

# Spotlight

Volume LXIII, No. 3  
ILA Honor Council - #35575  
May 2021

## President's Message

Congratulations to You!

I am pleased to announce that the Niagara Frontier Reading Council has been awarded the International Literacy Association (ILA) Honor Award for exceptional service to literacy and the community! The award was presented at a recent meeting of the New York State Reading Association (NYSRA). This is the 17<sup>th</sup> consecutive year that the NFRC has received this award.

This award recognizes the professional development opportunities we provide for our members. One of the NFRC's popular professional development opportunities is the Professional Book Discussion Group. This was the eighth year of the PBDG. We met via Zoom on two occasions to share ideas and insights on *The Distance Learning Playbook* (Fisher, Frey, Hattie, 2020). Earlier in the year, we zoomed on *We Got This* (Minor, 2019). These discussions provided support to educators and caregivers as they navigated the unique challenges of this school year. I'm looking forward to Year 9 of our PBDG!

The Honor Award also recognizes the NFRC's commitment to promoting literacy in the community. We have several ongoing outreach programs, including

installing and maintaining Little Free Libraries throughout the Western New York area, and donating a basket of books to families at Habitat for Humanity home dedications. Past programs include book giveaways at the Buffalo Zoo and a partnership with Oishei Women and Children's Hospital of Buffalo. You can read more about these wonderful programs on our website, [theNFRC.org](http://theNFRC.org).

As President of the NFRC, I thank all who made these events and programs possible. Thank you for volunteering your time and energy to organize these events. I appreciate each of you, and the Board Members and Officers, for your efforts, big or small. Thank you also to our members who attended and continue to support this organization by joining the NFRC. This is your honor. Kudos to you!

Heidi Clarke, NFRC President



# NFRC 2021-2022 Slate of Officers & Board Members

## NFRC Officers 2021-2022

- Co-President - Heidi Clarke
- Co-President for Programming - Dr. Ashlee Campbell
- Secretary - Jack Agugliaro
- Treasurer - Dr. John Strong\*\*
- Director of Membership - Carol Bush

## Board Members 2020 - 2022

- Judy Bradbury
- Pamela Garabedian
- Patty Oliphant
- Lindsey Buck

## Board Members 2021 - 2023

- Elizabeth Bystrak
- Dr. Tiffany Karalis-Noel
- Christine Woodcock
- Mary Beth Scumaci

## Chairperson Positions

**Editor of Spotlight-** Jack Agugliaro

**Web Designer & Editor-** Mary Beth Scumaci

### **Social Media Chair-**

**Council Awards Chair-** Elizabeth Bystrak

**Professional Development Chair-** Judy Bradbury

**Outreach Chair-** Pamela Garabedian; **Co-Chair:** Judy Bradbury to oversee Little Free Libraries project

**CTLE Chair/ Mini Grants Chair-** Patricia Oliphant

### **Finance / Budget Chair-**

**Nominating Chair - Comprised of the Board**

**Liaison Chair-** Jack Agugliaro

**Audit Chair -** Betsy Marshall

**Western Regional Director 2018-21, NYSRA -** Cherie Gerych



# NFRC Professional Book Discussion Group

## Year 8 Recap & Request for Input

Year 8 of the NFRC Professional Book Discussion Group was entirely virtual. We enjoyed participation with colleagues across the state as we discussed *We Got This: Equity, Access, and the Quest To Be Who Our Students Need Us To Be* by Cornelius Minor and *The Distance Learning Playbook* and challenges, concerns, and triumphs educators, students, and parents faced during this unprecedented school year. We benefited from learning together, sharing insights, and even laughing. And there were prizes!

Thank you to those who offered their time and talents serving on the committee. Your input and dedication is deeply appreciated. Thanks especially to Ashlee Campbell for arranging for the Zoom meetings and overseeing registrations; Patty Oliphant for creating our colorful flyers and managing the prizes; Patty, Heidi Clarke, and Jack Agugliaro for leading meetings; and the balance of the committee for offering valuable input and support.

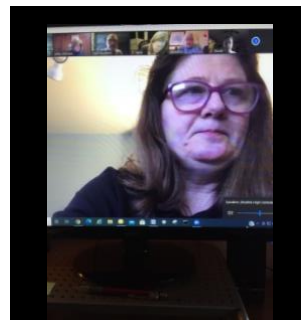
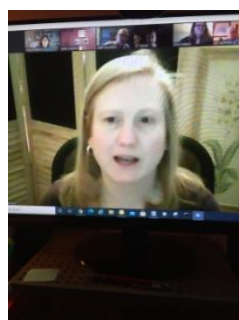
We look forward to another year of NFRC professional book discussions. Please let us know if you have a book to suggest or any recommendations you care to offer. Did you enjoy the virtual platform? Do you prefer it? Would you like to see a mix of virtual and in-person meetings when that becomes a safe option? Would you like to join the Professional Book Discussion Group committee? Are you interested in leading a session?

We welcome input from our members. Please send your thoughts and comments my way!

Happy summer to all,

Judy Bradbury

[judybradburywrites@gmail.com](mailto:judybradburywrites@gmail.com).



Jack, Heidi and Lisa during remote PBDG discussion

## Books for Habitat

Almost every month, Habitat for Humanity Buffalo dedicates two new or rehabbed homes, and low income families become home owners. Many of these families are refugees and the dream of owning a home seems out of reach. NFRC attends every dedication where there are young children and presents them with a basket of books, along with our good wishes for a better life in their new home. Part of NFRC's mission is outreach and, thanks to all of our members, we will enter our 8<sup>th</sup> year of this partnership with Habitat. – Susan Busch



### **The Matthew Effect in a COVID World** by Lisa Insalaco

In a recent training I attended, the presenter talked about the research of the “Matthew Effect.” It had been a long time, since graduate school I suppose, that I had even thought about it and what it really means. Those words daunted me enough to pause. How will the “Matthew Effect” change our students in the COVID world?

What is the “Matthew Effect”? Robert K Merton, sociologist researcher, coined the term in 1968 based upon the Bible passage from Matthew 25:29. “The old saying does often seem to hold true,” he says, “the rich get richer while the poor get poorer creating a widening gap between those who have more and those who have less.” Though one might think of this as “the rich get richer and the poor get poorer,” the “Matthew Effect” goes far beyond the doorway of economics. It goes further than barriers of ethnicity, gender, or race.

“The Matthew Effect” reaches deeply into education, all education. Research Psychologist, Keith Stanovich, (Reading Research Quarterly, 1986, “The Matthew Effects in Reading”) applied the same described phenomenon on how new readers acquire the skills to read. “Early success in reading skills usually leads to later successes in reading as the learner grows. While struggling to read before grade three may be indicative of life long problems of learning new skills.” Those who read will improve at a much faster pace than those who develop poor reading skills.

Students struggling to learn to read in a COVID world have missed big gaps of developmental time in education, time off task of reading and writing, missed enriched experiences of language development, and lost opportunities of building background knowledge and enrichment. As teachers we are working at a feverish pace to try to make the best of every second in a hybrid classroom, make the most dynamic virtual or recorded lessons, and we worry ourselves silly by asking, “Is it enough?” The truth is, we cannot make up for time lost. It is gone. Just like every socio-economic indicator, COVID has exposed our educational systems for what they are. There have always been disadvantaged gaps in impoverished schools, a disparity in technology access in student homes, and deserts of print access among those who struggle to pay for basic necessities of life. COVID has just exacerbated those educational barriers.

So then, what can be done? As educators, we have an obligation to help these students through this COVID world. Research is being done as we speak. Politicians want students to take standardized tests to measure how much has been lost. Administrators are trying to plan for the coming year. Do we retain students? What about those students who just did not participate or engage? You can be sure that state level decisions will be made, not by what might be best for children, but by the funding made available, if any.

Research has proven those students who read an extra 5-10 minutes each day will read 282,000 words per year. That usually puts them near the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile. Those who read an extra 20 plus minutes each day read 1,800,000 words per year and this puts them near the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile. (Nagy & Herman, 1987) What about those kids who have done nothing? Nada. Zip. Zilch. Certainly, the rich literacy child will get richer, even with a loss of time in school. The poor literacy child, those with little participation during education in a COVID world, will be the “Matthew” casualties unless their path of engagement changes as soon as possible.

In the book Outliers: The Story of Success, by Malcom Gladwell (2008), he explains how the Beatles became one of the most successful musical bands in history, how Bill Gates achieved his wealth, and how some people seem to achieve the highest realms of success. His thesis asserts that vast amounts of TIME ON TASK brings the average person to the super achiever, or an outlier. His hypothesis of the “10,000 Hour Rule,” argues that, “anyone can become a great achiever by allotting thousands of hours to become successful.” Though we are not advocating for 10,000 hours, the amount of time on task and true engagement in the subject matter of anything we might teach is what will bring us through.

We cannot make up for the time lost in a COVID world, but going forward, meaningful quality time on task, both at school and in a child’s home, will make all of the difference.



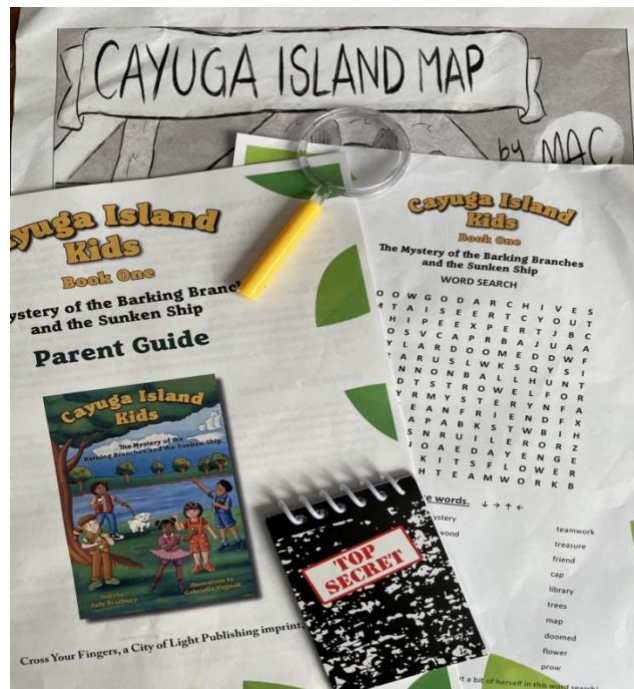
## Cayuga Island Kids Series Launch Event

On May 8<sup>th</sup> a launch event was held for the first book in the Cayuga Island Kids chapter book series, *The Mystery of the Barking Branches and the Sunken Ship*, written by NFRC board member Judy Bradbury. It was held at the setting of the series: Jayne Park on Cayuga Island in Niagara Falls.

At the series launch, children followed a copy of the map found at the front of each of the books in the series to hunt across the park for characters featured in the books. They received giveaways from each character, including a magnifying glass, a notebook, a word search, and a bookmark, and were also able to view the actual cannonball that is at the center of the story. Judy was available to personalize copies of the book. (The kids were even able to choose the color ink they wanted her to use.) An educator guide, a parent guide, and a character sketch were also available to adults and can be found free for download on Judy's website.

Congratulations to Judy!





(PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER SCUMACI)



## **From Educational Leadership, May 2021, *From Research to Practice*:**

The recent issue of EL included an article by John Hattie, a professor at the University of Melbourne, “What Can We Learn from COVID Era Instruction? His points nicely blended with a quote I referenced in our last professional book discussion: “Never let a crisis go to waste.”—Winston Churchill

We must learn from the disarray of tragedy and mistakes we have experienced. I have heard the complaints and difficulties of teachers and learners on both sides of the tech screen. But Hattie’s article brings out some useful aspects.

First point, educators led the charge. In the face of lock-downs and sudden forced remote instruction, teachers found ways to engage students and manage workloads. Leaders were willing to listen to teachers as education moved forward. Surveys of educators indicated remarkable resilience in having established strategies for education continuity. These strategies were well-planned and well-executed, and most plans were not designed from the top down, but by teachers and school leaders.

Another discovery was that there were teachers that taught remote learners how to self-regulate. These were the successful students. Pupil-centered instruction that was successful during the pandemic needs to be carried over into the regular classroom.

It is important to note that math and reading skills have not greatly declined from pre-COVID levels. However, there was a marked decline in writing. But, teachers built better connections with parents in helping them learn to focus on learning, and not just “get it right.” Students learned to be efficient, finishing assignments in less time. Teachers became more adept at using technology. Teachers also found they had to focus on student instructional needs and had to be clear about what success looked like. Further, it was found that many equity and access problems became glaring! In moving forward, these issues need to be addressed.

Education can move forward by utilizing results and realizations from the pandemic. Many new plans must be formulated using factors observed over the past year. The opportunities unfolding in education now should be embraced so that the COVID era is not a wasted crisis.

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I often resist educational ideas that overwhelmingly change approaches to instruction. I guess it’s because I hate to think that we had been wasting our time on something someone has suddenly determined does not work well. Often research is quoted – and in some cases, I pay attention. My reserve stems from “A Nation of Readers” era when silent sustained reading was shown as not having a lot of research behind it, but it was a promoted way to practice reading anyway. I didn’t need research to tell me it was a good idea...

Another article in EL was offered by Bryan Goodwin, president and CEO of McRel International. “Zombie Ideas in Education” listed six (un)dead ideas that research showed do not work, but keep coming up and being utilized. The article piqued my interest, so I dove in with the thought that these “dead” ideas should be true losers. However, I found Goodwin was

somewhat reserved about driving his research-based stake into the heart of some ideas, actually offering some resuscitation.

One idea was “Students have different learning styles.” I saw this in action in my classes when I was still teaching. I found many students fell into the visual or auditory learning styles. Fewer had the kinesthetic lean. Further, we all supposedly use a combination of these with emphasis on one more so than others. Goodwin offered brief examples of connections that research does not support, like an auditory learner might grasp geography better through music. Some teachers may have taken this too far, but he focused on those furthest stretched concepts. So he ended that idea discussion by saying students have a *preference*, not a style. My brain said – ok, semantics.

His last idea (the four in between, I got) was “Smaller classes are better.” He said this is true, but in theory only... Reading on, I found that he cited California’s dedication of \$22 billion to reduce K-3 class size from 30 to 20, to hire 25,000 new teachers, and to construct thousands of new classrooms. He then pointed out that students did benefit, but results were negated by the many “seemingly less capable teachers.” Sorry, but a flaw was discovered that should have been addressed. Teachers that are not capable are not the reason to say smaller classes are not better. The disrupt in logic disturbed me. Maybe Goodwin was more concerned with money.

Anyway, my critical thinking kicked in, as it should, and I wasn’t as sure of the rest of Goodwin’s logic. He further stated that they would have been better off to raise class size and spend money to recruit better teachers. He said this “could translate into 34 percent raises for teachers (assuming all savings were passed on to teachers).” You may have heard, as I have, that trickle-down economics is a great theory, but as yet has not occurred in the world.

After reading the article, I was in a zombie-like state. When I mentally surfaced, I had to write ~~something~~ this.

Jack Agugliaro, editor

## **NFRC Mission:**

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



*Many thanks to all of our NFRC Liaisons who have distributed information on our events! Your willingness to contact your fellow educators is invaluable! More to come in 2021-2022!*

**NFRC Officers for 2019-2020:**

President – Heidi Clarke  
Past President – Kirsten Burke Smith  
President Elect – Gina Niemel  
Vice President for Programming – Dr. Ashlee Campbell  
    Programming Advisor – Patty Oliphant  
Treasurer – Susan Busch  
Recording Secretary - Jack Agugliaro  
Director of Membership - Carol Bush  
Corresponding Secretary –Jack Agugliaro

**Board Members 2018-2020 Term:**

Judy Bradbury  
Lindsey Buck  
Pamela Garabedian  
Patricia Oliphant

**Board Members 2019 - 2021**

Elizabeth Bystrak  
Dr. Tiffany Karalis-Boyd  
Michele Montoro  
Mary Beth Scumaci  
Dr. John Strong

**2020-2021 Committee Chairpersons**

Council Awards Chair - Lindsey Buck  
CTLE Chair/ Mini Grants Chair - Patricia Oliphant  
Fall Event Chair/ CTLE Professional Development Chair - Judy Bradbury  
Finance / Budget Chair - (VACANT)  
History Chair- Pamela Garabedian  
Nominating Chair - (VACANT)  
Outreach Chair - Susan Busch  
Spotlight Editor - Jack Agugliaro  
Social Media Network – Heidi Clarke  
Web Co-Designer & Editor - Mary Beth Scumaci  
Liaison Chair - Jack Agugliaro  
Audit Chair – Betsy Marshall  
Western Regional Director 2018-21, NYSRA - Cherie Gerych

**About the NFRC:**

- We are non-profit educational organization chartered by The International Literacy Association since 1958.
- We are dedicated to the professional development and enhancement of literacy in our community.
- We are involved in professional issues affecting literacy.



## Niagara Frontier Reading Council

An ILA Honor Council - # 35575

### Annual Membership Application (9/1/2020 – 8/31/2021)

#### ***Join/Renew Today!***

NFRC membership has great privileges: includes membership to the New York State Reading Association (NYSRA), NFRC member events, access to NYSRA's member events, digital publications from NFRC and NYSRA, PD/CTLE credits, Professional Book discussion Group, awards, local/international community outreach, and more!

Register online: [www.theNFRC.org](http://www.theNFRC.org) or mail completed form below.

Payment can be made via PayPal, check/money order (U.S. funds only) to "NFRC."

Mail to: Carol Bush, 57 Minard St., Lockport, NY 14094

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

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

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

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

Position \_\_\_\_\_ Level (Elem., Secondary, Post-Sec.) \_\_\_\_\_

School/District/University \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a current member of the International Literacy Association (ILA)?

Yes/Member # \_\_\_\_\_  No

Are you interested in hearing about leadership opportunities in the NFRC?  Yes  No

### **Member Category**

Professional - \$35

Student (\*must be full-time student and submit current I.D with form) - \$15

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



An ILA Honor Council

## Full-Time Student Member Verification

Full-Time College Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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