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Spring 2013

Volume 41, Number 2

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Illinois Reading Council Journal

Volume 41, Number 2 Spring 2013

Table of Contents

1 **Editor's Page**
Kathy Barclay

Articles

3 **Viewpoints from the Field: Impressions from Teachers and Administrators on the Challenges and Successes of RTI Implementation in Illinois**
Wendy W. Fuchs and Bette S. Bergeron

13 **Illinois Authors + A Basket of Books = Mentor Texts for the 6 Traits of Writing**
Joyce R. Jeewek

22 **Lunch Bunch Book Clubs: A Model Fostering the Love of Reading**
Jenifer Rank

28 **Fostering Critical Thinking Skills: Strategies for Use with Intermediate Gifted Readers**
Jessica Kenney

Columns

40 **Navigating the Flood: Exploring Literature for Children and Young Adults: Preparing to Meet the Summer Reading Challenge**
Janet L. Pariza and Deborah Augsburger

48 **Terrific Teaching Tips: Tips for Close, Careful Reading**
Jan Miller Burkins and Kim Yaris, Guest Authors

58 **Parent Involvement in Reading: Linking Home and School to Address the Common Core State Standards in Reading**
Laurie Elish-Piper

62 **Professional Development: The Love of Reading: A Lifetime Goal**
Jennifer Berne, Sunday Cummins, Sophie Degener, and Ruth Quiroa

66 **Leadership in Reading: Building a Positive School Climate Utilizing the "Five Love Languages"**
Susan L. Massey with Nancy H. Gardner

72 **Research in Reading: Scripted Curriculum and Teacher Learning**
Melissa Stinnett

77 **Insights from Illinois Authors: A Conversation with Terri Murphy**
Ronda J. Brown

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

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Because the *IRCJ* serves as an open forum, its contents do not necessarily reflect or imply endorsement or advocacy by the Illinois Reading Council, its officers, or its members.

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About the Cover

The artwork for this issue was submitted by Tracy Jaconette's 5th- and 6th-grade students at the Spectrum Progressive School of Rockford. Tracy explains the assignment that generated the artwork on the cover in the following: "My students and I spent part of the fall semester learning about different story structures. The concepts covered included The Hero Cycle, Point of View, Symbolism, Theme, Mood, Story Arcs, Text and Illustrations, and Central Tensions and Resolutions. We read sample texts and discussed our own independent reading as we developed our understanding of literature. [The students] then had to come up with an illustration that tied these ideas together."

Tracy shared that her class's favorite new books were "*Wonderstruck* by Brian Selznick, *Sparrow Road* by Sheila O'Connor, both *Chains* and *Forge* by Laurie Halse Anderson, and, of course, [they] were all crazy for *The Hunger Games* series."

The following students' artwork is displayed on the cover:

Front Row: *Top Row (left to right):* Julia Baker, Anthony Buffington, and Nellie Conover-Crockett; *Middle Row (left to right):* Kaylee Whitenack, Gina Schneider, and John Coll; *Bottom Row (left to right):* Hannah Krenik and Natalie Deutsch

Back Cover: *Top Row (left to right):* Jack Gasparini and Paul Chikos; *Bottom Row (left to right):* Abby Foes and Leighton Barnes

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.

Editor's Page

Kathy Barclay, Editor

Like most of you, since the widespread adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), I have actively sought to build my knowledge of the standards through careful examination of a wide array of resources. I have attended conference presentations and professional development workshops, read professional texts and journal articles (some of which have been published in *IRCJ*), and availed myself of a plethora of online resources devoted to sharing information about the CCSS. One especially helpful resource is a blog written by Jan Burkins and Kim Yaris—*Burkins and Yaris Think Tank for the 21st Century* (*www.burkinsandyaris.com*). Daily posts inform and inspire readers in their quest to understand and implement the new standards. Jan and Kim graciously accepted our invitation to guest author the Terrific Teaching Tips column for this issue. I know you will find their column, "Tips for Close, Careful Reading," extremely beneficial. (Be sure to also check out Laurie Elish-Piper's column for ways to involve parents in the move toward achievement of the CCSS.)

While responding to the Common Core is important, there's certainly more on our collective agenda that deserves our careful professional consideration. In this issue of *IRCJ*, several authors share with us their ideas about RTI implementation in Illinois, using mentor texts to teach the 6 Traits of Writing, fostering a love of reading through "Lunch Bunch Book Clubs," and fostering critical thinking with intermediate gifted readers. You'll also find ideas for helping students meet the summer reading challenge, research about scripted reading curriculum, and more.

Thank you to our wonderful editorial staff and board, and to the many educators who continue to consider *IRCJ* as an outlet for your work. It is through your efforts that we are able to consistently provide high-quality professional readings on topics of educational significance.

Happy spring! Happy reading!

Kathy