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Overview

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  - Vocabulary Lessons & Test
  - Book Talk Videos
  - Writing Prompts (English & Spanish)
  - Book Reviews
  - Survey Questions
  - Book Printables
- Built-in Student Rewards
- Interactive Reading Log
- Robust Analytics & Reporting
- Fully Customizable

BOOK TACO STATISTICS

- Books Read: 12
- Activity Points: 199
- Reading Logged: 04:11:08
- Puki Reading: 00:58:14
- Book Points: 14
- Game Coins: 36

www.BookTaco.com

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The combination of text and illustrations in graphic novels can engage readers in a deeper understanding of the story as they use both traditional literacy and visual literacy strategies to read and enjoy the books.

Growing Up Graphically — pg 8
Frequently the curriculum supervisors in my district help out in schools during the first week of school. One year, as the school library supervisor, I was in an elementary school library that had begun circulating books on the first day of school. I was helping at the circulation desk. One fourth grader asked if he could have a specific book. “Of course!” I said. He didn’t think so; his teacher had told him to check out a book with a “yellow dot.” He came with different books he wanted but didn’t think his teacher would allow him to check out because they weren’t on his reading level. Finally, I whipped out my library supervisor’s business card, wrote a note to the teacher on the back of it, stuck the note in the book, and checked it out to the child.

I imagine this scenario—in which children must choose between books based on instructional priorities and those they want to read for pleasure—plays out frequently in school libraries or classrooms. There is a divide between the noble calling to teach children how to read and the equally noble calling to inspire a love of reading. We school librarians dance across this divide daily. What is the source of this controversy? How can we dance on the line and help our learners develop confidence in their reading identities?

Learning to Read

Common Belief 4 in the National School Library Standards notes, “Reading is the core of personal and academic competency”; this belief reflects and affirms the priority of all educators to develop literacy in all our learners (AASL 2018). Yet educators do not agree on the best way to teach reading as evidenced by the “reading wars,” a long-standing controversy illustrated by the debate between proponents of phonics instruction and balanced literacy.

Reading research has shown that children do not pick up on the symbolic meaning of letters to represent sounds, nor do they intuitively figure out how words work. Children must be explicitly taught the basic foundational knowledge of how sounds are represented by letters and how words and sentences are constructed. Once children learn the basics, they can apply the rules and principles to decode most words.

While the use of leveled readers has been shown to be helpful with very young readers who are learning to decode, the best way to improve reading comprehension is to practice reading a wide range of texts. Almost any text will do, including everything from easy, high-interest material (for example, sports magazines, song lyrics, comics) to difficult texts chosen on the basis of personal interest. Exposure to different types of texts produces an expanded vocabulary and background knowledge. Early, frequent, and varied exposure to language matters (Castles, Rastle, and Nation 2018).

Choice

The motivation to read is largely self-determined, and choice is a powerful driver. People, including children,
choose to do that which is fun, personally rewarding, or easy. This is where the dance begins! If “learners develop and satisfy personal curiosity by reading widely and deeply in multiple formats,” then we must surround our learners with opportunity and help them make connections between the school library’s resources and their interests (AASL 2018, Learner V.A.1). Finding and borrowing books (or using other kinds of texts) should be fun, accessible, and free of barriers. We need to consider how our policies, procedures, and routines inspire children and facilitate their engagement with text, as well as how they guarantee all learners’ rights to intellectual freedom. Reducing choice, whether through labeling, age-related rules, or restrictive policies, is not a strategy that makes children fall in love with books and reading. If our goal is to help learners self-identify as readers, then we must help them make connections with text through immersive practices that celebrate the reading life.

Do you:

• immerse children with the opportunity to read, or limit circulation numbers based on age or grade?

• book talk fifteen to twenty books related to your storytime selection, or just share one or two?

• change displays frequently and feature diverse authors and characters and inclusive perspectives?

• display student writing and student creations with related texts?

• allow children to select from any area of the library, or limit access by Lexile, grade, or reading level?

Community

Learners need to talk about what they are learning and reading, and the impact of a school community on learner education cannot be overstated. The National School Library Standards remind us that “learners actively participate with others in learning situations by... contributing to group discussions” (AASL 2018, Learner III.D.1).

We establish a reading culture through conversation. One research study identified social interactions between kindergartners and teachers as a factor in reading motivation. As children and teachers walked to a nearby public library, they discussed the topic of the week, asked questions about the children’s interests, and generally built excitement about the visit to the library. As the children browsed the library, the librarian continued to engage them in conversation about their interests and reading, using her expert knowledge to suggest specific books based on children’s interests (Fisher, Lapp, and Flood 2001).

Through conversation, the teachers encouraged curiosity and excitement and affirmed their students’ developing identities as readers and library users.

Communities include all people, and school librarians develop experiences and collections that ensure all people and all kinds of stories are represented. Movements such as #WeNeedDiverseBooks (WNDB) and #OwnVoices have fostered an increase in the number of books published by and about underrepresented people. The WNDB web page proclaims: “Imagine a world in which all children can see themselves in the pages of a book” (n.d.). Providing the opportunity for children to see themselves is a powerful way to affirm and build identity and self-image. Diverse Book Finder (<https://diversebookfinder.org>) is a program that analyzes picture books to track how black, indigenous, and people of color are represented in picture books. School librarians can use these tools to consider how to diversify their collections.

Dancing across the divide requires balance, knowledge, and grace. The more we know and understand about reading science, our learners, and publishing trends, the better prepared we are to create school libraries that immerse learners in reading, foster positive learning identities, and promote a reading culture in our schools.

Mary Keeling is district supervisor of school libraries for Newport News (VA) Public Schools where she has developed and led implementation of a district-wide inquiry process model. She was a 2015–2016 Lilead Fellow, chaired the 2015–2018 AASL Standards and Guidelines Implementation Task Force, and has written for many school library-related publications. She published “Supporting You, Supporting the Standards: AASL’s Implementation Plan” in the November/December 2017 issue of Knowledge Quest.

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When I was in my first year of school I came down with the chicken pox. I was kept home for two weeks until all signs of the disease were gone. When I came back to school, my class of forty-one students had taken up reading. I was so excited! However, I learned that my classmates had learned exactly two words: look and school. I wondered, What about the rest of the words? I was so disappointed. My mother laughed when I told her the story. "They are not all like you, chomping at the bit to read."

I have always been "chomping at the bit" about reading. It has been my passion and my strength when taking all those standardized tests that depend on vocabulary. It has been my passion and my weakness when confronted with the many checklists of life, when I was more absorbed in reading than doing. Many of you are like me. You probably list your love of reading as one of the reasons you became a school librarian.

The authors in this issue of Knowledge Quest address the topic of reading from many sides, from keeping students reading to the education of new school librarians. School librarians are bolstered by Common Belief 4: "Reading is the core of personal and academic competency" (AASL 2018, 13), and the belief that we as school librarians can help students achieve not only competence, but also joy through the wondrous act of reading.

For those students who are "chomping at the bit" about reading, Dr. Sara Churchill considers reading from the perspective of the gifted student, although her research has implications for all learners. Gifted students make up a considerable part of our student populations, and we need to pay more attention to supporting them in their reading choices. They are our future leaders and those for whom reading is already a joy. Celebrate them!

As school librarians, we are often asked to become confidant, soother, and listener of student problems. It always helps to have a good book to suggest. Dr. Kasey Garrison shares teen and preteen graphic novels and graphic memoirs that can smooth over some of the bumps in life as students look for help in dealing with growing pains in our fractious world.
School librarians are more than the gatekeepers for books. We are the motivators and purveyors of good reading, the support for teachers and parents in supporting the gifted, the reinforcing agent who can offer reading practice in a non-threatening environment.

School librarians are more than the gatekeepers for books. We are the motivators and purveyors of good reading, the support for teachers and parents in supporting the gifted, the reinforcing agent who can offer reading practice in a non-threatening environment. We believe in reading and in creating student readers, because reading is the foundation for competence after formal schooling ends.

Karen Perry is currently an instructor in the Library Science Department at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA. Karen served as a school librarian and public library children’s librarian for more than thirty-four years. She is currently serving on the US Board on Books for Youth, representing AASL. She has served on several awards committees for ALSC and YALSA, as well as the AASL National Conference planning committees for 2015 and 2017.

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Growing Up Graphically

Coming-of-Age Issues in Graphic Novels

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Introduction

Coming of age has been a quintessential theme in young adult literature since the breakthrough novels of the late 1960s like S.E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders* (1967). These novels started to recount a more authentic experience of growing up than earlier writing, which depicted teen years more like “a Norman Rockwell painting” (Cart 2018, 4). These earlier writings patronized young readers and ignored the confusion of this time, while also missing the opportunity to help support them through it. Thankfully, today’s young adult novels offer a more realistic portrayal of adolescence, illustrating the harsh social realities and complexities of the journey into adulthood and giving developing readers some solace and commiseration in the experience.

In addition to traditional formats, there are a wealth of graphic novels, often personal memoirs, addressing the complex issues of growing up and coming of age. Graphic novels offer young adults a unique and provocative perspective, with the combination of illustrations and text telling the story with art and symbols. The focus on visual literacy and symbolism also serves to address diverse learning and reading styles and preferences for young adults, and graphic novels offer clear connections to important curricula and standards.

Alignment to the AASL Standards

Graphic novels are aligned to the National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries in many ways. Within the Explore Shared Foundation, the Think Domain notes that “Learners develop and satisfy personal curiosity by...Reading widely and deeply in multiple formats” (AASL 2018, 38). Integrating graphic novels into collections and teaching resources will support the development of students’ visual literacy as well as more traditional literacy skills. Further, Common Belief 4 states that “Reading is the core of personal and academic competency” (AASL 2018, 13). In addition to academic pursuits, school librarians are tasked with developing collections that support students in their own personal development because school librarians know the value of reading and the power of the right book at the right time. That belief goes on to note that “the school librarian supports, supplements, and elevates learners’ literacy experience by guiding them...”

Graphic novels offer young adults a unique and provocative perspective, with the combination of illustrations and text telling the story with art and symbols.
and involving them in motivational reading initiatives” (AASL 2018, 13). That “elevates learners’ literacy experiences” piece is key to the role and potential of the school library. The combination of text and illustrations in graphic novels can engage readers in a deeper understanding of the story as they use both traditional literacy and visual literacy strategies to read and enjoy the books. Currently, I am engaged in a project creating a website of young adult graphic novels addressing social justice issues and resources for librarians, educators, and others working with young adults to integrate these titles into their teaching and programs. With my co-researcher Karen Gavigan, we have visited library collections throughout the United States and Australia and identified titles focused on social justice issues around socio-cultural constructs like race, gender, and sexuality. In addition, we have found many of these graphic novels are also profound coming-of-age stories that can bridge cultures and offer young readers a different perspective on growing up. This article explores these books divided into common themes found in this research.

**Coming of Age during War**

There are many graphic novel memoirs about coming of age during war or a time of political unrest and violence. These titles are often graphic memoirs, told from an autobiographical perspective, where the author and/or illustrator give their personal account of the experience. In the 2013 Mildred L. Batchelder Award Honor book *A Game of Swallows: To Live, To Die, To Return* (2012) and the sequel *I Remember Beirut* (2014), Zeina Abirached shares experiences from her childhood during the Lebanese Civil War in the 1980s. Despite the violence and turmoil happening outside of her home, Abirached has great memories of her family and their neighbors, sharing stories, making meals, and happily listening to loud music meant to block out the noise of bombs. A similar story is shared in the recent graphic novel collaboration with Victoria Jamieson, Omar Mohamed, and Iman Geddy *When Stars Are Scattered* (2020). This story is about Omar’s experience growing up in a Somali refugee camp with his younger brother who is nonverbal.

Brigitte Findakly and her partner Lewis Trondheim created *Poppies for Iraq* (2017), which tells of Findakly’s youth in Iraq during the 1960s and 1970s and her visits back to Iraq to see extended family after moving to her mother’s native France. The increasing violence in the country and decreasing freedoms of the people are shown clearly in her graphic novel. Two stories from Iran share similar accounts, Marjane Satrapi’s graphic novel classic *Persepolis: A Story of a Childhood* (2004) and *Parsua Bashi’s Nylon Road: A Graphic Memoir of Coming of Age in Iran* (2006). Other examples of traditional novels on these themes are available in graphic novel format like *Anne Frank’s Diary: The Graphic Adaptation* (Folman, Frank, and Polonsky 2018).

These insider perspectives give readers a firsthand glimpse into how youth experience the political violence and suffering and how, despite these different circumstances, there are some things about growing up that can be quite similar in any culture.

**Gender and Sexuality**

Sexuality and gender issues are common themes youth grapple with in traditional coming-of-age novels, and this theme is clearly found in the graphic novel format. One such title was the first graphic novel to win both the Caldecott and Printz Honors in 2015. *This One Summer* (2014) by Jillian Tamaki and Mariko Tamaki follows tweens Rose and Windy on their annual summer Canadian lake holiday as they eavesdrop on local teens and the teens’ sexual escapades. Rose and Windy’s “transformative summer” plays out against the backdrop of Rose’s parents dealing with a miscarriage and the girls trying to figure out these sexual identity and family issues from their own unique perspectives (Gandhi 2017, 1).

Funded by a Kickstarter campaign, *As the Crow Flies* (2017) by Melanie Gillman is another summer story that tells the story of Charlie, a 13-year-old queer black girl attending an all-white Christian camp where the girls complete an arduous trek through the mountains. Charlie’s journey takes readers through her questions about religion and sexuality.

Tillie Walden is a highly acclaimed graphic novel creator, and her stories like *Spinning* (2017) and *On a Sunbeam* (2018) tackle issues of sexuality and more with authentic voices and images. *Spinning* is a lengthy but intimate memoir of Walden’s teenage years training as a competitive ice skater while dealing with bullying, coming out, and her family’s move from the East Coast to Texas (Cooke 2017).

Another great story in this category is Jen Wang’s *The Prince and the Dressmaker* (2018), the tale of a young prince who hires a talented seamstress to design him beautiful dresses that he wears at night on the streets of Paris as Lady Crystallia. In addition to a cross-dressing tale, this graphic novel is a fun story of friendship, growing up, and being yourself.

**Marginalized Groups**

Just as there are graphic novels about the LGBTQIA community, there are also some brilliant stories discussing...
the experiences of marginalized groups based on race and immigration that will inspire discussions with your learners. A classic example is *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang (2006), which tackles issues related to Chinese stereotypes, immigration, and fitting in while growing up; it even weaves in some Chinese mythology. Yang’s skillful illustrations add quality and imagery to the story that text alone would not be able to convey.

While *American Born Chinese* holds a light-hearted, humorous tone, *I Am Alfonso Jones* (Medina, Robinson, and Jennings 2017) is set against the backdrop of the Black Lives Matter movement and deals with racism and police brutality against people of color. When teenager Alfonso is shot by a security guard mistaking the clothes hanger in his hand for a gun, Alfonso is transported to a ghostly world where he talks to other people of color killed by the police in similar circumstances. He watches how his community reacts to his death with activism and calls for justice. Both stories give different perspectives on what it means to grow up outside of the dominant, mainstream culture (i.e., white and middle class).

**Middle School Age**

In addition to coming-of-age stories focused on aspects of the protagonist’s socio-cultural identity, there are also some great choices describing the middle school experience. The talented Raina Telgemeier has written and/or illustrated a slew of popular graphic novels aimed at this age range, including *Drama* (2012) and *The Baby-Sitters Club* graphic novel series. Her autobiographical trilogy of *Smile* (2010), *Sisters* (2014), and *Guts* (2019) gives an intimate look at her own life and growing up with anxiety, “a fraught sibling relationship,” and extensive dental work due to an accident (Alter 2019, 5). In a recent interview with *The New York Times*, Telgemeier describes how images can express her feelings better than words (Alter 2019), especially with more serious issues like experiencing panic attacks.

Victoria Jamieson is another author/illustrator who writes for the middle school age group with graphic novels including her debut *Roller Girl* (2015), which won 2016 Newbery Honors, and *All’s Faire in Middle School* (2017). Both stories follow girl protagonists navigating life through middle school and their unique hobbies, on the roller derby track for Astrid and at the Florida Renaissance Faire for Imogene.

There are some great options with appeal to middle school boys as well with a new graphic novel adaptation of Kwame Alexander’s *The Crossover* (2019), illustrated by Dawub Anyabwile, and *New Kid* by Jerry Craft (2019); both feature black boys as protagonists. These high-quality choices will engage readers with their authentic representations of life in middle school.

**Best Practices and Resources**

Despite the recognized value of using graphic novels for teaching and to engage reluctant readers (Hughes...
et al. 2011; Jennings, Rule, and Zanden 2014), many educators still find it challenging to integrate the format into learning opportunities. Thomas Newkirk (2002) noted this is likely due to the absence of visual literacy curricula in pre-service teacher education programs. Luckily, there are heaps of resources available online for support in sharing graphic novels with youth. Since reading in this format is a much different experience than a traditional novel, Michael Pagliaro (2014) created a rubric that gives good tips for how to read, select, and evaluate graphic novels. David Low and Katrina Jacobs (2018) shared ideas for literature circle roles specific to graphic novels that address important elements like art, space, and coloring. Scholastic's graphic novel imprint Graphix has some great free teaching tools on its website promoting Scholastic titles, including videos with popular graphic novel authors, teaching guides, and handouts (2019). Additional resources are outlined in the “Graphic Content and Challenges” sidebar (below); these resources target important issues relevant to graphic novels and offer selection sources.

**Conclusion**

This article shared some engaging graphic novels with coming-of-age themes to support young adults going through similar experiences. These titles are often memoirs written and illustrated from the insider’s perspective, and so can be especially evocative and powerful in reaching growing readers and helping them to see reflections of themselves through the text and images.

*This project has been funded by the American Library Association’s Carnegie Whitney Award.

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**Graphic Content and Challenges**

It is important to consider your audience and community while making graphic novel selections for your school library. For example, a textual reference to nudity in a traditional novel can be a lot tamer and hidden than an illustration of a nude character in a graphic novel. Due to the sometimes “graphic” nature of the graphic novel format, they are often targets for challenges. Here are some useful resources to be prepared for the censors:

**Comic Books Legal Defense Fund:** <http://cbldf.org>

The Comic Books Legal Defense Fund is a non-profit group dedicated to protecting free expression through comics and helping librarians, educators, and other people promoting this format. They offer legal aid and advice, and include a wide range of useful resources from free webinars to notable case files of challenged comics and graphic novels.

**ALA’s Graphic Novels and Comics Round Table (GNCRT):**

<www.alanrt.org/gncrt>

Conceived in 2018, the GNCRT is one of ALA’s newest groups and includes a ton of useful information on their website like webinars on Banned Books Week since graphic novels are often featured on that list. They also administer the Eisner Graphic Novel Grants for support in developing your collection.

**No Flying, No Tights:**

<www.noflyingnotights.com>

This well-established website has reviews of all kinds of graphic novels to help support challenges and questions about the inclusion of graphic novels in your collection. Their site also provides good resources to integrate the format in unique ways in your teaching practice.

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**Dr. Kasey L. Garrison** is a senior lecturer in the Master’s of Education-Teacher Librarianship program and coordinator of the Children’s Librarianship Specialisation at Charles Sturt University in Australia. She is a co-awardee of the Carnegie Whitney Award with Karen W. Gavigan for the project “Social Justice in Young Adult Graphic Novels: A Global Perspective.” She is the author of the two-part series “What’s Going on Down Under? Portrayals of Culture in Award-Winning Australian Young Adult Literature” published in the Journal of Research on Libraries and Young Adults this year.
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AASL Supports School Librarians During School Closures

**AASL Town Hall**
Thursday, May 28 | 11:00 AM Central

As communities approach the end of this school year, AASL will center discussion at this week’s town hall meeting on the upcoming school year and how education may evolve post-pandemic as a result of our current experience. How will school librarians influence the way education takes shape in the new world? Register to join the discussion at [ala.org/aasl/townhall](ala.org/aasl/townhall).

**School Library Closure Impact Survey**
Survey Closes Monday, May 11, 9:00 AM Central Time

During this unique time of national crisis, school librarians are taking the lead in teaching and learning now more than ever. AASL wants to capture the critical role school librarians continue to play during this crisis. Please take a few moments to complete this survey at [surveymonk...](surveymonk...).

Results from AASL’s series of snapshot surveys will help inform the AASL Town Hall discussion held on May 28.

**RESOURCES TO SUPPORT SCHOOL LIBRARIANS DURING CLOSURES**

- **ALL | AASL Learning Library** contains a wealth of FREE resources—from webinars to presentations to Knowledge Quest articles and issues—to help school library professionals engage with learners and update their professional practice during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **AASL Complimentary Resources Clearinghouse** lists free resources for online instruction and activities offered by AASL vendor partners and exhibitors.

- **Knowledge Quest** bloggers are posting daily about the creative ways they are finding to connect with learners, help fellow educators, and update their practice during the pandemic. Subscribe to receive email notifications to the latest posts.

- **AASL Member Forum on ALA Connect** offers AASL members a platform to talk about the issues they’re dealing with during these difficult times.

- **Pandemic Preparedness Resources for Libraries**, curated by ALA, includes resources on pandemic prevention, guidance on disinfecting workplaces, and what individual staff and their library users can do to reduce risk of contagion.

- **CDC Guidance on COVID-19** offers the latest on resources and developments concerning the pandemic, including information on how the virus spreads, symptoms, prevention, and treatment.

VISIT [ALA.ORG/AASL/ABOUT/PANDEMIC](ALA.ORG/AASL/ABOUT/PANDEMIC)
anching Out

Promoting Reading and Providing Access When the Library Is Closed

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Building lifelong readers is a core tenet of our mission as school librarians; it is practically encoded in our collective DNA. “Reading is the core of personal and academic competency” is even one of the stated Common Beliefs of our profession (AASL 2018, 13). We aim to develop and maintain a vibrant reading culture in our schools by promoting quality reading materials for our users and ensuring equitable access to those materials. “A love of reading is just as essential to the future development of students as showing them how to research and manage information” (Ercegovac 2012, 36). In an ideal world, nothing would stop our students and staff from accessing all our collection at any time, and we would be unlimited in our resources of time, space, and budget to support our readers.

However, the hard truth is that sometimes our school library spaces are closed to users, with or without our consent, and are inaccessible. During the school year, many school libraries are closed for standardized testing, school-wide activities, or any number of other events that prevent students and staff from using the library space as they normally would. As of this writing, we are experiencing a global pandemic with COVID-19 and for many of us, our school buildings are off limits. However, there are other times when schools are closed, including natural disasters, weather events, school vacations, summer break, and more. Regardless of the reason or how much of your school library or your school is inaccessible, there are creative ways to support reading in your school community. Your role as a supporter of readers and champion of quality books for independent choice reading continues to be crucial, regardless of the temporary inaccessibility of your space.

Even though it might take some creative thinking on our parts, “the school library has the ability to provide continuous access to resources” and can ensure that the love of reading and access to materials continues (AASL 2018, 56–57). Here are a few ways to get you started as you consider how to support readers and build excitement around reading without the benefit of your school library space.

**Thinking Outside Your Space at School**

A closed school library space does not have to lead to the elimination of library services to users. According to AASL, "the school library is not confined to the physical library space" and can reach farther than your library’s four walls (2018, 56–57). If your school library is inaccessible, think about how you can reach into other spaces to continue to promote reading to your students and staff. The cafeteria is often an excellent place to have a “pop-up” library, since it is a location that most students visit daily, regardless of testing or other activities. Set up a table with a computer capable of accessing your circulation system, and bring along a cart of high-interest books for your students. They may not be able to access your entire print collection at that moment, but you can bring a piece of the library to them. You can also use this opportunity for students to return books, since you will be in a high-traffic area where returning materials might be easier. If the cafeteria isn’t an option, consider using a lecture hall, the lobby before and/or after school, or other popular areas; the important thing is that students are still able to access high-quality reading materials and continue to see you at the forefront of reading promotion.

Students may also have specific titles that they would like to check out but are unable to access. Consider setting up a system for them to request specific titles from your collection that you can have available for them at the next pop-up library day. You can expand this into a wider initiative, where any student can request a book via an online form and have the book delivered to them at a determined time or class, such as during their English class or their first period. If your building is closed but you can access the library shelves, consider arranging a curbside pick-up and drop-off system for requested titles. Although it takes some logistical planning on your part, this concierge-style service can help ensure that users maintain access to the collection.

Brainstorm ideas for how you will continue to promote titles and reading without the displays and activities in your school library space. If you don’t already, you may want to highlight specific books on your school’s morning announcements, news show, and/or newsletter while access to your space is limited or nonexistent. Placing book advertisements with cover images and descriptions in the hallways, social
Regardless of the reason or how much of your school library or your school is inaccessible, there are creative ways to support reading in your school community. Your role as a supporter of readers and champion of quality books for independent choice reading continues to be crucial, regardless of the temporary inaccessibility of your space.

Collaborating with Educators in their Classrooms

When the library space is closed, consider reaching out to educators to collaborate on lessons or activities, just like you would in the library space, but go to their classroom instead. Some schools use end-of-year testing to host a mystery reader program during English classes. Mystery readers may include the school librarian, principal, parents, or other staff members. Teachers may offer clues in the days leading up to the event, challenging students to guess who will be visiting their classroom for a read-aloud activity. Mystery readers can coordinate with the teacher for a specific genre or type of reading, such as a picture book, short story, or the next chapter of the class’s read-aloud novel. Activities like mystery reader excite students and engage them in reading in a different setting.

Another way to collaborate with teachers to promote reading is by taking the library to them. Throughout the day or time period your space is closed, you may want to set up a schedule to visit classrooms to do book talks and offer students a variety of titles on a cart, similar to a pop-up library in the cafeteria. Bring your laptop and a scanner so...
Encouraging Reading through Programming

Programming is also an excellent way to promote reading and a school-wide reading culture, even when your space is off limits. Reading contests and activities that encourage students to read outside of school can be wonderful promotional efforts when your space cannot be used. Something like a reading bingo, where students read books that fit different categories, can help buoy excitement around reading throughout your school building, regardless of access to the physical library space. Once students submit their completed bingo boards (which could happen in non-library locations such as the main office, digitally, or their classrooms if needed), students’ names might go into a raffle drawing for a prize of some kind. Even if your budget is not extensive, a small prize can help build up excitement around reading during the school library closure.

Additionally, consider how you might use book trailers and reviews to encourage students to read. There is a plethora of quality book trailers found on authors’ and publishers’ websites as well as YouTube. Promote selected book trailers on social media, in the hallways, in the cafeteria, or any location where students may gather and have access to their phones or other devices, helping to encourage them to continue reading. Similarly, you can also promote book reviews created by you or the staff, highlighting specific titles. These book reviews or book talks can be words on hallway posters, videos shared in English classes, or live talks given on the morning announcements, among many other options. You can even have students join in the creation of book reviews for other students to view, using Flipgrid or other digital tools. Having student-created reviews and book talks can help incorporate some student ownership and voice into your reading promotion efforts (Chance and Lesesne 2012).

For schools that have feeder schools, such as elementary schools that feed into a middle school, reach out to the school librarians at your lower feeder schools toward the end of the school year to set up a visit to meet your future students. These visits can give you a way to connect to your future students while simultaneously promoting reading and your school library. While you’re there, you may want to ask students about the books they like to read, highlight exciting components or activities in your library, and highlight titles for summer reading initiatives. You can then use the titles the students provide to inform your suggestions for read-alikes and your displays at the start of the next school year (Kordeliski 2017, 12). Imagine the feeling of walking into a new school and a new library and seeing not only a friendly librarian face that you recognize but also books that you like already featured! Whether or not you make an in-person visit, consider creating a digital message to send to feeder libraries introducing yourself that perhaps includes a mini-tour of your space. These are great ways to use the time that your library is closed to your advantage to start building your reading culture for the next year.

Suggesting Alternative Sources for Reading

In addition to promoting your book collection, consider other avenues to keep students reading. If your school library subscribes to magazines, you
Programming is also an excellent way to promote reading and a school-wide reading culture, even when your space is off limits. Reading contests and activities that encourage students to read outside of school can be wonderful promotional efforts when your space cannot be used. Something like a reading bingo, where students read books that fit different categories, can help buoy excitement around reading throughout your school building, regardless of access to the physical library space.
may make previous issues available in places like the cafeteria, nurse's office, or counselor's office. Another idea is to partner with the youth services librarian from your nearest public library branch. They can help promote new books, advertise upcoming activities at the public library, organize a library card sign-up event at your school, and more.

Consider reminding parents and staff that digital reading is reading, too! Whether or not there is access to your physical space, e-books, audiobooks, and other digital media can be excellent ways to keep students reading. When possible, dedicate a portion of your library budget to digital formats, since many students prefer reading digitally. Promote various ways to access e-resources throughout the year, such as online subscriptions, the public library, and your school library collection. Advertise these electronic titles anywhere your students and staff may notice them, including social media, newsletters, and your school library website (Kordeliski 2017, 14). There are also several ways to share digital read-alouds with students, including screencasts, Flipgrid, and YouTube playlists. Always be sure to acquire publisher permission before creating or sharing digital read-alouds with your school community.

Removing Barriers to Continue Access (and Reading!)

Whether your collection is truly inaccessible or if you are temporarily displaced, students still need access to reading materials. As Sonja Beckham states, “being stewards of our school resources doesn’t mean books should remain on the shelf in pristine condition, but instead means resources should be placed in the hands of students to explore” (2011, 53). Bringing parts of your collection to them in the hallway, cafeteria, classrooms, and online still provides students with accessibility to your collection. Work with teachers and other staff in your building to promote reading through lessons and activities like mystery readers, book talks, and infographics. Examine your digital collection as well as your public library to offer reading in other formats. By implementing one or more of these ideas in your school, you are demonstrating to students that the school library isn’t just an extra part of their school experience; instead, the school library can meet students and staff everywhere they are and continue to promote the love of reading.
Stacy Gilbert is a librarian at Fairfax County Public Schools. Stacy is a member of ALA, AASL, YALSA, and the Virginia Association of School Librarians. She has written an article on library collaboration with secondary math teachers in School Library Connection and volunteers with the NOVA Teen Book Festival to connect educators with up-and-coming YA authors. She is a past recipient of the Dickinson Award from the Virginia Association of School Librarians, as well as the Library Graduate of the Year Award from Old Dominion University. Her library interests include middle-grade and YA literature, makerspaces, and social-emotional learning.

Rachel Grover is a librarian at Fairfax County Public Schools. Rachel is a member of AASL and the Virginia Association of School Librarians. She has written articles and created workshops for School Library Connection. Rachel is also adjunct faculty at Old Dominion University. Her interests include genrefication, makerspaces, and technology.

Works Cited:

Practice Distance Learning During School Closures with the AASL Standards Card Game

Engage with your professional networks exploring the National School Library Standards and implementation strategies while observing social distancing.

Download modified instructions for organizing virtual game play at standards.aasl.org/card-game

Order your own professionally printed and cut game at standards.aasl.org/shop
Left to Chance
Gifted Students & Independent Reading

Sara Churchill
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Selection of materials, one of the required classes when obtaining a school library endorsement, teaches school librarians how to find, analyze, and build a library collection representing all learners. AASL emphasizes the importance of reading and collection development in the groundwork of the National School Library Standards, the Common Beliefs. In the beliefs, reading is described as "the core of academic and personal competency" and the encouragement of lifelong readers is a primary goal of school libraries (AASL 2018, 13).

When developing collections, school librarians can easily find resources recommending books for struggling learners and English as a second language (ESL) students, as well as students who are reading at grade level. As a new school librarian, I came away from my courses armed with lists and websites to help me meet the needs of these students. However, it wasn’t long before I realized there was a group of students I was missing—my gifted learners.

Even though all ages of gifted learners face this dilemma, it became apparent that my students in grades three through five faced even more of a struggle than older and younger students. Often, younger students branch out into middle-grade chapter books, and high school students reach for adult literature. However, it’s difficult to find materials for grades 3–5 that push students intellectually, without stretching the boundaries of mature content. I found myself scouring websites, stretching the limits of advanced searches on websites, and constantly looking at reviews and book levels. Though I could pick up a vendor catalog or a journal and find a focus on books appealing to ESL learners or "high/low" books (high interest, low reading level), try as I might, I couldn’t find much addressing students who needed basically the opposite—high reading level, lower age interest.

This gap in literature plagued me for years and eventually became the focus of my own research. The asynchronous development of gifted learners is well known, but little has been done to address this characteristic regarding recreational reading. In fact, reading in general, as it pertains to gifted students, is an area that lacks research. My gifted students were challenged in their math or science classes, but lacked engagement in advancing their reading skills. When it came to recreational reading, something teachers knew was important, they assumed their gifted students would be able to find their own materials. The thinking was that because the students could read a variety of materials on their own, they could also find the materials on their own. However, it was apparent to me, as the school librarian, this wasn’t always the case. Many of our gifted students were not achieving high levels of independent reading. I decided I needed to dig into this phenomenon a bit more and find out what my gifted readers truly wanted and needed. By understanding their needs more clearly, I hoped to develop concrete ways in which I could better support their reading habits. The results of my research allowed me to generate a list of ten steps that teachers and librarians could take to help foster the independent reading habits of gifted students. Those ten tips follow the research findings in this article.

Reading Benefits

Reading is a fundamental skill, to be sure, but reading often opens the door to so much more. Studies show time and again that reading is beneficial in a variety of ways (National Endowment for the Arts 2008; National Center for Education Statistics 2013; Rideout, Foehr, and Roberts 2010; and Sullivan and Brown 2013). Frequent readers ultimately have “better work habits, social and emotional development, language structure, and overall school performance” (Arthur 1995, 3). However, reading cannot solely exist in a curricular setting; it must extend beyond the school day for students and exist as an activity to partake in for personal enjoyment and growth.

Given the benefits of recreational reading, I wanted to know how I could best support my gifted readers in this endeavor when they were so often left to their own devices.

Research Questions and Methodology

The purpose of my study (Churchill 2017) was to identify factors affecting gifted students’ selection of recreational reading materials. I wanted to find out:

- How outside sources influenced their choices
- What types of materials and formats they liked to read recreationally
- If they selected different materials in different locations
- What other influences impacted their recreational reading selections

In order to fully understand the complex variables influencing my students’ choices, I took a qualitative, exploratory, multiple case study approach to my research. I interviewed eleven of my fourth- and fifth-grade gifted students. I interviewed students individually over the course of several weeks and asked them to answer with their own thoughts and opinions. They were told there were no right or wrong answers. After interviews were
Frequent readers ultimately have “better work habits, social and emotional development, language structure, and overall school performance” (Arthur 1995, 3).
The results of my interviews were grouped into easily identifiable categories. Students talked about who influenced their reading selections, what they liked to read for fun, when and where they liked to read, and why they thought certain kinds of books were enjoyable.

**Who Influenced Gifted Students’ Reading Selections?**

In keeping with findings of existing studies (Adler et al. 2004; Conniff 1993; Gambrell, Codling, and Palmer 1996; Larsen 1999; Manning and Manning 1984; Tate 2014), the biggest influence on gifted students’ reading selections, outside of themselves, was their peers. Students discussed how friends, classmates, and even siblings persuaded them to read or not read certain books. Parents and grandparents had some influence over their choices, though far less than peers. Only rarely were teachers mentioned as an influence, and only the students who were directly referred to me for help mentioned me as an influence. However, the ultimate influencer was the students themselves. Regardless of what their friends, family, and teachers said, the deciding factor was if the student thought the book would be interesting. They made their own decisions about what they chose to engage in on their own time.

**What Do Gifted Students Like to Read Recreationally?**

It will come as no surprise to any educator who has had a gifted student that fantasy was a much-loved genre for this group. From Harry Potter to Percy Jackson to *The Hobbit*, fantasy provides these children with a chance to explore the ins and outs of identity and life’s challenges. Judith Wynn Halstead offered an explanation for why this genre appeals so strongly to middle-grade readers: “They discover it at just the age when they are entering their own personal quests for identity and beginning to consciously establish their personal values” (2009, 218). This idea is echoed in another study by Susan Lee Stutler that suggests the deep content of the genres of fantasy and science fiction appeal to these students. Themes often include self-discovery and self-determination, and there are often “quests for friendship, freedom, or survival” that help the characters come to a “deeper understanding of themselves and others” (Stutler 2011, 46). They also contain wildly descriptive settings and worlds that stretch the reader’s imagination.

Students also frequently identified books in a series as enjoyable reading choices. Like readers of all ages and abilities, the opportunity to get to know characters, see how they grow and change, and follow similar stories over an extended period of time is an appealing prospect.

The last genre/format that stood out from my interviews was what I called nonnarrative nonfiction. Examples of these books include the *Weird but True* series, *The Guinness Book of World Records*, and *Ripley’s Believe It or Not*. Gifted students have a huge desire to read in order to learn. In fact, several students made sure to point out that if they weren’t learning, it wasn’t as fun. These types of books include lots of facts and information in quick, easily digestible bites—something that is very appealing to young readers looking to learn new information.

**Where Do Students Read Recreationally?**

Students did most of their recreational reading at home: either before or after school, during travel times, or while a sibling had an activity. In fact, only one student said they read for fun at school. This reflects what recent research has found (Scholastic 2015): recreational reading time in schools is decreasing drastically. The potential reasons for this are numerous and have been a source of discussion among reading professionals since the U.S. National Reading Panel discouraged the assumption that leisure reading would lead to the development of reading skills and fluency (2000). From *No Child Left Behind* and increasing emphasis on high-stakes tests to reading management programs and leveling systems, many factors influence this statistic. For our part, we must ask what can be
done to maximize reading time at home. Are there ways educators and school librarians can make recreational reading a priority in schools? These are important questions deserving deeper examination.

Why Do Gifted Students Choose to Read in Their Free Time?

There were two reasons why students said they read for fun. The first is the simplest. They read because they like it and want to learn. Ultimately, these students will choose to pick up a book and read it because they enjoy reading as a hobby. Even though this love of reading and desire to learn is inherent in most gifted students, educators still need to foster those dispositions. We also need to teach students how they can challenge themselves as readers. We cannot let them stagnate in their reading growth; to do so would be a disservice to them.

The other reason was that they read to meet academic or personal reading goals. However, students held conflicting views on this kind of “assigned” reading in its various forms. Many felt assigned reading, especially books read to meet their required reading program goal, were not considered “fun” and therefore did not qualify as recreational reading. Even voluntary programs involving the state children’s choice books and a book competition did not typically produce selections considered recreational because the students “had to” read those books. However, several students said they often found they ended up enjoying books that were assigned reading and decided to mark them as recreational reading anyway simply because the books were enjoyable. Similar sentiments are also reflected in the students’ statements regarding the school’s required reading program and the levels they were assigned. While most students identified the program as being a help to find books “in their level,” many also stated the program kept them from reading recreational materials they wanted to read because those were outside their goal range. The books that they read to meet their goal were often considered a means to meeting their goal, not something read for enjoyment. For a few though, the reading program and its goals were secondary to the joy of reading the book, and as long as they enjoyed the book, they marked it as recreational.

There are many questions that could be asked to examine this particular aspect of the findings. While the research in the area of assigned reading is growing, very little of it focuses on how it impacts gifted readers. Yet another hole in the research landscape that needs to be filled.

Where We Need to Explore Further

After analyzing the data, I came away with three main ideas warranting further exploration. The first is the role of the school library and school librarian in recreational reading. How can we make sure gifted students are aware of the library’s offerings and increase their number of check-outs? To that end, how can the school librarian impact this area in particular? The students who worked directly with me to find reading materials not only had higher circulation rates, but also reported enjoying more of the items they checked out. Clearly, a school
The second idea benefitting from closer examination is the concept of assigned, or even encouraged, reading and gifted students. While many students liked having guidelines to help them find materials that would push them, they also didn’t like being restricted to only those materials. How can we help achieve a balance of this in our schools?

Finally, the results showed that, like their lower-ability counterparts, gifted boys on the whole read less and less proficiently than their female classmates. While this is a common finding in literacy literature, to see it reflected in gifted boys is concerning. What can we do to encourage gifted male students in their recreational reading?

Ten Steps Librarians and Teachers Can Take

Ultimately, my research resulted in a list of ideas that school librarians, classroom teachers, and gifted coordinators can implement to ensure they are meeting the needs of gifted readers. Here is a list of ten actionable steps to take in order to achieve this goal:

1. Facilitate peer groups. Research says that students are most influenced by their peers when it comes to reading motivation. Capitalize on that by providing time and space for students to talk about books that they are enjoying.

2. Engage in reading conferences. By taking the time to check in on students’ choices and progress with their independent reading materials, you can easily assess if your gifted students are engaged with the materials they have selected and discover what motivates them to read.

3. Provide large amounts of fantasy and science fiction. Because adolescents are interested in the journeys of self-discovery and the rich environments that occur in these genres, they are popular choices for young readers, especially gifted students. Having lots of choices in these genres will help keep them reaching to the shelves for more to read.

4. Provide a wide range of genres, including nonnarrative nonfiction. Though many might gravitate toward fantasy and science fiction, gifted students can be challenged by new genres and formats. Some students also might not fall into the mold of enjoying the unrealistic genres and prefer more true-to-life books.

5. Become familiar with as many titles as you can. By learning about many popular and classic books, you will be able to match books with readers more easily. Ultimately, students decide to read a book based on if they think they would enjoy it or not. If you can find materials that they would enjoy, you are well on the way to getting them to read more.

6. Take advantage of home reading without being strict about requirements. Since most recreational reading takes place outside of school hours, try to encourage students to take time to read at home. However, requiring minutes or checklists can be demotivating to students, especially gifted readers. So choose flexible and engaging home reading programs and incentives.

7. Level within reason. In other words, be flexible with reading “programs.” While students appreciate some guidance on how potentially difficult books may be, they don’t like being limited to only materials in strictly defined reading levels. Encouraging parents, classroom teachers, and even the students themselves to be flexible with leveling can keep students engaged and excited about what they are reading.

8. Provide time for free reading in school. While educators can’t control what students spend time doing outside of school, we can make time for recreational reading during the school day. Make reading a priority in your classroom, library, and school and emphasize the importance of the activity by participating in it yourself.

9. Pay extra attention to the reading habits of gifted boys. Like their grade-level counterparts, gifted boys read less recreationally and have lower reading goals and achievement. By attending to the needs and interests of male students, educators can find motivating materials and continue to hold high expectations for reading achievement.

10. Collaborate with colleagues (other librarians, classroom teachers, gifted coordinators, etc.). The demands on educators are many. In order to maximize our influence, we can all work together to help meet the needs of gifted students. School librarians can help classroom teachers with peer clubs, reading recommendations, home reading programs, and more. Collaboration is a powerful tool, and we can use it to encourage our students to find a lifelong love of reading.

Conclusion

Gifted readers deserve a school librarian who takes time to cultivate a relationship with them and provides them with ample opportunity to find what they want. They need teachers and parents willing to let them read the things that engage them recreationally. This isn’t
necessarily a simple task. “Teachers struggling to meet basic requirements have little time to suggest and follow through with extra reading for brighter students. Parents may find it difficult to keep track of what their children are reading. Guiding children’s reading appears to be one more unaffordable luxury in an increasingly busy world” (Halstead 2009, 7). Yet, we must persist in providing these opportunities to all students, not just the ones we deem in more need of our attention. As Albus Dumbledore said in an oft-mentioned series in this study, “It is our choices, Harry, that show who we truly are, rather than our abilities” (Rowling 1999, 333). Our brightest students should not stagnate in their growth because we assume that “merely providing books,” as Judith Wynn Halstead says, is enough. We must “fill in the gaps” and “bring gifted children and books together more effectively” (Halstead 2009, 7). We simply cannot leave this to chance.

Works Cited:


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is an instructor at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in the Teacher Education Department. She was a member of the initial NxtWave cohort, obtaining a doctorate in Educational Leadership with an emphasis in School Libraries. She has a forthcoming article in The Michigan Reading Journal on using picture books to expand vocabulary. She has served as the Nebraska School Librarians Association Secretary and has been a member of AASL’s Innovative Reading Grant subcommittee and the Program Reviewer Committee.


NEW SCHOOL LIBRARIAN PREPARATION STANDARDS

HOW DOES REA

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FIT IN?
Introduction

Last year, AASL announced the newly released ALA/AASL/CAEP School Librarian Preparation Standards. These standards are used to guide programs preparing future school librarians for Master’s degrees that include school library licensure. If you think back to your Master’s courses, you might have seen AASL professional standards embedded in the course syllabus or aligned to assignments. These were the school librarian preparation standards. Prior to these new standards being approved and released in 2019, the last set of preparation standards were released in 2010. A school librarian preparation program that wants to receive national recognition by the Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP) and ALA/AASL must implement these standards and go through the CAEP accreditation process.

Aligning with the National School Library Standards

The AASL-CAEP Coordinating Committee developed the 2019 School Librarian Preparation Standards over a two-year period. We sought input from practicing school librarians, school library program faculty, and other educators. (For more information about the development, please read the Knowledge Quest blog post "What Exactly Are the School Librarian Preparation Standards?" at <https://knowledgequest.aasl.org/what-exactly-are-the-school-librarian-preparation-standards/>.) We wanted the school librarian preparation standards to reflect the language and intent of the National School Library Standards since the AASL Standards were released as the committee began its work in developing the new preparation standards.

One of the biggest areas of focus for our committee was maintaining our commitment to the core skill of reading. The National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries identified reading as a Common Belief central to the school librarian profession. Common Belief 4 states, "Reading is the core of personal and academic competency." The explanation of the belief expands on this by explaining the role of the school librarian in motivating readers, using story to engage learners, and incorporating technology and digital and print materials in their collections (AASL 2018, 13). In developing the new school librarian preparation standards, CAEP required the committee to include a standard on what content knowledge school librarians should gain before entering the profession as well as the application of that content knowledge in their teaching.

How Does Reading and Literacy Fit in the New Preparation Standards?

Of the five standards in the new School Librarian Preparation Standards, reading is included in Standard 3, Knowledge and Application of Content. This standard states:

Candidates in school librarian preparation programs are knowledgeable in literature, digital and information literacies, and current instructional technologies. Candidates use their pedagogical skills to actively engage learners in the critical thinking and inquiry process. Candidates use a variety of strategies to foster the development of ethical digital citizens and motivated readers. (AASL 2019, 10)

The standard includes three components: reading engagement, information literacy, and technology-enabled learning. It mirrors Common Belief 4 from the National School Library Standards and recognizes that reading is the foundational skill needed for learners to grow both personally and academically.

In the 2010 Standards for the Initial Preparation of School Librarians, reading also played a major role. In those standards, literacy and reading stood alone as a single standard. The old standard (which was standard 2) stated:

Candidates promote reading for learning, personal growth, and enjoyment. Candidates are aware of major trends in children’s and young adult literature and select reading materials in multiple formats to support reading for information, reading for pleasure, and reading for lifelong learning. Candidates use a variety of strategies to reinforce classroom reading instruction to address the diverse needs and interests of all readers. (AASL 2010, 18)

The standard included four elements: literature, reading promotion, respect for diversity, and literacy strategies.

Differences between the 2010 and 2019 Standards Related to Reading

When comparing the 2010 and 2019 reading/literacy-focused standards, there are several notable differences. First, the 2010 content standard includes a specific element related to diversity in collection development, which the 2019 content standard appears to omit. However, diversity is actually much more omnipresent in the 2019 standards as a whole. Diversity is included in 2019 standard 1, The Learner and Learning, which addresses learner diversity and learner differences. Additionally, diversity in collection development is also included in
standard 4, Organization and Access. This standard notes: “Candidates demonstrate their ability to develop, curate, organize, and manage a collection of resources to assert their commitment to the diverse needs and interests of a global society” (AASL 2019, 12).

Second, the 2019 standards also appear to omit literacy strategies, which were included in the 2010 standards. This omission was a deliberate reinterpretation of the role of school librarians in reading and literacy instruction. While school librarians are prepared to support reading instruction, our primary role is to encourage the development of motivated readers and learners who can engage with information and use it critically and ethically. This new interpretation places less emphasis on school librarians as reading instructors.

Third, the 2019 standards place a new emphasis on information literacy and the development of critical-thinking skills and inquiry. In the 2010 standards, literacy was primarily interpreted as the ability to read. The new standards broaden the concept of literacy and specifically include multiple literacies and the inquiry process.

Finally, the 2019 standards place technology front and center as a central content area for school librarians to master. In the 2010 standards, technology was included in the standard related to information that primarily dealt with access to multiple formats (physical, digital, and virtual). In the 2019 standards, technology has been moved to the content standard, which indicates school librarians should be knowledgeable about appropriate uses of technology and should be able to design and adapt learning to better engage all learners through technology. The new component also uses the term “technology-enabled learning,” which we believe emphasizes learning instead of technology.

How Were the New Standards Influenced by Other Reading/Literacy Standards?

A strong relationship between school librarians and student success in reading and writing exists. Keith Curry Lance and Deb Kachel state that in statewide achievement studies, “the most substantial and consistent finding is a positive relationship between full-time, qualified school librarians and scores on standards-based language arts, reading, and writing tests, regardless of student demographics and school characteristics” (2018). The connection between school librarians and literacy was taken into consideration in the development of the 2019 standards. The International Literacy Association’s (ILA) 2017 Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals were reviewed and are reflected in the 2019 standards. Themes of foundational knowledge, curriculum and instruction, assessment and evaluation, diversity and equity, learners and the literacy environment, professional learning and leadership from the overarching ILA standards can be found in the school librarian preparation standards. Since school libraries and school librarians can have a defining impact on the literacy of students, there is a natural relationship between the two standards.

ALA/AASL/CAEP Standard 3, Knowledge and Application of Content, demonstrates one of the most substantial relationships
Candidates in school librarian preparation programs are effective educators who demonstrate awareness of learners' development. Candidates promote cultural competence and respect for inclusiveness. Candidates integrate the National School Library Standards considering learner development, diversity, and differences while fostering a positive learning environment.

**Table 1. AASL CAEP Standards at a glance.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALA/AASL/CAEP School Librarian Preparation Standards (2019)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard 1: The Learner and Learning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1.1 Learner Development.</strong> Candidates demonstrate the ways learners grow within and across cognitive, psychomotor, affective, and developmental domains. Candidates engage learners' interests to think, create, share and grow as they design and implement instruction that integrates the National School Library Standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1.2 Learner Diversity.</strong> Candidates articulate and model cultural competence and respect for inclusiveness, supporting individual and group perspectives.</td>
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<td><strong>1.3 Learning Differences.</strong> Candidates cultivate the educational and personal development of all members of a learning community, including those with diverse intellectual abilities, learning modalities, and physical variabilities.</td>
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<td><strong>1.4 Learning Environments.</strong> Candidates create both physical and virtual learner-centered environments that are engaging and equitable. The learning environments encourage positive social interaction and the curating and creation of knowledge.</td>
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<td><strong>Standard 2: Planning for Instruction</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2.1 Planning for Instruction.</strong> Candidates collaborate with members of the learning community to design developmentally and culturally responsive resource-based learning experiences that integrate inquiry, innovation, and exploration and provide equitable, efficient, and ethical information access.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2.2 Instructional Strategies.</strong> Candidates use a variety of instructional strategies and technologies to ensure that learners have multiple opportunities to inquire, include, collaboratively, curate, explore, and engage in their learning.</td>
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<td><strong>2.3 Integrating Ethical Use of Information into Instructional Practice.</strong> Candidates teach learners to evaluate information for accuracy, bias, validity, relevance, and cultural context. Learners demonstrate ethical use of information and technology in the creation of new knowledge.</td>
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<td><strong>2.4 Assessment.</strong> Candidates use multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth. Candidates, in collaboration with instructional partners, revise their instruction to address areas in which learners need to develop understanding.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Standard 3: Knowledge and Application of Content</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3.1 Reading Engagement.</strong> Candidates demonstrate a knowledge of children's and young adult literature that addresses the diverse developmental, cultural, social, and linguistic needs of all learners. Candidates use strategies to foster learner motivation to read for learning, personal growth, and enjoyment.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3.2 Information Literacy.</strong> Candidates know when and why information is needed, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use, and communicate it in an ethical manner. Candidates model, promote, and teach critical-thinking and the inquiry process by using multiple literacies.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3.3 Technology-Enabled Learning.</strong> Candidates use digital tools, resources, and emerging technologies to design and adapt learning experiences. Candidates engage all learners in finding, evaluating, creating, and communicating data and information in a digital environment. Candidates articulate, communicate, model, and teach digital citizenship.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Standard 4: Organization and Access</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4.1 Access.</strong> Candidates facilitate and advocate for flexible, open access to library resources and services according to the ethical codes of the profession. Candidates design and develop strategic solutions for addressing physical, social, virtual, economic, geographic, and intellectual barriers to equitable access to resources and services.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4.2 Information Resources.</strong> Candidates use evaluation criteria and selection tools to develop, curate, organize, and manage a collection designed to meet the diverse curricular and personal needs of the learning community. Candidates evaluate and select information resources in a variety of formats.</td>
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<td><strong>4.3 Evidence-Based Decision Making.</strong> Candidates make effective use of data and information to assess how practice and policy impact groups and individuals in their diverse learning communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Standard 5: Leadership, Advocacy, and Professional Responsibility</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5.1 Professional Learning.</strong> Candidates engage in ongoing professional learning. Candidates deliver professional development designed to meet the diverse needs of all members of the learning community.</td>
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<td><strong>5.2 Leadership and Collaboration.</strong> Candidates lead and collaborate with members of the learning community to effectively design and implement solutions that positively impact learner growth and strengthen the role of the school library.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5.3 Advocacy.</strong> Candidates advocate for all learners, resources, services, policies, procedures, and school libraries through networking and collaborating with the larger education and library community.</td>
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<td><strong>5.4 Ethical Practice.</strong> Candidates model and promote the ethical practices of librarianship, as expressed in the foundational documents of the library profession including the American Library Association Code of Ethics and the Library Bill of Rights.</td>
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between the two sets of standards. This standard requires school librarian candidates to demonstrate knowledge of literature that addresses the diverse needs of all learners. Component 1 of standard 3 states, “Candidates demonstrate a knowledge of children’s and young adult literature that addresses the diverse developmental, cultural, social, and linguistic needs of all learners. Candidates use strategies to foster learner motivation to read for learning, personal growth, and enjoyment” (AASL 2019, 10). This knowledge takes into account the varied literacy needs of students and requires that successful school librarian candidates use strategies to foster learner motivation for reading. Correspondingly, ILA standard 2, Curriculum and Instruction, and ILA standard 5, Learners and the Literacy Environment, are reflected in standard 3 of the school librarian preparation standards.

ILA standard 2, Curriculum and Instruction, states, “Candidates use foundational knowledge to critique and implement literacy curricula to meet the needs of all learners and to design, implement, and evaluate evidence-based literacy instruction for all learners” (2017). ILA standard 5, Learners and the Literacy Environment, requires that “Candidates meet the developmental needs of all learners and collaborate with school personnel to use a variety of print and digital materials to engage and motivate all learners; integrate digital technologies in appropriate, safe, and effective ways; foster a positive climate that supports a literacy-rich learning environment” (2017). These two components of the ILA standards demonstrate one of the strongest correlations between the two sets of standards. Both AASL and ILA focus on meeting the needs of all learners and providing a variety of materials, both print and digital, to engage and motivate learners. In addition, “The concept of diversity and equity is demonstrated in both sets of standards and plays an equally important role in the development of collections, school library programming, and knowledge of literacy candidates to meet the needs of a diverse community” (AASL 2019, 36).

What to Expect from New School Librarians Based on the New Preparation Standards?

School librarian preparation programs have plenty of opportunity to embed reading and its importance in a variety of literacies throughout their programs, particularly in relation to the increased emphasis on diversity and the specific focus on reading engagement. This is a significant change—the emphasis on our role as motivator of reading for pleasure, rather than as reading instructor. The need for diverse texts to motivate reading will require candidates to read and review #OwnVoices texts and diverse voices and critically examine texts. Meanwhile candidates (and their instructors) will need to review their own assumptions about reading and readers, particularly their cultural biases that impact collection development, readers advisory, and reading promotion. Are we including diverse voices that students will gravitate toward, and what cultural messages are we providing? Reading provides us information about our larger world even when reading for pleasure. What are the stories that readers want and need?

The school librarian preparation standards offer an opportunity not only for programs, but for practicing school librarians to reflect on the school librarian’s role in promoting reading for pleasure and reading promotion. Programs will have an opportunity to examine their course offerings and assessments to determine their alignment to the new standards, and practicing school librarians will have the opportunity to explore areas of potential professional growth. The increased emphasis on diversity with a focus on developmental, cultural, social, and linguistic needs of students will shift the educational experiences of new school librarians. The new preparation standards ask programs educating school librarians to address using literature from multiple perspectives to serve diverse student populations as a component of information literacy. Candidates will need to build cultural competence in order to effectively curate literature from multiple perspectives. As new school librarians enter the field their newly gained knowledge can be shared with more veteran school librarians, developing collaborative partnerships that help both professionals put theory into practice in a reflective manner.

The emphasis on the school librarian’s role of motivating reading for pleasure found in component 3.1 suggests an opportunity for school librarians serving readers to focus on joy. Being in a school library can and should be fun. Learning can be joyful, and reading is learning. Veteran and new school librarians should share their experiences in bringing joy into learning by talking with readers and by immersing themselves in books. School librarians who share the joys of reading by immersing themselves in books bring new understandings of how readers are motivated and what reading experiences they seek. However, this shift in emphasis also requires school librarian preparation programs to develop candidates’ understanding of non-readers, how to serve a population that may choose not to read, and how to advocate for reading when serving a population that may choose to avoid reading.
The change in emphasis on reading does not reflect a lack of focus on reading for information. Rather, it reflects the goal that reading is embedded throughout a variety of classes in preparation programs. Reading is a foundational skill to a variety of literacies. As an example, information literacy instruction will require reading skills. In standard 2.3, Integrating Ethical Use of Information into Instructional Practice, lessons on evaluating information will require focusing on how to read for accuracy, bias, relevance, and cultural context (AASL 2019). Since reading is embedded throughout these standards, school librarian preparation programs will need to consider course learning objectives related to reading skills and development in a variety of courses. Candidate assessments should focus on developing a literacy of formats, as there is an increased emphasis on multiple literacies. Focusing on multiple literacies allows candidates to develop understandings related to different skills in reading fiction and non-fiction, graphic formats, and other media forms. The multiple formats expand the definition of text but recognize the many formats through which information is experienced and why reading matters.

Why should you care about the preparation standards if you already have your degree and your licensure? The 2019 standards show where the field is headed and the expectations that principals and other administrators will have for new professionals entering the field. As educators with years of experience, veteran school librarians can share pedagogical techniques as mentors, recognizing that new professionals will have understandings of how to implement theory into practice but will need support in implementation. Examining the new standards is a great way to make plans for future professional development. If you see an area in the new standards that needs work, make a plan to explore that topic more fully as part of your professional goals.

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Dr. Kimberly Gangwish is an instructor in the School Library and Instructional Technology Leadership programs at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Her recent publications include “Deaf Characters in Young Adult Literature” in the Journal of Curriculum, Teaching, Learning and Leadership in Education. She also writes the Future Forward column for School Library Connection. Dr. Gangwish serves on the AASL Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation Coordinating Committee and is the AASL liaison for the Nebraska School Librarians Association.

Works Cited:


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THE SCHOOL LIBRARIAN

READING SKILL REINFORCEMENT

Library Readings

Librarians
School librarians are the literacy leaders in their buildings (Sachs 2018). They have the resources and skills to open “the door to the reading world wider” (Sachs 2018). One of the Common Beliefs in the AASL Standards is “Reading is the core of personal and academic competency” (AASL 2018, 13). Combining these two positions—that school librarians have the skills and that reading is the core—it is apparent that reading is the single most important skill school librarians can promote in their libraries. Reinforcing reading skills taught in the classroom and motivating students to practice reading are an integral part of a school librarian’s job.

Why do we worry about reading in this age of technology? Reading is the beginning of a child learning to think beyond themselves. Reading is also a foundational skill that is necessary to acquire before true technology mastery. Children need to be able to read directions while using technology and make procedural decisions. They have to understand through reading how to proceed on their chosen device.

Although the AASL Standards put less emphasis on reading instruction, principals and educators (and learners) deserve assistance in reinforcing reading skills and providing reading practice. As a school librarian you may not realize all the actions you take that help children practice the complex decoding skill of reading. Here are some key reading skill areas where school librarians have traditionally provided support.

**Recognizing Story Structure**

**Sequencing.** or identifying the beginning, middle, and end of a story, is an integral skill that school librarians use in their lessons with learners. When you ask your students for feedback during a story, do you ask, “Remember what happened at the beginning?” When you provide a continuing lesson (or sequel) based on a previous story, do you refer to what occurred in the first story to help students understand the sequence of events? For younger grades you may use an interactive board to sequence events, reviewing the events in *Stone Soup* by Jon J. Muth or *The Mitten* by Jan Brett. What about plots with flashbacks such as Dan Gutman’s *Willie and Me* or Varian Johnson’s *The Parker Inheritance*? Are you discussing this style of sequencing in your book talks, your book clubs, and with your Battle of the Books teams?

**Discussion of literary elements.** including plot, setting, theme, characters, conflict/climax, etc. is an action school librarians probably take without planning. Examining the setting and identifying the main characters is also a fairly well-developed reflex. Defining themes, such as kindness in *The Day the War Came* by Nicola Davies, is another activity that helps learners acquire essential reading skills. Do you discuss the author’s purpose in writing the story? Do you discuss secondary characters and their contributions to the story?

**Identifying parts of a book and how to use them.** including instructing students in how captions provide details about photos, is another activity school librarians use to help learners read. Do you help students identify story versus fact by leading paired book discussions using nonfiction and fiction texts, such as *Moonshot: The Flight of Apollo 11* by Brian Floca and *Full Cicada Moon* by Marilyn Hilton?

**Working with Words and Broadening Vocabulary**

**Rhyming.** Oldies but goodies, such as *Llama Llama Red Pajama* by Anna Dewdney and the more recent *The Nuts: Sing and Dance in Your Polka–Dot Pants* by Eric Litwin, provide practice hearing and reading English soundalikes. Learning to identify rhymes is a beginning reading skill that is great fun to practice with poetry as well.

**Practicing strategies to decode and attack unknown words.** It is important to work with young students on decoding as “their word recognition system is not yet in place and reading is far from fluent and expert” (Nation 2019, 49). Do you use whole-group decoding activities with oversized “big books” on your story rug? Or do you use projected e-books to practice attacking unfamiliar words?

**Word walls/specific subject vocabulary/keywords.** When collaborating with other educators on subject topics, you may use word charts or develop your own from such narrative nonfiction titles as *One Plastic Bag* by Miranda Paul. Are you helping students identify terms for search tools such as the Pebble Go database or an online encyclopedia?

**Constructing Meaning from Text**

**Retelling and summarizing.** You have most likely asked students to create book trailers for promotional materials for books that use their retelling skills. Have your learners write a review and post it in the library catalog or on a bulletin board.

**Inference.** Even the youngest students can learn to infer and draw conclusions. Do you use story illustrations to help students make inferences and gather clues about the story? Jerry Pinkney’s *Lion and the Mouse* or David Wiesner’s *Mr. Wuffles* are award-winning titles that can be used for these lessons.

**Character study and visualizing.** Reading aloud to students from chapter books helps develop their imagination, pushing them to
create a picture in their mind of the characters in a story. Reading aloud also develops student listening skills so that when reading new material, they may recognize words they have previously encountered only through listening. Do you read aloud from chapter books and follow up with independent activities that allow students to express their vision of the book’s main character?

Comparing and contrasting. Student standards at many levels call for experience in comparing two or more things. In the school library there are many versions of traditional tales that may lend themselves to comparison. Are you using two versions of the same folk tale, such as Jerry Pinkney’s Little Red Riding Hood and Little Roja Riding Hood by Susan Middleton Elya, so that students practice finding similarities and differences?

Providing Guided Practice and Opportunities for Independent Practice

Checking out free-choice books for independent reading practice.

The most important support you can give young readers is the opportunity to practice their skills often using appropriate reading selections. Do you offer a wide range of choice for all students?

Buddy reading as guided practice. While students are in the library, do you make use of the buddy system in practicing reading aloud? Students who have an opportunity to practice reading aloud with a classmate will have more confidence in choosing books for independent reading.

Using Digital Tools to Teach Reading Skills

With the ever-changing world of technology and availability of one-to-one devices for instruction, enhancing reading instruction with digital tools has become a wonderful practice to elevate reading instruction. Using digital tools not only makes the formative assessment process more engaging and fun for students, but it also can provide practice for developing skills. Consider these areas where you may already be working:

Live instantaneous feedback. Did you use online quizzes and fun interactive games to test vocabulary, content basics, and check for understanding/comprehension? “Digital tools and apps for formative assessment success give teachers and students many options and opportunities for classroom success” (Dryer 2019). Through such tools as Kahoot, Mentimeter, Socrative, or Poll Everywhere, educators can build live interactive opportunities for students to give feedback in real time in the form of game-style quizzes. School librarians and classroom educators can use this feedback to drive reading instruction and personalize lessons to meet diverse learning needs. Vocabulary.com games or Quizlet decks are helpful digital tools to personalize reading instruction and engage students as they learn vocabulary. There are countless online resources today to meet these needs. (To learn about the ones listed above and many more, read “75 Digital Tools and Apps Teachers Can Use to Support Formative Assess-
Leveled research resources. Do you use technology to provide resources of differing levels of difficulty? The school librarian should be able to effectively address the needs of diverse learners with leveled online resources. When the school librarian is an expert in online resources that provide information to students on their level, the students can become more actively engaged in the research process. Through resources such as Britannica School, students can generate their database search and choose from three different levels. These resources alter the same information to either simplify or increase difficulty, according to the ability or choice of the student. They enable learners to be more independent in their ability to research a topic and be successful in the collection of relevant information to have meaningful discussions with others in the class at all ability levels.

Non-linear instruction. Do you help students find meaning from their reading in a non-linear fashion? By utilizing digital tools, school librarians and classroom teachers can organize instruction in a non-linear fashion. Through a learning management system such as Edmodo, Canvas, or Google Classroom, educators can creatively organize resources using hyperlinks, Hyperdocs, and instructional video snippets that students can both create and view to make the learning process more personalized. Hyperlinking complex words and phrases with videos and other explanatory resources embeds the self-help tools students need directly into the instructional format. Online dictionaries and vocabulary lists help students learn new words, aid in reading instruction, and are very useful at all ages when differentiating instruction for ESL students.

E-Readers. Do you encourage the use of e-books? While we would all agree that nothing can replace a good print book, the addition of e-books and interactive reading materials are great additions to the school librarian’s toolkit. They provide students with an opportunity to utilize different skills and thought processes when reading. Just as a carpenter uses many types of tools to build a house, the school librarian utilizes many different types of reading materials to motivate and entice students to want to read.
BEFORE THE USE OF DIGITAL TOOLS, SCHOOL LIBRARIANS AND EDUCATORS FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO EFFICIENTLY IDENTIFY THE EXACT READING INSTRUCTION STRATEGIES LEARNERS NEEDED TO BE SUCCESSFUL. NOW THEY CAN MANAGE OUTCOMES, USE FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS, AND IDENTIFY STRATEGIES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF LEARNERS ON A MORE CONSISTENT BASIS.
AN EXCITING WAY TO REINFORCE READING SKILLS IS THROUGH MORE NONTRADITIONAL LIBRARY ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS MAKING. MAKERSPACES HAVE SPRUNG UP IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES ACROSS THE NATION AS STIMULATING PATHWAYS FOR HELPING STUDENTS LEARN THROUGH DOING.

at any level. Through the use of interactive books, such as LightBox books by Follett for elementary and middle grades or Interactive books by Capstone for younger readers, students are introduced to a whole new world of reading. These digital books incorporate interactivity (such as Google Maps) to virtually take the reader directly into the story. Embedded videos increase understanding of difficult concepts, and some platforms offer quizzes to check for understanding while personalizing the reading process by allowing for audio and vocabulary help when needed.

Before the use of digital tools, school librarians and educators found it difficult to efficiently identify the exact reading instruction strategies learners needed to be successful. Now they can manage outcomes, use formative assessments, and identify strategies to meet the needs of learners on a more consistent basis. These digital tools also help school librarians combine traditional reading reinforcement strategies into their daily teaching. When school librarians combine traditional “book reading” with the resources and benefits that come with the Internet and technology in the digital tools referenced above, students are more engaged and successful in their reading journey (Lynch 2017).

**Reading Instruction and Making**

An exciting way to reinforce reading skills is through more nontraditional library activities, such as making. Makerspaces have sprung up in school libraries across the nation as stimulating pathways for helping students learn through doing. School librarians and educators can work together and harness students’ passion for making to reinforce reading skills. School librarians have always utilized literature to inspire follow-up activities to a storyline or as a curricular connection. With the maker movement there is no limit to the creativity that can be integrated into quality reading instruction. School librarians from around the country are utilizing makerspaces to enhance their reading instruction strategies. Here are a few examples/ideas:

- Use Makey Makeys to sequence or rewrite a story ending (reading comprehension assessment)
- Create blackout poetry (working with words and broadening vocabulary) (Whitehead 2015)
- Develop characters in detail using Legos, clay, or Storyboard That (assessment)
- Utilize a green screen to enhance book talks (reading comprehension assessment)
- Develop animated video book trailers (summarizing plot and theme, sequencing)
- Create class books where each student is responsible for a page with pop-ups or circuits (constructing meaning from text)
Novel Engineering

One specific approach to connect making and literacy is Novel Engineering. Novel Engineering is a research-proven, innovative approach to integrate literacy instruction and engineering into elementary and middle schools. Makerspaces are easily integrated into the math and sciences, but can be more difficult to connect to literacy. Through the Novel Engineering concept, students use existing classroom literature—stories, novels, and expository texts—as the basis for design challenges that help them identify problems, design realistic solutions, and engage in the Design Process while reinforcing their literacy skills (Novel Engineering n.d.).

Researchers at the Tufts University Center for Engineering have shown children’s literature can inspire making in students. As Megan Blakemore details in the March/April 2018 *Knowledge Quest* article “Problem Scoping Design Thinking and Close Reading: Makerspaces in the School Library,” projects that are built on literacy in a makerspace help students develop their ability to work through the design process and specifically the problem-scoping portion (2018). Through Novel Engineering, students are encouraged to identify a problem that a character is experiencing in a selection of literature and then create a possible solution. There are many resources that offer possible ideas to help you get started. Many include the plot, problems identified by students, and example solutions designed by students.

Check out the Novel Engineering site to see examples: <https://www.novel-engineering.org/classroom-books/>.

Conclusion

Yes, as school librarians we do teach reading. We provide many opportunities for students to practice reading and to reinforce their growing reading skills. But we can find more ways to promote and encourage this reading development, particularly when we integrate technology and maker activities. As we implement the National School Library Standards, we discover even more opportunities to embed reading and its importance in a variety of literacies throughout the school library. When school librarians focus on reading engagement and help students make connections to diverse resources, our role as an instructional partner in building successful reading skills in students is clear. By developing reading as the core competency, we help give students the foundation they need to succeed.

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ANALYZING THE DIVERSITY OF A HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY COLLECTION
Recognizing diversity is important not only in American society but also in school libraries. Our schools are culturally diverse places that have students and staff who represent varieties of race, culture, ability, sexual preference or identity, religion, gender, and class. School librarians serve all these individuals. The National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries discusses the need for a school library collection to reflect the school’s community (AASL 2018). Furthermore, the American Library Association’s “Diversity in Collection Development” interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights states that “library collections must represent the diversity of people within the society or community the library serves” (2002). If the current collection of young adult fiction portrays only the typical white, heterosexual main character, then the collection does not allow for understanding and learning of other races, cultures, and abilities, nor does it allow for students of minority groups to see themselves represented in books. The modern school library must strive to continually add diverse titles to its collection so that all students feel represented and can find and read books to which they can relate.

Diversity in Young Adult Fiction

The lack of published multicultural authors and stories is well documented. According to the Cooperative Children’s Book Center, who releases annual reports documenting the number of books by and about people of color, only 28 percent of books published in the United States in 2018 were by or about people of color (2019). This includes Africans or African-Americans, American Indians or First Nations people, Asian Pacific people or Asian-Pacific Americans, and Latinx people.

Steven T. Bickmore, Yunying Xu, and Myra I. Sheridan studied the lack of diverse authors in the National Book Awards (NBA) finalists and winners over a twenty-year period (2017). They considered the racial and ethnic makeup of the authors and protagonists in the NBA nominees and eventual winners to learn more about how diverse authors are represented in book awards. They created a spreadsheet with the following categories: author, author gender, author race/ethnicity, protagonist, protagonist gender, protagonist race/ethnicity, protagonist socioeconomic status (SES), setting, genre, and grade levels. They then entered data from the 100 NBA winners and finalists from 1996 to 2015. They found that 77 of the 100 finalists were white, including 15 of the 20 winners. Of the 23 remaining finalists of color, some were repeat nominees. Additionally, only 10 titles were written by African Americans; six of the 16 African-American protagonists were written by white authors or "cultural
outsiders” (2017, 47). The researchers labeled the 23 books written by non-white authors as "culturally relevant texts" (2017, 49). Of these 23 books, the researchers found that exploration of identity was a common storyline.

This lack of published books containing diverse characters and written by diverse authors spurred authors Ellen Oh and Malinda Lo to create We Need Diverse Books (WNDB), an organization “dedicated to increasing diversity in children’s literature.” WNDB encourages books that “reflect and honor the lives of all young people” (WNDB n.d.). Providing diverse books for students also reflects the work of professor Rudine Sims Bishop, who found that students need to be able to see themselves in book characters (1990). Diverse texts allow students to see themselves in mirror books with characters who look and act like them; they also enable students to look through windows to gain a better understanding of others’ lives by reading about characters from different backgrounds. Not only

For a book to qualify as a diverse book requires more than simply having a character with a foreign-sounding name who behaves in a stereotypical manner. For a book to qualify as a diverse book requires more than simply having a character with a foreign-sounding name who behaves in a stereotypical manner. Determining the diversity of a book requires careful consideration of characters, authorship, and intent. The school library collection should include books with characters who look, behave, and think like a variety of different people to inspire all types of students to take chances or grow in new ways. School librarians can ask themselves, “Who does my school library serve?” (Lechtenberg and Phillips 2018, 57) to remind themselves that the students served by school librarians benefit from diverse and inclusive material.

Collection Analysis for Diversity

School librarians can take steps to improve the diversity in their current book collection. In order to create a diverse collection, a school librarian must first understand what is missing from the current collection. This can be done by completing a collection analysis using the school library catalog. Sarah Jorgenson, a school librarian of a diverse student body in the Midwest, noticed that there were many students who were interested in reading but who were unable to find a main character with whom they could relate. As a result, Sarah worked with her professors Dr. Jenna Kammer, Dr. Rene Burress, and Dr. Charlene Atkins at the University of Central Missouri to develop an action research study to address her concerns.

The research for this study took place at one high school in the Midwest. The library within this high school has two full-time certified school librarians and one full-time library clerk. The library’s collection contains approximately 8,000 copies of fiction and non-fiction titles available for students to check out. Approximately 1,800 students in grades 10 to 12 attend the high school, and approximately 150 staff members work at the school.

Diversity of Current Library Collection

To analyze the collection for diversity, the top 100 titles that were checked out during the first three terms of the 2018–2019 school year were examined. This diversity collection analysis was based on the analysis created by Bickmore, Xu, and Sheridan (2017). Data pulled from the library’s management system software did not include names or library card numbers; the only data collected were the top 100 books checked out and the number of times those books were checked out. The top 100 titles were then broken down by main character and author. For analysis of the main characters from the books on the top 100 titles list, the character’s gender, race, and sexual orientation were determined via multiple Internet sources through a lateral technique (Caulfield 2017).

In this study, the top 100 titles were pulled from eleven browsing genres, which did not include non-fiction, reference, and professional collections. When analyzing the diversity of the authors, we discovered that out of the top 100 titles checked out, 29 were written by repeat authors, which left us with 83 individual authors to analyze. Of these 83, 31 identified as male and 52 as female with no other genders specified. Approximately 25 percent of the authors were from racial minority groups, which included authors who identified as Black or African-American, Asian, Latinx, Lithuanian, Middle Eastern, and Haitian. When analyzing main characters of the same titles, we found that 25 percent of the books had multiple main characters. Sixty-six books had male main characters, and 57 books had female...
main characters. When looking at minority group representation of main characters, 42 percent of the characters where Black or African American, Asian, Latinx, multirace, Korean, and Middle Eastern. When analyzing sexual preference of main characters, 90 percent of the characters were straight, and 10 percent were identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer.

Jorgenson compared these results with the diversity of her student population and discovered targeted areas of collection development. She also shared the results with her administration, along with a request for funding to purchase additional diverse titles. During the 2019–2020 school year she and her co-librarian have been focused on purchasing books that more closely represent the diversity within the student population. They have also been promoting diverse books that were already in the collection but did not show up in the top 100 titles. Finally, they have been encouraging teachers to integrate diverse titles into their classroom lessons.

Implications for School Librarians

In order to analyze the diversity of a school library collection, school librarians can follow the following steps:

1. Use your library management software to run a report of the top 100 circulating titles.

2. Determine the date range of the report. It is recommended to run a report that spans a whole school year (e.g., first day of school in August 2019 through last day of school 2020).

3. Create a spreadsheet in Google Docs or Microsoft Excel and then break down the top 100 titles by main character and author.
School librarians should be mindful of the following tips and cautions while analyzing the diversity of a school library collection:

4. Determine the main characters’ gender, race, and sexual orientation via multiple Internet sources. Internet sources used to identify diversity in the books include the library’s software management system, Goodreads, Kirkus Reviews, School Library Journal, and many other book review journals and blogs.

5. Determine the diversity of authors on the top 100 titles list. Consult author and publisher websites and social media, as well as op-eds written and interviews given by the authors, to determine the gender, race, and sexual orientation of the authors.

6. Compare the results of the diversity collection analyses with the diversity of the student population of the school. In our study, 22 percent of students responded as identifying as lesbian, bisexual, gay, or queer, yet only 10 percent of the top 100 titles featured main characters who identify as LGBTQ. Examples such as this highlight where to further develop the collection in the future.

The findings of a diversity collection analysis provide a guide for school librarians to improve the diversity of the collection. School librarians can use the analysis to identify books that are missing from their collection. As funding becomes available, new books can be purchased with characters or authors that represent the current diverse population in the school. School librarians can also use the results to promote current books within the library collection that are diverse but not part of the top 100 list so that students are more aware of the diverse titles that are already in the library. School librarians should work with teachers to integrate diverse titles into their lessons to create more opportunities for students to read diverse books. School librarians should share results of the study with the administration to increase conversations about diversity and request additional funding.

The design of this action research study is not limited to the particular high school at which it took place. This study can be duplicated anywhere; school librarians need to know what is—or is not—on their school library’s shelves. In today’s diverse society, providing opportunities for diverse opinions and worlds through books is just one of the things school librarians can do to help their students. All school librarians can get started by analyzing their student population and analyzing the corresponding diversity of the school library collection.
Another way to build a diverse collection is through personal research. By following hashtags like weneeddiversebooks, browsing collection lists, and reading reviews, high school librarians can find hundreds of recommendations for diverse titles to fill their library shelves. There are resources available online for critiquing one’s collection; for example, School Library Journal offers a diversity toolkit on their website, and in the September/October 2009 Knowledge Quest article “Questioning Your Collection” Toby Rajput gives advice for analyzing and updating a library collection (2009). One way to know what to look for is to start with the School Library Journal’s 2018 Diverse Books Collection Survey, which gives the top demands for books in various libraries.

**Conclusion**

Diversity covers many areas: race, culture, ability, sexual preference or identity, religion, gender, and class. In order to serve all students, school librarians must be ready to advocate and promote diversity within their own environment. Placing diverse books in the hands of students helps develop empathy and understanding, allowing students to get to know those around them. By being knowledgeable and accessible, and by providing diverse resources for students, school librarians help students to grow and understand each other and themselves.

Sarah Jorgensen is a high school librarian in the Midwest. She is a 2019 graduate of an Education Specialist degree focused on School Librarianship at the University of Central Missouri.

Dr. Rene Burress is an assistant professor of Library Science and Information Services at the University of Central Missouri. She was awarded ALA’s 2019 Jesse H. Shera Awards for Dissertation Support for proposed dissertation research employing exemplary research design and methods. She is a member of ALA, AASL, the Missouri Library Association, and the Missouri Association of School Librarians.

**Works Cited:**


Since I became involved with oral storytelling five years ago, my life has changed. I’ve learned how to cater stories to my audience both as a storyteller and a writer.

Using Oral Storytelling Techniques in Reading Sessions

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My connection with stories began as a child in India when my parents and grandmother narrated fascinating tales from Indian mythology. I was also fortunate to have access to a tiny library that nurtured my curiosity and provided hours of reading fun.

Imagine my amazement when I moved to the United States and discovered public libraries filled with thousands of books! I was delighted to spend hours there, both as patron and volunteer. Fast forward to motherhood, and the library became a favorite haunt for the entire family. I told my children all kinds of stories—new and old, from near and far—with and without books.

My Personal Connection with Oral Storytelling

I am now a children’s author and oral storyteller living in Singapore. Since I became involved with oral storytelling five years ago, my life has changed. I’ve learned how to cater stories to my audience both as a storyteller and a writer. Oral storytelling has helped me overcome my fear of public speaking. I have performed storytelling at schools, libraries, and literature festivals, including the 398.2 Storytelling Festival in Singapore and the Bookaroo Festival of Children’s Literature in India. I’ve discovered how stories transcend borders and cultural differences.

One of my picture books, The Clever Tailor, is the product of my experiences with oral storytelling. It is based on a Yiddish folktale that I loved so much that I decided to tell it. As I began preparing for the telling, I decided to create my own version of the story (as oral storytellers often do)—an Indian adaptation that I told several times. It was so well-received that I wrote it as a picture book story and sent it to a publisher, who accepted it! The Clever Tailor is about a poor tailor who reuses the same piece of cloth multiple times to make something special for each of his family members. In the end, he is left with something everlasting.
Using Oral Storytelling Techniques

Oral storytelling refers to telling a story without a book. The teller does not memorize the story verbatim but must know it well enough to tell it by maintaining eye contact with the audience.

Though oral storytelling may seem overwhelming to some, it is important to remember that all of us are already storytellers. We talk about our day at school or work, a recent vacation, or perhaps an interesting news report.

Employing one or more of the following basic techniques of oral storytelling can help make storytelling collaborative and more engaging:

• Gestures and/or facial expressions
• Voice manipulation
• Repetitive phrases, rhymes, songs, and/or music

Gestures and/or facial expressions can be used to better explain a character’s movements and/or emotions. When I read my picture book Pickle Mania, a story about a little girl who dislikes spicy Indian pickles and resolves to make a non-spicy pickle of her own, I put on facial expressions to convey different tastes (sweet, spicy, and so on). I also invite children to suggest their own expressions.

Voice manipulation can be effectively employed to distinguish between multiple characters in the story and to convey different emotions. When telling Lunch-Friends, a story about a little boy’s intent to make up for the loss of a mango tree that is home to several birds and other animals, I use a soft voice for the child protagonist, my normal voice for the grandmother, and a deep voice for the vegetable-seller.

Repetitive phrases, rhymes, songs, and/or music (whether or not included in the book) make storytelling more enjoyable and give listeners a chance to participate. When telling Pickle Mania, children eagerly join in with the repetitive phrase (in the book): “Dippy-dip Licky-lick!” With The Clever Tailor, I invite my audience to join me in chanting the following phrase in its different forms (not in the book): “He wore it here, he wore it there, he wore it everywhere!”

In addition to the above techniques, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of a pause. Placed at strategic moments of the oral storytelling, a pause can enrapture the audience and make them eager to find out what happens next. When I tell The Tree Boy, a fantastical story about a lonely boy whose wish turns awry when he turns into a tree, I use pauses to corroborate moments of sadness as well as the turning point in the story.

Finally, using puppets, props, and art/drawing also makes storytelling sessions more enthralling. I use costumes and other props when telling The Clever Tailor. As I pull out each prop from a bag, I can sense the audience’s anticipation about what prop will emerge next.

Benefits of Oral Storytelling

Using the basic techniques of oral storytelling and making the experience collaborative are beneficial in a number of ways:

• It makes the session more fun and engaging.
• It gives children a chance to open up and participate.
• It helps reinforce the message in the story.
• Role-playing, if used, fosters language development and self-confidence.
• The storyteller enjoys a fulfilling experience.
My Experiences at Storytime

Oral storytelling is different from reading aloud. When reading aloud, the storyteller reads the story from the book, occasionally turning to the audience. On the other hand, oral storytelling involves telling the story without a book. The storyteller uses his or her own words to tell the story while maintaining complete eye contact with the audience.

As a volunteer storyteller at Singapore’s public libraries, I have experimented with oral storytelling in different ways:

1. Reading aloud followed by oral storytelling. Oral storytelling becomes a recap of the story after it has been read from the book. I involve children in the oral storytelling, using one or more of the basic techniques mentioned earlier. If time permits, I also engage them in role-playing. Since the audience already knows the story from the read-aloud, they participate with great enthusiasm.

2. Oral storytelling followed by reading aloud. Oral storytelling gives the audience a chance to imagine the characters and the story’s setting. During the read-aloud, audience members compare their imagined characters and setting with the illustrations in the book. This often generates excited comments.

3. Blending oral storytelling with reading aloud. As I part-read, part-tell the story, the audience is usually more involved in the listening process. They participate when prompted, often stopping to ask questions or make observations about the illustrations.

How do I decide which of these to use? Well, it depends on the average age and size of the audience, the complexity of the story, and time available.

As I think about the storytelling session for my next book, Dancing in Thatha’s Footsteps (releasing fall 2020), I’m excited to think about the possibilities. The book is about an Indian classical dance, so it will certainly include music, gestures, and facial expressions. What else? You’ll just have to wait to find out.

Srividhya Venkat hopped, skipped, and jumped careers until she came upon her most cherished one: writing for children. A former early childhood educator, she discovered her passion for oral storytelling five years ago. Srividhya is an active member of Story Connection, Federation of Asian Storytellers (FEAST), and Society for Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI). She has published seven picture books and contributed to a couple of folktale anthologies. Her picture book, The Clever Tailor, won the SCBWI Crystal Kite Award 2019 and is among the 101 Great Books for Kids (2019) listed by Evanston Public Library and Best Children’s Books of 2019 by Kids Stop Press, India. Her next book, Dancing in Thatha’s Footsteps, releases in fall 2020. She lives with her family in sunny Singapore.
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