



Empowering
Lives
Through
Literacy

Communicator

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and follow us on:



***"Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child,
and one teacher can change the world."***

~ Malala Yousafzai

IRC MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN

If each member – **"EACH ONE"**

invites someone to join – **"REACH ONE,"**

IRC can share our **"MISSION & LITERACY OPPORTUNITIES"** with everyone!



SHARE YOUR **"EACH ONE, REACH ONE"** STORY FOR A CHANCE TO WIN BOOKS OR A CLASSROOM LIBRARY!

Hello IRC Members,

When I was working on my Master's in Elementary Education with certification, my reading methods professor, Dr. Kelly Neylon, **invited me to join her** at a Prairie Area Reading Council (PARC) Executive Committee meeting. I left the meeting as Vice President of PARC—apparently no other members had applied to fill the role; imagine that! LOL! Little did I know, I was just given a priceless gift!

Within the first year, I began meeting some of the most prolific literacy leaders of our time. At the first meeting I attended, Dr. Richard "Dick" Allington, who was a literacy researcher, presented on the importance of reading volume (amongst other things). During the year, I also attended meetings/workshops with Jim Trelease, who shared information about the role of families in cultivating literacy skills; and I met Dr. Steven Layne who had just written *Igniting a Passion for Reading*, highlighting the critical need to address the affective domain (identity, engagement, motivation, etc.). Dr. Layne's work was integral to my dissertation research—in fact, as the Director of a newly formed Doctorate of Education in Literacy program, it was Dr. Layne who invited me to apply to the program, and its impact on me was profound.

Not only did I meet researchers and scholars who contributed to the field of literacy education, but I also began meeting children's and young adult authors. The first author presentation I attended was none other than Kate DiCamillo! As I listened to authors share their writing/publishing process, I began to understand the nuances of all aspects of literacy. Those authors not only fueled my passion, they also helped me become a better teacher.

During my 20+ years **as an active member** of Illinois Reading Council (IRC) (and other professional organizations), I have had the honor and the privilege of learning alongside many AMAZING educational thought partners, bibliophiles, authors, orators, researchers, advocates, and innovators who have also become collegial friends. When the day-to-day grind of teaching drains my literacy heart and soul, my active participation fills me with agency, energy, passion, and JOY! IRC has: (a) given me a network of colleagues who help me feel validated as a professional, (b) shaped my professional identity and philosophical beliefs about literacy education, (c) developed my pedagogical beliefs and instructional skills/craft, (d) added depth and breadth to my knowledge, (e) inspired and challenged me through action, and (f) brought me immeasurable JOY. IRC has been a shield of armor to ward off the negative narrative that surrounds educators.

IRC is my home! It can be your home! **My story began because someone INVITED me to a meeting and I accepted the invitation to be actively involved. "Each One, Reach One" is not just a conference theme, it is this year's Membership Campaign.** It is a challenge for

each member to reach out to a council meeting and to become a member of IRC.

Welcome to IRC!!! We ARE SO GLAD YOU ARE HERE!!!

Cindy Gerwin
IRC Director of Membership

To Celebrate and Support IRCs Mission & Membership Goals:

- From September 2026 to May 2027, six (6) books will be raffled (mailed) each month to members across the state. *Three books to a current member (the Each One) who invited someone to join IRC AND three books to the new member (the Reach One).*
- For each New Member who joins IRC, a book will be added to a classroom library which will be raffled at the 2027 IRC Conference. *Libraries will contain 50-100 books — meaning, the more new members, the more libraries to raffle.*

Share your “Each One, Reach One” Story at the link below
or also via the online form available
on the homepage of the IRC Website!

CLICK HERE TO SHARE YOUR STORY TODAY!



IRC will be offering the Webinar Series for members only in 2026-2027. All webinars will begin at 7:00 p.m. Members who watch the live or recorded webinars can earn professional development clock hours.

September 2, 2026 ~ Timothy Rasinski

Vocabulary Instruction that Works: It's More than Word Lists



It's not enough for readers to be able to decode words accurately (phonics), they also need to know what those words mean (vocabulary). Too often, though, vocabulary instruction is relegated to word lists and word sheets. In his presentation, Tim Rasinski will present actionable, artful, and engaging approaches to develop students' vocabularies and also their love of words and word study.



February 3, 2027 ~ Becky Anderson

Discovering the 2027 Illinois Reads Books



Join Becky Anderson as she presents the Illinois Reads books for 2027. 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 7, 2026 ~ Pamela A. Mason

Honoring our Learners: Formal and Informal Classroom Assessments



Teachers use formal assessments to gather screening, progress, diagnostic, and summative data about their learners to inform their instruction. However, these assessments cannot capture all the ways in which the learners make sense of written text. In this session we will discuss multiple ways to collect formal and informal data on students' literacy progress and how these strategies can add mance to the numbers provided by standardized assessments, honoring the funds of knowledge that our learners bring to classrooms every day.



March 3, 2027 ~ Loren Long

My Life: Art, Stories, A Bus, A Boy, and an Island



In this webinar, Loren Long will share a bit of his origin story ... "influential teachers in my childhood and influences in my art as an illustrator." And, he will share a bit of what he did leading up to his children's book career. Loren will also uncover his process for creating two recent picture books ... *The Yellow Bus* and *The Boy and the Island*.



November 4, 2026 ~ Barb Rosenstock

Real Life Revision Strategies



You and your students have sorted through ideas and produced rough drafts. What comes next? Revision! The 'messy middle' during revision is the point at which many student (and adult) writers throw in the towel. But revision isn't just changing a few words or "writing it again." Join children's author Barb Rosenstock as she presents practical techniques for turning drafts of any length into great writing. Learn how to write like a reader, use word counts and word banks in new ways, and consider the visual shape of a draft.



April 7, 2027 ~ Kristin Ziemke

Text and Tech: Reading All Ways



In this session, Kristin will share thinking strategies to enhance comprehension, communication, and critical thinking across print and digital texts. She'll provide ready-to-use lessons that personalize learning, build background knowledge, grow vocabulary, and support deeper reading. She'll show you how to tap students' natural curiosity with print and digital resources, resulting in learners who are inspired and empowered to develop expansive literacy skills for today's world.



December 2, 2026 ~ Andrea Honigsfeld

Wait, Don't Just Translate: Multidimensional Strategies for Multilingual Learners



To translate or not to translate, is that the question? Or is it more important to explore ways to use translation intentionally while implementing carefully designed, scaffolded lessons? This session is designed to explore how does translation help throughout the school day, especially in the earliest stages of language development and what strategies other than translation can be used to support newcomers' academic, language, literacy, and social-emotional growth.



May 5, 2027 ~ R. Joseph Rodriguez

A Teacher's Right to Write & Publish: Scholars & Scribes from the Classroom



Join R. Joseph Rodriguez to learn about writing from the classroom and your own teacher's right to write and publish. Practice short forms of effective writing that lead to publication as well as longer forms through exercises and examples. Learn about the varied modes and media, which include articles, books, essays, poetry, and videos across audiences, organizations, platforms, and venues. Collect ideas to get started writing now with practices that lead to publication.



January 6, 2027 ~ Maria Walther

Squeeze It In! Making Time for Meaningful Read-Aloud Experiences



Even on the busiest school days, interactive



June 2, 2027 ~ Darcy Day Zoells

Enhancing Visual Literacy Through Picture Books



Applying the method of shared inquiry when reading picture books can help children with decoding and developing their ability to critically read the visual world. Humans tend to trust their





language comprehension. Join Maria to discover simple, effective ways to weave meaningful read-aloud experiences into your instructional day, even when you're using a published reading program. Explore recently published picture books and leave with practical, classroom-ready strategies that help students ponder and engage in purposeful conversations.



eyes. I saw it with my own eyes. Seeing believing." However, we know witnesses can be wrong, special effects are convincing, and biases can go unchecked. When one considers the curated and constructed nature of so much of our visually saturated world (advertising, TikTok, Instagram etc.), it's more important than ever that we look closely and question what we see. Story time is a great place to start that conversation with young children.



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!

Sign into your Member Account to register for the webinars today!

Professional Learning and Development Committee

By Laura Beltchenko, Chair

Hello to all IRC members and welcome to the 2026-27 school year! I truly hope that we are all inspired to make this year a year of continued successful teaching and student learning.

I would like to direct all of our IRC members to the [IRC PD Services](#) page on the IRC Website. On this page you will find a host of information pertaining to opportunities for your school and your district to have expert, high-quality professional development learning on-site from knowledgeable and quality professionals. Please share this information with the organizers in your district who structure and plan your professional learning. Let them know that the Illinois Reading Council not only has an outstanding literacy conference every year, but the Council also provides the targeted and customized professional development that is essential to support literacy development for your students. One final note on Professional Development Services. If you would like to become a PD provider for the IRC, please complete the application that is located on the IRC Professional Learning page.

The [Professional Learning](#) page of the IRC website has a host of valuable information that you can use to support your classroom. Do you have a website or resource that you have found to be valuable for instruction, student engagement or your personal professional learning? IRC has a [Professional Learning Padlet](#). We are continually seeking resources to share with our colleagues and the Padlet is one way to communicate quality information. Please use this link to [Share a Resource for the IRC Professional Learning Padlet](#) and your contribution will be posted and shared with IRC members!

Have a productive and successful school year!

All my best, Laura

IN MEMORY OF CAROL OWLES

The Illinois Reading Council is sad to share that Carol Owles passed away unexpectedly on Thursday, August 6, 2026.

Carol was a cherished long-time member of the Illinois Reading Council and a dedicated leader on our Board of Directors. Through her work as chair of the IRC International Projects Committee, Carol made a profound impact for the Guatemalan Handicrafts and the Navajo Nation Scholarship and School Supplies Projects. Many will remember meeting Carol and her husband Art at the annual IRC Conference as well as at many other literacy conferences/organizations in Illinois.

Carol devoted her life to education and helping others. She was an extraordinary literacy advocate, a true pillar of our community, and a dear friend who will be deeply missed.



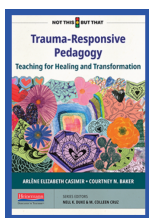
IRC BOOK CLUB

Join educators from all over the state in the online **Fall 2026 IRC Book Club**! Choose one, two, or all three book clubs!

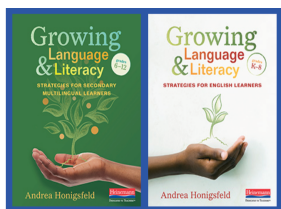
Beginning October 18, participants will be reading, reflecting on, and responding in the **War Games** book club and/or the **Trauma-Responsive Pedagogy** book club and/or **Growing Language & Literacy** book club during the seven weeks of online discussions.



War Games was written by Alan Gratz. In the book club, participants will learn how to hold book clubs with their own middle grade classrooms based on this historical fiction novel about Olympic gold, Nazi gold, and a daring heist during the 1936 Berlin Olympics.



Trauma-Responsive Pedagogy was written by Arlene Elizabeth Casimir, Courtney N. Baker, Nell K. Duke, and M. Colleen Cruz. In the book club, participants will be provided an actionable guide that offers research and inclusive frameworks to help create a trauma-responsive classroom with the tools needed to support their students through challenges.



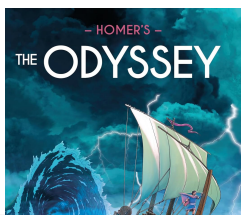
The **Growing Language & Literacy** books were written by Andrea Honigsfeld. In this book club, participants will choose between **Growing Language & Literacy: Strategies for English Learners** that provides K to 8th Grade Teachers with strategies to support EL students' academic language and literacy development based on the TESOL framework of language acquisition OR **Growing Language & Literacy: Strategies for Secondary Multilingual Learners** that provides secondary 6th to 12th grade teachers practical strategies to support adolescent multilingual learners across all grade levels and content areas.

Register by **October 18, 2026**, 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

The warm sunny days of summer are slowly fading and giving way to the colorful autumn season. The new school year has started and the store shelves are now filled with autumn decorations. During September we celebrate Labor Day, honor our grandparents, remember and observe 9/11, and celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month.



Do you like adventure stories? Then read **The Odyssey** by Homer. **Homer's The Odyssey: A Graphic Novel** by Steve Skidmore and Steve Barlow has been adapted for children. This is the story of Odysseus during the time of the Trojan War, which was a battle between the Greeks and Trojans. It is also a time when Gods and Goddesses played a part in human lives. As the Trojan War dragged on Odysseus had the idea of a "Wooden Horse" in which the Greeks would hide. The horse was taken to the battle area and



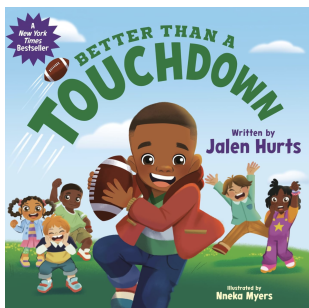
at the appropriate time the seal was broken. The Greeks surprised the Trojans and ultimately defeated the Trojans – thus bringing the end of the war. After the war Odysseus longed to return to his homeland to be with his wife and son. On his journey, he encounters sea monsters, one-eyed ghosts, various other creatures, and ordeals and incidents as he attempts to return

home. This version of *The Odyssey* is written in a “dyslexia-friendly design” that makes it possible for not only students with dyslexia but also for students with other learning disabilities to be able to read this classic novel. The back of the book contains a wealth of information in regards to themes, timelines, Homer’s storytelling, use of language, maps, and how this classic story has been adapted over the years in books, movies, TV series, etc. This is a book for all libraries.



I Survived the California Wildfires 2018 the Graphic Novel by Lauren Tarshis gives an in-depth account/history of wildfires. Join Josh and his mom as they travel across country from their home in New Jersey to northern California where his cousins live. Josh is still upset about his life-changing situation after his dad was arrested for stealing millions of dollars from the bank where he worked. Josh meets his cousin Holly and as the cousins begin to enjoy each other’s company they decide to explore the nearby forest. As they journey further into the forest they are met by a fast moving wildfire. Feeling trapped and scared the cousins watch the animals run and they decide to follow them when Holly realizes they’re running towards the river. In the meantime, the embers burn Josh’s shoulder. As they keep running they eventually reach the river. There’s an old zipline which the kids climb onto and jump into the river planning to swim to the other side. However, Holly breaks her leg when she jumps into the river.

Though in pain, Josh gets Holly on his back and they swim together to the other side. The firefighters see the kids, rescue them, and take them to the hospital for medical attention. *I Survived the California Wildfires 2018* is an exciting story that engages the reader but also helps the reader understand what it’s like to be a firefighter in a wildfire. The back of the book includes additional information about the special gear firefighters wear, the special vehicles and life saving equipment, and the special tools that are designed to help firefighters contain and eventually put out the fire. This is a great graphic novel to be read by students from 3rd grade and up.



Another football season is starting. ***Better Than A Touchdown*** by Jalen Hurts is the story of young Jalen who is excited about the start of the new school year as he’s finally old enough to join the football team. When he gets to school his friend Trey tells him the sad news, “There will be no football team.” This is due to the garden club needing more space to grow their vegetables. So the football field was used for this. Feeling devastated Jalen isn’t about to give up on his dream of playing football. With the help and advice of some of his teachers, Jalen and his friends work very hard to clean up a nearby empty lot and make it into a football field. The colorful illustrations help to enhance the humor within the story. This is an enjoyable book about friendship, teamwork, and achieving a goal.

This book would be enjoyed by all PreK and primary age students.

Looking Ahead

September is Library Card Sign Up Month

September is Hispanic Heritage Month – Find resources at www.teachingcentralamerica.org

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

September 7: Labor Day – Enjoy a restful day

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 13: Grandparents Day – Thank your grandparents for all they do for you

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



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

- **September 1, 2026:** IRC is accepting [Program Proposals to present at the 2027 IRC Conference](#).
- **September 2, 2026:** [IRC Webinar](#) on Vocabulary Instruction that Works: It's More than Word Lists with Timothy Rasinski from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **September 3, 2026:** **Central Illinois Reading Council** will host a Back to School Gathering from 5:00 to 7:00 pm at Bar Bella, 2805 W White Oaks Dr, Springfield, Illinois.
- **September 7, 2026:** **East Central-EIU Reading Council** will host Moms & Kids Book Event from 3:00 to 4:00 pm at Morton Park, 1215 Division St, Charleston, Illinois.
- **September 8, 2026:** IRC is excited to celebrate **International Literacy Day**.
- **September 10, 2026:** **Western Illinois Reading Council** will host Sip and Swap from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at Hidden Hills Vineyard and Winery, 120 Hidden Dr, Galesburg, Illinois.
- **September 16, 2026:** **Central Illinois Reading Council** will host a Book Chat from 4:30 to 6:00 pm at Elderberry & Plumb, 926 S 7th St, Springfield, Illinois.
- **September 16, 2026:** **Prairie Area Reading Council (PARC)** will host the Reading Between the "Wines:" A Virtual Monthly Book "Tasting" from 7:00 to 7:30 pm via Zoom.
- **September 17, 2026:** **Black Hawk Reading Council** will host a Book Talk from 5:30 to 7:00 pm at the Anthology for Books, 137 S. State St, Geneseo, Illinois.
- **September 23, 2026:** **MID-State Reading Council** will host Pages & Pairings from 6:00 to 7:00 pm at Wine Merchant, 1704 Eastland Dr #8, Bloomington, Illinois.
- **September 26, 2026:** **East Central-EIU Reading Council** will host Comic Con Convention at Eastern Illinois University, Booth Library, 600 Lincoln Ave, Charleston, Illinois.
- **October 1, 2026:** IRC is accepting nominations for the [Boomer Crotty Joy in Literacy Early Career Award](#). This award celebrates educators who are promoting joyful literacy and making a difference in the literate lives of students in their early years as educators. IRC will honor an educator who is still in their first through fifth years in the profession. The award was established in memory of Boomer Crotty, a long-time IRC member and advocate of spreading laughter through books.
- **October 18, 2026:** [Fall 2026 IRC Book Clubs](#) will begin for the *War Games* book club and/or the *Trauma-Responsive Pedagogy* book club and/or *Growing Language & Literacy* book club.

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. 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:

- 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!

Visit the IRC Website

QUICK LINKS

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:

