



ICEC NEWSLETTER

September 2023



PRESIDENT'S WELCOME, E. PAULA CROWLEY, ICEC PRESIDENT

A warm welcome to you and to the 2023-2024 school year!

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and Illinois CEC (ICEC) support us in our work by connecting us with our colleagues and sharing the knowledge and resources we need to strengthen and develop our professional practice. Visit the CEC website at: <https://exceptionalchildren.org/>

Explore the CEC website and find exactly what you need. Learn about the virtual PD Fair on Thursday, September 28: <https://exceptionalchildren.org/fallPDFair>; Special interest subdivisions: <https://exceptionalchildren.org/engage/special-interest-divisions> Details on upcoming events, resources for your classroom, and so much more.

Explore the ICEC website and learn details about upcoming events, professional resources, professional and student award applications and so much more: <https://www.illinoiscec.net/>

Early Bird preregistration is open for the ICEC Fall Convention, November 2-4, 2023, at the Chicago Marriott Naperville. The Convention Preregistration deadline is October 20, 2023. The theme that guides this event is Making a Difference One Student at a Time. Peruse the preconvention program details and register today at: <https://www.illinoiscec.net/convention/online-preregistration/>

Select from a wide variety of topics from early childhood education all the way to work preparation programs, processes and procedures

that address learning and behavior development, legal updates, keynote speakers, targeted programs for preservice professionals, exhibits, and so much more. More than 80 presentations await you. Get to know your colleagues and share your expertise. Make your hotel accommodation reservation today and avail yourself of the best individual and Convention group rates: Call 1-800-228-9290 or 1-630-505-4900 and ask for the ICEC Group Rate.

Wishing you the best school year yet and looking forward to seeing you soon!

Sincerely,

Paula

E. Paula Crowley, Ph.D.,

Illinois Council for Exceptional Children, President, January 2023-December 2024. Contact me: epcrowl@ilstu.edu or use ICEC website Contact Us | 309-531-7255
Engaging Best Practice in Special Education Every Day

ILLINOIS COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN (ICEC) FALL CONVENTION, 2023 BY BERNADETTE KOMENDA, CHAPTER 336 PRESIDENT & ICEC CONVENTION CHAIR

Welcome to the **ICEC 74th Annual Fall Convention, November 2-4, 2023**. Learn from and engage with over 80 presenters on topics such as autism; behavior; community engagement; diversity; and so much more. Special educators, related service providers, teacher educators, preservice special educators, administrators, policy makers, parents, and special education advocates are invited to attend this Convention. Presentations and posters will address this year's theme: "Making a Difference One Student at a Time." Early Bird registration is open until September 8. Register today and save: <https://www.illinoiscec.net/> Take a glance at our [ICEC Presenters](#).

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By taking care of
myself I have so
much more to offer
the world than I do
when I am running
on empty.

Ali Washington



SELF-CARE FOR A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL YEAR BY MICHELLE LAIRD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES, TROY SCHOOL DISTRICT 30-C

While the term “self-care” is one we might wish would be abandoned, each of us taking care of ourselves is critical to preserving the strength of our field. According to the [Illinois State Board of Education’s Unfilled Positions Data Report](#), 3,500 teaching positions were unfilled in Illinois in the 2022-2023 school year. That is an increase from the 2,138 unfilled teaching positions in 2021-2022, and 1,703 unfilled teaching positions in 2020-2021. Teacher shortages, among a myriad of other things, are contributing factors to stress levels that can steal our joy and lead to teacher burnout. Knowing how our bodies react to stress, and strategies to promote regulation, can serve as a protective factor against the onslaught of things we cannot control.

When our bodies are stressed, hormones are released that trigger the fight, flight, or freeze response of the sympathetic nervous system. The parasympathetic nervous system is the counterbalance that helps return the body to a regulated state. The vagus nerve is the longest of 12 cranial nerves that makes up 75% of your parasympathetic nervous system, and impacts major body functions between your brain and your bum ([WebMD, 2022](#)).

Vagal tone is a measure of how well our vagus nerve is functioning. A high vagal tone provides a higher capacity to endure stress, change, and challenge and higher capacity for rest, recharge, and recovery ([Neurodivergent Insights, n.d.](#)). While there’s no hack or quick fix for low vagal tone, there are strategies we can employ that will strengthen our vagal tone.

Strengthening the vagus nerve is not unlike exercising to strengthen your muscles. The best attack will be regulating reps over time. And just like beginning an exercise program, start with one strategy that is easiest to integrate into your daily life, and build from there. Here are few to choose from:

- Maintain a consistent bedtime / wake up time
- Deep and slow breathing (exhale for longer than you inhale)
- Exposure to morning sunlight
- Trade social-media check-ins for deep regulating breathing
- Shake it out / big sigh - quick way to discharge accumulated stress
- Lay on the floor with your legs up the wall
- Sing, hum, or gargle for 30-seconds
- Turn your shower on cold
- Move your body more
- Spend more time outside
- Eat less processed food / more gut-healthy food

“Each of us taking
care of ourselves is
critical to preserving
the strength of our
field”

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE COLUMN, BY KARA KENNEDY, CHAPTER 336 VICE PRESIDENT & ICEC COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR

As the Communications Chair for ICEC I want to bring back the ICEC newsletter to share our events and learning from around the state. One of my passions is translating research to practice, especially in the area of literacy. This year I will host a column in each newsletter that highlights aspects of research to practice in the area of literacy.

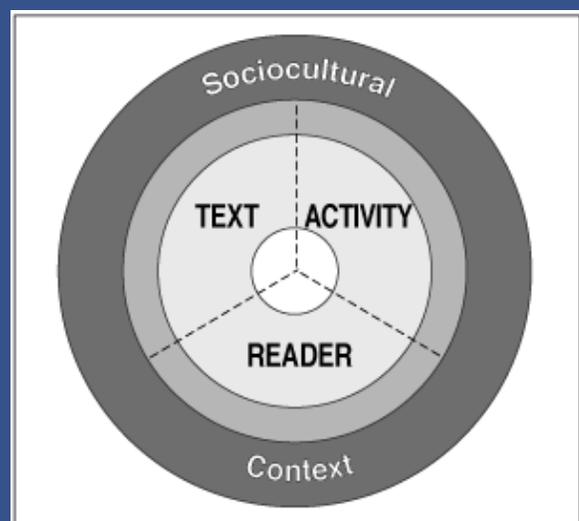
The last few years have brought a renewed focus on literacy instruction in the media and public policy. The term Science of Reading has been thrown around and given a variety of definitions, here, in this column, Science of Reading refers to implementing literacy instruction and policy that is based on the body of accumulated research in the field. While the media has mostly highlighted the areas of phonics and early reading instruction, The National Reading Panel (2000) put forth five main pillars of literacy instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Comprehension instruction hasn't gotten nearly as much attention as phonics instruction, but comprehension is the final goal of reading instruction (Rasinski, 2006). How can I get my students to accomplish that goal?

First, we need to explore what impacts comprehension. According to the RAND Reading Study Group (2002), reading comprehension is the interaction of the reader, text, and activity within a specific context or situation. The reader brings background knowledge, comprehension strategies, dis/abilities, and past experience to a text and activity.

Dis/abilities can facilitate comprehension or make it more difficult depending on the specific disability. The activity can be complex or simple, which impacts the reader and text complexity. The text complexity or difficulty, then, is affected by a reader and the activity being done with the text. For example, if a student is being asked to answer how female characters are depicted in fairy tales, that will make a fairy tale much more difficult than if it's a mere plot retelling. Further, a fairy tale's setting and culture can make a text more or less difficult depending on a reader's background knowledge of that place and culture.

Second, the text itself can be difficult in terms of language and sentence structure, usually measured by a Lexile level or some similar tool. However, these are incomplete pictures of text complexity because there are other factors like multiple points of view, symbolism, and time shifts, to name a few (Cunningham et al, 2018). A popular technique to overcome the issue of text complexity is finding a student's instructional text level and then matching them to a text at that level to help increase learning. This is often done by administering a reading comprehension assessment, for example the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) or the NWEA MAP assessments, which generate each student's Lexile reading level in the data report. Then, the teacher would proceed to only give students readings at that Lexile range. However, if increased reading comprehension is the goal then this technique won't work for students above 1st grade. In the most recent studies, when students are matched with instructional level texts it produces no benefit or students matched with texts two or more grades above their instructional level produce greater growth in reading comprehension (Brown et al, 2018; Lupo et al, 2019). In other words, this technique doesn't help and at worst hurts students. The only exception from the Lupo and colleagues study is students who are English Learners (ELs).

What can we do to help students grow in content area knowledge and reading comprehension? That will be the focus of future columns!



Updates & Announcements from the Divisions

THE ILLINOIS DIVISION ON AUTISM AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (IDADD)

BY DR. JESSICA ZANTON, IDADD
PRESIDENT

The IDADD subdivision has been revived! We elected the following officers:

- President: Dr. Jessica Zanton
- President Elect: Dr. Louise Yoho
- Vice President: Dr. Kathleen Briseno
- Secretary: Dr. Andrea Dinario
- Treasurer: Khalid Alasmi
- Liaison to the Board: Meghan Wurst
- Member at Large: Kim Novak, Maria Powell

We have identified 3 primary purposes for our subdivision:

- 1--Education about individuals with Autism and/or Developmental Disabilities
- 2--Advocacy for and with individuals with Autism and/or Developmental Disabilities
- 3--Resource: identifying and sharing of resources and services for teachers, parents, and caregivers

We will hold an IDADD meeting at the ICEC Conference on Friday, November 3 from 3:00-4:00 PM (listed in the convention flyer as part 2 of the IDADD Showcase). All are welcome to attend!

ILLINOIS DIVISION ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSITION (IDCDT) BY LYNDSAY PALACH SHELTON, IDCDT PRESIDENT

Social Media

*. Check IDCDT out on Twitter and Facebook for offerings through CEC, Illinois CEC, DCDT, and Illinois DCDT. Please follow us! Twitter - <https://twitter.com/IDCDT> Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1141950806679969>

Monthly Illinois DCDT Town Halls

*. Join us for our *new* Town Hall sessions for membership in order to address specific topics. August flyer attached! Save the date for the following townhalls! I included the flyers for both August and September.

Monday, September 18 at 4:00 PM, TOPIC: Conferences & Professional Development
meet.google.com/xxw-eewv-iaf



Updates & Announcements from the Divisions

ILLINOIS DIVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD (IDEC) BY EVELYN GREEN, IDEC PRESIDENT

The Illinois Division of Early Childhood (IDEC) of the CEC proudly announces that registration is open for the [2023 Sharing A Vision \(SAV\) Conference](#) taking place October 3-6, 2023 at the Embassy Suites Hotel & Conference Center in East Peoria, IL. This conference is designed for early childhood general and special educators, family support staff, early intervention personnel and anyone who works with young children, IDEC members, students and families. Visit <https://sharingavision.org/> to get a discount on registration!

We're kicking off SAV 2023 with What's Happening in Illinois on 10/4/23 from 4:00-6:00pm. This is your opportunity to hear updates from leaders from early childhood entities, as well as join the conversation. This event will include leaders from ISBE, Birth to Five IL, Family Advisory Committee (FAC) of the Illinois Early Learning Council (ELC), IL Head Start Association, and the Division of Early Childhood of the IL Department of Human Services, including Early Intervention.

You won't want to miss In The First Place: Inclusive and Joy-Filled Early Care and Education, presented by our keynote speakers, Dr. Julie Causton and Dr. Kristie Pretti-Frontczak from Inclusive Schooling. This dynamic duo will set the stage for what promises to be two days of nonstop learning, networking and fun. You can find all of the great workshops and activities in the at-a-glance schedule for SAV 2023, available here: <https://sharingavision.org/conferen.../at-a-glance-schedule/>

Did you know you can apply for SAV registration through your local STAR NET Region? Award amounts vary across regions, so contact your local STAR NET for more details! Unsure what Region you belong to? Consult the map found here: <http://www.starnet.org/.../07/Statewide-Starnet-Map-1.pdf>

2023 SHARING A VISION CONFERENCE
REGISTER TODAY

ILLINOIS DIVISION FOR CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE EXCEPTIONAL LEARNERS (IDDEL) BY CHANITA JONES, IDDEL PRESIDENT

IDDEL is active and seeking your support in equipping Illinois educators and parents with culturally and linguistically responsive practices and resources for all phases, stages, and domains.

Lean in! Share your expertise! Pick up some new tools! Network with others! Join the Facebook group to meet our new executive board members and get more involved in the work of IDDEL. <https://www.facebook.com/cec.iddel>

If you have a strategy/tool/technique/resource or answer to an important question, and you would be willing to share it in a 5-minute talk, please message us on our Facebook page. Be well, get involved, and we look forward to connecting with you.