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**About the Cover**

The artwork on the cover were submissions from 4th- through 6th-grade students from throughout the State of Illinois for the Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education and the Illinois Reading Council's Static Stick Decal Contest.

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**MISSION**

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

**VISION**

The Illinois Reading Council advocates quality literacy opportunities for all learners and serves as a primary organization that provides educators at all levels access to research, materials, and methodologies to promote and teach lifelong literacy and learning. Support of an active, well-organized system of local and special interest councils and state committees provides a viable network for communication, exchange of information, and grassroots involvement of a diverse membership. The Illinois Reading Council’s publications, special projects, conferences, and workshops stimulate the personal and professional growth of educators.
As far as the Illinois Reading Council is concerned, tis always the season for giving . . . and the gifts we give are those that keep on giving! The IRC advocates quality literacy opportunities for all learners, and two of its many purposes are (1) to stimulate and promote literacy research, and (2) to disseminate knowledge helpful in the solution of problems related to reading. As a publication of the IRC, the Illinois Reading Council Journal seeks to provide educators at all levels access to research, materials, and methodologies to promote and teach lifelong literacy and learning. In this issue, you will find our gift to you this season—a rich array of articles and columns designed to support your work with learners of all ages.

Included in this issue are findings from new research studies, recommendations for books and electronic resources for students and teachers, and proven strategies for supporting students’ reading development and test-taking abilities. More specifically, this issue contains (1) a thoughtful discussion of a research study conducted in a kindergarten classroom; (2) suggestions for establishing focused middle school writing conferences; (3) strategies for improving reading comprehension and helping students develop the skills necessary for navigating standardized tests; (4) ideas for supporting visual literacy skills and abilities through use of electronic primary sources; (5) high interest, low readability resources for reluctant, struggling, and ELL readers; (6) iPad Apps for supporting literacy; (7) suggestions for engaging diverse families through home visits; and more.

Tis the season for all things good! Whether you are teaching children in preschool or high school or serving as a librarian, media specialist, reading specialist, coach, administrator, or teacher educator, as a member of the Illinois Reading Council, you are helping to give the gift of literacy and love of learning to children and families across Illinois. During this season of giving, and in the new year to come, may you continue to give generously and to receive richly the rewards that come with supporting quality literacy opportunities for all learners.