

Illinois Reading Council



Empowering  
Lives  
Through  
Literacy

# Communicator


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**If “the open road” is the way to take in journeying through life, surely the same applies to reading. Let it be an adventure! Let it happen!**

~ Henry Miller

## FROM THE DESK OF THE IRC PRESIDENT By Julie Hoffman

Greetings IRC Members,

Happy new year!

I love the start of a fresh year. My friend Jane tells me that how we spend the first day of the year sets the tone for the rest of the year. Something about a fresh start makes us want to reflect on the year past and dream big for the year ahead.

Have you thought about 2024? What are your reading and writing goals? Are you anticipating the new books that are coming out this year? I am! I had a chance to read an Advanced Reader Copy (ARC) of John Schu’s *Louder Than Hunger*, which is expected in bookstores in early

March. There are a few picture books and YA titles I am excited about as well.

Do you have any literacy goals? Are you gathering new ideas about how to reach and teach emergent readers and new ways to help more experienced readers fall in love or stay in love with reading? Have you registered for the 55th Annual IRC Conference in Springfield, Illinois? I hope to see you there on March 14th and 15th!

Until then, I wish you every blessing in abundance!

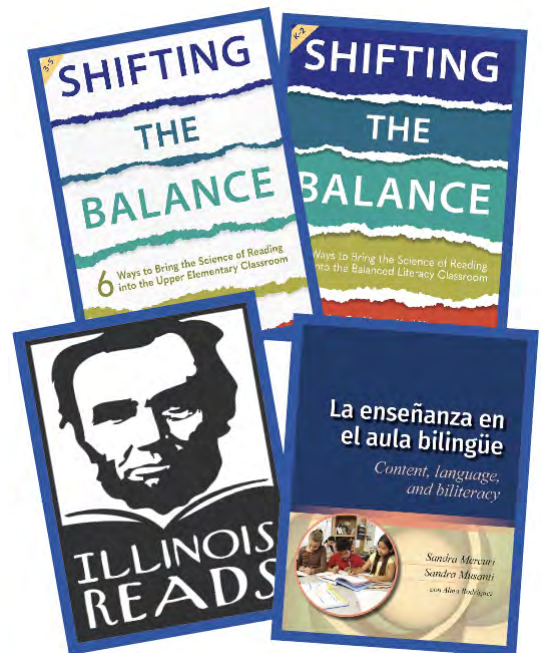
-Julie Hoffman

## Winter 2024 IRC Book Club

Join educators from all over the state in the online [Winter 2024 IRC Book Clubs](#)! Choose one, two, or all three book clubs!

Beginning January 21, participants will be reading, reflecting on, and responding in the ***Shifting the Balance*** book club, the ***Illinois Reads*** book club, and/or the ***La enseñanza en el aula bilingüe*** book club during the seven-weeks of online discussions. Participants who complete all assignments will be eligible to receive **15 PD clock hours** for each book club. Please note that all three book clubs will also be repeated during the Spring 2024 session.

For the ***Shifting the Balance*** book club, participants can choose either the **K-2** or the **3-5** version. ***Shifting the Balance: 6 Ways to Bring the Science of Reading into the Balanced Literacy Classroom (K-2)*** was written by Jan Burkins and Kari Yates and ***Shifting the Balance: 6 Ways to Bring the Science of Reading into the Upper Elementary Classroom (3-5)*** was written by Katie Egan Cunningham, Jan Burkins, and Kari Yates. For the ***Illinois Reads*** book club, participants will be selecting books from one of the age bands of the 2024 Illinois Reads list to prepare lessons plans and activities. For Birth to 2nd Grade, participants will select a new book each week for a total of seven books; for 3rd to 5th Grade, participants will select three books; for 6th to 8th Grade, participants will select two books; and for 9th to 12th Grade or the Adult age band, participants will select one book. For the ***La enseñanza en el aula bilingüe: Content, Language, and Biliteracy*** book club, the book was written in Spanish (and not translated to English) by Sandra Mercuri, Sandra Musanti, and Alma Rodriguez. This book club will be held completely in Spanish and provide a ton of ideas for bilingual teachers.



Register by **January 15, 2024**, to participate in the book clubs. Registration is FREE for IRC Members. The cost for non-members is \$50, which includes IRC membership for one

# Picture Book Round-Up For Educators

By Kristin Rydholm

This picture book round-up for educators focuses on procedural texts referencing the reading and the writing process.

Reading all of these books could provide teachers and students with ongoing opportunities to reflect and discuss the challenges and rewards associated with learning to read and write.

All of the titles are in print and available to purchase or check out at your local library today.

## Reading



[\*How to Teach a Slug to Read\*](#) by Susan Pearson and illustrated by David Slonim.

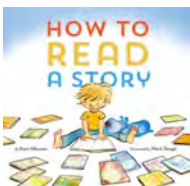


[\*How Rocket Learned to Read\*](#) by Tad Hills.

Check out the [Educator Guide](#) and [Tad Hills Video](#) to go along with the book.



[\*The Summer Nick Taught His Cats to Read\*](#) by Curtis Manley and illustrated by Kate Berube.



[\*How to Read a Story\*](#) by Kate Messner and illustrated by Mark Siegel.

## Further Reading

- [\*\*13 Picture Books for Young Students About Learning How to Read\*\*](#) by Kristin Rydholm (Edutopia)

## Writing



[\*\*How to Write a Story\*\*](#) by Kate Messner and illustrations by Mark Siegel.



[\*\*Rocket Writes a Story\*\*](#) by Tad Hills.

Check out the [\*\*Educator Guide\*\*](#) and [\*\*Tad Hills Video\*\*](#) to go along with the book.



[\*\*Look! I Wrote a Book \(And You Can Too!\)\*\*](#) by Sally Lloyd-Jones and illustrated by Neal Layton.

Check out the [\*\*Story Planner\*\*](#) to go along with the book.



[\*\*The Story of a Story\*\*](#) by Deborah Hopkinson and illustrated by Hadley Hooper.

Check out the [\*\*Activity Kit\*\*](#) to go along with the book.

## Further Reading:

- [\*\*Classroom Connections: The Writing Process\*\*](#) by Kristin Rydholm (Book Links Magazine)

## [About Kristin Rydholm](#)

She received her BA in education from National Louis University and her MS in reading/literacy from Bank Street College of Education. She has been a classroom teacher, a school administrator, and written numerous articles featuring picture book roundups and teacher resource packets for organizations such as Edutopia, the American Library Association, and Scholastic.

# Static Stick Decal Contest

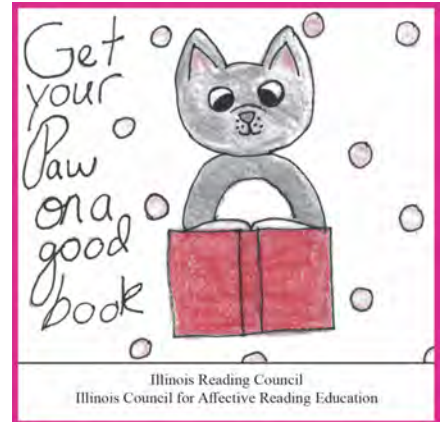
The Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education (ICARE) and the Illinois Reading Council (IRC) invite your students to design the next [Static Stick Decal](#) that encourages children to read.

## QUALIFICATIONS

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

## GUIDELINES

- Make an original design in the 4-inch square on the back of the [application form](#).
- Invent an original character(s) to include in your design. You may NOT use any published cartoon or comic characters (including characters such as Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Super Heroes, Pokémon, etc.) nor any computer-generated art.
- Develop an original saying or slogan.
- Designs are limited to three colors plus black and white.



Complete the [application form](#) and mail it with the design by **January 15, 2023** to:

Illinois Reading Council  
Attn: Static Decal Contest  
1100 Beech Street  
Building 8, Suite 2  
Normal, IL 61761

## 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 Friday Luncheon at the annual Illinois Reading Council Conference. 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.

# #WhatAmReading



I am reading [Sweet Potato Soul: 100 Easy Vegan Recipes for the Southern Flavors of Smoke, Sugar, Spice, and Soul](#) by Jenne Claiborne.

~ Julie Hoffman, IRC President



Don't be fooled by the word vegan. This cookbook is filled with beautiful photographs and tasty recipes for southern soul food that doesn't use any animal products. I have made the sweet potato skillet home fries and low country grits. Next time I will be making the Miso Peachy Arugula Salad, jackfruit jambalaya, spicy fried cauliflower chick'n, and strawberry shortcake!

I am reading [An Examination of Dyslexia Research and Instruction with Policy Implication](#) by Peter Johnston and Donna Scanlon.

~ Laura Beltchenko, IRC Professional Learning and Development Committee Chair

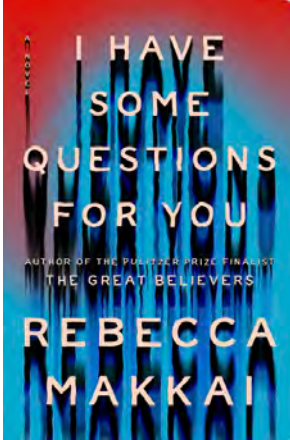


I'm looking at the work of literacy researchers, Peter Johnson and Donna Scanlon. I am reading their article, *An Examination of Dyslexia Research and Instruction with Policy Implications*, that appeared in *Literacy Research: Theory Method and Practice*, August, 2021.

I am reading [I Have Some Questions For You](#) by Rebecca Makkai.

~ Carrie Sheridan, IRC Executive Director

In anticipation of IRC's **Illinois Reads Book Festival** planned for February 3, 2024 in Westmont, Illinois, I'm starting 2024 off with a book from the Illinois Reads book list. The book, *I Have Some*



*Questions For You*, is a mystery where a woman must confront her past as she uncovers details from a tragedy that happened at the New England boarding school she attended. I'm anticipating a page-turner where I can cuddle up on the sofa with a blanket as the fireplace crackles and I wish for it to snow outside. Hope everyone is having a very Happy New Year!

# Family Literacy Bookshelf

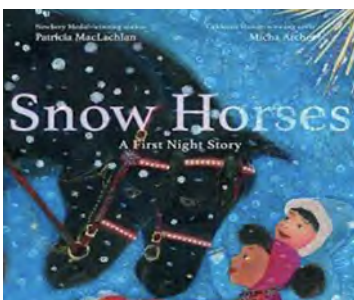
## By Barb Ashton

Happy New Year! Welcome to 2024! During January we honor and commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday, cheer for our favorite football team as they march towards the Super Bowl, and take time as a family to enjoy some outdoor winter activities. January is also a good time to do a challenging puzzle in honor of National Puzzle Month.



New Year's Eve is always a special time as we say good bye to the old year and ring in the New Year with joy and festivities. Does your family do anything special? You can read [\*The Lucky Grapes: A New Year's Eve Story\*](#) by Tracey Kyle to learn what people and families do in Spain. Young Rafa is finally old enough and has been waiting all year to celebrate New Year's Eve with his family in the plaza. He knows there will be music, food, fireworks, and grapes. Rafa learns that he needs to eat a grape for good luck in the new year each time the clock chimes during the count down. Will Rafa make it to midnight? Can he eat all 12

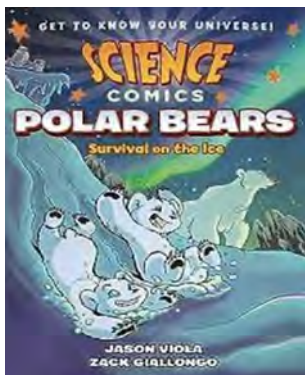
grapes? What will happen if he doesn't eat all 12 grapes? This is an enjoyable story written in rhyme with Spanish words intermingled within the story. It is also a nice introduction to a Hispanic cultural tradition.



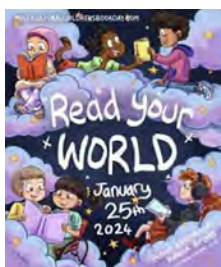
Have you ever gone on a sleigh ride during the winter? Whether yes or no, you'll enjoy reading [\*Snow Horses: A First Night Story\*](#) by Patricia MacLachlan. This is a delightful story of Jenny who goes to her family's barn to bridle her Percheron horses Tim and Tom for the town's annual New Year's Eve tradition of taking a sleigh ride. During the rides the children sing and laugh. The adults also join in the rides, remembering when they were young and enjoying the magic of the sleigh ride on New Year's Eve. After the rides the families return home and Jenny returns the horses to the barn as everyone begins to welcome the New Year.

The story is told in free verse along with beautiful collage illustrations that capture the joy of the

sleigh ride.



Polar Bears are one of winter's best loved animals. But who are these animals that live in the Arctic? Read the graphic novel [Science Comics: Polar Bears Survival on the Ice](#) by Jason Viola and illustrated by Zack Giallongo. Join two polar bear cubs, Anik, Isla, and their mother as she teaches them the skills they'll need to live, eat, hunt, and survive in the arctic. The authors provide a wealth of information about polar bears and melting of the polar ice cap, global warming and how it affects the bears and what can be done to stop it. The illustrated graphics are well done and the antics of Anik and Isla add to the text and information about polar bears. The back of the book contains a glossary, background notes, and bibliography for further reading. **Science Comics Polar Bears** makes a nice addition to school, classroom, and all libraries.



Multicultural Children's Book Day is celebrated on Thursday, January 25, 2024. Go to [www.multiculturalchildrensbookday.com](http://www.multiculturalchildrensbookday.com) for a wealth of materials and activities to celebrate Read the World. The theme for 2024 is Climate Change Understanding Environmental Justice.

## Looking Ahead

**January 4: World Braille Day** – in honor of Louis Braille and the communication for the blind

**January 11: Amelia Earhart** – First Woman to Fly Solo

**January 15: Martin Luther King's Birthday**

**January 17: Benjamin Franklin's Birthday**

**January 18: Winnie the Pooh Day** – A. A. Milne's Birthday

**January 20: Penguin Awareness Day**

**January 21: Squirrel Appreciation Day**

**January 25: Multicultural Children's Book Day**

**January 29: National Puzzle Day**



Don't forget to take advantage of some upcoming PD opportunities planned throughout Illinois.

- **January 3, 2024: IRC Webinar on Collaborate, Build, Nurture, Reflect: Roadmaps for Learning that Sticks** with **Kass Minor** from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.



- **January 12, 2024: Prairie Area Reading Council** will host **Fort Night** from 4:45 to 6:45 pm at Westmont Public Library, 428 N Cass Ave, Westmont, Illinois.
- **January 15, 2024: IRC** is accepting registrations for the [Winter 2024 IRC Book Clubs](#).
- **January 15, 2024: ICARE and IRC** are accepting submissions from students in grade 4, 5, and 6 for the [Static Stick Decal Contest](#).
- **January 16, 2024: Sauk Valley Reading Council and Dixon Public Library** will co-host the **Writing with Families Project** from 5:45 to 7:00 pm at the Dixon Public Library, 221 S. Hennepin Ave, Dixon, Illinois. The Writing Group will meeting every Tuesday until February 20, 2024.
- **January 18, 2024: Secondary Reading League (SRL)** will host Dysgraphia 101 with Jill Rogers from 7:00 to 8:00 pm virtually with the Illinois SLD Support Project.
- **January 25, 2024: Secondary Reading League (SRL)** will host Dyslexia Knows No Age with Kellyn Sirach from 7:00 to 8:00 pm virtually with Illinois SLD Support Project.

To view the full **IRC Events Calendar**, please visit the [IRC Website](#).

# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Members are encouraged to submit articles at any time to [irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org](mailto:irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org).

**#WhatIAmReading:** Share a book that you are reading, in 3 to 4 sentences. Creative pictures of you and your book in your favorite reading spot are encouraged.

**IRC Highlight Reels:** Share snapshots of successes in your classrooms in 100 to 300 words. Remember no success is too big or too small to share and pictures welcomed!

### Other Literacy Topics:

- SEL via Literacy
- For the Love of Librarians
- Trauma Informed Practices
- Culturally Responsive Teaching and Literature
- And any other literacy topics that interests you!

Thank you for helping to inspire your fellow educators! Posts will be shared on social media too!

[Visit the IRC Website](#)

[Full IRC Events Calendar](#)

**QUICK LINKS**

Latest on the IRC Conference

Available IRC Awards and Grants

Bring IRC PD to your School District

Learn more about the Illinois Reads Program

Questions? Please feel free to reach out to the Illinois Reading Council by email at [irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org](mailto:irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org) or by phone at 309-454-1341.

See what's also happening on our social media sites:

