

Hot Topics in Literacy explores picture books, technology and more

by Tim Holdsworth - Tuesday, October 09, 2012

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Picture books have been an early foundation for childrens' imaginations and ways to see the world around them —but are they still relevant in a digital age?

On Saturday, Oct. 20, award-winning children's author Liz Garton Scanlon will speak on why there is still deep value and relevance in picture books for today's children as part of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh reading education department's 2012 Hot Topics in Literacy. Scanlon's keynote will include stories of her professional work, as well personal vignettes that have inspired her work.

The annual, one-day conference explores the latest issues in literacy, with breakout sessions for K-12 classroom teachers, as well as others in literacy leadership roles. Some of this year's topics include instruction that targets Common Core State Standards, what to expect from the next generation of assessments, integrating digital tools for literacy and learning and using literacy techniques to enhance math instruction.

Scanlon is an adjunct professor of creative writing at Austin Community College, and has received numerous awards, honors, and recognition for her books, which include *Think Big*, *Noodle & Lou* and the Caldecott Honor recipient *All the World*.

In her own words:

What is your connection to Wisconsin?

"My dad is a native Wisconsinite (he grew up in Sheboygan) and although I grew up in Colorado, my family moved back to the Midwest when I was 13. I went to high school in Elkhart Lake and got my bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Most importantly, I am lucky enough to come back to Elkhart Lake with my family almost every summer."

What inspired your career as an author?

"I started writing for children once I became a mom. I was already a writer — I'd practiced journalism and written for textbook companies and edited a poetry journal and worked as a corporate copywriter — but it was as a mother that I was re-introduced to children's literature. I remembered, almost instantly, what I'd loved about being read to a child, and it was one of my favorite parts about being a mother of young babies. I knew, before my first daughter had turned one that I wanted to be a part of the magic, intimate world of children's books."

Was there a teacher who inspired you?

"I was helped along the way by so many wonderful teachers, but my dearest writing teachers were

probably Ron Wallace, a poet at the University of Wisconsin, and Naomi Shihab Nye, a poet and children's author I worked with at the University of Texas. And, also Ms. Shavi, my kindergarten teacher who read aloud to us — book after book after book."

For more information about Hot Topics in Literacy, call (920) 424-4444 or send an email to reading@uwosh.edu.

To register, go to uwosh.edu/go/hot_topics. Conference registration includes lunch and on-campus parking will be available for free.