Building and Analyzing Environmental Content through Literature
Environmental science students were given the option to read either the nonfiction text *Eyes Wide Open: Going Behind the Environmental Headlines* or the novel *Carbon Diaries: 2015*, in order to deepen connections to environmental topics while utilizing literature circles in which readers were placed according to their reading ability. The primary task in their small groups was to identify multiple facets of the reading assignment and determine broader environmental implications.

**Presenter Juan Gonzalez** teaches Environmental Science at J. S. Morton High School in Cicero, Illinois.

Connecting the Chains: Linking Assertion, Evidence, and Elaboration to Engage Writers in Finding Their Persuasive Voice
In this session, we will work on pre-SAT and pre-AP type writing, where students will evaluate a text for theme, and carefully dissect how the writer achieves that theme. Looking at an excerpt from *Chains* by Laurie Halse Anderson, you will work in pairs to identify diction and imagery that convey theme, then write a paragraph analyzing both the “what” and ‘how” of the argument. You’ll learn a fun peer critique activity for writing, and how to build upon this exercise for more advanced assignments.

**Presenter Tina Peano** has taught at a number of schools, including Lindblom Math and Science Academy, and Roosevelt High School. She has worked as a consultant for National-Louis University, The Chicago Metro History Fair, and the Chicago Teachers’ Center. She has two girls, a husband, five cats, and must replace her vacuum cleaner yearly.

How do you promote Independent Reading in your classroom?
The purpose of this workshop is to showcase ways in which teachers have implemented independent reading units focused on building interest, stamina and enthusiasm for reading. One unit, Developing a Culture of Reading, showcases Jordan’s experience, both good and bad, with attempts at implementing independent reading with 9th and 10th (Regular and ELL) students. He will share checklists, websites, and other resources for running your own independent reading program. Susan’s unit, What’s Worth Reading? asks students to dig deep into their interests and explore genres to learn more about what kind of books make them want to read. Group activities and discussions, along with after-reading reflections will be shared. Research will be referred to and handouts available.

**Presenter Jordan Wankoff** has an MA in Literacy, and an MAT from Northeastern Illinois University and Bachelor’s degree in English from The University of Chicago. He is a long-
time member of the faculty at Foreman College and Career Academy where he focuses on helping students improve their skills in reading, writing, and academic conversations. This year he is trying to help students regain the joy of reading through choice reading of books at their independent reading levels. When not scheming the next lesson plan, he can be found playing the fiddle or driving his son to hockey practice. Presenter Susan Yates has invested herself for 13 years into the student body of Foreman... she is a big fan of those guys. With a recent MA in Literacy, her teaching focus has shifted to the individual student and engaging them in a passion for reading. When Susan isn’t teaching, or working on school related tasks, she can be found in the stands of her son’s hockey games, in the garden avoiding the bees, or submerged in another DIY project... all of which her feline children avoid.

Looking at Climate Change through Fact and Dystopian Fiction
Inspired by a presentation at last year’s YAL Conference, two teachers used Eyes Wide Open: Going Behind the Environmental Headlines and the novel Carbon Diaries: 2015 to deepen students’ knowledge and critical thinking about climate change. Find out how they organized the learning across their biology and English classes and how their students responded. Go away with new ideas for your own cross curricular unit and with new inspiration for educating ourselves and our students about the climate crisis facing us. Presenter Karen Zaccor, a Biology teacher and Presenter Jesse Speth, an English teacher, collaborated to give their students at Uplift Community High School the opportunity to approach critical climate issues from two perspectives.

Surviving In-School Suspension: the Social Emotional Connection
How can we truly promote literacy to students who are struggling with social emotional issues that affect their behavior and remove them from the classroom? In this session, Melanie shares snapshots from her unit Learning from Your Mistakes, an independent reading workshop she implemented with students during In-School Suspension (ISI). The unit came from a need to assist students with multiple infraction issues to connect with actual text that relates to issues they face and helps them develop problem solving strategies they could use in their own lives. She will share how this unit allows students to use books to reflect on their own situation and behavior as they build individual social and emotional skills and self-knowledge. Participants will explore ways to connect to the trials of this generation, support social emotional learning, and promote literacy engagement. Presenter Melanie Lopez has a two Master’s degrees—one in Adult Education and a second Education Administration. She is now pursuing a third Master’s through Northeastern Illinois University and a Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction through the University of Phoenix. She has taught at Foreman College and Career Academy in
the Belmont-Cragin community since 2004. She previously taught English as well as AVID. She currently serves as Dean of Interventions at Foreman where she runs the In-School Suspension Program. She is married and mother of twenty-month twin girls. She loves being a mother and an educator even at home.

**Whose Stories Need to be Told?**
What does it take to create a more fair and just world? Whose stories need to be told to create more justice? What role can I play? These are just some of the essential questions our incoming 8th graders grappled with during the 4-week GEAR UP Summer Academy focused around the theme of social justice. Our GEAR UP students spent their summer at DePaul University or at Loyola University digging into Congressman John Lewis’ graphic novels *March Book One* and *March Book Two*. Students asked questions and gathered data to further investigate the various struggles for justice through an independent novel that embraced a social justice issue, all while connecting their learning to today’s world. This hands-on workshop will provide an overview of the social justice unit and take you through a frontloading activity, which sets the stage for inquiry. Lots of great material to be shared!

**Presenter Kristy Papczun** has taught middle school language arts in CPS since 2007 and this was her fifth summer with the GEAR UP Summer Academy, teaching literacy. Currently she is in full-time graduate school at UIC, working toward a masters in Educational Policy Studies. **Presenter Stephanie Gates** is a veteran educator with more than 20 years’ experience in CPS. Primarily a Language Arts teacher, she has also taught Social Studies, Science, Journalism, Multicultural Studies and Creative Writing. She is currently the Creative Writing teacher for students in grades K-8 at Hampton School. When she is not teaching, Stephanie enjoys blogging and writing memorable obituaries. **Presenter Demetrius I Young** is a Reading Teacher at Marquette School of Excellence specializing in enrichment, nurturing and developing future leaders. He is committed to bridging the gap between academics and social justice awareness for urban school scholars.

**Friday “What’s Hot” Workshops**
You will be assigned to one Friday workshop based on availability from your top 4 choices.

**Chicago Communities and Youth: Shifting the Narrative**
NEIGHBORS BRACE FOR CHICAGO VIOLENCE. 42 PEOPLE SHOT, 7 KILLED IN CHICAGO WEEKEND VIOLENCE.
If you live in Chicago, or anywhere in the United States even, this is the narrative that you are used to hearing about the city. But is this the whole story? Media often uses the deficit-model to talk about Chicago communities and youth. What are they leaving out? Get a taste of the Inquiry and Design Institute, a week long collaborative
professional development experience that prepares teachers and staff to implement innovative summer programming for GEAR UP students. Experience the Inquiry and Design Cycle to dig deeper into thinking about which stories are told and which need to be told to in order to create more justice in this city. Use found poetry to create a counter narrative that gives voice to our youth and their communities.

**Presenter Crystal Pfeiffer** was born and raised in the Albany Park neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois. She attended DePaul University, where she earned a BA in World Language Education K-12 for Spanish in 2010. She also received her Master’s in Cultural and Educational Policy Studies from Loyola University in 2014. Her Master’s thesis entitled “Culture Wars: A Quest for Justice in Arizona” focused on questions of justice relating to the lack of diversity in school curriculum and the historical and current political climate that affects this. She taught Spanish and AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), a college-readiness course, at Roosevelt High School in Albany Park, where she began to develop an interest in issues and policies relating to education.

**The ChiTeen Lit Fest: Connected Learning Opportunities for Teen Writers**

Last year, more than 350 teens from across Chicago’s communities and literary genres convened in the loop for two days of headliners including Rhymefest, lots of visiting writers, teen panels, workshops, and maker stations to immerse themselves in the worlds of reading, writing, publishing, and performance. GEAR UP teens were there as performers and participants. This year, we are doubling our efforts with more offerings, more teens, and bringing in GEAR UP teachers to develop and deliver curriculum in support of this exciting endeavor. Come learn more about how you and your students can connect to the fest.

**Polly Mills** is a Pushcart Prize nominated writer and Story Workshop® director. She builds opportunities for teen writers and collaborates with their teachers. Because of her efforts, the Center for College Access and Success is a funded partner in guiding the teens and teachers who design and build the ChiTeen Lit Fest.

**Did you have time to read your books? The Power of Independent Reading**

Independent Reading has been around for a long time. We now know there are strong connections between independent reading and reading achievement, but what does that mean to you? What impact do you think it has on your students’ reading growth? In this session we will try to explore what current research is saying about this practice as an integral part of your literacy program. Wait there’s more! No double standards here as we practice what we preach and allow you to have the time to read the novels you selected for your YAL workshops.
Friday “What’s Hot” Workshops (continued)

**Presenter Lynette Emmons, Ed.D.** has been Director of the Center for City Schools in the Urban Institute at National-Louis University and Assistant Professor for the past 19 years. In 1996 she was a Runner-Up for the Chicago Area Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching and in 1993 was named a fellow of the Illinois Writing Project. She has presented at a variety of national conferences and has worked with many school districts throughout the nation for the past twenty-six years.

**Narrative Game Design**

Come play Hearsay, a student-created game from the University of Chicago’s Hexacago Health Academy. Learn some basic game design principles and get ideas for creating your own narrative storytelling game.

**Presenter Ashlyn Sparrow** is an experienced game designer with a passion for creating interactive worlds and telling deep and meaningful stories about the human condition. As the Game Changer Chicago (GCC) Lab Director, Ashlyn works closely with Center for Interdisciplinary Inquiry and Innovation in Sexual and Reproductive Health (Ci3) researchers and faculty to lead the GCC staff in the development of serious games, interactive learning experiences, and digital media art with youth and for youth.

**The Power of Our Own Stories - Questions as Gateways**

We’ll look at a variety of texts, such as Lives in Limbo, about undocumented students in the 2000s, and The Girl from the Tar Paper School, documenting one of the earliest student protests from the Civil Rights era. Another such text is We Are Alive When We Speak for Justice, containing high school students’ interviews with participants of the case that ended de jure segregation in California schools. We will review online resources and discuss possibilities for projects designed to achieve your curriculum goals while encouraging your students to think of themselves, their families, and their communities as makers and shapers of history, rather than consumers or victims of it. Participants should bring any texts or materials that would work well with their students to share with other teachers.

**Presenter Pat Gleason** has been working with teachers and students for many decades. Her particular interest is in helping teachers increase their effectiveness with culturally and linguistically diverse students.

**A Walk in My Shoes. . .**

Teachers! Come get a glimpse into the lives and lifestyles of GEAR UP parents as they support their children on their journey to post-secondary education. Deepen your understanding of the various transitions families are navigating and find out how you as a teacher can support the process. Each day students and families face a variety of difficulties and disparities that affect the learning process but may be hidden from
view in the school setting. Learning about everyday realities from the perspective of your students and their families can enhance how we make connections and how we can help light up the pathway to success!

**Rhonda Thomas** is currently a Program Manager for GEAR UP West at Michele Clark High School. Rhonda holds a B.A. Degree in Social Work and a M.A. in Inner City Studies from Northeastern Illinois University and has spoken throughout the United States for organizations such as “Making It Count” a program that encourages High School students to prepare for college.  

**Akua Cason** understands the importance of education, integrity, and collective responsibility for youth. Akua received her BA in Psychology and her MA in Education, Inner City Studies. She has embraced, as her mission, the positive intervention in the lives of youth. She is currently an Area Manager for GEAR UP. Here she is involved in guidance projects for college preparation, and risk reduction strategies for youth and adults.

**The WE Movement: Aligning Literature and Service-Learning**

WE is a worldwide movement that empowers young people to make a difference. The WE Schools Programs provides a rich array of free resources for teachers (units, lesson plans, a teacher mentor, school speakers, and more) as well as a powerful approach to engaging students with service-learning through literature. By exploring issues taught through literature, educators will leave with new ideas, activities, and book lists that will help best engage students to become change makers. As an added bonus, you will receive access to an ongoing professional development book club experience, and GEAR UP educators will learn how to receive a free class set of books. Learn how you and your students can get involved in the WE Schools program.

**Caitlin Botsios** is the Manager of Civic Education and WE Schools Illinois. Caitlin works in over 668 WE Schools to ensure educators have access to high quality professional development on project and service based learning. In post session surveys, 100% of educators Caitlin has worked with agree that she is an engaging, entertaining, and informed presenter. As a member of the Teach For All Teacher Development Community of Practice, Caitlin works across the globe in education development to ensure that the best practices for teacher development are innovative, culturally-responsive, and shared.

**What’s Hot in Young Adult Literature?**

Want to know the books kids are eager to read—even willing to part with money to own? Our conference bookseller shares the titles that will make terrific additions to your classroom library. Kimberly has been the Community Relations Manager for Barnes & Noble in Geneva for the past 14 years. She provides a wide variety of services including fundraising for schools, storybook character visits, author events and book sale support for conferences.

**Kimberly Luthin** has an M.S. in Art Education, an M.A. in Art History and an MFA in Visual Communication from Northern Illinois University.
Saturday Workshop Descriptions

You will be assigned to two (2) YAL book workshops based on availability from your top 5 choices.


Reynolds’ and Kiely’s novel, All American Boys, provides a rich opportunity to explore the tough issues of racism, police brutality, and their personal and political impacts on people’s lives. In our workshop, we will demonstrate techniques for laying the groundwork for a respectful discussion of “hot-button” topics such as Black Lives Matter vs. Blue Lives Matter vs. All Lives Matter. These techniques can serve to scaffold students in building arguments based on evidence rather than received prejudices; and for researching questions that are relevant to students, including the history of police-community relations in Chicago and the growth of the Black Lives Matter organization as a 21st-century liberation movement. Equally important, we will show how revealing the multiple identities of the main characters in All American Boys serves to promote readers’ empathy for characters of different backgrounds.

April Nauman, Ph.D., M.A., Professor of Literacy Education in the Department of Literacy, Leadership, and Development at NEIU, teaches in the Literacy Masters and Reading Endorsement programs, which she invites all teachers to check out. Durene I. Wheeler, Ph. D., Associate Professor at NEIU in the department of Educational Inquiry & Curriculum Studies, holds a Core faculty appointment in African & African American Studies (AFAM) along with Women’s & Gender Studies. Her teaching and research interests include historical intersections of race, class, and gender in U.S. Education, practical application methods of critical race and feminist pedagogy, and helping teachers and parents foster more socially just classrooms and school environments.

Blow Your Students’ Minds: STEAM Activities based on Mike Mullin’s Ashfall

The cataclysmic eruption of Yellowstone’s supervolcano might be the explosive spark that ignites your students’ passion for learning. Join Northern Illinois University’s STEM Read (stemread.com) to experience fun, engaging, end-of-the-world activities related to Mike Mullin’s Ashfall. STEM Read creates free online lesson plans, interactive games, videos, collaborative writing prompts, and live events that bring science and stories to life. In this session, we’ll explore how you can use Mullin’s fast-paced, realistic book and STEM Read’s online resources to introduce everything from geology and math to visual literacy and ethics. Attend this session to participate in hands-on activities, share ideas, and come away with ideas to engage learners with STEM and the arts (STEAM).

Gillian King-Cargile is director of NIU’s STEM Read and the author of the Stuffed Bunny Science Adventure Series: engaging story books that incorporate NGSS-aligned STEM concepts. King-Cargile holds a BA in film production and an MFA in creative writing. She is passionate about reaching students who might not see themselves as future
scientists or as serious readers and helping to ignite their enthusiasm for reading and learning. Mary Baker is the director of SMARTspace@NIU, which provides free standards-aligned online STEAM learning opportunities for K-12 learners. Mary promotes student creativity through problem-based learning opportunities to help learners collaborate, engage in STEAM activities, develop innovative solutions to authentic problems, and make connections across multiple disciplines. Formerly, an art and technology specialist in Louisiana, Mary made her way north to Chicagoland. She has a B.F.A., M.Ed., M.FA., Ed.S., and is currently working on her doctorate.

Reframing Perspective and Examining Power in Darkroom: A Memoir in Black and White

As a young Latina immigrant to Alabama’s Black Belt in the 1960’s, Lila Quintero Weaver’s unique perspective to the struggle for justice raises critical questions relevant to all of us living through today’s turmoil: To what extent are we all witnesses to history and the messages it has for humanity? What lessons can we learn about others and ourselves through studying U.S. Civil Rights history? What stories from this time period need to be heard so that we can think more deeply about the role of ordinary citizens in creating a more just world? How can the graphic memoir, Darkroom, inform our conversation about what it means to bear witness to injustice?

In this interactive, inquiry-based workshop we will share stories, gather information from primary and secondary sources, join in collaborative conversations, ask questions, engage in inquiry stations, and make connections to today regarding the power of race, and the struggle to make real the ideals of equality and social justice.

Literacy Specialist Susan A. Garr, MA, believes collaboration matters. She taught high school English and film studies for 10 years prior to joining CCAS/NEIU. She works with GEAR UP teachers to develop Unit-for-Books Mini-Grant Proposals, bringing their ideas, passions, and excellent books into the classroom. Awed by the time, talent and energy that teachers put into their craft, she is on your side, hoping you will want to write a grant with her. Chris Johnson, Professional Development Manager at the Center for College Access and Success, has worked with the GEAR UP program for more than 15 years. She believes that it is more important than ever that as citizens and educators we stand up for justice in our world.

Hannah Arendt’s Little Theater: Setting the Stage for Philosophical Thinking

“There are no dangerous thoughts. Thinking itself is dangerous.” Hannah Arendt in The Life of the Mind.

In this workshop we will think alongside German philosopher Hannah Arendt to consider her concept of “the banality of evil.” Based on the Holocaust trial of Adolf Eichmann, we will compare an allegorical picture book, Hannah Arendt’s Little Theater, to the acclaimed Eichmann in Jerusalem, Arendt’s witnessing and analysis of
the famous Nazi war crime trial. We will engage in philosophical concepts through textual analysis and puppet performances, exploring the power of testimony and witnessing.

Kate Thomas is an arts educator, puppeteer and philosopher in training. Polly Mills is a Pushcart Prize nominated writer and Story Workshop director. She builds opportunities for teen writers and collaborates with their teachers.

El Club de Lectores Rebeldes: en busca del Libro Salvaje (The Rebel Readers Club: In Search of El Libro Salvaje)

This title is a Spanish language selection featured as a vehicle for developing and maintaining Spanish literacy, and for preparing students to earn the State of Illinois Seal of Biliteracy. The workshop will be conducted in Spanish. This book and workshop will be of interest to Spanish and Bilingual teachers, librarians, family educators, club sponsors, teachers and administrators interested in advancing Biliteracy for all, and folks like us who for years have been searching for non-translated yet accessible young adult reading material in Spanish! NOTE: This workshop will only be presented in Spanish.

Gina Gamboa is Director of Bilingual Programs at the NEIU Center for College Access and Success. Angela Barrera is a Bilingual Coach at Morton Freshman Center. Together, they have been collaborating for many years to address district-wide biliteracy in one of Illinois’ largest Latino high schools.

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving with The Martian

Author Andy Weir not only describes astronaut Watney’s struggles and inventive problem-solving tactics while he is stranded on Mars, but invites readers to discover the underlying science behind them through Watney’s understandable and humor-infused explanations. Amidst challenges that draw upon many topics and experiments covered in the high school sciences, Watney’s journey provides a template for the critical thinking problem-solver: decomposing major issues into manageable pieces, brainstorming and analyzing several (seemingly) possible solutions, and making plenty of mistakes while learning critical lessons from them. We’ll read excerpts from the book and pair them with similar hands-on problem-solving activities that are great for science classes.

Germania Solorzano has taught in a variety of classroom settings for the last 20 years. When not working, she’s writing, reading, and nerding out on the possibilities of the arts and sciences. Steve Bonomo has a background in Mechanical Engineering and has taught high school math and science both in the U.S. and in Tanzania as a Peace Corps Volunteer. He loves turning trash into STEM activities and connecting science to all other disciplines.
Silenced Voices Heard Through Verse: Silver People: Voices of the Panama Canal

Join me as we read, listen to, perform, discuss, and understand the verse novel. We will bring this genre alive for young people who may know little or nothing about the Panama Canal whose expansion was celebrated this year. The building of the Panama Canal has been considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World, yet the stories of tens of thousands of black and brown people who died to make it possible, have been left untold. Their lives and stories matter.

Beverly Rowls has provided professional development support for literacy instruction to Chicago and Illinois area teachers for over twenty years. An avid reader and student, Beverly studies both historical events and informational texts that she then uses as fodder for creating relevant and motivational curricula for both youth and adults. In addition, she finds reading literature from diverse cultures to be both fulfilling and enlightening. Teaching is one of her most endearing endeavors.

Bullies Past and Present in Dear Bully and Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass

Bullies are everywhere these days, and we all need to know more about how to deal with this growing epidemic. Our workshop will compare some personal tales of bullying by well-known authors in Dear Bully with the fictional experiences of Piddy, the Latina teenager who is tormented by “mean girl” Yaqui Delgado in Meg Medina’s award-winning novel. We will explore how reading and writing stories and plays can equip students (and adults) for life’s challenges. Resources for combatting and preventing bullying will also be included.

Mary Massie, Ph.D., MFA, is a Senior Literacy Specialist at CCAS/NEIU and one of the founders of the CCAS Young Adult Literature Conference. She loves researching current young adult literature to find books with the potential to change lives for the better. Cindy Zucker is a Bilingual-ESL Specialist at the CCAS. She believes that bilingual people bring twice as much to the conversation!

Register at yal.c4cas.org

When you register, you will indicate your top five preferences for workshops. Depending on availability, we will place you in two of these workshops. Participants are encouraged to register on-line by October 1st to get the workshops they prefer. If registration is received after October 7th, conference participation cannot be guaranteed. Register at yal.c4cas.org. Staff at non-partnership schools may attend for $450 per person. Payment in full is requested by October 7th.

Once we receive your payment, you will receive an e-mail confirmation, then we will send the books for your two workshops. Participants who register and pay the conference fee by October 7th will receive books at their schools. For registrations after 10/7 you may need to pick up books at Center for College Access and Success (770 N. Halsted; enter on Chicago Ave.). We strongly recommend that you read your workshop books before the conference to get the most out of your conference experience.

Questions? Call Dan at (312) 563-7134