

Adolescent Literacy Thought Leader Awards 2018

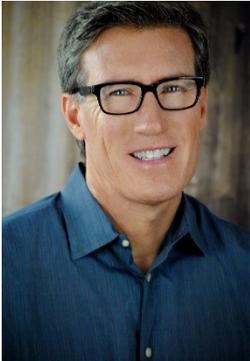
Conference Preview

ILA Annual Conference SRIG Session 0839: *Changemakers in Action: Adolescent Literacy Thought Leader Award Recipients Lead Us into the Future*

Saturday, July 21, 2018 from 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM, in the Austin Convention Center, 10A - Theater

We are proud to recognize exceptional contributors to the field of adolescent literacy. On July 21st, we will honor our Adolescent Literacy Thought Leaders at the ILA Annual Conference in Austin, Texas. Here's a preview of what our honorees will share.

The best teaching is responsive Kelly Gallagher



Compliant reading and writing is not the same thing as engaged reading and writing. So how do we move students from simply completing assignments to kindling their engagement with reading and writing?

The answer, in part, lies in responsive teaching. What do I mean by “responsive teaching”? Consider this excerpt from *180 Days*, a new book I have co-written with Penny Kittle:

Every year, we believe we must rewrite curriculum so it is responsive to the mosaic of our students and our changing world. Students are at the center of our work. We teach them, not curriculum. Even though we plan ahead for a year, our day-to-day teaching will vary as we respond to the learning of our students. We do not micro-plan very far ahead. Instead, we teach with urgency—deciding daily how best to lead our students to engage deeply and to sustain energy for learning.

We are excited by both knowing and not knowing what will happen each day in class. Some teachers believe planning is deciding ahead of time how things will go, which is true, but we believe it is also *planning* for what we can't yet know. We plan for the inevitable variation in unit design that occurs when you study students' work, enabling us to respond with better teaching. It is the alchemy of our ongoing active thinking about our students' progress and our goals that drives our instruction in class—that tells us what to cut and what to keep when a school-wide lockdown expands second period an extra thirty minutes and shrinks fourth period to half its size.

We map each year with careful planning, but we're always aware that if we keep our heads down studying a map, we miss our most alive teaching—responsive, dynamic, and exhilarating. A map shouldn't be so specific that it prevents us from using current texts. A malleable curriculum map encourages a hidden standard—relevancy—to be central in our practice. We want our content to matter *now*, because helping students see this relevancy increases their engagement and, thus, their achievement.

What does responsive teaching look like in my class? Each year, for example, I teach an argument unit. But I do not teach the *same* argument unit every year. Two years ago, we studied the upcoming presidential election, and students wrote arguments and mailed them to candidates. Last year, my students dove into the DACA debate. This year they are writing to lawmakers asking them to take action regarding mass shootings. As the world shifts, it is critical that my classroom shifts with it. My teaching needs to be responsive to the interests of those students sitting in my classroom. This means a subtle shift in my mind-set is in order. I am not teaching “stuff”; I am teaching kids.

To help foster responsiveness in my curricula, I am always on the lookout for short stories, non-fiction, charts, graphs, memoirs, poems, and video clips that bring relevancy to the classroom. These “seeds” prompt students to

read, write, and talk about timely and important issues, and I weave these seeds in even as I teach classic literature. When teaching *To Kill a Mockingbird*, for example, I might bring in poetry that discusses the events of Charlottesville or a chart that explains current incarceration rates by race. Yes, finding new seeds every year is hard work, but it is the kind of hard work that keeps me, the teacher, engaged year in and year out. It brings a freshness to the curriculum and to my teaching. As the cliché goes, there are two kinds of teachers in the world: those who have taught twenty years, and those who have taught one year twenty times. I strive to be the former by being responsive to the needs and interests of my students.

I look forward to sharing some more of this thinking with you when the ILA Secondary Reading Group meets on Saturday, July 21, 2018 at the annual convention in Austin, Texas. I hope to see you there!

Follow Kelly on Twitter @KellyGToGo and visit him at www.kellygallagher.org.

Nominate a future Adolescent Thought
Leader with [this nomination form!](#)

From *Change Maker* to *Challenge Taker*: A Literacy Project for You and Me

Donna E. Alvermann, Ph.D.

The theme of this year's ILA Conference—Be a Changemaker—inspired me to title my talk for the Secondary Reading Interest Group (SRIG) along similar lines. Below is a brief overview of what “From *Change Maker* to *Challenge Taker*: A Literacy Project for You and Me” will entail. But first, I would like to express my appreciation to the SRIG membership for nominating me as one of two Adolescent Literacy Thought Leaders for 2018. It is also a pleasure to be giving this talk in Austin, Texas, where I began my career as an educator in the early 1960s.



My current research focuses on young people's digital literacy practices and silent reading—a combination I view as intricately linked to the type of work adolescents are able to accomplish online if they have their teachers' support and access to the internet. As a literacy teacher educator at the University of Georgia, I try to support secondary reading teachers in my state as they work to incorporate digital literacies and silent reading instruction (with an emphasis on reading critically) in a curriculum that at times may have given short shrift to these important elements.

The metaphor I plan to use in pulling together my experiences as both researcher and teacher (so that they have potential application for SRIG members) is *pentimento*. Here, I draw from social activist and dramatist Lillian Hellman's (1973) description of that term:

Old paint on canvas, as it ages, sometimes becomes transparent. When that happens it is possible, in some pictures, to see the original lines: a tree will show through a woman's dress, a child makes way for a dog, a large boat is no longer on an open sea. That is called pentimento because the painter "repented," changed his mind. Perhaps it would be as well to say that the old conception, replaced by a later choice, is a way of seeing and then seeing again. (Hellman, 1973, p. 3)

The following three snippets provide a chronological glimpse of how I have used *pentimento* to move from what Colleen Patrice Clark (2018), the managing editor of *Literacy Today*, calls an educator who has the power to

transform young people's lives to one who actually takes *responsibility* for doing so. While I do not claim to have achieved full success in that journey, I have learned from mistakes along the way that keep me humble and willing to take on the next challenge. These mistakes-turned-into-tips will be shared as part of my talk.

Snippet One

My initial venture into the digital realm came with the publication of *Adolescents and Literacies in a Digital World* (Alvermann, 2002), which was made possible by Colin Lankshear, Michele Knobel, Chris Bigum, and Michael Peters who were at the time the general editors of a Peter Lang series known as New Literacies and Digital Epistemologies. This edited volume had as its goal "the broadening of the term *literacies* to include the performative, visual, aural, and semiotic understanding necessary for constructing and reconstructing print and nonprint-based texts" (p. viii). The authors who contributed chapters to this volume reinforced the need for critical media literacy strategies that provide a means of examining unexplored assumptions on the web.

Snippet Two

Reading is no longer constrained to black markings on a white background or vice versa if you prefer the opposite contrast on your digital devices. Multimodal literacies are taken up as naturally by young people today as language-based communications were a generation or so ago. In fact, Rachel Sanders, one of my doctoral advisees at the University of Georgia, will have defended her dissertation in a format solely outside the written word at the Georgia Museum of Art on April 5, 2018. I will share slides of her dissertation titled "[Text]ture: Weaving Together an Understanding of Literacies" during my talk.

Snippet Three

An in-press article by Jon Wargo of Boston College, a scholar in our field who has researched "how sound allows us to hear, listen, and write against injustice," provided the impetus I needed to take a personal step toward ratcheting up my move from change maker to challenge taker. If this latest move comes off as planned, I will have something to share with you in Austin that may get you to thinking of ways to use *pentimento* in your own classroom or in a professional growth seminar that you are responsible for planning and implementing. Even if not completely perfected by July 2018, the "surprise" I have in mind will be an honest attempt to answer the call for action in teaching adolescent literacy using critical silent reading in a digital era (Alvermann, 2018).

Stay tuned, and see you soon!

References

- Alvermann, D. E. (Ed.). (2002). *Adolescents and literacies in a digital world*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Alvermann, D. E. (2018). The optimism of uncertainty: A call to action. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 61(5), 581-584.
- Clark, C. P. (2018). Driving change at ILA 2018. *Literacy Today*, 35(5), 2.
- Hellman, L. (1973). *Pentimento: A book of portraits*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown.
- Sanders, R. K. (2018, April 5). [Text]ture: Weaving together an understanding of literacies. Artist Statement. Exhibition at the Georgia Museum of Art, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA.
- Wargo, J. M. (in press). #SoundingOutMySilence: Reading a LGBTQ youth's sonic cartography as multimodal (counter)storytelling. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*.

Adolescent Thought Leader Awards

2015

Doug Buehl, Wisconsin
Carol Jago, California
Jeff Wilhelm, Idaho

2016

Douglas Fisher, California
Nancy Frey, California

2017

Judith Irvin, Florida
Cris Tovani, Colorado

Secondary Reading Interest Group Officers 2017-18

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SRIG Business

We still await changes in the membership process from ILA that will allow co-registration in Interest Groups and Affiliates when people join or renew. In the meantime, please renew your SRIG membership or join us now by following this link to the [SRIG website](#). Use PayPal or send a check as indicated. Thank you!

You may also join at the Secondary Reading Interest Group meeting in Austin! Bring your checkbook or \$10 cash and we'll give you a receipt onsite.

Your \$10 annual dues keep things going! Expenses associated with a SRIG session or the website, special recognition, and plaques for the Adolescent Literacy Thought Leader Awards all come from our members' dues. At \$10/per year it is a bargain! You get to be part of a network of likeminded professionals, support the work of the SRIG and get all communication related to the SRIG, two newsletters, and access to resources. Remember, you have to be an ILA member to be a member of the SRIG.

Please share information about ILA and the SRIG with adolescent literacy students and professionals you know, and encourage them to join. A membership form is included at the end of this issue of *The Exchange*.

Find us online!

<https://www.secondaryreadinginterestgroup.com/>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/AdolescentLiteracy/>

Twitter: @AdolesLit

Adolescent Literacy Institute Preview

ILA Annual Conference Institute 07: *Let's Talk About That! How Purposeful Conversation Improves Middle and High School Literacy and Learning Across Content Areas*

Friday, July 20, 2018: 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM in the Austin Convention Center, Room: 9C – Banquet

[Register](#)

Let's Talk About That! How Purposeful Conversation Improves Middle and High School Literacy and Learning Across Content Areas is the topic of our adolescent literacy institute at ILA. Carol Jago, Cris Tovani, and Nancy Steineke lead a team of exceptional adolescent literacy educators who promise to make this an informative, engaging session. Here's a sampling of what attendees will learn.

Good Questions Stimulate Engaging Conversations

Carol Jago

Asking good questions is at the heart of good teaching. The questions we put to students can either shut down discussion, "What action does Lady Macbeth perform continuously?" or open it up, "Why do you think Lady Macbeth repeatedly 'rubs her hands'?" The first question simply checks to see if students have read the scene; the second takes that reading as a basis for discussion and invites them to explore the significance of what they have read. Which question would you be more interested in responding to?

I want students to approach literature with curiosity. Too many approach anything resembling a classic text with nothing but fear and loathing. They don't believe they are capable of reading Shakespeare. They are ashamed of their questions. How many times have you asked, "Any questions?" and been met with silence? Few apart from your most confident learners are willing to raise a hand and draw attention to what they don't understand. Yet these same teenagers can deconstruct the lyrics from the latest album and the subtleties of a complicated movie with great skill. They possess the power of analysis but are intimidated by the questions we demand they answer correctly.

Everyone misses things when reading, particularly on a first reading. Good questions can draw students' attention to important details they may have overlooked. The trick is not to make students feel stupid. Good questions point the way toward understanding. And once we have asked a question, we need to listen carefully to students' responses. Sometimes the most unexpected response contains genuine insight, albeit imperfectly expressed. Ask the respondent to tell you more and then listen hard. This may reveal something that you missed.

"Ask the respondent to tell you more and then listen hard."

Questions are the keys to learning. They inspire students to look deeply into texts and, perhaps, to see more than they had ever imagined could be there. Composing good questions is the work of teaching. Listening to students' respond thoughtfully is one of its greatest pleasures.



Reading, Writing, and Talking about Text Nancy Steineke



The other week in the *New York Times*, there was an interview with Questlove, musician and author, about his connection with reading: past, present, and future. Here is the question and answer that most struck home with me.

What books are you embarrassed not to have read yet?

I read “The Great Gatsby” in high school, though I think maybe at the last minute I ended up Cliffs Noting part of it. (Still got a B!) I want to sit down and read it again, for real, with a group.

And no, it wasn’t the “Cliffs Noting” part that surprised me. It was the fact that Questlove thought reading and discussing *Gatsby* with others would be fun; belonging to a *Gatsby* book club is what would make a difference for him now.

Question: how are teenagers any different than adults when it comes to reading? I don’t think they are. In fact, almost all readers crave talking about text with other readers when it is enjoyable, thought-provoking, and non-threatening. Yet, we teachers are sometimes reluctant to turn over the discussion reins because we worry whether student-led groups will get along, include all members, stay on task, and dig deeper into the text. However, worry no more! Students *can* be taught how to successfully lead and refine their own discussions as they challenge each other’s thinking and celebrate their collective insight.

Join us on Friday July 20, 2018 as we explore how to coach students in active conversation. During Nancy Steineke’s session, participants will have the opportunity to participate and experience easy-to-implement strategies that first help student groups bond effectively while examining positive behaviors that enhance the group and the discussion. Next, we will dive into text annotation that captures a reader’s thinking but also propels interesting, engaging discussion. Then after our text-based conversations, we will conclude with some quick and effective reflection that celebrates a group’s accomplishments while also nudging them to refine discussion skills in order to make future discussions even better.

“Questlove: By the Book.” (2018, April 15). *The New York Times*. Page BR6 of the Sunday Book Review.

Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/10/books/review/questlove-by-the-book.html>

Talk as a Tool to Grow Thinking Cris Tovani

Have you ever noticed that when you want students to be quiet, they talk and when you want them to talk, they clam up?

My good friend Sam Bennett writes in *That Workshop Book*, “Whoever is doing the reading, writing, and talking is doing the thinking.” It’s so true. When I talk, I learn. To be honest, I never truly learn something until I get the chance to talk it out. Talk helps us learn. But talking at kids doesn’t help them learn.

Working ourselves out of talk time so that students can do it more, requires planning. But the pay-off is worth it. Students who get to talk have the chance to



rehearse new ideas. Talk allows learners to ask questions that can propel new learning. It provides a venue to explore new perspectives. “Talk” is a tool that helps learners figure things out.

At ILA this year, I will have the pleasure of participating in an all-day session with several esteemed colleagues. In our session: *Let’s Talk About That! How Purposeful Conversation Improves Middle and High School Literacy and Learning Across Content Areas*, we will dig into talk and how we can harness it to leverage new learning. During my portion of the day, participants will explore what makes talk productive and how we set can up systems and structures so that kids will talk about their thinking. We will dig into a little bit of the research to strengthen our resolve to encourage talk. In addition, I will share some tools that I use to facilitate student led discussions.

Systems and Structures to Scaffold the Talk

Getting kids to have purposeful conversations doesn’t take forever to teach. Actually, kids are quite good at it when we aren’t around to tell them what to talk about. Certain systems and structures support student led conversations so kids don’t find themselves bird walking or uncomfortably staring at each other. With a little bit of effort, we can scaffold student led talk so that small group discussions quickly become a tool to grow thinking. Here are a few ideas that we will explore:

Anticipate Roadblocks: We’ve all been in groups where there is someone who talks all the time. We’ve also been in groups where someone diminishes a comment we’ve made. Sometimes we’ve been stuck and had to figure out how to get the talk back on track. As adults, we know how to deal with these situations. Teaching kids how to discuss will help them well beyond school. By anticipating some of the roadblocks to student led discussions, teachers can decide what systems and structures need to be put into place to meet students’ needs.

Let Them Talk About Something Juicy: Vanilla gets boring fast. Sometimes it’s tempting to shy away from controversy. After all, the last thing any teacher wants is an afterschool phone call from an irate parent. But if we only let kids talk about safe topics or ones where the answers are already known, kids don’t stay engaged for very long. Provocative questions that are a bit edgy and don’t have easy answers gives students a reason to read, write, and discuss.

Plan for talk time: If we don’t consciously plan for students to talk, they won’t. When we plan how kids will talk (small groups, pairs, whole class) and what their purpose for the talk is, we are more likely to make it happen. No one wants to talk about something that has already been figured out or decided. When teachers and students have a plan for talk, it because a fruitful opportunity for learning.

Just telling kids to have an interactive, productive discussion can be easier said than done. In our haste to get everything done, it is easy to catch ourselves doing all the talking. Learning more ways to facilitate student led talk, helps kids their voice and articulate their thinking. They pay-off is while they are talking, we can learn what they know and need. I hope you will join us on Friday, July 20th!

Cracking the Literacy Code

Terry McHugh

Last month, I had the honor of attending the 3rd World Literacy Summit at Oxford University in England. Held for the first time in 2012, the Summit provides a platform for collaborative discussion and the sharing of information around global literacy efforts, with a goal of eliminating the literacy gap for the world's 757 million inhabitants that cannot read or write. As a global literacy event, one of the more unique aspects of the Summit is gaining the views and perspectives of a wide array of different national contexts.

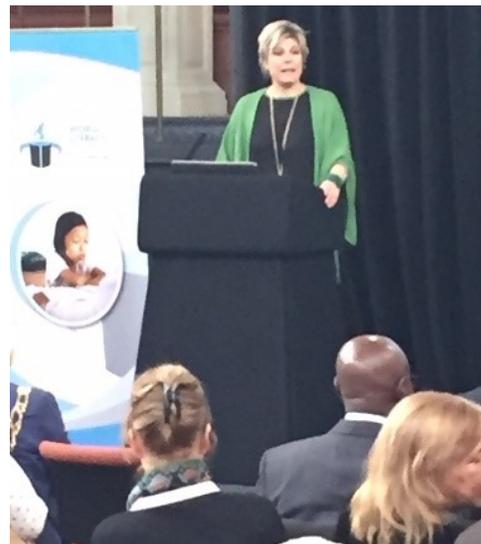
The opening keynote address was delivered by Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands, in her capacity as the UNESCO Special Envoy on Literacy and Development. With extensive experience addressing issues of literacy across the globe, Princess Laurentien has raised awareness and built coalitions around basic literacy as a prerequisite for inclusive, prosperous, and healthy societies. There were a number of critical ideas she shared about "Cracking the Literacy Code" and while I recognize she was addressing initiatives aimed at reducing the global literacy gap, I couldn't help but think of applications to my own work in American schools and the efforts of the Secondary Reading Interest Group.

"To reduce the literacy gap, we must confront the sentiment of shame."

For those committed to addressing the world's literacy gap, Princess Laurentien suggested that we must recognize and confront the "sentiment of shame" attached to illiteracy. Be it the internal sense of shame about one's being, the comparison of one person's perceived abilities to another's, or confusion born from conflicting societal value sets, shame has a profound impact on perpetuating illiteracy and poses obstacles to overcoming the worldwide literacy gap. Perhaps it's easier to understand how shame serves as an obstacle for an adult learner in a developing country, preventing him or her from accessing literacy services, but what role might it play in influencing adolescent learners in our schools?

For our own students, shame can be a powerful inhibitor to learning. The Princess shared ideas similar to what Thomas Newkirk addresses in his recent (and important) work *Embarrassment*, in which he explores the idea that embarrassment, or more specifically the fear of embarrassment, affects how we learn, and how we teach. Newkirk suggests, "embarrassment (or fear thereof) is one of those big facts of learning--or not learning--and [it] deserves attention. It interferes, inhibits, forces misjudgment... any risk, any uncertainty closes down student effort (2)."

It is important to recognize that as literacy educators, we have tremendous power to address the "sentiment of shame" and mitigate the force of embarrassment. To do so we must reaffirm that relationships are important factors when working with a student who might be feeling shame and insecurity regarding their perceived literacy abilities. We can create learning spaces and classroom communities with a climate and culture that supports all students. We just might be able to eliminate the shame and embarrassment our students may feel, by fostering confidence and by guiding them through learning experiences in a way that helps shape their



Princess Laurentien provides the opening keynote address at the World Literacy Summit.

identity as readers and writers. “If we can take on a topic like embarrassment and shame, we can come to a richer, more honest, more enabling senses of who we are and what we can do” (Newkirk, 12).

“Shift the moment of intervention to when students hesitate; don’t wait until they struggle.”

The suggestion here is not simply for earlier identification of students that struggle, but actually moving the point of response from when students struggle to the moment at which students hesitate.

As educators who work primarily with adolescent learners, this idea has profound implications for us. Many of us work with “at-risk” populations, and we know the moment of hesitation for many of our students occurred



World Literacy Summit attendees gather at University of Oxford to discuss global literacy

long before they set foot in our schools. Shifting the moment of intervention will require us to shift the focus of our advocacy. We need to do more to advocate for early childhood education, family programs and innovative ideas that take place long before the students arrive to us. We need to recognize that literacy attainment is about more than just schools; it’s about families and communities and education. We need to create a demand for solutions both in and out of our school buildings. I also think about my school’s commitment to building a complex RtI/MTSS structure, and wonder how that fits within the struggle vs. hesitate conversation? Might we be creating a system at the secondary level that offers “too little, too late?” In my school, struggle equates to failing. I don’t think my school is unique in this way. As I talk to colleagues across the country, it seems as if many schools are responding in similar

ways, creating complex intervention systems targeting students that are failing. Instead, might we focus on what blocks student learning before focusing attention on what interventions to use?

Teachers would be better able to serve all students by spending time exploring the complex relationships between student engagement, motivation and achievement. This would give us better insight as to why students might hesitate when faced with new or more challenging learning experiences. Understanding emerging research on maturation and how it relates to executive functioning skills can only serve to complement lessons designed to foster literacy skills across all disciplines.

“Enhancing literacy is a precondition for increasing employment, reducing crime, enhancing health, and ending poverty.”

Much of the work being done globally to address the literacy achievement gap is focused on the economic benefits of advancing literacy rates. In fact, the United Nations’ Goals for Sustainable Development (Goal #4) outlines an ambitious plan to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by the target year 2030.

The connection between literacy and economic advancement is fairly well established and is used frequently as a “motivator” for adolescent learners in the U.S. The argument goes something like this: “Kids who do well in school and go to college will earn, over a lifetime, significantly more money.” However, reducing literacy to a simple dollars and cents calculation clouds the notion that literacy is transformative and undercuts the power of literacy to promote social justice, equality, inclusion, and equity, in our schools and across our communities. In other words, advancing literacy is a public good. We carry this mindset as advocates for our profession, but might it be just as important to let this thinking influence our daily work, as a way to inspire the design and

delivery of our lessons. As the school year is winding down and I am caught in the whirlwind of end-of-year requirements and time constraints, it's easy to lose sight of that fact. The mental boost is welcomed.

Additional information about the World Literacy Summit can be located at <http://worldliteracysummit.org/>

References:

Newkirk, T (2017). *Embarrassment: and the emotional undercurrent of learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

United Nations. (2015). Sustainable development goals: 17 goals to transform our world. Retrieved May 18, 2018. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

Adolescent Literacy News & Resources

The 5th Manitoba Adolescent Literacy Summit will take place April 11 and 12, 2019!
Manitoba Reading Association Adolescent Literacy Summit <http://mrasummit.weebly.com/>

Consultant and author Sandi Novak published several practical blog posts on student discussion. Check them out here: <https://snovakeducationalservices.com/publications/f/bringing-discussions-to-a-close>

If you're working on an interesting project with students, student-teachers, teachers, or other adolescent literacy professionals, we would love to hear from you!

Send information about your activities in adolescent literacy to dfranciosi@projectcriss.com.

Canadian Network of IRA Councils, Canadian Special Interest Group, LEADER Special Interest Group, and the Secondary Reading Interest Group

Invite you to the



20th Annual Canadian Reception

at the ILA Annual Conference in Austin

Friday, July 20, 2018

7:00 – 10:00 PM

at Max's Wine Dive

207 San Jacinto Blvd

(2 blocks west of the convention center)

Learn about ILA's Special Interest Groups
Stay for the LEADER Awards and Reception

Light refreshments, cash bar, and great company!

The Illinois Secondary Reading League
invites you to the

42nd Day of Reading Literacy Workshop Exclusively for 6-12



Featured Speaker
Cris Tovani

Friday, November 30, 2018

9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

at the Tinley Park Convention Center
Tinley Park, Illinois (southwest Chicago-metro)

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