

Illinois Reading Council



Empowering
Lives
Through
Literacy

Communicator

1100 BEECH STREET, BLDG 8-2
NORMAL, IL 61761

PHONE: 309-454-1341
FAX: 309-454-3512

EMAIL: IRC@ILLINOISREADINGCOUNCIL.ORG
WEB: WWW.ILLINOISREADINGCOUNCIL.ORG

and follow us on:



"Books are a uniquely portable magic."
~ Stephen King



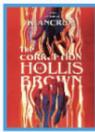
ILLINOIS READS A READING STATE OF MIND

Illinois Reads and Young Authors Book Festival
will be held on **Saturday, April 25, 2026**
at **Tinley Park High School,**
6111 175th Street, Tinley Park, Illinois

The Illinois Reading Council is excited to share plans for the **Illinois Reads and Young Authors Book Festival!** Plan now to bring your families, students, and all book lovers to this fun and free event from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at Tinley Park High School on Saturday, April 25, 2026. At the event, the following Illinois Reads Authors will be leading sessions and sharing their books.



Adi Alsaid
Grades 9-12



K. Ancrum
Grades 9-12



Gina Bellisario
Grades K-2



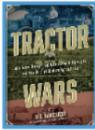
Betsy Bird
Birth to Age 4



Veronica Castillo
Grades K-2



Gloria Chao
Adult



Neil Dahlstrom
Adult



Darcy Day Zoells
Grades K-2



Juleesa Espinoza
Grades K-2



Jessika Fleck
Grades 3-5



Jessie Ann Foley
Grades 6-8



Harold Green III
Birth to Age 4



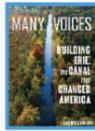
Gene Ha
Grades 9-12



Kate Hannigan
Grades 3-5



Nicole M. Hewitt
Grades 6-8



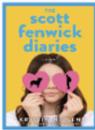
Laurie Lawlor
Grades 9-12



Lisa Maggiore
Grades 3-5



Dana Marie Miroballi
Birth to Age 4



Kristin Nilsen
Grades 6-8



Heidi Bee Roemer
Birth to Age 4



Barb Rosenstock
Grades 9-12



Rebecca Siegel
Grades 6-8



Zach von Zonk
Birth to Age 4



Alex Willan
Grades K-2

You can bring your books and have them signed! Books will also be available for purchase from Anderson's Bookshops.

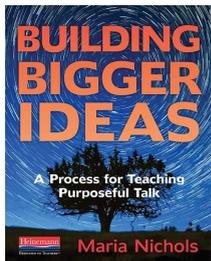
At this Book Festival, the Illinois Reading Council will also be celebrating the written work of students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. All students, including those in special programs, are invited to participate. Schools are encouraged to select their Young Authors who will attend and be celebrated at the **Illinois Reads and Young Authors Book Festival**. Registration to be a part of the [Young Authors Celebration](#) is due by April 5th!

To find out more about [Illinois Reads](#) or the [Young Authors Celebration](#), visit us online today!

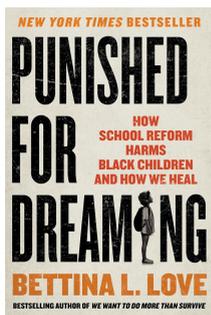
IRC BOOK CLUB

Join educators from all over the state in the online [Spring 2026 IRC Book Club](#)! Choose one, two, or all three books!

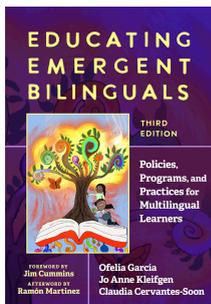
Beginning **March 22**, educators will participate in online discussions over the next seven weeks with the ***Building Bigger Ideas*** book club, the ***Punished for Dreaming*** book club, and/or the ***Educating Emergent Bilinguals*** book club. Participants who complete all assignments will be eligible to receive 15 PD clock hours for each book club.



Building Bigger Ideas: A Process for Teaching Purposeful Talk was written by Maria Nichols. During the book club, participants will be guided beyond teaching students to talk politely about books to teaching them to have meaningful conversations with purposeful talk that serves as a tool for constructing understanding with others.



Punished for Dreaming: How School Reform Harms Black Children and How We Heal was written by Bettina L. Love. During the ***Punished for Dreaming*** book club, participants will delve into the last forty years of educational reform through the lens of 25 Black Americans with a roadmap for transformations for all children at its core.



Educating Emergent Bilinguals: Policies, Programs, and Practices was written by Ofelia Garcia, Jo Anne Kleifgen, and Claudia Cervantes-Soon. During the ***Educating Emergent Bilinguals*** book club, participants will use this widely used textbook that has been expanded to explore the potential of translanguaging and the promises and pitfalls of Artificial Intelligence. It also addresses the harmful role that colonialism and raciolinguistic ideologies play, offering guidance for transforming policies and practices to improve the education of emergent bilinguals.

Register by **March 22, 2026**, to participate in the book club(s). Registration is FREE for IRC Members. The cost for non-members is \$50, which includes IRC membership for one year. **PLEASE NOTE: The cost of book is not included.**

REGISTER TODAY!



RESOURCES

UNLOCKING THE ILLINOIS COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY PLAN: WRITING

By Donna Herman and Deb Augsburger

Writing Overview

Writing is a fundamental literacy skill involving the coherent expression of thoughts and ideas in print. More than a communication method, it is a tool for cognitive development, structuring ideas, reflection, and critical thinking. Writing encompasses elements like grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary use, and organization. It complements reading and is vital in enhancing language understanding. Writing enables individuals to develop their ability to articulate thoughts, expand their vocabulary, and improve their grammar proficiency. Writing fosters creativity, reflection, and self-expression, deepening language understanding and enhancing both written and verbal communication skills.³⁹

Ah, Writing! Next to public speaking, it is one of the most dreaded activities for students and teachers alike. Writing is very complex, as indicated by the writing rope referenced in the ICLP (Sedita, 2023). The elements of craft and transcription, such as handwriting, spelling, and word choice, support the higher functions of skilled writing. Given the ubiquity of AI, it is imperative now more than ever that we teach students to write well, so that they may express their OWN ideas effectively and critically evaluate written works. But writing often gets short shrift in teacher education and professional development. Where to start? How to model and assess? How do we make writing something that students embrace and want to engage in?

SKILLED WRITING

CRITICAL THINKING

- Generating ideas, gathering information
- Writing process: organizing, drafting, writing, revising

SYNTAX

- Grammar and syntactic awareness
- Sentence elaboration
- Punctuation

TEXT STRUCTURE

- Narrative, informational, opinion structures
- Paragraph structure
- Patterns of organization (description, sequence, cause/effect, compare/contrast, problem/solution)
- Linking and transition words

WRITING CRAFT

- Word choice
- Awareness of task, audience, purpose
- Literary devices

TRANSCRIPTION

- Spelling
- Handwriting, keyboarding



Sedita, Joan. (2023). *The Writing Rope: A Framework for Explicit Writing Instruction in All Subjects*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Fortunately, the ICLP evidence-based instructional practices K-12 help us out tremendously:

- Teach grammar in context
- Write diverse formats and genres (non-traditional formats are motivating!)
- Use a scope and sequence for grammar (build on what students know and can do)
- Support translanguaging (multilingual writing)
- Use sources and support writing with evidence
- Write across the curriculum: Use opportunities for planning and revising writing
- Use a variety of mentor texts across difficulties, disciplines, and genres, with appropriate scaffolds; develop skills in analyzing, interpreting, and synthesizing information
- Structure active engagement with texts through discussions/reflective writing
- Model handwriting/cursive and teach letter formation (not drawing/tracing letters)
- Short & frequent multisensory handwriting practice activities

Some practical ideas that support all students (multilingual learners, students with specialized needs, gifted students, etc.) include:

- Power Writing
- Interactive writing

- Use theater to build writing skills
- Story Impressions: Provide vocabulary from mentor text to generate new stories
- Write informational signs from content reading
- Shared/Collaborative Writing: start a story individually; pass the paper to partner; each continues adding to the text; read and revise
- Testimonios and “Where I’m From” personal narrative poems (Christensen, 2000)
- One topic = 18 writing prompts (cross a topic with purposes and audiences)
- Real-world writing purposes
- Use wordless picture books: Talk, build language & story → write it
- Graphic novel templates for writing: Canva, StoryboardThat, etc.
- Sentence Combining
- *What Works Clearinghouse guide for teaching writing*

Sources:

<https://microlearning.ccee-ca.org/power-writing-a-writing-fluency-activity/>

<https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/synthesis/chapter/getting-ready-to-write-the-p-o-w-e-r-writing-process/>

<https://keystoliteracy.com/>

<https://www.storyboardthat.com/create/worksheet-graphic-novel>

<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/WWC/Publication#/pubsearch>.

Christensen, L. (2000). *Reading, writing, and rising up: teaching about social justice and the power of the written word*. Milwaukee, Wis.: Rethinking Schools.

Mayes, A.S, Coppola, E.C., & Fa, B. (2020) *Using Theatre to Develop Writing Skills: The Story Pirates Idea Storm*. The Reading Teacher Vol. 73 No. 4



2026

IRC CONFERENCE

March 12-13, 2026

Springfield, Illinois



ILLINOIS READING COUNCIL
a full literacy palette

On-site registration is still available for the upcoming [2026 IRC Conference](#), A Full Literacy Palette, on March 12-13, 2026 in Springfield Illinois.

To find out all about the conference and the featured speakers who will be joining us, check out the [2026 Preliminary Program](#) that is online now. Featured speakers include: Wiley Blevins, Lesa Cline-Ransome, Tricia Ebarvia, Loren Long, Bettina L. Love, Pamela A. Mason, Briana Carlson-Morales, Yuyi Morales, Maria Nichols, Marc Tyler Nobleman, Jarrett Pumphrey, Jerome Pumphrey, James Ransome, R. Joseph Rodriguez, Aisha Saeed, Maria Walther, Becky Anderson Wilkins, Rachel Zindler, and the 2026 Illinois Reads Authors.

We hope to see you at the 2026 IRC Conference!

THE ILLINOIS READING COUNCIL
invites you to join us for the
57TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
March 12-13, 2026 Springfield, Illinois
a full literacy palette

Featured speakers include

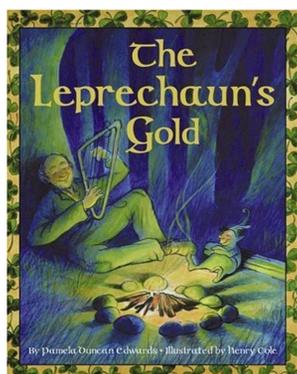
WILEY BLEVINS	LESA CLINE-RANSOME	TRICIA EBARVIA	LOREN LONG
BETTINA L. LOVE	PAMELA A. MASON	BRIANA MORALES	YUYI MORALES
MARIA NICHOLS	MARC TYLER NOBLEMAN	JARRETT PUMPHREY	JEROME PUMPHREY
JAMES E. RANSOME	R. JOSEPH RODRIGUEZ	AISHA SAEED	MARIA WALTHER
BECKY WILKINS	RACHEL ZINDLER	SAMIRA AHMED	ILLINOIS READS AUTHORS - 2026

REGISTRATION AND HOUSING ARE OPEN ONLINE! FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT THE IRC WEBSITE AT WWW.ILLINOISREADINGCOUNCIL.ORG

Family Literacy Bookshelf

By Barb Ashton

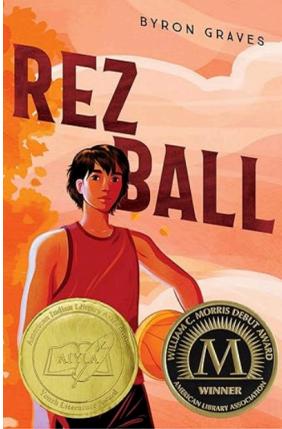
During March we observe Women in History month, celebrate St. Patrick's Day, Ag in the Classroom, March Madness, and spring training of our favorite baseball team.



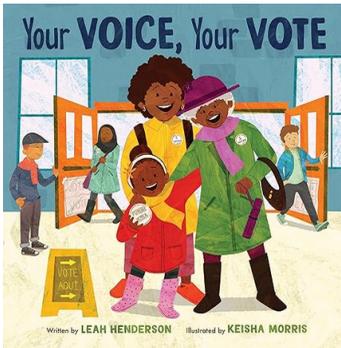
St. Patrick's Day is fast approaching. To put you in the spirit of the day read the Irish folktale [The Leprechaun's Gold](#) by Pamela Duncan Edwards. This is a classic Irish folktale about two harpists, joyful Old Pat and mean spirited Young Tom. Both Old Pat and Young Tom want to participate in the King's Royal Palace's contest to become the finest harpist in Ireland. The night before the audition Tom snaps the strings of Pat's harp so he can't perform at the contest. That same night a leprechaun tells Tom and Pat that he needs help because a rabbit is holding his foot in his hole. Tom does nothing but Pat assists the leprechaun to free his foot. The next day at the contest Tom begins to play but realizes the strings on his harp are broken and he is disqualified. Pat's turn is next and he plays his harp with new strings. Did the leprechaun return the favor? Did Old

Pat win the contest? You'll need to read *The Leprechaun's Gold* to discover the answers. This is an engaging tale about kindness along with a bit of magic. The colorful illustrations and the challenge of finding the four-leaf clovers hidden throughout the book/story make this a fun and enjoyable tale to share on St. Patrick's Day.

Are you ready for March Madness? To help you get into the spirit and excitement of the basketball tournaments read the YA novel [Rez Ball](#) by Byron Graves. This is the story of Tre



Brun who loves to play basketball, especially on his high school team on the Red Lake Reservation. However, Tre is dealing with the recent loss of his older brother Jaxon (who was a popular player) in a tragic car accident. Tre works very hard to make the varsity team and help them win their first state championship. Tre also has the dream of becoming the first person from the rez to make the NBA. While pursuing his dreams Tre encounters many challenges from coaches, family, teammates, the community, along with racism, peer pressure, and friendships. After decades of rez teams not making it, do the Red Lake Warriors have that magical season and win it all? *Rez Ball* is the book to read during March Madness.



This is an election year. A new and informative book about the importance of voting is [Your Voice, Your Vote](#) by Leah Henderson. In this timely picture book Quetta Little learns about the importance and power of casting your vote on election day. Quetta joins her grandmother and mother as they head out the door to cast their vote at the voting station. As they make their way through their neighborhood, they meet various obstacles that prevent people from voting. However, grandmother and mother journey on and teach Quetta about the importance of voting and those who fought for the right to vote. Quetta finally understands the power of voting and how it helps to raise your voice on issues and problems our nation faces. The “warm

illustrations and engaging text” will help younger children understand the importance of taking the time to vote. *Your Voice, Your Vote* is a timely book to share with students and their families as America continues to face challenges for voting rights. This book provides many opportunities for discussion. Additional information is included in the Author’s Note along with suggestions for Further Reading listed in the back of the book.

Looking Ahead

March is Music in Our Schools Month.

March 2: Read Across America Day – Theme is Celebrating A Nation of Diverse Readers

March 14: Pi Day – Go to www.nctm.org/piday for resources

March 14: Albert Einstein Birthday

March 15: Ides of March

March 17: St. Patrick’s Day

March 20: Spring Equinox

March 24: National Ag Day – Theme is Agriculture: Together We Grow

March 29: Palm Sunday

April 1: Passover begins

April 1: April Fool’s Day

April 5: Easter Sunday



UPCOMING PD EVENTS

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

- **March 3, 2026: MID-State Reading Council** will host the AI Classroom Monthly Book Club from 4:30 to 5:30 pm at Gill Street Restaurant, 3002B Gill Street, Bloomington, Illinois.
- **March 3, 2026: Suburban Council of IRA (SCIRA)** will host the Using AI to Strengthen Literacy Instruction Without Losing What Matters with Meghan Hargrave from 4:30 to 6:00 pm via Zoom.
- **March 4, 2026: IRC Webinar** on Verses of Becoming: Poetry as Radical Self-Discovery with Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **March 10, 2026: Illinois Valley Reading Council** will host an Author Event with Alice B. McGinty from 5:30 to 6:30 pm at the Peoria Heights Public Library, 816 E Glen Ave, Peoria Heights, Illinois.
- **March 12-13, 2026: Illinois Reading Council** will host the 57th Annual IRC Conference in Springfield, Illinois. Visit the Conference Webpage to find out more about the Featured Speakers, Registration, and much more!
- **March 16, 2026: Illinois Valley Reading Council** will host the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Webinar Series on Comprehension from 4:30 to 5:30 pm via Zoom.
- **March 22, 2026: Register for the Winter 2026 IRC Book Club** where participants will read, reflect on, and respond to *Building Bigger Ideas: A Process for Teaching Purposeful Talk* by Maria Nichols and/or *Punished for Dreaming: How School Reform Harms Black Children and How We Heal* by Bettina L. Love and/or *Educating Emergent Bilinguals: Policies, Programs, and Practices for Multilingual Learners* by Ofelia Garcia, Jo Anne Kleifgen, and Claudia Cervantes-Soon.

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.

#WhatIAmReading: Share a book that you are reading, in 3 to 4 sentences.

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:

- Artificial Intelligence in Education
- Tips for Teaching Writing
- Strategies for Struggling Readers
- Building the Reading and Writing Connection
- 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!

QUICK LINKS

[Visit the IRC Website](#)

[Full IRC Events Calendar](#)

[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 or by phone at 309-454-1341.

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

