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SPRING 2023 IRC BOOK CLUB STARTS MARCH 26, 2023

By the Illinois Reading Council

Join educators from all over the state in the online **Spring 2023 IRC Book Club!** Choose one or two books!

Read, reflect on, and respond to ***Being the Change: Lessons and Strategies to Teach Social Comprehension*** by Sara K. Ahmed and/or ***Rebellious Read Alouds: Inviting Conversations About Diversity With Children's Books*** by Vera Ahiyya. Beginning March 26, these seven-week online discussions will help your students develop skills of social comprehension to make sense of themselves and the world as they navigate relevant topics in today's society and/or to spark meaningful conversations about race, identity, and social justice in your classroom using read alouds as an entry point. Participants who complete all assignments will be eligible to receive **15 PD clock hours** for each book club.



Register by March 15, 2023, to participate in the book club. Registration is FREE for IRC Members. The cost for non-members is \$45, which includes IRC membership for one year. PLEASE NOTE: The cost of book is not included

REGISTER TODAY!

BUILDING LITERACY THROUGH A VENDING MACHINE: WHO KNEW?

By Anita Brown, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Federal Grants, Taylorville CUSD#3



"I am getting that chapter book, next!" Second grader poking at the window display on the vending machine.

"Dude, they have graphic novels in the machine." Fourth grader to his buddy at lunch.

"My baby sister loves that book. I am getting it for her." First grader to teacher in the classroom.

Vending machine literacy excitement for both students and adults is exploding in Taylorville School District. The vending machines are used for positive behavioral interventions or classroom goals. Tokens are distributed to students as a reward for positive actions. Those tokens are inserted into the book machine granting the student one free book of their choice to keep.

Books in the machine are chosen by instructional staff to be of high interest to students (fiction, nonfiction, art, sciences, math, how to, joke books, sports, to name a few). They can change as student interest changes. For example, we recently had an author visit (IzzyB) and students are requesting his books in the vending

machine. Connection, connection, connection!

How do you start the excitement in your school?

Our elementary building vending machines were purchased through Title I funds. The books have been funded through Title, Scholastic points, parent organizations, and local business fundraisers. Most recently, a local bank had a Friday jeans day and donated the funds for the books. A local coffee shop had a day of giving and their funds were donated to the book machine, as well.

The literacy buzz was moving rapidly in the community. TPSF (Taylorville Public Schools Foundation) sponsored a Fund A Need program for the purchase of a vending machine at our junior high school (grades 5-8).

Rebounding and reestablishing a love for literacy is being accomplished through vending machines. District and school wide goals are being addressed: positive behavior initiatives, social learning, increasing home libraries, tapping into student interests, and putting the fun into reading. We are making reading a priority sprinkled with a bit of fun, and students are on their way to becoming lifelong readers.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

By Laura Beltchenko, IRC Professional Learning and Development Chair

Quality, targeted and meaningful professional learning is what all educators require to stay current in practice. According to the [National Education Association](#), professional learning:

- Sets you up for success and expands your skill set
- Expands your knowledge base with new ideas and perspectives
- Builds confidence and expands your expertise
- Creates professional collegiality
- Supports achievement of personal career goals

With these goals in mind, the Illinois Reading Council has a cadre of outstanding professional development professionals who can customize for your district, school, or grade level, professional learning in literacy development.

Our literacy professionals are grounded in the beliefs of the professional learning organization, [Learning Forward](#). These beliefs are:

- Professional learning improves educator effectiveness and is fundamental to student learning.
- All educators have an obligation to improve their practice.
- More students achieve when educators assume collective responsibility for student learning.
- Successful leaders create and sustain a culture of learning.

- Effective school systems commit to continuous improvement for all students and teachers.

Learning forward's vision, mission, and beliefs. Learning Forward. (2022, October 18). Retrieved February 25, 2023, from <https://learningforward.org/about/vision-mission-beliefs-values/>.

The IRC and the Professional Learning Cadre welcome your inquiries for professional learning and development in all aspects of literacy development. Our cadre members are located in differing areas of Illinois to support your need for quality professional learning for educators and administration. Please consider the services of IRC. This link will take you directly to the [IRC Professional Learning and Development Webpage](#).

IRC, Literacy Learning Links and Resource Padlet of Teaching and Student Learning Tools

If you are in need of updated literacy articles, new professional books or websites that support your needs without having to pay for the resource then the [IRC Literacy Learning Links and Resource Padlet](#) is where you should click right now! This Padlet has been the effort of many educators making contributions from IRC councils around the state as well as individual teachers that have utilized a website, read an article or found a resource that has benefited their delivery of instruction for their students. Updates are ongoing and new categories and resources are always being added. If you have a resource to share please complete the Google Form for [Share a Resource](#) and it will be reviewed and posted in the appropriate category on the Padlet.

35 YEARS AND COUNTING: FIVE FOR THE JOURNEY

By Beth Walker Gambro

I recently celebrated one of those milestone birthdays. You know, those ones that cause a person to begin looking back and wondering how they've arrived at this spot so quickly. The same goes for my career. I have been loving my various reading gigs for 35 years now. Once you've marinated in literacy education as long as I have you begin to wonder if your reflections might inspire others to stay the course in this field we love.

When centenarians are asked their secrets for living a long life I joyfully celebrate those that reply saying the secret is a good book and a daily glass of wine. My own Godmother celebrated 102 independent years in this world which some have attributed to her daily, 9:30 am beer...but that is another story. What are the secrets to a long and mostly happy literacy life? Here are five that have fueled my journey:

1. **Find Your People:** For me, it began at NIU and my leadership involvement in NIRC where I made connections with colleagues such as Maria Walther, Judy Davis, and Jerry Johns. They made me laugh, ponder and sometimes moved me beyond my comfort zone. I still LOVE opportunities to mingle with them!
2. **Commit to Lifelong Learning:** As my journey has progressed I have sought out learning opportunities in a variety of places. First, in books...of course! But, aside from experiential learning, by far the most impactful literacy learning I have experienced has been attending IRC, ILA, and ICIC conferences. Here, I gathered new ideas and evidenced-based instructional practices and garnered even more of the aforementioned "find your people" groups.
3. **Be the Change:** I have always attempted to model the learning practices that I believe to be of utmost importance. Whether reading simultaneously with my elementary students during DEAR time, offering multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery for my graduate students, or gently nudging children's book publishers to create more supportive texts for our most fragile readers I think I've demonstrated that actions can speak louder than words.
4. **Serve Others:** It has been in the service of others that I have often been refueled and restored. Early on, NIRC provided me with opportunities to extol the benefits of early literacy skills with mothers and children living in a sheltered setting. IRC grants have allowed me to bring free books to newborns in hospitals, to families at my local food pantry and to the literacy professionals with whom I work. Serving on committees and in leadership roles for IRC and NIRC also offered countless ways to serve.
5. **Seek Joy:** Seeing a reader feel success and excitement about their reading accomplishments and the books they discover is a joyful feeling that has brought me far. I've always embraced living "La Vie en rose" which roughly translates to seeing life through rose-colored glasses. This world view has kept me joyful. Amid challenging circumstances, like when the COVID pandemic abruptly transformed me from a district literacy leadership position to a hybrid first grade classroom role, I sought joy. Was it the easiest year of my career? Not at all. However, the bright

(and not so bright) moments in my life as well as many experiences in my long career.

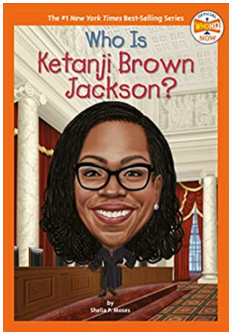
Like other seasoned educators in our council, I have always strived to Put Reading First, Become a Nation of Readers, Leave No Child Behind, Teach Like a Pirate, Prevent Reading Difficulties in Young Children, Ramp-Up My Read Alouds, and above all else, teach children to read. As we all continue on this journey as literacy educators may we continue to find ways to inspire, educate, and uplift each other.

Beth Walker Gambro serves at the district literacy specialist for the Yorkville Community School District. She is a former IRC Reading Teacher of the Year and an avid supporter of both the Illinois Reading Council and the Northern Illinois Reading Council.

FAMILY LITERACY BOOKSHELF

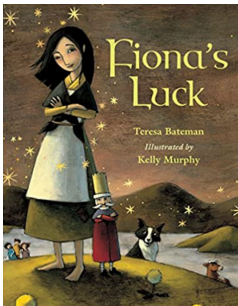
By Barb Ashton, IRC Family Literacy Committee Chair

The March winds, the return of chirping birds, sunny and warmer days, trees budding, early flowers blooming, and thoughts of spring activities will soon become a reality. During March we observe Women in History month, celebrate St. Patrick's Day, Ag in the Classroom, March Madness, and spring training of our favorite baseball team.



March is Women in History Month. A book to share with your students and families is ***Who Is Ketanji Brown Jackson?*** by Shelia P. Moses. This is the biography of Ketanji from the time she was a little girl and her rise to become the newest member of the U.S. Supreme Court. As a preschooler, Ketanji would sit with her father while he was working and studying his assignments for his law degree. It was during this time that she developed an interest in law. While continuing her education Ketanji wasn't always given encouragement to achieve her desire to become a lawyer. However, Ketanji persevered and graduated with honors from Harvard Law School. She distinguished herself as a lawyer, a public defender, and later as a federal judge. Ketanji became the first African American woman appointed to the U. S. Supreme Court. *Who Is Ketanji Brown Jackson?* offers a timely introduction to the newest member of the Supreme Court. This short and informative biography makes a nice addition to your Women in History

collection.



Saint Patrick's Day is fast approaching. Are you hoping for a bit of Irish luck? Then read ***Fiona's Luck*** by Teresa Bateman. This Irish folk/fairy tale tells how Ireland's luck has been gathered up by the greedy Leprechaun King and his people. He locks it up in a treasure chest and puts it in a secret hiding place. As a result the people go hungry (the potato famine). As luck will have it there is a young woman named Fiona who goes around town pretending she has milk and eggs from her animals. The Leprechaun King has Fiona brought to his underground throne room. While there she spies the treasure chest and suspects this is where the luck is stored. In order to gain her release Fiona is challenged by the Leprechaun King to a series of games. If she wins, Fiona is granted one wish. Does Fiona win? Does Ireland get its luck back and return to its good fortune? You'll need to read *Fiona's Luck* to find the answer. *Fiona's*

Luck is enhanced by Kelly Murphy's illustrations and use of colors that express the various moods of the story, along with the rhythmic language of an enjoyable story to share on St. Patrick's Day.



March Madness is about to begin and will soon grab our attention. For your basketball fans ***Shot Clock*** by Caron Butler and Justin A. Reynolds is a story to enjoy. This is a story about Tony, a young African American boy who lives in a housing complex in an economically depressed area of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Tony loves to play basketball with his best friend Dante who is an elite player for the local AAU team and has helped take the team to two National Championships. When Dante is shot and killed by a police officer Tony's life changes dramatically. Tony and Dante's younger brother Terry try out for the Sabres team Dante played for while struggling with the aftermath of police violence and injustice. Terry makes the team and Tony doesn't. However, Coach James is a very dedicated coach and asks Tony to become the team statistician, using his math skills to assist the team in winning. Tony is upset at first but once he starts applying his skills he sees the value in his work and enjoys working as part of the team. Coach James informs the team that they

have an opportunity to play for the National Championship in Orlando if they all continue to work together as a team. This is a timely book mixing basketball with current relatable events, as well as family, grief, friendships, social justice, community, and healing after tragedy. *Shot Clock* provides many opportunities for discussion on current topics and is an excellent read for middle and YA students.



It's the one year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. To learn more about this country read ***Blue Skies and Golden Fields: Celebrating Ukraine*** by Oksana Lushchevska. This is a beautiful book, using photographs and written word to give a glimpse of Ukraine's culture and history. Learn how the sunflower became the symbol not only for peace but also for hope and resistance against invasion by foreign adversaries. Learn also about their beautifully decorated Easter eggs. This book makes a nice introduction for discussion and information about Ukraine. *Blue Skies and Golden Fields: Celebrating Ukraine* can be enjoyed by all students and their families. This book makes a great addition to all libraries.

Looking Ahead

March is Music in Our Schools Month. It is also the 50th anniversary of Hip Hop music. Share the book **Hip Hop Speaks to Children**

March 2: Read Across America Day – Create and Celebrate A Nation of Diverse Readers

March 14: Pi Day and Albert Einstein Birthday

March 15: Ides of March

March 17: St. Patrick's Day

March 20: Spring Equinox

March 21: National Ag Day – Celebrating 50 Years – Growing a Climate for Tomorrow

UPCOMING PD EVENTS

By the Illinois Reading Council

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

- **March 1, 2023: IRC Webinar on Stories as Connectors, Stories as Community Builders, and Stories as Conversations** with Jasmine Warga from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **March 1, 2023: Prairie Area Reading Council** will host Painting with STEM & Literature with Laura Riley from 5:30 to 7:30 pm at Westmont Community Center, 75 East Richmond Street, Westmont, Illinois.
- **March 1, 2023: Western Illinois Reading Council** will host an Online Book Club on The Burnout Cure by Chase Mielke.
- **March 7, 2023: MID-State Reading Council** will host The High Five Habit Book Study from 4:30 to 5:30 pm at Gill Street Bar & Restaurant, 3002B Gill Street, Bloomington, Illinois.
- **March 9-10, 2023: Illinois Reading Council** will host the 55th Annual IRC Conference,

Revolution: A Change is Gonna Come, in Springfield, Illinois.

- **March 26, 2023: Spring 2023 IRC Book Club starts** with choice of books: ***Being the Change: Lessons and Strategies to Teach Social Comprehension*** by Sara K. Ahmed and/or ***Rebellious Read Alouds: Inviting Conversations About Diversity With Children's Books*** by Vera Ahiiyya.
- **March 16, 2023: Macon County Reading Council** will host Action and Literacy in the Classroom with Cara Burkhart and Holly Steiling from 4:00 to 6:00 pm at Brew Works, 102 E Williams Street, Decatur, Illinois.
- **March 23, 2023: Lewis and Clark Reading Council** will host Dyslexia Simulation with trained professionals from the Children's Dyslexia Center of Southern Illinois. This event will be held from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at the Collinsville Memorial Public Library, 408 W. Main Street, Collinsville, Illinois.
- **March 25, 2023: Illini Reading Council** and **Vermilion Valley Reading Council** will co-host March Mindfulness with Amanda Cliburn and Kevin Soto from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm in the Champaign Public Library, Robeson Pavilion Room C, 200 W Green Street, Champaign, 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 or by phone at 309-454-1341.

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

