



Empowering  
Lives  
Through  
Literacy

# Communicator

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## PROGRAM PROPOSALS FOR THE 2023 IRC CONFERENCE

By the Illinois Reading Council

The Illinois Reading Council is excited to share plans for the

2023 IRC Conference  
**REVOLUTION: A CHANGE IS GONNA COME**  
March 9-10, 2023  
in Springfield, Illinois



The following speakers will be joining us at the conference:

- Sara K. Ahmed
- Blue Balliett
- Derrick Barnes
- David Biedrzycki
- Joelle Charbonneau
- Jerry Craft
- Matt de la Peña
- Lynne Dorfman
- Alison Gordon
- Nikki Grimes
- Jacob Grant
- Tiffany D. Jackson
- Carol Jago
- Gordon C. James
- Lauren Tarshis
- Becky Anderson Wilkins
- 2023 Illinois Reads Authors
- And More To Come!

IRC is currently accepting [Program Proposals](#) to present at the 2023 IRC Conference. **Proposals are due by September 1, 2022.** Teachers, researchers, librarians, administrators, and others interested in promoting reading and related literacy areas are encouraged to submit program proposals. Please take a moment to review the 2023 Program Proposal format, general information, and criteria for selection that are available online.

The Preliminary Program with the Conference Registration and Housing Forms will be available on the [IRC Website](#) by October 1st. We hope to see you at the 2023 IRC Conference!

## THANKS FOR ALL YOU DO AS THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR BEGINS!

By Leslie Forsman, IRC President

I've seen several memes about the "teacher shortage" (probably the same "teacher shortage" that I was graduating "just in time to help fill" in the early 1980s). Some of these memes support the profession, some do not. The "raise the pay" vs "reduce the requirements" arguments are common, but one of the better memes shared that's it not a shortage of teachers, but rather a shortage of respect for teachers.

While it might be a lovely idea to hire Veterans to fill in at schools, that is not the same as hiring trained, certificated personnel. That plan (not with Veterans specifically) was tried in the school library world too. "Anyone can put books on a shelf," "anyone can read a story" were common statements, and although the basic premise might be true, there is more to those job duties than meets the eye. There is more to teaching than meets the eye also.

As teachers, as school personnel, you have my respect. Teachers invest numerous years of their lives in training and education, stress over the state certification tests, spend lots of their personal funds, are continually learning and developing, all to be a part of this profession they chose. Yes, they chose to be a teacher, even knowing society's dim view of and lack of respect for the profession. They chose this profession because they care about children and want to help them learn and grow, to help them become the best they can be, to follow their dreams and curiosity. Teachers deserve respect; they've earned respect.

As you begin this new school year, whether you've been teaching for 50+ years, are just starting your first year, are somewhere in between, or still in college, know that you have my respect and the respect of many others for a job you do so well, for the love you pour into classrooms every day, for that special help you share with the students that seek you out, for building that trust that allows our students to try, to learn, to grow. You deserve respect and thanks.

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## CALLING ALL MEMBERS!

By Donna Herman, IRC Director of Membership

August, a time of last minute summer trips, school shopping, teacher planning, and more brings excitement and hope for what's just around the corner! Classrooms of excited students and friendly faces in the hallways remind teachers of why they love what they do.

August is also a time when IRC begins their annual membership campaign with each council setting membership goals, planning events, and working with each other to help members in their professional learning and growth.

Consider how you might support your local council by referring a new member or asking how you can get involved! Let us know how we can help you! [Membership](#) is just a click away!

Join IRC at [#IRCReads](#) on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)!

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## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

By Laura Beltchenko, IRC PL&D Committee Chair

Hello to all IRC members and welcome to the 2022-23 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 you and your district to have expert professional development and high-quality on-site learning from knowledgeable and quality professionals. Please pass this information on to the organizers in your district who 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 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, the IRC Cadre application 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!

Please do not hesitate to connect with me personally to clarify information about becoming a member of the Professional Learning Cadre or for information on the Padlet at [pd@illinoisreadingcouncil.org](mailto:pd@illinoisreadingcouncil.org).

## NATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL – SEPTEMBER 3, 2022

By Bonnie Matheis, Illinois State Library, Illinois Center for the Book

The National Book Festival will be held on September 3, 2022 in Washington DC. The National Book Festival will also be offered via three live-streamed stages for Watch Parties. This is a great opportunity for everyone to see some amazing authors. Illinois' own Nick Offerman and Samira Ahmed will be live along with many other great authors!

The three stages at the 2022 National Book Festival are highlighted below.

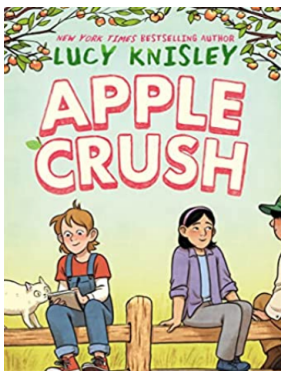
- **Main Stage:** Dhonielle Clayton, Tiffany D. Jackson, Nic Stone, Angie Thomas, Ashley Woodfolk and Nicola Yoon; Nyle DiMarco; Candice Iloh; Leslie Jordan; Ebony LaDelle; Janelle Monáe, Yohanca Delgado and Alaya Dawn Johnson; Nick Offerman; Jason Reynolds.
- **Society & Culture:** Rachel Aviv; Gal Beckerman; Daniel Bergner; Juli Berwald; Will Bunch; Morten Høi Jensen, Shawn McCreesh and Becca Rothfeld; Kathryn Judge; Brendan McConville; Robert Samuels; Linda Villarosa; Edith Widder; Elizabeth Williamson; Ed Yong.
- **Young Adult:** Samira Ahmed; Victoria Aveyard; Donna Barba Higuera; Namina Forna; Chloe Gong; Tiffany D. Jackson; Ryan La Sala; Ebony LaDelle; Darcie Little Badger; Malinda Lo; E. Lockhart; Anna-Marie McLemore; Jason Reynolds; R. M. Romero; Sabaa Tahir; David Valdes.

To find out more, visit <https://loc.gov/bookfest>.

## FAMILY LITERACY BOOKSHELF

By Barb Ashton, IRC Family Literacy Committee Chair

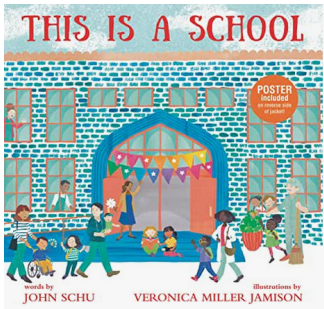
The warmth and pleasant days of summer are slowly fading away with the start of a new school year. Autumn is on the horizon with cooler temperatures, colorful trees, fall activities, and the beginning of football season. During September we honor our grandparents, celebrate Labor Day, Hispanic Heritage Month, and remember and observe 9/11.



**Apple Crush** by Lucy Knisley is the graphic novel sequel to *Stepping Stones* which is set in a rural community where Peapod Farm is located. Jen and her mom are adapting to life on the farm. Fall has arrived. Jen is apprehensive about transitioning to middle school. In the meantime Jen and her step sister Andy have gotten jobs at the neighboring farm preparing for the annual pumpkin patch and haunted hayride. The owners' nephew Eddie is also working at the farm. Jen struggles to fit in at school but through her artistic talent she's able to make friends and meets up again with Ollie, the boy she sat next to on the school bus. When career week is held at school Jen and her mom bring the apple crusher machine and demonstrate how apple cider is made. With just a week to go Jen, Andy, and Eddie put up the final Halloween decorations on the farm and run through all the scary scenes along the haunted hayride. Jen also realizes that Andy has a "crush"



on Eddie as well. *Apple Crush* is a delightful graphic novel about friendship, blended families, and navigating the middle school years. The audiobook version is an enjoyable experience as the sound effects and characters bring this story to life. This book would make a fine addition to any library but especially to rural school and rural community libraries.



The new school year has started. A delightful book to read and share with students is ***This Is A School*** by John Schu. This is an ode to all elementary schools. The story begins with a child. On each succeeding page the child is placed in a different situation such as the classroom, the hall, the gym, the library, etc., and tells what occurs in each room. School is a place where a child can learn, work, play, and can make a mistake. It is also a place for diverse students who receive assistance, support, and encouragement to succeed from a staff/team of adults who care about them and what it means to belong to the school community. The bright and colorful illustrations done in watercolor, acrylic paint, and digital collage enhance the story. *This Is A School* is also a reminder of the importance of working together – students,

parents, teachers, administration, and support staff show that good things can be accomplished and growth as a school community can be achieved. As an added bonus the book's jacket cover when reversed becomes a delightful reading poster to display in classroom or library. *This Is A School* can be viewed on YouTube.



Football season has started. For young football fans the new graphic novel series ***The Cryptid Club #1: Bigfoot Takes the Field*** by Michael Brumm will get you into the football season. The story begins with Lily who works on the school newspaper. She needs a big headline and exciting story for the newspaper. Lily's younger brother Henry tells her about the rumors going around school about claw marks on the football equipment, animal hair clogging up the gym showers, and two eighth graders stumbling upon Bigfoot taking a shower in the locker room. Lily knows better than to believe Henry, but desperate for a story, she joins Henry and Oliver, the neighbor she babysits for, and decides to investigate and search for clues, and forms The Cryptid Club. This is her opportunity for a big story. One night while searching for clues they really see that there is a Bigfoot. They make friends with him and learn an important lesson. To find out what they learned and if Lily gets her big headline and writes her exciting story you'll need to read *The Cryptid Club: Bigfoot Takes the Field*. The illustrations are bright and colorful mixed with humor and mystery. This is a fun story to

read by older primary students and especially your struggling readers. Fans of *The Bad Guys series* will enjoy this book.



In honor of Hispanic Heritage month ***Coming Up Cuban: Rising Past Castro's Shadow*** by Sesame Street actress Sonia Manzano is an informative novel/book that takes place during the Cuban Revolution and as Fidel Castro seizes power to become the new leader of Cuba. This is a collection of four short novellas of four children – Ana, Miguel, Zulema, and Juan – whose lives were affected by Castro's revolution. Through the eyes of these children the reader gets a picture of Cuba's transformation under Castro with schools being closed, new government regulations, etc. Parents' concern and fear for their children prompt them to send them to America under a Special program called Operation Peter Pan. Each novella focuses on a different aspect of life under Castro. Ana's focuses on the revolution as her father has just returned from fighting with Castro. However, when her family realizes Castro has fooled them and her father writes a letter criticizing the revolution, he's put in jail. Tragedy comes but Ana and her mother flee Cuba, come to America and live with a relative until they're able to begin a new life. Zulema's novella focuses on the rural

area of Cuba and her family who are peasant farmers. Castro sends brigadistas (teachers) to her farm and forces her family to house the teachers. Zulema has a book of fairy tales that she wants to learn to read but is turned away as only books that are state sanctioned are allowed. Miguel's novella focuses on being a refugee. Miguel comes from a more affluent family. His parents send him to America as part of Operation Peter Pan. When he arrives in Miami he is taken to an orphanage, but Miguel is able to keep in contact with his parents in Cuba who are trying to leave. They eventually leave Cuba, are reunited with Miguel and move to New York where his father gets a job and they begin life as a family. Juan's novella

focuses on radicalization. Juan is an Afro-Cuban boy being raised by his grandfather as his parents were killed in a traffic accident while visiting the U.S. Juan helps his grandfather run a fruit cart. Juan's best friend Paco is radicalized and strongly supports Castro. Juan and Paco disagree especially about the violence that occurs and the justification of the revolution. *Coming Up Cuban* is a well written and researched book that provides your middle school, Jr High and High School students with a resource about a tumultuous era in history.



A companion book to read or pair with *Coming Up Cuban* is *Isla to Island* by Alexis Castellanos. It is the story of the journey of an Operation Peter Pan child. It tells the story of Marisol whose parents send her to New York as one of the thousands of children who participated in Operation Peter Pan. Her story is told in a wordless graphic novel. The use of color within the picture frames provides a powerful depiction of Marisol's emotional, challenging, immigrant experiences, and finally adjustment to her new life in America. The back of the book gives further information about Operation Peter Pan, some recipes from Marisol's kitchen, and additional books for further reading.

## September Reminders:

**September: Library Card Sign Up Month**

**September: Hispanic Heritage Month** – [Teaching Central America](#) offers many materials and resources

**September 5: Labor Day** – Enjoy a restful day

**September 8: International Literacy Day**

**September 11: Patriots Day** – The 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers

**September 11: Grandparents Day** – Don't forget to thank your Grandparents for all they do for you

**September 19: Talk Like a Pirate Day** – Ahoy Maty! Don't walk the plank but read a pirate book

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

**September 22: Autumn equinox** – Fall Begins

**September 26: Johnny Appleseed Day** – Read about this American tall tale character and his adventures

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## LITERACY LINKS

By Sheila Ruh, IRC Educational Media Committee Chair

Take a moment to review some of the Literacy Links provided by the IRC Educational Media Committee to help Illinois educators in today's classrooms.

### Assessment Resources

#### [Quizlet](#)

Quizlet's flashcards, tests, and study games make learning fun and engaging for students of all ages. This tool allows you to create your own study sets, track your study progress, and compete.

### Reading Passages Resources

#### [Read Theory](#)

This free online resource of reading passages provides access to over 1,000 interactive reading comprehension exercises that adapt to individual ability levels. This program teaches students to think critically, draw inferences, understand scope and global concepts, find or recall details, and infer the meanings of useful vocabulary words.

### [Flashcard Stash](#)

This online tool allows you to create and customize your own digital flashcards. You can create flashcards with anything, and it allows you to include images as well.

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## UPCOMING PD EVENTS

By the Illinois Reading Council

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

- **September 1, 2022:** IRC is accepting Program Proposals for the Annual IRC Conference.
- **September 1, 2022: Sauk Valley Reading Council** will host a Book & Wine Tasting from 4:00 to 6:00 pm at Crystal Cork, 219 W 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Dixon, Illinois.
- **September 5, 2022: Vermilion Valley Reading Council** will participate in the Westville Labor Day Parade with giveaways at 11:00 am in Westville, Illinois.
- **September 6, 2022: Will County Reading Council** will host the Book Club Chit Chats via Zoom. More details will be available soon.
- **September 7, 2022: IRC Webinar on How Photography Enhances the Teaching of Writing with Ralph Fletcher** from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **September 8, 2022: International Literacy Day**
- **September 12, 2022: Prairie Area Reading Council** will host Back to School Book Gossip with Kathleen March from 6:30 to 7:30 pm at Anderson's Bookshops, 5112 Main Street, Downers Grove, Illinois.
- **September 13, 2022: MID-State Reading Council** will host Book Talks at 6:00 pm at Gill Street Bar & Restaurant, 3002B Gill Street, Bloomington, Illinois.
- **September 14, 2022: Central Illinois Reading Council** will host the CIRC Back to School Social at Harvest Market Farmhouse Brews, 3000 S Veterans Parkway, Springfield, Illinois.
- **September 14, 2022: East Central-EIU Reading Council** will host Taco 'Bout Books from 6:00 to 7:30 pm at Eastern Illinois University, Buzzard Hall 2430, 1920 9th Street, Charleston, Illinois.
- **September 15, 2022: Macon County Reading Council** will host Seven Strategies for Successful Starts with Boomer Crotty from 4:00 to 6:00 pm at the Decatur Public Library, Children's Room, 130 N Franklin Street, Decatur, Illinois.
- **September 15, 2022: Northern Illinois Reading** will host the NIRC Fall Conference with David Paige from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at Northern Illinois University, Holmes Student Center, Skyroom, 340 Carroll Avenue, DeKalb, Illinois.
- **September 15, 2022: Western Illinois Reading Council** will host Taco 'Bout Books from 4:30 to 6:00 pm at El Rancherito, Galesburg, Illinois.
- **September 16, 2022: Chicago Area Reading Association (CARA)** will host the Global Read Aloud. The event will be both virtual and in person. Registration and location will be announced soon.
- **September 20, 2022: West Suburban Reading Council** will host Science of Reading 101 with Kari Pawl and Gena Lewis from 6:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom.
- **September 22, 2022: Lewis and Clark Reading Council** will host Books and Brews from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at Stubborn German Brewing Company, 119 S Main Street, Waterloo, Illinois.

- **September 29, 2022: Southern Illinois Reading Council** will host Literature and Art Paint Night with Patricia Braun and Marianne Stremsterfer, Pam Turner, Leslie Small, and Teresa Burdin from 5:30 to 8:00 pm at Starview Vineyards, 5100 Wing Hill Road, Cobden, Illinois.

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

## 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:

