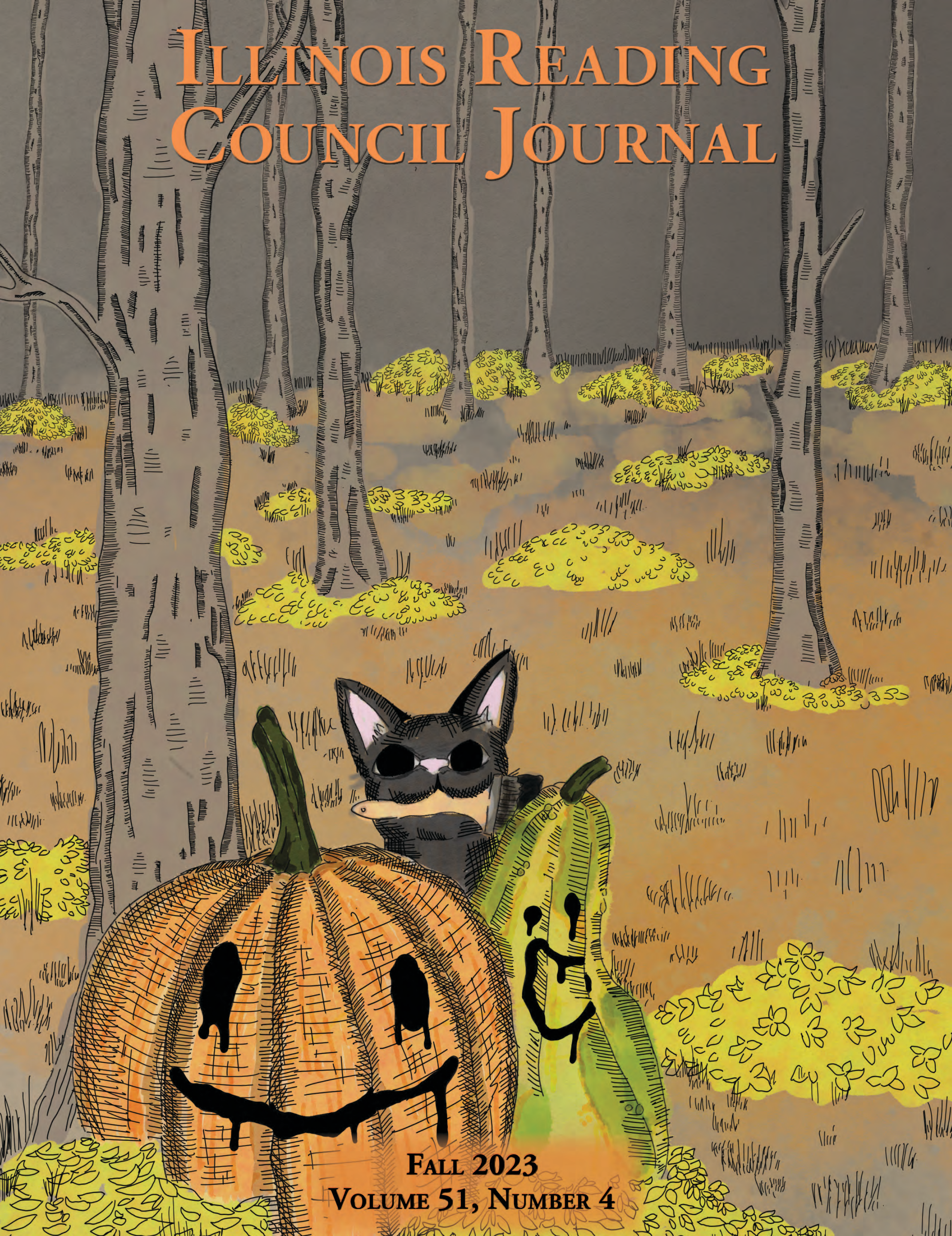
Illinois Reading Council Journal



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About the Cover Artist

Gavin Burkhart

Gavin Burkhart is in his final year of classes at the DePaul College of Education, studying Elementary Education and minoring in English. He aspires to be a reading specialist and to work with struggling readers to help fortify the next generation of exceptional readers. Gavin currently works as a substitute teacher at an early learning center and is passionate about his work. In his free time, Gavin loves to partake in a multitude of artistic activities but prioritizes ink drawings and watercolor paintings. Additionally, he loves to read and spend time with his tiny black cat, Coraline. The cover of this fall issue is dedicated to this tiny cat as well as to his late grandmother, Catherine, who imparted her passion for art upon him by frequently gifting his family painted gourds and pumpkins.

Front Cover: "A Feline's Fall Time"
Back Cover: "Spooky Medley"

Other artwork by Gavin Burkhart can be found on pages 21, 45, and 65.

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by Feather Flores and illustrated by Kelly Leigh Miller
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by Justin Roberts
Molly on the Moon
by Mary Robinette Kowal

K-2

The Most Haunted House in America
by Jarrett Dapier
Stella Keeps the Sun Up
by Clothilde Ewing
Elephant's Big Solo
by Sarah Kurpiel
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Progress and Potential in Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): Comprehensive Literacy Policy

Susan M. Foster
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Illinois

Introduction

While a significant body of research exists on literacy policy implementation, there is a need for further study of how reading education policies are formed and transformed (Cassiday et al., 2016; Coburn et al., 2011; Elleman & Oslund, 2019). Existing studies show reading education policies are influential and change over time, but there is comparably less information explaining why some ideas about reading education (and some researchers) become part of policy initiatives and become embedded in legislation; why certain documents and voices become influential in the policy-crafting process; how and why certain bodies of research move in and through policy networks; and what forces facilitate change in policies over time (Coburn et al., 2011; Goodman, 2014; Torgerson et al., 2019).

To form productive relationships between researchers and policymakers who endeavor to improve reading education, literacy scholars have called for a fundamental reconsideration of literacy policy and practice, a broadening of perspectives on literacy achievement and assessment, and a deeper analysis of academic achievement patterns (Avineri et al., 2015; Elleman & Oslund, 2019). To this end, we need more information on the "loose" relationship between literacy research and the policymaking process, and a better understanding of the circumstances under which some research makes it into the hands of key figures in policy-crafting positions (Coburn et al., 2011, p. 8; Pearson et al., 2014).

Current conditions in literacy policy and practice also warrant increased attention to our understanding of these dynamics. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) mandates comprehensive literacy instruction to secure federal funds for school improvement. However, comprehensive literacy is historically ambiguous in conceptualization, and contentious public discourse surrounding balanced approaches to literacy instruction has increased under COVID-related teaching and learning conditions (Gabriel, 2018; Luscombe, 2022; Sanchez, 2022).

Adding complexity to this landscape, ESSA significantly scales back the federal government's role surrounding accountability and school improvement (Loveless, 2018; Sawchuk, 2015). Federal incentives to adopt common standards have been removed, and states have increased flexibility in addressing low-performing schools and teacher evaluations (Klein, 2016; Martin & Sargrad, 2015; Sharp, 2016). Consequently, ESSA literacy policy represents one of the few measures with potential to productively influence reading education (ESSA, 2015b).

Structure of Paper

This study aims, in small part, to answer the call for increased understanding of connections between literacy research, policy, and practice by examining the ESSA literacy policymaking process. First, the study's theoretical framework and methodology are explained, and a summary

review of research on the literacy policymaking process is provided. For context, the conceptual evolution of comprehensive literacy instruction is then reviewed. Using ESSA policy language, the way comprehensive literacy instruction is conceptualized and mandated in current federal policy is then examined. Documents and voices influential in the policymaking process are identified, and important recent changes in the policy environment are discussed. Findings include analysis of areas in which ESSA comprehensive literacy policy demonstrates progress, as well as areas in which the policy creates challenges for implementation and assessment. Implications for classroom practice are discussed, and lessons valuable to education policymaking are identified.

Theoretical Framework

This research is framed by Critical Policy Analysis (CPA). Rather than simply asking if a policy "worked," CPA explores what policy *is* and what policy *does* (Diem et al., 2014). This research is closely aligned with CPA's focus on the roots and development of education policy (Ball, 2015; Levinson et al., 2009). In this focus, critical policy scholars are interested in the context of how policies emerge, the problems policies aim to change, how policies develop over time, and their effect on cultural power dynamics (Brewer, 2008, 2014; Levinson et al., 2009).

Critical policy analysts are called on to explore texts, contexts, and consequences, paying attention to the complexity of policy development and implementation as a continuous endeavor—the policy roots, processes, and evolution over time (Brewer, 2014; Taylor, 1997). Policy is not considered absolutely definable as law or as cultural mandate, authorized or unauthorized, *de facto* or *de jure* (Brewer, 2008). Rather, CPA conceptualizes education policy as texts, events, artifacts, and practices which speak to the wider social processes of schooling (Ball, 2015). Levinson et al. (2009) state, "we understand policy as a complex, ongoing social practice of normative cultural production constituted by diverse actors in diverse contexts" (p. 770).

The centrality of race, challenges to dominant ideology, focus on experiential knowledge, and commitment to social justice inherent to the CPA framework render it particularly important for education policy studies. As schools do not exist in isolation, these CPA tenets allow for an examination of the connections between education and the lived experiences and racial discourse of social and political structures such as schools (Atwood & Lopez, 2014).

By highlighting the histories and social attachments of policy—the aspects of policy study that raise questions about visions for education in a democracy—this critical approach moves educators and researchers beyond reactions to policy and toward understanding and anticipation of policy trends—where power lies, whom the key players are, and what their agendas might be (Diem at al., 2014; Edmonson, 2002).

Methodology

Those who advocate for policy must know how to use history. A portrait of the past should be used to make sense of current policy issues—to raise questions about, and challenge assumptions being made in, current policy environments (Brewer, 2014). This study combines a complexity-revealing CPA framework with historiography, enabling meaningful analysis of educational issues through a kinship between theoretical and strategic aims, allowing a deeper understanding of how power is exercised through policy production (see Brewer, 2008; Gale, 2001; Young & Diem, 2014).

The five fundamental concerns guiding historiography include the following:

1. The way in which public and private issues within a policy domain in the past were addressed

2. Identification of current public and private issues within a policy domain
3. The nature of this change between the past and present
4. Complexities existing in these accounts of policy history
5. Examination of who is advantaged and disadvantaged by these circumstances (Gale, 2001)

Policy historiography aims broadly to understand the nature and outcomes of policy change between points in time. The historicizing process is recursive and nonlinear, involving the bridging together of large sets of primary and secondary source documents, interpreting them, and combining them into a narrative (Brewer, 2014; Winton & Brewer, 2014).

Sources

This research was conducted using primary and secondary sources in the form of policy texts and contextualizing documents. Contextualizing documents include sources from popular media, teachers' unions (American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 2018; National Education Association [NEA], n.d.), Congress, and the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), as well as sources pertaining to policy actors found to be influential in the policymaking process.

The report of the National Reading Panel (NRP) and National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) (2000) was chosen as the starting point for the analysis of recent history because it represents the first time in a decades-long pendulum swing between basic skills-focused and meaning-focused philosophies of reading education that the federal government called together scientists, teachers, administrators, and teacher educators to determine what research said about reading (Shanahan, 2005). The NRP report served as the basis for federal literacy policy under the George W. Bush administration and was used prominently in crafting Reading First, the literacy initiative in No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (Calfee, 2014; U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2002; Yatvin, 2002).

Documents pertaining to teachers' unions are chosen as contextualizing sources because the AFT and NEA act as a major political force through money, votes, and campaign volunteers. They are considered the most powerful interest groups in education (Blad & Ujifusa, 2019; DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009). Additional contextualizing sources include documents related to the USDE, the Congressional Education Committee, Common Core State Standards (CCSS) expert reviewers, Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) state literacy teams, and civil rights organizations.

The policy documents have been retrieved from Congressional and USDE resources. The official ESSA policy document has been retrieved from the Congressional website (ESSA, 2015b). In addition to the official policy document, the complete legislative history, including when the initial bill was introduced and passed and by whom, and a chronological record of all actions taken and differences resolved is provided (ESSA, 2015a). Subpart 2, "Literacy Education for All," focuses specifically on literacy (ESSA, 2015b). Additional policy documentation related to ESSA was retrieved from the USDE (2010, 2015a, 2015b).

Review of Literature

Literacy Policy Research

Coburn et al. (2011) differentiated three areas in literacy policy research: (1) dynamics of the policymaking process, (2) policy implementation, and (3) policy outcomes, with research on the dynamics of the policymaking process—how issue networks form, how policies change over time, and how some research and some researchers become key players in the process—being an area in need of further study.

Policymaking Process Studies

There have been two prominent lines of research in the dynamics of the policymaking process: (1) analysis of the degree to which reading legislation is rooted in literacy research, and (2) analysis of the process by which some ideas about literacy instruction (and some researchers) become part of policy initiatives and become embedded in legislation.

Coburn et al. (2011) highlighted the need for more studies in the second line of research, illuminating why policy networks exist and what causes them to change over time. There is a need for more information on the "loose" relationship between literacy research and the policymaking process, and a better understanding of the circumstances under which some research makes it into the hands of key figures in policy-crafting positions (p. 8).

This study falls into the second line of research investigating the process by which certain ideas about literacy instruction, and certain researchers, become part of policy initiatives. Existing research in this line was conducted primarily in an especially active period in the history of literacy leading up to implementation of Reading First, using social network analysis, document analysis, and interviews with key policy informants.

McDaniel et al. (2001), Miskel and Song (2004), and Song and Miskel (2005) found an unusual expansion of the issue network influencing literacy policy in the late 1990s. These studies identified 131 organizations (e.g., reading professional organizations and teachers' unions) actively involved in shaping policy at the national level, but new actors from the business, medical, and special education communities and advocates for children living in poverty were also becoming involved.

Of these 131 organizations, these studies distilled 18 organizations and five individuals who were most influential in policy debates (e.g., NICHD, AFT, International Reading Association [2002a, 2002b], Reid Lyon, and Congressman Bill Goodling). Interview data found this group highly influential due to their ability to disseminate research promoting their viewpoint, collaboration skills, formal and informal contacts, and their appearance to policymakers as objective (McDaniel et al., 2001).

Analysis of state-level issue networks' influence on literacy policy revealed a key difference—that government actors were more influential than professional organizations or interest groups because many state-level organizations focus on education policy generally rather than literacy as a content area. State-level issue networks were also found to be more focused on policy implementation than the policymaking process (Song & Miskel, 2005).

Coburn (2005) analyzed the literacy policymaking process by studying shifts in California's reading policy between 1983 and 1999. This research found tremendous change in the network of actors, and the positions being advocated for, between policy eras.

These studies demonstrate how policy actors from widely variable professional backgrounds can generate sharp shifts in reading policy in relatively short periods of time, highlighting the need for more studies illuminating why such networks exist and what causes them to change over time (Coburn, 2005; Coburn et al., 2011).

Calfee (2014) demonstrated this type of analysis through examination of one powerful figure, Reid Lyon, an influential psychologist with the NICHD who shaped policy and practice surrounding the NRP, NCLB, and Reading First. Lyon (2006) was chief architect of these programs, proclaiming controlled experiments to be the gold standard in educational research, and phonological awareness and phonics to be the essential foundations for reading development. Based on Lyon's guidance, the NRP report devoted 170 pages to phonological awareness and phonics versus 99 pages to vocabulary and comprehension. The federal government implemented NCLB's $1 billion Reading First program under this guidance,

and the Lyon model was reflected in the 2010 CCSS early reading foundational skill (Calfee, 2014).

Welner (2011) offered similar analysis of how policy elites and their ideological premises have influenced education policy and practice in the School Choice/Accountability Movement. Welner's analysis found that a highly influential network of state-level, market-oriented think tanks funded predominantly by three right-wing benefactors with strong media ties—Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, the Sarah Scaife Foundation (funded by billionaire newspaper publisher Richard Mellon Scaife), and the John M. Olin Foundation—has induced major shifts in education policy discussions.

Welner (2011) found that while university scholars produce most research, publications of private think tanks are disproportionately represented in major national newspaper reports, producing a high level of activity aimed at influencing policy. Welner charges that while there are no quick fixes for attenuating these participatory and political inequalities, redressing the imbalance of power between communities impacted by education policy and policy elites requires learning the methods of policy actors such as the Scaifes and Olins to limit their sway of power.

McDonnell and Weatherford (2013) investigated the policy process surrounding development of the CCSS by exploring the question of how the use of research and other types of evidence differ as policy evolves from an idea to a set of prescriptions or incentives for formal enactment. Using development of the mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) CCSS, the role of policy entrepreneurs and the extent to which evidence is used in different stages of the policy process are analyzed. McDonnell and Weatherford describe policy entrepreneurs as advocates who are willing to invest their resources—time, energy, reputation, money—in return for anticipated future gain, and who occupy official and unofficial policymaking roles with claims to public hearings, political connections, negotiating skills, and persistence.

Research is only one resource policy entrepreneurs draw upon, and even in areas with solid research bases, such as early literacy acquisition, McDonnell and Weatherford (2013) argued that the complexity of the policymaking process allows for variable interpretation of findings. Additionally, the way problems are defined shapes the solutions proposed, and McDonnell and Weatherford found policy entrepreneurs select evidence allowing them to define policy problems with preplanned solutions.

Finally, McDonnell and Weatherford (2013) suggested that the stages of policy problem definition and solution combine research-based evidence with evidence appealing to the core values of elected officials and constituents. For example, they found that CCSS promoters and developers integrated research with a variety of evidence types based on specific political goals.

Bertrand et al. (2015) analyzed the policymaking process by examining how discursive strategies of policy insiders influence the policy agenda. Through interviews with policy insiders, this study found three main discourses used in explaining the causes of educational inequity: (1) social structure, (2) family and community deficits, and (3) teachers' unions and teacher seniority. While the social structure discourse challenged the status quo inequity by naming systemic factors as having influence on achievement, the family and community deficit discourse supported status quo inequity by framing students and their families, communities, and cultures as inhibiting their school success. The teachers' unions and teacher seniority discourse was used to blame the ability of tenured, more experienced teachers to choose schools in white, middle-class neighborhoods rather than areas with poverty, people of color, and crime.

Despite their typically limited interaction with non-elites, Bertrand et al. (2015) found policy insiders to be highly influential in shaping

public opinion through these discourses. They also found a strong socially reproductive influence of public discourse on concrete policy and social structures in the study's main implication: "that 'policy insiders[']' discourses and discursive strategies either limit or expand possibilities for policy changes supportive of educational equity agendas" (p. 23).

Findings

Comprehensive Literacy Instruction – Historical Evolution

Understanding the significance of comprehensive literacy instruction as currently mandated requires an understanding of why it is problematic to identify a distinct conceptualization of this instructional approach (Gabriel, 2018; Kurtz et al., 2020). Some of the ambiguity can be attributed to the perception that comprehensive literacy evolved from whole language, to balanced literacy, and to the commonalities it shares with scientifically based reading research (SBRR) (Goldstein, 2022; Hanford, 2022).

First, comprehensive literacy as an instructional approach is distinct from whole language. Whole language promotes learning through transactions with the world, acquiring and incorporating language and literacy in natural ways (Goodman, 1996). Whole language was not intended as an instructional methodology but, rather, as a philosophy of language and literacy acquisition (Davenport & Jones, 2005).

In the late 1980s, however, classroom practices such as using "great books" to expose students to rich literature became associated in public perception with a whole language-based methodology (Davenport & Jones, 2005, p. 46). When California's achievement tests showed a decline in reading scores, a phonics versus whole language public debate ensued, and literacy policy shifted to a skills-based approach (Alexander & Fox, 2013; Davenport & Jones, 2005).

Second, the terms *comprehensive* and *balanced* are often used interchangeably with respect to literacy instruction, and significant crossover between the approaches contributes to ambiguity (Calkins, 2014; Gabriel, 2013). Recently, balanced literacy instruction has been the subject of contentious public discourse, being characterized as the straw man in revived reading wars (Gabriel, 2018; Goldstein, 2022; Schwartz, 2021b). The following analysis aims to clarify ambiguity by examining scholarly conceptualizations of comprehensive literacy instruction and identifying areas of commonality and difference between basic skills-focused versus meaning-focused approaches.

Proponents of basic skills-focused instruction cite SBRR, finding that while the human brain is naturally wired for oral language, it is not naturally wired for written language (Hanford, 2018, 2022; Luscombe, 2022). According to SBRR, young brains must be rewired, through explicit instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness, to connect sounds heard to letters representing sounds in text (see Hernandez, 2011; Kurtz et al., 2020; Scarborough, 2001). Proponents of meaning-focused instruction cite research suggesting basic skills instruction is always necessary but never sufficient given the social, cultural, and historical contexts of literacy development (see Afflerbach, 2022; Gee, 2009; Heath, 1982; Perry, 2012).

There is arguably more common, than uncommon, ground between camps in this debate. The dynamic has been described as seemingly conflicting views that are actually complementary parts of a complex whole (Teale et al., 2014). Yet, the controversy has persisted stubbornly across decades and policy environments, resulting in a cycle that is counterproductive for the field and detrimental for teachers and learners (Alexander & Fox, 2013). Gabriel (2018) contends,

> *There is resistance to reading research in both directions. "Scientific research"—sometimes*

the very same studies—is used to argue both sides. Philosophical differences are frequently acknowledged, but rarely understood. Like different denominations of a single religion, different approaches to reading instruction often have significant assumptions in common, but some core disagreements that each believes is a fatal flaw of the other and the reason to dismiss it completely. Distrust and disinformation on both sides perpetuates dramatic pendulum swings back and forth between contrasting approaches. These rob educators of the continuity needed to master and innovate in any direction, and eliminates the possibility of meaningful integration of ideas. (p. 2)

Comprehensive Literacy Instruction

The NRP and NICHD (2000) recommended reading instruction that integrates the five pillars of literacy instruction—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Scholarly conceptualizations of comprehensive literacy instruction typically align with these guidelines and have also been associated with the workshop and gradual release of responsibility models of instruction (Dorn & Soffos, 2005; Fisher & Frey, 2008; Pahl & Roswell, 2005).

Routman (2000, 2018) described comprehensive literacy as an instructional model balancing all aspects of language arts while making learning personal, relevant, and authentic. In Routman's description, reading and writing receive daily, sustained emphasis, and guided contexts are used to help learners become critical thinkers, independent problem solvers, self-monitors, self-evaluators, and goal setters. Learners are provided choices within clearly defined structures. Skills and strategies are incorporated into real-world learning experiences, and students are provided productive feedback through formative assessment designed to move learners forward. The knowledgeable teacher is part of a professional literacy community culture and serves as the decisionmaker who, based on students' needs, interests, and experiences, determines when, how, and how much to intervene. Routman (2000) also described comprehensive literacy as emphasizing personal, intellectual, and social aspects of literacy learning, and that it is highly constructivist in the sense that students make meaning through new experiences rather than learning from others' experiences.

Similarly, Morrow and Gambrell (2011) described comprehensive literacy as highly adaptable to the learning environment, materials, methods, and individual students, and, therefore, as ultimately resting on the shoulders of teachers with expertise in literacy instruction. They outlined comprehensive literacy instruction as follows:

- It is a balanced approach that involves appropriate emphasis on meaning making (comprehension) and skills instruction (phonics and phonemic awareness).
- It incorporates evidence-based best practices to suit the needs of all students in whole-group, small-group, and individualized instruction.
- It builds on the knowledge that students bring to school.
- It acknowledges reciprocity among reading processes (e.g., decoding, vocabulary, comprehension, motivation) and between reading and writing.
- It recognizes that comprehension is the ultimate goal of literacy instruction.
- It emphasizes meaning construction through open and collaborative literacy tasks and activities that require critical thinking.
- It offers opportunities for students to apply literacy strategies in the context of meaningful tasks for real-world purposes.
- It provides for differentiated assessment and instruction in accordance with the diverse strengths and needs of students (e.g., struggling readers, English learners [ELs]).

These descriptions demonstrate that instruction consistent with the tenets of SBRR are key components of scholarly conceptualizations of comprehensive literacy instruction. These descriptions also demonstrate that the comprehensive approach aims to balance many challenging aspects of literacy instruction: reading and writing (rather than focusing heavily on reading at the expense of writing); teacher-directed and student-centered activities (rather than total student inquiry or total teacher-directed instruction); whole-group, small-group, and independent configurations; and skills-focused (e.g., phonics) and meaning-focused (e.g., comprehension) instruction. Gabriel (2018) acknowledged holding these aspects in balance within a 90-minute period requires tremendous skill in planning, execution, assessment, and reflection by knowledgeable teachers every single day, yet they are each essential and none should be canceled out.

This analysis is particularly germane given recent public discourse surrounding literacy instruction. COVID-related teaching and learning conditions (i.e., widening achievement disparities and pandemic-related learning loss) have arguably contributed to a reading wars revival (see Blad & Ujifusa, 2019; ESSA, 2015b; Goldstein, 2022; Hassan et al., 2022; Luscombe, 2019; Mahnken, 2019; Schwartz, 2021b; Wexler, 2018, 2019; Wilburn et al., n.d.; Winter, 2022). Proponents of instruction based in SBRR are increasingly calling for movement away from a comprehensive approach:

> *But advocates say it cannot wait: in 2019, even before the pandemic upended instruction, only 35% of fourth graders met the standards for reading proficiency set by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, an even lower number than in 2017. Only 21% of low-income students (measured by whether they qualify for free school lunch), 18% of Black students, and 23% of Hispanic students can be considered on track for reading by fourth grade. These numbers have been low for decades, but the pandemic has given the dismal results extra urgency. "There have been choices made where our children were not in the center," says Weaver. "We abandoned what worked because we didn't like how it felt to us as adults, when actually, the social-justice thing to do is to teach them explicitly how to read." (Luscombe, 2022, p. 3)*

Comprehensive Literacy Instruction – ESSA Policy Conceptualization

As the following analysis of policy language demonstrates, ESSA literacy policy accomplishes something remarkable for the field of literacy. ESSA explicitly defines, mandates, and funds comprehensive literacy instruction that integrates evidence-based practices based in SBRR with a sociocultural orientation (ESSA, 2015a, 2015b, 2018). In doing so, ESSA literacy policy integrates the cognitive, linguistic, social, and motivational aspects that have shaped historical eras of reading research (Afflerbach, 2022; Alexander & Fox, 2013). This confluence offers the possibility of interrupting pendulum swings between contrasting instructional approaches that have prevented literacy educators from mastering and innovating in either direction (Gabriel, 2018). The following policy language demonstrates this confluence:

> *SEC. 2221. Purposes; Definitions.*
>
> *"(A) Purposes. – The purposes of this subpart are –*
>
> *(1) to improve student academic achievement in reading and writing by providing Federal support to States to develop, revise, or update comprehensive literacy instruction plans that, when implemented, ensure high-quality instruction and effective strategies in reading and writing from early education through grade 12; and*
>
> *(2) for States to provide targeted subgrants to early childhood education programs and local educational agencies and their public and private partners to implement evidence-based programs that ensure high-quality*

comprehensive literacy instruction for students most in need.

(A) including developmentally appropriate, contextually explicit, and systematic instruction, and frequent practice, in reading and writing across content areas;

(B) includes age-appropriate, explicit, systematic, and intentional instruction in phonological awareness, phonic decoding, vocabulary, language structure, reading fluency, and reading comprehension;

(C) includes age-appropriate, explicit instruction in writing, including opportunities for children to write with clear purposes, with critical reasoning appropriate to the topic and purpose, and with specific instruction and feed-back from instructional staff;

(D) makes available and uses diverse, high-quality print materials that reflect the reading and development levels, and interests, of children;

(E) uses differentiated instructional approaches, including individual and small group instruction and discussion;

(F) provides opportunities for children to use language with peers and adults in order to develop language skills, including developing vocabulary;

(G) includes frequent practice of reading and writing strategies;

(H) uses age-appropriate, valid, and reliable screening assessments, diagnostic assessments, formative assessment processes, and summative assessments to identify a child's learning needs, to inform instruction, and to monitor the child's progress and the effects of instruction;

(I) uses strategies to enhance children's motivation to read and write and children's engagement in self-directed learning;

(J) incorporates the principles of universal design for learning;

(K) depends on teachers' collaboration in planning, instruction, and assessing a child's progress and on continuous professional learning;

(L) links literacy instruction to the challenging State academic standards, including the ability to navigate, understand, and write about, complex print and digital subject matter. (ESSA, 2015a, 2015b; Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program, *n.d.; USDE, 2010)*

Integration of SBRR

ESSA policy language requires age-appropriate, explicit, systematic, and intentional basic skills instruction in the areas of phonological awareness, phonic decoding, vocabulary, language structure, reading fluency, and reading comprehension (ESSA, 2015b, p. 1936). These priorities are consistent with SBRR and its focus on developing the crucial basic skills necessary for young readers to connect sounds heard to letters representing sounds in text (Hanford, 2018; Hernandez, 2011; Scarborough, 2001).

ESSA policy language also calls for explicit, systematic instruction with frequent practice in reading and writing across content areas using critical reasoning, with specific instruction and feedback from staff, linked to challenging State academic standards (ESSA, 2015b, p. 1936). ESSA literacy policy language repeatedly highlights the importance of frequent practice in reading and writing, and of using reading and writing strategies to enhance motivation and self-direction—priorities consistent with a skills-based approach to literacy instruction (ESSA, 2015b, p. 1936; see also Hanford, 2018; Hernandez, 2011; Scarborough, 2001).

Sociocultural Orientation

ESSA policy language also integrates the social, cultural, and historical contexts of literacy acquisition by requiring instruction that is designed to be constructivist, individualized, adaptable to learners and learning environments, and locally controlled through teachers' expertise and family involvement (Afflerbach, 2022; Perry, 2012; Smagorinsky, 2001). This

integration is revealed in policy language related to quality of instructional resources, student interest, differentiation, formative assessment, student progress monitoring, teacher training and planning time, family involvement, and funding provided for these priorities (ESSA, 2015b, 2018).

For example, ESSA policy language requires the use of diverse, developmentally appropriate, high-quality, high-interest print materials in individual and small-group instruction, and in discussions with peers and adults (ESSA, 2015b, p. 1936). These requirements reflect awareness of the ways in which literacy is a social practice involving culture and identity (Street, 2013; Teale et al., 2014).

Another area in which ESSA policy language demonstrates a sociocultural orientation is through its shift away from a singular focus on high stakes, standardized assessments toward multiple means of assessment integrating Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to diagnose students' needs, monitor students' progress, and inform instruction (ESSA, 2015b, p. 1936; see also Samuels, 2016). This shift recognizes the importance of formative assessment practices rooted in prior knowledge, substantive feedback on ways to improve, and instructional extensions for teaching transfer (Moss et al., 2005; Shepard, 2000, 2016).

ESSA policy language prioritizes local control by highlighting the importance of teachers, principals, and support personnel (e.g., specialized instructional support and school librarians) in developing and administering high-quality instruction (ESSA, 2015b, p. 1942). For example, comprehensive literacy instruction is defined as depending on teachers' collaboration in planning, instruction, assessment, and continuous professional development (ESSA, 2015b, p. 1936) and in funding formulas wherein teachers are provided collaborative time to evaluate the quality of literacy instruction as part of a well-rounded education, and to plan evidence-based instruction (ESSA, 2015b, p. 1943; see also ESSA, 2018).

ESSA policy language prioritizes individualized instruction through its directives to address the needs of diverse learners, including those with learning differences and ELs. For example, funding is provided for intensive, supplemental, accelerated, and explicit support for students whose literacy skills are below grade level (ESSA, 2015b, p. 1942; see also ESSA, 2015a, 2018).

Finally, ESSA policy language recognizes families as important stakeholders in children's literacy development by providing funding to coordinate family involvement with school personnel, and to encourage family literacy experiences that support literacy development (ESSA, 2015b, pp. 1941-1942; see also ESSA, 2015a, 2018). Specifically, ESSA provides $10 million to fund Statewide Family Engagement Centers for the purpose of supporting parent education, engaging community involvement, and nurturing family–school partnerships (ESSA, 2015b, p. 1942; see also ESSA, 2018; Rosales, 2016).

Policymaking Process – ESSA Policy Actors

ESSA comprehensive literacy policy is historically significant for the field of literacy specifically and for the field of education broadly. ESSA represents the product of a hard-fought, years-long legislative battle securing bipartisan Congressional support to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) for the eighth time in history (Sharp, 2016; USDE, 2009, 2015a).

Securing bipartisan Congressional support for reauthorization was an arduous process. After three failed attempts and the interim passage of powerful *de facto* policy in the Race to the Top (RTT) fund (n.d.), Congress ultimately reauthorized ESEA as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) on December 9, 2015 (Gonzalez, 2015; Lohman, 2010; USDE, 2009, 2015a). The Congressional Education Committee of the 114th Congress negotiating ESSA was

led by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Congressman John Kline (R-MN), and Congressman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (D-VA) (Haynes, 2015; Klein, 2015c).

Democratic Senator Patty Murray, a former preschool teacher and school board member, was the most prominent policy actor influencing the ESSA literacy policymaking process (Amos, 2015; Landrieu & Murray, 2011; Murray, 2011). Murray was supported by President Obama in her commitment to increased investment in early childhood literacy programs and K-12 comprehensive literacy throughout the years-long process leading up to the 2015 passage of ESSA (Haynes, 2015; Klein, 2015b).

Senator Murray and Representative John Yarmuth (D-KY) sponsored federal legislation known as the Literacy Education for All, Results for a Nation (LEARN) Act from 2009 through the 2015 passage of ESSA. ESSA comprehensive literacy policy was developed within Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL), a discretionary grant program under the LEARN Act (Heitin, 2016).

ESSA literacy policy therefore came into being under the guidance of relatively few policy actors influencing the policymaking process, outside of Congressional purview, through a competitive grant program not required to satisfy the traditional ESEA equity agenda. As a result, the Congressional record during the height of ESSA negotiations (April 30 to December 10, 2015) reveals little significant debate specific to literacy policy (ESSA, 2015a; *Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program*, n.d.; USDE, 2010).

Rather, the SRCL program serving as the model and evidence base for ESSA comprehensive literacy policy was authorized as part of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 Consolidated Appropriations Act (Public Law No. 111-117) under the Title I demonstration authority (Part E, Section 1502 of ESEA). The SRCL program was awarded $200 million, including $10 million for the establishment of literacy teams in six states: Georgia, Louisiana, Montana, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Texas (Murray, 2011; Robelen, 2011; *Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy State Profiles*, n.d.; *Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Resources*, n.d.). The goal of the literacy teams was to stimulate reform by funding high-quality comprehensive literacy programs in state education agencies (SEAs) that would be recognized nationally and serve as models for other SEAs (*Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Frequently Asked Questions*, n.d.; *Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Resources*, n.d.).

Senator Murray and the Congressional Education Committee of the 114th Congress were ultimately successful in their determined pursuit of federally mandated comprehensive literacy instruction, an extraordinary accomplishment of relatively few policy actors influencing the policymaking process. The following analysis demonstrates why this accomplishment is particularly relevant given ESSA-related changes in the policy environment.

Policymaking Process – ESSA Policy Environment

ESSA significantly reduces the federal role in accountability and school improvement compared to past versions of ESEA. This reduction is the result of considerable objection from members of Congress, the civil rights community, and teachers' unions to the perceived overreach of NCLB and RTT. For example, RTT was characterized as unlegislated education reform that resulted in powerful *de facto* policy because the USDE took advantage of a recessionary economic environment and unpopular aspects of NCLB to achieve their ESEA agenda (i.e., mass adoption of common standards and increased teacher accountability) (Leonardatos & Zahedi, 2014; Lohman, 2010; Loveless, 2018; USDE, 2015a). Consequently, the final version of ESSA was fundamentally altered,

and federal involvement in education policy and practice was significantly reduced (ESSA, 2015b; Klein & Ujifusa, 2015; Loveless, 2018; Sawchuk, 2015).

Specifically, ESSA allows local education agencies (LEAs) and SEAs greater discretion in the use of federal funds and in their handling of underperforming schools (Klein, 2016). Under ESSA, states are still required to submit accountability plans to the USDE to secure federal funding for school improvement, but responsibility for choosing goals, establishing timelines, and intervening in low-performing schools has been returned to the purview of LEAs and SEAs (Klein, 2015a; Sharp, 2016).

ESSA also withdraws what had been a major tenet of the equity stance under the RTT fund: federal involvement in teacher evaluation and tenure policies as means of accountability through teacher effectiveness and student growth (Lohman, 2010; Sawchuk, 2015; “The Every Student,” 2016). States are no longer required to connect student outcomes to teacher evaluation and promotion, and NCLB’s highly qualified teacher requirement is also excluded from ESSA (Martin & Sargrad, 2015; “The Every Student,” 2016).

Finally, ESSA explicitly removes federal incentives for the adoption of common standards (Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions, n.d.). While the CCSS were technically never mandated by the federal government, the perception of CCSS as having been at best incentivized and at worst coerced is evident in ESSA policy discourse (ESSA, 2015b; Lohman, 2010):

> *The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 ends federal interference in state standards and ends the federal mandates on states to adopt the Common Core State Standards. What this bill does: The Every Student Succeeds Act restores to each state control over their academic standards. States will be responsible for choosing what academic standards to adopt or develop that are aligned with college entrance requirements and relevant state career and technical education standards. (Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions, n.d.)*

These changes in the ESSA policy environment are crucially important with respect to literacy policy because the mandate for comprehensive literacy instruction represents one of the few measures that have the potential to productively influence reading education.

Discussion

Over the past half century, much has been learned about reading and writing, how they develop, and how teaching facilitates literacy development (see Hernandez, 2011; Hruby & Goswami, 2011; Kurtz et al., 2020; Scarborough, 2001; Shannon, 2014). We understand the universal human ability to think symbolically and invent language as needed, how written language relates to oral language, how the brain seeks to make sense of written language, and how digital communication is overlapping with oral and written language (Goodman & Goodman, 2014; Kampulainen et al., 2020; Leu et al., 2013). We have integrated knowledge from other disciplines to understand how literacy works, and we have put literacy development in the context of use rather than seeing it as a set of autonomous skills (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012; Smagorinsky, 2013). Theory and research over the past half century have been in broad agreement that the goal of literacy instruction is comprehension, and that stages of learning to read and reading to learn are inextricably intertwined (Afflerbach, 2022; Scarborough, 2001; Teale et al., 2014).

ESSA comprehensive literacy policy is technically and historically remarkable in its integration of this complexity. However, complexity creates challenges. ESSA conceptualizes comprehensive literacy instruction expansively, incorporating the entire continuum of

literacy development. This presents an enormous undertaking for implementation because effectively balancing the components of comprehensive literacy instruction requires tremendous skill in planning, execution, and assessment (Gabriel, 2018).

Additionally, ESSA does not provide a customized assessment system to measure and report progress to students, families, and policymakers. ESSA literacy policy requires multiple and varied assessments; however, the primary means of measuring and communicating student achievement remains the NAEP and state-level standardized assessments (ESSA, 2015a; Kohn, 2015). This continued reliance on standardized assessments contradicts the policy's sociocultural orientation and threatens to repeat the history of past education movements which arguably failed in part due to the lack of customized assessments to measure and communicate their unique value (Davenport & Jones, 2005; Moss et al., 2005; Smith, 2004).

Finally, it has been argued that ESSA comprehensive literacy policy is underfunded (Heitin, 2016). Senator Murray (2011) characterized the federal commitment to literacy education as inconsistent and inadequate. In FY 2008, federal literacy funding was almost $540 million, declining to $147 million (FY 2009), increasing to $200 million (FY 2010), and reduced to nothing in 2011. The SRCL program (ESSA's pilot program) received $200 million (FY 2010) and $190 million (FY 2016) to be doled out across programs in only six states (Heitin, 2016; *Striving Reader Comprehensive Literacy Resources*, n.d.). The annual budget for ESSA comprehensive literacy policy is $190 million to be doled out nationally, amounting to less than one-fifth of the annual $1 billion funding for NCLB's Reading First program (ESSA, 2018; Heitin, 2016; Manzo & Klein, 2008).

Overall funding for K-12 programs under ESSA has steadily increased. COVID-related emergency education stabilization funds followed formulas designed to close opportunity and achievement gaps in ESSA's largest line item (Title I-A) (USDE, n.d.). Many states prioritized COVID-related American Rescue Plan funds for early reading instruction based in SBRR (Schwartz, 2021a). Additionally, 2023 saw a $1.4 billion increase over FY 2022 in budgeted Title I funds, and the projected budget for FY 2024 Title I funds is $20.5 billion, a $2.2 billion increase (USDE, 2023).

The FY 2024 budget priorities related to literacy focus primarily on ELs and multilingual education through Title III funding. Title III funding for English language acquisition programs increased from $831 million (FY 2022) to $890 million (FY 2023). The FY 2024 budget proposes $1.2 billion to support ELs through research-based and effective bilingual education and language instruction programs, $90 million to build multilingual teacher pipelines, and $25 million toward LEA and SEA grants for improving and expanding instruction in world languages (USDE, 2023, n.d.).

These findings take on increased importance given the current policy environment. ESSA significantly scales back the federal government's role surrounding accountability and school improvement (Klein, 2016; Martin & Sargrad, 2015; Sawchuk, 2015; Sharp, 2016). In the absence of incentives to adopt common standards, increased state flexibility in addressing low-performing schools, and reduced federal involvement in teacher evaluation, ESSA comprehensive literacy policy represents one of the few measures that has the potential to influence reading education in productive ways.

Conclusion

ESSA comprehensive literacy policy makes significant strides in establishing a developmental theory of reading by integrating the cognitive, linguistic, social, and motivational aspects shaping historical eras of reading research (Alexander & Fox, 2013; Elleman & Oslund, 2019). The mere existence of this well-integrated policy

demonstrates important progress. Literacy scholars have warned that without this meaningful integration of information about brain structures and mental activities with social and cultural dynamics, there will be continued oversimplifications and rival camps in the field of literacy (Afflerbach, 2022; Goldberg & Goldenberg, 2022; Goodman, 2014).

It remains to be seen, however, whether ESSA's expansive conceptualization of comprehensive literacy, the lack of a customized assessment system, and variable federal funding will diminish the program in implementation and in the public's perception of its value. Initial ESSA state education departments' implementation plans were due in the 2017-2018 school year, yet four years after passage, ESSA had not fully commenced and COVID-related teaching and learning conditions further hindered implementation (Alvarez, 2016; Blad & Ujifusa, 2019; Luscombe, 2022). While immediate attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of state programs are premature, federal funds are reserved under Section 2222(b)(1) for the Director of the Institute of Education Sciences to eventually conduct a national evaluation of ESSA comprehensive literacy policy (ESSA, 2015b, p. 1944).

In the interim, this research sheds light on fertile ground for future study. COVID-related teaching and learning conditions have converged with a federal mandate for comprehensive literacy instruction in a fundamentally altered policy environment. This convergence presents a unique opportunity for all who endeavor to improve literacy instruction to respond proactively in support of policy which, although imperfect, demonstrates progress toward a developmental theory of reading of crucial importance for diverse learners (Benavot, 2015; Foster, 2020).

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About the Author

Susan M. Foster, PhD, is an assistant professor of Elementary Education at Southern Illinois University–Edwardsville. Dr. Foster teaches courses in literacy and differentiated instruction. Her research focuses on literacy policy and the history of education policymaking.

Gavin Burkhart, "Cheep"

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Developing Cultural Competence Through Multicultural Children's Literature

Amy D. Davis
Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, Illinois

The U.S. public educational system has been criticized as Eurocentric, designed for White European culture. Differing cultures may struggle within this system (Irvine, 1990). According to Maeda (2019), social systems are not naturally inequitable. They have been intentionally designed to reward specific demographics for so long that the system's outcomes may appear unintentional but are rooted in discriminatory practices and beliefs. All students, regardless of race, have equal access to content; however, situations may remain unequal because individual needs are left unaddressed. To address these differences, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) (2020) adopted the Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards to address and improve the academic and behavioral outcomes for the state's diverse student population.

Even though there are barriers to equity out of the teacher's control, such as poverty, race, and ethnicity; access to quality instruction; lack of stability at home; hunger; abuse; homelessness; gender; and students' and parents' language and educational levels, teachers can increase their knowledge of diverse cultures and cultural competence to create an equitable learning environment.

Funds of Knowledge

Teachers using students' funds of knowledge to shape their pedagogy will connect students' experiences and engage them academically (Moll, 2015). What students bring to the classroom are viewed as assets rather than deficits. When teachers care enough to take the time to learn about their students, they demonstrate a commitment to making sure they feel represented in their classrooms. Gay (2018) explains, "By *seeing*, *respecting*, and *assisting* diverse students from their own vantage points, teachers can better help them grow academically, culturally, and psycho-emotionally" (p. 58). Teachers can build a sense of empathy toward their diverse student populations and focus on helping them achieve academic success. This requires a commitment to the whole child (Price-Dennis et al., 2017).

Culturally Responsive Teaching: Teacher Responsibilities

Many English Language Learners (ELLs) may feel they have to assimilate into the dominant social culture of their schools. Bashir-Ali (2006) refers to this belief as "social, cultural, and linguistic allegiance" (p. 628). Teachers should be aware that ELLs may try to "hide" their identities and become part of the dominant culture.

If teachers are aware of this power imbalance, they can serve their students in one or all of the following roles:

- *Cultural Organizer* – Gay (2018) describes this as teachers understanding how culture operates in the dynamics of their classrooms and their ability to create a learning environment that represents cultural and ethnic diversity.
- *Cultural Mediator* – As cultural mediators, teachers provide opportunities for dialogue about the conflicts between the mainstream culture and differing cultural systems.

Moreover, they help their students to clarify their ethnic identity and, in turn, honor other cultures, bridging any cultural imbalances (Gay, 2018).

- *Orchestrators of Social Contexts* – Teachers understand the influence culture has on the learning process and are skilled at planning lessons that are compatible with the sociocultural contexts of their ethnically diverse student populations (Gay, 2018).

Cultural Representation in Literature

Alanis (2007) states, "effective teachers recognize, honor, and incorporate children's voices in all areas of curricula" (p. 29). One's personal identity is shaped by their culture, and sharing multicultural children's literature assists children in developing their personal identities. According to Alanis, "Culturally relevant texts help students understand who they are and where they come from because they connect to students' lives not just to their cultural heritage" (p. 29). Cultural competence begins when teachers expand their knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds and incorporate multicultural children's literature into their pedagogy.

Gay (2018) claims that multicultural children's literature is a way to expose students to different cultures and improve understanding from an "insider" point of view. Furthermore, it can help children to develop positive racial identities and interracial relationships. Teachers must be intentional and purposeful in their teaching practices to create "agents of collective community change" and counter racist, sexist, and classist ideologies (Price-Dennis et al., 2017).

For this article, I closely examined 10 multicultural children's picturebooks, looking for cultural themes of customs and traditions, food, religious attire, art, symbolism, and physical features within the following ethnic/racial groups: Middle Eastern, Hispanic, Asian, and African American. There are two purposes for this article: (1) to build teachers' understanding of cultural differences, and (2) to share quality multicultural children's literature. When selecting books for this article, I chose books that incorporated cultural themes and were culturally affirming for different ethnic groups, being careful to avoid cultural stereotypes.

Middle Eastern

Khalil, Aya. (2020). *The Arabic Quilt: An Immigrant Story*. Tilbury House Publishers.
***Audience:* K-2; *Cultural feature:* Egyptian cuisine**

In this story, Kanzi moves with her family to the United States from Egypt, leaving her *teita* (grandma) behind. She's in Mrs. Haugen's 3rd-grade class, and one of her classmates, Molly, makes fun of her native language, Arabic. Kanzi shares the quilt her *teita* made for her with her class, and her mother comes and translates Kanzi's classmates' names into Arabic to create a class quilt. At the end of the story, Kanzi and Molly become friends.

This book features traditional Egyptian cuisine. At the beginning of the story, Kanzi comes from upstairs for breakfast, and her mother is serving an Egyptian dish called *ful medames*. These are fava beans stewed with tahini (sesame seed paste) and seasoned with cumin and lemon. Her *baba* asks her if she wants him to pack her a *kofta* sandwich for lunch. *Kofta* is ground lamb or beef mixed with onions, garlic, parsley, coriander, cumin, cinnamon, allspice, cayenne pepper, and ginger and served with pita bread. Kanzi comes into the kitchen to speak to her mother while she is busy cooking *shurbet'ads*, Egyptian red lentil soup. This soup consists of red lentil legumes stewed with potatoes in vegetable broth; seasoned with onions, cumin, and turmeric; and then pureed into a creamy consistency.

Khan, Hena. (2019). *Under My Hijab.* Lee & Low Books, Inc.

***Audience:* K-2; *Cultural feature:* Religious attire**

The second book in this group is *Under My Hijab* by Hena Khan, illustrated by Aailiya Jaleel. The story is about a young girl and how she notices that the women in her life, her grandma, mother, aunt, sister, and friends, all wear their *hijab* in public but remove them at home. The book emphasizes that underneath their *hijab*, women can style their hair in many ways. The author placed a note at the end of the book about the *hijab*'s significance. Women who practice the Islam faith wear it to feel closer to God, or their religion requires them to keep their head and neck covered. It can be worn in different styles depending on taste and culture, and girls do not begin wearing one until they reach adolescence.

Cunnane, Kelly. (2013). *Deep in the Sahara.* Dragonfly Books.

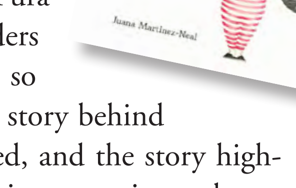
***Audience:* K-3; *Cultural feature:* Religious attire**

The last book in the Middle Eastern group is *Deep in the Sahara*, which is set in the West African country of Mauritania. This is a story of Lalla, a young girl who wants to wear a *malafa*, the colorful cloth Mauritanian women wear over their clothes, like her mother and big sister. Lalla is trying to discover the true meaning of the cloth. She explores the ideas of women wearing it for beauty, mystery, and tradition. At the end of the story, Lalla receives her first *malafa* and discovers it stands for faith. The last scene is Lalla and her mother both wearing their *malafas* and praying together to the east. In the author's note at the end of the book, Cunnane explains the religious customs of Mauritania. In Islam, east is the sacred direction toward the Kaaba in Mecca, so Muslims face this direction in prayer at least five times a day. Men and women pray separately at mosques. Girls between the ages of 9 and 15 begin to wear the *malafa* for modesty and for protection from the sand and sun. The custom of women wearing veils is intended to keep Muslims' focus on the inner connection to God and not on the outer appearance.

Hispanic

Martinez-Neal, Juana. (2018). *Alma and How She Got Her Name.* Candlewick.

***Audience:* K-3; *Cultural feature:* Naming customs**



The first book in the Hispanic group is *Alma and How She Got Her Name* by Juana Martinez-Neal. This story is about a young girl, Alma Sophia Esperanza José Pura Candela, who wonders how she ended up with so many names. There is a story behind each name Alma received, and the story highlights the person and their connection to her.

In the Spanish language, they use the word *apellido* for "last name," which translates to "family name" in English. Hispanics have two *apellidos* in their full name—the first family name comes from their father and the second name from their mother. When a woman gets married, she does not change her name to match her husband's. Individuals may have two names that precede their family names, but the second name is not their middle name. It could be an alternative to what they can be called. For example, if parents could not decide whether to call their child Valeria or Andrea, they can call her Valeria Andrea. A composite name that consists of two names can be counted as one name—for example, María José is one name. In addition, individuals may have four composite names that count as two names in addition to

their family names so some people can have up to six names or more. Many parents name their children for Catholic saints to protect them throughout their lives (Maguina, 2022).

Vamos, Samantha R. (2019). *The Piñata that the Farm Maiden Hung*. Charlesbridge.
Audience: **K-3;** ***Cultural feature:*** **Folk art**

This tale cleverly incorporates Spanish words and Mexican traditions and folk art as a farm maiden (*campesina*) prepares a *piñata* and surprise party for the birthday girl. Each character is introduced in English, and then on the next page they are named in Spanish. The story is repetitive as each character is introduced and helps with the task of creating the *piñata* and preparing for the surprise party. This book illustrates many traditional types of Mexican folk art such as those discussed below.

Mexican Folk Art

Alebrijes **–** *Alebrijes* are Oaxacan-Mexican wooden animal figurines hand painted with bright colors (Figure 1). These are sometimes referred to as "spirit animals," or *toná*, and assigned to children at birth to protect and scare away evil spirits. The colors and chosen animal signify specific meanings—for example, green signifies empathy, while pink means love, and yellow represents joy. There are 20 different animals assigned depending on a child's personality—for example, an armadillo represents strength, a dog signifies loyalty, and a cat represents independence (Rutopia, n.d.). (*Image source for Figure 1:* https://rutopia.com/en/blog/alebrijes-are-considered-mexican-spirit-animals)

Figure 1. *Alebrijes*, Oaxacan-Mexican Folk Art

Figure 2. *Cascarones*

Cascarones **–** These are drained and dried eggshells that are decorated and filled with confetti. When broken, they represent Jesus's resurrection from the tomb and bring good luck for the recipient (Figure 2). Typically, they are used during festive times like Carnaval, birthdays, and Easter. They originated in China where they were filled with powder. Marco Polo brought them back to Italy in the 13th century. In the 1860s, the Spaniards introduced them to Mexico. To celebrate, you take the *cascarón* and crush the egg in your hand over the person's head, letting the confetti rain down on their head (Helaine, n.d.). (*Image source for Figure 2:* https://sanantonioreport.org/cascarones-a-tradition-that-will-never-crack)

Figure 3. *Papel picado*

Figure 4. A traditional Mexican piñata

Papel picado **–** These are small flags made of tissue paper cut into intricate designs or words and used for such festivities as *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead), Mexican Independence Day, and birthday parties (Figure 3). When the Spanish came to Mexico, they brought tissue paper from China, so artisans had a new, more colorful paper to create their banners. They are made by stacking many sheets of paper and using chisels to cut the designs (Art Mexico, 2022). (*Image source for Figure 3:* https://www.etsy.com/listing/538383449/papel-picado-5-pk-60-ft-long-fiesta)

Piñata **–** The traditional piñata is a seven-coned star, rooted in theological ideologies (Figure 4). Each cone represents one of the seven deadly sins. Breaking the piñata symbolizes the triumph of good over evil, and the fruit and candy inside symbolize the temptation against wealth and earthly pleasures. When the person hitting the piñata is blindfolded, this represents faith and how we must follow it blindly. In Mexico, piñatas may be broken for the 12 days before Christmas (*posada*) and before other parties like birthdays (Souroujou, 2016). (*Image source for Figure 4:* https://www.inside-mexico.com/la-pinata/#gsc.tab=0)

de la Peña, Matt. (2018). ***Carmela Full of Wishes.*** **G. P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers.**

Audience: **K-2;** ***Cultural feature:*** **Customs and traditions**

The last story in the Hispanic group is *Carmela Full of Wishes*, written by Matt de la Peña and illustrated by Christian Robinson. This is a story about a young girl, Carmela, who is finally old enough to accompany her brother to town to run errands. Her mother gives her gold bracelets for her birthday that she often jingles at her brother to ward off his glares; he's not particularly happy with his little sister. As they travel through the neighborhood, she finds a white, fluffy dandelion. She tries to decide on just the right wish before she blows the white fluff away; and because her brother annoys her, she could wish something bad to happen to him. Unfortunately, she trips and falls, and her scooter destroys her precious dandelion. Carmela begins to cry, and her big brother takes her to the sea where she sees a sky full of dandelion spores. Since he was so kind to her, she decides he isn't so bad after all and takes off her gold bracelets.

In Hispanic culture, children wear bracelets to protect them from *mal de ojo* (the evil eye); they are said to ward off evil spirits. Typically, these bracelets incorporate red or pink colors and often feature *azabache*, a protective black gemstone (*Baby Jewelry Customs . . .*, 2023).

Asian

Galliez, Roxane Marie. (2018). *Time for Bed, Miyuki.* Princeton Architectural Press.

***Audience:* K-3; *Cultural feature:* Japanese symbolism**

Miyuki's imagination peaks at bedtime when she remembers all the things she must do before she can go to bed. She needs to water the vegetables, gather snails, and prepare for the arrival of the Dragonfly Queen. Her patient grandfather follows along on her adventures, gently encouraging her to go to sleep. This story is about family, nature, and love.

Time for Bed, Miyuki features Japanese cultural symbolism through its beautiful illustrations by Seng Soun Ratanavanh. In one illustration, Miyuki is riding carp kites. These are called *koinobori*, which are special kites in the shape of a fish called *koi*. In the Japanese culture, the *koi* symbolize strength, and these flags are often flown during the time of a major Japanese holiday called Children's Day (Tokutarō, 1970). In the next illustration, Miyuki is sitting next to a pond with two orange goldfish swimming beneath her. Chinese traders first brought goldfish to Japan in 1502. The goldfish serves as a symbol of wealth, fortune, and good luck (Smith, 2015). On another page, there is a picture of the *maneki-nek'* (beckoning cat). This is a common Japanese figurine which is often believed to bring good luck to the owner. The figurine depicts a cat, traditionally a calico Japanese Bobtail, with a paw raised in a Japanese beckoning gesture (Saunders, 2021). On the next page, there is an illustration of a Japanese sun. The sun plays an important role in Japanese mythology and religion as the emperor is said to be the direct descendant of the sun goddess, Amaterasu (Oyama, 2022). There also is a picture of a rabbit, which is one of the signs of the Japanese zodiac. Rabbits are considered lucky as the Japanese *kanji* used to write that the word rabbit is like the *kanji* meaning "get rid of" or "make vanish." People believe that rabbits will make bad luck disappear because they are known for jumping high. Lastly, there is a picture of a dragonfly, which symbolizes courage, strength, and happiness. They often appear in art and literature, especially in *haiku* (Oyama, 2022).

Wardlaw, Lee. (2011). *Won Ton: A Cat Tale Told in Haiku.* Henry Holt & Company.

***Audience:* K-3; *Cultural feature:* Japanese poetry**

The second book in this group is *Won Ton: A Cat Tale Told in Haiku*, which is a clever tale about a Siamese cat who is adopted by a boy and his family from the animal shelter and given the name Won Ton. The story begins at the shelter and then moves to his new home where Won Ton is shy at first but warms up to his new family. He is playful and mischievous, enjoying being outside in the yard until he meets another cat and wants to go back into the house. The book is written using a series of *senryu*, a Japanese style of poetry like *haiku.* While both follow the same rules, a three-line poem with five syllables in the first line, seven syllables in the second line, and five syllables in the third and final line, *senryu* poetry subjects tend to be related to human nature contrary to the subjects related to nature found in *haiku.* According to Brewer (2019), the main goal is to capture an image or moment in a concise, comical way about ironic human behavior.

If teachers decide to write *senryu* or *haiku* poetry with their class, they need to understand the difference between these two styles and explain that difference to their students.

African American

African Hair

African hair has a significant history and story which relates to the books chosen for this group. There is a purpose for the texture. The frizzy, kinky hair insulates the head from the intense African sun's rays. There is not one single type of African hair; some textures can be kinky and some present as looser curls. In the 15th century, hair functioned as a messenger in West African societies. It was part of a complex language system which communicated a person's marital status, age, religion, ethnic identity, wealth, and rank within the tribe (Byrd & Tharps, 2014). Because a person's spirit supposedly was nestled in the hair, the hairdresser was considered the most trustworthy individual in society. Grooming African hair could take hours and sometimes several days. Tribal hairstyles were elaborate works of art which showcased braids, plaits, and patterns with shells, flowers, beads, or strips of material woven into the hair. According to Byrd and Tharps (2014), African hair was a "social aesthetic, and spiritual significance has been intrinsic to [Africans'] sense of self for thousands of years" (p. 7).

When the first African slaves were brought to North America in 1619, the first thing the slave traders did was shave their heads: "given the importance of the hair to an African, having the head shaved was an unspeakable crime" (Byrd & Tharps, 2014, p. 10). Because enslaved individuals were unable to care for their hair properly, and lice and ringworm were pervasive, enslaved individuals often tied their hair up with a head rag or shaved their heads. Those individuals who worked with the White population styled their hair imitating their White owners or in tight braids, plaits, or cornrows. They even sculpted their hair to look like a wig. According to Byrd and Tharps (2014), African hair was deemed "wholly unattractive and inferior by the Europeans" (p. 13). Because they did not have access to the combs, herbal ointments, and palm oil they used in Africa, many used bacon grease and butter to straighten their hair. Cornmeal and kerosene were scalp cleaners, and coffee was a natural dye for women. To straighten their hair, they used lye mixed with potatoes, which would eat the skin right off the person's head.

When the enslaved people became free, the ideal hairstyle was straight, and many African Americans straightened their hair and tried to emulate European standards of beauty, dress, and behavior. In the mid-1960s, there was a shift in how Black Americans viewed themselves. They began to take pride in their Blackness and celebrated their distinctive African characteristics. The Afro was born, and the "Black is Beautiful" movement took root. In Africa, hair is to decorate; but in America, if a Black person straightens their hair, they are trying to be White. In the 1970s and 1980s, natural Black hair became a Civil Rights issue, and African Americans were losing their jobs and being sent home from school because they chose to wear their hair in braids or cornrows (Griffin, 2019).

In 2006, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued the *Compliance Manual on Race and Color Discrimination*. It protects individuals against "employment discrimination based on a person's color, hair, facial features, height, and weight" (EEOC, 2006).

Cabrera, Cozbi. (2018). *My Hair Is a Garden*. Albert Whitman & Company.

***Audience:* K-2; *Cultural feature:* African hair care**

In *My Hair Is a Garden*, Mackenzie is made fun of and bullied about her unruly, nappy hair. She cannot take any more comments, so she seeks the guidance of her neighbor, Miss Tillie, to show her how to take care of her hair. At the end of the book, Mackenzie discovers her natural hair is beautiful. The author, Cozbi Cabrera, provides homemade hair recipes to care for Black hair.

African hair is prone to dryness and breakage because the protective oil called sebum produced at the scalp does not spread evenly along the hair fiber due to the texture and tight curls. Interestingly, African hair produces more oil than Caucasian and Asian hair. Because it does not retain moisture, Black hair can become dry and break, so it requires less washing—from once a week to once a month (Tanus et al., 2015). There are specific hair products made for African hair—pomades made from shea butter, and natural oils like coconut, olive, and avocado. Synthetic products that might dry out their hair are avoided, and they treat their scalps frequently.

Barnes, Derrick. (2017). *Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut*. Agate Bolden.

***Audience:* K-3; *Cultural feature:* African hairstyles**

Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut is set in the barbershop where a young African-American boy goes to get his "line" freshened up. A line is the crisp yet subtle line that boys get when they get their hair cut. This is a book about the self-esteem, confidence, and swagger boys feel when they leave the barber's chair. A figurative crown is placed on their heads that helps them to love and accept themselves and care about how they present themselves to the world.

Both Black men and women have many styling options such as braids, cornrows, tight fade, dreadlocks, bald, or a weave. Braids come in varying lengths, and cornrows are braids that are close to the scalp. The tight fade haircut refers to where barbers cut the back and sides of a person's hair close to the scalp with clippers. A high and tight fade is where the back and sides are cut close to the scalp, and the top is left longer. Dreadlocks were popularized by Reggae singer Bob Marley and are ropes of hair created by sectioning areas and twisting the hair into ropes. Men and women can both get a weave, which is sewing, gluing, or clipping artificial hair extensions to the hair. African hair is decidedly different than any other kind of hair. The care routine, products, and styling are like no other. Understanding the importance of hair in the African-American culture and its history allows teachers to understand and accept these differences.

Conclusion

Teachers can develop their cultural competence by reading these picturebooks to their students and sharing the cultural information that each book exhibits either through text or illustrations. In addition, they must have a sense of curiosity about cultures other than their own which, in turn, builds empathy and understanding for others. With this open mindset, teachers can be understanding, accepting, and willing to create an equitable learning environment for their students. Diversity is an asset and a beautiful thing in the classroom.

There were two purposes for this article: (1) to build teachers' understanding of cultural differences and (2) to share quality multicultural children's literature. When sharing multicultural literature with students, teachers must

take into consideration the diversity within their student populations. Students can identify with shared literature. They can build their own identities and develop a greater understanding of where they are from. Be careful to avoid literature that illustrates cultural stereotypes. Choose literature that simply informs and shares the beautiful diverse aspects of various cultures. When teachers know better, they do better in meeting all students' needs.

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About the Author

Amy D. Davis is an assistant professor at Eastern Illinois University in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Foundations. Her research includes children's second language acquisition and their transition from listening and speaking to reading and writing.

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Bibliotherapy: A Systematic Research Review with Social-Emotional Learning Applications

Melinda E. Langeberg
Viterbo University
La Crosse, Wisconsin

Introduction

Thirty-four million U.S. children experience various types of traumas before their 7th birthday (Health Resources and Services Administration Maternal and Child Health Bureaus, 2019). This trauma ranges from increased anxiety and fear to anger, and may produce learning difficulties (Barr, 2018; Bath, 2008). If left untreated, trauma may increase the chance of negative long-term health effects such as post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts (Dye, 2018; Heath et al., 2017). Unfortunately, addressing children's mental health is a sizable task. Too few social and mental health workers mean a limited number of children get the mental health care they need. Admittedly, children do have a better chance of accessing care in school. In fact, Boyer et al. (2022) expanded the World Health Organization's (2011) findings regarding children's mental health access. Both sets of researchers concluded that American children are more likely to secure mental health counseling in school; but still, only one in five youths find mental health support. While the lack of mental health support is one obstacle, cost is another. Researchers report that treating childhood trauma is costly. Boyer et al. (2022) reported that untreated childhood trauma is a public health risk financially and emotionally, and, left untreated, it increases the chances of drug use, suicidal thoughts, and long-term health risks such as obesity and high blood pressure. For this reason, schools may look to bibliotherapy, a reading-centered, easy-to-use, and cost-effective way to overcome these challenges.

Bibliotherapy research first appeared in 1919 in the study, "The Therapeutic Use of a Hospital Library," published by Green and Schwab in *The Hospital Social Service Quarterly* (as cited in Bradley & Bosquet, 1936). Bibliotherapy is "selected reading material as an adjunct to psychiatric treatment" for children (Bradley & Bosquet, 1936, p. 23). In the last 120 years, the definition has changed. One early study described it as *an adjunct* while another study from 1936 used the term *therapeutic*. In later years, bibliotherapy researchers described it as guided reading, low-cost psychotherapy, or self-help (Beatty, 1962; Schrank & Engels, 1981). As the definition transformed, so did its management. Research between 1900 to 1962 listed psychiatrists and librarians as trained bibliotherapy clinicians. But by 1981, researchers described it as a collaboration between the patient and counselor. Social workers or teachers, and librarians and psychiatrists disappeared. Conversely, by 1989, several definitions favored a partnership between the patient and a professional, but the professional's job title was unclear. As a result of this ever-changing administration, bibliotherapy's parameters are imprecise; thus, what it is, why it is used, and how it should be used are undefined.

Purpose and Research Questions

The passion for this project centered on the fundamental belief that reading positively impacts children's lives. In fact, Lenkowsky

(1987) and Jack and Ronan (2008) reported that reading can be used to change negative behavior and to support emotional health. In accordance, Lenkowsky (1987) and Heath et al. (2017) reported that reading supports academic and imaginative development and can prevent negative thinking. Because reading is such a powerful tool, bibliotherapy may be a low-cost way to extend the reach of mental health professionals and, ultimately, support large groups of students. Thus, the purpose of this study was to develop a systematic research review investigating bibliotherapy. Results provided an updated concept definition, as well as social and emotional learning curriculum connections. This study adopted a postpositivist paradigm because the researcher was interested in capturing historical perspectives and prescribing rigorous techniques that identified patterns across time and various studies (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Through this lens, three questions emerged:

1. How does research define bibliotherapy?
2. What research supports using bibliotherapy?
3. In what ways do bibliotherapy and social-emotional learning practices intersect?

Methods

Research Procedures

Type “bibliotherapy” in a library search engine and several thousand articles or books appear. A systematic research review design narrows and synthesizes large amounts of information and summarizes knowledge (Andrews, 2005; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This design style was employed to answer the research questions and was aligned with previously published work by Montgomery and Maunders (2015) and Tubbs et al. (2019). Coupled with these researchers’ designs and guidance, search procedures were developed.

Search Procedures

Key word search techniques emerged with help from a university research librarian and alignment with Torgerson (2003) who noted that including inclusion and exclusion strategies establishes a study’s selection criterion. Eleven databases were employed such as Academic Search Complete, ERIC, and Psych Articles; these databases helped develop inclusion and exclusion mapping activities and determine search protocols. After four practice searches, inclusion and exclusion mapping activities were finalized and employed using the key words and abbreviations listed below:

- TX All with Text AND (search filters used to narrow search results)
  - Systematic review
  - Trauma-informed care
  - Bibliotherapy
  - Story therapy

Over 7,000 studies were recognized and excluded because, although they explored bibliotherapy, they did not relate to emotional trauma or review multiple research studies, or they examined bibliotherapy as a tool to lose weight, quit smoking, treat autism, or deal with sports injuries. Searches were conducted between September and December 2019. The official search resulted in over 3,000 studies. Continued inclusion and exclusion mapping activities resulted in only 10 selected studies. These were all annotated, summarized, and coded. The search procedure and the results are presented in Figure 1.

Included Study Criteria

In each of the 10 studies, the belief that reading was beneficial was expressed, with bibliotherapy defined and described. Likewise, they were selected because they illustrated a historical progression of attitudes and beliefs about bibliotherapy and examined multiple bibliotherapy

Figure 1. Search Procedures and Outcomes (*n* = Number of Identified Studies During a Specific Search)

Grey literature screening • Identified (*n* = 5) • Removed (*n* = 5) • Remained (*n* = 0)
Cited reference screening (*n* = 7) Identified and included six new studies for a total of 13 (*n* = 13) • Removed (*n* = 8) • Remained (*n* = 5)
Total articles identified (*n* = 3,895) Academic search complete Academic search premier Ed. research complete Professional development collection • ERIC • Psych Articles • Psych Intro • Teacher Ref. Center
Total articles identified (*n* = 10)
Screening by full text (*n* = 10) • Removed (*n* = 3) • Remained (*n* = 7)
Screened for terms (*n* = 3,895) • Removed (*n* = 3,844) • Remained (*n* = 51)
Excluded by an abstract (*n* = 41) • Removed (*n* = 31) • Remained (*n* = 10)
Excluded by duplicates (*n* = 51) • Removed (*n* = 10) • Remained (*n* = 41)

studies. For example, one study reviewed as many as 95 articles between 1967 and 1986, and others reviewed as few as eight. The included studies and codes are listed in chronological order in Figure 2.

Data Extraction, Coding, and Analysis

This study conducted a qualitative research synthesis. After the 10 studies were accepted, their data were collected by coding, summarizing, and analyzing. Codes were aligned to each research question, mapped, and analyzed for common language patterns. These language patterns were as follow:

- Definition
- Procedure
- Curriculum implications
- Bibliotherapy's impact

Results

How Is Bibliotherapy Defined?

None of the 10 analyzed systematic reviews included a current well-defined concept definition. Clear concept definitions are essential because "a major factor [hindering] progress in our field—and almost every intellectual field today—has been the use of sloppy, careless, or

Figure 2. Included Studies Code Map

Study	Definition	Procedure	Classroom Practices	Bibliotherapy's Reported Impact
Bradley & Bosquet (1936)	"[S]elected reading material as an adjunct to psychiatric treatment" (p. 23)	Booklists include stories with "some moral or cultural point of view" and include reading aloud (p. 23).	Read-aloud Connect the text to the reader Guided reading Whole group or small group discussions	Nonfiction texts are unsatisfactory because patients were "unable to maintain an interest in such activities [hobbies] by merely following written instructions" (p. 25). Included a book list because "children's tastes and technical reading skills are too variable to make specific age classifications of any real value" (p. 26). Books • took their minds off their problems. • increased academic achievement. • controlled the child's behavior. • enlarged social and cultural backgrounds. • helped bond the client and the doctor.
Beatty (1962)	"Therapeutic use of books" (p. 107) Therapeutic use of books in a hospital setting (p. 113)	"Close cooperation between physician, librarian, and family of the patient, and of comprehensive reading records" (p. 109) Reading diaries are kept and discussed during each session (p. 109). Trained professionals and a collaboration between the doctor and the hospital librarian	Book discussion Writing about the text	Bibliotherapy will benefit patients only if a partnership between the librarian and clinician organizes the therapy around the reader's interests and needs. Patients come willing to read (p. 109).
Schrank & Engels (1981)	"[G]uided reading that helps individuals gain an understanding of the self and environment, learn from others or find solutions to problems" (p. 143)	Identification, catharsis, and insight	Guided reading Discussion Read-aloud	Guided reading works when the book matches the reader, and the practitioners have knowledge of the text. The text builds a trusting relationship between the reader and the practitioners.

Lenkowsky (1987)	"[A]n attempt to help a child understand himself or herself and cope with presenting problems by providing literature relevant to the child's personal situation [and] developmental needs at the appropriate time" (Russell, 1958, as cited in Lenkowsky, 1987, p. 1). Can be accomplished by social workers, librarians, and teachers.	"[P]rogressive planned therapy includes three main components: identification, catharsis, and insight. Identification with characters, situations, or elements of a story engage the reader to view his or her problem from a new and different perspective" (Russell, 1958, as cited in Lenkowsky, 1987, pp. 1-2).	Selected readings	A 1983 study reported that "bibliotherapy was not effective in reducing childhood fear and anxiety" (Newhouse & Loker, 1983, as cited in Lenkowsky, 1987, p. 126). "The absence of systematic, objective, comparative research, however, suggests that while many believe in bibliotherapy and are using it, sufficient substantiated evidence of how it works, why it works, or if it works is not yet available" (Lenkowsky, 1987, p. 128). "[G]ain hope" and release tension (Lenkowsky, 1987, p. 2). Under the guidance of social workers, librarians, and teachers, bibliotherapy has a positive impact on the overall emotional health of children.
Riordan & Wilson (1989)	"Guided reading of written materials in gaining understanding or solving problems relevant to a person's therapeutic needs" (p. 506)	Self-help treatment in a group setting	Guided reading Group book discussion	"Bibliotherapy is a tool among many to be used when it can contribute to an overall satisfactory outcome" (p. 507). Most effective when paired with group discussion. Impacts attitude change, self-concept, and behavior changes in children.
Marrs (1995)	A "low-cost "psychotherapy system" "The use of written materials or computer programs, or the listening/viewing of audio/videotapes for the purpose of gaining understanding or solving problems relevant to a person's developmental or therapeutic needs" (p. 846)	Eighty percent of his studies included a book as the medium.	Direct instruction (p. 852)	"According to the results of this meta-analysis, it appears that bibliotherapy does have a moderate degree of effectiveness" (p. 861). Bibliotherapy is simply more effective at reducing anxiety than in helping with problems that require participants to delay gratification (p. 862). Is a prevention strategy (p. 845). Bibliotherapy has success in dealing with fear and anxiety (p. 844). It can be a "low-cost" alternative to psychotherapy. "Bibliotherapy may be able to be used more confidently in the prevention of problems in living and the promotion of emotional and physical health. The changes coming into our health care system—the emphasis on patient responsibility, lowered cost, and prevention—bibliotherapy could play an important role" (p. 864).

Gregory et al. (2004)	"An adjunct to group therapy" (p. 275) "A form of self-administered treatment in which structure materials provide a means of self-improvement to help alleviate distress" (p. 275) "Based on the principles of cognitive behavior therapy [CBT]" (p. 275) "Exercises designed to help the reader overcome negative feelings associated with depression" (p. 275)	Specific sessions introduce materials that the clients read on their own time (p. 276). Includes reading that has cultural relevance, content, and format appropriate for the reader	Matches text to the reader Includes a pre-assessment to match the text and reader	"Meta-analysis reviews of bibliotherapy began to appear in 1990" (p. 275). More appropriate for mild depression because a client needs to be motivated to read (p. 278). Instead of adjunctive care, this study advocated for "steeped care" which was defined as the first least invasive "line of care for people with mild and moderate depression" (p. 278). Bibliotherapy is an inexpensive resource (p. 275). It is helpful in identifying distorted thinking. Highly accessible to a large population (p. 278). Free of stigma surrounding mental health counseling (p. 278). Empowers client by building a sense of responsibility and "control over their condition" (p. 278).
Jack & Ronan (2008)	Assessing a patient's needs and finding reading material to meet those needs	Librarians assisted the doctor, and Red Cross volunteers used reading material to address the hardships of war veterans (p. 166).	Post-reading discussion Selected stories	There is much confusion surrounding bibliotherapy because it is used and studied in multiple disciplines (p. 162). "It seems that the use of bibliotherapy has exceeded its original theoretical and definition base" (p. 178). Impacts individual attitude and behavior (p. 178).
Montgomery & Maunders (2015)	The use of fictional stories, poems, or films	Selected materials whose characters' experiences related to outcomes of interest in participants (p. 42)	Read aloud by a supervising adult (p. 42)	Defined two types of bibliotherapy: (1) creative and (2) self-help. Creative bibliotherapy has a small to moderate effect on the prevention and treatment among children for internalizing behavior (p. 43). Showed a small impact on building empathy (p. 43). Results support the CBT methods that include bibliotherapy. Promotes emotional self-exploration of repressed thoughts and experiences.
Yuan et al. (2018)	"Guided reading that encourages readers to challenge unhelpful thoughts and behaviors" (p. 354) Self-help "to guide and encourage the patients to make changes" (p. 354)	Uses foundational elements of CBT and provides exercises to overcome anxiety problems. The therapist gave support in working through procedures.		Bibliotherapy "is an effective treatment for reducing depressive symptoms in adolescents . . . but shows less robust effects with children" (p. 365). Reduces the impact of stigma, less time, low cost, low staffing, and greater privacy.

subjective definitions" (Locke, 2003, p. 415). Likewise, Podsakoff et al. (2016) reasoned that "clear conceptual definitions are essential for scientific progress and provide a concrete set of steps that organizational and behavioral scholars can follow to improve their conceptual definitions" (p. 160). The definitions examined in this research were incomplete because they did not include all three concept definition parts outlined by Podsakoff et al. (2016) and guided by the Purdue Online Writing Lab (2021). The Purdue Online Writing Lab explains that formal definitions include three ingredients: (1) term usage, (2) class, and (3) characteristics. For example, in the most recent study, Yuan et al. (2018) wrote that bibliotherapy was "a treatment for mental health issues using written material" (p. 354). This definition was unfinished, explicitly because it did not contain specific term characteristics.

To clarify, six studies recycled a 1987 definition developed by Lenkowsky and a 1995 one by Marrs. Conversely, one study defined bibliotherapy as a "type of cognitive behavior therapy that could be an adjunct to group therapy"—an incomplete definition but updated (Gregory et al., 2004, p. 275). In 2008, Jack and Ronan noted that "it seems that the use of bibliotherapy has exceeded its original theoretical and definition base" (p. 178). While noting this, they still did not recommend an updated definition. The consequence of an outdated and incomplete definition, as Podsakoff et al. (2016) pointed out, is that without clarity, scientific progress stalls. Likewise, organizations such as schools may not consider including bibliotherapy in trauma-informed curricula because science cannot decide what it is. Although no clear concept definition was recognized, this researcher did find the following common language patterns that helped characterize bibliotherapy:

- Therapeutic (111; *n* = 10)
- Self-help (56; *n* = 10)
- Psychiatric (52; *n* = 10)
- Guided reading (8; *n* = 10)

Using Podsakoff et al. (2016) and the Purdue Writing Lab's (2021) definition elements guide, each definition was scrutinized for term usage, class, and characteristics.

Term Usage

All 10 studies used the term *bibliotherapy* in the definition. Additionally, six analyzed studies also used synonyms such as psychotherapy, guided reading, cognitive behavior therapy (CBT), and self-help.

Class

Class is a concept or category to which the term belongs. Reading materials have classes such as textbooks, fiction, or journal articles; these classes belong to the term *reading material* but are separated by type or class. Mental health supports also have classes, and six analyzed studies identified bibliotherapy's class as therapeutic or psychiatric.

Characteristics

Term characteristics separate similar words. For example, a novel and a short story are both text and reading material, but the term's characteristics dissect their differences. In fact, all 10 reviews separated bibliotherapy from other types of therapy by procedure or purpose. Notably, eight of the ten studies characterized bibliotherapy as a behavior modification activity associated with CBT, and six studies described it as cooperative or collaborative. Similarly, five studies included the words *relevance* and *discussion* in their definition, and six used the verb *reading* or the noun phrase *reading material* in distinguishing bibliotherapy from other types of therapeutic care. Finally, several of the research studies indicated that, in general, the text must first be paired with the reader's background and experience and then discussed in a group setting.

Discussion

As science advanced, studies showed promise for using bibliotherapy with certain populations. Technology improved meta-analysis and data collection techniques. In fact, later studies relied on these upgraded systems to defend and describe bibliotherapy but not to redefine it. None of the included studies used the updated data collection methods to develop a modern definition. This current study did. It restructured and redefined the term and presented a new definition.

Updated Definition

What Is It?

Although medical professionals discussed bibliotherapy as early as 1919, the first official definition did not appear until 1941. In *Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary*, it was written that bibliotherapy is "the employment of books and the reading of them in the treatment of nervous diseases" (as cited in Jack & Ronan, 2008, p. 163). This author developed a current definition using Podsakoff et al. (2016) and Purdue Writing Lab's (2021) definition guidelines. The new definition clarifies what bibliotherapy is and how and why it is used. The following is the updated concept definition: "Bibliotherapy is a therapeutic tool using collaborative reading and discussion to reduce anxiety and depression."

What Research Supports Using Bibliotherapy?

Reviews between 1930 and 1987 reported little quantifiable data supporting bibliotherapy. Similarly, Lenkowsky (1987) reported that success rates were imperfect, and without controlled research, bibliotherapy's impact was questionable. Equally important is that before 1990, there was a *feeling* among researchers that bibliotherapy worked, but analysis techniques were not sophisticated enough to support this feeling (Lenkowsky, 1987). Reliable quantitative research came later as recent studies reported bibliotherapy as effective, and Marrs (1995) suggested that "newer technologies [that allowed] meta-analysis" (p. 861) explained that bibliotherapy had a moderate impact on reducing anxiety and depression. By 2015, Montgomery and Maunders expanded Marrs' (1995) findings and suggested that bibliotherapy helped prevent children's mental health issues because "fictional stories provided an opportunity for identification of unhelpful beliefs and behaviors, challenging their meanings, and the development of new beliefs and behaviors" (p. 43). Yuan et al. (2018) supplemented these results and noted that bibliotherapy reduced depression in middle and high school students.

The fMRI helped explain these results. In 1990, a new tool, the fMRI, helped psychologists and neuroscientists study brain activity (Glover, 2011). It allowed scientists to explain bibliotherapy's impact because it detected changes, noted metabolic variations, and identified the parts of the brain impacted by therapy and shared story. It exposed the way reading changed brain function. Even though neuroscientists and psychologists describe how shared stories impacted humans, not a single systematic review in this study threaded this supporting technology into their discussions. However, this researcher did.

Neuroscience

Neurobiologists investigate how stories impact human behavior. In 2012, Nobel prize-winning psychiatrist and neuroscientist Eric Kandel explained that when the human brain interacts with the dramatic arc, the brain releases specific chemicals: oxytocin and vasopressin. These chemicals are associated with positive social cognition—feelings of empathy and pleasure. Kandel (2012) clarified that these chemicals bond humans because they "increase trust and a willingness to take risks" (p. 431). Four of the 10 systematic reviews concluded that bibliotherapy increased empathy and trust and

changed negative behaviors. Thus, bibliotherapy works because it helps increase pleasurable feelings and builds trust. Furthermore, Kandel also found that stories "decrease the production of cortisol, a stress hormone, and thereby induce relaxation" (p. 431). Linking this result, Marrs (1995) and Yuan et al. (2018) noted that bibliotherapy reduced anxiety, and Kandel's (2012) research suggested why. Kandel is not the only researcher studying the use of stories and the brain. Paul Zak, a neuro-economist, questioned how using stories changed human behavior.

Like Kandel (2012), Zak (2012) used fMRI to identify the most active part of the brain during reading or listening, and he found the brain was most active in the sections that regulate human connection and empathy. Where Kandel (2012) identified how the story impacted the human brain, Zak (2012) identified in what ways the story impacted or supported positive behavior changes. Both neurologists resolved the question, "How and why it works?" Together, the scientists noted that interacting with the story changed negative behaviors and built trust between readers and groups that share the story—like a teacher, a learner, and a class. Similarly, where Kandel (2012) and Zak (2012) helped answer this study's first two questions, their findings aligned with Heath et al.'s (2017) results which noted that stories build "a strong foundation for social-emotional learning curriculum" (p. 551). These results assisted in answering this study's final question: "In what ways do bibliotherapy and social-emotional learning practices intersect?"

Social-Emotional Learning

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), as reported by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (n.d.), is the process where children and adults learn to develop healthy emotional behaviors. Similarly, in a recent RAND Corporation report, "76 percent of principals and 53 percent of teachers nationally reported that their schools used a social and emotional learning (SEL) program or SEL curriculum materials in the 2021–2022 school year" (Schwartz et al., 2022). Although SEL is an accepted curriculum, the explicit recommendations of how to teach the curriculum are left to the schools to unravel. For example, the Southeast Comprehensive Center at American Institutes for Research (2018) condensed multiple SEL research articles, policy briefs, and annual reports into an information request document. This organization synthesized information from organizations such as the U.S. Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education to recommend SEL policies and procedures. Some of the strategies this report suggested were to

- build supportive, respectful, trusting relationships between adults and students.
- develop a sense of belonging or connection.
- develop cultural competency skills.

None of the recommendations in this information request included specific classroom practices. It follows that SEL is the curriculum lens, and bibliotherapy is the "how-to tool" to teach SEL. As multiple researchers established the emotional benefits of bibliotherapy, they also noted that bibliotherapy is appropriate for large groups and includes shared reading, writing, and discussion experiences (Gregory et al., 2004; Marrs, 1995; Montgomery & Maunders, 2015; Yuan et al., 2018). Schmoker (2019) pointed to classroom activities such as group reading, writing, and discussion as foundational teaching and the center of classroom literacy-based activities. Figure 3 illustrates this overlap.

Text-Reader Alignment

Bibliotherapy and classroom activities share similar goals and results: participant engagement and building a sense of belonging (Goodwin

Figure 3. Overlap of Bibliotherapy, SEL, and Common Classroom Practices

et al., 2022; Montgomery & Maunders, 2015). Accordingly, when text and reader participants match, SEL goals are met. As participants reported, when readers see themselves or their issues in the reading materials, they are motivated to succeed and described greater interest and a personal connection (Goodwin et al., 2022; Riordan & Wilson, 1989). Furthermore, when choosing reader-centered materials, as Marrs (1995) documented, alignment appeared to support emotional needs and even "decreased anxiety, increased academic achievement, expanded social and cultural backgrounds, and bonded the practitioner and participant" (Bradley & Bosquet, 1936, p. 26). Similarly, Montgomery and Maunders (2015) pointed out that when "selected materials align with participants' experiences and goals, bibliotherapy was more successful" (p. 42). This success meets SEL goals. Because participants are engaged and connected, children develop emotionally healthy behaviors through the pages of a well-matched book.

Read-Aloud

A read-aloud is a practice in which a leader picks a text section to read aloud and guides the participants in discussing the segment. This technique leads participants through complex emotions, concepts, and language. When a reader identifies with literary characters, emotional experiences, and situations, the reading generates discussion and helps present "an understanding of circumstances that allow challenging issues" to be confronted safely (Arruda-Colli et al., 2017, p. 549). This technique permits the facilitator to demonstrate the reading process and increases comprehension, but the read-aloud also expands the point of view and builds independent reading and thinking skills (Burkins & Croft, 2010). Following this, researchers also commented that the read-aloud is "the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading" (Anderson et al., 1985, p. 23). In connection, bibliotherapy research noted increased problem-solving skills and better emotional health (Marrs, 1995). SEL strives to build empathy through bibliotherapy, and classroom practices meet this goal. When practitioners use a read-aloud, Montgomery and Maunders (2015) found that empathy and self-exploration developed. Participants develop similar results, such as social-emotional competencies, when teachers utilize the read-aloud.

Guided Reading and Discussion

Participants develop their social-emotional skills when classroom communities pair guided reading with discussion. Studies described guided reading as small group collaborative reading where the leader asks key questions (Fountas & Pinnell, 2019; Montgomery & Maunders, 2015). Practitioners use it because, as Schrank and Engels (1981) reported, "guided reading helps individuals gain an understanding of self and learn from others or find solutions to problems" (p. 143). Following this, Yuan et al. (2018) reported that "guided reading encourages readers to challenge unhelpful thoughts and behaviors" (p. 354). Similarly, SEL strives to help students self-monitor their feelings and develop strategies to change negative emotions and actions (Connecticut

Education Association, n.d.). Guided reading and discussion advance this goal because when classroom teachers pair guided reading and discussion, the small reading groups can collectively explore thoughts and feelings while the teacher prompts the group members to consider alternative viewpoints. Importantly, Riordan and Wilson (1989) concluded that teaming reading and group discussion successfully changed attitudes and behaviors. Combined, guided readings and discussions are powerful tools because they help readers develop lifelong social and emotional skills.

Suggestions

In addition to a read-aloud setting or through guided reading and discussion, stories can be used in other ways to meet SEL goals. Figure 4 illustrates the further overlap between social and emotional learning goals, bibliotherapy practices, and classroom and lesson plan applications.

Implications for Future Research

By examining multiple systematic reviews, researchers described the relationship between stories and trauma to support emotional health. Schools are starting to focus on student mental health through an SEL curriculum. Field (2022) reported that U.S. schools increased their SEL spending by 45% between 2019 and 2022. In response, educators are being tasked with embedding SEL into their classrooms more often (see Tussey & Hass, 2020). Although one purpose of this study was to identify how SEL practices intersected with bibliotherapy procedures, not a single study included bibliotherapy in the busy classroom setting or was conducted by an education expert. Thus, the following are potential future questions:

- In what ways are elementary learners impacted when bibliotherapy is embedded in the SEL curriculum?
- In what ways could bibliotherapy provide directions for developing a SEL curriculum?

Limitations

This descriptive research study's results are limited. Its conclusions cannot be generalized to all bibliotherapy research or systematic reviews. Even though thousands of studies were initially identified, only 50 were included in the abstract review stage. Because few of the

Figure 4. Further Overlap in the Application and Use of SEL, Bibliotherapy, and Classroom Practices

Social-Emotional Learning Goals	Bibliotherapy Practice	Classroom Application(s)	Use
To set and achieve goals	Use the story to change negative behavior or thoughts	Vocabulary building emotion and Vocabulary Word Wall	During a pre-reading activity
To manage emotions	Journal writing	Group read-aloud writing prompts	To assess prior learning Use the story as an anticipatory set or at the end of the lesson and ask students to reflect on the story in an exit ticket.
To establish and maintain relationships	Group discussion	Mentor text Text sets	As a • partner chat • discussion circle • literacy circle

examined studies included children or the classroom setting, only 10 studies were identified, included, and analyzed. Note that qualitative research includes a researcher's perspective and is restricted by the researcher's skills and positionality. Because of this, the results may be biased. Finally, the author is a literacy specialist and a childhood trauma survivor.

Conclusion

For many children, trauma goes untreated (Heath et al., 2017). The World Health Organization (2011) noted that teachers or laypersons may use bibliotherapy to fill the treatment gap. The *APA Dictionary of Psychology* (American Psychological Association [APA], 2007) defines a *layperson* "as someone not belonging to or trained in a particular profession who lacks specialized knowledge of a particular subject" (p. 528). Teachers are cautioned that using bibliotherapy may uncover emotional difficulties. As a precaution, use bibliotherapy in conjunction and collaboration with the school's mental health team. An SEL curriculum may address this mental health support gap. The current suggestion and research align with Suvilehto et al. (2019) who also recommend intentionally including bibliotherapy in the SEL curriculum because bibliotherapy is easy to use, and its techniques are similar to many classroom literacy practices. As a benefit, bibliotherapy is also a low-cost and efficient way teachers can employ these practices to support student mental health and extend the reach of school counselors without interrupting their classroom routine.

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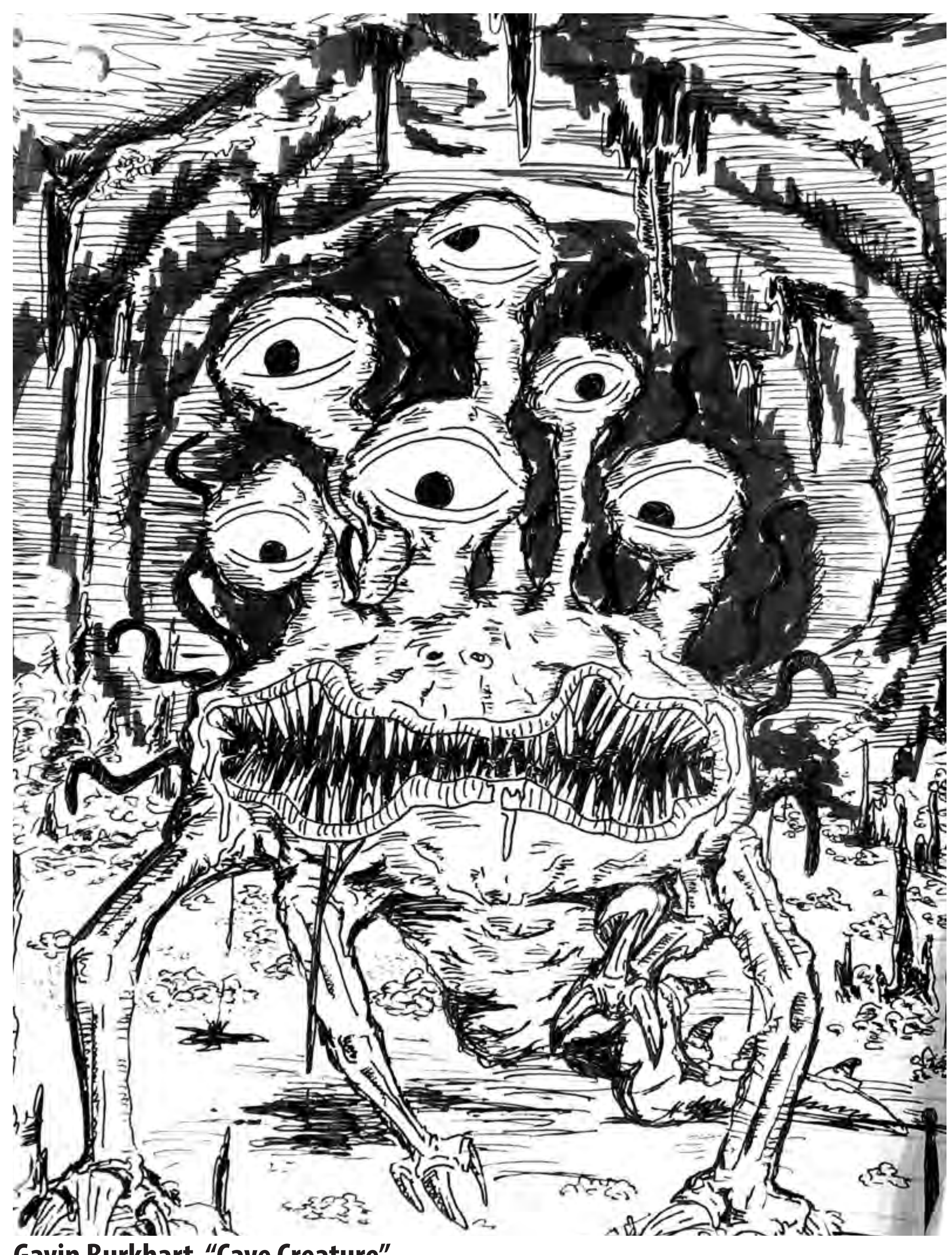
About the Author

Melinda E. Langeberg is an associate professor at Viterbo University in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Her research passion centers around language and how it can transform lives.



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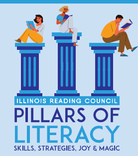

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Finding Common Ground: Understanding Ourselves and the World Through Literature

Jung Kim and Deborah Augsburger

About this Column

With all that is going on in the world today, it is no longer enough to simply appreciate differences. We must learn how to understand one another, see each other's humanity, and work toward greater justice. High-quality children's and young adult literature can provide an important first step for helping youth to begin exploring these critical viewpoints, as well as to develop empathy and love for the world around them. It should be highly enjoyable and engaging, yet it can open doors to understanding, raise questions about the status quo, and begin conversations about how we move through and shape the world in which we live. To this end, this column will present literature that provides a variety of perspectives in exploring and valuing the world around us.

Learning About Others and Building Greater Empathy

It is perhaps a well-worn observation that we need more empathy these days. With so much divisiveness and digging in of sides, it becomes harder and harder to understand someone else's point of view. However, this is not a fight we can give up on. We need to learn how to make more connections with one another, build more relationships, and learn how to see what another person's life might be like—their joys, sorrows, hardships, and loves. It is only by seeking out our shared humanity that we can work toward systemic change and greater love and equity for all. This collection of books either helps show insights into others' lives or shows characters that learn empathy from one another.

Books for Preprimary/Primary Readers

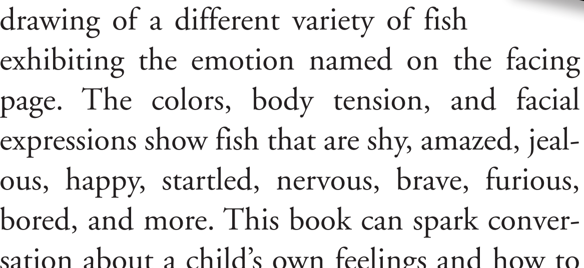
Ferry, Beth. *The Umbrella.* Clarion Books, 2023. Illustrated by Tom Licthenheld. On a perpetually rainy day, a small girl and her dog take shelter in an antique shop. There they find an old, damaged umbrella labeled "Free." Curious, they carry it home; but on the way, it shreds into pieces on the ground. In the morning, they are surprised to find hundreds of umbrellas growing where the pieces had fallen. They decide to share, and this act of generosity brings a change in more than just the weather. The text is spare, and yellow is the only color other than gray in the illustrations, but there are so many messages to be discovered in this seemingly simple book: there is value in those we may overlook or discard, joy is contagious, and there is hope in even the dreariest of times, and so on. *Easter egg alert:* Those who remember the author/editor Amy Krause Rosenthal will immediately notice the beautiful tribute to her memory.

Rex, Michael. *Facts vs Opinions vs Robots.* Nancy Paulsen Books, 2020. The robots are constantly arguing, asserting that their ideas are the right ones. But when they learn to discern what is fact and what is opinion, they decide that they can disagree and still get along. An otherwise potentially heavy-handed lesson is presented with humor and just enough silliness. Robots disagreeing about whether to have oil or bolts on their chocolate or pistachio ice cream is a great way to begin learning to appreciate when your disagreement is based in fact or is merely a difference of preference or opinion. When a new robot shows up, it is time to learn to not judge them before we get to know them. The illustrations are bold and goofy, making this book loads of fun.

Roberts, Justin. *I'll Be Your Polar Bear.* Putnam, 2021. Illustrated by Chuck Groenink. The rhythmic text and sumptuous illustrations invite us along as a parent affirms that he will be there to guide and support the child no matter how challenging the circumstances. The human family is represented in the adventures of the polar bears as the father and child make their way back home through a snowy night to the warmth of the stove, some cocoa, and a big bear hug. This book also provides a loving depiction of a single-parent family with the father as caregiver.

Teague, Mark. *We Are Going to Be Pals!* Beach Lane Books, 2023. We are treated to a science lesson disguised as a buddy comedy in this unique book about friendship and symbiotic relationships. A *very* chatty egret fills page after page with dialogue as it teaches a long-suffering, silent rhinoceros why they will be friends and how their relationship will work in spite of their differences. The egret tells jokes (though not very good ones) and dispenses wisdom (really, very good lessons) while the rhino goes about its daily routine, including some much-needed alone time. However, when the egret gets stuck in a bad situation, the rhino comes through, and they eventually understand how much they need each other. The illustrations include other animals in their habitat and emphasize the enormous differences between these unlikely friends.

Van Haut, Mies. *Happy.* Pajama Press, 2023. Wow. This book is a work of art. The stunning illustrations and single-word pages in this concept book combine to convey complex emotions. Each two-page spread features a chalk and pastel drawing of a different variety of fish exhibiting the emotion named on the facing page. The colors, body tension, and facial expressions show fish that are shy, amazed, jealous, happy, startled, nervous, brave, furious, bored, and more. This book can spark conversation about a child's own feelings and how to recognize the feelings that others may have.



Yoon, Helen. *Have You Seen My Invisible Dinosaur?* Candlewick, 2023. The clever illustrations invite readers to question and imagine as they wonder whether the titular dinosaur really does exist. The protagonist asks the reader for help finding their lost dinosaur. They make snacks, which attract many other pets; distribute lost pet posters, which are not at all helpful; and explain how the dinosaur got lost in the first place. Just when we think it is a hopeless cause, a chance encounter and the clever illustrations make everything clear. The joy of this book is in its interactivity and the empathy it invites by directly addressing the reader. We are drawn in by the sincerity and earnestness of the otherwise absurd request, so, of course, we eagerly help in the search.

Books for Intermediate and Middle Grade Readers

Applegate, Katherine. *Odder.* Feiwel & Friends, 2022. Illustrated by Charles Santoso. Inspired by the program at the Monterey Bay Aquarium for orphaned otters, this novel in verse follows a young sea otter named Odder on her life-changing adventures. Orphaned and raised in the aquarium, Odder learns how to survive in the wild from her human caretakers and is released into the wild. After an encounter with a shark, she is returned to the aquarium where she becomes a foster mom for other abandoned otter pups. We see the human and animal worlds through the otter's eyes in this book, building empathy for the living creatures and how we are interconnected.

DuBois, Caroline Brooks. *Ode to a Nobody.* Holiday House, 2022. So often books are about characters that are special in some way—hidden powers, royal birth, extraordinary work ethic—yet 13-year-old Simone is not special. She is an average student, living in the shadow of her overachieving big brother, and an average skater, while trying to navigate 8th grade. When a tornado touches down in her neighborhood, though, it rips open different things in her life—her parents' marriage, her friendships, and even where she belongs. While Simone was just floating along before the tornado, after the tornado, she realizes she has to figure out who she is and how to use her voice. Told through verse, the book captures beautifully what it means to be a young person on the cusp of discovering themselves and learning their own worth.

Farok, Nizrana. *The Boy Who Met a Whale.* Peachtree Publishing Company, 2021. Razi and Shifa are brother and sister living in a fishing village in Sri Lanka. Still grieving their father and wary of the ocean, they encounter a shipwrecked boy who carries a treasure. Unsure whether to help him or leave him to encounter the pirates who land soon after him, they take a risk and embark on a thrilling adventure. It turns out that this treasure has an important connection to their village. Still processing their grief but now ready to fish again, they learn that helping others can also mean that they can accept help from them. Readers will also enjoy *The Girl Who Stole an Elephant*, an equally fast-paced adventure about a girl trying to help her impoverished community by stealing jewels from the royal family.

Harrington, C. C. *Wildoak.* Scholastic, 2022. Maggie has been sent to visit her grandfather Fred in the countryside, while her parents try to figure out what to do about her stuttering. She explores the wild woods near Fred's cottage and finds a wounded snow leopard that had been dumped in the woods by its city-dwelling owner. Maggie does her best to care for the leopard, while Fred challenges the developers who begin clear-cutting the woods for industry. Both are fighting against time as it seems that the villagers, the developers, and Maggie's own father are all working against them. This award-winning book set in England in the 1960s is beautifully written and imbued with compassion for nature, empathy for those who are different, and hope for the future when people are willing to speak up and to listen to one another.

Torres, Javier. *Stealing Home.* Kids Can Press, 2021. Illustrated by David Namisato. While there have been a few graphic novels about Japanese incarceration during World War II published in the last several years (e.g., *Displaced*, *They Call Us Enemy*), most of them have focused on the experiences of those interned in the United States. Some

readers may not know that this also occurred in Canada. This book focuses on the experiences of one Japanese-Canadian family and their removal from Vancouver to an incarceration camp in Canada's interior. Told from the perspective of a young boy, Sandy Saito, it charts the separation of his father from the family, Sandy's attempts to understand what is going on, and the fierce determination of Japanese Canadians to negotiate various adversities. An underlying theme of the book is Sandy's love of baseball, the ways in which it connects him to his father and his community, and how it helped uplift spirits. The simple, sepia tones of the illustrations lend a poignant tone to the book and underscore Sandy's youth. The book also provides an afterword with more stories and resources that would definitely be important to read and discuss with students.

Books for Young Adult Readers

Alameda, Courtney, & Maetani, Valynne E. *Seven Deadly Shadows.* Quill Tree Books, 2020. What would anime be like as a literary novel? Alameda and Maetani have crafted a retelling of Kurosaura's *Seven Samurai* with heavy influences from popular manga and anime works. The story also draws on the folklore of Kyoto but is set in the current day. Kira is a bullied schoolgirl who happens to be the heir to be caretaker of her family's Shinto shrine. When the shrine is attacked and her grandfather killed by supernatural monsters, Kira and the kitsune (half-human, half-fox) Shiro engage in an epic adventure, battling to save the shrine and the significant artifact hidden there before her parents sell the property to a stranger. This novel is full of magic, monsters, evil vs good, violence, and faith. Kira's journey helps her learn how to discern the motivations of others and to accept help even from unlikely sources.

Alfageeh, Sara. *Squire.* Quill Tree Books, 2022. Illustrated by Nadia Shammas. Part of an underclass of people in the Bayt-Sajji empire, Aiza dreams of training as a squire and then becoming a knight. As she undergoes training, she must hide her Ornu status. Despite the difficulties of training, Aiza excels and becomes a squire. However, when she is sent to patrol a border and finds herself fighting her own people, she begins to learn the truth about the Bayt-Sajji empire. Fighting both the prejudice of others and a system built upon lies, can Aiza be true to herself and be successful? *Squire* explores what it means when groups of people are persistently cast as "less than" and the difficulties of fighting against those stories. This beautifully illustrated graphic novel also has extensive notes from the author and illustrator that touch upon their own experiences as Arab Americans and their connections to the story.

Clayton, Dhonielle, Jackson, Tiffany D., Stone, Nic, Thomas, Angie, Woodfolk, Ashley, & Yoon, Nicola. *Blackout.* Quill Tree Books, 2021, & ***Whiteout***, Quill Tree Books, 2022. ***Blackout*** is a unique novel told in six interconnected stories of teens trying to get home (or to an epic party instead) during a New York City heatwave and blackout. The chapters alternate between stories set across the city until they converge in Queens. The New York Public Library, Apollo Theater, and double-decker bus tours feature in the stories as the teens interact with their families, work out their relationships, and (re)discover love. ***Whiteout*** takes the collaborative writing process a step further, telling a single story through the perspectives of multiple characters who are on a quest to help Stevie apologize and make up with their girlfriend during an epic snowstorm in Atlanta. Their friends and family help Stevie, a scientist who seems to lack empathy, learn to appreciate the perspectives and feelings of others.

MacGregor, Maya. *The Many Half-Lived Lives of Sam Sylvester.* Astra Young Readers, 2022. Sam Sylvester is not your typical kid in many ways. Moved from rural Montana to the Oregon coast, they're transracially adopted (Sam is white, but their father is Black), are non-binary, and are on the spectrum. They also keep a scrapbook about kids who died before they were 19—a birthday rapidly approaching for them—and just moved into what might be a haunted house. Thirty years ago, a teenager died in the house from what may or may not have been an accident. As Sam navigates the trauma of what drove them from Montana while (hopefully) making new friends in Oregon, they also might be putting themselves into danger in investigating the mystery of their house. As things get increasingly weird, Sam begins to wonder if their story might end before their birthday. Readers will find a little bit of everything in this book—mystery, ghosts, but ultimately hope.

Tahir, Sabaa. *All My Rage.* Razorbill, 2022. Multi-voiced books are definitely a trend in youth literature right now, and—to be honest—not always done well. Tahir, however, does an amazing job in bringing voice to three Pakistani-American characters: Noor, who lives with her abusive and controlling uncle; Sal, who is trying to keep his family's motel afloat while grappling with his father's alcoholism and mother's death; and Misbah, who has so much love and strength to share—but is it enough for all those in her life? As each character tries to chase their dreams and find happiness in a difficult world, sorrow and trials create obstacles for each of them. Not all of them will make the "right" choices, and they will struggle with the consequences of their actions. But how do you know what the right choice is when there is no road map for you or you feel there are no good choices? This book is one that you will want to read again as soon as you read the last page.

Zamora, Javier. *Solito.* Hogarth, 2022. A child makes his way from El Salvador, through Guatemala and Mexico, to try and reunite with his parents in the United States. It is a brutal, grueling journey over seven weeks that he makes without any other family members. It is amazing and appalling, brutal and beautiful, made more poignant by the clear voice of a 9-year-old. Based on poet Javier Zamora's actual journey (and read by the author in the audiobook version, breaking voice and all), it took him almost 30 years to come back and revisit the memories of this incredible journey—not only the hardships he confronted but the family he found along the way. While suggested for ages 13 and up, the young voice of Javier makes this accessible for a variety of ages, although the subject matter and length would need to be considered. When so much awfulness has been used to describe people on the border, this reminds us of their humanity.

About the Authors

Jung Kim is a professor of Literacy and co-chair of the Department of Education at Lewis University and, when not working, can be found either running or reading. A former English teacher and literacy coach, she is interested in critical literacy, issues of equity, and coffee. She has written two books on teaching with graphic novels, and her most recent book is on the racialization of Asian-American teachers.

Deborah Augsburger is a professor of Literacy in the Department of Education at Lewis University. She serves as treasurer of the Will County Reading Council and long ago was on the executive board of the Illinois Reading Council. Her specializations in the field of literacy are children's literature, diagnostic assessment, and storytelling. You can reach her via e-mail at augsbude@lewisu.edu.

BOOK CLUB

To register, return this form with payment by October 15, 2023 to
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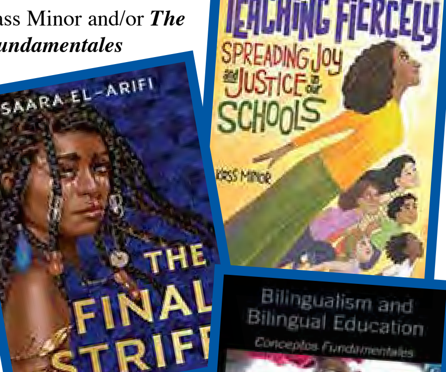

Read, reflect on, and respond to ***Teaching Fiercely: Spreading Joy and Justice in Our Schools*** by Kass Minor and/or ***The Final Strife: A Novel*** by Saara El-Arifi and/or ***Bilingualism and Bilingual Education: Conceptos Fundamentales*** by David Schwarzer, Mary Petron, and Clarena Larrotta.

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Family Engagement in Literacy

Laurie Elish-Piper

About this Column

Families play a key role in their children's literacy development and school success. To support educators in building positive working relationships with their students' families, practical suggestions are offered to promote family communication, involvement, and partnerships.

Moving from Monologue to Dialogue and Focusing on Joy to Promote Family Engagement in Literacy

A new school year always brings excitement and opportunities for a fresh start. This year, however, there seems to be a greater need for a reset in the post-COVID-19 era where face-to-face teaching, learning, and events will form the foundation for our work as educators. In addition, the lessons we learned about using digital technologies during the pandemic remain, providing us with tools to enhance our connections with families through virtual meetings, hybrid events, and online teaching and learning tools. In fact, technology has proven to be a useful tool to increase conference attendance, home–school communications, and access to school events (Wilinski et al., 2022), which will likely persist even with our return to in-person interactions and events with families.

This past year was especially challenging as we emerged from the pandemic to see more students struggling academically, socially, and emotionally. Concurrently, teachers reported facing increased levels of stress (Wong & Jimenez, 2023). A story on National Public Radio highlighted three teachers from across the United States who shared their first-hand experiences with increased mental health issues, challenging classroom behavior, and student apathy and disengagement, which led them all to identify the need to adjust and update how we teach and support students (Contreras et al., 2023). Research shows that family engagement promotes improved academic outcomes, social skills, and classroom behavior for students (Annie E Casey Foundation, 2022; Cosso et al., 2022), and Ferlazzo (2011) argues that it contributes to better classroom environments. These reasons provide a compelling case for why prioritizing family engagement early this school year is an important and impactful goal. Therefore, in this column, I offer two broad ideas for launching strong family engagement efforts to get the school year off to a great start: (1) shifting from one-way communication to dialogues with families and (2) approaching family engagement through a lens of joy and celebration.

Moving from Monologues to Dialogues

A monologue is a one-sided communication, often characterized as a speech. Such one-sided communications are easy to prepare and control because they position the teacher as the source of information and wisdom while situating family members as passive recipients. On the other hand, a dialogue is a two-way or interactive conversation that invites input, involvement, and relationship development. At

first glance, it may seem easy and efficient to send an e-mail or a newsletter home, but what if no one reads the e-mail? Or what if a family member reads the newsletter but does not ask a compelling question or seek clarification? It may feel like an efficient use of time to create an Open House or Curriculum Night presentation that allows the teacher to tell families everything they want them to know about their class and the expectations for their students, but what if there is not an opportunity offered for families to ask questions or share their ideas? If teachers truly want to leverage the value of communication with families, we must move from monologues to dialogues. Through dialogues, teachers can learn about families' priorities, build relationships, and better understand how to support students' learning.

Many teachers send an introduction letter near the beginning of the school year that functions as a monologue to provide information about themselves, their classroom, and their goals for their students. Whether these introduction letters are in print, e-mail, or digital media, such as video, there are a few simple but significant shifts that can be made to move the introduction letter from monologue to dialogue. First, teachers can provide an easy way for family members to respond to meaningful questions that will help build relationships. For example, if the teacher sends an introduction letter to families as a Google form that contains information but also has several questions embedded in it (e.g., see Figure 1), it will be easy for families to respond to this and for the teacher to review, organize, and use the information received.

Newsletters are another common strategy that teachers use to communicate with families that often take the form of monologues through which teachers inform families about upcoming units of study, assignments, and activities. By using video and audio content, teachers can make newsletters more interactive and interesting, including links to surveys and online polls to get real-time feedback from families. In addition to providing information about the classroom and curriculum, teachers can use newsletters to share important ideas to support student reading and learning. For example, the short article in Figure 2 demonstrates that the teacher values and encourages the literacy practices that families use in their homes. Furthermore, through the use of the short survey, teachers can get insights into how their students experience literacy at home so they can make connections to their instruction.

Figure 1. Questions to Ask Families in an Introduction Letter

- What do you see as your child's greatest strengths or skills?
- What goal(s) do you have for your child this year?
- What are you worried about for your child this year in school?
- Is there anything else you can tell me about your child that you think would help me support their learning?

(Questions adapted from Aguilar, 2014)

Conferences, phone calls, and Open Houses are commonly used strategies to connect and communicate with students' families that can default to being monologues by which teachers convey information and family members are just passive recipients; however, it is easy to convert these strategies to dialogues. First, when planning what to share, teachers can be sure to leave at least half of the time for conversation, questions, and input from family members. Second, by using questions that invite family members to share their ideas and input, teachers can promote dialogue. For example, asking questions such as "What have you been seeing at home?" "What are your questions?" "What do you want me to know about your child that will help me be a better teacher for them?" "When you came to school today, what were you hoping we would

Figure 2. Sample Newsletter Article

Literacy at Home

Children learn by imitating what they see their family members say and do, and this is true for literacy too. Literacy includes reading and writing as well as listening and speaking. When your children see you using reading and writing at home, they notice and are likely to imitate you when you write lists, read the news on your phone, send birthday cards to relatives, read for fun, or follow recipes when cooking. If you read and study a religious text like the *Bible*, *Koran*, or *Torah* or discuss the characters and plots of TV shows or movies, your children see you using literacy for multiple purposes. Maybe you share stories and songs from your family history with your children or read, write, or speak in another language at home. Those things all help your children grow as readers, writers, and learners.

I would love to learn about how you use literacy at home. Please click on this link to share some of the ways you use literacy in your home. This information will help me make connections between what you do at home and what your child is learning in school. I look forward to working with you as a team to support your child's learning, development, and success.

Linked Survey

Your name:

Your child's name:

How do you use literacy at home?

- Do you like to read for fun?
- Do you often read for information or to get things done?
- Do you write lists such as shopping lists or to-do lists?
- Do you write e-mails and text messages regularly?
- Do you write cards and letters to family and friends?
- Do you read for religious purposes such as worship or study?
- Do you watch and discuss TV shows, movies, or videos?
- Do you share oral stories and songs?
- Do you read, write, and/or speak another language with your child?
- Are there other ways you use reading and writing at home? Please share those here.

discuss?" and/or "What is confusing or unclear to you?" Finally, when teachers recap and confirm, they can end dialogues by making sure that they are on the same page as the students' families. For example, a teacher could say, "Today, we discussed . . . and . . . . Is that accurate, or did I miss something?" Or a teacher could ask, "We talked about doing . . . and . . . to support your child. Did I get that right?" When teachers use these ideas when they communicate and meet with families, they can foster dialogue which builds a foundation for positive partnerships with families.

Focusing on Joy in Family Engagement Activities

In September of 2012, I had the privilege of hearing education advocate Jonathan Kozol speak at DeKalb High School in DeKalb, Illinois. He led off his speech by asking, "Where is the joy in education? What have we done to the joy?" That question resonated with me as I reflected on why I entered the field of education and why many of the preservice and inservice teachers I have worked with over my career became educators.

Figure 3. Family Engagement Activities Grounded in Joy

Activity	Description of Activity	Description of How Activity Fosters Joy
One School, One Book	Families read, discuss, and participate in activities related to a common book. Selecting a book that will appeal to a wide range of students and families can be a bit daunting, so consultation with a librarian and PTA are advised. As students and their families read the book, they can create a classroom paper quilt constructed of squares made by each family to show their favorite parts. Students and family members can keep a dialogue journal to write to each other about the book—what they notice and what they wonder. A culminating activity can be organized in the school gym to watch the movie/video version, enjoy popcorn, and discuss the differences between the book and movie. An author visit or virtual visit can be scheduled to learn about why and how the author wrote the book and to address questions from students and families about the book.	Shared experiences around books can build positive feelings about reading and create common bonds across the entire school. Because children hear and learn about the book in school, they can build bridges at home to involve their families if they are reluctant to participate initially. Because the focus is on enjoying and responding to the book, and not on answering questions or completing assignments, families can have a low-stress, enjoyable experience. The culminating activity can build anticipation and excitement while providing an opportunity for a fun and free event where families can enjoy time together while also meeting and interacting with other families, school faculty, and staff.
Seasonal events such as a back-to-school ice cream social, winter sing-along or line dancing party, or family field day	Inviting families into school for fun social events can create a time for them to have fun, play games, enjoy music through song and dance, be silly and laugh, and have a good time. Events can be identified and organized in collaboration with the PTA or other parent/family groups in the school.	Events organized around fun themes can build connections with families who are not as likely to participate in academically focused events. Such seasonal activities provide opportunities for families to enjoy their time together as well as to get to know their children's teachers and other families. In addition, these events build a sense of community and connectedness to the school as a positive and supportive resource. The benefits of such events can be increased if they are scheduled regularly such as once a quarter or even monthly.
Volunteer activities	When families participate in helping others, they can experience gratitude and contentment in being of service. Cleaning up the school grounds or neighborhood; planting and tending a community garden; collecting cans and bottles for recycling; or hosting a clothing, book, or toy swap are all examples of how families can engage in meaningful ways as part of the school community.	These volunteer experiences develop a collective purpose to help others and contribute to the well-being of the school and its families. Furthermore, participation can promote a sense of pride in the school and community.

Often the joy of learning, the joy in helping students grow and develop, and the joy in giving back to a community are reasons cited for entering the profession. However, joy seems to have taken a backseat to standardized testing, standards and accountability, and increased scrutiny on schools and teachers. Hough (2022) describes how the pandemic has made it even more difficult for teachers and students to experience joy in the classroom.

Gholdy Muhammad's (2023) work delves into joy in education, specifically for Black students. In an interview for *Education Week*, Muhammad explains,

> *joy was art and aesthetics. It was teaching our children to name the beauty within themselves and within humanity. Joy meant coming together for advocacy and problem solving to make the world better. Joy was wellness, healing, and justice. (as cited in Ferlazzo, 2023, para 7)*

Using these ideas, I propose that family engagement efforts need to foster joy by

involving families in meaningful, collaborative, celebratory ways that build relationships, community, and support for student success.

Family engagement activities that center on joy while involving families in meaningful ways are summarized and described in Figure 3. After these activities are implemented, teachers can use surveys, exit tickets, or electronic polling to get input from families about what they did and did not enjoy, what they learned, and suggestions for future family engagement activities and events. While it may be tempting to focus entirely on the curriculum or reinforcing key skills, embracing joy in family engagement activities can build positive attitudes toward school and help teachers foster comfortable relationships with their students' families.

Closing Thoughts

As teachers embark on the new school year, I hope these ideas are helpful to build family engagement post-COVID. By considering the ideas of shifting communications and interactions with families from one-way monologues to two-way dialogues and focusing family engagement activities around joy, teachers can create positive and productive relationships with their students' families.

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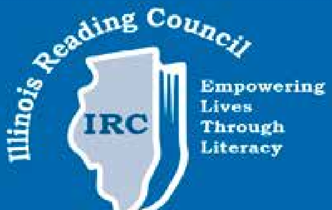
About the Author

Laurie Elish-Piper is Interim Executive Vice President and Provost at Northern Illinois University where she previously served as Dean of the College of Education. She is also a Distinguished Teaching Professor and Distinguished Engagement Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at NIU. Prior to her work in higher education, Laurie was an elementary and middle school teacher, and an educational therapist in a clinical setting. Her research, publications, and presentations focus on family literacy, parent involvement, literacy assessment, and literacy coaching.



IRC Webinar Series

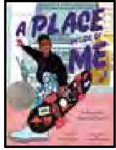
All webinars will begin at 7:00 p.m.

IRC will be offering the Webinar Series for members only in 2023-2024. All webinars will begin at 7:00 p.m. Members who watch the live or recorded webinars can earn professional development clock hours. Mark your calendars and register to take part in this convenient, free IRC membership benefit. Members will receive monthly emails with links to register. Nonmembers can join online and email for the registration link.

September 6, 2023 ~ Zetta Elliott

Poems Can Heal the Heart: Empower Poets in the Classroom

This interactive webinar will introduce participants to the award-winning poetry of Zetta Elliott. After sharing some of her techniques and mentor poets (Gwendolyn Brooks, Danez Smith), Elliott will lead a writing activity that will inspire and empower young poets in the classroom.



October 4, 2023 ~ Kylene Beers

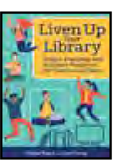
When Kids Can't Read: Strategies that Build Success

Join Kylene as she shares strategies that help all readers – but especially struggling readers – improve comprehension, vocabulary, and engagement. She will focus on strategies and scaffolds that can be used with fiction or nonfiction. This is most appropriate for teachers, coaches, and administrators who work with students in grades 4-12 though primary grade teachers can use the strategies with a few adjustments.

November 1, 2023 ~ Julia E. Torres

Liven Up Your Library: Inclusive and Engaging Programs for Teens and Tweens

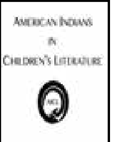
Julia will discuss book banning, how and why it happens, as well as what you can do about it, ways to collaborate with literacy education practitioners, and how to create or strengthen a culture of reading in your environment. Julia has experience and education in creating educational and library environments that empower individuals and support literacy development. Julia also believes in what Brazilian educator Paulo Freire calls "education as a practice of liberation" and will be discussing the role that healthy knowledge institutions can play in transforming individuals and society.



December 6, 2023 ~ Debbie Reese

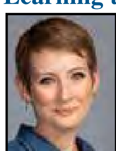
Updating Representations of Native Americans in Your Classroom Library

Today, more than ever before, teachers can choose books by Native writers to teach students about the first peoples of this land. Debbie will highlight several books, providing information about why they are exemplary texts and how they can be used in the classroom. Including Native-authored books in the classroom, however, is not enough. Books that won prestigious children's literature awards often contain stereotypes, bias, and factual errors about Native peoples that can interfere with a reader's ability to comprehend the information in Native-authored books.

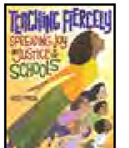


January 3, 2024 ~ Kass Minor

Collaborate, Build, Nurture, Reflect: Roadmaps for Learning that Sticks



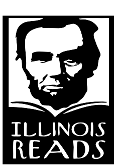
As educators in schools, we have been disconnected from our personal selves, from the archives of our heart that brought us to the classroom in the first place. The past few years have been tough, and reflection is often undervalued in the field of professional learning in schools, often seen as a time wasting sentiment when more "productive" experiences could occur. In order to sustain ourselves and our profession, different routes to teacher agency, engagement, and learning opportunities are required. To create sustainable learning, learning that sticks, that shifts, changes people and their praxis, it is absolutely vital to make space and time for reflective opportunities. In this session, Kass will work in community with educators through a series of reflective practices to create sustainable learning, learning that sticks, that shifts, that changes people and their praxis.



February 7, 2024 ~ Becky Anderson

Discovering the 2024 Illinois Reads Books

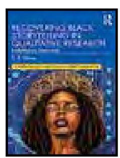
Join Becky Anderson as she presents the Illinois Reads books for 2024. Learn more about the Illinois Reads statewide literacy initiative that promotes reading for all Illinois citizens. Six books in six age bands from Birth to Adult will be shared. A variety of book topics and themes are chosen for each age band, highlighting the work of Illinois Authors.



March 6, 2024 ~ Stephanie R. Toliver

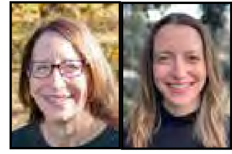
How Science Fiction Writing Helps Adolescents Think Through Social Justice Issues

S. R. Toliver is an assistant professor of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign whose scholarship centers science fiction, social justice, and English education. She is the author of Recovering Black Storytelling in Qualitative Research: Endarkened Storywork, and her academic work has been published in several academic journals, including Journal of Literacy Research and Equity, Excellence and Education.

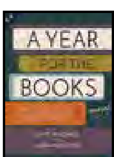


April 3, 2024 ~ Maria Walther and Katie Walther

Reach For The Books: Reenergize Reading Routines



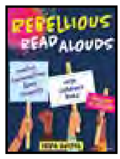
Looking for practical ideas to refresh your students' reading routines while staying rooted in evidence-based practices? In this session, you'll learn innovative ideas to elevate read-aloud experiences, small group work, independent reading, and more.



May 1, 2024 ~ Vera Ahiyya

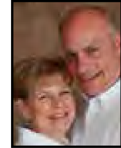
Rebellious Read Alouds

Students need to see themselves and their peers in the books they read, and to engage with varying viewpoints. How can educators create a safe and nurturing space that inspires young children to explore diversity and ask curious questions? Spark meaningful conversations about race, identity, and social justice in your classroom using read alouds as an entry point.

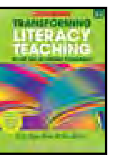


June 5, 2024 ~ Karen Biggs-Tucker and Brian Tucker

Swing into Summer with the Tuckers: A Few Strategies to Begin Curating Your Classroom Library to Prepare for Readers, Writers, and Researchers



Don't miss this informative evening with Karen and Brian! Join two veteran teachers as they share their classroom-tested strategies choosing texts that will not only grow the minds of your literacy learners, but will build your classroom library with diverse, engaging books. Then, peek into their classrooms to see how they use these texts in authentic, engaging ways when you return to your classrooms in August!



To register, sign into your IRC Membership Account at www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org

https://doi.org/10.33600/IRCJ.51.4.2023.60

Professional Development

Sophie Degener, Adelfio Garcia, Ivy Sitkoski, and Martin Mireles

About this Column

For the past couple of years, there has been a persistent message in news stories, podcasts, and on social media that teachers are not teaching reading correctly and/or they are pushing a "woke agenda" through reading books with diverse characters that represent marginalized perspectives. One proposed solution to both of these perceived issues is to diminish teacher agency by mandating scripted literacy curricula that provide little or no flexibility for modifying lessons to meet the linguistic, cultural, academic, and social needs of our students. For many, it is a frustrating time to be a teacher.

As the 2023-2024 school year begins, let's commit to changing the current narrative around teaching and teachers. If you are currently reading this column, then you are demonstrating intellectual curiosity and a desire to continuously improve your teaching craft. Find like-minded colleagues at your school or within your community to join together with and practice responding to the outrages, both big and small, that are befalling teachers. When you read a story critical of teachers in the newspaper, write a letter to the editor that provides a different perspective. When you read a Twitter or Facebook post that decries the "woke agenda" of teachers, respond with facts and share your own experiences. If your school district is considering mandating a scripted curriculum, show up at school board meetings or seek positions on curriculum committees so you are at the table when decisions are being made.

Teachers are professionals with vast sources of knowledge about what the kids in their classrooms need. We need to make sure our voices are heard. And to build your professional knowledge and support your sense of expertise and agency, we encourage you to keep reading! The books we have reviewed in this column will do much to build your knowledge so that you feel well-equipped to take on anyone that challenges or questions your work with children.

Note: Are there books that you've read that have had a profound impact on your literacy teaching? We'd love to read and review them. Send suggestions to Sophie at the e-mail address included at the end of our column.

Elevating Teachers and Teaching: Changing the Narrative

Echevarría, Jana, Vogt, MaryEllen, Short, Deborah J., & Toppel, Katie. *Making Content Comprehensible for Multilingual Learners: The SIOP® Model* (6th ed.). Pearson Education, 2023, 400 pp. ISBN 9780137878857.

As I strongly believe, and as SIOP emphasizes, every teacher is a content and language teacher. Empirically validated by over 20 years of research, SIOP emphasizes equity in the classroom, ensuring that multilingual students have access to and acquire core content while simultaneously developing their language knowledge. For more

than 25 years, SIOP (formerly known as the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) has played a pivotal role in supporting multilingual learners in various classroom settings (p. v). Recently, Echevarría and colleagues released the 6th edition of *Making Content Comprehensible for Multilingual Learners: The SIOP® Model*, which provides guidance and scenarios to empower multilingual students in the classroom.

The authors begin by framing the discussion around an asset-based perspective while shedding light on the current outcomes of achievement. Consequently, SIOP and its instructional practices are introduced, starting with their research-based origins. In Chapter 2, the book provides lesson planning considerations and multiple-grade examples to ensure clarity. For instance, when planning differentiation for students with different language proficiencies, language scaffolds such as differentiated sentence starters and scaffolded note outlines tied to the content are presented as specific examples of support. Building on this asset-based approach, the importance of linking content concepts to students' funds of knowledge is explicitly stated in Chapter 3, where the significance of building background knowledge is discussed. Utilizing a student's knowledge to facilitate learning is just as crucial as leveraging their linguistic resources. In Chapter 4, two different methods for achieving comprehensible input are highlighted: (1) explicitly teaching cognates and (2) encouraging students to translanguage. This asset-focused theme is consistently maintained throughout the subsequent chapters, with specific examples and teaching scenarios being drawn out.

While SIOP serves as an instructional model for multilingual learners, it recognizes that each multilingual learner is distinct and possesses a unique combination of content and language knowledge. The authors demonstrate this understanding by providing differentiation strategies for students with varying language proficiencies throughout the text.

Additionally, since every classroom is different, the book offers a plethora of teaching scenarios that exemplify a spectrum of SIOP implementation. These scenarios encourage critical thinking about the SIOP components. As an educator, I understand that each school year is distinct and vastly different from the last. The teaching vignettes encompass a range of grade levels, from elementary to high school, and cover various content areas, making the scenarios relevant and applicable to a wide audience. Instructional coaches and other professionals who support educators in refining their craft will find these scenarios equally valuable.

In conclusion, Echevarría and colleagues have provided a solid foundation for instructional considerations and practices that foster equitable pedagogy for multilingual learners. **–MM**

Cantrell, Susan Chambers, Walker-Dalhouse, Doris, & Lazar, Althier M. (Eds.). *Culturally Sustaining Literacy Pedagogies: Honoring Students' Heritages, Literacies, and Languages*. Teachers College Press, 2022, 200 pp. ISBN 978-0-8077-6702-3.

The premise of *Culturally Sustaining Literacy Pedagogies* is an exciting idea: For the most beneficial outcomes, teachers need to help students use and continue to develop the funds of knowledge they bring to school, while at the same time learning and gaining access to the dominant culture. In other words, teachers need to not only affirm but *sustain* the diverse cultures and languages of their students.

Each chapter of this book is authored by a different group of literacy scholars and focuses on Culturally Sustaining Literacy Pedagogies (CSLP) enacted in a particular setting. The settings include elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. All contributors are participants in a Literacy Research Association Study Group, coordinated by the book's

editors, that is devoted to conversations about CSLP. In the introduction, the editors explain the theories that undergird their initiative, and the authors of each chapter frequently refer to those theories and to additional scholarly support. The treasures, though, are the detailed descriptions of the ways in which theory can be put into practice.

Several elements weave throughout all the settings. For example, instruction begins with student interests and funds of knowledge. Additionally, to enable students to use the full range of their abilities, literacy is defined broadly, and includes oratory, images, videos, and music. Educators working with intermediate-grade students at one school employed Writer's Workshop to engage the students in an exploration of their career dreams. Students drew their ideas, created collages, listened to guest speakers from the community who held different jobs, and created career reports using *PowerPoint*. The students expanded their knowledge base about both their dream careers and about effective multimodal communication. Teachers at another school built a unit around the already well-developed knowledge base of 5th graders about injustices in their own communities. To deepen their insight, the students studied a novel in which the experiences of the characters paralleled their own. The teachers posed open-ended questions and taught reading strategies to help students get the most out of their reading. Students then undertook purposeful writing projects with the aim of working for real-life social change. Each student picked the community issue about which they cared the most, and they wrote letters to real people or created posters and public service announcements to share on media platforms.

An important theme is the recognition that culture is not monolithic. By getting to know their students, teachers can learn the varied ways in which culture is embodied, avoiding stereotypes and making their teaching authentically serve the students they have. Centering curriculum around students' lives and defining literacy broadly helps shift focus away from White Eurocentric ways of knowing and demonstrating knowledge, a goal of anti-racist teaching and another important theme.

No doubt you are wondering, can we center curriculum on students and still meet standards and expectations? The editors and authors give full acknowledgement to the difficulty many teachers face implementing such a curriculum in the current climate. Challenges are a focus of the Study Group, and ways of addressing them are discussed in the book.

This book is somewhat dense, due to the frequent references to research and scholarship. Rest assured, however, that the ideas and examples are rich and make the book well worth reading. **–IS**

Keene, Ellin Oliver. *The Literacy Studio: Redesigning the Workshop for Readers and Writers*. Heinemann, 2022, 232 pp. ISBN 978-0325120058.

Reflecting on the instruction I observed in several urban and suburban classrooms this past school year, I can affirm that teachers' plates continued to be overwhelmed by published programs, school-based time-crunched literacy blocks, and plenty of instructional post-pandemic nuances. Ellin Oliver Keene wrote *The Literacy Studio: Redesigning the Workshop for Readers and Writers* for teachers with instructional demands and challenges in a constrained, limited-time instructional block.

In her introductory prelude, Keene offers an extensive overview of her instructional model that supports reading and writing instruction infused in one Literacy Studio. The book has seven chapters that build on each other. Chapter One begins with an overview of the research, demonstrating how students benefit from the integration of reading and writing.

Keene advocates for teachers to think of their literacy blocks as an artists' studio inspired by reading, writing, and students' showing their thinking with a strong habit of revision, rereading, rethinking, and editing as common practice. Chapters Two and Three address the common problems that most educators, like me, face daily: use of instructional time and time for planning. The book reminds us of how valuable time and planning are; however, in these post-pandemic years, in which demands come from many directions, instructional time gets cut, and time for planning quickly disappears and is instead used to meet all of the professional demands that arrive at our desks.

In Chapter Four, Keene explores the notion of the reader and writer's craft, including the construction of ideas, details, and all the literacy elements involved in crafting. Chapter Five follows up on crafting with the introduction of composing, engaging readers in how these two concepts come together. In Chapter Six, the author names composing as the heart of the Literacy Studio, emphasizing the different formats that can be introduced during whole and small group work. Keene also provides insight into the potency of language and the ways teachers successfully use it in elementary and intermediate grades. Also, the author emphasizes the design, plan, development, and formats of different minilessons for the crafting and composing sessions.

Chapter Seven addresses the process of launching the Literacy Studio for first-timers and for those teachers who would like strategies for managing the instructional demands put on them. Conferring is a must-have component to the Literacy Studio. The author provides benefits and processes on how to embed conferences into their time-crunched literacy block. This chapter shares different approaches for using time effectively in today's classrooms. Keene uses the term *invitational groups* and elaborates on how these groups can inform teaching decisions based on teachers' interactions to learn the instructional needs of each group of students. In Chapter Eight, a reflective chapter, Keene reminds us of the joy of engaging with students, allowing us to watch them develop their reading and writing identities through conferring, the use of global and not-so-global questions, and the last most needed part of the Literacy Studio, the joy of sharing—using language to communicate and develop literate identities.

I invite all educators to lighten their instructional demands by trying the ideas Keene shares in this book. We all may be surprised by the results when students are allowed to shine despite the published curriculums and time-crunched literacy blocks. **–AG**

Minor, Kass. *Teaching Fiercely: Spreading Joy and Justice in Our Schools.* Jossey-Bass, 2023, 320 pp. ISBN 978-1-119-86767-8.

If you have ever met Kass Minor or seen her speak, you know she is an effervescent person with a deep love of children, teachers, and teaching. She exudes passion and joy. Reading *Teaching Fiercely* is like being in conversation with her—her voice shines through, and her optimism and sense of possibility radiate off the pages. It is impossible to read this book and not believe that we can make schools better and that we can positively impact the lives of all of our students, particularly those who have been most marginalized in schools. She writes, "I am obsessed with teaching and learning in ways that support kids feeling like their whole human selves in the place we call school" (p. 25), and indeed her book is really about finding ways to teach that fulfill this goal.

Minor begins her book by acknowledging how difficult teaching has been over the past few years and how teachers are overwhelmed and often just barely surviving. Her goal is to support teachers in reclaiming their joy, and she suggests that engaging with the book in "small

bites" (p. xxvii) and with a thought partner or partners will make the reader's journey through the book more impactful. Throughout each of the chapters, Minor includes "work alongs" and "reflections," which invite the reader to stop reading to write, reflect, plan, or brainstorm, considering their own settings and contexts. I found these extremely valuable for processing Minor's ideas and visions while considering how they would work for me and my students.

I appreciate how Minor drills down on the concepts of *justice* and *joy.* Many of us understand how school systems are impacted by the dominant culture, but have we considered how even the notion of justice is influenced by the dominant culture? When it comes to social justice in our schools, who gets to define justice? And who is that justice for? Minor asks similar questions about joy, and she provides several work-alongs to unpack our own thinking about these terms.

Minor understands that "to move forward, we must look back" (p. 62). We need to understand our own experiences in schools and how these have shaped our teaching, and we also must understand the history of schooling in our country. Minor provides historical perspectives on how injustices pervade public schools as well as historical examples of schools (such as the Folk Schools) that have embraced justice. She also provides a link to a must-read digital download that goes even deeper on the historical underpinnings of justice/injustice in schools.

Truthfully, providing a succinct summary of Minor's book is nigh impossible in such a short space. In brief, though, several ideas stood out:

- Her framework for teaching for social justice: collaborate, nurture, build, and reflect (Chapter 3)
- The structure for shared vision planning with colleagues that builds on each other's values and ideas regarding the optimal classroom learning environment (Chapter 4)
- The importance of agency for teachers as they work to design, with their students, learning spaces, experiences, and curricula that are immersed in joy (Chapters 5 & 7)

Teaching Fiercely is not a quick read but, instead, is a book to take your time with, to savor. It is a book that centers you, the reader. You must be willing and committed to digging deep into yourself (e.g., summoning your inner child, considering your own values, defining your purpose) and making time for reflection. While Minor guides your journey, providing lovely and vulnerable examples from her own teaching (successes and failures), as well as tools for planning and reflection, you must be willing to do the work, and you must recognize that the work cannot be accomplished quickly and without deep thought and meaningful action. **–SD**

About the Authors

Sophie Degener is an associate professor in Reading at National Louis University. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in literacy, and her research interests include early literacy, family literacy, and teacher education. Adelfio Garcia is a biliteracy consultant to Chicago Public Schools and Chicagoland school districts. He received his doctorate in Reading and Language from National Louis University, and his research interests are in the areas of biliteracy, translanguaging, family literacy, language development, and methods of teaching literacy in Spanish. Ivy Sitkoski teaches reading, library, and computers at Grass Lake Elementary School in Antioch and is also an adjunct professor at National Louis University. Her research interests include methods for teaching literacy as well as collaboration among reading specialists and speech language pathologists. Martin Mireles, our new co-author, is the District Instructional Coach–Biliteracy Specialist for Cicero District 99. All serve as school district consultants and are frequent presenters at local, state, national, and international literacy conferences. If you have comments about this column or suggestions of books to review, please send them along to Sophie Degener at sophie.degener@nl.edu.

Gavin Burkhart, “Sherbert the Festive Frog”

https://doi.org/10.33600/IRCJ.51.4.2023.66

Climate Justice Now

Evelyn Pollins, Kristine M. Schutz, and Rebecca Woodard with
Anna Bernhardsgruetter, Angie Fortin, Jade Guest, and Naybet Mendoza

About this Column

This column supports the development of urgent pedagogies about climate justice learning in elementary and middle school ELA classrooms. In each issue, we explore practical ways elementary teachers can engage young people to read, compose, learn about, and act on climate justice. In this issue's column, we offer educators text recommendations for book clubs that help children begin to think toward climate justice.

Middle-Grade Book Club Texts to Get Kids Thinking Toward Climate Justice

As literacy educators interested in learning more about climate justice and supporting teachers in designing and enacting climate pedagogy, we have found our own participation in book clubs to be an influential space for growing our own climate knowledge and considering how we might teach young people about environmental sustainability and climate justice through the English language arts (ELA). Kristine and Becca have shared our own climate-focused book club experiences working with teachers (see Schutz et al., 2022), as well as many examples of picturebooks that can support learning about climate justice (see Schutz & Woodard, 2023; Woodard & Schutz, 2022, 2023). For this issue, we collaborated with a graduate student/former elementary teacher (Evelyn) and preservice teachers (Anna, Angie, Jade, and Naybet) who have taken a literacy methods course with us in which we inquire into water justice to extend the idea of using book clubs with middle-grade novels to help young people deepen their understandings about climate justice through explorations of the three anchoring themes we elaborated on in the last three columns: (1) interconnectedness, (2) relationality, and (3) action.

Middle-Grade Book Clubs

Book clubs (also referred to as literature circles) have been used in classrooms to support young people's comprehension since at least the 1980s. The practice makes reading social, and research has shown that this supports several aspects of children's literacy learning from content comprehension (Klingner et al., 1998), to attitudes toward reading (Davis et al., 2001), to critical thinking (Brabham & Villaume, 2000). Book clubs have also been shown to support children's social-emotional learning by advancing gender equity in classrooms (Evans et al., 1997) and supporting children's growth in interpersonal skills (Venegas, 2019).

Book clubs and literature circles have taken on many forms in classrooms over the last 40 years. To clarify our own use of the term: when we refer to book clubs, we mean regular meetings of four to six students who are all reading the same book. Children prepare for these meetings by taking notes on their thinking as they read; and when they meet, the discussion is then directed by the students. Later in this column, we will outline some of the tips and practices that can support productive, meaningful discussions in book clubs.

One particularly helpful way to organize book clubs that allows children to talk both within and across clubs reading different texts is to identify a guiding question. Many teachers

like to use book clubs to help children better understand narrative elements like characterization, plot, and sensory details. Possible guiding questions for this kind of book club study might be

- How does the main character change over time and what do they learn?
- What does the main character learn about themself, relationships, and the world over the course of the book?

In our own literacy methods courses, we have designed or participated in book clubs in which we read a variety of #ownvoices middle grades texts driven by the guiding question, "What can I learn about myself and others through #ownvoices texts?" Other book clubs in the literacy block may be more interdisciplinary in nature, related to science or social studies learning, for example. Guiding questions for these kinds of inquiries might include the following:

- Why do people leave their homelands and what challenges do they face?
- Is technology helpful or harmful?
- How do the arts reflect or shape a culture?

The disciplinary focus and guiding question for your inquiry will determine the texts children select from when choosing their book clubs. A good guiding question is one students are interested in answering, can be answered in more than one way, and furthers everyone's understanding about the world, not just one particular book or set of books. The books should offer a variety of perspectives that all address your guiding question in some way.

Book Clubs that Teach Toward Climate Justice

In the previous three columns about picturebooks, Kristine and Becca looked at climate justice through three anchoring themes: (1) interconnectivity, (2) relationality, and (3) action. These themes can also be explored through middle-grade novels—our focus in this piece. Here, we draw from our own experiences designing and participating in book clubs about environmental/sustainability issues to share ideas for two book club units related to climate justice for middle-grade children. The first addresses climate justice more broadly, and the second focuses on water. In both cases, we want students to understand that they have power and agency when it comes to addressing the climate crisis. While small, everyday changes can be meaningful and powerful, the real changes that need to be made are systemic and will require large-scale community cooperation and changes in power. For these two book club unit suggestions, we will first share ideas about how we might use a number of middle-grade novels to explore different guiding questions, and then we will highlight a few of our favorite books with some more detailed summaries.

Book Club 1: What Is Our Role as Global Citizens in Protecting Our Planet?

We designed this guiding question to focus on issues of citizenship and local–global connections—which are both aspects of understanding our interconnectivity and relationality (as humans, as Americans, etc.). Building off the interest many children show for saving animals and their habitats, we curated books that show how animals—likable and not—affect ecosystems and how young people can support ecosystems and advocate for change when ecosystems are threatened. The books we selected to support the guiding question, "What is our role

as global citizens in protecting our planet?," feature a wide variety of perspectives, support students' development of their understanding of point of view, and support them in connecting their inquiry to actions they can take in their own lives. We have elaborated on some of the most thematically rich texts in the chart below.

Katherine Applegate's (2021) *Willodeen* (Charles Santoso, illus.) helps students see that even the most irritating and disgusting animals can play an important role in our ecosystems. Peter Brown's series beginning with *The Wild Robot* (2016) (followed by *The Wild Robot Escapes* [2020] and *The Wild Robot Protects* [2023]) initially takes humans out of the discussion altogether, showing readers how animals in an ecosystem must learn to adapt to changing conditions. *A Whale of the Wild* by Rosanne Parry (2021; Lindsay Moore, illus.) also takes an animal's point of view, teaching readers about orcas and our changing oceans as she tells the story of one whale family struggling to survive. All the stories show how animals, plants, water, and humans affect each other in profound ways.

Title/Cover	Summary
	***Willodeen* by Katherine Applegate** *Willodeen* starts off bracingly: main character Willodeen's parents and younger brother are killed in a wildfire in the first 20 pages, leaving Willodeen to live with two kindly older women. She spends her days roaming the forest near her home of Perchance, making notes about the plants and animals. The battered town depends on tourists who flock annually to see the adorable hummingbears who build bubble nests in the town's blue willows, but this year, in addition to the threat of more wildfires, the hummingbears don't seem to be appearing. *Willodeen's* imaginary elements have several parallels to our own world, allowing students to make connections in expansive and creative ways.
	***A Whale of the Wild* by Rosanne Parry** Told entirely from the perspective of a young orca learning to guide her pod to safe waters, *A Whale of the Wild* teaches readers about point of view, whale behavior, the effects that global warming and plastic waste have on oceans, and how the marginalization of Indigenous communities has hampered conservation efforts. The bulk of the novel is an adventure story, but informational material at the end gives readers background on orcas, other large ocean animals, ways humans affect ocean ecosystems, and action items to combat global warming and destruction of the ocean ecosystems.
	***The Unicorn Rescue Society: The Madre de Aguas of Cuba* by Adam Gidwitz and Emma Otheguy** In *The Madre de Aguas of Cuba*, Professor Fauna is on a mission. He is looking for real unicorns but also to find a way to rescue the Madre de Aguas, a water serpent. When Professor Fauna, Elliot, and Uchenna fly to Cuba to rescue the mysterious Madre de Aguas, their plane lands badly in the waters of Cuba, which are very contaminated. They will have to learn more about Cuba and explore Havana with Yoenis. While they learn about Cuba and their democracy, the Shmoke's brothers are in Cuba as well, dumping pink waste into the waters and sewers of Cuba. *The Madre de Aguas of Cuba* has a lot of extensive information about Cuba and their relationship with the U.S. as well as a touch of cultural legends that are believed in Cuba. It combines the real-world problems such as water contamination and the protection of water with fantasy in a creative, entertaining, and informative way.
	***The Last Beekeeper* by Pablo Cartaya** Cartaya's novel takes place in a futuristic, dystopian surveillance state where Yoli and her older sister Cami struggle to make ends meet and to pay for Yoli's schooling as their family strawberry farm produces less and less edible fruit with every harvest. The tiny pollinating drones that were supposed to be superior to the old method of pollination keep failing. Yoli's faith in technology and the society she lives in slowly falls away as she discovers her Abuela's extensive research on bees—and the secret bee colony she maintained in the woods. Yoli and the other farmers band together to bring back the natural ways that were used in farming, but they have to fight back against the technocratic government.

With more space to build a plot than a picturebook, we also appreciate the way several middle-grade novels build stories around how kids can affect change in their community. The books work to strike a balance between giving children agency and power while also recognizing that each child's actions alone will not solve the climate crisis. Many focus on saving animals and their habitats. Gidwitz and Otheguy's (2021) *The Unicorn Rescue Society: The Madre de Aguas of Cuba* (Hatem Aly, illus.), like *Willodeen*, uses imaginary animals to inspire readers to notice how the choices of humans affect animals' habitats and communities. Gidwitz and Otheguy also educate readers on mythical creatures from different cultures around the world, partnering with authors from different backgrounds to share stories from Mexico, Cuba, and Pakistan. Kids also work to save animals in Carl Hiaasen's book *Hoot*, first published in 2002, and he has since expanded his selection of books about Florida's Everglades. *Hoot* remains a powerful example of how people can stand up to corporations threatening nature. *The Leak*, a new graphic novel by Kate Reed Petty and Andrea Bell (illus.) (2021), shows readers how writing can be a powerful tool for change. Finally, *The Last Beekeeper* by Pablo Cartaya (2022) brings the interconnectivity theme to a story about a girl reviving the honeybee population after climate change has driven them to the brink of extinction. This selection is especially fruitful for book club choices because the wide variety of genres (fantasy series, realistic fiction/mystery, graphic novel, and dystopian fiction, respectively) give students lots of options.

Book Club 2: Why Is It Important to Protect Water, and How Do We Protect Water?

We also often organize book clubs with young people around narrower guiding questions that contribute toward understanding environmental sustainability (e.g., How is climate change affecting ecosystems around the world? What would our world be like without trees? What contributes to the "system" of ecosystems?) The texts in these types of book clubs offer a constrained choice for readers and allow clubs to co-construct deeper content knowledge about a specific topic. Committed to infusing a climate justice thread into their three literacy methods courses at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC), Kristine and Becca designed a unit in their intermediate grade methods courses in which preservice teachers explore the topic of water justice and learn to design and enact inquiry-driven, textually rich instruction (see Schutz & Woodard, 2022). As part of this unit, they incorporate book clubs about texts related to water justice guided by the question, "Why is it important to protect water, and how can we protect water?" There are wonderful books related to water protection and water justice for intermediate and middle school readers, many of which are also available as audiobooks.

During these book clubs, students have time to explore ideas in their chosen texts—*Healer of the Water Monster* by Brian Young (2021), *Flush* by Carl Hiaasen (2010), *The Unicorn Rescue Society: The Madre de Aguas of Cuba* by Gidwitz and Otheguy (2021), *Spark* by Mitch Johnson (2022), and *Thirst* by Varsha Bajaj (2022)—while simultaneously learning more about specific issues related to water justice and water protection (e.g., Indigenous advocacy, water scarcity, renewable energy, technological innovations). Summaries of a few of these texts can be found in the chart at the top of the next page. Students engage in multiple multimodal reading responses, including such forms as quadramas, comics, and sketchnotes, as they process and communicate their learning with others. Following the book clubs, students mix into Water Expert Groups with students from other book clubs, where they explore informational texts like articles and documentaries related to the guiding question. They bring their understandings from their book clubs to their Water Expert Groups as they further explore new topics.

Title/Cover	Summary
	***Healer of the Water Monster* by Brian Young** Trying to avoid spending time with his father's new girlfriend, Nathan decides to spend his summer on the Navajo reservation with Nali, his grandmother. Without running water, electricity, or cell service, it doesn't seem like there is much to do—that is, until Nathan encounters a dying water monster. The water monster is one of the Holy Beings from the Navajo Creation story. Nathan must undergo a series of trials to prove his worthiness and courage to help save his new friend. In an effort to encourage young readers to learn the Navajo language, author Brian Young incorporates Navajo words and phrases throughout the book.
	***Flush* by Carl Hiaasen** Like most of Carl Hiaasen's books, *Flush* is set in Florida and features both its ecological splendor and precarity. Convinced that the *Coral Queen* casino boat is dumping raw sewage into their local Florida Keys waterways, Noah's dad tries to sink it and ends up in jail. Humor and intrigue abound as Noah and his family work to get him out, expose the truth, and prevent further pollution of their beloved waters.
	***Spark* by Mitch Johnson** Outrage is sparked when a mysterious girl shows up in Little Village with a striking message. Following the sudden disappearance of his entire village, Ash heads north with the mysterious girl as they seek answers for the sudden withdrawal of life all around them. The lack of water and resources hinders their efforts while traveling through abandoned areas under the moonlit sky in search of sanctuary. It's not until they reach a massive prison wall, blocking off life as they know it, that secrets are unveiled. Mitch Johnson's play on words and descriptive imagery hooks students in and allows for them to make sense of and make connections with the world around them. Readers find themselves wondering if strength really determines who survives in this dystopian world.
	***Thirst* by Varsha Bajaj** *Thirst* is a fictional story that tackles real-world problems such as water scarcity. This book follows the main character, Minni, who lives in one of Mumbai's poorest regions where access to water is very limited. It wasn't until Minni witnessed thieves stealing water that she realized just how complex the issue of water scarcity really is. Despite the hardships, Minni, through her faith and courage, remains hopeful for the future. However, her optimism is challenged when she is faced with a life-changing decision that will not only affect her but the rest of Mumbai. Corruption, violence, inequity, and justice are some of the central themes of *Thirst*. Educators can incorporate these themes in their teachings to expand students' knowledge on real-world issues that exist in other countries and other cultures.

Preservice teachers found the book club part of the water inquiry unit to be "engaging" and shared that even through reading fiction texts, they deepened their knowledge about water and water protection. Anna, who read *Healer of the Water Monster* (Young, 2021), explained how the book "was a great introduction to the cultural significance of water [for] Indigenous people" and that, in spite of being a fiction text, it taught her book club members about "the real challenges that Indigenous people have faced and continue to face regarding water." Jade shared that while reading *Spark* by Mitch Johnson (2022), a story "that takes place in [a] dystopian type of future where resources are scarce and people are prisoners to an unjust system that disrupts the natural order of life," she identified many "similarities to our own world in regards to leadership and choices that affect society as a whole." Overall, she said that the "[w]ater book club was a great way to spark relevant conversations that could potentially inspire real change."

Some educators might think the process of cultivating a book club text set will be daunting. Rest assured that you have all you need to find these books—an Internet connection and

a device. We have found most of our books by scouring the Internet and book lists, and we watch out for new releases as we have noticed more climate-focused texts coming out every month. Over the years, we have also included other water justice-focused texts in our book clubs, some of which might feel too advanced for your readers but could certainly be used with support. These include *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park (2010), *The Light in the Lake* by Sarah R. Baughman (2020), *The Extraordinary Colors of Auden Dare* by Zillah Bethell (2018), and *Coral Reefs: Cities of the Ocean* by Maris Wicks (2016).

Tips for Powerful Book Clubs

Book clubs can be enriching, challenging, engaging, and, for many students, very fun! But truly productive talk about books does not just happen naturally. Here are some tips for helping your students both develop their critical reading and thinking skills while also honing important interpersonal skills.

Give Children True Choice

Children choose their book clubs based on interest, not on reading level. Some books will be more complex than others. Student interest and motivation are factors in reading comprehension, so the choice of book will support some children in reading more complex texts. The structure of book clubs also supports comprehension, and many students will be able to access more complex texts with the discussion support of their peers. However, some children will still require additional scaffolds to access their texts of choice. This can come in the form of audiobooks or buddy reading. It is important, though, that no student is prevented from reading the book of their choice because someone else deems that book "too easy" or "too hard" for them.

Give Students Agency

Now that they have chosen what they want to read, let the group set their agenda. How many pages will they read before their next meeting? How will they hold each other accountable to meeting those expectations? While student agency is a priority in this kind of work, we also recognize that teachers bring knowledge about children and the text they are reading that might be helpful in guiding children's reading. As children gather to make decisions about their goals and the kinds of questions they will ask to guide their reading, we recommend being present for these club conversations and contributing in ways that seem helpful—for example, asking questions like "How might we document our thinking this week? Do we think it's okay for kids to choose different methods?" that help participants consider factors they might not have come up with on their own. However, we stress that these decisions still must be student-driven.

Ditch the "Role Sheets"

Many teachers have used "role sheets" to give children specific jobs in a book club: discussion leader, "word detective," questioner . . . . While it can seem helpful to give children clear expectations and guidance, children have largely found these roles to be limiting and frustrating (Daniels, 2006). Rather than assigning specific tasks to students, teach lessons on how to take notes as they read—either on a book club record sheet or on post-its—and provide ongoing guidance and feedback on how students can build off of each other's ideas, ask questions, and request clarifications.

Always Be Teaching

Book clubs do not just magically work because children are excited and motivated. (Although that helps!) Throughout the year, support students'

book conversations with lessons on both reading and discussion strategies. Teachers can also provide targeted support for discussion groups by sharing a video of a successful portion of a book club discussion to the whole group and have students identify moves that made that discussion successful (a "fishbowl") or sitting in on book club meetings and coaching the group on discussion strategies. Teaching about specific reading strategies through think-alouds supports students by showing them how to come to book clubs with more thoughtful ideas and talking points to contribute. You can also invite children to observe their own work and guide inquiries on how to improve it. Have them listen to a recording or watch a video of a recent meeting. What questions were most productive? Were group members sharing equitably? Were there parts that were difficult? Why?

Remember Your Guiding Questions

You started this unit with a guiding question that united all of the texts. When this cycle of book clubs ends, invite students to share how their book gave them new perspectives on the guiding question. Through group presentations or a gallery walk, invite groups to notice where the books' ideas and themes intersected and how they changed their thinking. In future columns, we will share different ideas for reading responses that push students' thinking and engage them in true critical action in their communities.

Conclusion

Children are naturally curious about the world around them and their role in maintaining it. Curating sets of texts that children can use to delve deeper into the questions they have supports comprehension, engagement, and the transfer of knowledge to action. These rich, student-led discussions can be another tool for bringing climate justice education into the classroom.

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About the Authors

Evelyn Pollins is a doctoral student in Literacy, Language, and Culture at the University of Illinois Chicago and a former elementary teacher. Her own love of children's literature led her to studying how children negotiate identities as readers and how educators can support more expansive ideas of what it means to be a reader.

Kristine M. Schutz is a faculty member at the University of Illinois Chicago and a former dual language teacher. She conducts research on literacy teacher preparation that supports future elementary teachers in engaging in humanizing and disruptive literacy teaching.

Rebecca Woodard is a faculty member at the University of Illinois Chicago and a former elementary and middle school teacher. She researches writing pedagogy that recognizes teaching and learning as socially, culturally, and historically and politically situated.

Anna Bernhardsgruetter, Angie Fortin, Jade Guest, and Naybet Mendoza are undergraduates at the University of Illinois Chicago. They are preparing to be elementary teachers through UIC's BA Urban Education program.

Mission

The mission of the Illinois Reading Council is to provide support and leadership to educators as they promote and teach lifelong literacy.

Vision

The Illinois Reading Council advocates quality literacy opportunities for all learners and serves as a primary organization that provides educators at all levels access to research, materials, and methodologies to promote and teach lifelong literacy and learning. Support of an active, well-organized system of local and special interest councils and state committees provides a viable network for communication, exchange of information, and grassroots involvement of a diverse membership. The Illinois Reading Council's publications, special projects, conferences, and workshops stimulate the personal and professional growth of educators.

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A Warm wELLcome for Language Learners

Kristin Lems

About this Column

The Winter 2020 issue of the *Illinois Reading Council Journal* published a special issue focusing on "action for equity," with thoughtful articles and abundant family and classroom resources. This issue of the "wELLcome" column, which is dedicated to topics regarding English language learners (ELLs), continues in that same vein.

Word Choice: A Neglected but Key Skill for ELL Writers

Introduction

With all of the urgent, critical issues confronting education in general, and literacy practices in particular, why write a column on something as obscure as word choice? *Word choice* (sometimes called v*ocabulary choice* or *diction*) often drops to the bottom of the "To Do" list for English as a Second Language (ESL), English, bilingual, and language arts teachers. Even when teachers are able to focus on writing to begin with (writing development is often the first thing cut when lessons run over), teachers of English language learners (ELLs) are too preoccupied with teaching grammar, spelling, organization, syntax, genres, and building background knowledge to spend even a moment on word choice! Also, teachers may conflate teaching vocabulary words for reading comprehension with teaching students how to choose—and use—the best possible words in writing.

What Makes Good Writing?

The test of good writing is whether a reader understands it—and enjoys reading it. Without good writers, reading is no fun! The same thing that constitutes good writing for native speakers of English constitutes good writing for those learning English as a new language. However, writing in a new language, in this case, English, is considered the last, and hardest, set of skills to learn, and it takes the longest. It is the domain which caused the WIDA Consortium to raise the annual ACCESS test exit scores more than once because students were being exited with strong oracy skills, but weaker skills in reading and writing. Although the "literacy" composite score includes reading and writing, writing still predictably lags behind the other scores at all grade levels.

Writing is an abstract process in which we convey something to unseen readers through words alone. We do not have eye contact, hand gestures, or conversational fillers, and we cannot circle back and say something a different way. You might almost say (not entirely metaphorically) that written words are "set in stone." Writing is doubly abstract for ELLs because the general abstract process of writing gets even more abstract when the writer has to produce his or her own words, phrases, and sentences in a new language.

We always tell students to read their work aloud to see if it "sounds right," but that does not really work much beyond noticing missing words, problems with subject-verb agreement, or verb tense problems. It can be hard to know if something sounds right in a new language, especially because more formal writing is not meant to be spoken aloud. Although narrative stories are strongly related to oral storytelling, most writing after the early grades is not conversational and is

likely to involve academic language. In fact, by the time most ELLs enter classrooms conducted only in English, narrative or creative writing is often no longer in the curriculum, having been supplanted by book reports, science lab reports, comparison/contrast essays, argumentative essay writing, and the like.

Language skills, both in the WIDA standards and the Common Core State Standards, are often divided into two broad categories: (1) social language and (2) academic language. In the field of ESL and bilingual education, these are usually referred to as BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) language, which is mostly oral, and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) language, which is mostly written (Cummins, 1979, 1981). Estimates of how long it takes to become fully proficient in using academic language across all domains varies, but it may reach upwards of seven years (Thomas & Collier, 2002). That means a lot of ELLs may not achieve it even by the end of high school, and that means they may not be "college and career ready."

Academic Language Is Misunderstood

The phrase *academic language* is often misunderstood to include only things like "beakers" or "foreshadowing" or other content-specific words. Academic language is much more than that, and the words it encompasses are needed for most writing. These include words that can be found in the comprehensively researched *Academic Word List* (2023) and includes such versatile words as *issues*, *present*, *signifies*, *source*, *throughout*, and *unless*, just to name a few random selections (an excellent downloadable two-page summary of words on the *Academic Word List* can be found at the Colorin Colorado website: *https://www.colorincolorado.org*). Looking at these words, you can immediately surmise that they are not usually spoken aloud—oral language is structured differently from written language and uses less extensive vocabulary (Lems et al., 2023). At the same time, these words are very common in written English.

There are many genres of formal writing, and these have important and practical value. They include such tasks as creating reports, applying for jobs or for college, applying for a scholarship or entrance to a program, challenging a charge or a ticket, lodging a complaint, writing a tribute or obituary, communicating with a lawyer, or applying for benefits, to name only a few. Writing well definitely matters! Each genre has specific protocols and includes specific words and phrases, and that means that finding an appropriate word may not be the same as finding the best word. The habit of using a "good enough" word might be okay but not if students have college interests that might include journalism, engineering, law, medicine, or government—all of which require report writing and coherent, logical prose. Suddenly, we see that some of the important middle-class careers do, in fact, require strong writing with "just right" word choices. The habit of knowing and using the right words must begin well before college and, in fact, well before high school.

How Writing Is Taught Now

The way writing is taught in English grade-level classrooms, which often include ELLs, may overlook ELLs' specific writing needs. For example, a study of Calkin's *Units of Study for Writing* in a 4th-grade classroom (Westerlund & Besser, 2021) found that the main writing activities, drafting and free writing, did not provide enough explicit attention to language. Scaffolding was discouraged, and too many concepts were expected to be understood implicitly and not made explicit. Lems et al. (2023) call for explicit teaching of writing skills for ELLs:

> *ELLs need considerable teacher guidance. In a process writing model, ELLs may be left in a small group without guidance from an*

> *expert peer or adult. Teachers need to guide ELL writers in topic selection, sentence and paragraph structure, word choices, grammar, editing, spelling, and punctuation, in addition to overall cohesion and coherence. (p. 10)*

In fact, in one study (McCarthey et al., 2004), researchers took a look at ELL writing assignments for 4th- and 5th-grade ELLs in several programmatic settings and found that the writing tasks and requirements were both complicated and "fragmented." They said,

> *The students' school routines were quite complicated, as each interacted daily with several different teachers, and each setting entailed different tasks, expectations, and rules for governing interaction. As a result, students' views of writing at school were somewhat fragmented. Even when assignments ostensibly focused on authentic communication, the students did not always recognize the purpose or value. (p. 351)*

Word Choice in Two Writing Rubrics

The WIDA Consortium develops and maintains many of the standards used in the ESL field, including the ACCESS test and the language proficiency levels. In the *WIDA Model Writing Rubric Grades 1-12* (WIDA Consortium, 2023), writing is evaluated in three basic areas—(1) linguistic complexity, (2) vocabulary usage, and (3) language control—with each described at six levels of proficiency. At the highest level of "native like" proficiency in English, vocabulary usage is described as "Consistent use of just the right word in just the right place." That nuanced description has native-speaker bias in it ("I know it when I see it"), and it requires a lot of background knowledge to know how words are used in particular ways. What is "just right" anyway?

Word choice, which is called "diction" in some rubrics, is defined as "appropriateness and maturity in words and expressions" (National Writing Project [NWP], 2010, p. 3). In a 2010 comparative study of student writing done by teachers who were, or were not, trained in NWP professional development, student diction was significantly better in students whose teachers went through the training. Clearly, teacher engagement in writing creates better student writers, but for ELLs, these must be combined with explicit, systematic lessons in building skills, and one of these skills is word choice.

Six Ways to Teach Word Choice

Here are a few thoughts about making the implicit become explicit in the area of word choice. Of course, this will vary according to your teaching setting and the curriculum your district is using. Nevertheless, these activities can be incorporated in any setting, including the teaching of monolingual English students!

1. Make word choice part of your writing rubric. Instead of the generic "vocabulary" category, give some points for lively, evocative words and phrases—and let students know it is part of the grade.
2. Do class think-alouds that explicitly ponder word choices. Take suggestions from the class. Have kids look up the words that might be used in a certain place and discuss the nuances of meaning, not just whether they are appropriate. Even simple sentences about emotions can span a wide range of possible word choices.
3. Consider phrases and idioms instead of single words. Teach two-word verbs and idioms as part of vocabulary development. Teach figurative language, especially for verbs (Lems, 2018). The "best word" might be a phrase or an idiom or a metaphor.
4. When analyzing a text, take time to highlight the author's word choices. Talk about

what would have changed if the author had used a different word. For example, you could ask why "The cat crept along the ledge" is better than "The cat walked along the ledge."

5. Show examples of word choices that are vague, wordy, or unclear (NEVER use student writing as an example. Do I need to say that?) and explain why. You, the teacher, can model this, whether or not students can participate actively. You are the expert. That's why you're the teacher.
6. Use creative writing as the playground for rich word choices. Many students love creative writing but do not like expository writing. One consolation you can offer is to tell them that they can bring the treasure hunt for great words over from creative writing into expository writing, and that great words and phrases can liven up their report, research, or essay.

Just remember, "little things" can add up to very big things in writing, and good word choices can transform dreary writing into writing that is lucid and memorable. (I hope this column qualifies for the latter!)

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About the Author

Kristin Lems, EdD, is a professor in the ESL/Bilingual Education Endorsement program at National Louis University, where she has directed two five-year grants from the U.S. Department of Education in ESL teacher education. A two-time Fulbright Scholar, Lems' popular textbook, *Building Literacy with Multilingual Learners: Insights from Linguistics*, will be released in its 3rd edition by Guilford Press in December 2023, with new topics including gamification, online reading, videogaming, and visual literacy. Prepublication copies can be ordered on Amazon.

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The "Bates" Shop: Fishing for Primary Source Documents

David Bates

About this Column

Teachers have known for decades about the importance of using primary source documents to help students gain a more complete understanding of historical events. According to the Library of Congress website (*www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/whyuse.html*), "Primary sources provide a window into the past—unfiltered access to the records of artistic, social, scientific, and political thought and achievement during the specific period under study, produced by people who lived during that period." Thanks to resources such as the Library of Congress site, teachers have unprecedented access to thousands of documents. Using these resources brings history to life and, perhaps more importantly for *IRCJ* readers, exposes students to a variety of text structures and formats. In this column, examples for teachers to incorporate primary source documents with language arts will be provided.

The Importance of Multiple Perspectives – Part I: The Ghost Dance

In July 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978. This law requires Native American children in the foster system to be placed with Native American caretakers whenever possible. In Justice Neil Gorsuch's words, the law itself was a response to the "mass removal of Indian children from their families during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s by state officials and private parties" (as cited in Chemernisky, 2023). Along with recent reckonings regarding abuses at Indian boarding schools in both the U.S. and Canada, the very existence of the Indian Child Welfare Act (and the legal challenge to it) reminds us that the violent removal of Native Americans from their ancestral lands still echoes in American life today. Just as significantly, most Americans remain unaware of the extent of abuse endured by Native Americans.

How is this possible? How can an entire people be rendered invisible? An examination of primary sources surrounding the Ghost Dance and the Wounded Knee Massacre reveal how dominant narratives become ossified into conventional wisdom. This essay, the first in a two-part series, will examine selected primary sources from the Ghost Dance controversy of the 1880s and 1890s. Examining these sources serves several purposes. First, it emphasizes the critical importance of allowing historical subjects to speak for themselves, unmediated by popular misconceptions, conventional wisdom, or the influence of historians and publishers. This is particularly vital when discussing a group such as Native Americans who have not only been marginalized and brutalized, but also historically misrepresented for centuries. Second, it helps students appreciate the complexity and contingency of historical narrative. By examining the truth of the Ghost Dance through the eyes of Native Americans and sympathetic observers, and comparing it to the virulent myths peddled

by the U.S. government, students can gain an understanding of the context of the Wounded Knee Massacre (which will be covered in the next issue). Finally, it can spark a conversation regarding the nature of historical narrative itself as students can use primary sources to confront long-standing distortions and falsifications and, thus, consider how history is made or, as it were, mis-made.

By the 1880s, thousands of Native Americans had been forcibly moved onto reservations where conditions were grim. Extremes of weather, widespread crop failures, and the near-extinction of buffalo all combined with the federal government's (often deliberate) neglect to create a desperate life for many Native Americans, including the Lakota living on the Standing Rock and Pine Ridge Reservations in South Dakota (Warren, 2021). This desperation was well-known to the U.S. government. James McLaughlin (1890), the Indian Agent at the Pine Ridge Reservation, recorded Lakota grievances in a candid memo to his superiors. He noted that the Lakota were forced to travel miles to Indian Agency offices to obtain their rations, only to find that when they arrived, the promised rations were cut without warning or explanation—and, on at least one occasion, that the scales used to weigh food before distribution were rigged to cheat them. "The Indians are in half starved condition now," McLaughlin concluded, and "nearly all have lost faith in the Government."

Out of this desperation grew one of the most unique and fascinating religious movements in American history: the Ghost Dance. The Ghost Dance began in the late 1860s when a Paiute religious leader named Wodziwob prophesied that whites would soon disappear from the earth, leaving Native Americans to live in a utopian world. This movement briefly flared in California and Nevada but fizzled with Wodziwob's death in 1872 (Hall, 2017). By the 1880s, the prophecy was revived by another Paiute holy man born Quoitze Owalso, but best known as Wovoka. For much of his early adulthood, Wovoka lived with a white rancher named David Wilson, who bestowed upon the young man the European name of Jack Wilson and insisted he attend church (PBS, 2001). By the late 1880s, when he began making his own prophecies, Wovoka had infused the original Ghost Dance prophecy with his own understanding of Christianity:

> *When you get home you must make a dance to continue five days. Dance four successive nights, and the last night keep up the dance until the morning of the fifth day, when all must bathe in the river and then disperse to their homes. You must all do in the same way.*
>
> *I, Jack Wilson, love you all, and my heart is full of gladness for the gifts you have brought me. . . . [W]hen your friends die you must not cry. You must not hurt anybody or do harm to anyone. You must not fight. Do right always. It will give you satisfaction in life. . . . Do not tell the white people about this. Jesus is now upon the earth. He appears like a cloud. The dead are still alive again. I do not know when they will be here; maybe this fall or in the spring. When the time comes there will be no more sickness and everyone will be young again. Do not refuse to work for the whites and do not make any trouble with them until you leave them. When the earth shakes do not be afraid. It will not hurt you. (Mooney, 1896, p. 781)*

In reading Wovoka's so-called "Messiah Letter" with your students, several things are notable. The first, as mentioned, is his explicit integration of Christianity into traditional Native American religious traditions. The second is his explicit instruction to "not hurt anybody," "not fight," and "not refuse to work for the whites" or "make any trouble with them." You might ask your students to examine this prophecy and predict white Americans' reaction to it. As we will see, the government's response to the Ghost Dance was extraordinarily violent, especially given the prophecy's explicit calls for peace, calm, and cooperation. Ask your students why that reaction might have

occurred. What prejudices might have affected white attitudes? How might those prejudices have been enflamed by long-standing myths about Native Americans peddled by both the government and media?

In 1889, Lakota leader Kicking Bear (Mató Wanáĥtake) visited Wovoka in Nevada and brought the Ghost Dance back to his people at the Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota (Aktá Lakota Museum & Cultural Center, 2023). Here, the Ghost Dance was further transformed as it gained elements of the Lakota's most sacred religious rite, the Sun Dance. In this ritual, a young tree is felled and erected at the center of a circle, around which a large number of believers chant and dance (Warren, 2021). Specifics of the dance varied between tribes, and sometimes included drums, repeated phrases, or sacred items like feathers and flags (Hall, 2017).

As the Ghost Dance spread among the Lakota, their religious leaders had visions of their own. At a meeting of the Hunkpapa Sioux in 1890, Kicking Bear offered the following prophecy:

> *My brothers, I bring to you the promise of a day in which there will be no white man to lay his hand on the bridle of the Indian's horse; when the red men of the prairie will rule the world . . . . I bring you word from your fathers the ghosts, that they are now marching to join you, led by the Messiah who came once to live on earth with the white men, but was cast out and killed by them.*
>
> *On the evening of the fourth day, [we] were met by a man dressed like an Indian, but whose hair was long and glistening like the yellow money of the white man. . . . He led the way up a great ladder of small clouds, and we followed him up through an opening in the sky . . . . [We] were shown all the countries of the earth and the camping-grounds of our fathers since the beginning; all were there, the teepees, and the ghosts of our fathers, and great herds of buffalo, and a country that smiled because it was rich and the white man was not there. Then he whom we had followed showed us his hands and feet, and there were wounds in them which had been made by the whites when he went to them and they crucified him. And he told us that he was going to come again on earth, and this time he would remain and live with the Indians, who were his chosen people.*
>
> *And the Great Spirit spoke to us saying: "Take this message to my red children. . . . The earth is getting old, and I will make it new for my chosen people, the Indians, who are to inhabit it, and among them will be all those of their ancestors who have died, their fathers, mothers, brothers, cousins and wives—all those who hear my voice and my words through the tongues of my children. I will cover the earth with new soil to a depth of five times the height of a man, and under this new soil will be buried all the whites, and all the holes and the rotten places will be filled up. The new lands will be covered with sweet-grass and running water and trees, and herds of buffalo and ponies will stray over it, that my red children may eat and drink, hunt and rejoice. And the sea to the west I will fill up so that no ships may pass over it, and the*

Kicking Bear, Oglala Lakota, ca. 1846-1904 (Aktá Lakota Museum & Cultural Center, 2023)

other seas will I make impassable. . . . And while my children are dancing and making ready to join the ghosts, they shall have no fear of the white man, for I will take from the white man the secret of making gunpowder, and the powder they now have on hand will not burn when it is directed against the red people, my children, who know the songs and dances of the ghosts; but that powder which my children, the red men, have, will burn and kill when it is directed against the whites and used by those who believe. And if a red man dies at the hands of the whites while he is dancing, his spirit will only go to the end of the earth and there join the ghosts of his fathers and return to his friends next spring. Go then, my children, and tell these things to all the people and make all ready for the coming of the ghosts."

Then we were shown the dances and taught the songs that I am bringing to you, my brothers, and were led down the ladder of clouds by him who had taken us up. We found our horses and rode back to the railroad, the Messiah flying along in the air with us and teaching us the songs for the new dances. At the railroad he left us and told us to return to our people, and tell them, and all the people of the red nations, what we had seen; and he promised us that he would return to the clouds no more, but would remain at the end of the earth and lead the ghosts of our fathers to meet us when the next winter is passed.

Analyzing this extraordinary passage with your students reveals some similarities and some differences with Wovoka's prophecy. While it contains similarly explicit Christian imagery (most particularly the appearance of a Messiah complete with stigmata), it is also more specific, and more straightforwardly apocalyptic, than Wovoka's vision. As your students read this, ask them to compare the two visions and their potential impact on Native Americans. How might these inspire people? How might they give them hope? What specific grievances or difficulties does it address?

Understanding the Ghost Dance itself can be vital to this process. We are extraordinarily lucky to have evidence of these dances. James Mooney, a white ethnologist of Native American culture and life, traveled to the Plains in the 1880s and 1890s to document the Ghost Dance. One of the few sympathetic white voices in this era, Mooney attempted to dispel growing myths among white Americans that the Dance was a prelude to war. Mooney made audio recordings of some of the Dances, which still survive today as an incredible record of the period. These can be accessed at the Library of Congress website (Hall, 2017). For the more ambitious, Mooney's (1896) seminal book, *The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890*, contains detailed ethnographic information about the songs, dances, and religious traditions of a variety of tribes. The book is in the public domain, and a digitized version is available for free on the Internet Archive and through a variety of libraries. Together, these tools offer teachers a tremendous level of content to share with their students—content that allows them, as much as possible, to understand the Ghost Dance through the eyes of those who lived or (in the case of Mooney) witnessed it.

Analyzing the Ghost Dance Movement also involves understanding its roots. Like all spiritual movements in history, it had roots in the material conditions of its time. In a famous speech after the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890, Red Cloud, a major leader of the Oglala Lakota, recalled,

We felt we were mocked in our misery; we had no newspaper and no one to speak for us. Our rations were again reduced. You who eat three times a day and see your children well and happy around you cannot understand what a starving Indian feels! We were faint with hunger and maddened by despair. We held our dying children and felt their little bodies tremble as their soul went out and left only a dead weight in our hands. They were not very heavy but we were faint and the dead weighed

us down. There was no hope on earth. God seemed to have forgotten. Someone had been talking of the Son of God and said He had come. The people did not know; they did not care; they snatched at hope; they screamed like crazy people to Him for mercy; they caught at the promise they heard He had made.

The poignancy of these words—of Red Cloud's recollection of holding his dying children "as their soul went out and left only a dead weight in our hands"—is difficult to read. Yet Red Cloud's words are corroborated by other contemporaries. James Mooney (1896) argued that "The Ghost dance itself, in the form which it assumed among the Sioux, was only a symptom and expression of the real causes of dissatisfaction," namely, "broken promises and starvation" (p. 828).

Despite these facts, white Americans, and the U.S. government in particular, responded to the Ghost Dance with wild paranoia. The aforementioned McLaughlin (1890), despite his clear-eyed evaluation of the government's failures to provide for the Lakota, concluded that the Ghost Dance (which he derisively called "the 'Messiah' craze") was "inaugurated by [Lakota] leaders for the purpose of exciting the Indians, and as a cover for their meetings to arrange for an outbreak" (p. 1). By "outbreak," he meant war—in other words, the Ghost Dance was a ploy to conceal a massive conspiracy to spark a war with the U.S. Such paranoia quickly reached the halls of power. In 1883, Secretary of the Interior James Teller circulated a letter to Indian Agents serving on reservations. In it, he referred dismissively to "old heathenish dances, such as the sun-dance, scalp-dance, & c.," and demanded that they be "discontinued." His logic was as follows:

These feasts or dances are not social gatherings for the amusement of these people, but, on the contrary, are intended and calculated to stimulate the warlike passions of the young warriors of the tribe. At such feasts, the warrior recounts his deeds of daring, boasts of his inhumanity in the destruction of his enemies, and his treatment of the female captives, in language that ought to shock even a savage ear. The audience assents approvingly to his boasts of falsehood, deceit, theft, murder, and rape, and the young listener is informed that this and this only is the road to fame and renown. The result is the demoralization of the young, who are incited to emulate the wicked conduct of their elders.

What is most vital to emphasize to your students is that there was no evidence at the time, and none unearthed since, to substantiate either McLaughlin's or Teller's accusations. Indeed, an excellent activity for your students would be to compare what they have learned about the Ghost Dance—the prophecies of Wovoka and Kicking Bear, the testimony of Red Cloud, McLaughlin, and Mooney—to the truly extraordinary response of the federal government to the movement. Ask them how such a response could possibly have been provoked by the simple act of prophecy and dancing, and how it might be rooted in long-standing racism against Native Americans.

To further illuminate this point, you can examine popular newspapers, which had writers who expressed deep suspicion of the Ghost Dance and the motives behind it. As historian Louis S. Warren has put it, "after treating the Ghost Dance mostly as a curiosity, the press now . . . rivet[ed] a considerable portion of the nation's 63 million people with stories about imminent 'outbreaks' by bloodthirsty savages." He particularly notes the *New York Times*' claim that some 15,000 "fighting Sioux"—that is, male warriors—were massing for an attack, despite the fact that only 18,000 Lakota Sioux in total lived in the U.S., and scarcely 4,000 of them were followers of the Ghost Dance. Some outlets "even reported that thousands of armed Indians had surrounded the reservation and killed settlers and soldiers" (Warren, 2021). In the November 20, 1890, issue of Clarksville, Tennessee's *Tobacco-Leaf Chronicle*, a front-page headline reads, "MORE

SERIOUS – Indians Continue to Indulge in the Ghost Dance – Bloodshed the Only Thing That Will Stop Them" ("More Serious," 1890, p. 1). The most inflammatory statement, regarding "bloodshed," reputedly came from a source on the Pine Ridge Reservation and reveals a commonality in this coverage: the conviction that the Ghost Dance reveals some essentially violent character innate to Native Americans. Another report in the article claims "there is not a man in the agency who knows anything about Indian character who does not predict trouble" ("More Serious," 1890, p. 1).

The November 22, 1890, issue of the *Indianapolis Journal* reported that some Lakota at the Pine Ridge Reservation had threatened, "openly and above board" to "cut off the soldiers' ears and otherwise maim them." An official considered it "probable that six or eight thousand Indians may sweep down on the agency at any moment," and concluded that "Nothing but a marvel could save us from Custer's fate," referring to the annihilation of the 7th Cavalry at the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876, and hoped "that reinforcements would arrive before the red devils make their break." Others reported that "the wives and children of all the whites about the agency have left for safer points along the railroad" ("Indians Not Ready to Fight," 1890, p. 1).

Students can examine these spurious accounts themselves. The Library of Congress's collection of digitized historical newspapers, *Chronicling America*, contains a curated list of particularly notable Ghost Dance coverage ("Search Strategies & Selected Articles," n.d.). Moreover, a search of the database at *https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov* for the phrase "Ghost Dance" returns nearly 3,000 entries, even when limited to the years 1880 to 1891; thousands more articles from the 1890s, 1900s, and 1910s, which look retrospectively on the Dance, are also available. Urge students to find these articles on their own. Ask them to consider how the geographic location of the newspaper, its political/partisan affiliation, and its coverage of other issues might impact its coverage of the Ghost Dance. Once more, compare the newspaper coverage to the firsthand accounts provided by Native Americans themselves and ask how such distortions might have arisen, and what their impacts may have been.

A comparison of these primary sources offers unique insight into the Ghost Dance and its significance. By reading the words of Native Americans, students gain an appreciation for the complexity of history, particularly how it can conflict with traditional narratives, and how history can be deeply affected by biases and prejudices. The story does not end here, of course. The fear that white Americans felt about the Ghost Dance would soon erupt into the so-called Ghost Dance War, which, in turn, would culminate in one of the great tragedies of U.S. history: the Wounded Knee Massacre. In the next issue, I will discuss the various accounts of that tragedy, and how the contradictions between official government reports and Native American eyewitness accounts have long muddled the historical memory of this pivotal event.

Note from the Author

It is vital to note here that my description of James Mooney as "sympathetic" is relative. By the standards of his time, James Mooney was progressive in his attitudes toward Native Americans. Yet, he still used the word "outbreak" to refer to the Ghost Dance and the violent repression that ensued, and he repeatedly invoked the derogatory dichotomy of "savagery" and "civilization" to refer to Native Americans and whites, respectively. These changes in attitude—the act of balancing our modern distaste for Mooney's cultural chauvinism with our knowledge that he was, by 19th-century standards, enlightened and sensitive—can be a fruitful topic of conversation to have with students.

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About the Author

David Bates is an associate professor of History at Concordia University Chicago. Previously, he served as director of the Teaching with Primary Sources program at DePaul University and as an adjunct instructor in DePaul's College of Education. His research centers on issues of race and labor in U.S. history.

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Authors, Books, and Beyond

Amina Chaudhri

About this Column

This column includes book explorations, author conversations, and everything in between with a critical lens. **Editor's Note:** I am pleased to announce Amina Chaudhri as the new contributor of our "Authors, Books, and Beyond" column! Welcome Amina!

A Conversation with Barb Rosenstock

Barb Rosenstock is a prolific creator of nonfiction picturebooks. Her biographies document the accomplishments of well-known historical figures such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Claude Monet, and Joe DiMaggio, and less iconic, but equally worthy people such as Nek Chand and Alice Paul. A consistent feature in all her works is that she finds something about her subjects that has usually escaped public attention, and that makes her subjects more human than heroic. Her most recent book, *The Mystery of the Monarchs: How Kids, Teachers and Butterfly Fans Helped Fred and Norah Urquhart Track the Great Monarch Migration* (2022), chronicles the work of a husband-and-wife entomologist team and all the citizen scientists they recruited in the 50-year project to tag and track monarch butterflies. As a result of this project, we now know that the monarchs migrate 3,000 miles from Mexico to as far north as Minnesota, and that they play a crucial role in pollination and habitat maintenance. I spoke with Barb Rosenstock about *The Mystery of the Monarchs* and all that went into its creation.

Barb Rosenstock

Amina Chaudhri: The Mystery of the Monarchs *is so beautiful and so different. Would you call it a biography?*

Barb Rosenstock: In the publishing industry, it would be called a biography, but I don't think of it that way at all. Whenever there's more than one character, I can't call it a biography. On the other hand, it really is the story of Fred's life and what he did with it. Somewhere in the middle of this book I thought, this is really about the project, not so much about the person. It's about how many people it took and how long it took [to tag and track the monarch butterflies] and how science works.

AC: *What made you want to tell the story of the mystery of the monarchs?*

BR: I ran across a *National Geographic* article from 1976 in an antique store or a thrift shop,

and the cover is a picture of all these butterflies. I thought, “Who is that woman among the butterflies?” I did not buy the magazine that day (I did buy it later), [but] I went home and the image stuck with me. It reminded me of a time when I was a child, and the place I lived was more rural than suburban. There used to be monarch butterflies all over the place, but I never really knew anything about them.

AC: *So, the image stayed with you . . . .*

BR: Yeah, and I started researching . . . .

AC: *Is that how you get ideas for books? You are a prolific biographer. How does a topic catch your attention?*

BR: Something gets caught in my brain, like the fact that Ben Franklin invented swim fins, that makes me think, “What? What do you mean? How come?” Or that there’s a man in India who built a 40-acre sculpture garden out of recycled materials. That’s a lot of art! What would make someone do that? Monet painted on a boat! Why would he do that? I’ve seen Monet’s paintings all my life, and I never realized that he painted on a boat. I have this organic curiosity, so when I come across a strange fact about a person that I’ve never really thought about, I need to find out. I don’t start writing immediately. I kind of start to get familiar with or want to know more about the mindset of the person.

AC: *It sounds like there’s an element of serendipity or chance in your creative process. It’s not insignificant because you notice it, and it sits and simmers and then you decide it’s time for it to become a new book.*

BR: Right, and sometimes I’m halfway through the research before I decide it is going to be a book. There are plenty of things I have researched that did not end up as books. There’s also the “kid interest” aspect that I consider before I decide to continue with a book. And sometimes there’s no information—the factoid I heard that caught my attention was it! That’s how a book comes into being in the middle of the research—when I know I have something to say about the topic.

AC: *You sound like Fred—the curious Fred in* The Mystery of the Monarchs*: “He couldn’t ignore that buzzing march in his Toronto neighborhood any more than a butterfly could ignore a sweet flower” or you can ignore an interesting idea!*

BR: Yeah! Like with Houdini. He had a massive library! You just don’t think of Houdini and books in the same breath.

AC: The Mystery of the Monarchs *highlights not only the scientists involved, but the citizen scientists too. This is an unusual angle—a more collective one—than we typically see in picturebook biographies. Can you talk about that please?*

BR: I started the book as a traditional biography about Fred Urquhart. I think you can tell that from the first two or three pages. But the reason we know about the monarch migration is because of the work of many, many people. So it was more true to the story for me to talk about the science. We talk of individual scientists—Thomas Edison, Marie Curie, Lewis Latimer—but science almost never works that way. The more research I’ve done I’ve seen that it’s a complete collaboration.

AC: *Did you find evidence that gives as much credit to the team effort as you do in your book?*

BR: Oh absolutely. Fred and Norah had these Insect Migration Association newsletters, and they communicated with the members. If someone wrote a letter saying they wanted to help with the monarch, Norah would send them tags and kept track of their names and where they lived. They developed an entire community. And when they announced it [finding

the monarchs in Mexico], they said, "We have done it" not "I have done it." Fred had initially tried to involve other entomologists, but they were not interested in the topic of butterflies at all. So, in a way, he and Norah were forced to reach out to the general public.

AC: *This way of understanding of how work happens is so underestimated.*

BR: Right! When I do school visits, this question always comes up. I'll hold up my book and ask "How many people do you think worked on this book?" And the kids will guess, "Maybe six people?" And I'll tell them, "No, it's 200!" There are roughly 200 jobs in publishing that work on producing a picturebook. It's a huge team effort. There are people doing the type, the marketing, the design, the work in the factories where the pages are made, sales . . . . Kids literally have this image—they've told me—of me writing or typing, and then passing the pages to the artist! I think it's important for kids to know how much collaboration is involved. It's not my idea. It's *our* idea. It's not my book. It's *our* book.

The title of the *National Geographic* article was "Discovered: The Monarch's Mexican Haven," and I was conscious about not using that word, "discovered" because the people in the mountains in Mexico have always known about the monarchs. They were not discovered. Fred did not discover them. He figured out a way to track them so that, now, people in Mexico and North America and everywhere in between know about their route. People may have been asking the same questions: "Where do these come from? Where do they go?"

AC: *What a stroke of good luck and another example of the power of serendipity. Perhaps because of the lack of interest by the scientific community, this method caused the Urquharts to reach out. The impact of that must have been felt by the participants.*

BR: Fred and Norah have a loyal following, even now. I think they turned a lot of people onto science, realizing that observing the natural world was a worthwhile pursuit. In the book Fred stops to watch a dragonfly. Curiosity is a powerful thing that children possess—maybe Fred was late to school because of it and his teacher was not happy about it! But curiosity can be a powerful driver, even when it gets in the way of what's expected.

AC: *How does the audience—young readers—figure in your process?*

BR: Like I said, I always start with a spark in my own head—Monet on a boat? Vincent van Goh had insomnia? These ideas are a little weird. "Will a kid care?" is the question I ask myself most often throughout the process. Starting with the research, I think about what part of this story young readers will identify with. The person's childhood? Where it takes place? The qualities of the person? Their curiosity? Their fear? Being treated unfairly? Being frustrated? The trick I use is to take those familiar emotions or topics and guide them to the unfamiliar. [For example, in *Otis and Will Discover the Deep*, it] is about the feeling everyone has of being scared, to the invention that helped these two guys explore the deep ocean. I wonder about how a kid who has never seen the ocean will connect—that's the giant puzzle of it all, the thing that keeps me writing. There's so much that I leave out because I'm writing about people's jobs and much of that is about being worried about money! And kids don't really care about that. Van Gogh wasn't sure where his next meal would come from. That's not very kid-friendly. We can get lost in that as adults because there are things you find in the research that are really fascinating about how people struggle, but you have to take the adult-struggle out and figure out the struggle any kid can connect to.

AC: *That's important for teachers to know about and for them to communicate to their students how you as a writer must carefully select what information goes into the book and what gets left out. How powerful for kids to know that authors are thinking about them as they create books.*

BR: If I was a kid, knowing that authors were writing with me in mind—wow!

AC: *Readers would love to know about the collaborative process between you and the illustrator—Erika Meza, in particular—and/or other behind-the-scenes stories about the creation of picturebooks that we might not know about.*

BR: Erika and I have never met. I've never even heard her voice! It's fairly typical that authors and illustrators don't collaborate as such. We just go into the project blind. Illustrators get to read the story before they agree to work on it. I don't always know their work until we have been matched by the publisher. What I did with *Monarchs* is that I created a giant Google document, and I put in it all the photos and important parts of research that I had used. Erika wound up finding that useful. The publisher would send me Erika's sketches, and I would comment. In one of Erika's first sketches for a scene in which Fred is young, she drew a house with a two-car garage in the background. This was 1910. Nobody had two cars!

AC: *There's one spread that includes two framed portraits of Fred and Norah—one when they were young and one when they are older—and that so clearly captures the passage of time.*

BR: It was 50 years of work, and the illustration shows that. There's another example of how text and illustration inform each other. When Fred and Norah had figured out that the butterflies cross the southern border in Texas, I had written that it was Brownsville, but I didn't know *exactly* where, so I went back and tracked their entire trip. Fred had written in his notes, "We cross the border at Eagle Pass." Erika put that in the illustration.

AC: *You are an advocate for the use of nonfiction and biographies in the classroom. What is it about the genre that you want teachers to know and to be able to communicate/share with students?*

BR: I really can't think of anything more important than true life. Let's give kids truth in an accessible way. I think stories can do that, especially biographies. Nonfiction is essential because it's reflecting the world back to kids. It's essential for kids to know about the real world that they are experiencing and to think about how things came about. I know it sounds corny, but kids are going to inherit this world in all of its glorious messiness, and they should know about it before they become adults.

AC: *We (adults) don't need to have all the answers to kids' questions. There is a book for everything.*

BR: Right, and some things are too big for answers so we get more questions.

AC: *What are you working on now that we can look forward to?*

BR: My next book is about the Great Lakes. It doesn't have any people in it!

AC: *Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me about* The Mystery of the Monarchs*!*

You can read more about Barb, and find teaching guides of her books, on her website: *https://barbrosenstock.com*.

About the Author

Amina Chaudhri is Professor of Teacher Education at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago, where she teaches Children's Literature, Social Studies Methods, and Literacy courses.

IRC Announces 2023-2024 Grant Recipients

REGION 2

Council	Recipient	Amount	Project
CARA	Laura Mudd	$750	Literacy Through the Arts Summer Enrichment Program

REGION 3

Council	Recipient	Amount	Project
Fox Valley	Jenna Andriakos	$1,000	Building Tier 3 Comprehension with Wordless Picture Books
Fox Valley	Samantha Contreras	$750	Meg Medina Author Study
Prairie Area	Sarah Dumler	$600	Second Grade Skills for Success

REGION 4

Council	Recipient	Amount	Project
Black Hawk	Susie Smice	$500	Morning Coffee Club
Illinois Valley	Samantha Alvarado	$500	Chew and Chat

REGION 6

Council	Recipient	Amount	Project
Central Illinois	Pam Folger	$1,500	Literacy in Recovery

REGION 8

Council	Recipient	Amount	Project
National Road	Andrea Kinder	$800	Let's Read the 2024 Monarch Award Nominated Books
National Road	Amy Hewing	$400	Bluestem Books and Breakfast

REGION 9

Council	Recipient	Amount	Project
Southern Illinois	Pamela Turner	$1,500	Reading Inspires a Total Eclipse of the Mind!

REGION 10

Council	Recipient	Amount	Project
IRC	Steve Layne	$350	Book Chat Magic
SRL	Alan Holtz	$600	Media Center's Manga Madness 2023

The Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education
and
The Illinois Reading Council

STATIC STICK DECAL CONTEST

The Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education (ICARE) and the Illinois Reading Council (IRC) invite **YOU** to design a STATIC STICK DECAL that encourages children to read.

QUALIFICATIONS

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

GUIDELINES

Make your original design in the 4 inch square on the back of this sheet.
(Teachers may copy the application form as many times as needed.)

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.

You are limited to three colors plus black and white. The label with Illinois Reading Council and Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education must be on the STATIC STICK DECAL design but it may be moved from the location on the application form.

Complete the application form on the back of this sheet. Mail it with your design to:

Kathleen Sweeney
c/o Illinois Reading Council
1100 Beech Street
Building 8, Suite 2
Normal, IL 61761

ENTRIES MUST BE POSTMARKED NO LATER THAN JANUARY 15!

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.

TIPS

Don't forget – The work MUST BE ORIGINAL. You may not use any published trademark, cartoon, comic characters or computer-generated art.

Keep the art work simple and positive. Too much detail within the space provided may result in a smeared look when the cling is reproduced.

Fine line markers, pens and pencils work the best. Crayon is usually difficult to read. A white background provides a cleaner design.

Spelling must be standard and correct.

The Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education and The Illinois Reading Council

STATIC STICK DECAL CONTEST
APPLICATION

Illinois Reading Council
Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education

Name ______________________________

Grade ______________________ Age ______________________

Teacher's Name ______________________________

School ______________________________

School Address ______________________________

City ______________________ Zip ______________________

School Phone Number (with area code) ______________________________

Parent/Guardian's Name ______________________________

Home Address ______________________________

City ______________________ Zip ______________________

Home Phone Number (with area code) ______________________________

Mail entries no later than **January 15** to:

Kathleen Sweeney
c/o Illinois Reading Council
1100 Beech Street
Building 8, Suite 2
Normal, IL 61761

Request for Membership on IRC Standing and Special Committees

Please consider becoming more involved in the Illinois Reading Council. Members of the local reading councils may submit their own names for consideration. Below are brief descriptions of committee goals.

IRC STANDING COMMITTEES:

Budget, Finance, and Strategic Planning Committee - Prepare a yearly budget, report on the audit, and review dues structure. Work to establish a well-defined vision for the future of IRC.
Bylaws, Policies and Procedures Committee - Review and update the IRC bylaws and policies.
Conference Committee - Make plans for the annual conference of the council.
Membership Committee - Stimulate membership of ILA, state, local, and special interest councils.
Nominating Committee - Prepare a slate of candidates for IRC Vice President, Recording Secretary, and Treasurer.
Organization/Council Bylaws Committee - Act as liaison between ILA and local and special interest councils.

IRC SPECIAL COMMITTEES:

Advocacy Committee - Gather and disseminate information concerning legislation related to reading.
Book Club Committee - Host four virtual book clubs in the spring, summer, fall, and winter.
Educational Media Committee - Assist state, local, and special interest councils with newspapers in education and with the integration of technology and literacy.
Family Literacy Committee - Collect and disseminate information concerning adult, parent, and family literacy.
ILA Exemplary Reading Program Award Committee - Assist ILA in recognizing outstanding reading and language arts programs in Illinois schools.
Illinois Reads Committee - A yearly statewide project to encourage reading for all Illinois citizens.
International Projects Committee - Address issues, provide resources, and encourage others to become involved in literacy projects in third world countries.
IRC Literacy Support Grants Committee - Recommend financial grants for literacy projects.
Jerry Johns Reading Educator of the Year Award Committee - Recognize an outstanding teacher contributing to literacy.
Obama Literacy Fund Committee - Promote the importance of multicultural literature and focus on providing multicultural literature for teachers' use.
Prairie State Award Committee - Review nominations to select an outstanding Illinois children's/YA author.
Professional Learning - Share best practices in educational initiatives and effective professional development to support all grade levels and content areas.
Publicity and Publications Committee - Provide templates and support to IRC and local councils to promote membership and events. Provide guidance in creating and publishing IRC materials.
Sticker Design Contest Committee - Promote the Static Sticker Decal Contest that encourages children to read.

Please complete the information below and mail the form to:
Illinois Reading Council, 1100 Beech St, Building 8, Suite 2, Normal, IL 61761

I wish to be considered for membership on the following committee(s) ______________________

Name ______________________

Reading Council ______________________

Address ______________________

City ______________________ State ______________ Zip ______________

Telephone: Home ______________ School ______________ Email ______________

Calls for Contributions for Future Issues of the Illinois Reading Council Journal

The *Illinois Reading Council Journal* seeks manuscripts dealing with topics, issues, and events of interest to educators involved in literacy programs at all levels of education.

About The Review Process

The complete review process takes approximately 10 to 16 weeks. Upon receipt of a manuscript, an initial review will be conducted and feedback sent to the author. Manuscripts accepted for peer review will be evaluated by at least two reviewers who are uninformed as to the identity of the author. The editor will compile notes from the reviewers and send feedback to the author, including whether the article has been accepted for publication and any requests for revision. Manuscripts are evaluated in terms of interest, quality of writing, appropriate documentation of ideas, uniqueness, and needs of the journal. Research articles should include a clear description of the methodology and should be written in a style that will be readable by classroom teachers. The final decision for acceptance of manuscripts resides with the editor. Please review articles in the journal before submitting manuscripts for consideration. Any questions about the submission process should be directed to Roxanne Owens, *IRCJ* Editor, by e-mail at ircjournal@illinoisreadingcouncil.org.

Short Submissions

For each issue, short items such as original poems, cartoons, artwork, or personal anecdotes may appear throughout the journal. Such submissions should be one-half page to one page in length, double-spaced, and word-processed. Front and back cover art is also accepted. The editor selects these items.

If you have questions about the submission process, please e-mail Roxanne Owens, *IRCJ* Editor, at IRCJournal@illinoisreadingcouncil.org.

IRCJ Submission Guidelines

Article submissions should be eight to 25 double-spaced pages, including references. Please prepare and submit your manuscript consistent with the following guidelines.

Manuscript Submission Guidelines

NEW! You can now submit your article online at *http://illinoisreadingcouncil.org/ircjournalsubmission.html*:

- *Anonymize the Manuscript Text:* Remove any names or references to the author(s)and affiliated institutions (clearly marked placeholders may be employed, e.g., [Author Name]; [Name of Institution]).
- *Text Formatting:* In general, apply APA style guidelines (7th ed.) to your text (e.g., Times New Roman 12 point or a similar serif font, double spaced, 1-inch margins, etc.).
- *File Type:* Save the manuscript as a MS *Word* document .doc or docx. (MS *Word* is used to provide in-text comments and revisions, so please do not submit pdf., .pages or .rtf.)
- *File Name:* This should conform to the following format: article v1_{title of article}_mm-dd-yy

  Example: article v1_Reading is essential_5-10-20
- Download the cover letter template from the submission webpage and fill it out.
- Rename the cover letter file name as follows: cover_{title of article}_mm-dd-yy
- Example: cover_Reading is essential_5-10-20

Additional questions can be sent to

IRCJournal@illinoisreadingcouncil.org

1100 Beech Street
Building 8, Suite 2
Normal, IL 61761
Phone: (309) 454-1341
Fax: (309) 454-3512
E-mail: irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org
Website: www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org
Twitter: @ILReadCouncil #ircreads
Instagram: instagram.com/ilreadcouncil
Pinterest: pinterest.com/illinoisreading
and join us on Facebook!

2023-2024 Officers and Staff

President
Julie Hoffman
2507 Lemont
Springfield, IL 62704
president@illinoisreadingcouncil.org

President-Elect
Melissa Stinnett
4 Hickory Grove
Macomb, IL 61455
presidentelect@illinoisreadingcouncil.org

Vice President
Cindi Koudelka
117 S. First
Tonica, IL 61370
vicepresident@illinoisreadingcouncil.org

Secretary
Melissa Wheeler
1101 Lafayette Avenue
Mattoon, IL 61938
recordingsecretary@illinoisreadingcouncil.org

Past President
Leslie Forsman
717 Morgan Street
PO Box 255
Chapin, IL 62628
pastpresident@illinoisreadingcouncil.org

Treasurer
Diana Wilkie
421 Konen Avenue
Aurora, IL 60505
treasurer@illinoisreadingcouncil.org

ILA State Coordinator
Amy Davis
912 A Street
Charleston, IL 61920
ilastatecoordinator@illinoisreadingcouncil.org

Director of Membership
Donna Herman
13630 W. Dublin Drive
Homer Glen, IL 60491
membershipdirector@illinoisreadingcouncil.org

Executive Director
Carrie Sheridan
1100 Beech Street
Building 8, Suite 2
Normal, IL 61761
carrie@illinoisreadingcouncil.org

Editor of *Illinois Reading Council Journal*
Roxanne Owens
5038 W. Berteau
Chicago, IL 60641
ircjournal@illinoisreadingcouncil.org

Illinois Reading Council
Empowering Lives Through Literacy
IRC

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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

1 Please print or complete the form online.

Last Name ____________________ First Name ____________________ Middle Initial ______

Address ______________________________ E-mail ____________________

City ____________________ State ______ Zip __________ County __________

Home Phone ( ) ____________________ Bus. Phone ( ) ____________________

School Name ____________________ District ____________________ City ____________
or
Business/Institution ______________________________ City ____________

Are you a Preservice Teacher? _____ yes _____ no College/University ____________________

2 **List the council(s) you wish to join.**
When you join, you receive membership in the IRC, as well as membership in a local or special interest council. You must select at least one of the councils listed on the back.

3 **List the dues amount of each council you are joining.**
$50 - One year membership for IRC and one council. If you join more than one council, each additional council is $15.
$30 - Preservice Teacher membership and $5 for each additional council.

1.______________________________ ______________________________
2.______________________________ ______________________________
3.______________________________ ______________________________
4.______________________________ ______________________________

4 **Option to Purchase Print Journals.**
IRC Membership comes with online access to the *IRC Journal*. Current issues will also be sent by email quarterly to you. If you wish to purchase a print journal, it is an additional $20 per year.

Total Before Optional Print Journal ____________
Add $20 Fee for Print Journal ____________
TOTAL AMOUNT DUE ____________

5 **Return this form with payment to:**
Illinois Reading Council
ATTN: Membership Dept.
1100 Beech St, Building 8, Suite 2
Normal, IL 61761
Paying by credit card? A $2 service charge is added.
Join Online or Fax: 309-454-3512

Method of Payment: (Sorry, no P.O.'s accepted.) ☐ Check to IRC ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Discover ☐ American Express

Cardholder's Name ______________________________ Credit Card Expiration Date Mo. ___ Yr. ___

Cardholder's Address ______________________________ CVV Code __________

6 **In our continuing effort to provide meaningful services to our members, IRC requests the following information.**

Are you a member of the International Literacy Association (ILA)?
a.___ yes membership # ____________ expiration date ____________
b.___ no

Age
a. ___ 18-24
b. ___ 25-39
c. ___ 40-54
d. ___ 55 and over

Years in Education Profession
a. ___ 0-4
b. ___ 5-14
c. ___ 15-29
d. ___ 30 and over

Highest Degree Earned
a. ___ Bachelors
b. ___ Masters
c. ___ Doctorate

Present Position

Classroom Teacher:
a. ___ preschool
b. ___ K-3
c. ___ 4-6
d. ___ middle school/jr. high
e. ___ high school
f. ___ post Secondary

Administrator:
a. ___ curriculum/reading supervisor
b. ___ building principal
c. ___ superintendent
d. ___ other____________
____

Other:
a. ___ librarian
b. ___ parent
c. ___ special ed. teacher
d. ___ gifted/talented teacher
e. ___ Title I /remedial
f. ___ reading specialist
g. ___ retired

Professional Areas of Interest (Check 3)
a. ___ administration
b. ___ adult literacy
c. ___ affective reading
d. ___ assessment
e. ___ children's literature
f. ___ comprehension
g. ___ content area reading
h. ___ family literacy
i. ___ holistic reading
j. ___ multilingual/multicultural
k. ___ newspapers in education
l. ___ parents and reading
m. ___ reading for gifted students
n. ___ research
o. ___ study skills
p. ___ teacher education
q ___ technology in reading
r. ___ Title I/remedial reading
s. ___ young adult literature
t. ___ young authors/writing

Illinois Reading Council Membership

Locations of IRC Local & Special Interest Council Regions by Counties

The annual membership of $50 includes membership in the Illinois Reading Council **and** a local or special interest council. The annual preservice teacher membership is $30 for one who has not been certified in the teaching profession and is working toward an initial teaching certificate. Please select the council(s) you wish to join from the list below. Residence in any of the designated council counties you join is not required. If you join more than one local or special interest council at this time, each additional council is $15. Preservice teachers pay $5 for each additional council. IRC Membership comes with online access to the webinars, book clubs, *IRC Journal*, and more. The *IRC Journal* and other membership benefits will also be sent by email to you. If you wish to purchase a print journal, it is an additional $20 per year. Follow the steps on the front of this form.

REGION 1

___ **Northern Illinois Reading Council** - (Boone, DeKalb, Winnebago, Eastern Lee & Ogle)

___ **Northwestern Illinois Reading Council** - (Jo Daviess, Stephenson, Carroll)

___ **Sauk Valley Reading Council** - (Eastern Whiteside & Henry, Western Lee, Ogle, & Bureau)

___ **Starved Rock Reading Council** - (LaSalle, Grundy, Kendall, Livingston, Eastern Bureau)

REGION 2

___ **Chicago Area Reading Association (CARA)** - (Chicago Area - Cook County within the Chicago city limits)

___ **Lake Area Reading Council** - (Western Lake, McHenry, Northwestern Cook)

___ **Suburban Council of IRA (SCIRA)** - (Eastern Lake, Northern Cook)

REGION 3

___ **Fox Valley Reading Council** - (Kane)

___ **Prairie Area Reading Council** - (Western DuPage County)

___ **West Suburban Reading Council** - (DuPage County east of Route 83 and those parts of Cook County west of Austin Boulevard excluding all areas within the Chicago city limits)

REGION 4

___ **Black Hawk Reading Council** - (Rock Island, Mercer, Western Henry & Whiteside)

___ **Illinois Valley Reading Council** - (Stark, Putnam, Marshall, Peoria, Woodford, Tazewell, Eastern Fulton, Mason)

___ **Mississippi Valley Reading Council** - (Adams, Brown, Pike, Scott, Greene, Calhoun)

___ **Western Illinois Reading Council** - (Henderson, Warren, Knox, McDonough, Hancock, Schuyler, Western Fulton)

REGION 5

___ **South Suburban Reading Council** - (Those parts of Cook Co. bounded on west by Will-Cook Rd., north by 115th St., and/or Chicago City limits)

___ **Two Rivers Reading Council** - (Kankakee, Iroquois, Northern Ford)

___ **Will County Reading Council** - (Will)

REGION 6

___ **Central Illinois Reading Council** - (Logan, Menard, Cass, Morgan, Sangamon, Christian, Montgomery)

___ **Macon County Reading Council** - (Macon)

___ **MID-State Reading Council** - (McLean, DeWitt)

REGION 7

___ **East Central-EIU Reading Council** - (Moultrie, Shelby, Cumberland, Coles, Clark, Edgar, Douglas)

___ **Illini Reading Council** - (Champaign, Piatt, Southern Ford)

___ **Vermilion Valley Reading Council** - (Vermilion)

REGION 8

___ **Lewis and Clark Reading Council** - (Macoupin, Jersey, Madison, St. Clair, Monroe, Washington, Clinton)

___ **National Road Reading Council** - (Bond, Effingham, Fayette, Marion)

REGION 9

___ **South Eastern Reading Council** - (Lawrence, Richland, Crawford, Jasper, Edwards, Clay, Wabash, Wayne, White)

___ **Southern Illinois Reading Council** - (Jefferson, Randolph, Perry, Franklin, Williamson, Saline, Gallatin, Union, Johnson, Pope, Alexander, Hardin, Pulaski, Massac, Jackson, Hamilton)

REGION 10

___ **CIRP** - (College Instructors of Reading Professionals)

___ **ICARE** - (Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education)

___ **ILLC** - (Illinois Language and Literacy Council)

___ **SRL** - (Secondary Reading League)

6-23

IRC

Illinois Reading Council Journal

Illinois Reading Council
1100 Beech Street, Building 8, Suite 2
Normal, IL 61761

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