyn enjoys giving Author Talks to elementary schools all over the country. She lives in Evanston, Illinois with her husband and her pug. Carolyn is thrilled to have her writing recognized by her home state. Congratulations, Carolyn!

