

EDITORIAL BOARD LIASON COLUMN



Jennifer Cooper

jcooper@mcpsva.org

Jennifer Cooper is a school librarian at Osbourn High School in Manassas City Public School District in Virginia. She is past president of the Virginia Association of School Librarians (VAASL). She currently serves as the past chair for the AASL Chapter Assembly. Jennifer is also a current member of the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) Book List and Book Award Oversight Committee and the *Knowledge Quest* Editorial Board. Previously, she has served as a member of the YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults Book Award Committee and the Virginia Library Association's Cardinal Cup Book Award Committee. She has written for *Knowledge Quest*, the VAASL Voice, and *School Library Monthly*.

Include and Fostering Growth in School Libraries

A few years back a class I was taking wanted participants to explore their why, why each has chosen to be an educator or stay an educator. As I explored the resources to help come to this conclusion, I learned that my why is to inspire others to share their stories through learning and understanding.

AS A SCHOOL LIBRARIAN, I wanted to serve all patrons by allowing them to foster growth and share their stories. This is why the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Include Standard is important to me and our practice. The articles in this issue share different ways that libraries exemplify these ideals and this standard by "demonstrat[ing] an understanding of and commitment to inclusiveness and respect for diversity in the learning community" (75).

Jen Sturge, Sandy Walker, and Lisa Walker's article asks school librarians to think about the lens through which we operate. Are they thinking about the policies, regulations, and guiding documents that ensure equitable access for all patrons? Their article asks school librarians to look at Collection Development, Access, and Overdue policies and procedures with a critical eye to ensure we are

providing equitable access to all. They share the Equity Lens tool developed by the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, which helps school librarians look at these documents to help them become more inclusive.

In "Equity in Action: Adapting Library Lessons for Autistic Students," Heather Baucum explores ways to help learners on the autism spectrum feel included in library programming. She explores methods that school libraries can follow to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment for all learners. Heather shares how she works with her special education classroom teachers and the applied behavior analysis program to help all learners in her school feel welcome in the library. Heather provides practical steps for storytimes; movement; and science, technology, engineering, arts, and math activities; all to foster empathy and understanding for all learners.

Providing access through multiple channels is the focus of Emmanuel Faulkner's article about the partnership between Baltimore City Schools and the Pratt Free Library. Working together has given the students of Baltimore City Schools access to positive learning opportunities. The librarians collaborate on a variety of programs; History Day, Visiting Author Series, and Battle of the Books to name a few. Despite logistical challenges, they have learned from these to provide experiences that included all learners.

Hannah Byrd Little, librarian, and Kevin Finn, English teacher, at The Webb School in Tennessee share how they collaborate to work toward a senior cumulative project. The Capstone Project provides seniors an opportunity to conduct real-world research, explore a community, and present their findings. Conducting primary research and using surveys and interviews not only prepares learners for collegiate educational rigor but also hones their interpersonal skills. Since the learners' research is personal, focusing on their interests, it enables them to see themselves in the research and helps them feel like they are part of the story they share.

Pull up a chair and explore; there are no expectations (except for maybe treating materials kindly), enjoy your time here.

School libraries work to ensure that patrons have the resources they need. The articles in this issue show how "school librarians enable academic knowledge to be linked to deep understanding"

Ensuring inclusion and book access to learners in The Johnson Youth Center, a residential Department of Juvenile Justice facility, and Raven's Way, a residential and community-based mental health facility, librarian Amelia Jenkins works with an often overlooked population. Amelia shares how she works with these learners, sharing and listening to stories while discussing books and learning about their interests. These collaborations have helped form relationships, allowing the learners to feel part of a community.

School libraries work to ensure that patrons have the resources they need. The articles in this issue show how "school librarians enable academic knowledge to be linked to deep understanding" (AASL 11) and librarians help mitigate the "digital and socioeconomic divides to affect information technology access and skill" (AASL 14). Or as one of my favorite social media accounts sums it up:

"Library energy is the best energy. Like here is all the knowledge we could find, it's been meticulously organized and vetted and it will cost you nothing today, welcome to the absolute pinnacle of human civic evolution, feel free to pull up any bean bag chair you like." (@thisoneOverhere)

Libraries are welcoming places where all can feel included. Pull up a chair and explore; there are no expectations (except for maybe treating materials kindly), enjoy your time here.

WORKS CITED

American Association of School Librarians. "National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries." Chicago: ALA, 2018.