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If we are willing to dig a little deeper, we can uncover some powerful data to inform our practices.

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Visit <http://knowledgerquest.aasl.org> to post your thoughts on this issue.
Every tribe needs a playbook. A playbook provides optimal sets of circumstances to achieve your goals. I know some of you may be thinking of sports as having cornered the market on playbooks, but I have seen the positive impact of playbooks far beyond my beloved Alabama Crimson Tide football and gymnastics teams. My mom has rediscovered the joys of quilting through the books her quilters’ guild members share with one another through a lending library. I learned to play the saxophone by spending time playing through workbooks outside of class because I was not able to have private lessons. When I joined the talented and hard-working tribe of school librarians, I looked to AASL for the tribal playbook, and I continue to be supported by a trove of resources that help me achieve my goals.

November 2017 has been highlighted on my calendar for years—literally—because I knew this month marked the culmination of a multi-year research project that will catapult our profession to new heights. A tenacious editorial board of seven AASL members has been using research-based best practices to create our National School Library Standards. This group has had the opportunity to work alongside a seven-member task force creating an ambitious implementation plan for these research-based standards—a plan that is sure to strengthen the impact of the new standards. The work of these fourteen AASL members produced what I think of as my best-practices playbook for school librarianship.

As a new school librarian, AASL’s 2007 Standards for the 21st-Century Learner provided a playbook that overwhelmed me at first. I would read sections of the standards time and again, and realize that someone in library school forgot to give me a superhuman pill. Then, as I got to know and work with the faculty at my new school, my colibrarian Marnie Utz and I were fortunate to have very early success with coteaching a class taken by every high school freshman. We spent hours before, during, and after school making sure our instruction accomplished what was needed while communicating all of the ways the school library could meet students’ needs. If we could instill that in freshmen, we would be able to build upon that foundation for years to come. Looking back, I would give my colibrarian and me a thumbs-up for being instructional partners, teachers, and information specialists during that month-long unit. However, I would have to give myself a thumbs-down in program administration and leader during that time. It took a while for me to realize the power of the standards, but once I did, that power changed the way I approach my work in this fulfilling profession.

AASL’s National School Library Standards are a research-based playbook of best practices for the many roles school librarians have the great good fortune of playing for their communities each day. If you’re like me you look around and say, “Wow, she is doing it all!” or “How does she have time to sleep?” I have two things I ask you to remember. First, if you are setting and making progress toward goals that are student achievement-oriented and support your faculty and administration, then I guarantee you are showing your community the power of the National School Library Standards at work. Second, if you are setting and making progress toward goals that are student achievement-oriented and support your faculty and administration, then I also guarantee that you have profes-
sional admirers who wonder how you can do it all and wonder when you find time to sleep. There is room in our AASL Standards for you to create the school library your community needs while being the school librarian you are inspired to be.

I want to take a moment to lead a national round of applause for our standards editorial board and our implementation task force.

Editorial board members are:

- Susan Ballard
- Elizabeth Burns
- Kathryn Roots Lewis
- Kathy Mansfield
- Marcia Mardis (chair)
- Deborah Rinio
- Kathleen Riopelle Roberts

Task force members are:

- Judy Deichman
- Sara Kelly Johns
- Mary Keeling (chair)
- Kate Lechtenberg
- Ellen McNair
- Jeanie Phillips
- Joyce Valenza
- Mary Keeling (chair)
- Kate Lechtenberg
- Ellen McNair
- Jeanie Phillips
- Joyce Valenza

These dedicated members, along with AASL Manager of Communications Stephanie Book and AASL Executive Director Sylvia Knight Norton, have made sure our future remains bright as we work to provide our students, faculty, and community with the resources they need to succeed.

While we have our new AASL Standards playbook now, we are also fortunate to have wonderful voices from across our profession who are sharing their best practices for important aspects of our work in this issue. Thank you to guest editors Jennifer Boudrye, Kathryn Roots Lewis, Suzanna L. Panter, and Robin Ward Stout for pulling together a wonderful array of voices to inspire our work as we integrate the new standards and prepare for the second semester of our best year yet! Let's finish 2017 strong and bring 2018 in with passion and drive that show our communities how much we love our profession!

Steven Yates is an assistant professor at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. In 2017 he received the Lois Henderson Presidential Award from the Alabama School Library Association. With Karen Chapman, he coauthored the article “The Impact of Monographs Crisis on the Field of Communication” in the May 2017 issue of the Journal of Academic Librarianship.
As we prepared this important issue, we looked at best practices in school libraries and found many practitioners who, through various means, truly are preparing their students to be lifelong learners in the twenty-first century.

School Library Best Practice Requires Innovation

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These are exciting times for school librarians. This issue of Knowledge Quest coincides with an important AASL milestone; the new National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries will be unveiled in Phoenix only a few days after this issue is mailed to members. What an opportunity to look at best practice in school libraries!

We believe that we are extremely fortunate. We work with school librarians who use their wisdom and compassion to create paths that deepen student learning. Some of the school librarians featured in this issue are in our own districts, while others we have met through the network of library supervisors we know. Although they had NO sneak peek at the new standards, these practitioners are all dynamically shifting library practices that dovetail seamlessly with AASL’s new National School Library Standards. As we prepared this important issue, we looked at best practices in school libraries and found many practitioners who, through various means, truly are preparing their students to be lifelong learners in the twenty-first century. Despite the variety of approaches taken by the school librarians featured in this issue, we found one consistent commonality among these authors: innovation.

This issue focuses on best practices, innovations if you will, in four areas—four areas that we believe are integral to the success of reimagining school libraries. In preparing for librarian and library evaluation, step back and consider which pieces of data truly are a catalyst for moving your practice forward. Consider how you can build support and advocacy for your library. As you think about your library configuration, take a look at factors to ponder as you assess your school library.

When empowering learners and teachers, identify what really matters and what works to develop inventive problem-solvers and creators. Think about what learners will carry with them long after they leave your school. What do they really need to shape, contribute to, and change our world?

In building a culture of reading, learn creative strategies that ignite all learners, young and old, to become voracious, thoughtful readers. How do you really make lifelong reading happen? What if ALL learners read every day? Would that be a game-changer?

To develop learners who are adept in information and knowledge building, revisit your own practice to determine when and how you help learners use information and
create knowledge. Take a look at how the ideas presented in this issue can easily be adapted for your practice and your learners. How do we continue to shape our practice to develop learning habits that encourage thinking and innovation?

Most of you are about half-way through the school year as you read this issue. You are just now learning about AASL’s new National School Library Standards. The librarians whose articles are featured here provide unique perspectives that we hope you find intriguing, practical, and thought-provoking. Their ideas already fit readily with the new AASL Standards, as many of yours will as well. We hope that these ideas will inform your practice this school year and transform learning in your library for years to come.

Kathryn Roots Lewis is director of media services and instructional technology for Norman Public Schools in Oklahoma. She is AASL President-Elect and a member of the AASL Board of Directors, AASL Executive Committee, and the AASL Standards and Guidelines Editorial Board. She is also a member of the Oklahoma Technology Association Board and the University of Oklahoma School of Library and Information Studies Alumni Association Board of Directors. Kathryn is the project director for the IMLS National Leadership Grant for Libraries Learning in Libraries: Guided Inquiry Making and Learning and administrator of the multimillion-dollar Intelligent Classroom project for Norman Public Schools. She is available on Twitter @KathrynRLewis.

Jennifer Boudrye is the director of library programs for the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). Prior to joining DCPS, Jennifer was a school library media specialist and administrator in Montgomery County, MD, public schools and has experience working with students from PreK–12. Before earning her MLS from the University of MD, she worked as a web publisher, and radio talk show producer and host. Jennifer is committed to ensuring that all students have access to the best information resources and opportunities to develop expert information literacy skills for school and life.

Robin Ward Stout is the administrator for library media services and emerging technologies in the Lewisville Independent School District, a suburban district in the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolis. She is a member of AASL and is cochair of the Texas Library Association Legislative Advocacy Committee ESSA task force. She was an inaugural member of the Lilead Fellows program through the University of Maryland iSchool, and has published and presented on the digital learning environment at the state, national, and international levels. Her recent articles include “Digital Citizenship Education in Nine Steps” published in the July 2017 School Library Journal and “Digital Literacy: Digital Citizenship 2.0” in the November 2017 issue of School Library Connection.

Suzanna L. Panter is the new program manager for school libraries in Tacoma (WA) Public Schools. Suzanna was a Lilead Fellow, an ALA Emerging Leader, and active member of the Future Ready Libraries leadership team. She is a member of AASL.

Work Cited:
FEATURE

Best Practices in Building a Culture of Reading
ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY OF READERS in a Secondary Library

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Working with tweens and teens can be challenging. They can be hard to reach and sometimes frustratingly difficult to engage. As a secondary school librarian, I’ve often been asked about the philosophy and practices I’ve implemented in my library to keep students engaged and help them remain active library users. One of the things I love most about my job as a school librarian, first at a middle school and now at a high school, is the challenge of creating a fresh and engaging atmosphere that brings kids to the library and encourages reading for pleasure. I am determined to foster an environment in my school library that creates an open, welcoming, and safe environment where a culture of reading will flourish and grow. Building a reading culture at the middle or high school level doesn’t happen overnight, and stumbling blocks will be encountered along the way. Flexibility is key. Understand that some things you expect to be smashing successes may end up being your biggest failures—and that it is okay. I once had a principal who always said even if we fail, we are failing forward. This statement became my mantra for developing a culture of reading at my school.

My Story
Over winter break during the 2010–2011 school year I changed school districts and started my first library job as the school librarian at Washington Irving Middle School in Norman, Oklahoma. Starting to work at a school in the middle of the year is hard. Routines and rules have already been established, expectations set. That spring semester I struggled to learn the collection, bond with students, and establish coteaching relationships with teachers in the building. The school had long ago established a specific day during homeroom as a reading day, and every student was expected to have a “prime time” reading—for—pleasure book with them at all times. I was ecstatic, what a brilliant plan! A reading culture is alive and well, and these kids truly love to read for pleasure. Except I noticed a very disappointing trend: the hour before the required “reading day” the library would be overrun with kids checking out a book for class. Then the hour after reading in homeroom the library book drop would be overflowing with books checked out at the beginning of the day. Students carried books around so they didn’t get in trouble in class, but few teens and even fewer teachers were actually reading for pleasure during this time.

A handful of teachers enforced the mandatory reading day for their students and modeled reading for pleasure by reading themselves during this time period. It was not that my school’s teachers were anti-reading. The situation was that the purpose behind having teachers read as well and the importance for having students read for pleasure had not been emphasized in several years. The tradition still stood, but the reasons behind it had been lost. By the end of the school year I had identified several library rules and procedures that I felt kept students from loving the library and reading for pleasure, and I had a plan for the next school year. I had scoured journals and blogs and books and read everything I could find on teens and reading. I had ideas, and I was convinced each and every one of them would work.

Then came construction. The school (which had been built in the 1970s following an open-concept model) was to be renovated; walls were going

**EVEN THOUGH I DIDN’T REALIZE IT THEN, SPENDING A YEAR IN A “FUN SIZE” LIBRARY WITH ALMOST THE ENTIRE COLLECTION IN STORAGE WAS THE BEST THING THAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO THE LIBRARY PROGRAM.**
to be created, and the library was going to be a new flexible space with walls. The timeframe for construction had been compressed down to a single school year, and, as a result, for my first full school year at Washington Irving the library would be moved to a much smaller temporary space containing a fraction of the collection. In the long term, having walls and a new flexible space was great, but the immediate future was going to be difficult.

Looking back on my first full year as a school librarian, it is easy to remember feeling the entire year was a massive setback to growing the reading culture. Even though I didn’t realize it then, spending a year in a “fun size” library with almost the entire collection in storage was the best thing that could have happened to the library program. Having a tiny collection forced me to become innovative in finding resources. A strong collaborative partnership with the public library developed from that first tough year and continued to grow. Moving into a new innovative and flexible library space the next year gave me the chance to build a new program from the ground up and gave students a voice and choice in what they wanted in their library. Starting fresh allowed me to approach every student in the building as a potential reader who “lost” their love of reading during the construction, and I set out to rekindle that love in each and every student. As a result, the library evolved into a welcoming space for all. We made book trailers, tried our hand at a school newscast, built a Tardis for the Dr. Who fandom, turned the school into Hogwarts for an evening event, played character smackdown, designed wardrobes for our favorite characters through a fashion app, wrote fan fiction, and in the process shaped the library into the first-choice destination before, during, and after school.

**Essentials for Building a Reading Culture**

Renovation and redesign of the school that coincided with my first full year at the school made it easy for me to change things when the new library opened, but a new library is not a requirement for building (or rebuilding) a reading culture at your school. Here is my checklist of essential things to foster a love of reading in teens and tweens:

- a school librarian who reads widely and recommends current YA books
- access to books teens and tweens want to read
- teacher buy-in
- a willingness to adapt programs and rules to fit the needs of readers
- a safe and welcoming space for all, even if they aren’t readers (yet)

**A School Librarian Who Reads Widely and Recommends Current YA Books**

For me, this is the single most important factor in promoting reading in a school library. Reading what the students read gives you credibility and goes a long way in building relationships with the students. Teens and tweens have an uncanny ability to know when you are pitching books you haven’t read and do not intend to read. Be sincere in your recommendations and in your likes and dislikes. I struggle with manga. It isn’t something I love to read, and I am upfront with the kids about how hard it is for me to read a book from back to front with little character development. I always encourage students who do love manga to give me recommendations for purchase and series I should try to build my love of the format. I love romance novels and deliver this news with excitement and passion. Students need to understand they should never feel embarrassed by what they like to read or apologize for liking certain books.

Middle and high school students can tell if you are not genuine, and if you are not they will quickly dismiss your opinion and tune you out. While it is impossible to read every title in your library, it is helpful to know something about every title you purchase. Be upfront and honest if you haven’t read it yet. Be honest if you hate a book and tell the reason why. Opening up to kids and telling them when you dislike a book builds trust with kids and models critical reading. Explaining why you love or hate a book is a developing skill middle schoolers don’t necessarily have yet. By modeling how to critique a book—especially those I don’t like—I not only make my readers’ advisory job easier by eliminating the need for me to read other books that have similar elements, the process also promotes critical thinking and pushes kids to develop an argument. One of the most successful book club discussions I had at the middle school occurred when I booktalked half a dozen titles I intensely disliked. One of the teachers in the room loved them, and in front of the students we had a lively discussion about what I disliked and she loved. My original goal was to foster discussion about the titles and get an idea about what made others enjoy a title I hated. The end result was so much more than that. Because I identified specific literary elements I didn’t enjoy (I rarely like books written in second person but I can overlook certain flaws in the plot if the character development is exceptional), students adopted the critique...
style and became able to identify the things they love and hate in books. The end result? Better readers and better writers.

I often read only the first book in a series, but I know the release day for the next title in a series or next book by a popular author because this information is an excellent icebreaker with students. I keep track using the Goodreads and FictFact sites, even for series I don’t personally read. Almost every title I read has a sticky note on it with the names of several students I think will enjoy the book. I use my hall duty during passing period to follow up with kids about titles. Few things go further toward building relationships with students than seeing a kid somewhere other than the library and saying that you have a book set aside specifically for him or her, or stumbled upon a new series you think the reader would love.

**Access to Books Teens and Tweens Want to Read**

No one has an unlimited budget; narrowing down your consideration list to fit your funding can be an agonizing task. I constantly ask students what they would like to see in the library. I write grants to supplement my budget; I collect advance reader copies at library and reading conferences and offer them up to kids in exchange for a "sticky note review"; I read blog posts and watch book-related video channels and fill student requests to the best of my ability. It is not uncommon to come back to school after being out a day or two for professional development and find my computer monitor covered in sticky notes with book requests.

The year of the construction, the temporary library was housed in the teacher’s lounge. Students could have only one book out at a time because there weren’t enough titles for everyone to have two checked out. I worked with the teen librarian at our local public library to have access to new titles and multiple copies of popular titles for students to check out and read. The public library was a lifesaver that year, providing unfettered access to books to make up for the lack of selection in our temporary space. At least once a month the teen librarian came to my school toting bags and bags of popular titles for students to read. We worked together as a team to promote and booktalk titles to students, and those visits were an excellent way to highlight all the teen activities available at the public library. This partnership continues on long after the construction was finished. At least twice a year the teen librarian comes to visit and promote public library programming and booktalk new titles with me. This partnership is beneficial to everyone; the students have better access to books, more exposure to titles with a wider variety of booktalks, and feel more comfortable using the public library because they already know a friendly face there.

Having at least one friendly face can go a long way in making students feel comfortable in a new place. At the end of every school year I visit with my incoming students by going to the feeder schools for my middle/high school. I booktalk the state awards list, show pictures and video of the library, and field questions about procedures, activities, and books. I ask what their favorite current reads are and what they are looking forward to in moving to a secondary library. This is a mutually beneficial activity. My potential students have an opportunity to meet me and get excited about the new opportunities they will have at their new library. The visits allow me to get a feel for what my incoming class likes to read, and over the summer months I read titles students mentioned, but that I am unfamiliar with. In the fall I can connect these books with read-alike titles in the existing collection.

This outreach gives students who might be overwhelmed the first month of school an opportunity to meet me in a setting they already feel comfortable with and talk to me about what they want in a library. They already know when they walk through the doors in August they are welcome in the school library, and most have an idea of at least one book they want to read or activity they want to do. At the start of the new school year I want students to quickly connect to a familiar book when they come into the library. Therefore, I display titles I talked about or students asked about when I met with them back in May.

**Teacher Buy-In**

All teachers, not just English teachers, need to believe in the magic and power of pleasure reading. Students need the reinforcement that reading is something that adults do, and it isn’t limited to language arts teachers. At our school, teachers display laminated signs on their classroom doors on which they write what they are reading. Interactive displays that highlight books teachers love can be the best conversation-starters in the building. One of my favorite displays is created by asking teachers to list their top reads of the year and encouraging students to post their lists as well. Currently, I run a teacher book club for which we read young adult novels and then get together once a month outside of school to discuss what we have read. An unexpected benefit of the teacher book club is that teachers are actively talking about the titles we read; they discuss the books in their own classrooms. As a result, students come into the library wanting to also read those titles.
A Willingness to Adapt Programs and Rules to Fit the Needs of Readers

My library is a noisy place. It can appear chaotic at times, and you don’t have to look very hard at the students to see that not everyone is reading a book or appears initially to be doing anything that relates to reading or research. The library is student-centered, and students should feel a sense of ownership in the library. To foster this sense of ownership, I often break many of the traditional library rules. There isn’t a limit to how many books a kid can check out; there are no fines; and food and drink are allowed in the library. In the library makerspace, I freely allow the camera equipment, editing software, and 3-D printer to be used by any student who has met with me to learn how to use the tools properly.

For most of my time at the middle school I ran a very successful hybrid book club that met at lunch once a month and also maintained a virtual space. By offering up a virtual discussion space, students who were not comfortable speaking up during our face-to-face meeting could post opinions and participate as much as they wanted. We selected a genre or an author and then shared our opinions on the books. We had epic character battles and used fashion apps like Polyvore to create wardrobes for our favorite book characters. We made book trailers and wrote fan fiction. The goal was to get students excited about reading and books and to connect reading for pleasure with things in their life they already enjoyed. Out of the virtual space, several fandom groups flourished, and soon I had kids meeting on their own in the library to celebrate their love of manga, Dr. Who, Ranger’s Apprentice, and Harry Potter. The Harry Potter group grew so large that I planned a school-wide Harry Potter Book Night.
with activities and games connected to the books and held a read-along for those who were “movie only” fans and had not yet experienced the magic of the book series. As the popularity of writing fan fiction and short stories grew, I signed up for NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month) and for several years I had a group of students who met in the library almost every lunch period to write and share their work.

I let students check out books over the summer and winter breaks, and at back-to-school night, and whenever a student asks. I do all of those things not to be a rebellious rule breaker but because the students asked for them. If I couldn’t explain the reasoning behind the rule and the kids could articulate why doing something like eating lunch in the library was important to them, I abandoned or modified the rule to the best of my ability.

A Safe and Welcoming Space for All, Even If They Aren’t Readers (Yet)

I don’t believe we can have a community of readers until we have established a community. Making sure every student—whether or not students consider themselves to be readers—feels welcomed and at home in the school library is priority number one for me. I never pass up an opportunity while I am teaching to pitch a book that fits with the lesson. Books can be both mirrors and windows, and my goal as a school librarian is to make sure that all kids in the school can find themselves, both who they are and who they want to be, reflected back to them in the pages of a book found in the school library. If students feel welcome they are more likely to become library users, even if they are non-readers. I used to say to teachers that I have to get young people in the door before I can make them readers. I still believe that, but I have also come to believe that even if students never use the library in the traditional way, that’s okay. They are still library users and view it as a place where they have the flexibility and freedom to make it what they need it to be. One day after school last year I was shelving books and wiping down tables and bookshelves, and I found some graffiti left by a student. On the side of a bookshelf the student had written “I love to read” and “This is my happy place.” Exactly how I want my students to feel.

Shortly after the school year started in August 2016 I made the decision to accept a librarian position at one of the high schools in my district. My experiences during the 2016–2017 school year were extraordinarily similar to how I first started at the middle school. I had moved mid-year and came into a library being completely renovated and redesigned. I spent the remainder of the school year in a temporary space with limited resources. My kids from the middle school feed to the other high school in town, so I started at square one with these students. I’ve already discovered some things that worked at the middle school must be adapted to a high school audience.

As I write this, I’m spending my summer learning how to Snapchat book talks and planning which titles to feature on Instagram. I’ve asked my high school students what their idea of a perfect library looks like and have continued to plan additional ways to make the high school library dynamic and welcoming for all. The high school campus is immense, and the past school year brought temporary hallways and detours, making it difficult for students to find their way to the library. In response my co-librarian and I created posters with book covers and QR codes that connected the covers to our digital copies in OverDrive. Students had access to books even if they didn’t have time to navigate all the way to the library. Our faculty book club grew every month, and we already have suggestions for the new school year. We allowed students to check out books for summer break and introduced our students to the public librarians. We are laying the foundation for a new community and creating a culture of reading.

Amanda Kordeliski

is a school librarian at Norman North High School in Norman, Oklahoma. Her most recent publication is as a contributing writer to the award-winning website <www.abmceducation.org> where her research and lesson plans integrating World War II into middle and high school curriculum are published as part of the Understanding Sacrifice Program through National History Day and the American Battle Monuments Commission. She currently serves on the ALA Center for the Future of Libraries Advisory Group, the Young Adult Library Services Editorial Board, and the Young Adult Library Services Association’s Financial Advancement Committee. Amanda is the chair-elect and marketing liaison for the Oklahoma School Librarians Division of the Oklahoma Library Association and serves on the high school reading team for the Oklahoma Library Association Sequoyah Book Award. You can contact her on Twitter @akordeliski.
Using Parent Book Clubs to Build a School-Wide Reading Community

Kristen Deuschle
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What is a reading community? Examples from around the world are incredibly varied. There are classroom reading communities, county-wide mass reading events, and even evidence that French and Italian soldiers in the First World War formed reading communities in the trenches. History shows that reading communities are beneficial and dynamic. As school librarians, our goal is to discover what they have in common, and determine how to use the parallel tenets from each to create an ongoing culture of reading within our own schools and local communities.

A prevalent misconception is that reading must be a solitary endeavor. This view of reading creates an instant aversion for many teens who tend to be social creatures, spending hours “actively using social media sites to make connections with their peers, share stories and gossip, and voice their opinions on current happenings” (Heiting 2015, 30–31). A successful adolescent reading community in Illinois used this insight to design a program in which reading was a social experience. The high school English class began with a teacher read-aloud on the first day of school, and continued throughout the year, providing opportunities for students to interact with one another using blogs, book talks, and book trailers. The results were compelling. “The class engaged in meaningful relationships and social interactions tied to reading, and these connections mattered to them. Students took these connections seriously, and they authentically acted in ways to contribute positively to the reading community” (Heiting 2015, 31).

During World War I, reading communities were formed not only by educated officers, but by ordinary soldiers as well. “The habits of collective reading and reading aloud defined the reading community of the trenches. Official photographs show collective newspaper reading as part of the male sociability of the trenches, while reading aloud was also a common practice” (Lyons 2014, 54). Not only did the communal reading provide the soldiers with escape from the boredom and the misery of trench warfare, it also created a sense of comradery.

On the Same Page, a comprehensive community reading program serving families and schools around the Atlanta area, has a strong take on community reading. Based on data from national assessments, organizers conclude that when we read together, “we make better collaborators and problem solvers because we understand our world a little bit better. We become a community of engaged, educated, and empathetic individuals” (On the Same Page n.d.). The common idea that flows throughout these reading community examples seems to be the incorporation of positive social interaction and opportunities for discussion.

The authors of the article “Creating a Community of Readers” broke down the complex task of building a successful reading community by suggesting that there are eleven necessary elements of collaboration and community-building between school and home:

1. Create and use a print-rich environment.
2. Adults serve as role models who enjoy reading.
3. Make time for reading.
4. Create a sense of ownership.
5. Emphasize the intrinsic rewards of reading.
6. Make reading a social experience.
7. Create a structure of collaborative leadership.
8. Articulate values, goals, and expectations of reading.
9. Create effective two-way communication between school and home.
10. Sponsor special school-wide events that celebrate the value of reading.
11. Highlight books worth reading.

(Baker and Moss 1993, 30–31)

There is no better person than a school librarian to combine these aspects into a program that will nurture a community of readers from elementary through high school and beyond. My position as a middle school librarian led me to create a method for promoting a love of reading; this method was particularly successful for the parents and students at my school. I combined two of my passions—community outreach and reading for pleasure—into the Piney Grove Parent Book Club. The goal of the club was to provide easy access to good literature, while at the same time opening up a dialogue between students, parents, and the school library about books.
The common idea that flows throughout these reading community examples seems to be the incorporation of positive social interaction and opportunities for discussion.

and the qualities of a good story. The book club created the opportunity for parents to have another way to bond with their preteens who were pulling away and becoming more independent.

There are two truths that I can profess with great certainty. The first is that families are busier than ever. The second is that parents of middle schoolers are desperate to continue being an active part of their children’s school lives despite fewer volunteer opportunities, and the utter mortification their preteens exude when catching a glimpse of parents at school. These truths are what made this program work so well. Parents were able to volunteer from home and choose how to involve their children. I had parents read aloud to their middle schooler, practice echo reading together, listen to the audiobook version in the car, and simply read the same book at the same time.

The Piney Grove Parent Book Club was designed to be very simple. It was almost exclusively conducted via e-mail. At the beginning of the year, I would send out a welcome letter to all parents or guardians of students at the school, describing the book club and my purpose for creating it. I would also do a media blitz, including an article in the school newsletter, e-flyers, and messages on our school Facebook page and Twitter account. Those interested in the club were invited to e-mail me for more information. As soon as parents responded, I sent them the Parent Book Club Guidelines including:

• a recommended book list,
• directions for accessing and using our online library catalog,
• a copy of the book review form,
• logistics for checking out and returning books,
• links to book review websites, and
• suggestions for reading as a family.

Once parents requested a book or two, their child simply came to the school library, checked out the books that I had pulled, and took them home. A note was placed in the
Consistent communication was the key to making the book club a success.

Participants were not required to fill out a review, but many parents found it enjoyable, especially when writing it together with their child.

Consistent communication was the key to making the book club a success. E-mails were sent out every few weeks just to check in with club members. The messages included reminders, stories about how parents were making a difference, and opportunities to share or ask questions. The e-mails helped to keep the club members engaged. Many of them commented that my messages were the impetus they needed to continue making reading a priority in their homes. They looked forward to them and relied on the reminders in their busy lives.

Twice a year I hosted a Parent Book Club get-together for all who could attend. The goal of the meeting was to get to know each other better, and to provide the opportunity for growth. In a comfortable and casual coffee-klatch atmosphere we laughed, learned about each other, and talked about the books we had read. A book club is not only an opportunity for parents to nurture relationships with their kids, it is a wonderful opportunity for school librarians to build relationships with families.

Dozens of moms and dads signed up to be a part of the Parent Book Club. Some chose to read books from a list I had compiled that included classics, award winners, and new acquisitions. Others chose their own books from our online catalog. Kids often urged their parents to read some of their favorites and vice versa. Reading the same book can be a great way to get a conversation started.

Each year, the word would spread about the Piney Grove Parent Book Club. In addition to dozens of parents, I had teachers, grandparents, and extended family members jumping on board. People who couldn’t check books out from the school library used the public library or purchased their own copies. Parents and students talked about the club outside of school. One day I received an e-mail from a local physical therapist. He told me that he had been hearing about the book club from friends, local families, and his patients. He wanted to know how he could join. That was the day that I realized that we truly were building a community of readers.

We live in such stressful times. The daily anxiety preteens live with is exacerbated by the persistent influence of social media. Building a culture of reading in a school community provides school librarians and parents with a powerful tool. Reading with others has social benefits beyond measure. It provides the connectedness so lacking in this digital age, improves relationships with others, and builds self-esteem. These benefits are everything that we want for our middle-schoolers and more! Try creating a parent book club of your own and watch the magic happen!

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FEATURE

Best Practices in Building a Culture of Reading
TODAY’S YOUTH’S VOICE ON HOW THEY VIEW READING AND WHAT “COUNTS”

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Encouraging Reading or Forcing It?

With the changes in school library spaces and school librarians’ roles, there has never been a more extraordinary time to be a librarian. However, one thing will never change even in these dynamic times; we are still the driving force behind strong reading programs and fostering that love of reading. We collaborate with teachers to embed reading and literacy into every content area, whether it is digital literacy or effectively using our print collection. We are the only educators on campus who are teachers to every student and every faculty member. How we wield this influence can greatly determine the outcome of the reading programs and culture as evidenced not only by the performance of our students on standardized tests but also by the lasting effects of reading for enjoyment and understanding.

Unfortunately, we have also seen the effects of “pushing reading” on kids. Students’ perception that we are “forcing kids to read” can sometimes negate any positive outcomes reading incentives were meant to have. To find out just what students think of reading, reading programs, and reading incentives, I sat with a group of students who had started up a library council at their local high school. To get a broader range of perspectives, I also invited siblings to come. These kids obviously love reading, but they also have strong opinions about how what they read is perceived. When fourth-grader Karmen (all names are pseudonyms) was asked about having to keep a reading log, she stated:

I feel that incentives do not motivate me because I feel like filling out forms with how many minutes, hours, and seconds I read is just a waste of time. I could definitely read 2,500 pages in a year, but I would much rather enjoy the book. It could have been better if we didn’t have to say the exact time and pages I read.

Emma, a senior and member of her high school Book Battle team, said:

My teachers made sure we read a certain amount each week, and the incentive was the grade we would get for it. I read all the time but never filled out my chart so I got bad grades for reading, so I didn’t really like that. Teachers should just ask students what they’re reading and engage them, rather than having them write down how many minutes they spent reading.

Are Challenges the Answer?

The question is, how do we create a culture of readers without driving them away? We want them reading; we want them doing the reading challenges for pleasure if so inclined, and we want them to enjoy the experience. How do we bring them into the fold of avid readers and keep them there? It is so hard to express the passion we have for reading without coming across as forcing our beliefs on students. Ideally, we want to let them come to the realization of reading’s benefits on their own. Accelerated Reading quizzes, class novels, and traditional reading logs are not working. In a recent study, nineteen third-grade higher-performing literacy students were observed to measure the effect of incentives on the AR program. According to the researcher, “Baseline was student AR performance during the first four weeks of school; the incentives (prizes) were given the next four weeks. Findings indicated that students’ attitudes became worse over the entire length of the study. Prizes included certificates, food, books, pencils, bookmarks, or anything that might be attractive to the recipient. The conclusion was that the reading incentives were counterproductive even though the number of books read and the scores on the test remained the same” (Stanfield 2008, 99).

Reading challenges are considerably more effective when the kids have a choice in what counts as reading. This generation has literally millions of things vying for their attention, and we cannot compete unless we offer what they want to learn, read, or explore. Isn’t this the original idea behind having libraries? Our purpose is nothing new—but our approach must be. Here is where we get to be that dynamic librarian mentioned earlier.

So how do we create a reading culture? In the past it has been by creating reading programs based on how many books are read, or how many pages, or how many words or genres, etc. We think this is giving kids choice, but as I found when talking to students, these challenges are not working if the goal is to create lovers of reading. Nena, senior and library council leader for her high school, claimed:

If a kid is forced to read a genre they don’t like for class to get a grade, they might not enjoy it, but if it’s for extra credit then kids might try to diversify what they read and actually try to read more.

Nena concluded by stating:

I would try to find books about subjects I was interested in and eat up the material because I was so curious and wanted to know more. Maybe if there had been someone who could provide me with the books or to be able to find more for me instead of me just finding my own books it would’ve helped me read more back then.
How Do Students View a Culture of Reading?

Most students surveyed attribute being a reader to being encouraged by a person, not a program. Gary, a senior, gave credit to his passion of reading to his parents. "We always had a lot of books at home…My dad was reading me The Hobbit when I was four." Thus Gary’s love for fiction was shaped. He credited his elementary teacher with discovering his love for nonfiction as well. In elementary school he read very little nonfiction until his teacher decided to pair her students with high school students with similar interests. "I was paired with someone going into herpetology because at that time I was very, very interested in reptiles. So we were mentored and taught about the subject. That was what encouraged me the most in informative, educational reading.” Today Gary is an incessant reader, library aide, and shooting for a perfect score on his SAT.

A member of a local high school library council Brad thinks a perfect reading culture is one in which “nobody cares what you are reading, as long as you ARE reading.” When then questioned if the quality of the reading material mattered Brad admitted that, although choice is important, quality should still be considered. “Reading poor writing isn’t going to make you grow much as a reader other than help you recognize poor writing.” Brad also was the type of student to breeze through reading challenges. "I would just log my reading to get the incentive, like tickets or prizes, but then I would never use them because, well, I was reading instead.”
What "Counts" as Reading?

Another question raised to the student panel was what kind of reading counts toward participating in a reading culture. Is this generation of kids actually reading more than ever, just in a different manner? Alexia, a senior and AP student, stated:

People are always acting like you are rude or not paying attention when you are on your phone. Most of the time when we are on our phones, we are looking stuff up. Usually I am looking up facts before I start talking.

Alexia also believes that fan fiction is overlooked as a genre. Whereas Alexia is one who got in trouble when younger for reading all night under her covers, now she says it is hard to pull that off with the pressures of high school, AP classes, and homework. She turns to fan fiction. It is easily accessible, and a lot of times they have short stories that are easier for me to read [during] breaks so I am not stuck in the middle of a chapter and can’t find out what happens for another two hours.

After talking to this student panel, one thing was very clear: they love books. They also love reading online but NOT necessarily e-books. When asked what they read digitally, Gary (the student who was read The Hobbit at age four) answered he read online forums so he could post things to incite arguments, as well as reading Gamer Guides because how else are you supposed to advance quickly? Of course, Alexia mentioned her fan fiction and Wikipedia. This declaration incited a very animated discussion amongst the panelists about the "Wikipedia Game."

Unfamiliar? Well, me too, so let me fill you in on what the kids are doing. They pick a random topic/page to go to in Wikipedia and see who can get to the page on a famous person first in the fewest clicks on hyperlinks. For example, they will pick the starting page to be "Berlin Wall" and the ending page to land on to be "George Washington," and whoever can get there in the fewest hyperlink clicks wins. It is their version of "Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon." This is a perfect example of what "linksters" now consider reading. Meagan Johnson, a generational expert and speaker, defines anyone born after 2002 as the Linkster generation. "We chose the term Linkster Generation because it is the first generation to be linked into technology from day one" (Blair 2017).

Whose Perspective on Reading Do We Honor?

As one can see, kids today are not always thinking inside the box, and by box I am referring to the square of white paper holding words in a novel. Another example to be aware of is the Hooked reading app. Hooked is a horror-story fiction app through which a whole story is told in text messages or chat format. My eleven-year-old son, to whom I was being one of "those people" by forcing him to read a few minutes a day this summer, asked me if this could count as reading. Of course, I checked it out before delivering a verdict. Interacting with Hooked isn't traditional reading—it is kind of hokey, yet it is also kind of brilliant as far as marketing to kids who don’t like reading. We have to start accepting what kids are reading may not be what we read. Downloads of Hooked went from "about 336,400 in October 2016 to 2,22 million in March of 2017" [emphasis added] according to Sensor Tower, a mobile app analytics company (Hartmans 2017). Amazon now also has a similar app called Amazon Rapids for younger children. Once again, we cannot compete with this if we don’t start trying to embrace what the millennials and "linksters" regard as reading. It really hits home when your child or a student asks, “Does this count?” Obviously, they are trying to define what reading is by our standards, not theirs.

We see the same discount of reading validity when kids try to read graphic novels for credit or pleasure. David, a seventh grader, stated:
There are large chapter comics/graphic novels with good qualities of new words and are more interesting and engaging. I think a lot of people would rather read a graphic novel over a full-length novel, and it is good for enticing kids to read. Graphic novels help in getting us to want to read.

To some readers graphic novels are arguably more engaging than traditional books. To truly comprehend the graphic novel, the reader has to engage the sensory details of sight in the graphics and the auditory details being spoken or expressed in onomatopoeias. The best way to explain to those of us who don’t get graphic novels would be to imagine yourself only listening to a movie. You would not understand the whole plot without the cinematography; if you watched that movie with no sound you would miss the plot as well. You need to absorb both to appreciate the film. The same concept applies with graphic novels. Readers of graphic novels are much more engaged than we sometimes give them credit for, and these novels are rarely counted in reading programs as pages read or as a book.

Readers today are not interested in one-size-fits-all definitions of what it means to be a reader. When asked if being a reader equated success, David replied:

My older brother has dyslexia, and it makes his head hurt and makes him sad to read, so my mom reads to him. I think that he likes stories, just not to read by himself. Being a reader does not mean successful in life or in school. You do not have to be a good reader to be good at math and science, outside of STAAR [State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness] and tests; people do not have to want to read novels to find good careers.

Einstein and other computer geniuses were not good students, but great thinkers and hands-on learners.

Rachael, a junior, shared:

I do think some people are more naturally inclined to read than others. I am very cerebral while my sister is more kinesthetic, so she enjoys active activities over reading. Being a reader does not make you “successful,” because success is defined differently by different people.

A New Perspective on a Reading Culture?

While reading programs and incentives are wonderful tools to encourage reluctant readers or to offer rewards to those embracing the challenge, keep in mind there are many kinds of readers and types of reading that cannot be measured. Maybe a reading culture isn’t how many pages have been read or if everyone is reading at an elevated Lexile level. Maybe it is about creating a culture where reading is in every aspect of life and just a given. Maybe as Nena believes, it is “people being able to read or listen to what they want whenever they want and not be impeded by stereotypes of people who read. Being able to enjoy what one reads and remember the feelings put into a book.” Or maybe it is “Talking about books like people talk about TV shows,” as Rachael believes.

After talking to all of these different students and hearing their perspectives, I realized that maybe some schools already have a reading culture and librarians just haven’t seen it and should start looking through the lens of a student’s perspective more often. We have a wonderful opportunity to use our influence to change how others view libraries, but maybe we, as librarians, should take the opportunity to change how we view reading as well.

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PERSONALIZING LEARNING

Think Like a Teen!
nager!

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Introduction

Several years ago, after distributing a prefab list of questions to teens, I considered how lifeless the students looked as they reviewed their choices for an upcoming project. In place of curiosity and an eagerness to learn, students’ faces reflected ennui. This lack of response wasn’t what I had imagined when I envisioned teaching research skills.

The creation and identification of high-yield practices for empowering students to think, wonder, and own their learning is a high priority for school librarians who value instructional leadership. Future-ready librarians are working to create flexible learning environments in which their students design solutions, consider possibilities, and share ideas. In these environments, librarians are learning with their students, preparing them to discover content in inquiry projects and delivering effective information-literacy lessons. The instructional practices described here are designed to create a culture of inquiry that foster a growth mindset and a love of learning for all students (Dweck 2007).

Neuroscience, New Pedagogies, and the Teen Brain

“The person doing the work is the one growing the dendrites.” Patricia Wolfe (2001, 187)

When student-centered learning experiences are the focus of our instructional practice with adolescents, critical thinking is the defining characteristic of engagement. Student-centered learning experiences are effective because students are provided with opportunities to explore, wonder, make personal connections, and interact with each other before teachers and librarians share what we know. Clearly, the length of time adolescents need to receive direct instruction has changed; teens are still easily rewired for new learning when they are engaged—that is, thinking—not just busy (Sousa 2016). To be a valuable guide on the side, we need to listen to and learn from learners’ ideas. In A Rich Seam, Michael Fullan and Maria Langworthy described the modern student/instructor partnership:

New or disruptive pedagogy is, by definition, student-centered. Teachers guide by attending to students’ ideas. When the work is engaging and teens have opportunities to make their thinking visible, then formative assessments occur throughout the learning process, whether or not technology is used. Educators elevate their craft when they design learning experiences while imagining, “What is this project like for a teenager?” and “Will each teen personally connect with this learning?” Teens need to participate in decisions about their learning while teachers and librarians implement lessons using compelling structures inside of larger, authentic inquiry- and project-based units. This article outlines a few of those structures—small changes can make big differences in student-centered learning.

Seven Students in the Room

Throughout the process of designing and implementing professional development for teachers and school librarians across all content areas, one thing stands out: transitioning from being a sage on the stage to being a guide on the side is best facilitated by creating a crosswalk between content standards and what

Figure 1. Guided Inquiry Design process (Kulthau, Maniotes, and Caspari 2012).
it feels like to be a teenager inside of a classroom in this, the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century—a time when information is ubiquitous and students need high-level problem-solving and collaboration skills to prepare for the future. Most educators today readily understand the opportunities of student-centered learning on an intellectual level. However, until one imagines being a teenager and identifies strategies to connect content with teen thinking and experiences, the experiences in library classrooms will continue to look and feel old-school from the perspective of students.

In rolling out professional development to teachers in a large district, the following is an effective metaphor for triggering the imagination of those eager to design effective lessons for teens:

Consider: There are always seven students in the room who know what you are about to tell them.
How might you modify your practice if you reflected on this each time you planned a learning experience for your students? How might you plan differently to capitalize on their knowing?

Consider, too: There are always a dozen students who have misconceptions about the information you are preparing to share with them.

Reflecting on these considerations prior to designing a lesson or unit has the potential to transform an instructional paradigm from one of teacher-driven to student-driven learning. Many students have some information—or misconceptions—about most topics when they enter school libraries as teens. Providing them with opportunities to discuss their thinking and share ideas in response to open-ended questions personalizes their learning experience and encourages their collaboration. Consider making the content more personal for them by providing these opportunities at the front end of a lesson before sharing any content with them.

In a recent ninth-grade inquiry initiative in our district, students explored global issues presented on the World’s Largest Lesson <http://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org> and were tasked with campaigning to raise awareness about or inventing a solution for one aspect of an issue. They were first prompted to think of opportunities they have to make a difference in their families, their classes, their schools, or their communities. In the Guided Inquiry Design process that was used (see figure 1), this discussion was included in the “Open” stage of their inquiry; it was a personal conversation and connected them to their upcoming learning experiences (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, and Caspari 2012). This conversation also provided opportunities for sharing their thinking on global and community issues.

In the next stage of the project, “Immerse,” students looked at and discussed compelling images depicting global issues, and noted their observations by jotting down their comments (see figure 2). In this process, teens engaged in conversation before discovering any content. Students were led to the understanding that there are no right answers or bad questions. It was clear from their observations that many of the students knew about the issues; some had personal experience with a few of them, and all were curious to know more.

In the next stage, “Explore”—still, no lecturing or assigned reading—students were asked to look at resources related to the issues and ask questions as they skimmed pictures and articles, writing down their questions in response to the prompt, “What are you wondering about this issue?”

These three stages, Open, Immerse, and Explore, are thoughtfully designed experiences, crafted to make sure that students engage with the content in personal and meaningful ways. By inviting teens to discuss and make personal connections to the content, the students in the room who already know about the content and those who have misconceptions about the content are provided with opportunities...
to share and grow. Through this process, their ideas are valued as part of the learning rather than as a tagline to the instructional agenda. These student–to–student conversations are formative assessments that will be valuable assets for partnerships between classroom teachers and school librarians. These conversations between students are also the infrastructure for teens to begin creating original ideas and building their resilience for the work ahead.

Creating a Collaborative Learning Environment

Teens need to talk with each other to express their current perceptions and insights. To analyze and grow new ideas, teen learners need to reveal and discuss what is on their minds in a collaborative environment. Most importantly, they need to communicate to transfer their learning into real-world, authentic experiences. A school librarian’s invitation for students to create meaning from evidence collected is one of the most important aspects of our work, and it is best accomplished in a collaborative environment. Small group student–to–student conversations, whether online or face–to–face, also afford librarians and teachers with partnership opportunities to grow and learn from their students’ perceptions. When we design learning experiences—and throughout the instructional process—it’s essential to recognize and appreciate that our students are not blank slates. Effective interactive structures extend beyond “activating background knowledge.” Letting teens express opinions, imagine possibilities, and exchange ideas and experiences before educators deliver content yields a classroom of engaged learners and creative thinkers. On the other hand, when students hear information before they engage in responding to a compelling question or before sharing with each other what they already know, their capacity to think critically about the topic and the overall quality of their learning experience is diminished. Learning doesn’t occur when students listen. Learning happens when they talk, think, share, and reflect. Let’s let them have the floor first!

When starting with a growth mindset, and believing that at least seven students know some of the content, these effective strategies for starting the conversation replace telling students what you want them to know.

Ask students to start the conversation with each other using robust open-ended questions that will help them personally connect with the topic. Instead of, “Who were the significant leaders in the ancient world?” try this: “What makes someone worth remembering?” or “What do you want to be remembered for?” (see Table 1).

In a lesson on website evaluation, begin by asking students to discuss with their tablemates the elements they are going to use to determine source reliability for an inquiry project and then share their ideas in small groups. As they share out with the bigger group, type their ideas in a slide for all to see. As an alternative, ask them to find authentic websites related to content-driven topics and then work together to create a rubric that will be used with a class of younger students. Their ideas will be interesting to you, and you will have engaged them in authentic work grounded in discovery and creation.

When presented with information generated solely by a librarian or classroom teacher, teens often respond as though they are checking off teacher requirements instead of engaging in thinking for their own purposes. When they are prompted to discuss, wonder, and think first, they own the work ahead.

Provide Engaging Prompts. Personalize Learning. Think Like a Teenager!

Recent studies on memory demonstrate that when learning experiences begin with activities that enhance students’ wondering and stimulate curiosity, memory for the content that follows is vastly improved (Yuhas 2014). Designing experiences in which students’ curiosity is ignited sets the stage for them to remember information and, ultimately, engages high levels of thinking, as evidenced in the work on inquiry learning by Carol Kuhlthau and her colleagues (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, and Caspari 2012). Educators’ introducing compelling essential questions purposefully designed to help teens personally connect to the content creates a groundswell of interest when facilitating inquiry projects. Table 1 contains examples of engaging open-ended essential questions designed to personalize learning.

Both unmotivated and advanced learners will be compelled to respond to the questions on the right in Table 1 because those do not have “correct” answers. The questions on the right will connect with learners’ own ideas in response to open-ended questions, and students will be more willing to share their ideas instead of risk being wrong when asked the questions on the left.

Build Personal Learning Experiences

Providing visual prompts to ignite curiosity is powerful for all students, and especially for those who regularly engage in social media or are reluctant readers. Visual stimuli are less threatening than text; when compelling images are used as prompts, teens are more willing to risk making observations and inquiries that align the content with their interests. Open-ended visual
thinking prompts are impactful for igniting interest. First asking, “What do you see?” and then, “What are you wondering?” and last, “Why do you say that?” is a compelling sequence to open an inquiry project (Yenawine 2013).

Asking students to record their questions (see figure 3) is an important element in the process; teens can look back and identify and then reflect on the kinds of questions they asked. If identifying robust research questions from the corpus of their personal questions is challenging, with librarian guidance they might have success using the Question Formulation Technique. This technique is a process through which students are guided to wonder, record their questions, and identify the types of questions they are asking, and then transform informational questions into critical-thinking questions (Rothstein and Santana 2017).

An infinite number of ways can be used to personalize students’ learning experiences besides evocative images; a caption, a short article, a video, a blog post, music or book covers, or primary sources all provide students with opportunities to wonder about the content. Each student will be able to contribute and will have a different story or anecdote that defines and expresses his or her perceptions.

Create and Communicate New Ideas

One of the challenges of engaging middle and high school students in research is transitioning them from gathering evidence to creating new ideas. Beginning an inquiry project with a performance task is a different, yet viable, alternative path to increasing motivation in an authentic context and smoothing the transition. The evidence gathered in their research might support an awareness campaign message or a solution to address a problem. Creating new ideas is the target of a true inquiry project; designing campaigns, inventions, or solutions in lieu of or in addition to a five-paragraph essay adds authenticity to learners’ research and fosters resilience, creativity, and the transfer of knowledge to other courses and life experiences.

State competency tests still drive content; however, it is likely that each district’s learning goals include, or will soon include, communication skills. Establishing the value of communication and facilitating specific communication skills are essential in preparing students for the jobs they will have when they graduate. For students to be effective collaborators and participants on the world stage in any field, they need to practice communicating. The learning ecosystem in a middle or high school library is a perfect place to foster students’ communication skills. It is essential to provide teens with multiple opportunities to think about how to most effectively convey their new ideas and then design, write, create, or perform an impactful communication. Providing students with the opportunity to think about how to best communicate new ideas to specific audiences is an authentic segue to gathering their evidence and designing or creating new ideas.

Recalibrate Interest: Talk to the Text!

Teen readers, whether motivated or unmotivated by text, often have extensive reading assignments. These assignments expose them to essential content and provide important paths for developing sound reasoning and critical-thinking skills. It is understated to say that text is a valuable avenue for them to better understand nuance and the issues in life experiences broader than their own. The most basic avenue to personalizing reading experience is the offering of choice on issues, topics, or reading selections. Additionally, while teachers and school librarians may effectively prompt teens with robust questions and “look-fors” as they read assigned articles and books, these prompts may be interpreted by teenagers only as assignments instead of invitations to make personal connections to the work. Returning to fundamental inquiry principles drives a more meaningful reading experience, fosters insight into the text, and forces students to reflect on their own connection to the task. For example, try asking individual students to stop, sit back, and consider what they have just read, and then wonder about what they are learning. Asking “What do you wonder about what you just read? Jot down your questions. Ask questions, talk to the text!” is a powerful tool for re-engaging with reading. Most teens are free-flowing with their wonderings—there is no “right” or “wrong” question. One student may wonder about a word meaning; another may wonder about the causes of poverty when reading an article about water shortages; another may wonder about the general meaning of a sentence. Mary Keeling described the value of this process:
Inquiry...engages students in framing their own questions and provides structures to help them make sense of information, synthesize ideas, and communicate their findings to a real audience. Designing for inquiry requires a shift in practice—hard work that motivates students to dig deeper into the learning experience. (2014, 7)

Student-initiated questions, while apt barometers of teens’ comprehension, are so much more. They are roots that deeply connect students to their learning, and should be used to create crosswalks between their experiences and the rest of the world.

**Long Projects: Keep the Fires Burning**

Several years ago, when I first started thinking about the quality of my students’ learning experiences from their perspective (instead of exclusively focusing on what I wanted them to know), I implemented my first true student-centered learning experience. My librarian partner Lisa Gunther and I put an array of books on each table in the library to kick off an inquiry project related to ancient civilizations. Students were required to stop at four out of the seven tables where print and digital resources were sorted by civilization and respond to the book covers, pictures, captions, and text by asking questions in response to the prompt “What are you wondering as you peruse each resource/topic?” The technique was a success. Stopping by to visit us in the library, a biology teacher asked about the chaos, “Why are all of the books and signs on the tables?” We described the activity to her. She embraced it and then created an impactful activity for the following fall. She proposed doing a similar activity, filling the library tables with resources aligned with the nine science units she would be covering during the school year. Students, upon entering the library, would be asked to peruse the resources and “wonder” about every topic. Each question or “wondering” would be entered on a sticky note, collected, and hung around the perimeter of her classroom. At the beginning of each unit, her plan was to remove the relevant questions and stick them on the whiteboard or into a Google doc and let the students know that they were going to be answering their own questions over the next six weeks. Brilliant!

**Invigorating the Research Process**

Effective inquiry, regardless of how high the engagement and personalization factors are on the front end, has moments when students lose interest as they work through the inquiry process. These can be the moments when students go on to develop grit and resilience. Providing them with a strategy to manipulate these lackluster moments by asking them to wonder about their work again and again scaffolds their lifelong learning skills. Ask them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARDS-BASED QUESTIONS</th>
<th>THINK-LIKE-A-TEENAGER ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the basic tenets of democracy?</td>
<td>Who has authority over me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who really has any authority?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the core values of democracy?</td>
<td>Do the people serve the government or does the government serve the people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what ways do restrictive laws allow us to have freedom?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What are the causes of the Civil War?</td>
<td>Is anything worth fighting for?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is microgravity?</td>
<td>Where would you rather live: in a world that is unpredictable or predictable?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would you like about being weightless? What opportunities would it afford? What might be challenging?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is being weightless in space an “altered” state?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What are the factors that influence solubility?</td>
<td>What is the difference between magic or mystery and science?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the significance of cell specialization?</td>
<td>When is being different an advantage?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What differences that exist between you and your siblings or cousins are significant?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who are the significant leaders in the ancient world?</td>
<td>What makes someone worth remembering?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to “step back and wonder” about what they’ve just read, about the problem they are trying to solve, about the issue or topic. Step back and wonder. In this moment, you connect them not to your work, but to theirs.

Prompt for Success

We are accustomed to asking students, “Do you have any questions?” That prompt does not achieve the same end goal as asking teens, “What do you wonder?” or “What are you curious about as you look at these pictures/this text?” For many teens, “What questions do you have?” is a prompt that is loaded with social constraints and challenges. Hearing this prompt, their inner narrative defaults to, “I should know this. What will others think when I ask a question? Maybe I should have heard or read this already.” The list of their inhibiting concerns goes on. Prompting with, “What do you wonder?” and then listening to or reading their questions is a strategy that gives credence to teens’ thinking. Wondering is, in fact, a critical-thinking skill that opens their minds to new learning.

Conclusion

It’s important for teens to share what they intuit, how they feel, and what they know about issues and topics before engaging with specific content. It is critical for them to have opportunities to share responses to open-ended, compelling prompts. Even more important, every teen needs a voice. Prompting students to wonder and providing open-ended questions are great equalizers. When these protocols become routine in your library, students will expect to have a voice. You will be nurturing future citizens with a love of learning. These are young adults whom you are preparing to make a difference in the world. Let them speak!

Works Cited:


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Recommended Reading about Personalized and Student-Centered Learning:

Blended Learning in Grades 4–12: Leveraging the Power of Technology to Create Student-Centered Classrooms by Caitlin R. Tucker (Corwin 2012)

Engaging the Rewired Brain by David A. Sousa (Learning Sciences International 2016)

How to Personalize Learning: A Practical Guide for Getting Started and Going Deeper by Barbara Bray and Kathleen McClaskey (Corwin 2017)


Students at the Center: Personalized Learning with Habits of Mind by Bena Kallick and Allison Zmuda (ASCD 2017)
The Power of Student-Generated Questioning in Inquiry Learning

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What happens when students are in charge of the questioning in inquiry learning? While beneficial to student engagement and learning outcomes, student-created research questions require a shift in thinking for the teaching team, which is made up of the school librarian, classroom teacher(s), and other specialists designing the inquiry learning experience. In the Guided Inquiry Design process, an innovative research method detailed in the book Guided Inquiry Design: A Framework for Inquiry in Your School, a critical component involves students’ writing inquiry questions based on their own interests (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, and Caspari 2012). A significant departure from the traditional research project, this process empowers students to pursue avenues of inquiry that genuinely captivate them. But for librarians leading inquiry learning, this shift can seem difficult to manage. Relinquishing control of research outcomes can cause concern that students will not master the standards a unit is designed to address.

Using student-generated questions does not have to mean losing control of student learning. By thoughtfully designing the culture, resources, and language around questioning and inquiry learning, the teaching team can be empowered to loosen their hold and guide learners to create high-level inquiry questions that spark the excitement of students and teachers alike.

This article outlines four strategies for guiding student questioning:

- developing and maintaining a classroom culture that supports questioning;
- providing students with curated resources that build background knowledge while laying the foundation for inquiry questions that address the content;
- building questions around a framework where questioning is consistently modeled, practiced, and encouraged; and
- enabling students to constantly rewrite, revise, and reimagine their inquiry questions.

This design empowers the teaching team to fully address curriculum and standards while empowering students to be the masters of their own learning. When both teachers and students are empowered, educators see the outcomes they desire, and students have the learning experience they deserve.

Establish a Culture of Inquiry

While the shift to student-generated questions may be an adjustment for teachers and school librarians, it can also be disconcerting for students. It is a sad truth that the testing climate in education fosters students’ expectations for black and white, multiple-choice, right and wrong answers. In inquiry learning, not only do students not know the answer right away, but they do not even know the question! To foster open minds and true engagement in the inquiry process, it is critical to establish a culture of inquiry in the classroom before inquiry learning ever begins.

Something that can be done as early as the first day of school is creating an environment in which making mistakes is acceptable. A teaching team can do that by being the first to mess up, sometimes even purposefully, perhaps by doing something as simple as writing the wrong date on the board and allowing students to correct them. It is hard to be vulnerable in front of students, but when teachers and school librarians demand perfection from themselves, students assume it is expected of them too. That is such an intimidating standard that many learners may not even try to reach it. When students see the teaching team allows themselves to mess up, they understand that their own inevitable mistakes will be accepted as part of the learning process. Mistakes can be a perfect teachable moment, an opportunity to model how to identify an error and to guide the student to a better answer in a way that allows the learning to continue. As relationships grow within a classroom, students will be able to do this for one another as well.

Another way to build a culture of inquiry is to encourage students to pursue their own avenues of questioning as they naturally arise. When a student asks a question that is irrelevant to the subject at hand, it is important to foster their curiosity by providing an outlet for them to explore further. It is easy to redirect students back to the task or ask them to save their questions for another time that almost certainly will not come. While the teaching team may feel compelled to stick to the lesson plan, it is important to think about the message this rigidity sends to the student. To dismiss a question for the sake of curriculum tells learners that the agenda is more important than their curiosity. In inquiry learning, the students’ curiosity is the most essential ingredient!

When building a culture of inquiry, it is important to ignite that curiosity rather than extinguish it. Establishing early that students may ask any question that stimulates their curiosity enables them to ask effective research questions when the time comes. Realistically, no educator can allow a class to veer off track any time a student asks a question, but rather than shut down inquiry, think of creative ways to stay on topic while allowing inquisitive students the freedom to pursue their curiosity. If devices are a part of the class environment, ask, “Why don’t you take a few minutes to find out more about that, and raise your
A third way to build a culture of inquiry is for the teaching team to model their own curiosity; in Guided Inquiry Design, this modeling is referred to as an inquiry stance (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, and Caspari 2012). Educators with an effective inquiry stance are open to new learning from all perspectives, make connections to that learning from their own lives, and encourage students to make those connections as well. Equally important is educators’ willingness to ask questions to which they do not already know the answer. Research cited in the book Visible Learning for Literacy, Grades K–12 (Fisher, Frey, and Hattie 2016) indicates that a teacher’s subject-matter knowledge is not the largest factor in student success. It is okay for teachers and librarians to acknowledge that they do not have all the answers! In an environment of inquiry, they can abandon the need to be the center of all knowledge and embrace not knowing just as inquiry learning asks students to do.

Curate Resources to Guide Thinking

One of the most common concerns about student-created questions is, “If students are asking their own inquiry questions, how do I make sure they are learning what they need to learn?” One highly effective way is by providing curated resources at the right moment in the inquiry process.

In Guided Inquiry, the eight-phase inquiry design framework used by this article’s authors, students participate in the Explore phase just prior to formulating their inquiry questions. No matter what inquiry method you use, there is likely an equivalent step in the process. Exploring requires students to spend time browsing resources to look for interesting ideas and concepts, begin formulating questions, and determine where their own interests lie within the scope of the unit topic. This phase is one of the best places for the teaching team to guide student questioning. By thoughtfully curating the resources students access in the beginning stages of developing research questions, the teaching team can ensure that students remain within the boundaries of the unit concepts, and, therefore, within the prescribed curriculum. For example, students browsing resources on deforestation will likely formulate questions on that topic because the background knowledge required to formulate those questions is acquired as they browse resources.

Using curated resources to guide student questioning is especially effective in elementary and middle school. The younger the students, the less background knowledge they have, and the more likely they are to use the resources provided as a foundation for their inquiry questions. With older students, it may be challenging to use curated resources to contain the range of their questioning, as they have more knowledge and experiences from which to draw. Though it can be daunting to relinquish control, remember that the only important thing is that students remain within the scope of the unit concept. If students do deviate, simply remind them of the concept and help them redirect their efforts. Trust that students will acquire any critical information during the inquiry process and allow them to pursue the ideas that captivate them; the best inquiry questions are often those the teaching team never considered. One of the many benefits of student-created questions is the students’ freedom to connect their own interests to the topic, and they may make connections that exceed expectations.

Provide a Framework

Another strategy used to guide students to develop deep, powerful inquiry questions is providing a framework for questioning. Many types of existing questioning frameworks allow students to structure their thinking and better understand what makes a good inquiry question. For younger students, framing questioning can be as simple as putting it in terms of “thick” and “thin”: thin questions are yes-or-no questions or those that require very short, simple answers, while thick require students to dig deeper with their research and provide more complex answers. This simple system helps students begin to understand the differences between basic questions and those that make good inquiry questions. These young students are often the most adept questioners simply because they have lots of practice.

For primary students, the most difficult part of questioning can be starting the question with the right question word. For example, questions that start with “How” or “Why” lead to deeper answers than those that begin with “Who” or “When,” and questions that open with “Does” are never good, because they must be answered with a “yes” or a “no.” To get off on the right foot, young students may need sentence stems to help them formulate deeper inquiry questions. Starters such as...
“What might happen if…”, “What are the similarities/differences between…”, and “How do we know that…?” give students the structure they need to ask inquiry questions that lead to deeper learning. These structures also allow the teaching team to guide students toward effective questioning that aligns with the curriculum and helps to avoid that wildly imaginative off-topic questioning small children are prone to!

Structures like these are not necessary only for young students; all students can benefit from a questioning framework, especially if student-created questioning is new to them. For older students, those in intermediate grades through high school, a widely used method for structuring questioning is by means of leveled questions. While there are many varieties of this kind of framework, one effective model is three tiered. Level 1 questions are yes-or-no or very simple questions that can be answered easily and in a few words. Level 2 questions are slightly more complex and have longer answers, but often require students to only report facts, not perform any critical thinking. Finally, Level 3 questions require complex answers, the use of multiple resources, and require students to think critically and synthesize information. Structuring questions in this way provides students the support they need to formulate high-level inquiry questions that lead to deep understanding while allowing them to remain in control of their own learning. Students feel supported, but also have a sense of autonomy.

No matter what structure is employed to facilitate student questioning, the process is most effective when teachers and librarians make time to conference individually with each student about his or her inquiry question. Though this conferencing can be logistically tricky, getting students through this checkpoint allows the rest of the inquiry process to run much more smoothly. Conferences give students the opportunity to reflect on their thinking and articulate why they are interested in a particular line of inquiry. One-on-one conferences also provide the chance for a member of the teaching team to guide students to higher-level thinking with questions like, “What do you expect the answer to this question to look like?”, “Where would you look to find the answer to this question?”, or “Does this question require you to draw your own conclusions?” This guidance not only helps students create high-level questions but also to learn to examine their thinking throughout the inquiry process.

**Let Them Ask the Bad Question**

There may be no such thing as a bad question, but not all inquiry questions lead to higher-level learning. All students are not going to fit perfectly into even the most carefully wrought plans. Even if students learn in a
culture of inquiry, are free to make mistakes and chase their own curiosities, and have curated resources and a questioning framework at their disposal, some students seem to lack understanding or willingness to make an effort or simply insist upon asking an inquiry question that will lead nowhere. Other students are unaccustomed to the need for revision and will resist feedback from the teaching team. Often, these students will insist on proceeding with a flawed inquiry question until they see those flaws for themselves. The beauty of inquiry learning is that it allows for students to backtrack, rethink, and revise their questioning before continuing with their research. Allowing them to do so gives them the tools they need to self-correct in the future.

Students might also choose to pursue questions based on incorrect information. This reality is why providing quality curated resources as the basis for student questioning is especially important. In the era of fake news, it can be difficult for students to determine the reliability of information. A powerful learning experience happens when students discover on their own that not all information is credible, a discovery they can make only if they are permitted to ask the bad questions.

Resource availability is also a factor in whether or not a question is right for inquiry learning. Very young students have the most-imaginative questions, but the resources available at their level may not meet their needs. Similarly, secondary students asking more-advanced questions may require resources that are restricted by organizations or paywalls. Frustrating as this experience can be, students will realize on their own that they can answer inquiry questions only when the information is readily available. Resist the urge to redirect too early and allow students the closure that comes with seeing a particular line of inquiry to its natural end.

Students are better equipped to be autonomous learners in the future when they experience the frustration of reaching an inquiry dead end and, with the support of the teacher and school librarian, assess their mistakes and determine what next steps to take to continue their inquiry. Consider why research skills are so prominent in standards across the curriculum: students need those skills to become lifelong, literate learners in the digital age. Allowing them to ask the bad questions, to experience inquiry failure, and to learn from it, moves them closer to that ultimate goal.

**Conclusion**

Like any new idea implemented in the classroom, student-generated questioning takes practice for both students and educators. Students may be confused or intimidated by the idea of generating their own questions. They may be afraid to fail or frustrated by the constant reflection and revision required to create great inquiry questions, and they may demand to be provided a research topic as they are used to. For their part, classroom teachers and school librarians must dedicate themselves to the thoughtful design of the classroom environment and each unit to support student questioning, and then prepare themselves to relinquish control and enable their students to take control of both the content and process of inquiry. With time and practice, educators will see a shift in both the attitudes and abilities of their students as they grow to become empowered, autonomous lifelong learners.

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**Kelsey Barker** is a school librarian at Norman (OK) Public Schools. A member of AASL, she received the 2016 Oklahoma Library Association Outstanding New Librarian Award. She coauthored (with Buffy Edwards) the article “In Principle and Practice: Developing a Guided Inquiry Design Unit for District-Wide Implementation” published in the December 2016 issue of Teacher Librarian. She also authored the article “Creating a Unique Brand for Your School Library: Values, Vision, Voice, and Visuals” in the Spring 2017 issue of Young Adult Library Services. She is the 2017–2018 Oklahoma Library Association (OLA) Marketing Committee Chair and Serves on the OLA Intermediate Sequoyah Reading Team (2017–2019 term).

**Works Cited:**


IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME

HOW I STARTED A MAKERSPACE FROM SCRATCH

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The school library is buzzing with activity; it’s a full house today. I am part of a circle of bodies as nine middle school students take turns with the blinking, scooting Ozobot robots on the round table in front of us. The students are gigging and cheering one another on when they place these programmable mini-bots on each sheet of paper criss-crossed with colorful loops, straight lines, and zigzags that guide the mini-bots. A line of students is behind me chatting and patiently waiting to check out books they just procured from “The Teacher Librarian’s Top Ten” display table, while my teaching assistant helps with the checkout process. To my left, seventeen students in the Minecraft Club work collaboratively on building and surviving in their virtual world, creatively named “Lunch 2.” On the other three computers the sixth- and seventh-grade “Codemen” are busily creating characters and adding movements to their (quite literally) made-from-Scratch video games. The remaining computers are connected to our 3-D printers, and two sixth-grade girls use design software to create their own fidget spinners. This is what lunchtime on Free Choice Friday is like at the Baker Middle School Library in Tacoma, Washington (see figure 1).

I have always loved libraries. I have always loved books and the experience of learning. My parents like to tell everyone about the time when I was three years old and my Havana-born abuela, who loved to spoil me with treats, asked me what I wanted. Thinking I would reply with “candy” or “ice cream,” I surprised everyone when I replied “buy books!” (I still have a book-buying addiction to this day.) I was destined to be a school librarian. I ended up in the right place at the right time: Tacoma, “the City of Destiny,” and at Tacoma Public Schools, where future-ready leadership had been established and the school librarian position is evolving into what it needs to be for today’s students.

My idea of the best kind of library has changed over the years. Reading and the love of it is very much a part of this school library. However, encouraging reading is just a part of what our 21st-century school library does. This is not the type of library I grew up going to. The Baker Middle School Library is a future-ready library. It is a hub of activity and fun. This is a place where talking, debating, exploring, and creating are fully encouraged. This is a library chock-full of STEM learning opportunities, technology, and tools. Ours is a library for the students of this generation. This incredible group of young thinkers, collaborators, and makers experience a much-needed creative oasis here. At an age when associating with peers is everything, they connect with one another through these learning experiences, and while they do have a guide if they need one, they can relax because no one tells them what they have to do. Unlike the classroom, students have choices about what they want to learn, whether that learning takes place through being part of a creative team, building a robot, using the maker kits, designing in 3-D, or through individual reading (see figure 2) or group discussion.

As a fledgling school librarian just starting to learn how to fly, I wanted to create a nest that was equal parts warm, welcoming, interesting, and exciting. I want students to want to be at our school library. I want them to own it, feel that it is their library. I dove head first into the implementation of a makerspace the moment I was introduced to the concept at the Washington Library Association’s October 2015 conference. It was just the thing to bring in the students, I was convinced. Like any good librarian, I started doing research. I read all I could find by others who were already doing what I wanted to do. I connected with like-minded colleagues online and in person at conferences and meetings. To learn even more I joined Twitter and followed experienced school librarians and others implementing makerspaces around the country. The ideas started flowing, and Baker’s makerspace—home of Baker’s Makers—would soon turn into reality.

Many of the makerspace offerings I started out with in November 2015 were simple, no cost, or inexpensive. Donated and recycled items became the start of the arts and crafts center. Our career and technical education teacher donated his late wife’s sewing machine. An encouragement to me from day one, Dawn Baughman, a fellow middle school librarian, started sending her beginner’s sewing books. After I discovered that fabric stores will give away their scraps and extra fabric, we had a fully functioning sewing table complete with a nearby laptop computer for students to watch YouTube how-to videos on sewing. The computer games and Minecraft Club were already built, and after laying some ground rules, naming and launching their Minecraft worlds, students were off and running without any further assistance from me.

Fortuitously, an opportunity presented itself when our local YMCA’s after-school program, due to lack of space, needed a place to store four full-sized 3-D printers. I offered a deal: our library would be their 3-D print shop home as long as we could use the printers during our lunchtime makerspace activities (see figure 3). Turns out, this arrangement was a win–win for both programs. Knowing nothing about 3-D printers, I recruited students who had learned how to use them during the YMCA’s after-school program. At lunchtime, a
few of these students came up to the makerspace and introduced a group of students to the ways of the 3-D design software—and the group took off! Word spread quickly, and students started coming to the library every day during their lunch period. There were days that, due to collaborations with teachers and classes in our library, I had to open only during one of the two lunch periods. Running a makerspace is many things, but most of all it is a feat of keeping plates spinning during a balancing act! Little did I know, I was about to add even more plates to the act.

In spring 2016 our newly minted Washington Library Association Administrators of the Year, Hannah Gbenro and Dave Davis, announced that they would be offering a makerspace grant to any Tacoma Public School library. I already had a growing wish list on various companies’ websites and, with the full support of Principal Scott Rich and Assistant Principal Amy Latimer, I started filling out the grant application. I remember thinking that I was asking for a lot, maybe too much, when I submitted the grant for the proposed amount, which was well over my existing library budget. What did I have to lose? Even if we were granted even one of the tools on my wish list, it would add more variety and learning opportunities for our students. I was thrilled to find out in June 2016 that our Baker’s Makers were granted the full amount requested, and I immediately went on a shopping spree of LittleBits robotics kits, Snap Circuits sets, filament used by 3-D printers, and lots more! (See figure 4.)

In my excitement, I had a terrifying moment when I thought to myself, “When am I going to learn how to use all of this new tech?” At first, the robotics kits were challenging for me—not knowing anything about...
anything—to wrap my head around. Then the first day we broke out the boxes, the students—without even glancing at the instructions—took the reins and started building with Snap Circuits, creating colorful paths for the Ozobot robots, constructing musical instruments with the Synth Kit, and building fully functioning robots on wheels (see figure 5).

As fun and exciting as all this was for the students, I knew that resource use could be better with a system in place. With all this growth, I had to establish organization for everything to run smoothly. I received the best advice from another one of my librarian colleagues Lisa Metcalf. As part of her library’s makerspace—and to “save her sanity”—she had established a makerspace system of specifying the focus for the day. This scheme was just what I needed to do. I still wanted students to have the freedom to simply come and read and to have the option to check in and check out books, but I also wanted to establish more of a focus on a specified activity center for those who needed that structure. For example, Mondays became “Minecraft & Coding” and Tuesdays became “True Blue Book Club & Book Checkout.” See figure 6 for the full weekly schedule—which is a daily guideline, not a firm rule.

When I was shopping for the makerspace, I was not sure what a good starting off point would be for students unfamiliar with robotics. As I browsed, I saw a line on the Ozobot website at the time that read, “Creative robotics to learn and play.” Playing with Ozobot robots was a perfect first step for the students, especially those who knew nothing about robotics. Unlike some of the more-intimidating circuit board robotics kits we have, these Ozobot devices are little spherical robots that read color codes. For example, green, black, and red together in that order
translate into “turn left.” As students plan their paths, they can consult a guide we place in the middle table. Once the students learned that all they needed were markers, paper, and an Ozobot, they’d work together to create a path for their bot that would wow other students. They are learning code and basics in robotics, even if they think they are just playing a game together. We’ve only touched the surface with what an Ozobot can do.

A colleague of mine Jodie Caldwell of Kent School District in Washington curated a list of resources (mainly from the Ozobot website) of short activities and full lesson plans. She agreed to share her list. As I write this in July, the next step I take will be to put together a plan to show how these lessons support the existing learning standards and then approach my fellow teachers at Baker in science, technology, or math departments. My hope is that together we will brainstorm ways we could incorporate these lessons into their classes. Here is a link to an example of a lesson that hits on the ISTE student standards 1 and 4, and is designed to bring together math and science targets in one lesson.

Quoting directly from the Ozobot website, this lesson “...introduces the solar eclipse by modeling one Ozobot as the Moon and a second Ozobot as Earth, and using OzoCodes to create the elliptical orbit.” Visit the Ozobot website for more free, easy-to-apply lessons using Ozobot robots: <https://ozobot.com/stem-education/stem-lessons>. Also linked to the page are a few testimonials from teachers using Ozobot robots, including a teacher who runs her school’s makerspace. Reading other educators’ stories and ideas for using these devices in the classroom has planted seeds in my mind for what could happen and how collaborative efforts can blossom into true growth and learning for students.

One successful (and fun!) collaborative effort that came out of the Baker makerspace occurred in April during National Poetry Month. After seeing a Pinterest post I loved, I shared it with our wonderful and creative art teacher Isaac Dana. He and I talked about what we could do to bring this idea to Baker. He had the idea of having his art students collaborate to design a feather and illustrate it. I added that I thought we could “poetify” the project by asking students to write their favorite poem or part of a poem on the feathers. We both loved the idea of each student representing a little bit of themselves to form a beautiful depiction of what we could be together and how beautiful our diversity and differences are together (see figure 7).

Within the library, the focus on Poetry Month was a hit with the students and took on a life of its own. At the “poetry center” in our makerspace the students created their poetry feathers and browsed some of the library’s poetry books and books about poets. Inside the library, we created a “Post-it Poetry” wall (see figure 8) on which students posted their favorite poems written on sticky notes. The after-school program’s poetry club added some handouts for a local Youth Poetry Slam event. Having received a letter inviting any school to participate in a national poetry contest, I printed off some entry forms and placed them on a table for students who wanted to submit their original poems. By the end of April, we had ten entries that we proudly sent off to Washington, DC. At the end of June, we received notice that a poem written by one of our students will be published in a book of poems and that her entry will also be placed in the final round of competition!

Our makerspace participants embellished Mr. Dana’s feathers in the art and poetry center, and he used the feather project with his art students as well; we ended up with a couple hundred feathers. Some students wrote their own poems on their feathers; others contributed favorite inspirational quotes or poems by beloved poets. We displayed the full quote featured in the original Pinterest picture that inspired it all; the original poem was written by poet Erin Hanson. About a third of our Baker students participated in the poetry feather creation. A few teachers wanted to create and add feathers of their own.

After seeing the full wingspan in the hallway as shown in figure 7, students and staff alike came in the library to tell me that they loved it! Isaac Dana and I agreed we could do more in our collaboration next time and that the project was a fun way to connect art standards with ELA standards and art classes with the library. This collaboration also brought art- and poetry-loving students into the library and opened the door to reaching more who hadn’t previously known what was going on during lunchtime.

When an opportunity presented itself to introduce the use of the makerspace in a classroom, I hadn’t anticipated the far-reaching impact this use would have. The broadcasting elective is Exploratory Technology; what better class could one think of to incorporate some of these STEM learning opportunities? Coincidentally, many of the students in the class were in the higher grades; some were athletes and student leaders.

Beginning in December, once a month we’d have a Makerspace Monday for which I’d set up rotating stations for the students in the broadcasting class. Use of the makerspace piqued the interest of these students. The projects the students in the broadcasting course worked on could most often not be finished in one class period. I told them that all of the resources needed for the projects were available at lunchtime, and I let the students know that they could come up and continue tinkering. In
middle school, students have their lunch crews they hang out with during their break. As a result, these popular students would invite their lunch friends to join them in the library, bringing in even more curious students. The power of positive peer influence and word of mouth was in action! As a bonus, an eighth-grade student used Adobe Premiere Pro video-editing software to create a how-to video featuring the virtual reality goggles available in our makerspace. We broadcast this video to the whole school as a makerspace advertisement on the school’s daily news show. The virtual reality goggles were suddenly famous and in demand! I was delighted to discover that these goggles can be purchased for about $10 or made for even less, and I hope to collaborate and use these in the classroom as well. To learn more about using virtual reality for educational experiences, I highly recommend the article at <www.weareteachers.com/virtual-reality-classroom>.

Although every day has its own theme or focus, on any given day students are free to use the other activity centers if they want to. Freedom of choice in the makerspace is a big part of the draw. Curiosity and a willingness to try are all anyone needs. Some students want to illustrate their own bookmark or color in pages from the adult coloring books. Some students want to create origami birds. Students will try a new activity or do something fun with their two best friends, while others are laser-focused on a 3-D print design that has been weeks in the making. While I have taught the students a little and tried to create a welcoming and interesting space at school for them to explore, they have learned more and taught me more in the short time I have been there than I could ever have thought possible. I look to the upcoming years with hope and anticipation as the program continues to morph into a center for exciting learning opportunities that interest students and help shape and stretch them, enriching their lives now, while preparing them to become future ready.

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The Importance of Story and Storytelling in the Classroom

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In the Beginning

When our ancestors first tried to understand the world around them, they told stories. Lightning struck when an angry Zeus hurled thunderbolts, forged in the heart of a volcano, down from the clouds. Children in Africa learned morals from stories of the wily and cunning spider Anansi who used his tricks for his own gain. Today, we also use story to try to understand why things happen. Our era has seen teens learn of the dangerous impact of a bully in 13 Reasons Why. Our children learn the importance of love from The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane. Stories have power, and the stories we tell today do just as much to try to explain our world as did the myths of so long ago.

Storytelling is a part of who we are as humans. Melvil Dewey himself saw the need to catalog folktales and stories from the oral tradition in the 390s, a section dedicated to social customs. Stories form a part of the very fabric of who we are and give insight into the past as much, if not more so, than the histories that we read. Readers see in Chaucer’s prologue to The Canterbury Tales a snapshot of the medieval world. Thomas Malory’s Le Morte d’Arthur serves as a metaphor for the dying age of chivalry. We turn to our stories to glimpse, if only for a fleeting instant, a reflection of the near or distant past. As teachers, we can leverage our students’ own narratives, along with the Four Cs of 21st-century learning, to create educational opportunities within our classrooms.

**Storytelling, the Brain, and the Four Cs**

The Four Cs of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity go hand in hand with storytelling projects in the classroom. The Four Cs were established by the National Education Association (NEA) to help teachers add 21st-century skills to their classrooms by providing a framework for incorporating these skills. This framework is a starting point, not a panacea. NEA also provides links to additional resources that will help when preparing lessons for a 21st-century classroom (NEA n.d.).

When crafting a narrative, a student (or teacher) cannot help but employ each of the Cs as the story is crafted, polished, and told. Whether it is the story of a fugitive slave in American history, a retelling of a classical myth, or a fresh new piece of fan fiction, students working individually or in groups and using the Four Cs will produce fantastic results. Although a wonderful thing about storytelling projects is their ability to be completed in groups, collaboration among classmates can also be built into projects that involve peer review of single-author works.

The brain behaves differently during a story as well. According to Annie Murphy Paul, when the brain processes sensory words, not only do the vocabulary areas of the brain activate, but the sensory areas of the cortex do as well (2012). The brain actually experiences the story in the same way it would as if you were inside the narrative itself. Further, stories make us more empathetic and able to understand the thoughts and feelings of others (Paul 2012). If stories foster greater empathy, then telling stories may serve to deepen students’ understanding of others. Since stories create interconnectedness and community, they are a natural fit for a project-based approach.

**Project-Based Storytelling**

**Atwitter about History**

When I taught history, I taught it as a narrative; I did not teach it as a litany of facts, dates, and names. We talked about the past as a series of interlocking events and how there was a causal relationship between the things that happened. For example, we looked at events during the American Revolution that directly impacted the wording in our Bill of Rights. When my students completed projects, they were storytelling projects, not “Google up some facts and dates” projects. I think my favorite project was “Tweeting about the Past.” For
Stories form a part of the very fabric of who we are and give insight into the past as much, if not more so, than the histories that we read.

this project, I assigned students a conquistador in the first year and a major 20th-century event in my second year. The rules were simple: 140 characters (including spaces) per tweet, a minimum of 20 tweets split evenly between historical facts and what students thought they might see/think/feel/hear as the conquistador or a participant in the event, and promised extra points for creativity. I expected a mundane series of observations, but what I received instead were stories. One student’s tweets led me to experience the voyage of Magellan; another student conveyed the excitement of the golden age of Broadway. The students really had to work to convey a complete thought in only 140 characters, but they still completed a cohesive narrative.

At the time of this project, I was both teaching history and working as the full-time librarian in my school. This combination of responsibilities provided me a terrific opportunity to spend time teaching my students information-seeking skills and some resource evaluation. I decided I’d rather keep it simple with fifth-graders and focus on being able to choose a reliable resource and properly document resources for this particular project. I have always believed, and my professors in library school taught us, that information-seeking skills need context as much as learning to fish requires a body of water. It was easy to collaborate with myself by bringing my classes into the library, but for storytelling projects, even those that are fiction-writing projects, it is always important to include the library in the process so that students have an opportunity to do research in context.

The Truth Is in the Telling

Another standout project came when I asked students to choose a relative, preferably a grandparent, and interview the person. I had recently lost my last living grandparent, and I spent a lot of time grieving the loss of some of the songs and stories he
would tell that I simply could not remember. Once again, in an effort to demonstrate to my students that history is narrative, we used journalistic and storytelling techniques to convert these interviews into histories of their own families. Students recorded their relatives whenever possible and used those recordings to create the narrative. Once narratives were completed, students brought digital copies of their family’s pictures; the photos were imported into movie-making software. A family’s narrative was read as a slideshow cycled through the photos, creating a multimedia story that could be shared and kept as a part of each family’s history.

As before, I collaborated with myself in the library to teach students the difference between primary and secondary sources. Because they were telling stories that were experiences of their own family members, I stressed that these eyewitness accounts were, in fact, primary sources of history despite these episodes not having been described in our textbook. Though we can read about World War II, some of our grandparents and great-grandparents actually survived it. Through these journalistic interviews, students discovered the richness of eyewitness accounts and the importance of primary sources in research. Once their histories were complete, we discussed them as secondary sources, and I could explain how we can use quality secondary sources in our research because, oftentimes, researchers themselves have gone back to

Our stories have evolved from tales told around fires and in mead halls to dynamic multimedia events. This change, however, does not and should not lessen the impact and importance of the stories we tell.
primary source documents to create their own works.

One student’s project in particular should be highlighted. She asked if her great-grandmother could narrate the story in her own words. I knew the video would be difficult to produce, would require additional software, and create extra work, but I told my student we’d give it a shot. I showed her how to use the software she would need and silently hoped for the best. With a little bit of luck and a lot of sweat equity, she finished the project beautifully. What I didn’t know at the time was that her great-grandmother had told my student that she wondered why she was the one telling the story. When the project was shared with her family, however, my student’s great-grandmother finally believed that she had something important to say (Cherry 2012).

Tools for Digital Storytelling

Many tools can prove very useful for storytelling in the classroom. One of my favorites is using LEGO bricks to construct narrative scenes and then importing photographs of the creations into a program such as Microsoft Publisher to create a graphic novel or into iMovie to be combined with narrations over the scenes. Scenes can even be constructed and shared directly with the class. The really special thing about generating an e-book, however, is that it can be cataloged in the school library’s online public-access catalog, making each student a searchable author.

Another useful tool for individual work is the iOS app Morfo. Morfo allows students to animate a two-dimensional photograph that moves in sync with dialogue recorded by the user. Morfo offers a paid version and a free version, and the free version is suitable for the majority of classroom applications. The Morfo interface is user-friendly, and the tool exports completed movies directly to an iPad’s photo gallery.

Technology supports a wealth of storytelling options and can be used to create digital book reviews, digital puppet shows, and even movies with green screen and video-authoring apps. All of these options can be elements of storytelling, whether we are sharing the last book we read (no spoilers, of course), or creating a walking tour of our campuses. STEAM programs can benefit from these storytelling projects as well, whether they involve creation of illustrations in an art class or students’ use of their own art as the impetus for their stories. Our stories have evolved from tales told around fires and in mead halls to dynamic multimedia events. This change, however, does not and should not lessen the impact and importance of the stories we tell.

Conclusion

Charles de Lint wrote in The Blue Girl, “No one else sees the world the way you do, so no one else can tell the stories that you have to tell” (2006). This recognition that individuals are the best tellers of their own stories is especially true of our students. They each see the world uniquely, and their perspectives on social events, concepts, and social interaction are just as important as ours are as their teachers. When adults tell stories, they tell them from the perspective of years of experience. Students, on the other hand, may be seeing a story—their own or someone else’s—for the first time, and this fresh perspective will most certainly shape our own.

I asked my students to tell stories because I wanted them to see firsthand how story is woven into the fabric of our existence. The stories are there somewhere, as J.R.R. Tolkien wrote; we have but to record them (2000, 145). Our students all have stories to tell; we just need to give them a platform and an audience. Whether the story is told in LEGO bricks, claymation, puppetry, or text, all that matters is that the story gets told. Our classrooms and libraries have become the mead hall, our students the bards. As a school librarian, a father, and a lover of stories in all forms, I believe with all of my heart that when anyone tells a story, that person changes a life.

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PARTNERS IN 
CREATING A 
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LEARNING
21st-CENTURY EXPERIENCE

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Nationally, schools are going through a metamorphosis to meet the needs of 21st-century learners by focusing on student interests within the parameters of standards-based instruction. The future workforce will operate in highly interdisciplinary teams. Dan Schawbel wrote in Forbes Magazine, “38% of millennials feel that outdated collaboration processes hinder their company’s innovation and 74% prefer to collaborate in small groups” (2013).

The heart of a Future Ready school librarian, recognizing these needs, focuses on personalized student learning and collaborative teaching. Under the larger umbrella of the Future Ready Schools initiative (an AASL coalition partner), among the key components for librarians to address are curriculum, instruction and assessment; personalized professional learning; community partnerships; and collaborative leadership (Future Ready Schools n.d.).

The increasing need for the school librarian to assume the role of coteacher and collaborator to support STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) instruction is the catalyst that prompted us—a library media services instructional specialist and an emerging technology specialist—to seek a pathway to bring district, community, and global resources together to support teaching and learning. Initially, some of the school librarians in our district dipped their toes in the waters of STEAM education through adding makerspaces to their libraries. We sought a way to better support our district’s librarians in their endeavors.

What We Did
Mobile Transformation Lab

As we looked at national education initiatives and business models, it became clear that students needed to be immersed in what it means to design with someone else’s needs in mind. Our observations indicate students are more engaged when they create through an empathetic lens. IDEO, a global design and consulting firm that inspired Stanford University to start a school and program devoted to design called the d.School, created a process called Design Thinking to imagine and develop products and experiences. Design Thinking occurs in five phases: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test. [Editor’s note: Links to more information about the d.School and other entities mentioned by the authors are at the end of the article.]

Using concepts such as Design Thinking to create inquiry-based, hands-on learning opportunities centered on student ideation and creation, Lewisville Independent School District (LISD) in North Texas reimagined the role of library instruction through implementation of a Mobile Transformation Lab. The purpose of this lab is to serve the more than 53,000 students in LISD through a highly specialized coaching model that goes beyond the more–traditional materials and resources lending library, and includes two central–office specialists who work side by side with campus personnel when designing and coteaching a lesson.

When developing the concept of the Mobile Transformation Lab, we considered the importance of including information from the Texas Association of School Administrator’s visioning document; the International Society for Technology in Education standards, known as ISTE NETS; LISD’s strategic design plan; and the Future Ready Librarian initiative. In addition, we sought guidance from the work of a variety of education experts such as:

- Ruben Pentedura, who takes a fresh approach to the levels of student understanding characterized in Bloom’s Taxonomy. Pentedura created the SAMR model of instructional technology integration levels identified as: Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, and Redefinition (SAMR).
- Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe’s Understanding by Design (UbD), which outlines a method to plan instruction backward, beginning with the end in mind.

Year One

During year one we focused on developing the lab’s philosophy, services, and processes. Great time and thought were spent researching educational STEAM technologies and necessary supplies, and those we felt best met the district’s needs were purchased. Included were:

- MaKey MaKey kits
- Ollie robots
- Bee-Bot robots
- Google Cardboard VR viewers
- Q–BA–MAZE sets
- Magna-Tiles sets
- LEGO Mindstorms EV3 sets
- Yarn
- String
- Wooden craft sticks
- Pipe cleaners
- Cubelets robot construction kits
AS WE LOOKED AT NATIONAL EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND BUSINESS MODELS, IT BECAME CLEAR THAT STUDENTS NEEDED TO BE IMMERSED IN WHAT IT MEANS TO DESIGN WITH SOMEONE ELSE’S NEEDS IN MIND. OUR OBSERVATIONS INDICATE STUDENTS ARE MORE ENGAGED WHEN THEY CREATE THROUGH AN EMPATHETIC LENS.

- littlebits electronic building blocks
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Connector straws

We devised a plan for a collaborative model to build capacity for schools as they aimed to transform instruction. Several campuses at each grade level district-wide were chosen to serve in the pilot. As the program was fleshed out and we began our initial meetings with pilot campuses, it became clear that librarians and teachers were looking for a central repository of lessons and ideas. To answer this request, an open education resource (OER) of lessons, reference materials, and emerging technologies was created. This OER, featured on the Mobile Transformation Lab website, serves as a framework as we partner with librarians, district curriculum specialists, and instructional technology facilitators to provide teachers access to technical tools, instructional support, and technical expertise for special projects.

The implementation process for collaborative cross-disciplinary campus projects is as follows:

1. LISD Library Media Services staff members meet with the campus librarian, teachers, administration, and district curriculum specialists.

2. Campus staff decides the curriculum areas to be addressed and ensures alignment with Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (our state standards for students).

3. LISD Library Media Services staff members research emerging technologies that will support lesson transformation and design a day of learning for students.

4. Campus staff designs a lesson plan written in the UbD format; this plan embeds the recommendations made by Library Media Services staff.

5. Library Media Services central office staff members also connect the campus with experts and leaders in the field related to the topic of study, pre-teach lessons about Design Thinking to students, and provide hands-on assistance the day of instruction.

Year Two

Here are some examples from the program expansion that occurred in year two. While year one was open mainly to pilot campuses, the entire district was able to book the lab in year two. Additional materials, including Ozobot robots and Code-a-pillar sets, were added to the lab.

Middle School Math

One of our middle school principals pinpointed innovation and use of the Mobile Transformation Lab as key targets in the campus’s improvement plan. Encouraged by principal Kelly Knight and supported by a data-driven decision, math teacher Trista Abernethy partnered with local experts in the community, the school’s National Junior Honor Society, business leaders, community volunteers, the secondary math curriculum specialist, the instructional technology facilitator, the campus librarian, the library media services instructional specialist,
and the emerging technologies specialist to design an eighth-grade math lesson that targeted learning outcomes identified as difficult for students to conceptualize. Along with the critical math skills she needed to teach, this teacher wanted to encourage innovation and provide opportunities for students to formulate questions and solve relevant, real-world problems based on empathy in design. Her collaboration partners assisted her by creating lesson plans using the UbD framework, coteaching in their areas of their expertise, and judging the final projects and presentations.

Students were divided into teams of four. Each team selected a real-world problem related to recycling or waste management. The concepts addressed included problem-solving using volume, graphing, ratios, proportion, scale, and quantitative data analysis. Learners demonstrated their understanding of the concepts through a design challenge that encompassed 3-D printing, 3-D design, human-centered Design Thinking based on the IDEO model, coteaching in their areas of their expertise, and judging the final projects and presentations.

solution that could be represented by 3-D models made by hand, 3-D models made using the Tinkercad online design tool, or 2-D nets.

Elementary Science
Bernadette Trammell, school librarian at Camey Elementary in The Colony, Texas, has been working with us since the Mobile Transformation Lab’s inception. Our first lesson in year one focused on force and motion using Ollie robots in third-grade science. The second year’s implementation for force and motion expanded the instructional team to include a district science curriculum specialist and an instructional technology facilitator. How did bringing together this cross-curricular group from LISD’s Learning and Teaching Department support student outcomes? Involving a variety of content experts allowed us to view the lesson through many lenses and broadened student learning, creating a richer library experience through collaboration.

Looking Ahead to Year Three
As we write this in July, we are looking forward to the 2017–2018 school year, which offers many possibilities for expansion and pushing our technical limits. We are excited to have been asked by Kristi Taylor, school librarian at Lamar Middle School in Flower Mound, Texas, to provide support as her students design, create, and code wearable objects that incorporate all elements of STEAM. This project will be part of her Circuit Girls club at the school.

Currently, we are in discussions with a local university to create a cohort made up of LISD librarians and other interested district employees to expand our understanding of maker education, STEM,
STEAM in an effort to build capacity in school librarians and create a vertically aligned concept for students from preschool through college as they—and we—explore making as a modality for learning. Our hopes are to broaden our understanding of how children learn and design around empathy.

Finally, as our public libraries are adding makerspaces and expanding STEM and STEAM programming, we hope to partner with them to increase the services available to our students and their families as they all become makers.

Transformation does not happen in isolation. Seamlessly partnering with experts and multidisciplinary teams allows our district to transcend the brick-and-mortar schoolhouse. With the guidance of Library Media Services supervisor Robin Stout, we have the latitude to dream of a system to transform the role of instruction in school libraries. In the words of Andrew Carnegie, “Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results” (Thapaliya 2017). We are common people striving to make lasting, uncommon learning experiences for students. We can’t wait to see what happens next!

Leah Mann is a library media instructional specialist at Lewisville (TX) ISD. With Jody Rentfro, she coauthored the blog post “Supporting the Future Ready Student: The Mobile Transformation Lab” on the Texas Association of School Administrators Vision in Practice blog. She is a member of the Texas Library Association (TLA) Executive Board Nominating committee and TLA Legislative committee. She is currently pursuing her EdD in Educational Leadership at Dallas Baptist University.

Jody Rentfro is the emerging technologies specialist at Lewisville (TX) ISD. She is the current vice president of the Texas Computer Education Association’s Virtual Learning Special Interest Group. With Leah Mann she coauthored the blog post “Supporting the Future Ready Student: The Mobile Transformation Lab” on the Texas Association of School Administrators Vision in Practice blog. She is a national and international presenter for digital citizenship implementation in a K–12 environment, and has been accepted to present the session “Build Your Own: Mobile Transformation Lab” at ISTE 2017.

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SOURCES OF MORE INFORMATION

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Best Practices in Preparing for Library/Librarian Evaluation
Introduction

For a decade, I worked in a joint-use school/public library that serves a large high school and a community of thirty-three thousand. We usually saw several hundred visitors each day, more than a thousand when high school classes came for library presentations. The combined library is like a living room for a multigenerational family. It brings together all ages, from toddlers to retirees in their 70s and older. During a typical week in this dual-use library in Texas, preschoolers gather in eager anticipation for story time. Seated in a semicircle, their bright upturned faces burst into laughter while listening to Ladybug Girl’s latest predicament or hearing Pete the Cat optimistically remind us that, “It’s all good.” Two afternoons each week senior adult library patrons sit at desktop computers. Proving that it’s never too late to learn, the class focuses on mastering basic computer skills necessary to adapt in our ever-changing digital world. Meanwhile, high school students and faculty come and go. They gravitate to the library to check out books, movies, and music; use school desktop computers; and browse on personal devices. In a joint-use library, a grandmother may share a seating area with a seventeen-year-old working on Algebra 2 problems, while other teens play card games, and adults fill out job applications online. In this well-lit library, a living room of learning, there is space for all, and everyone is welcome.

I’ve always felt that this joint-use library, open year-round, is a place where people of all ages, interests, and income levels can find items of interest at no personal cost. The mission of A. H. Meadows Public and High School Library in Midlothian, Texas, is to offer what other public libraries provide: educational and entertainment resources to a community. Yet, the staff also wants the library to be seen as an effective school library that enhances the high school curriculum and helps improve student achievement. A. H. Meadows Public and High School Library, operating since 1985, consistently tries to rise to the challenge of successfully serving more than one patron population, effectively combining public and school library services and programs to meet current economic and community literacy needs.

One example of how this joint-use library has partnered with the nine school libraries in Midlothian is the annual Field of Readers community reading event. More than one thousand parents and children bring blankets and books for a family reading night on the playing field of the city’s multipurpose stadium. Last year, Midlothian’s ten librarians wore eye patches, hoop earrings, and black mustaches to promote the year’s theme “Read Like a Pirate!” High school students volunteer at the annual event to read stories or work face-painting tables for elementary students. Media students project video of families reading together onto the stadium jumbotron screen. The November evening includes a half-price book fair, games, and craft activities, but the main focus is reading as a community under the stadium lights.

Another example of a combined school and community effort is a special collection in Midlothian’s combined library. The children’s area houses a memorial collection honoring a former high school senior. Brooke Cambron wanted to be a teacher and was involved in Midlothian High School’s Ready, Set, Teach training program. After a sudden illness took her life, her friends and family initiated Brooke’s Books, annually hosting book drives in the children’s room. The library staff processes the donations with spine labels and bookplates with a custom Brooke’s Books logo. After ten years of donations from individuals, community groups, and a corporation, hundreds of books throughout the library remind Midlothian residents of a young woman who loved literacy and libraries.

Other examples of activities at A. H. Meadows Public and High School Library that involve community members—some school-age patrons, some much older—are free classes in American Sign Language offered from August through May, AARP defensive-driving classes, and legal-aid sessions throughout the school year. The Midlothian Homeschool Association, homeowner’s groups, and ACT/SAT boot camps use the three auxiliary rooms by reservation. During the summer, the library remains open sixty-two hours each week, hosting two story times and a movie afternoon for hundreds of readers to participate in the annual Texas Summer Reading Program activities. On Wednesday afternoons in the summer, the aroma of buttered popcorn fills the library as kids spread blankets to watch movies.

Prevalence of Combined Libraries

Combined libraries have existed in the United States and internationally for more than a century. Joint-use libraries are most often school libraries combined with the community’s sole public library. Dual-use libraries continue to grow nationally in an effort to provide better library services to more people at a lower cost. Sarah McNicol described the financial benefits “of greater efficiency in a shared building which results in reduced overhead costs related to utilities, maintenance, and landscaping” (2008). The exact
THE COMBINED LIBRARY IS LIKE A LIVING ROOM FOR A MULTIGENERATIONAL FAMILY.
number of combined-use libraries worldwide is unknown. At least sixty-seven joint-use libraries exist within the United States. California and Florida claim several successful shared library facilities. Two hundred joint-use libraries operate in Canada, with one hundred and twenty in Australia. The United Kingdom listed sixty shared libraries in 2005, but this number may be an underestimate of libraries with joint-use components (Gunnels, Green, and Butler 2012).

Advantages and Disadvantages of Joint-Use Libraries

Scholarly opinions both support and criticize dual-use libraries. Several key ingredients to successful dual-use libraries are identified in the literature, such as the establishment of joint-use policies and procedures in the form of a legally binding joint-use agreement, and commitment to the shared goal of providing better information access to students and public library users.

The benefits of collaborative city and school library programs are well suited to current economic challenges, especially in rural areas. A library budget that is customized to meet students’ as well as public patrons’ information needs is more economically effective than establishing and maintaining two facilities. Texas researchers Claire B. Gunnels, Susan E. Green, and Patricia M. Butler (2012) pointed out that a combined library will have material for all ages and reading abilities, providing more material and extended hours than those of a separate public or school library. In addition, joint-use libraries are more likely to remain funded...
during budget cuts because they have more community involvement than separate libraries. This was the case in Midlothian; when individual campus book budgets were drastically reduced, the joint high school/public library was not affected, due to consistent city funding. Mostly, a joint-use library benefits small communities that lack a tax base sufficient to support an independent public library.

The main disadvantage of combined libraries is identified in the research as a decrease in the quality of service when one library tries to meet the needs of students and a community from one facility. Sometimes adults are reluctant to visit a school campus for their personal library use, and security involving public visitors mingling with students is a paramount concern in a school library. Further, personnel issues are a complex challenge in a combined library. The defined roles for city and school library staff, management practices for a library director, and daily operating procedures can be implemented effectively only through a detailed joint-use agreement. Even the promise of economic benefits a community receives from a dual-use library can be an empty one unless a specific set of conditions are in place:

- Community understanding and support of the joint-use library concept.
- Binding contract between public library and the school district.
- Accessibility of the joint-use library by the public from outside the school building, and separate and convenient parking.

The conditions usually exist only in communities with fewer than three thousand residents and where the joint-use library is the only viable option for library service. However, the drive for economy is the reason the number of joint-use libraries continues to increase in the United States.

Need for Joint-Use Standards

In Texas twenty-four joint-use school/public libraries currently serve community and school populations (see figure 1). Although no standards have been established for joint-use libraries in Texas, separate standards do exist for Texas public and Texas school libraries (see figure 2), as well as accreditation requirements for public libraries to participate as members in the Texas State Library System. Specific standards are needed for Texas joint-use facilities to provide quality service. The need for such standards was the impetus behind my research described below.

In 2015 twenty-nine national and international library experts served as panel members (see figure 3) in my doctoral Delphi study (Casstevens 2016) to reach professional agreement on what joint-use standards should include and to create a checklist that Texas joint-use libraries can use to assess effective service (see figure 4). Prior to the study, I completed a background survey that revealed Texas joint school/public libraries:

- serve populations of 300–43,000 patrons,
- hold collections of 8,800–46,000 physical items,
- circulate 800–100,000 items annually, and
- often serve as the community’s only public library.
Elements Important for Joint-Use Standards

Checklist Representing Categories Identified by Experts

The Delphi study resulted in a statistical consensus from the expert library panel that identified forty-two joint-use library guidelines. (Statistical consensus was determined from the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation of the aggregated scale ratings. For more about determining statistical consensus during this research, see Casstevens 2016.) Texas school library and Texas public library standards, as well as Texas state library accreditation requirements, were correlated to create these joint-use library guidelines. These joint-use library guidelines can be viewed at <http://goo.gl/forms/PKDeiqzG0B>. The checklist represents the ten categories that 70 percent or more of the library experts agreed to include (see figure 5). The respondents used a five-point scale to rate each existing standard for inclusion in joint-use standards (see figure 6).

The standards recommended by the library expert panel in the Delphi study addressed effective joint-use library leadership and harmonious long-term goals between the city and school. To meet the information needs of the school and community, the library collection should reflect the diversity of the local school and population. The library environment should include space that meets public and school requirements, as well as adequate outdoor features such as parking, signage, ADA accommodations, and lighting. Financially, the joint-use library must designate clear monetary responsibilities to be met on a continual basis by the school district and the city, but also allow for flexible funding to reflect the current programming needs of school and public library users.

Certified School Librarian

A certified school librarian capable of providing quality instructional services is preferred for the joint-use library setting due to the instructional and collaborative nature of the work. The Delphi panel of library experts agreed that if a joint-use library is served by only one professional librarian, certification in school librarianship should be required. In addition, to maintain the integrity of lifelong learning for school and public library visitors in a combined facility:

- The library director (a certified school librarian if only one librarian is on staff) should have access to all school classrooms for research and library-use instruction, and consistently collaborate with teachers for specific curriculum needs.
- Public library patrons should have access to the library during school hours, with simultaneous access to instructional library services, such as reference help, computer assistance, and information location services.

AASL’s 2007 Standards for the 21st-Century Learner contain common beliefs that correlate with and enhance the joint-use library environment. If equitable access is a key component for education, equitable access in a dual-use library secures books, reading, and information technology in a safe learning environment for children, young people, and adults. A certified school librarian is the appropriate person to guide the library as it provides this equitable access.

Library Director’s Skill Set

The American Library Association offers a helpful fact sheet of articles and books from several states and different countries that address issues concerning joint-use libraries at <http://libguides.ala.org/Join-tuselibraries/Overview>. Research indicates several critical factors that support successful combined library service:
• one library director responsible for both school and public library services,
• convenient location for all library users,
• adequate staffing and operating hours to meet school and community needs, and
• no restriction on collection access for any user group.

The director of a combined library can employ the Joint Use Library Checklist at <http://goo.gl/forms/PKDeiqzG0B> to numerically assess library services. Several of the guidelines on the checklist detail how the director creates quality service.

**Leadership and Administration**

• The library director provides written policies and procedures that reflect and respect the authority of the library board, the school board, and other governing agencies of the joint-use library.

• The library director prepares an annual report for the library’s funding agencies.

• The library director provides administrative assurance that the joint-use library will meet the quantitative requirements for state accreditation in the Texas State Library system.

**Finance**

• The library director appropriately administers funding as established by the articulation of clear monetary responsibilities between the school district and the city to assure funding for the joint-use library on a continual basis.

• The library director manages the budget to combine city and school funding appropriate to the community served and the school campus enrollment.
Partnership is the core goal of a joint-use library. However, the benefits of successful collaboration still can be achieved if a standalone school or public library is interested in building a relationship with a library that serves a different—or overlapping—population.

• The library director proposes a budget that reflects flexible funding allocated by the current needs of programming and resources for both school and public library users.

Information Science and Librarianship

• If the population served is greater than 25,000, the library director is required to have a Master’s degree in library science, as stated in the Texas Public Library Standards.

• The library director organizes and provides professional development and continuing education opportunities for all joint-use library staff.

• The library director provides consistent outcome-based evaluation of library services to assess whether library programs achieve their intended results.

• The library director must be able to enact a variety of roles.

This last requirement is, perhaps the most challenging, yet it is integral to the success of any shared library. The blending of public and school professional librarianship must be organized and implemented by the library director. For example, in Midlothian, there were several school days I would read at storytimes to groups of preschool children from the school district or community day care centers and, in between storytimes, teach high school research sessions. A library assistant and I took turns teaching the afternoon senior adult computer class. During each school day, the school library staff left at 4 p.m., and two part-time workers clocked in at the circulation desk to continue library service until 8 p.m.

Partnerships Beneficial to All Libraries

Joint-use library services can complement each other. Nationally, libraries are trying to stretch budget dollars, and one auspicious innovation to do so is to partner in providing library services. A joint-use library will have material for all ages, larger collections, and more service hours than separate libraries. The federal funding agency for libraries,
the Institute of Museum and Library Services, has described libraries as “community anchors,” places where lifelong learning is cultivated and civic engagement is encouraged (Fuller 2016). Joint-use libraries can fulfill this specific role by providing access from one location to technology, health knowledge, financial literacy, and online communication to all library patrons.

Partnership is the core goal of a joint-use library. However, the benefits of successful collaboration still can be achieved if a standalone school or public library is interested in building a relationship with a library that serves a different—or overlapping—population.

- Joint programming could emerge from a combined mission statement drafted by both libraries—a mission statement that encompasses the interests of each population served.
- Reciprocal borrowing accounts would parallel the tremendously successful TexShare card program practiced throughout Texas among more than five hundred public, academic, and school libraries.
- Community and school resources could be greatly expanded by allowing public and school sharing with database, open access, and e-book resources.
- The exciting possibility of private-sector partners joining with publicly funded libraries creates the potential to benefit different populations by providing integrated services.

**Conclusion**

Although the joint-use library checklist described in this article addresses only proposed guidelines for combined school/public libraries in Texas, providing quality library service by means of dual-use libraries is a national and international topic of interest. To remain relevant in the twenty-first century, all libraries—standalone and joint-use—continually redefine their roles to provide information, entertainment, and education. This rapidly expanding, constantly changing challenge validates the need for standards in all types of libraries to ensure quality service. In 2006 library consultant Mary Lankford (a retired librarian) was commissioned by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission to identify success factors for joint-use library service. Lankford stated that the economic benefits of joint-use library service were not the most important measure of combined libraries. She stressed that quality of life improved for people with access to a school/public facility. An effective school/public library serves as a center of lifelong learning for community and school library patrons.

Each day at 8 a.m., patrons are waiting for A. H. Meadows Public and High School library to open. Students need to print a paper or check out a textbook. Public visitors turn in DVDs, bestsellers, or stop by the desk to request the new James Patterson book. Endless variety is the hallmark of working in a joint-use library, enhancing a common belief in the 2007 AASL learning standards: not only children, but all library patrons—school and public—deserve equitable access to books, information, and information technology in an environment that is safe and conducive to learning.

**Works Cited:**


**Standards Referenced in the Text:**


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Best Practices in Preparing for Library/Librarian Evaluation
GROWING THROUGH DATA

Improving Practices and Impacting Student Achievement

Teresa Lansford
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The Importance of Data

Data can be a powerful tool for self-evaluation, goal setting, and advocacy in the school library. Regardless of the grade level or the size of the student body, any school library has meaningful data to mine and learn from. Basic data such as circulation numbers can impact a myriad of areas relevant to student learning such as collection development, reading-engagement plans, and book-promotion activities. Instructional hours and patron usage data can be used to advocate for increased library time for grade levels or classes, modified duty schedules, or increased space. Standardized testing data can be mined for learning trends to create opportunities for increased collaboration and coteaching around a variety of standards. The Data Coach’s Guide to Improving Learning for All Students (Corwin 2008) is a great resource for groups or individuals who want to better understand data analysis; the authors of this work show how data sources can be used to drill down to verify root causes.

For those unequipped to analyze and interpret data, the vast options can be overwhelming. However, to abandon data, or to skim numbers while not understanding or acting upon them, does a disservice to both our practices and our patrons. As we school librarians look for ways to prove our relevance and effectiveness, and as we continue to champion best practices, innovation, and student impact, data becomes a catalyst for change and a support for sustainability in turbulent times.

Where to Begin

My journey with data began as a classroom teacher. I used testing, benchmark, and anecdotal records to judge progress and guide my instruction. When I became a school librarian, I initially felt a bit afloat. There were no longer standard benchmarks to evaluate my practices. While I had access to some standardized testing data, it seemed impractical to base my daily work on four to six questions that three grade levels of students might be asked at the end of the year. I suppose I could have enjoyed the ride, continued to do what I felt was right, and as long as I encountered happy children and teachers, figure I was on the right path, but I needed more. I needed to know that what I was doing was what was best for my students.

The answer for me was to create those benchmarks, which understandably is a task that takes a lot of time. By benchmark, I do not mean the tests with which benchmarks have become equated—and, as a result, often despised. I define benchmark in its purest form, which is simply a point of reference. From that point of reference I can measure current data, make inferences about what is causing change, and determine if I should change my work or build upon success. Creating true points of reference takes more than one year. In fact, I have yet to settle on the point that means success for me in one area. Additionally, numbers that equate to success in my library could very well be meaningless in another library. One school’s record-breaking circulation could be another school’s slow week. Keeping records for one’s own library over time is a personally powerful tool that can be used to impact student learning, improve practices, educate the public, and advocate for the library regardless of the school setting or the grade levels taught.

Library data analysis requires a growth mindset. Not all data points will be affirming or uplifting. We have to be willing to see the bad in order to make the good. Do not fear the truth, become empowered by it. Distance yourself emotionally and commit to seeking solutions. Data is just a baseline; it does not need to define us. Great successes may be revealed, but be prepared for anything.

Selecting Data

When selecting data two options are available. One is to try to look at all of the available data to see what sticks out and then make an action plan from there. This was my method because I felt compelled to know everything I could, but this approach can be very intimidating for someone new to data. Therefore, another option is to start small and pick one or two data points to interpret. It is important to drill down when looking at only one or two pieces of data. Yearly circulation, for example, holds little meaning for changing practices. A year has so many variables that it would be difficult to know where to start or what those numbers mean when trying to make changes that could improve circulation. I recommend selecting a term, student demographic group, or section of the library, such as biography or graphic novels, when trying to make meaning of circulation data (see figure 1). When I break down a nine-week period’s data by genre, I can see which areas lack patron interest and can make efforts to promote those books to students. In the example shown, I used what I learned about biography circulation along with my anecdotal notes of which sorts of biographies students were checking out to start a program in conjunction with our PTA president. We have plans to purchase more popular biographies that I can then pair with our existing books to encourage students to read about people they may never have heard of but who are worth learning about. Without looking at data for underlying issues I would never have thought to implement such a program. Tracking overall circula-
tion is good, but by looking deeper I was able to continue to find ways to improve my practice. These smaller segments of the overall circulation go farther in painting a picture of the library and its patrons than larger numbers would and, therefore, will better guide practice.

My first year in a school library I chose to look at circulation over nine-week chunks, but I had no idea how to interpret what I saw. Looking back, after improving the first nine weeks’ circulation by over 300 percent, that initial number makes me cringe, but I am grateful to have it. That initial low number motivated me to change my practices. Over the four years that followed, I used that data to implement several changes. The first was to make the library accessible from the first day of school. In the past, our elementary school’s library had not opened until school was well under way, and I had followed tradition. Now every student in the school checks out a book on the first day of school, a practice that sends a powerful message home about the value our school places on literacy. Continuing to analyze circulation data also led to the addition of a “visiting library” program through which teachers check out bins of books relating to the curriculum to enhance their classroom collections. Finally, and most importantly, I was able to use those increasing numbers to advocate for flexible checkout. Our primary grades had previously had a fixed schedule for “library day.” The circulation data helped me convince teachers that our young learners needed to use our library just as they would in the world outside of school: coming in when they needed a book, not just because it was Thursday. Once I had

Do not fear the truth, become empowered by it.
implemented these strategies over four years and increased circulation significantly. I made sure to share this data with other educators at the school and the principal. I sent them a bar graph (see figure 2) showing progress over the four years, a short narrative explaining the graph, and then a statement of gratitude for their supporting my initiatives and what that ongoing support for flexible checkout meant for kids.

For those librarians working with older students, circulation numbers are also useful to determine which library services and collections specific grade levels need to learn more about as well as to advocate for extended hours or collaboration with teachers to promote reading engagement.

Using Data as a Catalyst for Change

When making changes based on data, implementing only one new program at a time is the best way to accurately judge effectiveness. Taking on too much at once makes it impossible to judge which methods were effective and which were a waste of time. It took three years for me to fully implement my plan for increased circulation. Several promotional activities were abandoned after a month or two of little to no impact. As we all know, planning for and running an effective school library is a constant balancing act between the effort of running specific programs or initiatives and the effects they have on students. If a program isn’t making a significant difference in students’ lives, move on and try something else. Once again, it all comes down to distancing ourselves emotionally from our practice so that we can put students first.

When I was working on Scholastic’s Patterson Partnership Grant application I used graphic novel circulation data to make the argument for an

If we are willing to dig a little deeper, we can uncover some powerful data to inform our practices.

Figure 2. Bar graph of the first nine weeks’ circulation over four years shared with other stakeholders.
added $4,000 in graphic novels for our school. I compared circulation data to collection data and found a significant discrepancy. Graphic novels were circulated at much higher rates than were reflected in their percentage of the collection. I then had concrete evidence that supply was nowhere near meeting demand. Looking at circulation data by section uncovers areas that need to be expanded to better serve patrons or that need to be promoted to the school community. Additionally, comparing circulation numbers by demographic area to school-wide demographics can paint a picture of who is using the library and which demographics are being underserved. I recommend exploring the options available in a circulation system to find out how students can be sorted. Some systems may not have as many options for sorting students, but it is worth a look to find out what opportunities for drilling down are available in your school library.

**Surveys**

Surveys administered to staff members and students are another effective way to collect feedback to guide programs. In my experience, surveys are best built by a team of librarians who are looking for the same sort of data. I have often observed that on our own we are less likely to create objective questions simply because it can be a difficult task. Survey questions can cover a multitude of topics such as ranking services, reflecting on coteaching, willingness to incorporate research or library lessons into the curriculum, or time needed in the library. I recommend looking at data for the first time with a colleague to help process findings. We are often so close to our patrons in a school library setting that we may expect feedback that doesn’t match what we receive. When this happens, there is the potential for leaning more toward deflecting unpleasant truths than focusing on seeking solutions. A trusted coworker can go a long way in helping to maintain focus. Commit to stepping back and looking for trends that can be used to shape the library. Surveys are a great advocacy tool as well. Using the words of patrons to champion their library can go a long way toward making sizeable progress.

**Standardized Test Data**

In addition to surveys, I use several concrete data points for informing my practice. Administrators and subject area specialists can grant access to standardized data. I have access to benchmark reading levels and standardized test scores in reading. As with all data points though, drilling down is very important. For example, looking at overall reading scores to plan lessons without knowing the standards or objectives that contributed to the scores equates to taking shots in the dark. If we are willing to dig a little deeper, we can uncover some powerful data to inform our practices. Rather than looking at the overall score or even the reference standard alone, I analyze all of the reading standards. This is a practice I use, not only to judge my work, but also to determine areas of weakness in our building that I could use as opportunities to support teachers. I look at weak standards and objectives, and then brainstorm lessons or units of study that I could bring to teachers as opportunities for coteaching to support the standards. For example, last year’s data showed that while our instruction in genres was effective, students needed more support in the area of summary and generalization (see figure 3). High scores in other areas masked these low scores when averaged into the overall score "OPI" (Oklahoma Performance Index). By looking at strands I was able to create mini-lessons and opportunities for students to practice skills and...
strategies for summary and generalization in my cotaught units. If I hadn’t taken the time to break down their scores, that area of weakness might have gone unnoticed.

When I saw the impact I could make in my building through the analysis of reading data, I was inspired to look at the math data as well. In the course of my career as a librarian, I have supported the math curriculum in many ways. For example, I incorporate telling time and elapsed time while making inferences using the book *Pigs on a Blanket* by Amy Axelrod (Aladdin 1996), reinforce number sense and ordering decimals while teaching how to find books in the Dewey system, and teach probability while showing students how to use spreadsheets to collect and analyze information.

The data points we find do not have to equate to large research projects, but may provide excellent opportunities for mini-lessons that can make a large impact. In the upper grades this sort of data gives inroads to developing coteaching opportunities across curricular areas to meet the needs of a large student body. For example, if time constraints prevent every section of an English course from coming to the library for a mini-lesson, the standard could mindfully be integrated into lessons for sections across multiple subject areas to better ensure all students have the opportunity for growth. When this sort of thoughtful impact is made on student learning, interest will build among colleagues to collaborate to improve their own students’ achievement.

Sharing Data

This opportunity for the growth of library services and programs is why it is so important to share data with a larger community. Data can be used as a tool for advocating and expanding programs or lessons, as well as to empower mentors to aid in professional growth. I share my findings with my principal, director, fellow teachers in my building, and often other librarians in my district as well. Sometimes they notice items that I had overlooked that can cause me to reflect on my practices, or they may read the narrative I include and have possible solutions or strategies that I can apply.

My initial nine-weeks reports featured a pie chart of how I spent my time in hours (see figure 4). I
created the chart by looking at my calendar containing the schedule of class visits and inputting numbers in a spreadsheet to add up my time. I took this idea from experiences I had working around professionals who have to add up their time for billing purposes. It is an effective way to see how time is spent and reflect on whether or not the time use mirrors the vision for the library. This exercise alone can go a long way in helping to reflect on one’s practice as an educator. In my report I also included circulation numbers, and tables with instructional minutes and planning hours broken down by grade level. By looking at who I was working with and how often I worked with them, I could begin to make connections about how I was impacting student learning. Documenting these impacts provides an advocacy tool. Finally, I ended my reports with a brief narrative. This included highlights, roadblocks, goals for the coming nine weeks, and progress on professional goals from my growth plan.

This report, like most of my practices, has evolved over the years. I still make a data sheet for collecting my own thoughts and reflecting, but now I make my findings more digestible and add more narratives through the use of online tools like Piktochart and Canva. By using templates from these sites, I am able to highlight certain aspects of the data that I want to use for advocacy or growth (see figure 6). Since these formats are more reader-friendly, I have broadened my audience to my staff and district-level administrators who would have an interest in what I am accomplishing in my library. As a result of this sharing, people now know what I am doing in my library, and they are impressed because I am doing exactly what is best for the kids and engaging them at higher levels. I can keep up this level of service only through data analysis.

By sharing what I have learned about my school library, I have grown as an educator, and my library better serves our students. This success supports the idea that embracing the resources available to us and using those resources can improve our practices and services. I have used data to win grants that brought $7,000 in books to our library, and $12,000 in robotics, iPads, and accessories for our coding club. Student research and writing skills have steadily improved as evidenced by standardized testing data that I have tracked over the last five years. I have also reclaimed part of the library that had been used as a teacher workroom for a new makerspace. None of these results would have been possible if I had not been willing to take a hard look at what the numbers showed was really going on in our library. The benefits to learners and me continue to far outweigh any trouble or time that data analysis has taken, and the more I have worked with data, the faster I have become at filtering, sorting, and mining for my personal needs.

At the heart of data analysis is a drive to look hard at what goes on in the school library and a willingness to let findings be a catalyst for change. As we continue to engage students in deeper learning and prove our worth, data is a resource that, used effectively, can ensure we are—and are perceived to be—essential and valued within our schools.

School Librarian as Data Curator

The more comfortable I became with sorting and filtering the raw standardized data that came to us in a spreadsheet, the more curricular areas I added to my analysis. Now every piece of standardized data that comes to the school comes through me. I make it meaningful and digestible to teachers. I highly value this role as a data curator in my library. As a leader on our data team, I provide administration and staff with the materials they need to make informed decisions on school-wide practice. All of this work has added value to my role in the school, a value that I never purposely sought out. As other schools saw what ours had accomplished, I had the opportunity to meet with district principals as well as school librarians from other states to teach them how to use their own raw data more effectively. My work as a data curator has made me invaluable in a world where many continue to question the worth of school libraries and librarians.

Ultimately, I believe that when it comes to our professional value, the lesson to be learned is that, if we as school librarians resolve to make all decisions based upon data-driven student impact, we will inevitably add value to our profession no matter where that path takes us.

At the end of the day there are only so many initiatives we can take on within our libraries. We don’t have time for wasted time. We can’t do it all so we have to do what is meaningful and right. It is important that we use our energy and resources to our fullest potential. It is only through data collection and analysis that we can be sure that we are making the best choices for our programs and, most importantly, our learners.

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Supporting You, Supporting the Standards

AASL’s Implementation Plan

Mary Keeling, Chair, AASL Standards and Guidelines Implementation Task Force
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How does an association prioritize the needs of its members as it introduces new professional standards? What strategies ensure a smooth transition from one set of standards to another? How can a school librarian use new standards to spark and maintain continuous professional growth?

Understanding Member Needs

One way to ease the transition and prioritize the needs of members is to start by asking what members value in the current standards and what they want in the refreshed standards. AASL did just that; the AASL Standards and Guidelines Editorial Board (EB) conducted extensive surveys and shared its findings with the AASL Standards and Guidelines Implementation Task Force (ITF), so the ITF knew early that AASL members and nonmember school librarians want:

- implementation resources for multiple audiences that are free of library jargon (AASL 2016, 10),
- a simplified, visual presentation with searchable text (AASL 2016, 11), and
- tools to support solo librarians who lack easy access to face-to-face guidance (AASL 2016, 12).

A Balancing Act

To meet member needs, the ITF has balanced simplicity with complexity. An important early insight was that “one size does not fit all.” If we were to create implementation resources for multiple audiences, that meant that our plan had to expand to support learning community members with different needs, as well as school librarians at all stages in their careers. Our strategic plan identifies resources for seven specific groups of people: school librarians who need help, innovative school librarians, school library supervisors, educators of librarians, school administrators, teachers, and parents (see figure 1).

Developing messages for each group using a variety of media is complicated. But we also discovered that simple plans with distinct, concrete action steps are more compelling, memorable, and easier for users to implement (Heath and Heath 2010). We chose to manage the complexity by organizing our plan around four goals with two to four objectives for each (see figure 2).

To support librarians implementing the new standards, we plan to:

- explain the AASL Standards to school librarians, stakeholders, and partners;
- engage innovators in developing tools to explain the AASL Standards;
To personalize our stakeholders, we developed a cast of characters or personas.

Noah needs help. He may be new to the career or facing a change in schools, principal, or professional standards.

Inez the innovator is an early adopter; she learns by tinkering with standards and getting feedback through sharing her findings with others.

Margot the mentor is the school library supervisor. She is concerned with guiding librarians at all stages of their professional growth.

Leon the lead learner, an administrator, is concerned with getting the best added value from each educator in his building. He doesn’t quite know what to expect from his school librarian.

Tony is a teacher. He’s competent and well respected for his strong instructional practice. He’s not sure what collaborating with his librarian will add to his practice.

Patty is a parent. She has never used a school library before, so she doesn’t know what to expect the library to do for her child.

The current plan identifies 115 action steps, including the development of branding, learning resources, partnerships, and outreach. The action steps are organized in a spreadsheet format to allow a future standing committee to revise and adjust the plan as conditions in the educational landscape change in the years ahead. The strategic plan is available at [http://standards.aasl.org/implementation](http://standards.aasl.org/implementation).

Explain

To explain the structure, purpose, and value of the AASL Standards to school librarians and stakeholder groups, and create and sustain conversations about the standards (AASL 2017, 21, 22, 24). Members expressed a need for visual, searchable materials and resources for multiple audiences. AASL’s designers developed colorful icons to represent each of the standards’ Shared Foundations and Domains, and the implementation task force developed messages for each of our stakeholder groups. The ITF and AASL staff worked together to ensure that a complete set of printed materials was ready for distribution at the AASL National Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, in early November 2017, and all of these materials may be...
### Goal 1. Explain the structure, purpose, and value of the AASL Standards to school librarians, stakeholders, and partners beyond the school community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECTIVES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Develop consistent, sharable branding and messaging for the standards to be used across traditional and social media.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2 Introduce AASL Standards to key stakeholders, including state and regional school library leaders, national educational organizations, state departments of education, and school administrator organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Create and sustain excitement and conversations about the AASL Standards.</td>
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### Goal 2. Engage innovators in developing tools to explain the structure, purpose, and value of the AASL Standards to school librarians, stakeholders, and partners beyond the school library community.

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<th>OBJECTIVES</th>
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<tr>
<td>2.1 Identify and engage with “movers and shakers” in the school library profession.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2 Encourage practitioners to develop and share implementation models and metrics for AASL Standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.3 Engage with stakeholders outside the profession.</td>
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### Goal 3. Equip practitioners to understand, apply, and use the AASL Standards in their educational settings.

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<td>3.1 Design professional-development opportunities for practitioners.</td>
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<td>3.2 Foster building personal learning networks and crowd-sourcing of resources related to AASL Standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3 Ensure implementation support through AASL publications, websites, and online tools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4 Prepare library and information science, and continuing-education faculty members to integrate the new AASL Standards in university programs of study.</td>
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### Goal 4. Evaluate progress toward implementing AASL Standards and adjust for changing conditions.

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<tr>
<td>4.1 Document effectiveness of AASL Standards implementation efforts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 Review and adjust implementation strategic plan for continued relevance.</td>
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Figure 2. Goals and objectives of the ITF.
Successful implementation requires that all school librarians commit to:

- continual professional reflection and growth;
- adopting and applying the national standards;
- iterative, aspirational planning to lead and serve the learning community;
- advocating for all students; and
- advocating for the school library.

As school librarians look through the Shared Foundation infographics, they will see many places where the refreshed standards build on the Standards for the 21st-Century Learner (AASL 2007) and the guidelines expressed in Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs (AASL 2009). Our goal in explaining the structure, purpose, and value of AASL’s new National School Library Standards is to help practicing school librarians see what they are already doing and to show how student competencies, librarian competencies, and school library alignments are integrated into a coherent whole.

Social media offers a platform for creating excitement, and the ITF planned for Twitter chats in September 2017 to start conversations about the standards, with additional social media campaigns following launch.

Engage

We intend to “engage innovators in developing tools to explain the structure, purpose, and value of the AASL Standards to school librarians, stakeholders, and partners beyond the school library community” (AASL 2017, 28). After learning the basics, some librarians will move quickly into innovating with the standards, and they will want to share their experiences and discoveries as part of their own learning process. One of our objectives is to “encourage practitioners to develop and share implementation models and metrics for AASL Standards” (AASL 2017, 29). AASL will create, on its standards Web portal, message boards for individuals to:

- discuss ways to collect evidence to demonstrate progress toward meeting the AASL Standards,
- share their own self-reflection tools and...evaluation rubrics developed to align with the AASL Standards, and
- discuss and share models for connecting the AASL Standards to district ESSA initiatives. (AASL 2017, 29)

As school librarians invent, tinker, share with others, and get feedback, look for them to share what they are learning through AASL’s Web portal, Twitter chats, and blog posts.

Another objective is to identify and engage with “movers and shakers” in the school library profession. We invited state affiliates to send two leaders each to a one-and-a-half-day preconference workshop in Phoenix to work with the AASL Standards and Guidelines Editorial Board and the Standards and Guidelines Implementation Task Force. Finally, we’ve invited a group of grassroots leaders to provide feedback and consultation about how local factors are affecting implementation. Their input will be essential in helping the association learn what works and consider how to adjust action steps to respond to local needs.

 Equip

To meet our third goal and “equip practitioners to understand, apply, and use the AASL Standards in their educational settings” we grouped strategic actions under four objectives:

- design professional development,
- foster personal learning networks,
Shared Foundations, Shared Implementation

MARCIA MARDIS, Chair, AASL Standards and Guidelines Editorial Board

Have you had a chance to get a good look at the new National School Library Standards? This fresh and exciting document’s authors, the AASL Standards and Guidelines Editorial Board (EB), aimed to “remodel” the concepts and commitments of school librarianship through thoughtful reworking and injection of new material and language. The resulting document is dynamic, flexible, and interconnected—just like your daily practice!

As a quick reminder—or preview—of the AASL Standards’ content, the six one-word Shared Foundations (Inquire, Include, Collaborate, Curate, Explore, and Engage) form the education base that learners, school librarians, and school libraries share. Each Shared Foundation is interpreted in a Key Commitment, which is the main objective behind the Shared Foundation. For example, the Key Commitment for Explore is “Discover and innovate in a growth mindset developed through experience and reflection.” Together, the Shared Foundation and Key Commitment provide a broad statement of the results of meeting the standards; we intend for school librarians and advocates to use these statements to communicate school library core values to various stakeholders.

Each Shared Foundation and Key Commitment is realized through development of Competencies that fall into the four Domains widely used and understood in current school librarian practice: Think, Create, Share, and Grow. The Competencies apply to learners of all ages; the developmentally appropriate action taken to demonstrate competency will depend on the grade level. Learners may build competency by progressing through the Domains, beginning with Think and culminating with Grow, or they may engage with the Domains most appropriate to their learning task.

By focusing on an environment in which learners and educators have unprecedented access to teaching and learning opportunities, school librarians create a mobile teaching and learning culture centered on innovation, collaboration, exploration, deep thinking, and creativity. School librarians are key to the success of this educational paradigm shift because they provide resources and instruction to all learners through an inquiry-based research model that supports questioning and the creation of new knowledge focused on learners’ interests and real-world problems.

This vision for teaching and learning is dependent on school librarians who embrace, lead, and model progressive pedagogies, including coteaching, personalized learning, and face-to-face and virtual active learning environments. To support learners’ exploration, school librarians build virtual collections, encourage active collaborative learning, and create spaces and learning structures within flexible library spaces. School librarians are master educators who provide leadership for a vision of learning centered on learner voice and choice.

Though the EB conceptualized and authored the new AASL Standards, our writing benefited from our ongoing discussion with the AASL Standards and Guidelines Implementation Task Force (ITF). Through our close collaboration, we were able to, for example, view standards implementations from the personas’ perspectives as we reflected on the standards’ coherence and completeness—an approach that kept us grounded in ensuring that our standards were realistic and immediately useful. Inspired by a desire to sustain the ITF’s important work and mission, we included discussion questions and learning scenarios right in the standards book to jumpstart your use.

We were also fortunate enough to provide input to the ITF about meaning and interpretation of various standards’ elements. We want your understanding to be achieved as quickly and seamlessly as possible. This joint development carried through to our collaborative design of the learning sessions at the AASL National Conference and follow-up opportunities like Knowledge Quest blog posts, eCOLLAB webinars, and local presentations.

The joint efforts of the EB and ITF illustrate one clear message: we are one profession united by the National School Library Standards. We come to the standards as individuals, but we engage with them as colleagues. As the members of the EB and the ITF know, we are better together!

For more information about the AASL standards and implementation resources available, visit <standards.aasl.org>.

- ensure implementation support through AASL materials, and
- prepare library school faculty to integrate the standards into programs of study (AASL 2017, 32).

The ITF worked with the EB to develop and deliver conference programming for the AASL National Conference in Phoenix in November 2017. Conference programming featured numerous opportunities to learn about the standards through three preconference workshops, an unconference, the general session, and three concurrent sessions presented multiple times throughout the conference. A final concurrent session was designed to provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on their learning and make preliminary implementation plans of their own. Recordings of the concurrent sessions may be found...
and evaluate the evidence. As part of our evaluation process, we also plan to explore and document shifts in the educational landscape, conduct formal surveys and literature reviews, and develop and share annual reports with AASL members and partner organizations.

Summary

In closing, we’d like to welcome you to your new National School Library Standards! As we have developed implementation tools, each of the task force committee members has considered how these standards affirm our core beliefs about school libraries and the young people we serve. As we considered the implications of the Shared Foundations, we have deepened our own expertise. We’ve also been challenged to imagine growing and leading in new ways. Finally, at every step of the way, we have devoted our work to imagining YOU and your needs. We hope you will accept the implementation resources as an invitation to discovery and professional growth.

Mary Keeling is district supervisor of library media services for Newport News (VA) Public Schools where she has led development and implementation of a district-wide inquiry process model. She chairs the AASL Standards and Guidelines Implementation Task Force. A former Lilead Fellow, she has written for many school library–related publications; during 2015 and 2016 she was author of the “Management Matters” column in School Library Connection.

Marcia A. Mardis is associate professor and assistant dean, Interdisciplinary Research and Education, in the College of Communication and Information at Florida State University (FSU) in Tallahassee. A longtime member of AASL, Marcia is chair of the AASL Standards and Guidelines Editorial Board. Among her recent honors were receiving the 2016 FSU College of Communication and Information’s Leadership Builder Award, a 2016 Michigan Association for Media in Education President’s Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Profession, and several research and teaching awards from FSU. She is the author of the in-press article “The OER Curation Life Cycle: Closing the Loop for Our Learners” to be published in School Library Connection and coauthor of a number of in-press papers, including “Usage Data as Indicators of OER Utility” to be published in the Journal of Online Learning Research, and the recently published "Potential of Graphic Nonfiction for Teaching and Learning Earth Science” in School Libraries Worldwide.

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When literacy is allowed to unfold in a gentle organic way, without pressure, children see learning to read as an exciting adventure, not an anxiety-producing chore.

My former school’s motto is “Learning and Loving It.” Our Theme Learning approach (a form of inquiry learning) capitalizes on children’s innate curiosity and desire to learn, and, moreover, aims to keep this curiosity alive throughout their schooling. Halifax Independent School is a small K–9 school where children learn in multi-age groups and in a setting where all the core subjects are integrated into the study of interesting themes such as Oceans, Nova Scotia, and Living Things. These themes last a whole year, involve the whole elementary school, and are designed to cover traditional subject areas such as language arts, social studies, and science. Teachers outline the broad areas of study each year, but students have a lot of say in the topics they delve into.

This inquiry approach grew out of one of the principles of the whole language movement of the 70s: purposeful situations and authentic materials provide the best literacy learning. Children are motivated to learn to read and write when there is a real reason that makes sense to them to do so. Wanting to find out more about an animal that interests them, to read the caption on an intriguing picture, or to follow instructions on how to build a model boat are powerful motivators. Making signs for displays, writing letters to real people about topics students care about, or writing small books about the lifecycle of their favorite sea creatures encourages children to see the written word as essential for communication.

My experience is that children gain literacy skills as they are ready. They learn because they want to, because they want to keep up with their friends, and because they see reading as a source of everything that is mysterious and fascinating in the adult world—a gateway to knowledge and mastery of skills, and a source of pleasure. When literacy is allowed to unfold in a gentle organic way, without pressure, children see learning to read as an exciting adventure, not an anxiety-producing chore.

As cited in my book Best School in the World (Formac 2017), research shows that there is no long-term disadvantage to learning to read at later ages. Children who read later, especially in multi-age classes, still benefit from the hands-on activities that go along with theme studies. Even if learners are not ready to read yet, they are developing their imaginations, creativity, and verbal expression. These are crucial skills that can be crushed in classrooms in which the mechanics of literacy are drilled, and
where children believe mastering these mechanics is a measure of learners’ worth.

Part of the problem in many of today’s schools is that teachers are bound by yearly “outcomes” or standards that all pupils must meet on a rigid timetable. This “one size fits all” approach becomes especially problematic in the early years of elementary school where children’s rates of development vary widely. A six-year-old who is more interested in building forts and Lego spaceships than in the printed word may not be able to “use commas in dates and to separate single words in a series” as a Common Core standard (2017) for grade one demands—she may not even know what a sentence is. If she is subjected to many lessons on the subject when she is barely writing simple words, she may tune out, and when she is developmentally ready to learn the conventions of comma usage, they may not be taught. When she is twenty-two does it matter if she learned to use a comma correctly at age six or at age eight? Research—and common sense—say no.

In a Theme Learning or inquiry classroom at Halifax Independent School, a group of six- and seven-year-olds in a multi-age class studying the geology of Nova Scotia are divided into groups to study particular minerals (which they have chosen). A typical class might have one group at a table with microscopes, rock samples, and samples of sand from Nova Scotia’s beaches. Their task is to record some of what they see under the microscopes.

Another group is at the “research table” where the children look at the questions they had previously generated about their minerals and consult the assortment of illustrated nonfiction books scattered about. The first question, “What are the uses of coal?” has them all looking through indexes and scanning through pictures, and when one finds a passage that looks interesting, he reads it aloud, with teacher help, to the others. After a brief discussion of coal-burning power plants that produce electricity for our houses, the children write up the information in their own words (and creative spelling).

What is noticeable when visiting a class such as this is that the children are engaged in what they are doing: chatting to each other about the subject matter at hand, helping each other, collaborating over shared inquiries, and comparing their findings.

The third group is writing a few sentences in their journals about pictures they have drawn. One child dictates a description of her picture to the teacher, who writes it down, so that the student can copy it. Another writes, “On the weknd I saw a moovee it was frzn. Anna said Elsa the qeen. It was vry cold.” The teacher suggests...
to this child that there should be one more period there, and she quickly finds where to put it, capitalizing the following "I". The teacher is not correcting the children's spelling in their journals, but notices such things as when someone is ready to add a period to help clarify meaning. There is a fine line that teachers in this type of classroom walk—too much correcting might inhibit children's desire to write or at least try out new words, but pointing out ways to make their writing easier to read at the right time may be all a child needs to solidify a punctuation concept.

What is noticeable when visiting a class such as this is that the children are engaged in what they are doing; chatting to each other about the subject matter at hand, helping each other, collaborating over shared inquiries, and comparing their findings. When it is time to change activities, some children are so absorbed they don't want to move—the teacher assures them they can come back to an activity later. Because learners get a lot of individual help, they accept each other’s differences and always have something they can improve on. Smaller classes are necessary, but so, too, are standards that are used only as guidelines, assessments that are tailored to the needs of the children, and a curriculum that is inspired by what children are interested in.

Since this approach to literacy doesn’t generally use textbooks or workbooks, teachers become the gatherers of authentic materials, both from public and school libraries, community organizations, and institutions. Halifax Independent relied heavily on public libraries for good nonfiction children's books, literature, and teacher resources, but since the school moved into its own building ten years ago, it has been building its own collections. The school library is now a welcoming place where children go to research, to work quietly, and to read for pleasure.

This "sneaking the learning in," as one five-year-old described the teaching methodology at Halifax Independent School, has produced children who love to read, are excited about learning, and who continue to learn throughout their lives.

Molly Hurd’s perspectives on education have been developed out of her wide variety of teaching experiences in northern Quebec, rural Nova Scotia, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Britain. She was a teacher and head teacher at Halifax Independent School for twenty years. She believes passionately that keeping children's natural love of learning alive throughout their school years is the best thing a school can do for its students.
Writing in the Library? Why Not! Using Google Slides to Reinvent the Library Checkout Period

Matthew Doyle
mdoyle@csufresno.edu
The class visit to check out books has long been a staple of school library programs nationwide. This flexible or scheduled time allows students to take advantage of the library collection and enjoy reading based on their own interests. The library provides the perfect environment for students to self-select books based on their interests, an activity that has been shown to increase student motivation to read (Edmunds and Bauserman 2006). Still, the school library is a dynamic technology-rich space that is much more than just a warehouse for a collection of books. While some days it is easy to get caught up in a circulation-based workflow, as school librarians we all need to make time to step back from the clamor of daily tasks and think about our long-term goals for our students and our library programs.

Many educators recognize that, while it is important to collaborate with colleagues, finding the time to plan and collaborate on lessons can be a challenge in the high-stakes assessment-driven environment we currently occupy (National Center for Literacy Education 2013). As a result of this focus on testing, many school librarians have felt pressure to reduce their role in the school to simply circulating books and helping make sure teachers receive their prep periods. Although getting books in the hands of students is a key aspect of any library program, it is not the sole purpose of the school librarian in the K–12 school. This article is for those who find themselves struggling to connect checkout time with reading comprehension, student learning, and critical information-literacy skills. It outlines a more-efficient checkout period that uses reading journals to get students writing about their reading in a reflective, informal, and ungraded environment. This approach opens doors to collaboration and can start conversations with teachers about how the library can contribute to student achievement.

As reading and writing are interconnected, complementary processes (Britton 1972), reading journals have successfully been used as tools for students to enhance learning and improve reading ability (Kim 2011; Graham and Hebert 2010). The school library always plays a major role in the reading element of student achievement, but not always the writing aspect. Supporting reading journals offers school librarians an opportunity to participate in developing these interconnected skills. Participating in journal writing helps students clarify ideas, both for themselves and others, as they develop understanding (Langer and Applebee 1985; Pfeiffer and Sivasubramaniam 2016). Journaling increases student engagement with readings, reading comprehension, and motivation to read (Hurst, Fisk, and Wilson 2006; Hancock 1992; Martinez and Roser 2008; Wong et al. 2002). Reading-response journals can act as a safe space for students to take chances with their writing without fear of grading, and increase students’ confidence and motivation to read (Wollman-Bonilla 1989). As students become comfortable with the journaling process, responses to readings become more thoughtful (Gammill 2006). The checkout visit to the school library is a perfect time to give students a chance to reflect on library readings and learning, and to build a portfolio tracking their reading progress.

One tool that can serve as an excellent platform for reading journals is Google Slides. With Google apps now in over half of the nation’s school districts, there is a good chance students already have an account (Singer 2017). If not, accounts for lifelong use can easily be created during a single forty-minute class period. With a Google account, students can create Google Slides presentations that are the perfect medium to document their library readings and progress over time. With reading journals students are able to make effective use of all of their time in the library either selecting books or working on a journal entry. This structure can help school librarians better manage the library space while checking materials out, helping students with readers’ advisory, and keeping students engaged. Unlike one-off assignments, the slides presentation is a cumulative portfolio of a student’s own reading, and there is no limit to the length of any given entry or the entire journal. Images, videos, and links to outside sources can all be added to slides to help students document ideas and create meaning from their readings. Another benefit is that the journal format is adaptable to any grade, from kindergarten through high school. As students develop technology-based skills over the course of their educations, the journal becomes an effective way to incorporate technology skills and concepts with learning.

**Journaling increases student engagement with readings, reading comprehension, and motivation to read.**
In action, journaling creates a new routine for the school librarian and students in the library. Students enter the school library and pick up a Chromebook, laptop, tablet, or other device while returning their books; they can even have a seat at a desktop computer. Students log in and open their Google Slides presentations. After selecting an aesthetic theme and creating a cover page for a presentation, each new slide is dedicated to the library book read most recently. Student entries can follow a prompt provided by the librarian or a classroom teacher, or students can head off in their own directions when writing about the experiences they had with their books. The librarian can have students, individually or in small groups, rotate selecting new books while the rest of the class works on their entries. As with all Google Docs, presentations made with Google Slides can be collaborative, and students can share their presentations with the librarian, classroom teacher, peers, siblings, and even parents so that they can comment and view each student’s progress over the course of the year. While it is important that students not be graded on these entries, responses from both the teacher and school librarian can help motivate readers and develop a better understanding of learners.

Benefits to students when creation of reading journals is part of a library visit are substantial. Reflective reading journals allow students to learn from their own experience, the most fundamental and universal of all learning (Britton 1972). Students can reflect on their experiences with texts, relating them to other stories, their own lives, historical events, and the like. The journaling
The library reading journal allows students to write about what matters to them, to somebody who should matter to them: their school librarian.
year will allow them to see progress over the years as they advance and become stronger readers. Students can make comparisons between texts and relate newly read books to ones they have read in the past.

Teachers will be able to see what their students are reading and make evidence-based decisions as a result. The librarian will get an insider’s view of the material each student is reading and see how students are progressing. Both teacher and librarian can comment on the entries, ask thought-inspiring questions, and make informed choices on future reading suggestions based on the entries students create. Parents can also benefit by seeing what their children are reading in school and how they are integrating the new knowledge they gain as they advance through the grades. Ultimately, the library reading journal allows students to write about what matters to them, to somebody who should matter to them: their school librarian.

Matthew Doyle
is a public services librarian at California State University, Fresno, where he serves as liaison to the education department. He is a former school librarian at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. School Complex in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and current member of the American Library Association, the Association of College and Research Libraries’ Education and Behavioral Sciences Section, and California Academic and Research Libraries (the California chapter of ACRL). He received his MLIS in 2010 from the School of Communication and Information at Rutgers University. His research interests include information-literacy skills and California school library programs. This article is a documentation of his effort to increase the effectiveness of a school library program and increase opportunity for collaboration between classroom teachers and school librarians.

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