

# Illinois Language and Literacy Council



## “Proud Sponsor of the Young Authors’ Conference”

---

Newsletter

Fall, 2019

---

Ah the writing of holiday cards...something I should get started on, but haven't yet. Does anyone else still do that? Do you remember the joy of getting cards in the mail, especially the ones that included sprawled messages about what everyone else what up to? Maybe the ones that made a great party game—what does that say? Can you read that? The ones that simply shared that you were being thought of. Somewhere along the way it became common to write/type one letter, photocopy it, and send the exact same information to everyone on our list. I am guilty of doing that as well, but are we missing out by not individualizing our messages to our friends and family? Are they? Something as simple as a card or a thank you note is often among the most cherished of items.

Transfer those same thoughts to our classrooms. Are we creating form letter communications with our students, their parents? Are we individualizing our notes to highlight each of our students, their skills, their talents, their weaknesses? Are we really connecting on a personal (yet still professional) level or simply churning out the same documents with minor adaptations? What about our assignments? Are we recycling the same ones we've used for the past "X" years? Is it because they were great or simply faster? Do we ask our students for—and accept when they give us—a personal flair on assignments, a creativity freedom to share their information? Are we looking for their ideas and experiences or the basic factual information? Surely, there are times when each is the correct answer.

As many of us begin thinking about New Years' resolutions, can we begin to consider stepping back in time to make conversation, communication more personal? Can we make a phone call, rather than send an email or text? Can we write handwritten letter (even if our handwriting isn't the easiest to read sometimes) rather than a photocopied letter?

As you reach out to your friends and families, to your students, try to add a personal touch, a personal note whenever you can. It takes a little extra time, but the results might be amazing.

Merry Christmas! Happy Hanukkah! Joyous Kwanzaa! Happy New Year! Happy Holidays!

Thank you for your support of the Illinois Language and Literacy Council!

Leslie Forsman, ILLC President

**46th Annual Illinois Young Authors'  
Conference  
Saturday, May 16th  
Normal Community West High School**

Sponsored by the Illinois Language and Literacy Council and Illinois Reading Council, this daylong event is designed to honor exceptional writing by K through 8 students across the state of Illinois.

Guidelines and registration materials can be located at  
<http://www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org/yac.html>

**Volunteers are Needed and Appreciated**  
**Please fill out form in its entirety if you are interested.**  
**Form can be found in this newsletter**

**Mail to Dr. Sue Anderson  
Young Authors' Conference Coordinator  
Illinois Language and Literacy Council  
537 South Oak Avenue  
Westmont, IL 60559**

**Thank You!**

**Follow us on Twitter@ilyoungauthor or  
like us on Facebook**

**Any Questions - email Sue Anderson  
[anderbrose@aol.com](mailto:anderbrose@aol.com) or Ruth Stevig at  
[stevig@sbcglobal.net](mailto:stevig@sbcglobal.net)**

## **JUST WHAT IS THE YOUNG AUTHORS' CONFERENCE?**

The Young Authors' Conference, held in May each year is an event sponsored by the Illinois Language and Literacy Council, in conjunction with the Illinois Reading Council. Designed as a celebration to honor exceptional writing by students in grades K through 8, the conference provides an opportunity for these young writers to meet published authors and to hear how the authors themselves create the characters and stories that have become their books. This year the conference will be held at Normal Community West High School.

The daylong event, held on a Saturday, actually begins on Friday night for students, parents, or volunteers who wish to come early to attend a panel discussion by the authors. This is an informal chance to meet all of the authors at the conference, and to ask them questions about themselves and their work.

On the actual day of the event, Saturday, May 16th, 2020, the students will register and receive their room assignments and a book bag containing a pencil and gold seal, which they can later place on their own story. After hearing an introductory speaker, parents take off on their own until the afternoon, and students' head for small group sessions headed by volunteer parents and teachers. Students spend the next several hours sharing their stories, attending author workshops and listening to authors speak. The day ends with students and parents reunited in an awards ceremony where students receive certificates for participating in the

Young Authors' Conference as well as copies of the books written by the author whose presentation they attended. The gifted young writers have had a full day, and often leave with stories for next year's Young Author competition starting to take shape in their heads.

## **Volunteers needed Friday, May 15th!**

We are in need of volunteers who could help in setting up for the conference on Friday afternoon and evening, May 15th, at Normal Community West High School. Our board is a very hard-working board and we could use a few extra hands. If you are willing to do this, please contact Ruth Stevig at (847) 526-8798 or [stevig@sbcglobal.net](mailto:stevig@sbcglobal.net) for more information.

Thanks very much.

## Meet the Authors for 2020 Young Authors Conference!

### Suzanne Slade

Suzanne Slade is the award-winning author of more than 100 children's books. As a mechanical engineer who used to work on rockets, Suzanne shares her passion for science in many of her books. When she's not writing, you'll find her researching a new book idea, bicycling, walking her dog (Corduroy), or visiting a school near you!

"Research is the most exciting and challenging part of my job. While researching a new project, I read books (mostly primary sources), visit museums/historic sites, and interview experts. The research for Countdown: 2979 Day to the Moon took about 8 years. Although I'd worked on rockets during my engineering career, I still had a lot to learn. I interviewed the 4th man on the moon, Alan Bean, studied real moon rocks, read NASA transcripts, watched old newscasts, worked with NASA experts, examined spacecraft, spacesuits, and more!"

### Sarah Aronson

Sarah Aronson began writing for kids and teens when someone in an exercise class dared her to try. Since then, she has earned an MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts, and published three stand alone novels: Head Case, Beyond Lucky, and Believe, a young MG series, The Wish List (Scholastic, 2017-2019) as well as the picture book biography, Just Like Rube Goldberg (Beach Lane Books), illustrated by Robert Neubecker. When Sarah is not writing or reading (or cooking or riding her bike), she is talking to readers about creativity, writing, social

action, and of course, sparkle power! She loves working with other writers in one of her classes at the amazing Highlights Foundation or Writers on the Net ([www.writers.com](http://www.writers.com)). She currently serves as PAL coordinator for SCBWI-Illinois—and the SCBWI-IL initiative, Read Local. Warning: She overuses exclamation points. When she gets really excited, she makes funny faces and talks with her hands. She lives in Evanston, Illinois.

### Fern Schumer Chapman

Critically acclaimed Chicago-based writer Fern Schumer Chapman has written several awardwinning books. Her memoir, Motherland — a Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers selection, a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award, and a BookSense76 pick — is a popular choice for book clubs. Her two other books, Is It Night or Day? and Like Finding My Twin, are used in middle school classrooms. In 2004, the Illinois Association of Teachers of English (IATE) named Chapman the "Illinois Author of the Year." Twice, Oprah Winfrey shows have featured her books. The Junior Library Guild named her two most recent books, Stumbling on History and Three Stars in the Night Sky, as August 2017 and August 2018 selections. She gives dozens of presentations each year at schools and events. As a journalist and reporter, her work has appeared in many publications including the Chicago Tribune, Forbes, The Washington Post, U.S. News & World Report, Fortune, USA Today, and The Wall Street Journal. A graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a master's degree from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, she has taught magazine writing and other seminars at both Northwestern and Lake Forest College.

## Michele Weber Hurwitz

Michele Weber Hurwitz is a critically acclaimed middle grade author. Her newest novel, Hello from Renn Lake will be published in May, 2020, from Penguin Random House. Ethan Marcus Stands Up (Simon & Schuster/Aladdin 2017) was an Illinois Reads selection and is on the 2019-2020 Sunshine State Young Readers Award List. The sequel, Ethan Marcus Makes His Mark, was published in 2018. Michele's two previous middle-grade novels, Calli Be Gold (Penguin Random House 2011) and The Summer I Saved the World...in 65 Days (Penguin Random House, 2014) have been on state reading award lists - including the Illinois Bluestem - and received starred reviews. Michele lives in Northbrook with her family. Find out more at [micheleweberhurwitz.com](http://micheleweberhurwitz.com).

## Cynthia Milone

It was Dr. Martin Luther King who said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is "What are you doing for others?" I, Cynthia Milone live my life always with that question in mind. In fact, I could not think of a better profession to seize the opportunity to reply to this question and make a difference in the world, than being a teacher. I have been a science teacher for 7<sup>th</sup> graders for 22 years. Why do I teach science? Science is the ideal subject to teach mostly because it does not provide or claim to have all the answers, in fact through discovery learning one has more questions. Through science, I engage and motivate young students to ask questions, make mistakes, and discover phenomena through their struggles. I am a teacher who teaches students how to think rather than what to think by building relationships with my students.

My life has been a gift up to this point and I've been blessed beyond my wildest imagination. I am a proud wife to my husband, Mark and mom of 3 boys, Tony, Sam and Alex. I never take these blessings lightly. Still, I would always ponder if I could do more in my life to help others. I wanted to identify my purpose to create a meaningful life. My answer came in a tragic event of my son, Sam who attempted suicide due to being a victim of cyber-bullying. As a parent, all I wanted to do was to take his pain away and fix it but Sam knew that only he could fix it. And he is doing just that. Being alongside Sam throughout his journey of becoming a victor, I discovered what I was meant to do - to search for a solution to the bullying epidemic. Four years ago, I started an Eagles Rise Up Blog at my school and shared my son's story of hope. The goal of the blog is to provide a safe place for all students to discuss bullying situations, and to spread kindness. The blog was so successful that students are kinder to each other, speak up with greater frequency, and are more self-aware of how their actions impact others. To sustain the mission, The Eagles Rise Up student leaders under my guidance, embarked on a challenge to *defeat bullying*. From this challenge, a book was born, with every chapter penned by a student author.

The student authors recognized that in order to defeat bullying, you first need to fully understand the players in the bullying scenario. That is why *You Are Not Invisible* has fictional stories written through the lens of the bully, bystander, or the victim. Each inspiring story, poem, and picture tells the reader about the possibility for change, faith, hope, and of better times ahead. Through each story, the student authors hoped that soon the

bystander becomes the up – stander, the victim transforms into a victor, and a bully matures into a protector and a promoter.

As you can see life threw me a curve ball and my son, Sam continues to be my inspiration that his story of hope can be anyone's story. I discovered my purpose and I will do whatever it takes to stomp out bullying. Our book is available on Amazon and Lulu.com.



<http://www.lulu.com/us/en/shop/cynthia-milone-and-eagles-rise-up-student-leaders/you-are-not-invisible/paperback/product-23976856.html>

### **Chris Fascione, Storyteller**

Award-winning family entertainer Chris Fascione presents his fun, energetic and participatory one-man shows, "Bringing Literature to Life!" and "Juggling Funny Stories!" in which he acts out books with his audience at schools, libraries and other family venues. Whether through physical comedy, verbal wordplay, or a multitude of hilarious character voices, his ability to engage and hold captive children of ALL ages (as well as teachers and parents!) help to make him one of the most sought-after school assembly, reading program and community event performers in Illinois and beyond. Chris has conducted workshops on storytelling performance and read-aloud techniques to educational professionals and has been the keynote speaker at numerous literary events. As a professional storyteller/actor, Chris incorporates his acting, juggling and comedic skills to entertain, educate and lead children into the world of books, promoting literacy and a love of reading. As children's author

Esme Raji Codell writes, "Chris Fascione is the most talented literature-based storyteller in America today. If you have one program in your school or library this year, make sure it is his! Your audience will thank you." More information, including video clips, descriptions and reviews can be found at [www.ChrisFascione.com](http://www.ChrisFascione.com)

### **Laura Beltchenko, Parent Speaker**

Laura Beltchenko is a veteran educator with a passion for student motivation and engagement in all things literacy. Her career in public education includes classroom teacher, reading specialist, and coordinator of gifted programs, as well as associate superintendent for curriculum and instruction for a K-12 school district. She is committed to the professional development of teachers to support the implementation of best practice literacy instruction.

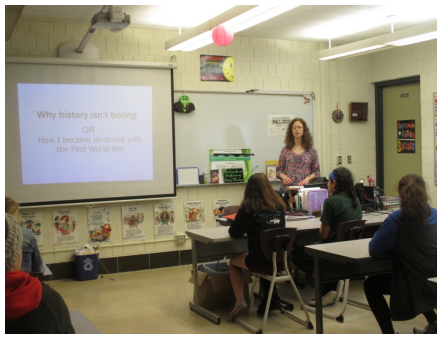
Laura believes in the use of high-quality children's literature as a vehicle to support both the cognitive and affective development of all ages of students. Her personal children's literature collection is vast and reflects an appreciation of quality authors and illustrators.

She has received numerous awards including the Illinois North Suburban Library System Library Advocate of the Year for her advocacy of school and public libraries, Lake County Illinois Innovative Educator of the Year by the Illinois Principals Association, and Administrator of the Year by the National Association for Gifted Children.

Laura's past leadership positions include President of the Suburban Council of the International Literacy Association, Chairman of the Gifted Education Advisory Committee to the Illinois State Board of Education, and Professional Development Chair for the Illinois

Association of Title I Directors. She served for 24 years on the Libertyville District #70 Board of Education and is currently a member of the Board of Trustees for Lincoln College in Lincoln, Illinois.

Laura is an invited presenter at state and national conventions and conference on topics such as balanced literacy, gifted education, children's literature and inquiry-based learning. She continually studies and presents on the English Language Arts Common Core Standards and Balanced Assessment. In addition, she writes a quarterly column on gifted education for the Illinois Reading Council Journal, Talent Ability and Potential and is very involved with the Illinois Association for Gifted Children (IAGC).



# Authors Interact with Young Authors





# Book Signing at the End of the Day



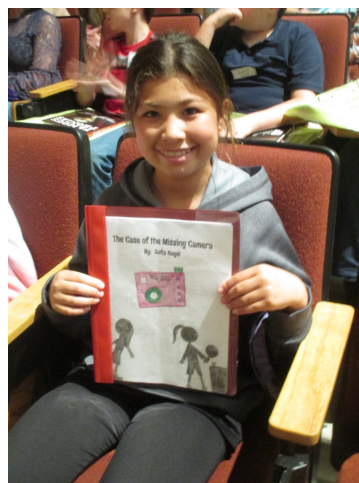
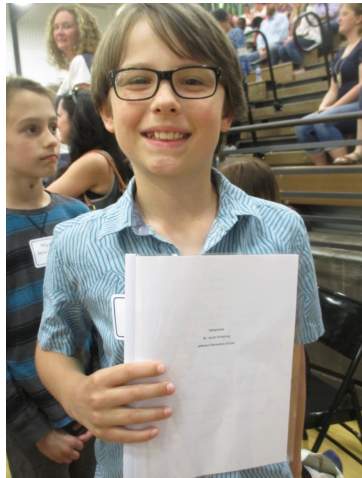
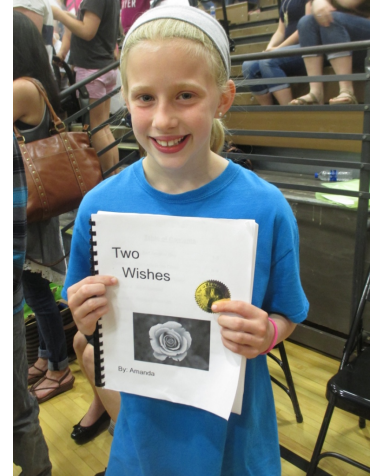


**Young authors display their books!**





# The Heart of the Conference - Young Authors and their Books



## 2019 Illinois Young Author's Conference Timeline

**September/January**– Create a committee of teachers who will be in charge of YAC at your school. This could be 2 teachers or more.

**November**– Download the YAC guidelines from: <http://www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org/yac.html>

**December/January**– Meet as a committee and decide how you would like to organize the conference. Some things to think about...

- Will you focus on all grade levels or just one?
- How many students will your school/district send? (\$50 per student; 1 volunteer for every 3 students)
- Will you have a theme that students must write about or can it be a free write?
- Will students work on this in class or is it the students' responsibility outside of school?
- What will be your process for determining a winner?
  - Rubric or checklist?
  - Will the criteria be the same for each grade level?
  - Classroom teachers select and then it goes to committee OR
  - All of the entries go straight to the committee to decide

Have a meeting explaining the Young Author's process to teachers and their responsibilities.

**End of February** – Teachers collect manuscripts and choose one classroom winner. Teachers give this to YAC Committee.

**March:** Committee decides on the school winner.

**March 30** - Download student congratulatory packet from here:

<http://www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org/yac.html> Send home with students to be returned no later than April 6th. Also included should be paperwork from the guidelines including: student registration form and medical waiver. Send volunteer form with parents/teachers who will be volunteering to be filled out by April 6 to Sue Anderson.

**March 30: Mail the following paperwork to Sue Anderson**

- Completed District Registration Form, page 5 (only one per district will be accepted),
- Completed Student Registration Form for each student selected to attend the Conference, page 6

- A signed Emergency Medical Treatment and Parental Waiver Form for each student registered, page 7
- Registration fee of \$50 per student (checks only) made payable to Illinois Language and Literacy Council

**March 30: Make sure your volunteer(s) has filled out the volunteer form**

Mandatory Volunteer Form(s) (at least one volunteer per three students)

Volunteer packets will be mailed to volunteers in May by ILLC.

**May 16: Students will represent their school at the 2018 Illinois Young Author's Conference at Normal Community West High School, Normal, Illinois.**

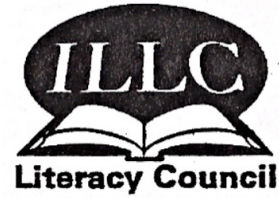
**Keep in mind:**

1. The work must be the child's own.
2. Dictated books may be typed or handwritten by an adult, but must be in the student's own language.
3. Parents may assist in editing and spelling.
4. Illustrations are optional. Photos taken by the student may be used.
5. Two children at the same grade level may work to co-author, or author-illustrate one manuscript.
6. Stories must have a cover with pages that are securely attached.

**If you have any questions about the Young Authors' Conference or volunteering, please email**

**Sue Anderson @ [anderbrose@aol.com](mailto:anderbrose@aol.com)**

ILLC Board and Committee  
Members  
2018-2019



Leslie Forsman, *President*  
lforsman@hotmail.com

Sharon Ball, *Secretary*  
sharonb277@aol.com

Stacey Keleher, *Treasurer*  
stacey.keleher@gmail.com

Lara Handsfield, *Past President*  
lhandsf@ilstu.edu

Sue Anderson, *Young Author  
Coordinator*  
[anderbrose@aol.com](mailto:anderbrose@aol.com)

Ruth Stevig, *Membership Chair,  
Co-Fundraising Chair, Newsletter  
Editor*  
stevig@sbcglobal.net

Meg Pyterek, *Historian, University  
Rep*  
peterborough48@gmail.com

Elaine Taylor, *Co-Fundraising Chair*  
[eeete@comcast.net](mailto:eeete@comcast.net)

**NEXT BOARD MEETING**

TBD - The next meeting will be in  
the winter of 2020.

All members or interested parties  
welcome. Before attending, please  
contact Sharon Ball at  
[sharonb277@aol.com](mailto:sharonb277@aol.com) for updated  
information.