Miriam Busch
Miriam Busch is the author of Lion, Lion (Balzer+Bray), and Storms (National Geographic). She received her MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Hamline University. She is the recipient of Kate DiCamillo’s Herman W. Block award (2012), and the Jane Resh Thomas prize (2013). Miriam (occasionally together with illustrator Larry Day) leads dynamic, participatory classroom discussions and workshops on everything story-related, no matter the age or genre. Miriam tailors presentations to the particular classroom concerns of individual educators. Presentations include: visual literacy, reading as writer/writing as reader, point of view, word choice, revision (revision, revision!), and the writing process.

Larry Day
Larry Day is the award-winning illustrator of both fiction and non-fiction. His new release: Lion Lion, by Miriam Busch (NPR’s Best Books For 2014, an Indie Bound Next List and Junior Library Guild Selection). Larry engages children in visual storytelling, tailoring his visits to each grade level. Larry leads groups through their own story creations as he draws everything from simple subjects to rough “thumbnail” story sketches. Students learn to more fully “read” illustrations as they experience the process of melding words with pictures. Through Larry’s approach, students gain visual literacy and have a blast in the process.

Jim Aylesworth
Jim Aylesworth was a first grade teacher for twenty-five years. During that time, he read to his children nearly every single day, and he grew to love the books himself every bit as much as the children did. Jim credits those years as a teacher and reader for gradually changing him into the author of more than thirty children’s books. Jim’s newest title, My Grandfather’s Coat, has just won the 2015 Sydney Taylor Book Award from Association of Jewish Libraries.

Jennifer Allison
Jennifer Allison’s illustrated novel IGGY LOOMIS: SUPERKID IN TRAINING has been selected by the Illinois Reading Council for the 2015 Illinois state reading list. The Iggy Loomis books are fast-paced, humorous adventures that focus on sibling rivalry and how to handle an “annoying” little brother with superpowers. Ms. Allison is best known for her five Gilda Joyce: Psychic Investigator mysteries for middle-grade readers, which have received numerous starred reviews and an Edgar Award nomination from Mystery Writers of America. A former news reporter and high school English teacher, Jennifer Allison teaches writing workshops at K-12 schools throughout the country. She currently resides in Chicago, IL with her husband and three children. Contact Jennifer at www.iggyloomis.com or www.gildajoyce.com.

Gayle Rosengren
Gayle grew up in Chicago, attended Knox College, and worked first as an advertising copywriter and later as a Young Adult Librarian at Fountaindale Library in Bolingbrook, Illinois, enthusiastically sharing her love of books with young patrons. Eventually, she moved to Wisconsin and worked in children’s publishing. Now she lives just outside of Madison and is thrilled to write full time. Her debut book, What the Moon Said, historical fiction for ages 8-12, was a Junior Library Guild Selection. Her second book, Cold War on Maplewood Street, will launch on August 4, 2015. Both are published by GP Putnam’s Sons.
**Todd Hasak-Lowy**
Todd Hasak-Lowy’s 33 Minutes, his first book for children, was recently selected as an Illinois Reads title for 2015. His first young adult novel, Me Being Me is Exactly as Insane as You Being You, will be published this spring and is written entirely in lists. He will publish his second middle grade book, Somewhere There is Still a Sun, a memoir co-written with Holocaust survivor Michael Gruenbaum, later this year. Before writing for a younger audience, Todd published two works of fiction for adults, a short story collection (The Task of This Translator, 2005) and a novel (Captives, 2008).

**Marianne Malone**
When I married and began raising my three children, I discovered so many of the great books for kids that I’d been too busy to read when I was young. I finally started to love reading and began to understand the freedom that writers must feel. I learned that writing – and reading – a story can take you into an imaginary world just as being way up in a tree takes you away from everyday life on the ground, and just as creating a dollhouse takes you into miniature imagined worlds. When my oldest daughter entered middle school her best friend’s mother and I tried a little experiment; we wondered if we could start a school for girls. Our little experiment worked and for the next decade I worked as the Art Teacher at Campus Middle School for Girls. I enjoyed working with this age group. It was then that I decided to write a book that my students might enjoy. (Marianne’s books include: The Sixty-Eight Rooms, Stealing Magic, The Pirate’s Coin, and The Secret of the Key)

**Leanne Statland Ellis**
Leanne Statland Ellis teaches third to fifth graders in the Chicago area. She was inspired to write The Ugly One by her travels in Peru, including two visits to Machu Picchu. She lives near Chicago with her husband and daughter, and given her reaction to the winter we have been having, she is not at all surprised that the main character of her book worships the sun. You can learn more about her and her books at [http://www.LeanneStatlandEllis.com](http://www.LeanneStatlandEllis.com).

**Grades 7-8**

**Jaleigh Johnson**
Jaleigh Johnson is a fantasy author born and raised in the Midwest. Her novels for the Dungeons and Dragons Forgotten Realms fiction line include The Howling Delve, Mistshore, Unbroken Chain, Unbroken Chain: The Darker Road, and Spider and Stone. Her first book for middle grade readers is The Mark of the Dragonfly, from Delacorte Press. In her spare time, she enjoys gaming, gardening, and going to movies with her husband. Visit her online at [www.jaleighjohnson.com](http://www.jaleighjohnson.com).

**James Klise**
James Klise lives in Chicago. His short fiction has appeared in literary journals like StoryQuarterly, New Orleans Review, Ascent, Sou’wester and Southern Humanities Review. His essays and reviews have appeared in the Chicago Sun-Times, Booklist, the Readerville Journal and elsewhere. By day, he works as a high school librarian. His first book is entitled LOVE DRUGGED. His most recent novel, THE ART OF SECRETS, has received the following awards: ALA Booklist Editors’ Choice 2014, Chicago Public Library "Best of the Best" 2014, Christian Science Monitor “Best 25 Middle Grade Novels of 2014.”

**Storytellers and Parent Speaker**
**Chris Fascione** performs his fun, participatory show, “Bringing Literature to Life, “ in which he acts out library books, for school assemblies, Reading Knights, libraries and other family venues annually. Chris is a “Storytelling World” award winner, has been featured through “Reading is Fundamental” and highlighted at the Connecticut and Illinois Storytelling Festivals. As a professional storyteller/actor, Chris incorporates his acting, mime, juggling, and comedic skills to both entertain and lead children into the world of books, promoting literacy and a love of reading. [www.ChrisFascione.com](http://www.ChrisFascione.com)

**Kim Sheahan** has been a central Illinois educator and storyteller for over 20 years. As the Assistant Director of Education at the Spurlock Museum, a museum of world cultures at the University of Illinois (Urbana), she incorporates oral traditions into a wide variety of multicultural and historical programs. As a freelance teller, she adds to her folktale shows two one-woman performances: “She Outranks Me,” celebrating Civil War nurse Mary Ann Bickerdyke, and “A Place to Live,” which honors civil rights Anne Braden. Kim has performed at the National Storytelling Conference, the Northlands Storytelling Network Conference, the Big Grove Storytelling Festival, and Illinois State Fair, as well as school assemblies, city-wide celebrations, personal parties and gatherings of all kinds. Her enthusiasm is both unmistakable and contagious. Let her share the joy and power of the tale with you in your classrooms or at your next special event. [www.kimsheahan.com](http://www.kimsheahan.com)

**Parent Speaker**

Speaking at many conferences., **Dr. Debra Gurvitz** focuses on urban education, diversity among learners, and school-based professional learning. She taught kindergarten, first, and multi-age groups, mentored classroom teachers as a reading coach and served as a K--8 district reading specialist. After completing a doctorate from National Louis University, she served as an Associate Professor in Reading and Language, taught graduate clinical reading specialist courses, and continues to direct the Urban Summer Reading Program. Publications include *Complete Guide to Tutoring Struggling Readers: Mapping Interventions to Purpose and CCSS* (Fisher, Bates, Gurvitz, 2014) and a chapter in *Partnering for Content Reading* (Ogle, 2010).