



News from

The Chicago Area Reading Association

*Supporting literacy learning
since 1957*

October 2018

Message from the President



Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of Chicago Area Reading Association, we would like to extend a “big thank you” to Dr. Jane Fleming, CPS Director of Literacy, for launching this year’s theme: Engagement, Equity, and Excellence. Dr. Fleming discussed the use of culturally relevant texts to increase literacy. Students need to read widely to open windows of knowledge. However, it is also important that our classroom libraries, mentor texts, and read-alouds offer opportunities to mirror the student population in our classrooms. Thank you to Dr. Mellodie Brown at Beethoven School for hosting the event.

You can register for our Fall Conference on November 13 at Northeastern Illinois University. Sara Ahmed, a former CPS teacher at Burley School, will present a dynamic, interactive workshop based on her two books: *Upstanders* and *Being the Change*. Much of her current thinking comes from an extensive literacy knowledge and her work throughout the years with Facing History. She presently teaches in Thailand and brings a unique perspective.

In the Spring, CARA will partner with Title 1, the Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education, and Lake Area Reading Council to sponsor a full day institute on May 16. Our featured speaker, Stephanie Harvey, is best described as the ultimate “teacher’s teacher”. Her latest books *Strategies 3* and *From Striving to Thriving* offer tons of short lessons on comprehension, collaboration, and inquiry.

Tell all your friends to join CARA! Don’t forget to check out Illinois Reads for great books and other resources by local authors and the Illinois Reading Council newsletter for many more great ideas.

Thank you,
Barbara Kent

Upcoming Events

October 17

Board of Directors Meeting
Burley School

November 3

Chicago Foundation for Education
Teacher Workshop
Chicago-Kent College of Law

November 7

Wired Wednesday Webinar with Anne Cassidy: Oral Language Groups: How to Help our Youngest Readers Before They are Ready for Guided Reading

November 10

IRC Board of Directors Meeting
Bloomington-Normal

November 13

5:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Being the Change with Sara Ahmed
Northeastern Illinois University Alumni Hall

November 15

Family Literacy Night at Ella Flagg Young School



Engagement → Equity → Excellence

Being the Change

with Sara Ahmed

Tuesday, November 13

5:00 – 8:00 pm

Northeastern Illinois University Alumni Hall

Co-sponsored by CARA and NEIU’s Goodwin College of Education

[Register now](#)



Launching the New Year with CARA!

September 27

We are so happy that Dr. Jane Fleming helped CARA launch its new year! A special thanks to LaVerne Wright, Assistant Principal of Beethoven School, for making all the arrangements for our launch! We also celebrated Dr. Gloria Pleasont's years of service and dedication to CARA and literacy learning. Many thanks to the vendors who provided wonderful new books for participants to browse and purchase – Heinemann, Grace Educational Resources, Usbourne Books, and Play in a Book!

Thanks to Laura St. John, our President Elect and Program Chair, for all her hard work in planning this event! The food was delicious, and the opportunities to network with other teachers were great!



Thanks to Dr. Fleming for a great presentation, the *Importance of Culturally Relevant Texts*



President Barbara Kent welcomes all to CARA's Welcome Back to School Celebration



Laura St. John chatting with Beethoven Principal Dr. Brown



Barbara Kent presents an Appreciation Plaque to LaVerne Wright, Assistant Principal of Beethoven, for hosting



CARA recognized Dr. Gloria Pleasont for her years of dedication to CARA and commitment to literacy learning



Director of Membership, Felicia Frazier, welcomed new members to CARA and IRC



President Elect Laura St. John presents an Appreciation Plaque to Dr. Fleming for a wonderful presentation



We closed the evening with some book browsing!

In an informal survey of participants following the evening, we asked, "What was your *aha* moment from Dr. Fleming's presentation?" The overwhelming response was, "multicultural ≠ culturally relevant." We are so grateful for Dr. Fleming's insight into selecting books that provide mirrors for our students!

If you have photos of CARA events to share, please send them to Joyce Jennings, joyce.jennings@comcast.net, so that we can include them future newsletters.



CARA at the IRC Conference

October 4-6

As we reflect on our most memorable moments of our three days in Peoria, our most enjoyable sessions were with authors sharing their books and the processes they used to create them. Barb Rosenstock, this year’s Prairie State Award winner for Excellence in Writing for Children, reminded us that history is more than facts – it’s the stories of peoples’ lives that we remember.

Gene Yang and Dan Santat – two prolific children’s and young adult authors – shared that their memories of reading in school were that they never saw anyone who looked like themselves in the books in their classrooms – a reminder that we need to constantly be aware of our book selections so should provide mirrors and windows for our students. Of special interest to us, was that these two authors experienced just what Jane had described to us September 27!

Dr. Tim Rasinski reminded us that fluency is still an under-addressed goal of reading achievement AND it is more than reading rate. Fluent readers read with expression and prosody. To get better, our students need to practice fluent reading – that means we need to make it fun – try poetry, paired reading, readers’ theater and songs!

<p>Thanks to CARA Board Member, Tontaneshia Jones for creating CARA’s Hall of Councils display board!</p>	<p>CARA Board Members, Kiwana Brown and Letitia Hinkle presented <i>Equity and Engagement in the Classroom</i></p>	<p>Jennifer Dixon, Principal of Palmer Elementary, Chicago accepts the ILA Exemplary Reading Program Award</p>	<p>ILA State Coordinator, April Flood, presents CARA’s IRC Council of Excellence Award to President Barbara Kent</p>
<p>Author Carole Boston Weatherford with IRC President Priscilla Dwyer</p>	<p>CARA Vice President and CIRP President Becky McTague, conducting the College Instructors of Reading Professionals meeting</p>	<p>Author Kwame Alexander reading from his new book, <i>Swing</i></p>	<p>Kate Roberts, author of <i>A Novel Approach</i>, presented a Saturday afternoon workshop</p>

Dr. Danny Brassell inspired us to share the joy of reading with our students. He reminded us to have tons of books accessible to our students, to put books that may be of interest to individual students in their hands – and say, “I thought you would love this book.” Don’t forget to share your own reading life with your students!

Thanks to all who helped to represent CARA at the IRC Conference! A special thanks to Lita McClinton, Secretary of CARA and our official Archivist, for the photos!



Welcome New Board Members!

In September, CARA welcomed two new members to its Board of Directors!



LaVerne Wright, Assistant Principal of Beethoven Elementary School, and 2017 Recipient of the Dr. Mattie Williams Award



Elwanda Butler, Assistant Principal at Earle Elementary School

Teacher Talk

from Sarah Mueller



Teacher Talk is a monthly column in the CARA Newsletter for sharing ideas or strategies with other teachers. This month's featured columnist is Sarah Mueller, a student at Roosevelt University. Thank you, Sarah, for sharing your ideas about working with parents!

A positive relationship between teachers and parents is essential. As educators, we need to make it a priority to communicate with parents and include them in the education of their child. A team effort between parents and teachers will create a loving and caring environment for a student to be successful in!

Here are some tips for working with parents:

- Communicate early and often with parents. Send notes or emails home to share good news about their child's progress. Call home when an exciting milestone is reached. We often make contact when behavior or academics are falling behind. Be sure to celebrate a student's successes with his/her parents!
- Send home a Pre-Parent Teacher Conference form to help parents gather their thoughts prior to meeting with you. This form can guide parents to think about their concerns, questions and comments and can serve as a place for them to take notes during the conference. Parents often feel overwhelmed during conference times; a simple questionnaire can put them more at ease and help them to feel prepared. Make up a form of your own or do an internet search to find one that works for your grade-level.
- Invite parents in to be a guest reader! Students LOVE when their parents are invited into their classrooms and parents enjoy connecting with their children in a fun and engaging way. Encourage parents to read aloud a favorite story to the class.
- Provide resources to parents as often as possible. Parents are eager for information on how to support their child at home. Send home emails or newsletters with suggestions for books to read, websites or learning apps to use at home and reading and math strategies to try with their child. Ideas for games to play together are welcome, as well. The extra planning and prep time are always worth it because parents appreciate the effort!
- Involve parents in the decisions being made about their child. Invite them in for a brief meeting or make a phone call to discuss intervention groups, support services or enrichment opportunities. Explain the benefits of including their child in a small group with the literacy specialist or an after-school coding club with the STEM teacher. Be receptive to a parent's input. Parents should feel heard and respected; they are as much a part of their child's educational journey as the teachers are.

By working together, we can make more connections and foster open and honest relationships between teachers and parents.

If you would like to share an idea or strategy, please send it to Joyce Jennings, joyce.jennings@comcast.net. All contributions are due the first Friday of each month.