

Illinois Reading Council



Empowering
Lives
Through
Literacy

Communicator

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"Fiction reveals truth that reality obscures."

~ Jessamyn West



Picture Books About Building Snow Buddies by Kristin Rydholm

"Do you want to build a snowman?"

~ Anna, from the movie *"Frozen"*

On a winter day in Illinois, when the snow is "just right," young children can make some pretty impressive snow friends. Most of the time, my Kindergarten students produced tiny and very cute snowballs affectionately called "snow babies." How can we as teachers and parents/caregivers of young children encourage and capitalize on this activity? What are the benefits, strategies and available resources that build on young children's enthusiasm for building their snow pals?

There are numerous picture books featuring snowmen, but I have assembled two lists of books where characters plan, problem-solve and ultimately build a snow friend. Reading these procedural books throughout the winter season would allow young children to consider steps in creating their own snow buddies **independently** and/or **collaboratively**.

These books support the early childhood curriculum by featuring STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) concepts, such as: weather, creativity, senses, geometry, measurement, physics, trial and error, and documentation. These titles additionally feature SEL (social and emotional learning) concepts such as: persistence, resilience, resourcefulness, collaboration, independence, and problem solving.

Building snow friends independently:

- [*The First Day of Winter*](#) by Denise Fleming (2005)
- [*I'm Going to Build a Snowman*](#) by Jashar Awan (2023)
- [*Sadie and the Snowman*](#) by Allen Morgan, illustrated by Brenda Clark (1985)
- [*Squirrel's Snowman*](#) by Julia Donaldson, illustrated by Axel Scheffler (2021)
- [*You Make Me Smile*](#) by Layn Marlow (2013)

Building snow friends collaboratively:

- [*All You Need for a Snowman*](#) by Alice Schertle, illustrated by Barbara Lavalley (2007)
- [*The Best Snowman Ever*](#) by Stephanie Stahl, illustrated by Veronica Vasilenko (2013)
- [*The Biggest Snowman Ever*](#) by Steven Kroll, illustrated by Jeni Bassett (2005)
- [*Henry and Mudge and the Snowman Plan*](#) by Cynthia Rylant, illustrated by Suçie Stevenson (2000)
- [*How to Build a Snow Bear*](#) by Eric Pinder, illustrated by Stephanie Graegin (2016)
- [*Making a Friend*](#) by Tammi Sauer, illustrated by Alison Friend (2018)
- [*Max and Mo: Let's Make a Snowman*](#) by Patricia Lakin, illustrated by Brian Floca (2007)
- [*One Snowy Day*](#) by Jeffrey Scherer (1996)
- [*One Snowy Morning*](#) by Kevin Tseng, illustrated by Dana Wulfekotte (2019) More of a disassembling/reassembling story.
- [*Raccoon's Perfect Snowman*](#) by Katia Wish (2020)
- [*Snowballs*](#) by Lois Ehlert (2001)
- [*A Thousand White Butterflies*](#) by Jessica Betancourt-Perez & Karen Lynn Williams, illustrated by Gina Lorena Maldonado (2021)
- [*Words to Make A Friend: A Story in Japanese and English*](#) by Donna Jo Napoli, illustrated by Naoko Stoop (2021)

Bio

[Kristin Rydholm](#) received her BA in education from National Louis University and her MS in Reading/Literacy from Bank Street College of Education. She has been a classroom teacher, a school administrator, and has written numerous education articles featuring picture books for Edutopia and the American Library Association's publication Book Links.

Static Stick Decal Contest

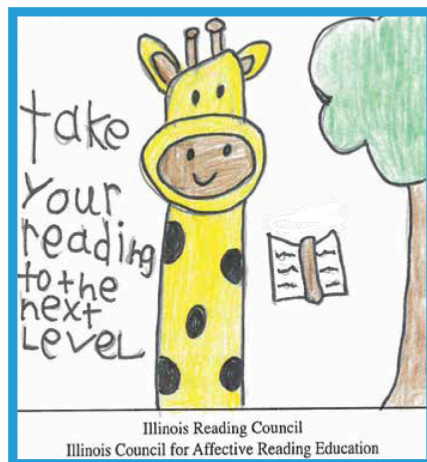
The Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education (ICARE) and the Illinois Reading Council (IRC) invite your students to design the next [Static Stick Decal](#) that encourages children to read.

QUALIFICATIONS

Entries must be from a student in grade 4, 5 or 6 in a school in the state of Illinois.

GUIDELINES

Make an original design in the 4-inch square on the back of the [application form](#). Invent an original character(s) to include in your design. You may NOT use any published cartoon or comic characters (including characters such as Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Super Heroes, Pokémon, etc.) nor any computer-generated art. Develop an original saying or slogan. Designs are limited to three colors plus black and white.



Complete the [application form](#) and mail it with the design by **January 15, 2025** to:

Illinois Reading Council
Attn: Static Decal Contest
1100 Beech Street Building 8, Suite 2
Normal, IL 61761

THE STATIC STICK DECAL CONTEST WINNER WILL RECEIVE:

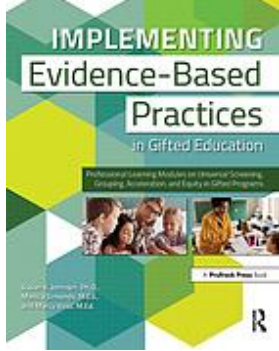
An autographed book by a well-known children's author. An invitation for the winner and his/her parents to be our guests at the Friday Luncheon at the annual Illinois Reading Council Conference. The winner will sit in a place of honor and be introduced during the luncheon. 30 Static Stick Decals with the winning design to distribute to classmates.



I am reading [Implementing Evidence-Based Practices in Gifted Education](#) by S. K. Johnsen, M. Simonds, and M. Voss.

~ Laura Beltchenko, IRC PL&D Committee Chair

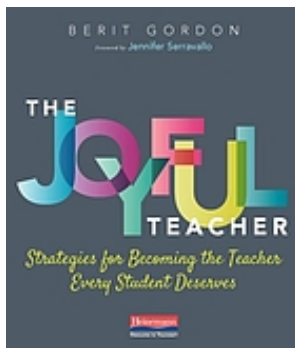
As we continue to determine how best to meet the needs of our



advanced and accelerated literacy learners, I have been reading books that are supported by evidence-based practices from the field of gifted education. The first book is [Implementing Evidence-Based Practices in Gifted Education](#) by S. K. Johnsen, M. Simonds, and M. Voss, 2021, Routledge Press. The authors have a long-standing reputation in the importance of providing quality educational pedagogy to our more able students. The book, designed in modules, has a link to all reference guides, implementation forms, handouts and presentation slides to support implementation of evidence-based practices in gifted education.

I am reading **The Joyful Teacher** by Berit Gordon.

~ Kimberly Hollis, Secondary Reading League President



Teaching is complex. In her book, [The Joyful Teacher: Strategies For Becoming the Teacher Every Student Deserves](#), Berit Gordon walks educators through all facets of teaching, from self-care, to classroom environment, to instruction and assessment ideas. It's a comprehensive look at all the elements that go into being an effective teacher, with practical strategies for each area. This text has something for everyone!

IRC is reading the books from the **Winter 2025 IRC Book Clubs**.

~ Stephanie Benson, IRC Book Club Chair



Join educators from all over the state in the online [Winter 2025 IRC Book Club](#)! Choose one, two, or all three books! Beginning **January 19**, participants will be reading, reflecting on, and responding to the following books during the seven-weeks of online discussions. Participants who complete all assignments will be eligible to receive 15 PD clock hours for each book club.

- [Humans Who Teach: A Guide for Centering Love, Justice, and Liberation in Schools](#)
- [Rooted in Strength: Using Translanguaging to Grow Multilingual Readers and Writers](#)
- [Illinois Reads](#)

Family Literacy Bookshelf
By Barb Ashton

The holiday season is here. December, the busiest month of the year, is also **Human Rights Month**. It commemorates the passage of the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights Document by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 guaranteeing everyone has basic rights and freedoms regardless of who you are. December is also **Read a New Book Month**, which encourages everyone to take time out from this hectic season to spend some time reading. Books also make nice gifts to give or receive.



December 7, 1941 will always be remembered as “The Day that will live in Infamy.” It is also the day when many of our military became heroes as well. But who is a hero? It is someone who has the courage to stand up to adversity. Alan Gratz’s new book [Heroes](#) addresses/reflects on being a hero. This is the story of best friends Frank (a white boy) and Stanley (a biracial Japanese American boy) who live in Hawaii near the Pearl Harbor Naval Base as their fathers are stationed and work there. The boys share a love for comic books, especially ones featuring the superheroes of the day, and are working on writing their own superhero comic book. While visiting the battleship Utah with a family friend the Japanese planes begin to bomb and torpedo the ships anchored in the harbor. Frantically the boys struggle to find safety. Will they survive this now famous day in history? Will their friendship survive as well, considering America’s sentiment regarding Japanese Americans? *Heroes* is an engaging historical fiction novel for middle school readers that addresses December 7th and also includes issues of one’s fears, racism, bullying, courage, and friendship. The

back of the book contains a map of Pearl Harbor, an author’s note, and ends with the comic book that Frank and Stanley wrote.



While we often read stories and books about World War II and the various battles America’s military engaged in, the Home Front is only mentioned in passing. [World War II: Fight on the Home Front](#) by Kate Hannigan is a graphic novel within the History Comics series. The stories of the home front are told by four curious children who take the reader across America into the cities, towns, farms, factories, businesses, and homes of all Americans. With the men volunteering or being called into the military, jobs at the factories were now done by women. Some of these women became known as Rosie the Riveter. The children used their wagons to collect scrap metal, newspapers, books, rubber, etc., as these items were recycled to make necessary items for the troops. Food, clothing, gasoline, and other items were rationed. The Federal government issued ration books to all Americans. Although daily life was changing, African Americans and other people of color were still experiencing racism, prejudice, and discrimination, with the jobs they were hired to do and often being excluded from serving in

the military. *World War II: Fight on the Home Front* is an informative and easy read for all middle grade students and above. The back of the book provides additional information on how America changed as the result of the development of scientific and technological advances during the war. The last page of the book contains additional books and websites for further reading.

The Christmas holidays will soon be here. To add a bit of



humor to your holidays, read [The Naughty List #1](#) by Michael Fry and Bradley Jackson. This is a story about Bobbie Mendoza, who is ignoring Christmas this year. Her family leaves the Christmas decorations up all year long and she's "tired of living in the Christmas house." While trying to take down the decorations she falls and breaks her arm. She is also busy taking care of her younger brother, Tad, who loves Christmas. At the same time Bobbie's family is separated due to their jobs. Dad is working in North Dakota and mom works more than one job. Feeling overwhelmed and wanting Tad to have a magical Christmas, Bobbie tries to win a gift for Tad. But when she participates in the contest something goes wrong and Tad ends up on the Naughty List. To save Christmas for Tad, Bobbie goes on a wild adventure to the North Pole. Will Bobbie be able to save Christmas, get Tad off the Naughty List, and give him a Merry Christmas? Read *The Naughty List* to discover how Bobbie solves this situation. The black and white cartoon illustrations complement the funny and hilarious incidents that occur throughout the adventure. Fans of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* books will enjoy reading this holiday book.

Looking Ahead

December 6: St. Nicholas Day

December 7: Pearl Harbor Day

December 15: Bill of Rights Day – Guaranteeing the basic rights of citizens in the Constitution

December 21: Crossword Puzzle Day – Do a crossword puzzle for fun on the Winter Solstice

December 24: Christmas Eve

December 25: Christmas Day and Hanukkah begins – Learn to play the Dreidel game

December 26-January 1: Kwanza – Learn about the 7 Principles of Kwanza

December 31: New Year's Eve – Say Goodbye to 2024



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

- **December 4, 2024: IRC Webinar on Why Don't My Best (Word) Readers Comprehend Text? Reading Science to Support Self-Regulated Comprehension** with **Kelly B. Cartwright** from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **December 5, 2024: Prairie Area Reading Council** will host the **Illinois Reads Sneak Peek** from 6:00 to 7:00 pm at Anderson's Bookshop, 5112 Main Street, Downers Grove,

Illinois.

- **December 5, 2024: Southern Illinois Reading Council** will host a Holiday Gathering from 5:30 to 7:30 pm at Montgomery's Place, 131 S Division St, Carterville, Illinois.
- **December 10, 2024: MID-State Reading Council** will host the Shifting the Balance Book Club from 4:30 to 5:30 pm at Gill Street Restaurant, 3002B Gill Street, Bloomington, Illinois.
- **December 31, 2024: International Literacy Association** is accepting nominations for the Exemplary Reading Program Award. Visit the International Literacy Association website for more information.
- **January 8, 2025: IRC Webinar on Discovering the 2025 Illinois Reads Books with Becky Anderson** from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **January 15, 2025: Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education (ICARE) and IRC** are accepting submissions for the Static Stick Decal Design Contest. Students in grade 4, 5, and 6 are encouraged to create an original design promoting reading. The winning design is printed on static stick decals.

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](#):

- Tips for Teaching Writing
- Literacy Meets STEAM
- Building the Reading and Writing Connection
- Why We Need to
- 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:

