

Empowering
Lives
Through
Literacy

Communicator

1100 Beech Street, Building 8, Suite 2
Normal, IL 61761

Phone: 309-454-1341
Fax: 309-454-3512

Email: irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org
Web: www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org



@IllinoisReadingCouncil



Twitter @ILReadCouncil #ircreads



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“The great gift is the passion for reading. It is cheap, it consoles, it distracts, it excites. It gives you the knowledge of the world and experience of a wide kind. It is a moral illumination.”

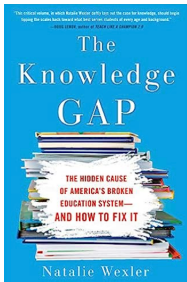
~ Elizabeth Hardwick

#WhatIAmReading



I am reading *The Knowledge Gap: The Hidden Cause of America's Broken Education System--and How to Fix It* by Natalie Wexler.

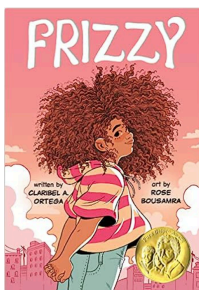
~ Jennifer Gratteau, 6th Grade and 8th ELA, Shiloh Village School District #85



After taking a professional development training on the science of reading, I got interested in this book, *The Knowledge Gap: The Hidden Cause of America's Broken Education System--And How to Fix It*, and did another online training around Natalie Wexler and this book. It is a GREAT read!

I am reading *Frizzy* by Claribel A. Ortega.

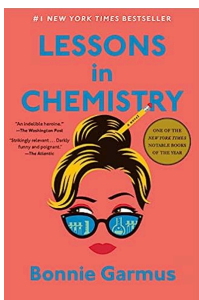
~ Julie Hoffman, IRC President



Frizzy is a graphic novel about how Marlene hates going to the salon, and no matter what she does, she can never keep her hair just right, not like her cousin with the “good hair.” Fortunately, Marlene has a best friend and a cool aunt who help Marlene love herself and her hair more.

I am reading *Lessons in Chemistry: A Novel* by Bonnie Garmus.

~ Carrie Sheridan, IRC Executive Director



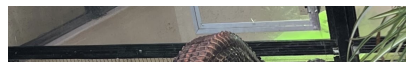
The book tells the life story of Elizabeth Zott who is a chemist in the early 1960s. Although the book is fictional, there are probably many truths that make me very thankful to the strong people who brought on changes for us from the past. I embraced the following quote from the book: *“Whenever you start doubting yourself...whenever you feel afraid...remember...courage is the root of change—and change is what we’re chemically designed to do. So...no more holding yourself back, no more subscribing to others opinions of yourself...no more allowing anyone to pigeonhole you into useless categories of sex, race, economic status, and religion. Do not allow your talents to lie dormant...design your own future...and ask yourself what you will change...and then get started.”* I found this quote and book very inspiring!



SHARING A SNAPSHOT OF A SUCCESS FROM THE CLASSROOM: A Mentor Text for *The One and Only Ivan*

By Diana Wilkie, IRC Treasurer

After reading the beautiful story of *Ivan*, the captive silverback gorilla, and his friendship with an elephant and a



dog, imaginations could run wild thinking about alligators held in a small local zoo.

Alice and Irwin arrived at Phillips Park Zoo more than 20 years ago, both as babies, and outgrew the space they share. Zookeepers have now used their voices to get them moved to an alligator sanctuary in Michigan so that they can live their best lives. Now they will continue to live together with plenty of room to move, as well as having 200 new friends!



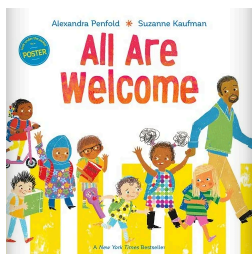
Students might compare and contrast these friendship stories or write a first person narrative as Irwin or Alice. The possibilities are endless!

Sharos, D. (2023, May 5). Alligators moved from zoo in Aurora to Michigan sanctuary. The Beacon-News. [Alligators at Aurora zoo moved to sanctuary in Michigan \(chicagotribune.com\)](https://www.chicagotribune.com/alligators-at-aurora-zoo-moved-to-sanctuary-in-michigan)

13 Picture Books to Start the School Year

By Julie Hoffman

Every student deserves to walk into a safe, welcoming, and inclusive classroom. This learning environment that is about the thriving of every student includes the books that are shared with the class. This Baker's dozen list of picture books has been curated for the first weeks of school for any age group, as high-quality picture books are for everyone.



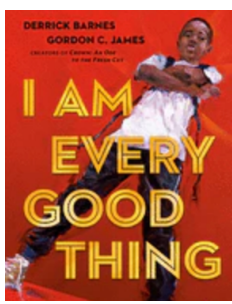
All Are Welcome by Alexandra Penfold (illus. Suzanne Kaufman)

All Are Welcome is a perfect book for the very first days of class. The rhyming pattern weaves us through a school where differences in gender, religion, culture, abilities and all of the ways we are different from each other are welcomed and celebrated, because “all are welcome here.”

Your Name is a Song by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow (illus. Luisa Uribe)

Another great book for the first weeks of school is *Your Name is a Song*, in which a young girl makes it clear to her mom that she does not want to return to school after her first day. She tells her mom that her teacher choked on her name. Throughout this beautiful story, the young girl is reminded that names come from the heart, that names are strong, that names are a song. Within the book, Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow celebrates more than thirty names from all over the world.



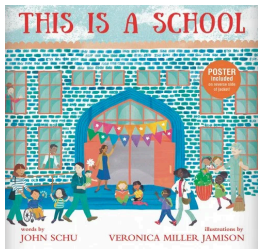
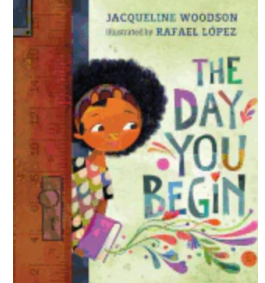


I Am Every Good Thing by Derrick Barnes (illus. Gordon C. James)

This gorgeous book can be used any time students need some affirmations and joy. Written in first person, readers come across statements like, “I am good to the core. Like the center of a cinnamon roll. Yeah, that good.” The book goes on to talk about brilliance, courage, and love. I have read this book to elementary school students, middle school students, and college students, as students at every age need to know that they are all that.

The Day You Begin by Jacqueline Woodson (illus. Rafael López)

There are times when you might not feel like you belong, or you might feel different than everyone else in the room. When you tell the truth about who you are is the day you begin. This book celebrates each of us, and this book celebrates you.

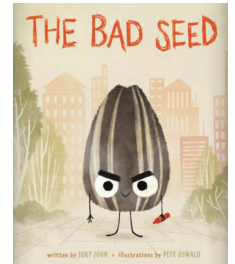


This is a School by John Schu (illus. Veronica Miller Jamison)

School is not just a building. It is a community—a place for asking, learning, celebrating, growing, changing, working, trying, hoping, and healing.

The Bad Seed by Jory John (illus. Pete Oswald)

This book is a great way to eliminate labels and offer an opportunity for fresh starts. The story introduces us to a sunflower seed that has been through some tough times, and used to be thought of as a “bad seed.” A bad seed who wants to do better, sometimes, and might not be such a bad seed after all.

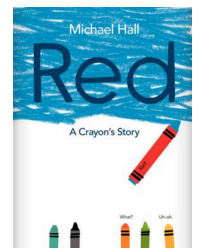


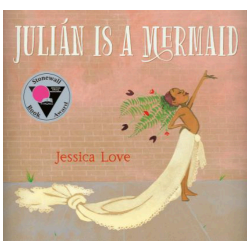
The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family by Ibtihaj Muhammad with S. K. Ali (illus. Hatem Aly)

Faizah’s big sister is going to school wearing a beautiful blue hijab. Wearing hijab means being strong, being a princess, being true to oneself, and being true to one’s faith. When Faizah’s big sister, Asiya, wears her hijab on the first day of school, she gets questions and some hurtful words. Hurtful words are for the person who says them, not for us to carry. Wearing hijab is special and regular, strong and friendly.

Red: A Crayon’s Story by Michael Hall

Every time Red tries to draw, he makes blue marks on the page. Red has a lot of people who care about him and want to help. Some offer advice, tips, and other ways to help Red do better, but nothing helps. When Red meets a new friend, Berry, she notices something that might help.



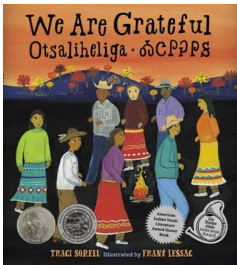
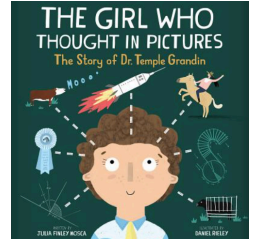


Julián is a Mermaid by Jessica Love

Julián loves mermaids and sees them everywhere he goes. He tells his abuela that he is a mermaid. When Julián dresses up as a mermaid, his abuela adds some jewelry to complete the outfit. This is a book about self-acceptance and celebrating who we are, mermaids and everything.

The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin by Julia Finley Mosca (illus. Daniel Rieley)

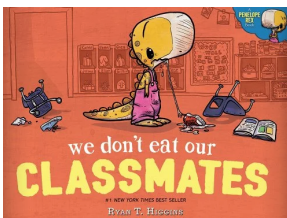
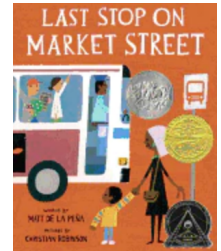
This biography of Dr. Temple Grandin is written in rhythm and rhyme to share and celebrate her neurodiversity and her brilliant mind.



We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga by Traci Sorell (illus. Frané Lessac)

This beautiful book by Traci Sorell (member of the Cherokee nation) shares the concept of *Otsaliheliga*, which is to express gratitude. The book takes us through the four seasons of a year, which include hardship and beauty, and for all of it *otsaliheliga*, we are grateful.

Last Stop on Market Street by Matt de la Peña (illus. Christian Robinson)
CJ and his grandma take a bus ride through town every Sunday. As they ride, they witness and interact with a variety of people from all over town. CJ learns about diversity, acceptance, and celebration of people as they make their way to their destination.



We Don't Eat Our Classmates by Ryan T. Higgins

Penelope has a hard time on her first day of school, because her class is filled with human children, and Penelope is a T. Rex. The problem is that even though she wants to make friends, humans are delicious. This book is a great way to introduce (or review) the concept of empathy.

Each one of these books can be used in classes of any grade level. In elementary classes they can be shared in tandem with discussion about SEL goals. In middle and high school classes, they can be analyzed for character development and themes. In all cases, they can be used to promote inclusivity and celebration of our differences and our similarities.

Family Literacy Bookshelf

By Barb Ashton

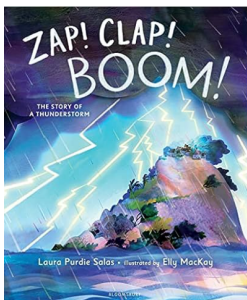
Autumn will soon be upon us. The store shelves and displays along with various other advertisements remind us that a new school year is about to start. However, August still provides time for family fun and enjoyable summer activities. While the “Dog Days of Summer” are upon us, August is also Family Fun Month and National Picnic Month.



Evicted from their family farm in Oklahoma during the Dust Bowl era, Gloria Mae and her family head to California to become migrant pickers at a peach farm. Gloria resents moving (loss of friends, classmates, etc.) and especially her dream of playing baseball. In spite of deplorable conditions, working long hours for little pay, and intimidating management Gloria discovers a makeshift boys baseball team within the peach orchard. At the same time her father tries to organize a strike for better working conditions after a child is seriously injured. Does Gloria make the team and her father avoid punishment? You will need to read **Three Strike Summer** by Skyler Schremp to get the answers.



Global: One Fragile World. An Epic Fight for Survival by Eoin Colfer and Andrew Donkin is a beautiful illustrated graphic novel that addresses the timely topic of climate change/global warming. This is the story of Sami (a 12-year-old boy) who lives in a fishing village along the Indian Ocean. It is also the story of Suki (a 14-year-old Inuit girl) who lives in northern Canada within the Arctic Circle. Each character's story is told in alternate chapters. Both children encounter dangerous situations as they face the results of global warming and their desire to make our planet safer for everyone. *Global* is an excellent read for middle school students through adults. The back of the book provides additional information on global warming. This book makes a nice asset for all libraries.



What do you get when you combine poetry with science? **Zap! Clap! Boom!: The story of a Thunderstorm** by Laura Purdie Salas is a delightful and informative book written in verse that introduces the reader to the various stages of a thunderstorm. The beautiful watercolor illustrations capture three children playing outdoors as a storm approaches, scurrying to get indoors, watching the storm from inside their home, and returning outside to play again after the storm passes. *ZAP! CLAP! BOOM!* Is an enjoyable read-aloud that helps younger students understand the science of a natural occurrence. The back of the book includes additional information on “The Science Behind Storms.” This book can also be viewed on YouTube.

Looking Ahead

August 11, 2023 marks the 50th anniversary of HIP HOP music. There is a wonderful magazine that gives the history of hip hop from it's beginnings to the present day that you can get at your local book store. **Hip Hop Speaks to Children** by Nikki Giovanni is an excellent book

for children of all ages.

August 1: Francis Scott Key Birthday – Wrote America's National Anthem

August 4: U.S. Coast Guard Day – The military branch that protects our waters and coastlines

August 5: Campfire Day/Night – Make some S'mores to enjoy with family and friends

August 9: Book Lovers Day – Enjoy reading a good book on the patio or a favorite spot

August 12: World Elephant Day – Read about elephants and how we can protect them

August 14: V-J Day – World War II ends with Japan's surrender

August 19: Aviation Day – Attend an air show or read a book about how planes can fly

August 21: National Senior Citizen Day – Thank a Senior Citizen and wish them a nice day

August 26: National Dog Day – Give your pet an extra hug or read a story to your pet today

Literacy Support Grants Awarded

By the Literacy Support Grant Committee

Thirteen Literacy Support Grants were awarded funding for the 2023-2024 school year. A total of \$10,000 dollars will be used for a variety of projects for all ages, from infants to adults, in schools, and other settings. More information about the grants that received funding can be found on IRC's website.

UPCOMING PD EVENTS

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

- **August 11, 2023: Illinois Reads** with **Candace Fleming, Eric Rohmann, and Stephen Majsak** at the Illinois State Fair, Springfield, Illinois.
- **August 12, 2023: Illinois Reads** with **Skyler Schrempp and Kayla Ancrum** at the Illinois State Fair, Springfield, Illinois
- **August 13, 2023: Illinois Reads** with **Alex Perry and Barbara Binns** at the Illinois State Fair, Springfield, Illinois.
- **August 19, 2023: Illinois Reads** with **Tamara Barker** at the Illinois State Fair, Springfield, Illinois.
- **September 6, 2023: IRC Webinar on Poems Can Heal the Heart: Empower Poets in the Classroom** with **Zetta Elliott** from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.

- **September 19, 2023: West Suburban Reading Council** will host A Book Look: Sharing of Resources on Current Topics at Jim and Petes, River Forest, Illinois.
- **September 28, 2023: Sauk Valley Reading Council** will host Beverages, Books, & Bingo at the Last Stop, 1914 Lowell Park Rd, Dixon, Illinois.
- **October 22, 2023: Fall 2023 IRC Book Club** begins with choice of books: *Teaching Fiercely: Spreading Joy and Justice in Our Schools* by Kass Minor and/or *The Final Strife: A Novel* by Saara El-Arifi and/or *Bilingualism and Bilingual Education: Conceptos Fundamentales* by David Schwarzer, Mary Petron, and Clarena Larrotta.

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

ILLINOIS STATE FAIR SPRINGFIELD

AUGUST 10-20, 2023

Come and Meet the
ILLINOIS READS AUTHORS
in the tent of Illinois Secretary of State and the
Honorary Chair of Illinois Reads, Alexi Giannoulas!

	Friday, August 11	Saturday, August 12	Sunday, August 13	Saturday, August 19
11:00 am - 1:00 pm	<i>Honeybee</i> by Candace Fleming and illustrated by Eric Rohmann Grades: K-3	<i>Three Strike Summer</i> by Skyler Schrempf Grades: 3-5	<i>Pighearted</i> by Alex Perry Grades: 3-5	<i>Babies Around the World: Dancing</i> by Tamara Barker Ages: Birth-4
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm	<i>ABC Animals!</i> by Stephen Majsak Ages: Birth-4	<i>Darling</i> by Kayla Ancrum Grades: 9-12	<i>Courage</i> by Barbara Binns Grades: 6-8	

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ILLINOIS AFFILIATE

Illinois Reading Council
Supporting Lives Through Literacy

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ILLINOIS
READS

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:

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

