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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.
In the spirit of the season, this issue of the Illinois Reading Council Journal offers to you many gifts—ways to make reading exciting and motivating for students of all ages and across varying content areas, help for implementing the Common Core State Standards, reviews of excellent new books for both children and adults, and ideas for engaging parents in their children’s learning. As you carefully and thoughtfully unwrap each one, we hope you’ll be as delighted to receive our gifts as we are to share them.

A number of motivational speakers over the past two decades have used the following quote: “The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant.” While the source of this quote, often attributed to Albert Einstein, has been debated, I think it is especially appropriate at this time in our profession. Across the nation, both intuitive and rational minds are engaging in serious discussion and debate as to the interpretation and implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). In the fall issue of IRCJ, two esteemed colleagues, Jerry Johns and Tim Shanahan, shared some of their views about the CCSS, thus sparking a professional discussion among our readers. In this issue, you will find the observations and perceptions of other professionals who wish to join this public discussion. The first commentary is from Lara Handsfield, Dana Karraker, Deborah MacPhee, and Linda Wedwick—all professors of literacy at Illinois State University. Following their contribution is a voice directly from the trenches—Michael Patrick Henry, a reading teacher and literacy coach in Burbank, Illinois. I know you join me in applauding all of our commentators for their thoughtful and careful consideration of issues that are impacting greatly upon our nation’s schools. Their insights are truly a gift. Only through continued dialogue can we hope to reach a shared understanding of the CCSS and their potential effect for our students.

With the ever present promise of snow in the air and the excitement of the holidays upon us, I wish you peace and happiness in the coming days and New Year.

Happy reading!

Kathy

Kathy Barclay, Editor