

# Spot



# Light

Volume LXII, No. 2

ILA Honor Council - #35575

March 2020

## President's Message

NFRC Community:

By the time you read this, you will undoubtedly have engaged in preparatory efforts unlike anything else you have experienced in your lifetime. We are in uncharted waters, and navigating the best we can. I would like to suggest that we can be a resource for each other during this challenging time.

Teachers have been preparing "turnkey" lesson plans to cover uncertain periods of time. Discussions have been circulating around standardized testing, preventing regression in learning, and whether students will even be compliant with remote learning.

One of the factors we may take for granted is access to educational technology. In many districts, teachers must plan for students' lack of internet access. Even in more affluent districts, it cannot be assumed that students have supports at home to maintain academic progress they have made thus far in the school year.

There are compounding concerns around students' food insecurity, and how they will have their basic needs met while there is an interruption in our typical routines. Many students eat multiple meals at school throughout the day.

At local stores, people are frantically shopping where and when they can. Many basic items have evaporated from shelves. Uncertainty has led to fear and panic to stockpile food, medicine, and paper goods.

One thing is clear: we are all in this together. Wherever we fall in our mentality about the coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic, it is here and will affect our lives for the next indiscriminate period of time. Could it be weeks? Months? No one really knows.

Many are seeing this as an exploration of patience, kindness, and community. In terms of the NFRC, I think this is a great opportunity to support each other.

Literacy is the door to all information, knowledge, wisdom, escape, entertainment, discourse, debate, etc. If there was any time to support literacy, this would be it. Literacy can be a vital tool in our navigation of unfamiliar territory.

Books, articles, magazines, newspapers, blogs, and other media are our beacon of connectedness in a disconnected time. Books are treasures waiting to be disinterred. They take us to new worlds, allowing us to travel to different times and places. New ideas and perspectives await us in text, opening our minds and hearts in ways we didn't realize.

If you don't already have the Libby app – I recommend getting it for your phone or tablet. This allows you access to library materials (books and audiobooks) for free. I encourage you to explore your local library's resources. (I am currently listening to my all-time favorite - L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* - again on my Libby app!)



If you are over 13 years of age and a resident of New York, I also suggest a virtual library card through the New York Public Library. Their app is called *SimplyE* – it is free and connects you to a host of e-books and e-audiobooks.



The Niagara Frontier Reading Council's social media pages on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram will be providing ideas, tips, and tools you and your communities can use to support literacy skills and the enjoyment of reading and writing during this tenuous time. Please like, share, and follow the NFRC on all platforms you use!

While we engage in such unusual amounts of "social distancing," we hope you take this time to interact more with the NFRC community online. Keep us posted on what you are reading or writing, and let us know how to best support literacy for you.

I wish you and your families health and safety during this uncertain time. Thank you for your continued participation with our local literacy council. We are the NFRC!

Kirsten Burke Smith  
NFRC President, 2019-2020  
kirstenburkesmith@gmail.com

## Slow Reading

I had spent a lot of time in my Reading Teacher career encouraging students to increase their reading speed. Activities included timed readings (a whole set of workbooks!) and timed test prep. Increased speed of comprehension tended to show improved understanding of random selections given in standardized reading tests. It is also known that delivering information in a slow, deliberate fashion will be lost on an audience as ideas may not be processed quickly enough to conceptualize clear ideas.

But, as with everything educational, there is always a new or resurrected idea that is promoted with research and references behind it. Thus it is with an article entitled, “The Promise of slow Reading,” by Christy Wessel-Powell, et al, included in the February 2020 edition of Educational Leadership.

My thinking immediately went to the concept of purpose for reading. If one’s purpose is to enjoy a piece, speed isn’t as important a factor. Nor is speed a factor if deep understanding is the goal. The authors promoted mindful, immersive reading, an activity that allows contemplation and self-connection to literature. The suggestion is to practice such mindful reading as part of ongoing classroom instruction.

Five “intentions” to foster immersive reading in grades K-6 were listed:

- 1) **Prioritize Time.** It was suggested that there are better times during the day to practice slower, mindful reading. Although adults might find reading just before bed a good time to reflect on ideas from books, children might better immerse themselves in the morning. The teacher would have to make the scheduling decision for her class.
- 2) **Feel the Story.** Children would need to be encouraged to make emotional connections with books. Emotions such as joy, sadness, excitement, and even combinations of feelings should be discussed, and how the books could help children in their lives.
- 3) **Consider Environment.** The place to read is not always a desk. Suggestions include pillows, rugs, corners of rooms and small tents. Children can even discuss diverse locations where they could read at home.
- 4) **Invite Conversation and Interaction.** Encourage students to share titles with each other and discuss ideas together. Students should also share information with adults in the room and, of course, the adults can model this behavior.
- 5) **Honor Choice.** It has been found that choice is a major factor in motivation in reading. Students should be encouraged to choose books in which they are interested. Also, if a student finds he doesn’t like the book he is reading, he should be allowed to set it aside and get a different one.

The authors conclude with the following point:

“...slow reading has a multitude of benefits that can combat the onslaught of hurried and disconnected information bombarding children.”

My opinion: I do think reflective practice is a good thing for children. The deeper connection between a child’s life and ideas in a book can make reading a restorative factor when things seem difficult.

Jack Agugliaro



## NFRC Spring 2020 Event



### *LitCamp and Luncheon*

It's all about YOU: Your questions, concerns, and passions form the heart of our time together

- Brainstorm topics for discussion as a team
- Learn alongside peers from a variety of educational settings
- Connect with other educators through meaningful conversation
- Build relationships and professional networks
- Participate in a small group breakout session of your choice
- Earn 2 CTLE hours

Don't Forget! The NFRC gratefully accepts new school supplies for our international outreach - Children and Teen Services, in the Dominican Republic.



See [www.thenfrc.org](http://www.thenfrc.org) for more info on this and other NFRC outreach efforts

- Door Prizes!
- Raffles!
- Giveaways!

Come for the luncheon - Stay for the learning

Saturday April 25, 2020

11:00 am-2:00 pm

Medaille College, 18 Agassiz Circle, Buffalo NY  
14214

Register now at [www.thenfrc.org](http://www.thenfrc.org)

Registration Fee: \$20.00 for Non-Members

**MEMBERS  
ATTEND  
FREE!!!**

\*this event immediately follows our final Professional Book Discussion Group meeting of the year - see [www.thenfrc.org](http://www.thenfrc.org) for more info about this PD opportunity



The Niagara Frontier  
Reading Council  
presents

# Spring Literacy EdCamp 2020

SATURDAY 4/25/2020

MEDAILLE COLLEGE, BUFFALO, NY

9AM-2PM

9-11am- Prof. Book Discussion Group



11-11:30am - Comfort Break

11:30am-12:15pm - Lunch/NFRC Business

12:15-12:30pm - Brainstorming

12:30pm-1:30pm - Literacy Camp Breakout Sessions

1:30-2:00 - Debrief/Door Prizes



FREE FOR NFRC MEMBERS!  
REGISTRATION REQUIRED:  
[WWW.THENFRC.ORG](http://WWW.THENFRC.ORG)



## PROFESSIONAL BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

The final face-to-face meeting of the NFRC Professional Book Discussion Group's discussion will take place at Medaille College on April 25th immediately before the Spring event. The PBDG meeting, co-led by Jack Agugliaro and Lisa Insalaco, will run from 9am-11am, and will focus on Chapter 5 of What's the BEST that Could Happen? by Debbie Miller. All NFRC members are welcome to attend. Participants will receive two hours of CTLE credit.

Also, be sure to check out the online component of our book group which was launched this school year and is open to all members of the NFRC. You should have received an invitation as a member of our organization. If you did not, please contact [nfrcbookgroup19@gmail.com](mailto:nfrcbookgroup19@gmail.com).

Both facets of the NFRC Professional Book Discussion Group earn CTLE credits. Join our lively and insightful discussions in both platforms!

As always, we appreciate your feedback and suggestions on these perks to NFRC membership. As we begin to plan for next year's discussion groups, we are eager to hear from our members. Please let us know if you have a book you'd like to be considered for future discussion. Send along insights, comments, and suggestions regarding the PBDG and especially the online component as we plan for its second year. Let us know if you'd like to join the committee, too! Email Judy Bradbury at [judybradburywrites@gmail.com](mailto:judybradburywrites@gmail.com).

**Reminder! At the upcoming Spring Event, the NFRC will be collecting **new school supplies** and **children's books written in Spanish** for our International Outreach initiative in the Dominican Republic. Thanks in advance for your continuing support of NFRC International Outreach projects!**

Thanks,  
Judy Bradbury

Have you been putting off becoming a member of the Niagara Frontier Reading Council? Would you like to be a part of a robust community of literacy-minded professionals?

**Become a member today!**

See the pages in this newsletter for member info, or visit our website:

**thenfrc.org**

## Newsworthy Outreach

NFRC continues to support Habitat for Humanity Buffalo by presenting books and bookcases to all families with children during their house dedications. Habitat has a goal of 20 completed and dedicated houses in 2020! That's a lot of books!

Thank you for your membership, which underwrites a portion of the Outreach budget, and for your donations at our events.

An important reason we are involved with Habitat is that homeownership is significant in providing children with a stable home environment, often leading to higher school achievement. Habitat gives families “a hand up, not a hand out.” The families must attend classes on finances, maintenance, budgeting, etc., put in 400 hours of “sweat equity,” and pay their 0% mortgage on time. These funds provide the money for future home renovations or new-builds.

This latest house was built using funds from a program all the new local breweries started, so this house is dubbed “The House that Beer Built!”

Thank you for your support of NFRC and Habitat!

Susan E Busch  
Outreach Chairperson



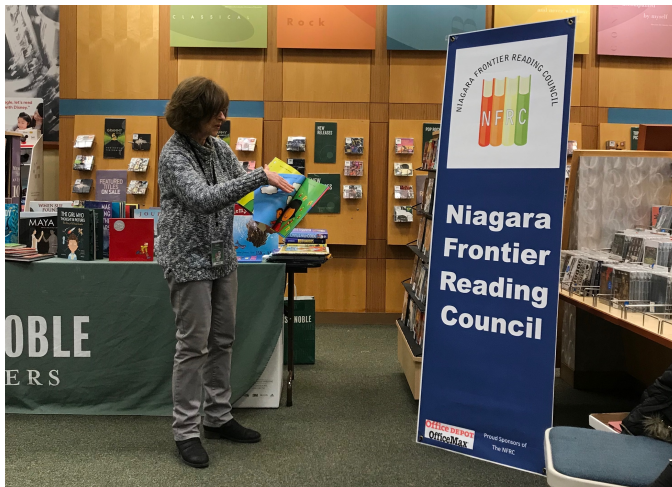
A recent Buffalo Habitat for Humanity home dedication (left), and a recipient of a NFRC bookshelf and home library (right).



## *Barnes & Noble Event*

On Saturday, January 18, 2020, NFRC held another “What’s New in Literature” Event, after the Professional Book Club meeting at Barnes and Noble. The B&N staff did phenomenal presentations of recently published literature for our students. Then, NFRC members presented books to assist us in Building Our Stacks. So many inspirational books were shared! Thanks to all who participated.

Susan E Busch  
Outreach Chairperson



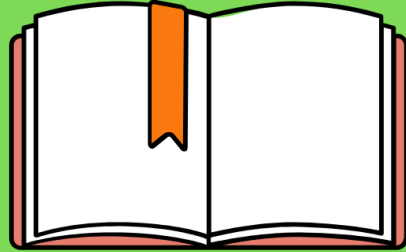
**Both Barnes  
and Noble  
staff  
presented at  
our B&N  
event!!**

## *North Tonawanda Middle School Share*

NTMS literacy initiatives to create a rich literacy school environment, submitted by Theresa Andrews, NTMS Reading Teacher:

1. Create a display of the books students read throughout the school year. The theme we used this year was "Color Your World with Books."
2. Reading teachers, ELA teachers, and principals all have a reading squad t-shirt and they wore them on literacy holidays
3. Monthly DEAR day in homeroom
4. Weekly independent reading time set aside in all classes
5. Special "themed" months on the school calendar:
  - Celebrated national Teentober the first week of October
    - **October 7 – Make a book mark in homeroom.** Each student was presented with a pre-cut bookmark in homeroom that they colored and decorated during this time.
    - **October 8 - #Shelfie Day.** A spot in hall by the library was set up for students to take pictures with their reading books, similar to a photo booth. Teachers were also welcome to take a photo!
    - **October 9 – Drop Everything and Read.** During an extended homeroom, the entire building stopped and read for 20 minutes. Students were told over announcements to bring their independent reading books to homeroom.
    - **October 10 – Caught you Reading.** Throughout the day if students were caught truly reading without being directed to by a teacher (ie: study halls, enrichment, lunch) they received a piece of candy. The librarian, reading teachers, counselors, principal and vice principal circulated throughout the day to "catch" students reading.
    - **Month Long October Activities**
      - Daily book recommendations by students on morning announcements.
      - Flag books in Library – 20 books in the library were flagged. The students did not know which ones were chosen. When a student checked out a flagged book they received a prize.
  - **November-** Book Drive: students, teachers, staff, local bookstores, and the NT community donated gently used/new young adult novels. We received hundreds of book donations.
  - **December-** "Give the Gift of Reading" event. We used the books from the book drive. Right before winter break, every NTMS student went home with 1 or 2 books to keep.
  - **February-** Teachers posted a pink heart on their door of a book they love. It could be their favorite childhood book, a book they read to their child, a book their favorite English or reading teacher shared with you in class, or just the best book you have ever read. Students were also given a heart and a hallway display was posted in every team hall of books students love.

*Editor's note:* More ideas were still being considered for the rest of the year, too! Feel free to share your ideas for future Spotlight issues! [j.a.agugliaro@gmail.com](mailto:j.a.agugliaro@gmail.com) —JA



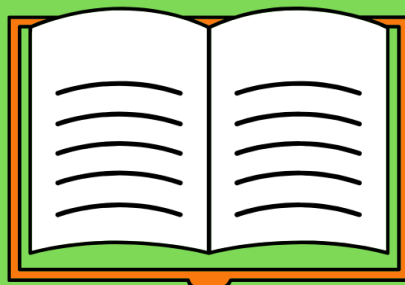
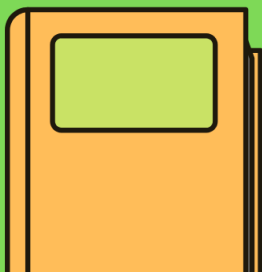
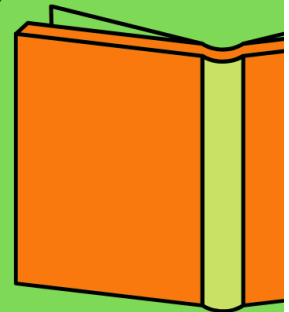
Applications Are Now Open for

# NYSRA Awards 2020



THE NEW YORK STATE READING ASSOCIATION  
OFFERS 11 DIFFERENT AWARDS AND MINI-GRANTS  
TO ITS MEMBERS.

For more info, visit:  
[nysreading.org/content/awards-and-grants](https://nysreading.org/content/awards-and-grants)



# Literacy House on the Niagara Frontier



with @NemoReads

Like a Butterfly  
Let a poem land on you  
long enough so you can see  
graceful words on vibrant wings  
secrets drawn in symmetry  
(reflecting you, reflecting me)

by Amy Ludwig VanDerwater

March can often be a long and dreary month, but one look at the calendar reminds us that spring is just around the corner. With this new season comes warmer temperatures, rainy days, and... [National Poetry Month!](#)

National Poetry Month is the largest literary celebration in the world. Every year, throughout the month of April, tens of millions of readers, students, K-12 teachers, libraries, booksellers, publishers, bloggers, and of course, poets, formally recognize the genre's vital place in our culture. This is a great opportunity to reinforce the importance of poetry with our children.

Students of any age can explore poetry and everyone can enjoy the beautiful language, imagery, and symbolism found in poems of all types. There are many ways for families to participate in [poetry-based activities](#) this coming month, have fun, and build reading and writing skills at the same time.

## *Literacy Link: The Power of Poetry*

According to poet Rita Dove, "poetry is language at its most distilled and most powerful." Because of this, poetry represents one of the best tools we have for teaching our students how to think about, understand, and analyze text. Poems help us make sense of the world and express ideas and feelings in ways that everyday language cannot. The playful rhythms, silly rhymes, and nonsensical words in poetry grab students' attention, giving them a chance to succeed with language by building vocabulary and playing around with words.

Because poetry reflects the sounds and patterns of language, it can reinforce spelling, phonics, and sentence structure. Poetry can also be read or listened to, so it is an effective tool for multiple learning styles. Poetry is more than just the words on the page; the genre itself invites multiple interpretations. To understand a poem, students must read closely, think critically, and make connections. Repeatedly reading poems promotes fluency – accuracy, rate, and expression – in all readers, but is especially powerful for those who struggle with literacy tasks.

## *NYS NG ELA Connection*

Poetry is integrated throughout the new Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards. A close look at the grade-level standards reveals that poetry, poetic language, and poetry terminology (e.g., stanza, sonnet) are specifically mentioned in all grades. But there's more to it than that. Those standards require that students make inferences, interpret words and phrases, determine the theme of a text, analyze the structure of a text and figure out how point of view shapes a text, among other things. Poems provide a perfect way to address these important skills both in the classroom and at home.



By simply reading and talking about a poem or two together, parents can easily help students work towards important literacy goals.



### *Think Poetry*

Looking for ways to help parents share poetry with their children? A good place to start is with popular song lyrics. Young children often are familiar with nursery rhymes set to music and other favorite classic children's songs. For older students, try a few pop, rock, or hip-hop songs. Lyrics often provide an accessible, familiar way to begin engaging with poetic forms. Watch people read and discuss poems they love in the [Favorite Poem Project](#). Celebrate [Poem in Your Pocket Day](#) on April 30, 2020 by selecting a poem, carrying it with you, and sharing it with others throughout the day at schools, bookstores, libraries, parks, workplaces, and on social media using #pocketpoem. Listen online to [poets reading their own poems](#) or visit [The Children's Poetry Archive](#), a UK site packed full of poet bios, recordings and poems ready to be explored.

### *Talking About Poems*

So, the family has picked out some poems to read, discovered a poet they enjoy, or has decided to celebrate National Poetry Month. What next? Here are some questions you can pass on to parents to get their poetry discussion going:

- What do you notice about the poem?
- What's the message of the poem?
- What comparisons does the author make? How are the things being compared alike?
- How are the sentences and stanzas connected?
- How are the images in the poem described?
- How does the poem make you feel? What causes that feeling?
- Why do you think the poet chose this title for the poem?

Here are some additional questions that specifically address how words and language are used in poetry:

- What word surprises you? Confuses you? Interests you?
- What word is most important in this poem?
- Which words may have multiple meanings?
- If the word \_\_\_\_ is removed, how does the poem change?

*Let's keep our families  
turning pages together...*



I am Mrs. Gina R. Niemel, Title 1 Literacy Specialist at Maple West Elementary School in Williamsville, currently reading and writing with kids every day and having a ball...

Follow me on Twitter @NemoReads





# NIAGARA FRONTIER READING COUNCIL

An ILA Honor Council

Council # 35575



## Annual Membership Application

September 1, 2019 - August 31, 2020

### Join/renew today! Membership privileges:

- \* Complimentary membership to the New York State Reading Association (NYSRA)
- \* Reduced pricing for NFRC Events, including the WNY Children's Book Expo Educator Event
- \* Digital delivery of the NFRC newsletter *The Spotlight*
- \* Reduced registration at NYSRA Annual Conference
- \* Professional Networking/Development/CTLE Credit
- \* Professional Book Discussion Group, including Online Book/Research Study – *new!*
- \* Mini-Grant Opportunities
- \* Local and International Community Outreach

Register online: [www.theNFRC.org](http://www.theNFRC.org)

Or, mail completed form with your check payable to NFRC to:

Carol Bush  
57 Minard St.  
Lockport, NY 14094

***Accepted: Paypal (online), checks, or money orders in U.S. funds only.***

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

School/District/University \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_ Level \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a current member of the International Literacy Association?  Yes / Member# \_\_\_\_\_  No

### *Please Make Appropriate Selections Below for Membership Level*

Member Category (Choose One)	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional	\$35
	<input type="checkbox"/> Student *must be full-time student and submit current student I.D.	\$15
	<input type="checkbox"/> First-Time Teaching Professional *must submit signed verification form	\$ Complimentary

Total Amount Due \$ \_\_\_\_\_



An ILA Honor Council

First-Year Teacher Complimentary Membership

First-Year Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

School District: \_\_\_\_\_

I acknowledge that the teacher listed above has been appointed to his/her first full-time position in this school district. I understand that in order to receive a complimentary membership to the Niagara Frontier Reading Council, the position must be a full-time probationary position. Long-term substitute teaching, changes in school districts, buildings, and/or grade levels are **not** included in this offer.

Administrator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Administrator's Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



An ILA Honor Council

Full-Time College Student Membership Rate

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Degree Program: \_\_\_\_\_

College/University: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*I acknowledge that the student named above is a full-time college student at the college or university, named above, where I teach.

Instructor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor's Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please note:** In addition to this signed letter, the full-time college student must include a copy of his/her current and valid college identification card to be eligible for the student membership rate.

## The NFRC Mission

The mission of The Niagara Frontier Reading Council is to promote literacy education, encourage professional development and provide community service that fosters literacy within Western New York. We hope to instill a passion for lifelong learning and to encourage readers to build a vision of the future.

### Featured Goals

- To encourage understanding of the reading/writing/listening/speaking process
- To serve our community as a resource on literacy issues
- To keep an awareness of current research in the field of reading

### About the NFRC

- A non-profit educational organization chartered by the International Reading Association in 1958.
- Dedicated to professional development and enhancement of literacy in our community.
- Involved in professional issues affecting literacy.
- Awarded Honor Council status.

### NFRC Officers for 2019-2020:

President - Kirsten Burke Smith  
Vice President for Programming - Gina Rose Niemel  
Treasurer – Susan Busch  
Recording Secretary - Jack Agugliaro  
Director of Membership - Carol Bush  
Corresponding Secretary – Heidi Clarke

### Board Members 2018-2020 Term:

Judy Bradbury  
Lindsey Buck  
Patricia Oliphant

### Board Members 2019 - 2021

Elizabeth Bystrak  
Sierra Chojnacki  
Michele Montoro  
Mary Beth Scumaci

### Committee Chairpersons 2019-2020

Council Awards Chair – Elizabeth Bystrak  
CTLE/Mini Grants Chair - Patricia Oliphant  
Fall Event Chair/ CTLE Professional Development Chair - Judy Bradbury  
Finance / Budget Chair – Kirsten Burke Smith and Pamela Garabedian  
History Chair- Pamela Garabedian  
Nominating Chair - BOD  
Outreach Chair - Susan Busch  
Spotlight Editor - Jack Agugliaro  
Web Co-Designer & Editor - Kristin Riley  
Web Co-Designer & Editor - Mary Beth Scumaci  
Liaison Chair - Jack Agugliaro



We want YOU!  
Become more involved with the NFRC.  
For more info, please contact:  
kirstenburkesmith@gmail.com

[www.thenfrc.org](http://www.thenfrc.org)