

Reading for the love of it

# Speaking of Reading

FALL 2011



## SOCIAL JUSTICE

### Inspiring Youth to Make a Change

**W**e Day 2010 was the day, that not only inspired some of my students to make a change but, inspired me to make my way to Africa in the summer of 2011. With *Teachers Helping Teachers Canada (THT)*, in affiliation with *Free the Children*, I volunteered in a rural school in Kenya where Canadian and Kenyan teachers came together to share teaching pedagogy. Canadian teachers created and implemented workshops to help Kenyan teachers improve their teaching practices through English instruction. *THT* also spent some time building a library so that the children will have access to reading materials and a place to store books. Although education from Kindergarten to grade eight is free in Kenya, many children do not have the opportunity to go to school. Many children spend their days working to help provide basic necessities for their families' survival or caring for younger siblings while older siblings and parents work. Being involved with *Teachers Helping Teachers* enabled me to bring back my experiences in Kenya and share them with youth in my own school in Canada.

*Me to We* is a social enterprise founded in 2008 by brothers Mark and Craig Kielburger. It encourages youth to mobilize, grow in their awareness on issues of injustice, and motivates them to raise money and necessities for children in need across the globe. Through *Me to We*, youth are able to get involved and make a difference by being part of worldwide change.

Having coached various sport's teams over the years, I was often surrounded by the mentality of "win, win, win".

Students were eager to come out on top for themselves. *We Day* and *Me to We* inspired the students to sacrifice so that they could see others, often strangers, come out on top instead of themselves. We all worked together passionately throughout

Teachers Helping Teachers in Pimbiniyet, Kenya.



Volunteering at a rural school in Kenya.



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### Fall, 2011

THE EAST YORK-Scarborough Reading Association has had a long and proud history of supporting numerous community outreach projects working to realize



social justice. In some small way, it has been our hope that our efforts, through your support, have helped change the lives and educational experience of many. Your support has helped impact education in Kenya, Tanzania, Ecuador, Peru, Northern Ontario's First Nations Community, and in Toronto.

This, our first newsletter of the 2011-2012 school year, gives voice to the importance of teaching for social justice. Educators strive to transform schools into places where students

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the year to help other children both locally and globally. We inspired others in our school and community to care as much as we did. Local grocery stores donated over a thousand

candy canes to use as a fundraiser at Christmas. Elementary students raised almost \$500 from this fundraiser alone. This money, along with other funds raised throughout the year,

was sent to Haiti to help with a clean water project.

Focusing on education, clean water, health care and alternative income in developing countries, youth joined together to increase awareness within their community. They organized and implemented fundraisers so that fellow children could benefit from things that they themselves often took for granted. This awareness and generosity has expanded to overwhelming numbers. My first call to recruit students for *Me to We* in September 2011 saw numbers more than double from the previous year. With so many passionate youth surrounding me at our meetings, I continue to be inspired to stand up for the rights of young people by taking action and committing to creating a better world!

*Liz Blythe, Kindergarten Teacher,  
St. Lawrence Catholic School,  
TCDSB*



...President's Message continued from page 1

learn not only to read and write, but also to question and re-think the world both inside and outside the classroom. As educators, we have the opportunity to inspire positive change. I hope this newsletter provides you with ideas to help you continue to work with your students on important issues dealing with social justice.

Our upcoming annual conference will undoubtedly give you additional inspiration. You will be touched by the story of Erin Gruwell, whose experience was captured in the acclaimed Hollywood film: *Freedom Writers*. This year, we are, for the first time holding two movie screenings: *Louder Than A Bomb* and *The First Grader*. Each film will be moderated by media literacy experts and provide our delegates with an opportunity to extend their thinking about social justice and gain ideas for teaching media studies. Joseph Boyden, our

banquet speaker, will encourage us to reflect on our First Nations communities; and Wes "Maestro" Williams, a local rap artist, will help us see how we can further empower our students.

I hope you will be able to join us at our 36th annual conference, which will take place at the Sheraton Centre Hotel on February 9th and 10th, 2012. It is the perfect antidote to the hectic and blustery days of February. As always, the entire East York-Scarborough Reading Association welcomes you to our conference, whether you are a first-time delegate, or a long-time participant at *Reading for the love of it*. Our association aspires to improve the quality of literacy instruction by providing our membership with the opportunity to hear from notable Canadian children's authors; and to learn with teachers, researchers and writers in the field of literacy.

Join us and learn from new and familiar voices. Reconnect with classroom teachers and local educators, including our long-time friends David Booth, Larry Swartz and Kathy Lundy. Revisit with our loyal conference presenters from the USA and Australia: Mary Bigler, Tony Stead and Jeffrey Wilhelm. We are excited to welcome back the "two sisters" Gail Boushey and Joan Moser; as well as Sharon Taberski, Janet Allen and Mélanie Watt... just to name a few. We have a robust program with something to interest teachers from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

I hope to see you all at our conference, but until then, don't forget to check out our website, join our Facebook page or follow us on Twitter.

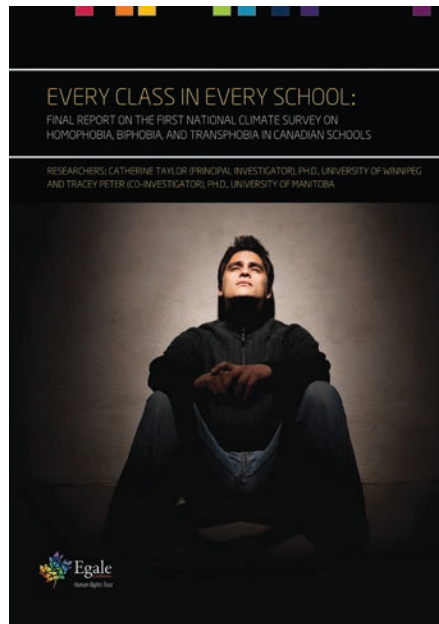
*Teresa Paoli, President*

# Building Inclusive School Communities: Student Witness to Social Justice

**W**alk into any school and you'll discover plenty of social causes to take hold of and plant your feet. Sadly, there are far too many causes that could either paralyse us from any action, lead us to perpetually give out of pocket (or cupboard), or catapult us into really making a difference in the world. That stop-gap foot of charity needs to be joined with the other foot of social action to further the walk toward justice being achieved. It is this foot of social justice that more and more students are embracing.

Whether it be advocating against sweat-shop labour, creating schools as bottled-water free zones, or using fair trade coffee and chocolate for school functions and fundraising efforts, students are prepared more than ever to challenge social structures and school board bureaucracy to bring about a more free, fair, and equitable world. In this respect, globalization has opened their eyes to see the interconnectedness of human beings, as well as the economic, social and environmental systems. These powerful student-led initiatives show the heart of who and what young people are concerned about and critical of. They understand the road to justice is not the quick fix of charity, but rather the long arduous road toward a better world.

In the Ontario educational scene, school boards are mandated through Ministry of Education Equity and Inclusion policies to, amongst other matters of diversity, be pro-active in addressing homophobia, and create safe-spaces for students who are gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgendered. Though school boards play an important role in how this plays out, it has been the voices of students and some courageous teachers who have been especially instrumental in challenging homophobia in halls and



staff rooms, and creating safe places where all can be seen, heard, and appreciated in their giftedness. This has been no easy task, and story after story gives testimony to how far we have to go to make our schools the safe places they are meant to be — for all. “How can I start a Gay-Straight Alliance in my school when my administrator sees no need?” is but one example of a hurdle to be overcome. After all, we are talking about the very lives of students and the dignity each deserves to be spared from the verbal and physical harassment that individual and institutional homophobia brings. (see *Every Class in Every School, The First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools*, by Egale Canada, 2011.)

No doubt, students will always be generous with their time and effort towards the issues of global inequity. What is happening now in our schools is an urgent, tangible appeal for justice that directly touches how all members of a school community see and treat each other. Stopping homophobic remarks in hallways,

curbing slanderous jokes in staff rooms, and creating safe places for LGBT students and straight allies is not only possible, but paramount in creating school communities that are welcoming, positive, and unafraid to promote and uphold human rights and the dignity of each member. Students see this clearly and are not bogged down with political or religious wrangling or rhetoric. They respond with a vision of love that witnesses to the larger school and local community that people matter before rules and policy, belonging matters more than exclusion, and that justice can happen as much in the local arena as it must in distant lands. Firmly planting our feet alongside this powerful student stance is what gives me hope as an educator that together we can make a difference. Where do you plant your feet?

*Kevin Welbes Godin*  
Resource Teacher & Human Rights  
Committee Chair,  
Toronto Secondary Unit

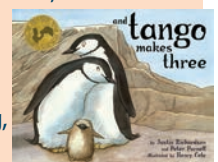
## Sample list of Resources for Elementary Classrooms and Teachers

**“We welcome the child, and in doing so, we welcome the child’s family.”**

***Who’s in a Family***, Robert Skutch,  
Tricycle Press, 1997

***And Tango Makes Three***,

Peter Parnell and  
Justin Richardson,  
Simon and Schuster  
Children’s Publishing,  
2005



***10,000 Dresses***, Marcus Ewert,  
Seven Stories Press, 2008

***Mommy, Mama, and Me***, Carol  
Thompson, Tricycle Press

***What Matters Most: A Children’s  
Book of Families***, Kristin Carter,  
Booksurge, 2008

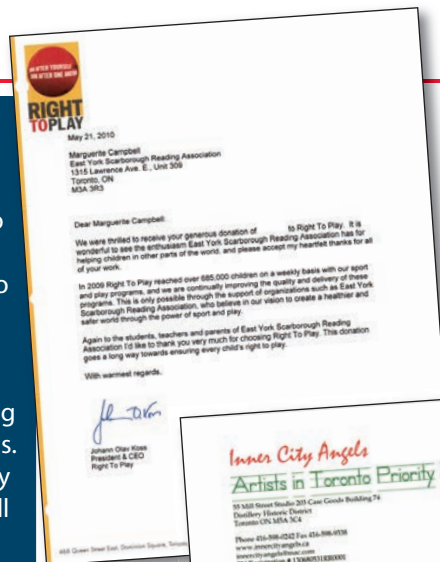
## Outreach — How the East York-Scarborough Reading Association Affects Social Change

The East York-Scarborough Reading Association is proud and honored to advance the causes of social justice through Outreach initiatives. It is our firm belief that access to literacy is a fundamental human right. Our goal is to support children and adults in attaining, promoting and strengthening literacy skills. We have a long tradition of reaching out to local, national and international communities.

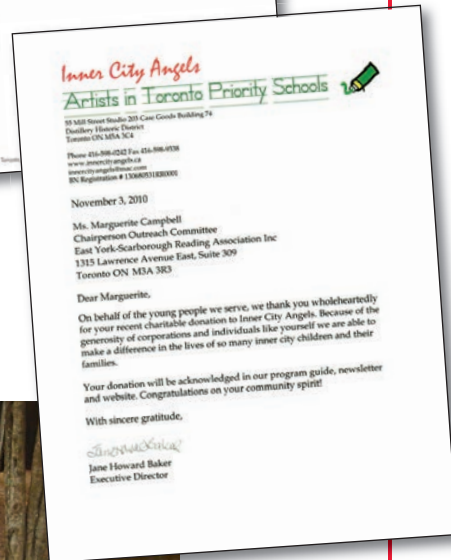
We are thrilled to continue our work and at present are eagerly exploring opportunities and projects for 2011-2012. Stay tuned for upcoming details.

It is with grateful hearts that we thank and acknowledge the generosity of our conference attendees who make the gift of literacy a possibility. All profits generated through the sales at our Outreach Table is dedicated to our yearly projects. Our sturdy bags, pins, pens, pencils, bookmarks, water bottles and blankets, as well as a few new surprises await you. Please stop by and don't forget to enter our draw for a fabulous prize. Hope to see you all on February 9th and 10th!

**Marisa Liscio, Outreach Chair,  
St. Maria Goretti Catholic School, TCDSB**



Thank you letters to the East York-Scarborough Reading Association.



Photos (left): Following massive flooding in Peru in the Spring of 2011, The Canadian Friends of Peru received funds which were used to provide school supplies as well as transportation for the children to find their way back to school.

Funds donated from the East York-Scarborough Reading Association were sent to Father Guy Casseus of Lospalis through Solidarity House, Haiti, and were used to purchase text books for the students and teachers at a remote school in Angoman in Haiti's Central Plateau.



# Acceptance and Tolerance

**W**hen I first wrote and illustrated *One*, my picture book about bullying, my initial concept was that the story would be about differences. I wondered, "What if I created a story about children with different colored faces? And instead of using brown, gold, and pink skin tones — I used green, purple, and orange skin tones?"

Then later in my quest to simplify my story and boil the writing down to its core essence, I thought, "What if I pared down my illustrations as well, and removed all facial features?" The illustrator side of me was indignant, of course. After all, I was a representational illustrator where cats looked like cats, and kids looked like kids. Still, the narrative called for simplicity. So I took a risk and removed the eyes, noses, mouths of these unusual looking 'children' in my drawings, leaving the new characters as basic blobs of color — blobs with distinct personalities. I smiled. It felt right. And there it stayed.

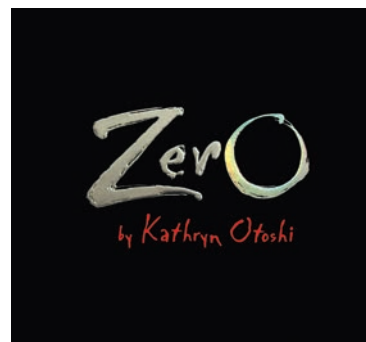
Then I went back to agonizing over my words. Before I went to press, I

shared my mocked-up book to students, teachers, and specifically experts who dealt with issues of social awareness. Invariably someone would ask me about RED, the bully in *One*: "What about RED?", they'd demand. "Why doesn't he transform and count in the end like the others?"

I was annoyed. I argued that the story wasn't *about* RED at all. It was about standing up to the bully and facing your fears. Until someone pointed out, "But, Kathryn, isn't your story about acceptance and tolerance? Shouldn't RED count too?"

Wow! Even after all my hard work, I had nearly missed the point of my own story!

Still, even after my book was published, I was unexpectedly challenged again. My *subconscious* took me to the mat — bringing to light a very painful memory I had repressed. Back in my elementary school days, a little girl named \*Ming was severely bullied on the playground and none of us spoke up for her. I remembered how quickly the initial snickering and eye-rolling turned into pushing and hair-pulling. My last memory I



have of Ming is her crouching behind a tool shed with a large group of kids pointing and laughing at her. She was crying so loud, she was screaming.

I can still hear her screams to this day.

As an author who has had the privilege of visiting hundreds of schools, I know without a doubt that books, reading and writing can raise and ignite social awareness and change.

I wrote *Zero* in an effort to discover why I didn't stick up for Ming that day. How can I *Be a One*, so to speak? That's when I realized *Zero* had to be about discovering our own inner value in ourselves and in others! It is about hope, our choice to count, and *stretching* into the braver person we envision we can someday become.

*By Kathryn Otoshi*

\*Ming is a fictitious name.



**Note:** Kathryn is providing the Friday Breakfast Keynote at the 2012 Reading for the love of it conference. Visit [www.readingforthe love of it.com](http://www.readingforthe love of it.com) for details.

## Support the East York-Scarborough Reading Association Outreach efforts. Plan to make a purchase at the conference Outreach Table on February 9th or 10th, 2012.



Reading Blanket \$35.00



Tote Bag \$10.00



Water Bottle \$10.00



Notebook & Pen \$7.00



Pin \$2.00



Lanyard Pen \$2.00

Pencils 3 for \$1.00



# The Thread

We need to see just how engaged our students would be  
if we taught  
Creatively  
Innovatively  
Passionately  
Globally  
Soulfully.

Perhaps for some it may come  
As an inconvenient truth  
But we must use other avenues to stimulate our youth.  
Steve Jobs in his burning bright brilliance knew exactly what to do  
I just hope we who call ourselves teachers see it too.

There was this thread  
That kept unravelling in my head  
A silky strong string of connectivity  
So simple in its workability  
That I think it startled me.

This thread in my head  
Is connecting back to Malcolm X when he said  
That the media was the most powerful of entities  
Because of the way it controls the minds of the masses.  
If you agree that it's true then you know just as I do  
That we should be using the media when we teach our classes.

This thread in my head  
Was wound around thoughts  
About school and what gets taught  
And about teachers who get caught  
Between the hard place and the rock  
When it comes to getting our students to talk.  
And share. And care.

We need to excite our students and ignite our students  
Give them access to success that is holistic and idealistic and realistic  
and artistic.

Just as important as any curriculum task  
Are some key questions we teachers need to ask.  
Questions like are my students comfortable?  
Are they laughing?  
Are they doing some of the asking?  
Are they demanding complete understanding,  
Regardless of their ages  
If they notice their textbooks not reflecting their looks  
in any of the pages?

And if within your school day  
You find a way to use hip-hop to stop  
The blank stares and the "I don't cares"

My thread of thought  
Sometimes gets caught  
And I'll admit  
Even a little bit enraged  
About how we've allowed  
Our students to become so disengaged.

And if because of the innovative way  
You taught today  
Your students walk away  
Thinking critically and analytically  
Understanding metaphors, similes and puns  
And has them smiling wide from the inside  
Because they identified the  
Alliteration in seven setting suns

We are definitely living our days  
In an iPod, Apple god world  
That offers daily upgrades on ways  
To keep us ear-budded and interfacing  
Completely erasing the need for you to stand next to me  
Cuz u cld jst send a txt 2 me :(

Then you are doing the kind of  
Attention getting  
Example setting  
Positive vibe spreading  
Mountain moving  
Music using  
Juicy word choosing  
Ground breaking  
Risk taking  
Mind shaping  
Status quo shaking  
Leader making  
Trail blazing  
Kind of teaching  
That's going make you want to  
Fly out of bed  
With all those threads of thought in your head  
And run to school.  
And make your students want to get there before you.

If our students are turned off by what and how they are  
learning  
Their disinterest means that we should be turning  
Our heads to what is keeping them  
Stimulated and invigorated  
Mesmerized and energized

It's clear in my eyes  
That we have much to revisit, re-learn and revise  
Teaching strategy-wise.

The thread in my head knows that this is exactly the kind of  
educators we need to be  
To teach the kinds of beautiful minds we've got  
In the 21st century.



**Michelle Muir,**  
Teacher, PDSB,  
Kindree Public  
School

nuffsaid@rogers.com  
www.michelle-muir.com

*(The Thread — Just For Teachers  
Remix revised from the original  
The Thread published in Nuff  
Said, 2009, TSAR Books)*

# Have You Heard?

## Highlights from Reading for the Love of It 2012 Program

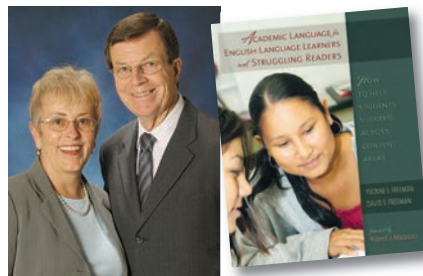
**A** spectacular line-up of presenters, workshops and a huge exhibitors display awaits you on February 9 and 10 at the Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel. Here are some highlights... what I might call "the tip of the iceberg," from the program:

- **Janet Allen** will explore methods to teach junior and intermediate students the skills needed to read "real" books. Discover new strategies that help expand students' vocabulary and improve reading comprehension.
- **Lorna Earle**, a leader in the field of assessment and evaluation, will speak specifically on the topic. Attendees will learn methods and reasons to assess *FOR Learning*, *AS Learning* and *OF Learning*.
- We have a number of presenters eager to offer creative ideas to engage learners through drama and dance. **Robert Faust** will expand the concept of the "Mask". **Christine Jackson** will provide sessions on using high yield, arts based strategies to promote critical thinking. **Edmond Dixon** will share cross-curricular drama techniques.



Robert Faust presenting *The Mask Messenger*

- You will find a gold mine of experts who are keen to support you in meeting the needs of ELLs. **Drs. Yvonne Freeman** and **David Freeman**, well known internationally for their books and presentations, will be describing best practices for engaging ELLs in your elementary and secondary classes. ESL leaders from various boards including, **Peter Heydon**, TCDSB, **Paula Markus**, TDSB, **Sharon Newmaster** from Waterloo, and **Jeffery Robinson**, Thames Valley DSB are some of the amazing specialists offering professional learning sessions.



Drs. Yvonne Freeman and David Freeman. Their book, *Academic Language for English Language Learners and Struggling Readers*.

- We are thrilled to offer a number of sessions on media studies. A film screening will be held on each of the two conference days. Teaching ideas will be discussed and guides provided. We are also very excited to welcome **Kathleen Tilly**, **Jonathan Ophek** and **Joyce Grant**, founders and developers of the *teachingkidsnews.com*. The three presenters will introduce this kid-friendly on-line daily newspaper and share practical ideas for teaching media literacy.
- **Dr. Enoch Hale**, from the *Foundation for Critical Thinking*, believes critical thinking is at the heart of instruction and teaches accordingly. He will be sharing a framework and practical teaching strategies that lead students to think critically in all areas of curriculum. Don't

miss this informative and engaging interactive session! (Read more about critical thinking, the theme of last year's newsletter at [www.readingfortheLoveofIt.com/newsletters.php](http://www.readingfortheLoveofIt.com/newsletters.php))



Dr. Enoch Hale

- **Kindergarten teachers...** You will find it difficult to choose from the many fantastic presenters and workshop offerings. **Miriam Trehearne**, author of *Learning to Write and Loving It, Pre-school to Kindergarten, 2011* will inspire with information and proven approaches that scaffold literacy and play. You can attend sessions with **Vanessa Grieve** and **Nanette Owusu-Ansah** and learn more about connecting Play-Based Learning to early literacy skills. Enjoy soaking up ideas from many other Kindergarten sessions including: **Sue Jackson**, **Lori Jamison**, **Tony Stead** and **Fern Westernoff**. As I said... it will be difficult to choose!

So many more exciting sessions that I would like to point out ...but the editors say halt... after all dear readers, we have a website, we are on Facebook and we are Tweeting. Check with your administrator for PD funds.

Take time for your professional learning, for connecting with colleagues and enjoy the energy.

*Registration is now open!*

*Save the dates; be inspired!*

*Kathy Lazarovits,  
First Vice-President and  
Conference Program Chair*

# Wanted — Awards Nominations

## Hidden Pearls: Teacher Nominees for our Reading Award

Take this opportunity to recognize deserving colleagues and nominate them for this special award. Each year, our Association honours exceptional contributions by teachers in the field of literacy. To qualify for this prestigious Reading Award the candidates should:

- have a history of sharing literacy expertise through workshops, seminars and/or mentoring
- have demonstrated a lasting influence on students through innovative teaching
- teach in either the T.D.S.B. or the T.C.D.S.B.
- be nominated by two different sources

Strong consideration is given to nominees who have attended conferences and workshops sponsored by

our Association. Presentations will be made at the Annual Awards Banquet on Thursday, February 9th, 2012. Winners will be awarded with a full conference registration, including two tickets for the awards dinner banquet and a \$100 gift certificate to purchase books.

An easy-to-complete form can be found on our website.

Nominations in writing (paper or electronic) will be also accepted until 5 p.m. on Friday, December 16, 2011. They can be submitted electronically (eys@readingforthe loveofit.com), by fax to 416-444-9282 or mailed to: EYS Reading Association  
1315 Lawrence Avenue East, #309,  
Toronto, ON, M3A 3R3.

*Anthony Petitti, Awards Committee  
Chair and Past President*



## Reading for the love of it Plan to Attend 2012

Thursday, February 9th and Friday,  
February 10th, 2012 at the Sheraton  
Centre Hotel, downtown Toronto.

Registration is now open at  
www.readingforthe loveofit.com.  
We recommend that you register early!

## Winter — Holiday Reading List is as Follows:

- The Fall of Giants* by Ken Follett
- The Cat's Table* by Michael Ondaatje
- The Sense of an Ending* by Julian Barnes
- Room* by Emma Donoghue
- The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern
- Half Blood Blues* by Esi Edugyan
- A World Elsewhere* by Wayne Johnston



Return undeliverable items to:  
East York-Scarborough Reading Association  
1315 Lawrence Ave. East, Unit 309  
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Tel: 416-444-7473  
Fax: 416-444-9282  
E-mail: eys@readingforthe loveofit.com  
Web: www.readingforthe loveofit.com

We are committed to improving the quality of literacy instruction and encouraging the development of a lifelong interest in reading.

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