



Communicator

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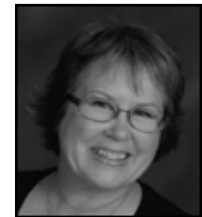
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Last September, I spent a pleasant afternoon on a friend's property just outside Petersburg, Illinois. He and my husband were off doing something manly, probably riding around the property looking for deer, while I spent some time taking pictures and exploring. For a time, I sat in the back yard writing. From my vantage point on the bluff high above the Sangamon River valley, I had a chance to enjoy the lush, green countryside and relax. It was very quiet. I could hear birds and the breeze, marginally punctuated by the occasional distant "beep-beep" of a truck of some kind backing up somewhere in the town below, and the hammering of the young man building a fence around the property. It was quite pastoral. Ironically, I brought with me the laptop on which I was composing, an iPhone in case I got an update on work issues, an iPad in case I wanted to take a break and play Angry Birds, and a digital camera because I just can't get out into the country without taking pictures. So much technology, and so much nature, all working together in harmony—at least for me, and at least for that day.



**IRC
President
Cindy Wilson**

This may not seem to have anything to do with reading or IRC, but bear with me, and please continue. As I was struck by the dichotomous relationship between nature and technology, I was also struck by the same kind of relationship between some aspects of teaching, learning, and educational politics. We live in an age of accountability, and also in an age where education is in the spotlight. Both can be good things, but both have generated a wide range of initiatives, special interest groups, legislation, events, and ongoing campaigns amounting to changes that are sometimes hard to keep track of. Here are some of the recent goings-on and information about education in Illinois:

In January 2010, Governor Quinn signed the Performance Evaluation Reform Act of 2010 into law, requiring that student progress be incorporated as a significant factor in teacher evaluations.

Last September, President Obama indicated that states may choose whether or not they subscribe to No Child Left Behind (in exchange for higher standards).

Perhaps as part of the reason for the call for higher standards, we recently learned that only 43% of students graduating from high school are prepared to deal with college level literacy and mathematics.

Continued on page 4

2012 IRC Conference March 15-17, 2012



**Registration
and Housing is
available now!**



IRA
State Coordinator
Roberta Sejnost

“Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.” ~ John F. Kennedy

As I reflect on the words of John F. Kennedy, I marvel at how well they describe our stations as IRC members. We lead and we learn, and I see the blending of those

two as I visit the local councils. I am always amazed by the wonderful things IRC members accomplish in the name of literacy as they lead and teach others. To give attention to some of these great things, let me give a **BRAVO** to the many councils who hosted membership meetings to meet and greet educators and potential members in so many creative ways with wine, chocolate, and even massages! And another **BRAVO** to the councils who have chosen to participate in IRA’s Honor Council program. Remember, if you need help or information about any portion of the Honor Council process, please contact me or your Regional Director. We are all glad to help.

Now, for more shout-outs! Congratulations to **Fox Valley** who received a program grant to bring Steven Zemelman to their members in September. The Regional Directors and I are now busy reviewing some additional applications so if your council sent one in, you’ll hear from us soon! And, if your council has not applied for the \$1000 program grant to ask for money to bring an author to the area or provide a mini conference, there is still time. The next deadline is June 1st, and the grant form can be found in your IRC binder.

Speaking of learning and leading, remember, IRC members, you are always welcome to visit other councils where you can gain some terrific ideas and wonderful moments of learning. Check the IRC Website at www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org for the most current information about each of these great opportunities.

Yet another way to lead and learn is to begin putting together the paperwork for IRC’s Council of Excellence award, which is due March 1st. Remember, there is a new

requirement for the C of E, which asks local councils to **submit their officers on time**, so begin thinking about getting your council’s slate of officers filled for next year now. On that note, if you have not volunteered yet to be a new officer, why not contact your council president and do just that? Remember that new officers need to attend the Leadership Training in July where they learn about their duties and join other council officers in planning their year’s meetings, activities, and service programs all while having **FUN and collegial camaraderie**. And, while councils are making these plans, Regional Directors and IRC Officers are on hand to make suggestions and offer help.

Finally, as State Coordinator, it is my honor to chair the IRC Service Award Committee, and this year we have two outstanding IRC members who will receive this award at the Presidents’ Breakfast at the IRC Conference in March. They

are **Carol Owles** and **Cheryl Walker**. Both of these loyal IRC members have given years of service to IRC in a variety of ways. To cite just a few: Carol has served as the IRC Director of Student Membership, the co-chair of the IRC International Projects Committee, been membership chair, vice president, co-president, president and treasurer of the Mid-State Reading Council and regularly contributed to the IRC Journal. Cheryl served twice as IRC’s treasurer, is the IRC Local Council Bylaws Committee chair, and

has been Lewis and Clark Reading Council’s treasurer for many years. Please join us at the Presidents’ Breakfast as we honor these two outstanding IRC members.

Finally, here are some dates to remember. More specific details and applications for each can be found on the IRC website and in the president’s binder:

- March 1st:** IRC Council of Excellence Award to Roberta Sejnost
IRA Honor Council to IRA
- March 15th –17th:** IRC Conference, Springfield, Illinois
- April 15th:** Complete the council officer list and submit to the IRC office.

Yours in Leadership,
Bobbie Sejnost

“...amazed by the wonderful things IRC members accomplish in the name of literacy as they lead and teach others.”

2012 IRC Conference Literacy in the Land of Lincoln

By Pat Braun, Conference Chair

Everyone is abuzz over the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). And rightly so. Educators should be concerned about how best to instruct students in the 21st Century. Districts are hiring consultants to inform teachers, while they are looking for published materials that will get the teaching job done; consultants are going on the road with day-long presentations focused on CCSS; administrators are biting their nails off worried about how to implement CCSS and rank high on state tests. But the ILLINOIS READING COUNCIL is not fretting or worrying. For over forty years, the Illinois Reading Council has presented the best speakers, authors, researchers, and practitioners available to our profession in the great state of Illinois.

Affiliation with the IRC is the best way to fully understand what it takes to support students in their literacy development. Our local councils, state council, journal, newsletter and annual conference keep us up to date and informed so we can support our students. It isn't surprising that Richard Allington promotes rigorous reading as the one "program" that will result in stronger young readers. How many teachers became teachers because they want to share their love of reading?

Allington may be familiar with Abraham Lincoln's rigorous reading instruction. Lincoln read, and reread, every book he could get his hands on. He talked about what he read to whomever would listen. He copied his favorite passages out of books and emulated the style in his writing. As a

young man, Lincoln enjoyed telling humorous stories, often risqué, but he definitely knew how to hold his audience's attention. Lincoln lived the language and took delight in building arguments. He respected the written word, and he respected learned men and women. No one told Lincoln what to read or how to respond to the reading. No one put him in workbooks or forced-choice state tests. He never agonized over state writing prompts. Does his literate life sound a bit like reading and writing workshop?

As you grapple with the CCSS, come to the Illinois Reading Council's 44th Annual Conference, Literacy in the Land of Lincoln. Here you will meet children's authors, have lunch with Illinois authors and illustrators, listen to the latest in research, network with others who are serious about teaching their students, peruse the latest published materials, and learn about services available through the Lincoln Library and Museum. And yes, you will hear about CCSS, but from the best educators the state and country have to offer.



For fun, and a step back in time, visit the Vachel Lindsey home for tea and poetry. Share your stories at Story Telling with Linda Tammen and Donna Stone. Join Lincoln, Mary Todd, and Linda Gorham at the Lincoln Banquet, in period dress just for fun.

Lincoln left us a rich legacy. It is up to educators around the state to ensure that a new and richer legacy be developed for our 21st century students.

Mission

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



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Ning: illinoisreadingcouncil.ning.com
and join us on Facebook!

President's Message continued from page 1

This past fall, Pat Braun and I participated in the Summit on Intergenerational Literacy. At the summit, we shared information about some of the many literacy initiatives state and nationwide, both new and well established, such as Ag in the Classroom, Guys Read, Voices for Illinois Children, and the Book It program by Pizza Hut. (Of course, we described and promoted the Illinois Reading Council and shared membership literature with all in attendance.)

In December, I attended a legislative hearing where several vested parties presented information about new teacher preparation demands, such as increased required scores on the Basic Skills Test; alternative means of becoming certified; and the elevated costs of becoming a teacher, in addition to the usual tuition, fees, and housing. As you can see from this small sampling, there is a lot going on in the state of Illinois concerning literacy and education in general.

What's the connection between this information and the polarity I described between nature and technology? Just this: sometimes it seems that polar opposites cannot exist together to any benefit, but maybe that's up to some intrepid individuals to work out. For example, statistics indicate that ISAT test scores have not improved by significant amounts over the past several years, so what good are these tests doing for the children of Illinois? If all of the basals, pull-out programs, RtI plans, and purchased support materials we rely on to increase test scores are not working, why use them? Why not just use ISAT prep time and the time invested in some of the other literacy programs to provide more instruction on skills that kids can apply, or to do what we can to help them love literature and the act of reading? My son-in-law told me recently that he lost an entire week of instructional time with his students because of assessments and other requirements. That's a lot of instructional time. On the other hand, what if we didn't have those tests? Maybe it's good information to know that what we're currently using is not helping our children make sufficient progress. Maybe it's good to know that we need to keep trying, that we have not found the silver bullet, or even that what we are doing is working in terms of more children *not* failing. Maybe that means less reliance on purchased programs and therefore more funds to use in other ways that could be more beneficial.

So it seems there are other gaps in education besides the achievement gap, one of which is a polarity, like the perceived distance between my green serene setting and all

of the technology I hauled with me. The polarity I see in education and politics could be described as the difference between some of the things teachers are required to do and what their experience, education, knowledge about students, and teaching instincts tell them to do. Of course, data-informed instruction should be an integral part of how we conduct our classrooms, and we all know that reliance in the past on teachers' instincts has not always provided the best for our children. We have all heard the arguments for and against standardized testing and instruction and curricular rigidity. The authors who we listen to at our conferences and workshops often draw support by insisting that reading should not be about filling in the right circle on a test. We all rah, rah, rah and applaud them, and I often wonder if they are raising the battle cry just to secure our affection for them (and increase our spending on their books), or if they are serious (though I lean toward 'they are serious' on this one—they are

readers, after all). Another polarity is the difference between those who are *teaching* children in their classrooms, and those who are trying to *control* the teaching of children in classrooms. Often these folks, who obviously have the well-being of our children in mind, may not have extensive experience or professional training in education, nor are they always aware of the complexities of teaching in a classroom characterized by the vast divergence of basic human needs, background

experience, cognitive differences and skills that our students bring to the classroom every day.


Is there room to prepare students for standardized testing so that teachers can have useful data while instilling a love of literature and giving students the survival skills they really need for the acts of reading and writing? Is there a way to utilize the many and varied special interest and political groups who also have students' best interests at heart while returning more control to the professionals working in classrooms? Is there a better way for these groups to provide support to teachers and students rather than calling the shots from a perhaps less than sufficiently informed standpoint? Judging from what I know and have witnessed for several years about the teachers in Illinois, if anyone can close these gaps, they can. You can. You should. You will. And of course I would be remiss if I did not point out that Illinois Reading Council and the upcoming conference are fabulous venues for demonstrating that professional expertise, adding to your knowledge and skills, and creating/maintaining important professional and personal connections. Make sure you are involved with Literacy in the Land of Lincoln this March!

“The polarity I see... could be described as the difference between some of the things teachers are required to do and what their...teaching instincts tell them to do.”

**Attend the
Illinois
Reading
Council
Conference**

**RECEIVE
UNIVERSITY
COURSE CREDIT**

**LITERACY IN
THE LAND OF
LINCOLN**
March 15-17, 2012
Springfield, IL



Students interested in one hour of course credit may attend the Illinois Reading Council Conference (IRC) in Springfield, March 15-17 and complete the requirements of this course.

The purpose of this course is to generate, develop, share, and implement creative teaching ideas as students apply what they learn in the conference sessions to their specific teaching situations. This course will also enhance the conference experience.

Course Location:

The IRC conference will be held at the Convention Center in Springfield, Illinois and adjacent hotels.

Course Requirements:

1. Upon sending registration for the course, participants will receive a course syllabus, an electronic log, and a collection of articles.
2. Readings: Prior to the conference, participants will select and read a focus article and write a brief (30 word) reaction to the article.
3. Participants will also read a trade book, fiction or nonfiction or picture book by a conference author, and compose a brief summary (30 words) of the book.
4. Attendance: Participants attend 15 hours of conference activities including visiting the exhibits.
5. Reflective Log: Participants will complete a reflective log documenting their participation at each session they attend.
6. Project: Students will develop a unit based on conference learning.

Course Calendar:

- Register separately for the Illinois Reading Council Conference, March 15-17, 2012.
- Students can register electronically before and during the conference by sending their registration form to Claudia Katz, ckatz17755@aol.com or
- Students can register by mail by sending their registration form to Claudia Katz, 1329 Oxford Rd., Deerfield, IL 60015. Make checks payable to National-Louis University (NLU).
- March 24, 2012. The article and trade book reaction, the log and the reflection, and the project are due electronically.
- Send Materials to Pat Braun. pbsed@sbcglobal.net Materials must be received as an electronic document.
- **To Register:** Complete the attached registration form and send it along with payment for the credit, \$350, to Claudia Katz, 1329 Oxford Rd., Deerfield, Il 60015, or by email to ckatz17755@aol.com. Make checks payable to National-Louis University (NLU)

Questions: Contact Claudia Katz at ckatz17755@aol.com or 847-236-1164.

Students using financial aid for tuition must register for the class no later than January 24, 2012.

DO NOT MAIL GRADUATE REGISTRATION directly to NLU

MAIL COMPLETED GRADUATE REGISTRATION FORM with \$350.00 CHECK OR

CREDIT CARD FORM payable to NLU TO:

CLAUDIA KATZ, 1329 OXFORD RD, DEERFIELD, IL 60015

NATIONAL-LOUIS UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE REGISTRATION FORM

SOCIAL SECURITY NO. _____

NAME: LAST _____ FIRST/MIDDLE _____

MAIDEN (IF APPLIES): _____ Check if new name or address since last graduation

STREET ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

HOME PHONE: (_____) _____ BUSINESS PHONE: (_____) _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

CHECK ONE: FALL _____ WINTER _____ SPRING 2012 _____ SUMMER _____

BIRTHDATE: _____ SEX: M _____ F _____

ETHNIC BACKGROUND (CHECK ONE)

1. American Indian or Alaskan _____ 2. Black Non-Hispanic _____ 3. Asian or Pacific Islander _____
4. Hispanic _____ 5. White Non-Hispanic _____

IF YOU HAVE A FELLOWSHIP OR A DOCTORAL SCHOLARSHIP, PLEASE CHECK:

Fellowship _____ Doctoral Scholarship _____

ADMITTED TO GRADUATE PROGRAM: Program _____ Advisor _____

In the Collage of Education, a maximum limit of nine semester hours of NCE/NLU credit taken as a special student prior to formal admission may apply toward a Master's Degree, Educational Specialist Degree or Certificate of Advanced Study.

ALL INFORMATION MUST BE COMPLETED OR FORM WILL BE RETURNED TO YOU

CRN	COURSE NUMBER	COURSE REGISTRATION Course Title	SEM HOURS
	RLR595BA	Special Topics in Reading: Literacy in the Land Lincoln	1

NOTE: Payment must be submitted at time of registration.

Student's Signature _____

Date _____

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
D.P. _____

CREDIT CARD CHARGE FORM

STUDENT'S SOCIAL SECURITY NO. _____

STUDENT'S NAME (*print*) _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

I hereby authorize National-Louis University to charge my Visa, MasterCard, Discover, or American Express account in the amount of \$ 350.00, which represents tuition.

CIRCLE ONE: VISA/MASTERCARD/DISCOVER/AMEX Exp. Date _____

Card No. _____

CARDHOLDER'S NAME (*print*) _____

Cardholder Signature _____

Meet an IRC Researcher

By Katie Ludes, Studies and Research Committee Member



Influencing lives is the goal of all good educators. Most educators do this through helping students in the classroom while a smaller group of others influences multiple lives through efforts made in educational research. Becky McTague is one of the latter, unique individuals.

McTague has gone above and beyond to influence lives in the utmost positive direction. Becky has played a vital role in many aspects of the reading world. She was a Co-Director of the Advanced Reading Development Demonstration Project (ARDDP) which was renamed Chicago Literacy Initiative Partnership (CLIP). ARDDP/CLIP focuses on developing and enhancing the literacy instruction throughout a school. The key concepts are to develop curriculum and assessments and to utilize assessments efficiently within the building to improve instruction. In addition, the implementation of a Literacy Team is a vital component for increasing literacy development within a building.

Becky has also had numerous publications in the *Illinois Reading Council Journal* as well as one in *The Reading Teacher*. She is excited about being included in a chapter, "ELL Fluency Scores—What can they tell us?," in Tim Rasinski's new book *Fluency Instruction: Research-based Best Practices. Second Edition*. With credentials like these, Becky's research is highly anticipated.

Currently, McTague is focused on creating ways for literacy to be available for all diverse learners as well as the educators who serve them. Because of her deep interest in English Language Learners and their particular problems with fluency, she is trying to develop new norms for these students. She is also focused on helping ELL and low socioeconomic students have access to higher-level literacy. The use of wikis has been her current avenue to gather information on how

online communities help to improve the higher level of literacy. Her final focus is on acknowledging the gains which can be made through the creation of Literacy Teams. Not only did the Literacy Teams enhance the schools in which she helped develop them, but through her guidance some of the Literacy Leaders have helped to improve the reading research available to all educators.

In education, making a difference in a life is our goal. Becky McTague has far surpassed that goal and is influencing many lives! She continues to "be like a pebble thrown into a pond, which makes a small splash, but then sends out many levels of reverberating circles."

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 for more
information. If you are interested in
volunteering, please contact Christina
Podraza at cpodraza@bsd2.org.

**The *IRC Journal's* Teaching Tips
column is looking for the best ideas
for teaching reading. To submit your
idea, please visit the homepage of the
IRC website to download a form.**

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
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 <i>Located adjacent to the Convention Center</i>	Hilton Springfield Hotel.....\$121 700 East Adams St., Spfd., IL 62701 <i>Across the street from the Convention Center</i>
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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
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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!

An Exclusively Secondary Literacy Conference
For All Teachers & Administrators of Grades 6-12
Tinley Park Convention Center, Tinley Park, IL

36th Day of Reading

Saturday, November 3, 2012

Featured Speakers:

GORDON KORMAN

Young Adult Author, TV Writer, Journalist

- ☆ Author: *Pop; The Juvie Three; Born to Rock; Son of the Mob; Schooled; Son of the Mob: Hollywood Hustle*
- ☆ ALA Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers; IRA YA Choice; Notable Social Studies Books for Young People, ALA Best Book for Teens, ALA Popular Paperbacks for YA

CAROL JAGO

Adolescent Literacy Expert

- ☆ Director: California Reading & Literature Project at UCLA
- ☆ English teacher in middle and high school for over 32 years
- ☆ Past President NCTE
- ☆ Author: *With Rigor for All Papers, Papers, Papers Cohesive Writing: Why Concept is Not Enough Come to Class: Lessons for High School Writers Literature & Composition: Reading, Writing, Thinking* & four books on multicultural authors in NCTE's High School Literature series.

Pre-Conference Workshop

Friday, November 2, 2012

Come to a special all-day workshop
with **Carol Jago**

**"Implementing the Common Core—
From Standards to Practice"**

Workshop enrollment limited to 100

For more information contact:

Barb Chrz-White bchrzwhite@comcast.net
Terry McHugh tmchugh@dayofreading.org

Team Discounts Available
CPS Vendor # 80827



www.dayofreading.org

Newspaper in Education

By Leslie Forsman, NIE Committee Co-Chair

During our "Summer Camps" at my local library, we worked on various Language Arts skills and with many terms. I asked my local newspaper to donate copies twice a week for the campers to read and use, which they very kindly did. The campers were very excited to get newspapers of their own and practically ran into each other getting to them. They really enjoyed the items on the "Mini Page," a syndicated feature many of you are familiar with, I'm sure. It runs in our paper on Tuesday (the first day we had newspapers); the campers were disappointed to find that it did not also run on Thursday (the other day we received newspapers).

We read articles in our newspapers and used lots of activities. For example, we searched for: nouns (both common and proper), one for each letter of the alphabet (our governor helped that day); verbs (past and present tenses); and synonyms of "beat" in the sports section (trying to find at least ten—it was harder than you might think).

With our younger campers, we cut various paneled comic strips apart, glued them to index cards and worked on sequencing and "beginning, middle, end." Some comic strips tell a very short tale within their frames. The use of these frames can help students work on recounting stories, summarizing, and creating their own dialogues.

Our older campers read articles to identify the authors' purposes ("P.I.E"): Persuade (letters to the editor), Inform (news items), and Entertain (humorists, comics), and also to identify point of view examples (third person is easy to find, first person is a bit more difficult sometimes).

All of these are mentioned in our state learning standards and in the common core standards, so you don't need to worry about having a little fun with the newspaper! (By the way, there are "Common Core Standards" applications for multiple platforms that you can download for free so that they are easily available to you.) We also had some wonderful origami creations from our newspapers. At least they completed—mostly—the tasks I had planned first; the folded objects emerged later.

As always, the NIE Committee can be reached via email at newspaperineducation@illinoisreadingcouncil.org.

Transitioning to the Common Core

By Deb Hays & Gail Huizinga,
RtI/Common Core Committee

As more information becomes available regarding the transition to the national Common Core Standards, and more specifically the Illinois Learning State Standards Incorporating the Common Core, educators need to remain apprised of changing resources and announcements. The main mission of Illinois Reading Council's RtI/Common Core Committee is to act as a conduit for IRC members through the highly informative website. The Committee will continually seek to provide the most current information possible as well as links to viable resources for membership to investigate. In the coming months, local councils will be asked to complete a brief survey to provide feedback on how the committee might be of further support. The site will also encourage postings of resources provided by IRC membership. There is so much out there, this needs to be a group effort!

As districts begin and continue with their transition to the Illinois Learning Standards Incorporating the Common Core, it is important to focus on the shifts instruction and curriculum will need to take to be truly aligned with the Common Core.

The shifts in ELA/Literacy instruction promoted by the Common Core State Standards are:

- Shift 1: Balance informational and literary text
- Shift 2: Knowledge in the disciplines
- Shift 3: Staircase of complexity
- Shift 4: Text-based answers
- Shift 5: Writing from sources
- Shift 6: Academic vocabulary

For further information, visit <http://engageny.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/common-core-shifts.pdf>. The site provides the six shifts in mathematics instruction as well.

The RtI/Common Core Committee encourages members to attend the **2012 IRC Conference** in Springfield, Illinois from **March 15-17, 2012**. Sessions dealing with RtI and strategies focusing on the shifts in instruction will be available. The RtI/Common Core Committee will host a session entitled "*Linking to the Common Core.*" It is just another way the committee hopes to support membership during this important time.

"Raising Readers" YouTube Video Series Available

By Laurie Elish-Piper

Parents often ask teachers, "What can I do to help my child with reading and writing?" These questions are often met with general responses such as, "read together," or "practice writing daily." While these suggestions are reasonable, many parents are unfamiliar with specific strategies they can use, and many teachers are not prepared to offer specific suggestions that parents can implement easily and successfully at home. In response to this situation, the Northern Illinois University Literacy Clinic has created a series of YouTube videos to share with parents. The "Raising Readers" video series offers simple research-based strategies that parents of K-12 students can use to support their children's reading and writing development at home.

The series includes 12 videos that focus on these topics:

Building the Reading Habit
Promoting a Love of Reading (K-5)
Promoting a Love of Reading (6-12)
Phonemic Awareness
Phonics
Fluency
Vocabulary
Comprehension Strategies
Comprehension of Fiction
Comprehension of Informational Texts
Writing (Grades K-2)
Helping Your Child with Writing (Grades 3-5)

The videos are short (2-4 minutes each) and easy to understand. They are designed to be shared directly with parents at conferences, at open houses, through links on school district websites, and by sharing the URL in newsletters and other school publications. The videos are all available on the NIU Literacy Clinic YouTube Channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/theliteracyclinic>. During the upcoming year, the NIU Literacy Clinic will be developing a video series for parents in Spanish.

For more information about the NIU Literacy Clinic and the Raising Readers series, including free informational handouts for parents in both English and Spanish, please visit the website at: <http://www.cedu.niu.edu/lscy/literacyclinic/> or email the Literacy Clinic Director, Laurie Elish-Piper at laurieep@niu.edu.

2012 Legislator of the Year Award

By Mike Ellerman, Kathy Merz, and Helen Bryant

Lt. Governor Sheila Simon and Representative Roger Eddy have been nominated by members of the Illinois Reading Council to receive the “**Legislator of the Year Award.**”

Lt. Gov. Simon is an educator and has visited all 48 schools of the Illinois Community Colleges this past year. She has been meeting with educators and their communities to discuss school consolidation, a concern for many small towns throughout Illinois. She also realizes that the Arts, Music and P.E. play an important role in the education of a student.



Lt. Gov. Simon is also interested in how to focus tax dollars more efficiently to the classrooms. She is Chair of the Classroom First Commission and is the Governor’s point person on educational reforms. She is also the Chair of the joint Educational Leadership Committee.



Representative Roger Eddy has been a strong advocate for increased foundation level funding and sponsored legislation that increased the amount of reimbursement school districts received for special education personnel. He commonly speaks at seminars across the state related to education reform and funding.

Representative Eddy reads to Head Start children. He is the minority spokesperson for the elementary and secondary education committee in the House of Representatives and advocates for funding for general state aid. He has sponsored various school improvement legislation including State Bill 7, education reform and unfunded mandates legislation in 2009 and 2010.

Lt. Governor Sheila Simon and Representative Roger Eddy will receive their awards at the annual IRC Conference Welcome Reception that will be held at the Abraham Lincoln Hotel Ballroom on Wednesday, March 14, 2012. All conferees and Illinois Legislators will be invited to attend.

South Eastern Reading Council and Southern Illinois Reading Council will also be awarded the **Legislative Liaison Award.**

7th Annual Prairie Writer’s Day (or Write Now, Don’t Wait)

By Patricia Ann Braun

How often have you thought, “I’d love to write books for children—when I retire.”? Speaking from a retiree’s perspective, if you want to do it later, start now! Start by reading a variety of children’s books, listening to authors talk about their writing at the annual Illinois Reading Council Conference, going to the ALA Conference, and spending some time at Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) events.

As IRC President-Elect, I was invited to SCBWI’s 7th Annual Prairie Writer’s Day where over 250 men and women interested in writing and illustrating children’s books joined to hear publishers and editors, as well as gather ideas, advice, critiques, publishing tips, and network with others like themselves. I heard editors remind authors: “Show don’t tell.” “Write from your passions.” “Develop your own unique voice.” “Develop deep three-dimensional characters.” “Include conflict.” “Cut out the extra description on the first page.” “Tighten up the writing.” “Writers, be true to self.” “Know that revision has to happen to make the story strong.” We teachers repeat these mantras in our classrooms while encouraging kids to write. We need to take our own advice, now, while the ideas are flowing.

Don’t wait until retirement. Get in the habit of writing a little every day, and I look forward to seeing your name on the cover of an Illinois author’s book. Get a head start on listening to Illinois authors and illustrators at the IRC Illinois Authors and Illustrators luncheon on Thursday, March 16, 2012.

Preservice Teachers’ Pizza Party

Be sure to register for IRC’s annual conference in Springfield that will be held on March 15-17, 2012. Also, tell your friends and fellow preservice teachers about it and bring them along! There are fabulous speakers and great opportunities to learn more about teaching literacy. When you register, be sure to include your registration to our annual Preservice Teachers’ Pizza Party on Friday evening, March 16. It’s free, but you need to register for it so that we can plan and will have enough food and space for everyone. There will be lots of opportunities for networking and sharing ideas and experiences, plus pizza, pop, treats, and great door prizes for everyone!!



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.

Stolen into Slavery: The True Story of Solomon Northup, Free Black Man

Written by Judy and Dennis Fradin

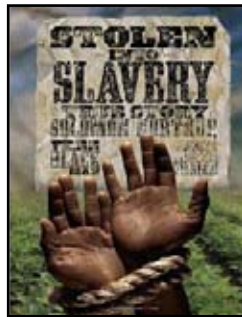
National Geographic

January 2012

Category: Nonfiction

Ages: 10 and up

Stolen into Slavery is the true story of Solomon Northup, an educated free black New Yorker who was drugged, kidnapped and then sold into slavery. Our book tells about his twelve years of captivity as a slave in the cotton and cane sugar fields of Louisiana.



Tornado!: The Story Behind These Twisting, Turning, Spinning, and Spiraling Storms

Written by Judy and Dennis Fradin

National Geographic

April 2011

Category: Nonfiction

Ages: 9 and up

The Fradins' Tornado! book opens with a teenager's story of surviving the 2007 tornado that annihilated Greensburg, Kansas. Subsequent chapters explain the history and science of such storms. The book is filled with stunning photos, survivor interviews and, most importantly, tips on how kids can protect themselves and their families from these disastrous storms.



The Three Wishes

Retold by Elizabeth Goldsmith-Conley

portablepoppets.com

Portable Poppets

March 2011

Category: Storytelling

Ages: 3-9

It's Ludwig's turn to cook dinner and Hedwig's turn to chop wood and she knows just what tree she is going to cut down. A fairy, though, begs her not to chop the tree down. Hedwig agrees and the fairy gives her three wishes. A hungry Hedwig accidentally winds up wishing for sausages.



Ludwig becomes so angry that Hedwig has wasted a wish on sausages that he wishes the sausages were on her nose. And so goes this amusing version of a favorite folk tale. The book comes with a DVD of the lively puppet show whose characters are featured in the illustrations. See the website for templates for making stick puppets and scenery.

From Failure to Promise: An Uncommon Path to Professoriate

Written by C. Moorer

fromfailuretopromise.com

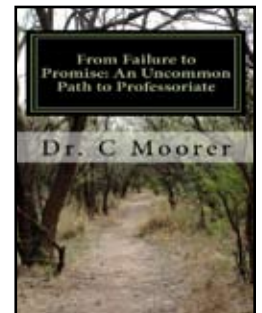
CreateSpace

December 2010

Category: YA Nonfiction

Grades: 9th and up

Moorer takes readers on a faith journey from his adolescence in Detroit Public Schools to academic failure on the collegiate level and through other turbulent tracks on the way to becoming a university professor. This story of one young man's journey will serve as a compass for those who are in pursuit of success. He shares relevant scriptures, skills, and strategies pertinent to overcoming failure.



May 2012 IRC Communicator and Illinois Authors' Corner deadline for submissions is March 1, 2012!

Cool Studies: Versus

By Lou Ferrolì

Are three tiers really enough? Seems to me to be too few. And what is an intervention, anyway? Some serious research at the Child Research and Study Center (CRSC) at SUNY at Albany is trying to help realize the promise of RtI. One of those studies, done in 2008 by Donna Scanlon and her partners, begins by reviewing research that shows that variability in student outcomes is more closely associated with variability among teachers than it is with variability in programs. Teachers matter more than programs. Some of the evidence they cite comes from the famous “first grade studies” of the 1960’s. They also cite some of their own previous research that documented great differences in the effectiveness of classroom teachers. What that adds up to, they say, is that while there are certainly characteristics of the child that place him or her “at risk” for experiencing early reading difficulties, the characteristics of classroom instruction determine to a large degree whether a child will experience such difficulties.

The CRSC group has had some success with an intervention program of their own. They reasoned that they might be even more successful by providing professional development about their intervention to classroom teachers. In RtI terms, if you have a Tier 2 intervention that is getting some results, instead of delivering it directly to students, can it be offered at Tier 1 in the form of professional development?

Their study compared three approaches to intervention: professional development (PD) for classroom teachers, a direct intervention provided to children, and a third group that received both. It is not so easy to determine if PD is effective. We’ve all been through staff development, in-services, and institute days. Over time we are likely to have had similar experiences: some PD really does help us improve our instruction, some PD is darn-near life-changing, and then some PD did us less good than the sleep we would have preferred. (Having actually slept through staff development sessions, I know this to be true.)

To determine if PD is effective they compared instruction of teachers before and after PD to see if there were changes in the teachers’ practices and to see if the children did any

better. It took them 3 years of measuring kindergarteners’ literacy skills and observing teachers’ instruction. In Year 1 (Baseline) there was no research treatment, just measurement and observation. Year 2 (Implementation) was when “all the treatments were initiated,” when the PD was done. In Year 3 (Maintenance) the PD for teachers was discontinued. The data that they analyzed focused on Years 1 and 3. They effectively (not literally) tossed out Year 2 because they knew there would be many changes during the very year the research team was “actively involved in guiding and supporting classroom instruction.” Changes that were evident a year later would be more meaningful.

“Results confirmed that variability among teachers contributes to variability in student outcomes. That is, teachers matter.”

They began with 43 teachers and 15 schools. As you might expect in a 3-year study, there was attrition: retirements, leaves of absence, moving, even a school closing. They ended up with “28 teachers for whom three consecutive years of data were available.”

To measure the instructional activities the researchers used an instrument they have been honing for some time, the Classroom Language Arts Systematic

Sampling and Instructional Coding. The CLASSIC uses a time sampling procedure. Every ninety seconds seven features about classroom activity are coded. It is quite an extraordinary and detailed instrument and, as to be expected with top-notch research, they took great pains to achieve reliability among the observers who were coding what they witnessed in the classroom visits. Each teacher was observed five times at various points in the school year. Each of the time-sampling visits lasted for two hours. I did the math: there are 80 ninety-seconds in two hours. That’s a lot of data.

The direct intervention treatment was their Interactive Strategies Approach which they insist is not a “program” but an approach, one that they have been developing for fifteen years and using in small group and individualized settings. For the PD treatment, the researchers trained the kindergarten teachers in this Interactive Strategies Approach adapted for use in their own classes. Implementing the ISA

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Cool Studies continued from page 14

requires a teacher to have knowledge and skills to identify what children are ready to learn and to identify which children would be most appropriately grouped for instruction. Further, teachers select tools and activities to help at risk students learn literacy.

What appeals to me about this sort of intervention is that it is not one that you buy and comes in a box. Rather the teacher is the intervention because she learned to effectively use an approach, an approach which calls for teachers to make lots of informed decisions along the way.

The results section of this study was a pretty tough read. The statistics were easy, but there were comparisons of many test scores and many features of classroom instruction. Some of these compared the most effective and the least effective teachers. Some compared teachers who received PD with those who did not. Some compared Year 1 instruction with Year 3 instruction. Some compared kids who received the direct intervention with those who did not.

Results confirmed that variability among teachers contributes to variability in student outcomes. That is, teachers matter. The results documented how teachers who received the PD had changed: they allotted more time to language arts instruction, had their kids doing more actual reading and writing during that time, and, their most distinguishing practice, they devoted considerably more time to instruction in small, ability-based groups.

One of the cool things about this study, I'm a bit embarrassed to confess, was the fact that the title included the word "versus." I love the idea of "versus" in research. Think about it. "The treatment group versus the control group." How about studies of "whole language versus phonics," "basals versus literature," "whole class versus small group"? And as to the researchers' original "professional development for teachers versus direct interventions for children," they said, "...it seems safe to infer that PD for classroom teachers (which supports Tier 1 intervention) was at least as effective as supplemental small group remediation (Tier 2 intervention) in reducing the number of kindergarteners who continued to be at risk for reading difficulties over the course of the school year."

I tracked down a PowerPoint about the approach because I wanted to know what Scanlon herself was saying about the ISA intervention and about the effectiveness of PD. You can find it at the Child Research and Study Center at SUNY Albany (<http://www.albany.edu/crsc/>). Scanlon said that

ISA is not done with fidelity. That's right. Want to hear that again? She reviews the wonderful potential of RtI, but she is very concerned about the "heavy emphasis on fidelity" which, she claims, might result in a lack of teacher responsiveness and failure to match instruction to the students' current abilities. It looks like I got my "versus" after all. Fidelity versus a teacher who can think. I'll let the last sentence of their study be the last sentence of this column. "Importantly, instructional improvements were not accomplished via the implementation of a highly prescriptive program nor the adoption of entirely new curricula but rather by encouraging teachers to analyze and respond to the instructional needs of their lower achieving students."

Scanlon, D., Gelzheiser, L., Vellutino, F. Schatschneider, C., & Sweeney, J. (2008). Reducing the incidence of early reading difficulties: Professional development for classroom teachers versus direct interventions for children. *Learning and Individual Differences, 18*, 346-359.

*MID-State Reading Council
will host a*



**Summer
Conference
on Monday,
June 18, 2012**

with author and educator
Kelly Gallagher

*All Local Council and IRC Members are invited
to attend at the same registration fee of \$50
as MID-State Members for this full-day
conference which includes lunch!*

**Several on-line Book Discussion Groups
with Kelly's books will be offered. For more
details, check our blog:**

**midstatereadingcouncil.blogspot.com
or the IRC website at**

www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org

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IRC Awards and Grants March 15-17, 2012

Hall of Fame Award

Roxanne Owens

Friday night at the Lincoln Banquet

Illinois Reading Educator of the Year Award

K-5: Sarah Rabe

6-12: Valerie Cawley

Reading Specialist: Todd Hartman

College Instructor: Linda Reven

Friday Luncheon with Katie Wood Ray

Legislator of the Year Award

Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon

Representative Roger L. Eddy, District 109

Welcome Reception on Wednesday evening

Parents and Reading Award

Jeanette Brosam

Thursday Luncheon with Patricia MacLachlan

Prairie State Award for Excellence in Writing for Children

Carolyn Crimi

Thursday PSA Banquet