



FVRC November Newsletter

Embracing Readers, Teachers and the Community

FVRC Officers:

President-Camille Lutz, Secretary- Katina Kastrantas, Treasurer- Diana Wilkie, Membership- Kristen Walsh, Social Media- Ashley Falkos, Past President- Dawn Lutz; Illinois Reads-Katina Kastrantas

Letter from the President

As I sit down to write this note Daylight Savings Time just ended, the election is upon us, and it's raining. About now you are asking yourself why you are reading this letter if it's going to start out so gloomy. Trust me, I asked myself the same question and then turned to ChatGPT for some guidance. (POOF!) in a matter of seconds it gave me a beautiful three-paragraph letter. Beautiful, but fluffy... no sustenance. If you are familiar with ChatGPT, you probably know I just needed to provide more details. To do that I looked in our Google folder and reminded myself of everything the FVRC board chose to put in this newsletter, and let me be the first to say they did not disappoint! So, I told my new AI friend what my dear friends on the FVRC board wrote and this is what it came up with (I added the names and dates):



"I hope you're all doing well and staying inspired! I'm excited to share our latest newsletter with you, and I invite you to take a few moments to dive in—it's full of updates, insights, and resources we hope you'll find valuable. Here's a sneak peek of what's inside:

Book Reviews: *Discover recommendations and reviews from your FVRC board members. Whether you're looking for new titles for your students or some inspiring reads for yourself, we've highlighted a range of books across genres and grade levels.*

Upcoming Event

that acclaimed author



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cheduled to announce
9th from 9:00-

11:00 am. This is an amazing opportunity to hear from an expert in YA literature and gain insights into the creative process.

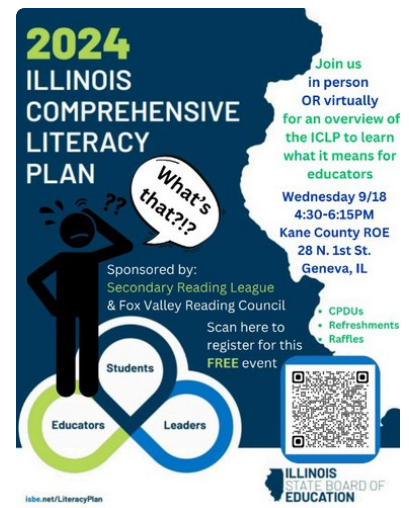
Celebrate Our IRC Membership Grant Winner: Join us in congratulating this year's IRC Membership Grant winner! Diana Wolf has been awarded the grant for her dedication to promoting literacy and fostering a love for reading in our community. Her winning proposal is featured in this issue, and we hope it inspires you as much as it has us."

Pretty good, right? Now, you might wonder why I am calling myself out with using ChatGPT. It's simple. I am sure you have had the kind of evening I am having...tired, stressed, inundated with other things, etc. I want to remind you it's ok to take a break, lean on a friend (or ChatGPT), and admit your best might not always shine. Afterall, we are human before we are anything else.

Camille Lutz
FVRC President

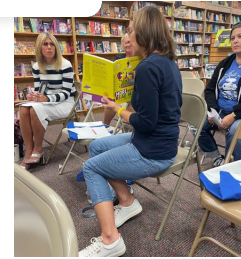
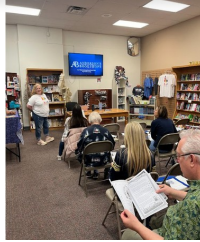
Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has adopted the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan, a roadmap to enhance and unify core literacy instruction efforts statewide. In September FVRC and Secondary Reading League joined forces with our featured speaker, Laura Beltchenko, who helped us better understand the finer points of Illinois' new statewide literacy plan!



Fall Book Talk

September was a busy month for FVRC! Our Fall Book Talk with Beth Stephens and Bert Crossland left many wanting to purchase and read every book that was discussed! Look for some of these titles in upcoming newsletters. As a bonus, Maria Walther was in attendance and shared some insight on her latest book.



Welcome New Members!

Kirsten Hett
Heidi Marchetti
Nicole McGuire
Rachel McMahon
Aimee Miller
Sheree Williams
Allie Arwood
Robyn Bernhardt
Glenda Bolte
Courtney Dougherty
Janice Eiken
Adeline Kennell
Kristie King
Kaitlyn Marks
Cindy Popuvici
Emily Skifano
Jennifer Guerra



IRC Grants-Newsletter Nov. 2024

Congratulations to FVRC Member Diana Wolf for Winning the IRC Membership Grant! Here is Diana's description of her winning proposal:

The Red Carpet Reads Competition is a school-wide reading program that has been running annually at Rotolo Middle School since 2007. Since the original start-up, enthusiasm for reading has continued to grow. Each school year, a list of highly engaging, diverse books is curated to reach the specific needs and identities of middle school readers. At their leisure, students try to read as many

of these books as
brings students at



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This competition
e as they explore

and read books together. Thanks to the Illinois Reading Council's grant, RMS is able to supply multiple copies of each book on the list. Reading is a social activity and when we can supply a common set of books to our students, they can talk to each other about these stories, pass them along, use them for group assignments, and of course, become more proficient readers.



Most IRC grants were due November 1st, but here are some upcoming deadlines you won't want to miss!

Program Proposals for the IRC Conference are due by Dec. 15th.

https://irc.memberclicks.net/index.php?option=com_mcform&view=ngforms&id=2201620#/

The Static Sicker Decal Contest for students in grades 4, 5, and 6.

https://www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org/assets/docs/Static_Stick_Decal_Contest.pdf

IRC Webinars



December 4, 2024: [IRC Webinar](#) "Why Don't My (Best) Word Readers Comprehend Text?" with Kelly B. Cartwright from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.

All webinars will be recorded. Members can earn one professional development clock hour for each webinar. Mark your calendars and register to take part in this convenient, free IRC membership benefit.

- **Members** will receive monthly emails with links to register for each webinar. Otherwise, members can also register through their online account or watch past webinars today.
- **Nonmembers** can also join online and sign up for the webinars through their new online account or watch past webinars today.




ILLINOIS READS

A READING STATE OF MIND

Illinois Reads Event hosted by FVRC

Reading is a gift that provides endless enjoyment and sets young readers on the path to lifelong learning. In an effort to highlight the importance of reading at all ages and to support Illinois authors, the Illinois Reading Council is excited to share the annual "Illinois Reads" Program. "Illinois Reads" was introduced by the Illinois Reading Council in March 2013. The initiative encourages people to read books by Illinois authors. Each year, the program offers a new list of six books in six different age levels. Learn more about [Illinois Reads](#) here.

Join the FVRC board at the Santori Aurora Library from 10-11am on Saturday, November 16th. Children will listen to read alouds, read to therapy dogs, decipher secret reading codes, visit the fingerprint lab, and create their attire in arts and crafts. After families "Read like Detectives," all will be encouraged to take home a book from the Illinois Reads list. FVRC members are welcome to join in on the fun with their families. We look forward to seeing you!

Join us 
**FOX VALLEY
READING COUNCIL
FAMILY READING
EVENT:**
Read Like a Detective
November 16, 2024
10:00-11:00 AM

Illinois Reading Council
authors for
families to take
home.

Enjoy books,
crafts, and
therapy dogs.

Santori Library
101. S. River St.
Aurora

TOP SECRET

No
registration
is required.

FVRC Member Maria Walther's Latest Book

More Ramped-Up Read Alouds: Building Knowledge and Boosting Comprehension (Corwin Literacy) 1st Edition

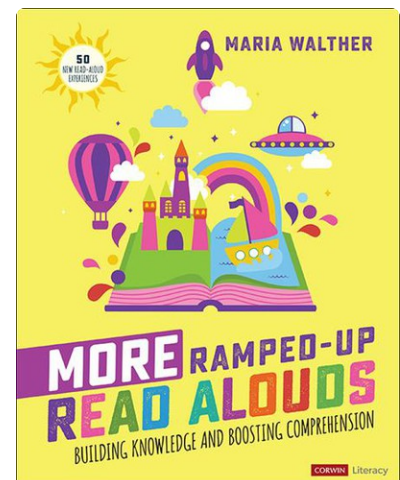
Unlock the transformative potential of read-aloud to joyfully strengthen essential literacy skills.

In this eagerly anticipated follow-up to Maria Walther's *The Ramped-Up Read Aloud*, discover 50 MORE read-aloud experiences designed to bolster students' literacy development, ignite imagination, and enhance motivation.

Backed by the latest research, this indispensable guide equips educators with the knowledge and tools to make read alouds a cornerstone of their teaching practice. *More Ramped-Up Read Alouds* includes lessons focused on foundational reading concepts like phonological awareness and decoding along with a new chapter on integrating literacy with STEAM.

This must-have resource for K-5 teachers, librarians, schools, and districts goes beyond the basics. It empowers educators to elevate their read alouds, offering strategies to broaden students' content knowledge, expand vocabulary, and boost listening comprehension. Each read-aloud experience features:

- Standards-based learning targets
- Key vocabulary words with kid-friendly definitions
- Effective questioning techniques



- Innovative read
- Targeted exte



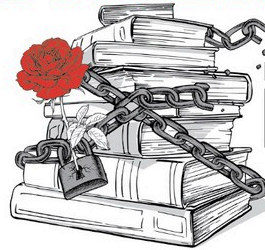
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learners

Looking to create joyful, enriching reading experiences that will lead to endless possibilities? Search no further! It's time to make interactive read-aloud a non-negotiable part of the day—and watch learners soar!

2025 IRC CONFERENCE

**March 13-14, 2025
Springfield, Illinois**



ILLINOIS READING COUNCIL
**LIBERATING
LITERACY**
Embrace Love, Joy, & Empowerment

2025 IRC Conference

Join members of the FVRC board at the 56th Annual IRC Conference March 13-14, 2025 at the Bank of Springfield Center, President Abraham Lincoln Hotel, and Wyndham Hotel in Springfield, Illinois. IRC is excited to bring amazing featured speakers who will help teachers, specialists, and administrators from every grade-level and content area. Check out the [2025 CONFERENCE PRELIMINARY PROGRAM](#) and the [2025 CONFERENCE VIDEO](#)!

See below for our very own FVRC members who are also presenting!

FVRC Speakers at the IRC Conference

Skin, Speech, and Surveillance: Dystopian YA Literature Through a Raciolinguistic Lens

Jennifer Erickson

In this session Jennifer presents an analysis of five young adult dystopian fiction novels. The novels were published between 2008-2022, marketed to teens 13-17 years of age. Two novels were written by white female authors: Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* (2008) and B.B. Brighton's *Neverborn* (2022). Three novels were written by female authors of color: Asian-American Marie Lu's *Legend* (2011), Indigenous-American Rebecca Roanhorse's *Trail of Lightning* (2018), and Mexican-American LGBTQ Tehlor Kay Meija's *We Set the Dark on Fire* (2019). In her presentation, Jennifer explores how a racially and religiously diverse sample of female authors depict characters of color, language, and surveillance and how you can share these novels in your classroom.

Building a Better Vocabulary

Jennifer Lancaster and Kim Hollis

Adolescent readers struggle with comprehension when they aren't able to lift the words off the



to support vocabulary acquisition while supporting comprehension as a Tier I intervention.

Participants will walk away with ready-to-use strategies to increase vocabulary, and even build some background knowledge in the process!

Energize End-of-Year Literacy Learning: Fresh Strategies for the Final Stretch

Maria Walther

Explore innovative strategies to revitalize interactive read alouds and empower students to independently apply reading strategies. Learn practical approaches that infuse joy into literacy routines while boosting learning and engagement. Set students up for summer reading success by fostering a love of reading that extends beyond the classroom. Leave with actionable strategies to invigorate your year-end literacy instruction.

STEAM-Powered Read Alouds: Igniting Curiosity and Expanding Knowledge

Maria Walther

Picture books have the power to illuminate complex STEAM concepts, making them accessible and engaging. Join Maria, a passionate read-aloud advocate, to discover classroom-tested techniques that seamlessly integrate read-aloud experiences into STEAM instruction. Learn strategies to spark inquiry, build critical content knowledge, and foster joy. Walk away with practical ideas and an extensive book list.

One Book One School: How to Turn a Simple Text into a Lifelong Memory for Your Students!

Ryan Schaefer

A librarian, a teacher, and an assistant principal walk into a school. Sounds like an opening to a bad joke. In reality, it was the beginning of an experience that students would talk about all year long. Come join Coventry Elementary as they share their experiences in elevating the traditional One Book One School model. We will discuss the initial planning, launch assembly, Family Reading Night, and author visits that have made this a truly special event for our students and their families! We also would love to hear from audience members on what they have done in their schools!

Breaking the Writing Barrier: Understanding Reluctance and Strategies to Inspire

Kristen Walsh

Incorporating conversation into the teaching of writing transforms the writing process from a solitary task into an interactive, collaborative experience. By engaging students in meaningful discussions before, during, and after writing, educators can foster critical thinking, enhance idea development, and reduce writing anxiety. Discussions encourage students to articulate their thoughts, receive feedback, and refine their ideas in a supportive environment, leading to richer, more authentic writing. This approach not only improves writing skills but also builds confidence

Enhancing Literacy and Learning: The Role of Learning Centers for Students in Grades 4-12

Kristen Walsh

This presentation explores the pivotal role of literacy centers in enhancing educational outcomes for students. Learning centers provide a dynamic environment where students can develop critical literacy skills. The presentation will delve into the diverse range of opportunities offered by these centers. It will also highlight the benefits of a collaborative learning space, where students can engage in peer learning and receive support from the teacher as well. Attendees will gain insight into best practices for implementing and optimizing learning centers, ensuring that students have the support they need to excel academically, and develop a lifelong love for literacy.

Read, Write, Action: Engaging Adolescents Through the Power of Multimedia Memoir

Kristen Walsh

Teaching multimedia memoir to adolescents merges traditional storytelling with digital tools, allowing students to express their identities in dynamic ways. By integrating text, images, audio, and video, students can craft deeply personal narratives that resonate with their experiences. This approach not only enhances engagement by tapping into their digital fluency but also broadens their understanding of narrative structure and voice. Multimedia memoirs empower adolescents to explore their creativity, develop technical skills, and build confidence in their storytelling abilities, resulting in a more meaningful and relevant learning experience that bridges literacy and digital expression.

Bringing the Joy Back: Creating Spaces for Readers and Writers to Find Their Identities Within a District Mandated Reading Curriculum

Karen Biggs-Tucker

Are you looking to find a balance between a district mandated program and what your heart tells you that learners need to do to find the joy in their daily literacy experiences? There is hope if you do what we ask our students to do and persevere in finding what is important in the work that we do each day in our classrooms. Come and find lessons that you can use with your readers and writers to engage them through the big ideas that exist in your curriculum. Leave with great book titles that will connect you, your students, with the joy that comes with experiencing a lot of reading and writing in meaningful ways each day.

Book Reviews by Kristen Walsh

Elementary: A Moving Story By: Beth Ferry & Tom Lichtenheld

Brothers and prof
with great care, ta



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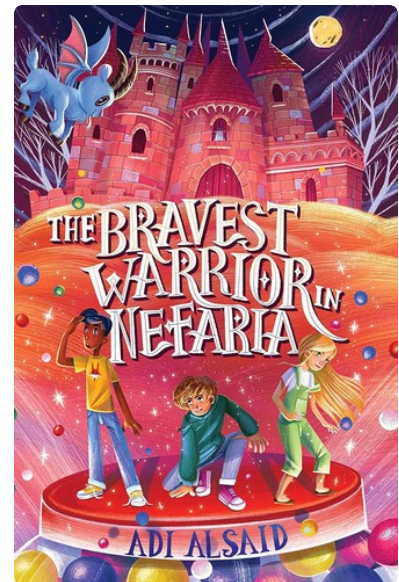
BESTSELLING DUO OF STICK & STONE
Y & TOM LICHTENHELD



Middle Grade: *The Bravest Warrior in Nefaria* By: Adi Alsaid

Welcome to Nefaria, a kingdom plagued by daily evil schemes—most of which are harmless enough that the residents simply carry on with life. Among them is Bobert Bougainvillea, a boy who feels practically invisible, overlooked by teachers and ignored by classmates despite his best efforts to be noticed. But everything changes when Bobert trails his classmates to a cursed gumball machine.

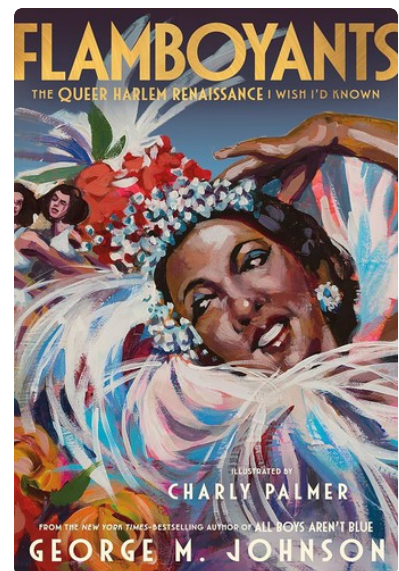
In an instant, Bobert finds himself entangled in one of Nefaria's most sinister plots, one meticulously crafted over the years by the disgruntled evil wizard, Matt. This time, Bobert can't retreat into the background. Only he has the knowledge, determination, and—if he can muster it—the courage needed to thwart Matt's long-awaited plan.



YA: *Flamboyants: The Queer Harlem Renaissance I Wish I'd Known* By: George M. Johnson & Charly Palmer

In *Flamboyants*, George M. Johnson honors the writers, performers, and activists of 1920s Black America whose sexualities have often been hidden or erased from history. Through 14 insightful essays, Johnson uncovers the profound impact that Black and Queer icons have had on American culture, spotlighting lives that deserve full recognition and celebration.

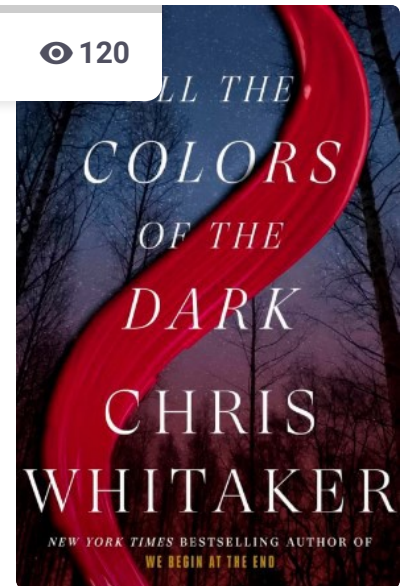
Blending personal narrative, stirring poetry, and illustrations by award-winning artist Charly Palmer, *Flamboyants* draws on history to explore how Black and Queer culture has shaped today's world and will continue to influence the future. With frank prose and a hopeful, truth-seeking approach, Johnson offers young adult readers an empowering collection of biographies that encourages teens to embrace their complex identities.



Set in 1975—a year

War draws to a close and Muhammad Ali faces Joe Frazier—the small town of Monta Clare, Missouri, faces a darker reality: girls are disappearing.

When a wealthy family's daughter becomes a target, an unexpected hero emerges—Patch, a local boy who saves her, yet leaves heartache and unanswered questions in his wake. Patch and those closest to him soon realize that the line between victory and tragedy is razor-thin, and their pursuit of the truth may cost them each other. Combining elements of a missing-person mystery, a serial killer thriller, and a love story, Chris Whitaker's novel masterfully explores the shadows of obsession and the fierce hope that refuses to fade.



Fox Valley Reading Council's Literacy Project Partnership with Love Smiles

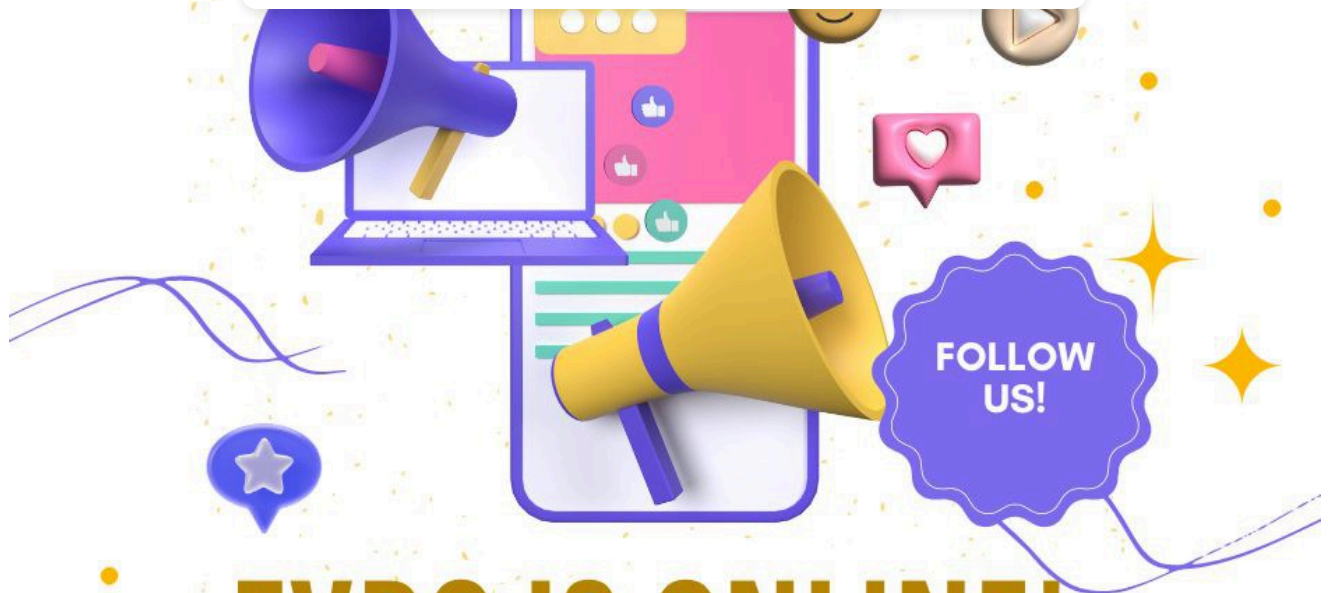
Love Smiles is an Illinois-based 501 non-profit organization dedicated to bringing awareness to pediatric cancer while providing moments of peace to those diagnosed and their families.

Love Smiles is very thankful for all the books donated this year. We thank those who brought donations to our Fall Book Talk. If you would like to donate any age books, contact dianawilkie@aol.com. <https://www.love-smiles.org/>



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FVRC IS ONLINE!



Stay up to date with events and literacy resources!

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Fox Valley Reading Council

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