



Empowering  
Lives  
Through  
Literacy

# Communicator

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and follow us on:



*"Reading gives us some place to go when we  
have to stay where we are."*

~ Mason Cooley



## UNLOCKING THE ILLINOIS COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY PLAN: PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

By Donna Herman and Deb Augsburger

Our series continues with part 3 on implementing the [ICLP](#): As previously noted, Core Instructional Practices in the Literacy Plan are neither exhaustive nor inclusive across all grade levels and for all learners.

Phonological Awareness (PA) includes hearing and manipulating spoken sounds, syllables, onset-rimes, and phonemes, and is considered a crucial foundational skill for developing readers. Remember, Phonics is the application of sounds to print, and is addressed later.

Systemic and explicit instruction is key in developing readers, writers, and spellers. Although often considered an early elementary skill focus, understanding the role of Phonological Awareness in upper grades continues to support literacy skills. The [ICLP](#) reminds us of this (p.38) and offers ideas to consider for students in Pre-k through high school. Here are some examples of the ICLP's evidence-based practices for Phonological Awareness (PA), as well as what this might look like in the upper grades.

**Early Childhood and Primary Grades:**

- The playfulness of songs, rhyming, poetry, and movement provides personalized learning rather than relying on worksheets or assuming they have developed PA.
- When teaching students how to isolate and identify sounds, use manipulatives to help them learn how to spell, rather than focusing solely on spelling without a sound-based approach

### Middle School:

- Teach students how to apply phonemic skills to multi-syllable words they are learning to spell, rather than giving them a list of spelling words to memorize. Continue to remind students how to approach content-specific words using phonemic awareness skills and introduce the role of dialects in language.

### High School:

- Help students consider and use phonological tools as they read and write across the curriculum instead of telling them how to pronounce complex words. Expanding students' understanding of dialects and language also promotes deeper literacy outcomes.

See resources on the [ISBE](https://www.ilrb.org/) website for the ICLP, as well as here: <https://tinyurl.com/25dh3juc>

In the next issue, we will discuss Word Recognition in the ICLP.

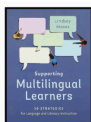


IRC will be offering the Webinar Series for members only in 2025-2026. All webinars will begin at 7:00 p.m. Members who watch the live or recorded webinars can earn professional development clock hours.

### September 3, 2025 ~ Lindsey Moses Supporting Multilingual Learners: Practical Strategies for Inclusive Language and Literacy Instruction



As classrooms become increasingly diverse, educators need effective, research-based strategies to support multilingual learners across content areas. This session offers practical guidance for designing inclusive instruction that promotes language and literacy development as well as academic achievement. Dr. Lindsey Moses will share examples and videos of classroom-tested strategies that foster oral language, reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and writing across the curriculum.



### February 4, 2026 ~ Becky Anderson Discovering the 2026 Illinois Reads Books



Join Becky Anderson as she presents the Illinois Reads books for 2026. Learn more about the Illinois Reads statewide literacy initiative that promotes reading for all Illinois citizens. Six books in each of the six age bands from Birth to Adult will be shared. A variety of book topics and themes are chosen for each age band, highlighting the work of Illinois Authors.



### October 1, 2025 ~ Candace Fleming Nonfiction Fun ... Truly!



Can kids write engaging nonfiction? Absolutely! In this fast-paced presentation, two-time Sibert medalist Candace Fleming will share secrets for creating fun and fascinating nonfiction with young writers. Participants will not only discover strategies for effective research and directed inquiry, but they will also leave with oodles of tips and ideas to help students create exciting "true stories" rather than dull encyclopedic accounts.



### March 4, 2026 ~ Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz Verses of Becoming: Poetry as Radical Self-Discovery



In this webinar, Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz explores poetry as both mirror and doorway—a sacred practice for naming truths, confronting wounds, and reclaiming the fullness of self. Through reading and writing, poetry offers a language for what is often unspoken, helping educators and students give voice to their lived experiences.



### November 5, 2025 ~ Colby Sharp

### April 1, 2026 ~ Kimberly N. Parker

## Awesometastic New Books!



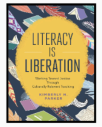
In this session, Colby will book talk some of his favorite 2025 picture books, chapter books, middle grade novels. Colby is the co-founder of *Nerdy Book Club*. He co-hosts The Yarn podcast with Travis Jonker. Colby co-authored *Game Changer! Book Access for All Kids* with Donalyn Miller, and he is the editor of *The Creativity Project: An Awesometastic Story Collection. A Commonsense Guide to Your Classroom Library* written with Donalyn Miller, is his latest book.



## Literacy Is Liberation: What Still Matters in Today's Times!



In this presentation, Dr. Parker will reinforce what continues to matter in our literacy work from her book, *Literacy is Liberation: Working Toward Culturally Relevant Teaching*.



### December 3, 2025 ~ Shawna Coppola "Redefining" Writing for Greater Equity, Engagement, and Authenticity!



Many of the ways we've conceptualized literacy need revising if we are to truly challenge some of the inequities that "live" within our educational system. How might this look when considering how we teach our students to write (i.e., to compose texts)? What paradigm shifts are necessary for ensuring that all of our students see themselves as "writers"?



### May 6, 2026 ~ Whitney La Rocca Look Again! Inviting Students and Teachers into Possibilities for Revision



What happens when we take another look, with curiosity over judgement, at student writing—and when we invite our students to do the same? In this interactive webinar, we'll examine how reframing revision as discovery can help students make meaningful choices as writers. Join us to reflect on your own feedback practices, learn new ways to support revision through three pathways of support (oral language, illustrations, and written language), and engage students in conversations to elevate their writing.



### January 7, 2026 ~ Cornelius Minor Being Child Centered in A World That Wants to Center Everything Else



We know the importance of using data to inform instruction and classroom based decision making. And we know that data is not just last year's test score. The most important data points walk into our schools each morning. What children do, how they do it, and what they say in response to our classroom practice is consistent information that we can use when making decisions. In this session, we will explore tools, methods, and practices that enable us to teach powerfully — with what we learn from and about young people at the center.



### June 3, 2026 ~ Samira Ahmed and Sara K. Ahmed A Summer of Inquiry & Justice: Build Your Stack & Your Inquiry Journal



Dive into "A Summer of Justice," a session focused on diverse fiction and nonfiction book talks—perfect for read-alouds, classroom shelves, or book clubs—stay for the paired research ideas. We'll also share how your own summer "Inquiry Journal" can serve you as a curious learner, then a mentor to student-led research, reflection, and civic engagement in the fall. You'll leave with a collective joy in the spirit of inquiry and a curated list to support your local bookseller, all while gaining renewed inspiration to guide your summer of impactful learning and justice-oriented inquiry.



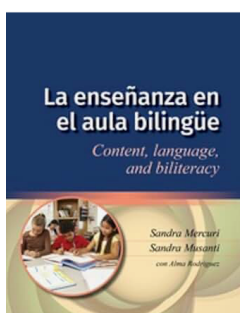
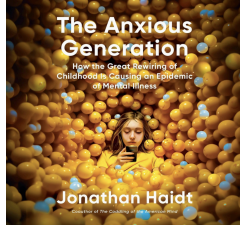
Mark your calendars and register to take part in this convenient, free IRC membership benefit. Members will receive monthly emails with links to register or can also sign into their Membership Account to register today. Nonmembers can join online and register today!

## IRC BOOK CLUB

Join educators from all over the state in the online **FALL 2025 IRC BOOK CLUB!** Choose one, two, or all three book clubs!

Beginning **October 19**, participants will be reading, reflecting on, and responding in the *The Anxious Generation* book club, the *Rebellion 1776* book club, and/or the *La Enseñanza en el Aula Bilingüe* book club during the seven-weeks of online discussions.

[The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness](#) was written by Jonathan Haidt. The book is an investigation into the collapse of youth mental health in the era of smartphones, social media, and big tech with a plan for a healthier and freer childhood.



[Rebellion 1776](#) was written by Laurie Halse Anderson. The book club participants will delve into this novel study on a thoroughly researched and emotionally resonant historical fiction book for middle grades.

[La Enseñanza en el Aula Bilingüe: Content, Language, and Biliteracy](#) was written by Sandra Mercuri, Sandra Musanti, and Alma Rodriguez. The book club will help educators who dedicate their work to bilingualism, biliteracy, and equity for bilingual learners as well as strengthen their own academic reading and writing in Spanish. The book is mostly written in Spanish with previews in English.

Register by **October 15, 2025**, to participate in the book club. 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!

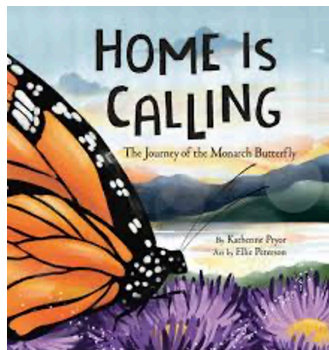
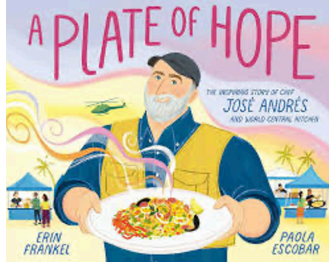
## Family Literacy Bookshelf

By Barb Ashton

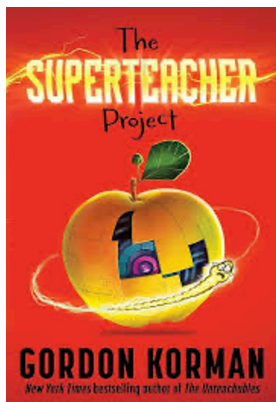
Autumn is slowly approaching. The students have returned to school and the start of football season is a sure sign that September is here. During September, we celebrate Labor Day, honor our grandparents, remember and observe 9/11, and celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month.

[A Plate of Hope: The Inspiring Story of Chef José Andrés and World Central Kitchen](#) is written by Erin Frankel and illustrated by Paola Escobar. It is a timely book especially considering what is going on in Gaza, Ukraine, and other parts of the world. It tells the story of how José Andrés started the World Central Kitchen. The Author's Note in the back of the book provides additional information about José Andrés. There is also a bibliography with websites that contains further information. This is a book that can be used at all grade levels.





**Home is Calling: The Journey of the Monarch Butterfly** is written by Katherine Pryor and illustrated by Ellie Peterson. This is a beautifully illustrated book that tells/explains how the Monarch Butterflies from southern Canada and eastern, northern and central United States migrate every autumn/fall to their home in Mexico for the winter. The back of the book contains additional information on this annual journey.



**The Superteacher Project** is written by Gordon Korman. It is an enjoyable book to share with your middle grade students. This is a story of a new teacher and some interesting students who are assigned to his class. Mr. Korman also includes a "Student Teacher" as one of the characters. The story is told with humor, empathy, and explores the use of AI in education. There is also an interesting twist to the story as well. Will the new teacher become a popular teacher at the school?

## Looking Ahead

**September is Library Card Sign Up Month**

**September is Hispanic Heritage Month** – Find resources at [www.teachingcentralamerica.org](http://www.teachingcentralamerica.org)

**September 1: Labor Day** – Enjoy a restful day

**September 6: National Read A Book Day** – Enjoy reading a book you can't put down

**September 7: Grandparents Day** – Thank your grandparents for all they do for you

**September 8: International Literacy Day** – Theme is promoting multilingual education

**September 11: Patriots Day** – Remember those who lost their life during the terrorist attack

**September 17: Constitution Day** – Study the history of this important document

**September 19: Talk Like a Pirate Day** – Read a book to learn more about pirates

**September 21: International Peace Day** – Be kind and peace loving to others

**September 22: Autumn Equinox** – Fall begins

**September 26: Johnny Appleseed Day** – Enjoy an apple and read about his adventures



# UPCOMING PD EVENTS

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

- **September 1, 2025: IRC** is accepting Program Proposals to present at the 2026 IRC Conference.
- **September 3, 2025: IRC Webinar** on Supporting Multilingual Learners: Practical Strategies for Inclusive Language and Literacy Instruction with Lindsey Moses from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom.
- **September 4, 2025: Central Illinois Reading Council** will host a Back-to-School Event from 5:00 to 7:00 pm at Bar Bella, 2805 W White Oaks Dr, Springfield, Illinois.
- **September 8, 2025: IRC** is excited to celebrate International Literacy Day.
- **September 10, 2025: Western Illinois Reading Council** will host the 4th Annual Books and Beverages from 5:30 to 7:00 pm at Reserve Artisan Ales, 185 South Kellogg Street, Galesburg, Illinois.
- **September 15, 2025: Illinois Valley Reading Council** will host the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Webinar Series on Oracy from 4:30 to 5:30 pm via Zoom.
- **September 16, 2025: MID-State Reading Council** will host Slices & Stories Book Talks from 6:30 to 7:30 pm at BloNo Pizza Company, Vinyl Room, 1304 Cross Creek Dr, Normal, Illinois.
- **September 17, 2025: Central Illinois Reading Council** will host a Book Chat from 4:00 to 6:00 pm at Ink and Imprint Books, 125 N Kickapoo St, Lincoln, Illinois.
- **September 18, 2025: Secondary Reading League (SRL)** will host the Teachers on the Town Progressive Book Talk with Kylie Peters from 4:30 to 6:30 pm at Geneva Public Library, 227 S 7th St, Geneva, Illinois. Then, walk with us to Harvey's Tales Bookstores for refreshments, shopping, and socializing.
- **September 24, 2025: West Suburban Reading Council** will host Digging Deeper into the Teaching of Reading Fluency with Tim Rasinski from 6:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom.
- **October 2, 2025: Northern Illinois Reading Council** will host Squeeze It In! Making Time for Meaningful Read Aloud Experiences from 5:30 to 7:30 pm at Pizza Villa, 824 W Lincoln Hwy, DeKalb, Illinois.
- **October 7, 2025: Illinois Valley Reading Council** will host the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Webinar Series on Phonological Awareness from 4:30 to 5:30 pm via Zoom.
- **October 7, 2025: 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.
- **October 15, 2025: Central Illinois Reading Council** will host a Book Chat from 4:00 to 6:00 pm at Sly Fox Books, 123 N Springfield St, Virden, Illinois.

- **October 19, 2025: Summer 2025 IRC Book Clubs** will begin for The Anxious Generation book club, the Rebellion 1776 book club, and/or La Enseñanza en el Aula Bilingüe book club.
- **October 23, 2025: Illinois Valley Reading Council** will host Bring Literacy to Life Through Art with Patricia Braun and Marianne Stremsterfer from 5:00 to 6:30 pm at the Peoria County Health Department, Community Room 21, 2116 N Sheridan Rd, Peoria, Illinois.
- **October 24, 2025: Secondary Reading League (SRL)** will host the 46th Day of Reading with Dr. Katie McKnight from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm at the Tinley Park Convention Center, 18501 Convention Center Drive, Tinley Park, Illinois.
- **October 25, 2025: Sauk Valley Reading Council** will participate in the Dixon Community Trunk or Treat from 10:00 to 11:30 am at the Dixon Town Square Center in Dixon, Illinois.

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:** This can be a professional book or one you are reading for pleasure.

**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:

- Books the Kids Loved This Year
- My New Favorite Professional Books and Resources
- Skills and Strategies
- Current Research in Literacy
- 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](mailto:irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org) or by phone at 309-454-1341.

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

