



IRL Newsletter

February 2021 ISSUE 12

Our Mission:

To empower individuals of all abilities to take charge of their own learning and lives, making it possible for them to be competent, caring and contributing members of society; and to provide learning opportunities for families, professionals, and communities to support those efforts.

In the Spotlight! A Writer, Editor, and Publisher Among Us...



Steven Thompson is the Associate Director at Almansor Academy. He's been with IRL for two years and he just published his very first book, *Aquafunkapus and the Macrocosm of Mayhem*.

What inspired you?

I've been a writer for about twenty years now. I just simply love the process of writing and putting words on a paper, ideas, concepts, etc., but I never published anything. I've taken a lot of classes, I've written a lot of material as a working creative screenwriter, and have participated in different contests to be inspired, but I never pushed myself to take it the next level.

Every November there's a National Novel Writing Month where you write 50,000 words. I've done this for six years in a row now, but it wasn't until the beginning of 2020 I told myself... "Steve, you keep filling up your google drive with work, so why don't you publish something? Why don't you put something out there, something that you've done so people can see it, can read it?"

One day, one of the people in my writing work group told me that she was starting her own writing workshop and that at the end of the workshop I could publish my book on Amazon. So I said, "I am in!"

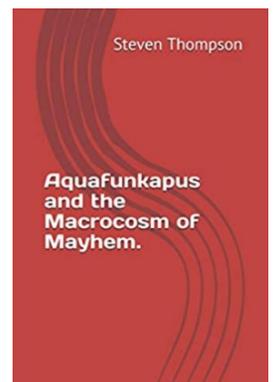
What have you learned through the whole process?

This whole writing process helped me to develop a better me. I feel I am happier and see things from a different perspective. It gave me an internal calm and definitely helped me to become a better writer. I wake up every day recharged, fresh, with a clear vision of what needs to be done, and always ready to give my 110% at IRL helping others to achieve their goals... because that's what we do at IRL, right? We empower our students to take charge of their own learning and lives while supporting those efforts. I see this whole writing experience as a tool that keeps me focused on my job while also giving me an outlet, which grounds me. So yes, I'd say that becoming a better version of myself is a result of my writing experience.

What advice do you have for those out there who may be thinking about writing their first book?

Go for it! Don't be afraid. Make a plan and write...

Write every day for 15 minutes. Set up a word count and don't edit yourself; don't spell check; do nothing else but write for thirty days... put your words on paper. Then go back and start editing. There are two different processes: the writing process and the editing process, and you can't do both at the same time. A common mistake is that people try to write and edit at the same time, but you cannot edit on a blank page, so just focus on the writing process. No matter how bad it is, how horrible it is, or if your first draft stinks, just write, write, write. Don't lose momentum... write, write, write; show it to people and be open to criticism; fix it and keep writing. It is truly a wonderful and rewarding experience at all levels.



2021 Started Stronger than Ever!

South Pasadena Grocery Outlet

South Pasadena Grocery Outlet have been great partners by hiring our students and adult clients and donating food to our families. Now the owners, Ernesto and Karina, will be giving us 10% back of every purchase over \$20 at their store through 4/1/21. They have created a laminated card that can be shown at the time of checkout to ensure that IRL receives 10% of your purchase.

If you would like to help raise funds for IRL programs and receive a card through the mail, please reach out to Gabriel Vazquez at gvazquez@redesignlearning.org. The more we all spend at South Pasadena Grocery Outlet, the more money they will donate! Remember, this promotion is valid ONLY at the South Pasadena location at the corner of Huntington and Fremont.



Photo Credit:
South Pasadena Review

San Gabriel Chamber of Commerce

IRL recently became a member of the San Gabriel Chamber of Commerce (SGCC), which has quickly benefitted our community. Sandy Rosco, SGCC Executive Director, immediately jumped into action, connecting us with local businesses. As a result of these connections, local businesses have already hired some of our TAS clients. We are also working to partner with Frida Pickles, a San Gabriel flower shop to create a new learning program for all of our students and adults with special needs. Beyond connections, Sandy has donated 6,000 masks and hand sanitizer to IRL, some of which have already been distributed to clients, families, and staff.



Thank you Sandy Rosco and SGCC for your support of the Institute for the Redesign of Learning. We are looking forward to continued collaboration as we build a better tomorrow for the community we serve.

Black History Month

Black History Month is an annual celebration of the achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. history. Also known as African American History Month, the event grew out of “Negro History Week,” the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month.



Ruby Bridges

10 Ways you can Celebrate Black History Month:

- Learn about Ruby Bridges
- Support a Black business
- Donate to a Black organization
- Spend time with a Black elder in your community
- Read a book by a Black author
- Learn about an unsung hero of Black history
- Explore Black Music
- Call out racism and prejudice in your community
- Read Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech
- Read a biography of an influential Black figure

Ways You Can Help...

To help support our work at Westmoreland Academy and all of our programs supporting children and adults on-campus and at home, please consider donating to IRL or a specific program.

[Donate Here!](#)

Connect with us!



Follow IRL @redesignlearning
#WheresIRL