

KNOWLEDGE QUEST

An illustration of a person with long reddish-brown hair, wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt, lying on their back on a light-colored surface. They are reaching up with both hands towards two large puzzle pieces floating in the air. One puzzle piece is light pink and the other is dark green. In the background, there are several wooden bookshelves filled with books of various colors. A small brown vase with dried flowers sits on one of the shelves.

HEALTH AND HEALING IN THE SCHOOL LIBRARY: A RETURN TO BETTER?

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The stories of how we directly impact the lives of our students are as important as the data about the number of classes taught and the number of books circulated, if not more so.

Health and Healing in the School Library

Jennisen Lucas, 2021–2022 AASL President | jennisenlucas@park6.org

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *The following story is being told with assistance and permission from the student, who is of age to grant permission. Names have been changed.*

Marsha ran into the school library crying. Sobbing, really, big tears running down her cheeks. She was stomping her feet as if trying to put out a fire. As I offered her a box of tissues, I could see the big feelings that the junior couldn't express just bubbling out of her. She stayed in my office, crying and starting to calm a little while waiting for the school psychologist to come talk with her.

Before this, Marsha came into the school library like any other student, to borrow a book or work on homework. She had started helping another student with a mural, but we didn't know there were things bubbling beneath the surface. However, on this particular day, the school suicide prevention training triggered Marsha, so she left her class and came to a place where she seemed to feel safe.

After this, Marsha came to the school library every day. On days that were too much for her, she would lay down underneath the circulation desk and cry until she felt a little better. On days that she was handling things, she would sit near my paraprofessional and I and talk about anything and everything. We knew this was part of her process. Little by little, she opened up to us, finding times that we weren't so busy, sometimes after school, so she could come in and talk.

One day as we were discussing the mural project, Marsha noticed that I was wearing Library Pride socks that I had received at a conference, and she noted that she really liked the rainbow stripes and wished she could wear Pride socks. Off-handedly, I showed her that they were "library" socks, and she proceeded to get very excited. A week later, I brought in a pair of Library Pride socks for her. According to Marsha, I am now her "absolute favorite adult human."

The next day, Marsha took over the mural project and started it over according to her own vision. At first, this meant quite a lot of black, dark gray, and night colors. Our discussions as she painted were fraught with anxiety, worry, and concern. We talked about how much everyone worried about her and how hard it was to convince them that she needed time to sort through her thoughts and feelings.

More than anything else, our learners need spaces where they can stop for a few minutes, take a breath, play a game of cards, have a good cry, read for fun, or whatever brain release they need.



After a couple of weeks, after Marsha started doing her schoolwork from home and coming into the library to hang out and paint, we started to see some major changes in the painting. Marsha started to add more colors besides gray and black. She started to talk with more laughter and engagement. What started as a small picture of a dark chair looking through a dark window at a night cityscape morphed into a floor-to-ceiling image of a welcoming reading nook with books, plants, suitcases. Even when she was not attending school for class, the school library was still her safe place.

As we have started to see this transformation in Marsha, we are very excited that she has used her own mental health journey to share a vision that makes our school library even more welcoming to the other students. She and I have had discussions about how many positive comments students have made about how welcoming her vision is.

After this crazy year and a half of COVID-19, civil unrest, government upheaval, and other personal hardships, Marsha is not the only one who is struggling. I believe that we all are, school librarians, teachers, administrators,

*There are a lot of things that have changed,
but the relationships we have with our learners
are still the most important part of all of this.
It is the relationships we build that make our
spaces the safe spaces that our learners need.*

and especially our learners. We feel as if we have been going non-stop for eighteen months, and we have not yet been able to process most of our feelings about any of it. We are tired. My district was lucky enough to have in-person school for the entire 2020–2021 school year, and I know many others have been virtual or hybrid for part or all that time. There are a lot of things that have changed, but the relationships we have with our learners are still the most important part of all of this. It is the relationships we build that make our spaces the safe spaces that our learners need.

More than anything else, our learners need spaces where they can stop for a few minutes, take a breath, play a game of cards, have a good cry, read for fun, or whatever brain release they need. No matter who they are, how they identify, or what they are going through, we are their space. Not everyone has the same story as Marsha, but our school libraries should always be available when people like Marsha need us.

As we tell the stories of our services and our spaces in the upcoming year, these are the stories we need to tell, respecting privacy and confidentiality, of course. The stories of how we directly impact the lives of our students are as important as the data about the number of classes taught and the number of books circulated, if not more so. Our school libraries should be places for our learners to find safety, respect, and assistance to help them heal.

Jennisen Lucas (she/her/hers) is the 2021–2022 AASL President. She is the district librarian for Park County School District #6 in Cody, Wyoming. She earned her MLS from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2003, and earned National Board Certification for 2006–2026. She has been chair of the Wyoming School Library Interest Group and has held and chaired multiple AASL committees.



Over the past year and a half, the lives of learners, teachers, and school librarians have been fraught with stressful situations. Focusing on academics has been challenging to say the least.

The Importance of Self-Care

Cassandra Barnett | Cassandra.barnett@ade.arkansas.gov

"You all take care, now." I don't know if that phrase is a southern thing or a country thing, but it is definitely a grandmother thing. My grandmother never said good-bye to anyone including us grandchildren; she always said, "You all take care, now." In the past year and a half, I have come to believe that taking care of oneself is way more important than I realized.

Part of the work we take on as school librarians is taking care of our learning community. We make sure our students have a safe space to retreat to. We collaborate with our teachers to help them as they create and implement learning experiences. We keep snacks for our hungry students, deal with teenage drama, and make sure the technology works.

Over the last school year, we gave new meaning to the school library as a safe space. We quarantined books, sanitized everything, and redesigned the school library to incorporate social distancing. We increased our stress levels by handling multiple tech issues, finding workarounds for insufficient internet access, creating take-home makerspace kits, giving access to books for all our students regardless of whether they were at school or at home. We updated our websites to provide more resources for our teachers and students. The list was endless and exhausting. Taking care of ourselves tended to come last or not at all.

In this issue of *Knowledge Quest* our contributors share ways they cope with the stress of juggling all the new challenges faced while dealing with face-to-face, remote, and hybrid learning. They also offer strategies for self-care that we can use as we move forward into what is still an uncertain future.

In their article "Confronting 2020 in the School Library: The Power of Collaboration," Dr. Joel Hoag (principal) and Dinah Wade (school librarian) relate how they partnered together to provide as normal a school library experience as possible for their students. They describe how they worked to address their three goals of virus mitigation, instructional integrity, and creating a culture of resilience. Their story illustrates how much can be achieved when an administrator and a school librarian combine their knowledge and experience to meet a challenge.

In this issue of Knowledge Quest our contributors share ways they cope with the stress of juggling all the new challenges faced while dealing with face-to-face, remote, and hybrid learning.

In "Managing the Unprecedented," three school librarians detail their experiences in managing virtual, hybrid, and in-person learning. Jhenelle Robinson relates her experiences during the pandemic in "Leading Out Loud: Empowering Youth through School Librarianship." As a school librarian in the South Bronx, moving to virtual and hybrid learning was especially difficult in a community that lacked many of the resources necessary to meet the challenge of remote learning. She shares her work as a facilitator of an identity club on her campus, the Black Student Union. The focus of this newly created club is to celebrate and learn from the contributions of Black people.

Erika Long reflects on the last year of "pandemic librarian-ing" in the vignette "Putting on Your Full Armor." She eloquently expresses the anguish many of us felt over the last school year as we confronted the many challenges of supporting our teachers and students. I want to follow her story to see how she fares over the next school year.

In her essay "Breathing in a New Atmosphere," Karina Quilantan-Garza, a Texas school librarian in the Rio Grande Valley, describes her efforts to support the social, emotional, and creative needs of her students. She tapped into the resources and activities available through the 2021 Great Kindness Challenge. Using her own interests as a guide, she shared music playlists and created a gaming league. Her examples provide an exciting opportunity for us to think about how we can incorporate social and emotional learning into our school libraries.

In the article "Incorporating Mindfulness in the School Library Three Ways," Traci Chun, Ashley Cooksey, and Lynn Kleinmeyer share how mindfulness can inform our collections, spaces, and practices. They explore how a "self-discovery" section can support students as they navigate social and emotional situations. Take a look at your library space through the filter of sensory experiences. Are we overstimulating our students with visual noise? Examples of mindful practices are offered including posture practice, providing opportunities for creative endeavors, and designating places to experience quiet and reflection.

Jennifer Luetkemeyer and Ashley Cooksey outline ways to take care of yourself in the coming school year in the article "Health and Healing in the School Library: A Return to Better?" In particular, they focus on the value of practicing mindfulness. Mindful breathing,

*Part of the work we take on as school librarians
is taking care of our learning community.*

meditation, and visual journaling are intriguing suggestions for how we can use mindfulness to become more mentally healthy.

Over the past year and a half, the lives of learners, teachers, and school librarians have been fraught with stressful situations. Focusing on academics has been challenging to say the least. Helping our students and teachers cope with the challenges stemming from the pandemic and racial and political unrest have clearly been a high priority. Within this issue, the authors have articulated our pain and offer strategies for managing the stress, not just for our students and teachers but for ourselves as well.

You all take care, now!

Cassandra Barnett is program advisor for school libraries for the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education. She provides professional development, promotes best practices in school libraries, advocates for school libraries within the state, and looks for collaborative opportunities for school librarians. She is also a project leader for the Arkansas Declaration of Learning, a yearlong project focused on object-based learning leading to student civic engagement. She is a member of AASL and serves on the Knowledge Quest Editorial Board. Cassandra is a past president of AASL.

FEATURE

HEALTH & HEALING == *in the* == SCHOOL LIBRARY A Return to Better?

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The 2020–2021 school year was plagued by the triple trauma of COVID-19, racial strife, and economic crisis. As we have attempted to return to “normal” in 2021, we’ve heard over and over again—on social media, from administration, in the news—that we should be “taking time for ourselves” and finding ways to implement self-care. On Michelle Obama’s podcast, Michelle Norris stated, “don’t reach for normal, reach for better” (Obama 2020). We couldn’t agree more, but what does that look like and where do we start? How do we find the time, and how can we possibly put ourselves first when our students are struggling and we feel that we need to offer them a sense of normalcy?

We don’t have all the answers, but we’d like to propose a new kind of normal—a better normal in which we value our own mental and emotional well-being as much as our students’. We boldly propose, in fact, that it doesn’t have to be one or the other. We can care for ourselves while also caring for others. In fact, we’d like to stress how important it is that we do so, not only for our own sanity, but also as an example to the future generations in our care. While the rest of this issue will focus on what we can do to care for others, this feature

is focused solely on how to care for yourself!

Compassion Fatigue

“I’m too tired to [exercise, cook, meditate, etc.]” “I don’t have the mental or emotional energy to do anything beyond what’s required.” You may recognize yourself in one of these statements. We’ve all been there at one time or another, but it’s exceedingly unhealthy to live in a constant state of fatigue. Unfortunately, the very nature of the teaching profession, like that of the caregiver field, lends itself to compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue, also known as secondary traumatic stress or secondary stress disorder, occurs when “professionals who do not actually experience a client’s trauma firsthand may manifest symptoms of it via the client’s endurance of it” (Hoffman, Palladino, and Barnett 2007, 17). Our “clients” are, of course, our students.

While compassion fatigue has long been an issue for the teaching profession with students bringing a range of traumas with them to the classroom (abusive homes, food insecurity, etc.), the effects of that trauma have likely worsened in the year and a half they have been at home and away from the structure and stability of the school day.

This means a greater likelihood of compassion fatigue for educators. The danger is that prolonged secondary exposure to trauma and the untreated mental and emotional effects of compassion fatigue can ultimately lead to burnout and abandonment of the teaching profession (Hoffman, Palladino, and Barnett 2007).

Overworked and Underpaid

Another issue that leads to educator burnout is being overworked and underpaid. Research shows that teachers are fairly unique in their reasons for overwork. The phenomenon of overwork has been widely studied, and the two prevailing theories for why overwork occurs are related to money and a preference for work life over home life. However, for teachers the motivation is very different and has to do with “1) teachers’ equation of the expanded role with good teaching practice; 2) the moral imperative of teaching; and 3) the desire to live up to the expectations held by themselves and their colleagues” (Barlett 2002, 16). Educators routinely arrive early, stay late, and take work home with them, despite the lack of any extra financial

**By using small pauses
throughout your day, you
can improve your mood
and create a mindful
moment to pause.**



incentives. This is the culture of education, and it's another reason that self-care is an absolute necessity.

"Well, great," you may find yourself saying, "But what do I do about it?" We're glad you asked! We have suggestions for two simple ways you can begin to incorporate the often-difficult practice of self-care into your lives: mindfulness and visual journaling. Our recommendation is that you try both to see whether one appeals to you more, or if you actually prefer to integrate both into your personal self-care practice.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness often evokes visions of a sage or guru, yogi, or very disciplined individual sitting cross-legged, hands resting on knees as if in meditation, tuning in to their own self. But mindfulness is so much more. Mindfulness is the "ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us" (Bayes-Fleming et al. 2018).

Mindfulness is attention to how you're feeling at any given moment. Are you stressed? Is your breathing normal, labored, faster than usual? Is your heart racing? How are your shoulders? Relaxed? Pulled up tight toward your ears? Have you taken a deep breath today?

Mindfulness is attention to detail. How does your food taste? What does it smell like outside? How does the sun feel? How is the lighting in your space right now? Too bright? Not bright enough? What is the feel of your clothing? Are you comfortable as you are right now?

Mindfulness can create a deeper awareness of others. How does the room feel? Can you sense tension? Is this person happy? Is this person supportive? Sad? Showing signs of a

need? Can you fill their needs? When you are more in tune with your own feelings and composition, you're more aware of others.

Once you begin to draw attention to the space within and around yourself, mindfulness in your daily routine becomes second nature. Mindfulness has many health benefits such as boosting immune systems, improving sleep, decreasing anxiety and depression, fostering altruism, combating bias, and improving self-image ("Mindfulness Definition" n.d.). How can you begin to cultivate mindfulness to enhance your self-care routine and create a new normal for yourself?

Mindful Breathing

Breathing techniques vary based on your desired outcome. Mindful breathing involves simply paying attention to your breath at any given moment. By using small pauses throughout your day, you can improve your mood and create a mindful moment to pause.

Many smartwatches and phones have a built-in health app that allows you to set timers and reminders throughout the day to cultivate these mindful breaks to stop and breathe. If not, set timers every few hours during the day. "But what if I don't have time to stop and breathe?" That's understandable. In general, educators are busy people throughout the day. Another suggestion is to use an already established routine. For example, before getting out of bed in the morning, add in a few mindful



Figure 1. Tibetan singing bowl played by Ashley Cooksey.
Photo credit Arshia Khan, Arshia Khan Photography.

breath cycles, as described below, and then repeat at bedtime. Using already established routines means that you're more likely to stick with new habits.

Breathing Technique

Take your time here. Don't simply inhale and exhale once. Find a comfortable place to sit or stand, close your eyes. Before you begin, allow yourself to relax the muscles in your face, jaw, neck, and shoulders. Then, draw attention to your breath. Focus on the nuances of how it feels without judging or giving the sensations names. Just breathe. Inhale through your nose and exhale slowly the same way. Allow your lungs to completely fill and relax throughout several breath cycles. Finally, return your attention to your surroundings before opening your eyes and carrying on with your day.



Figure 2. Ashley Cooksey demonstrates seated meditation. Photo credit Arshia Khan, Arshia Khan Photography.

Meditation

Meditation is another method to bring mindfulness to your routine. While the terms meditation and mindfulness are often interchanged, they are not quite the same. Mindfulness is a form of meditation. I (Ashley) often hear friends say, “I need to meditate on that before making a decision.” That is the exact opposite of what meditation should be. Meditation allows you to slow down, clear your mind, and check in with how you feel without judgment. You may have thoughts or ideas during meditation, but you shouldn’t dwell on them. Just like Elsa from Disney’s *Frozen*, let it go. There are a few meditation techniques in which you focus on or repeat a sound (see figure 1), word, phrase, or mantra; however, mediation does not require you to think. Our brain’s only job is to think, to process. Meditation allows us to relax our mind, our thinking muscle, and be mindful of how we are feeling.

Meditation Techniques

While there are many meditation techniques, I (Ashley) suggest three that are described on the Mayo Clinic’s website (2020). My personal favorite is sitting meditation because it can be done wherever you happen to be at the moment. I’ve even done this in my car while stuck in traffic (completely stopped and at a stand-still; not suggested while actively driving or at a stoplight).

- Body scan meditation. Lie on your back with your legs extended and arms at your sides, palms facing up. Focus your attention slowly and deliberately on each part of your body from toe to head or head to toe. Be aware of any sensations, emotions, or thoughts associated with each part of your body.

- Sitting meditation (see figure 2). Sit comfortably with your back straight, feet flat on the floor and hands in your lap. Breathing through your nose, focus on your breath moving in and out of your body. If physical sensations or thoughts interrupt your meditation, note the experience and then return your focus to your breath.
- Walking meditation. Find a quiet place ten to twenty feet in length, and begin to walk slowly. Focus on the experience of walking, being aware of the sensations of standing and the subtle movements that keep your balance. When you reach the end of your path, turn and continue walking, maintaining awareness of your sensations.

The challenge here is to bring awareness to yourself, emotions, and sensations but not dwell on any of them. It can be difficult at first but becomes easier the more you practice. To begin, try for a goal of five minutes three times a week. If you need support or help getting started, check out the Headspace App (<[headspace.com](https://www.headspace.com)>), which is free for educators in the U.S., U.K., Canada, and Australia. The app offers guided meditation sessions to help you incorporate this self-care technique as you create space in your schedule.

Visual Journaling

John Dewey said “We do not learn from experience...we learn from reflecting on experience” (“John Dewey Quotes” n.d.). Visual journaling, or art journaling, involves reflecting on experience through the use or creation of visual imagery. Rather than keeping a written journal to reflect on your



Figure 3. Finger painting example.

experiences, a visual journal allows you to be creative in your interpretation of thoughts and feelings. Artistic ability is not required for visual journaling, just the willingness to think and to experiment.

I (Jennifer) use visual journaling both personally and professionally. I came to it by way of a research group that I got involved with, and I was admittedly very intimidated at first by the artistic abilities of two of our research group members. But they were very kind and welcoming and helped talk me through the importance of visual journaling as a process rather than an art project. I soon discovered a love of collage and finger painting—yes, finger painting! There are, in fact, more finger-painted pages in my personal journal than anything else (see figure 3). The simple joy of getting my hands dirty and touching paint to page to create an image that captures how I'm feeling allows for a kind of release that I would not get through the written word—I know because I've kept written journals in the past.



Figure 4. Dictionary collage example.

Rather than keeping a written journal to reflect on your experiences, a visual journal allows you to be creative in your interpretation of thoughts and feelings. Artistic ability is not required for visual journaling, just the willingness to think and to experiment.



Table 1. Visual journaling supply options and resource list.

Supplies	Resources
- Mixed-media art journal - Watercolor pallet (the cheap Crayola ones are great for beginners) - Paint brushes (I buy the inexpensive bulk packages with multiple shapes/sizes) - Acrylic paints (the \$.50 bottles from Walmart or Michael's work great) - Markers - Colored pencils - Crayons - Glue/Tape - Old magazines and/or books for collaging - An old hairdryer (to dry paint backgrounds so you can work on the page quicker)	- Alisa Burke's blog: https://alisaburke.blogspot.com - Ganim, B., and S. Fox. 1999. <i>Visual Journaling: Going Deeper than Words</i>. Quest Books. - Pinterest collection of 236 visual journaling images: www.pinterest.com/d2hall/visual-journaling <i>Psychology Today</i> post "Visual Journaling as a Reflective Practice": www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/arts-and-health/201604/visual-journaling-reflective-practice - The Art of Education's "The 10 Best Supplies for Visual Journaling": https://theartofeducation.edu/2018/07/09/the-10-best-supplies-for-visual-journaling/

You can begin a visual journaling practice with a plain piece of paper and a box of crayons or markers, things you probably already have available to you at work or home. You can create based on a prompt or a picture or a feeling, whatever inspires you. If you conduct a web search for "visual journaling" or "art journaling" you can view all kinds of examples and you will find a number of prompts to help you begin. However, I've also compiled a list of possible inspiration:

- Save and print memes, quotes, or poems related to a particular topic; create a collage or focus a page on just one of them.
- Focus on a word or feeling; create a visual representation of that word/feeling, or write the word over and over, filling an entire page.

- Cut a definition from a dictionary and create a page around that definition (see figure 4).
- Use two or three paint colors that represent how you're feeling, and engage in some joyful finger painting.
- Choose an image or object; put your writing utensil on the page and draw the image/object without looking at the page or lifting your hand. Use that drawing as a starting point to create. This is called blinded contour drawing.

If you find that you enjoy visual journaling and would like to expand your arsenal of supplies and your list of resources, I've included a short list of each in the table above. Again, if you search online, you will find a plethora of recommendations for both supplies and resources.

I hope that you will find visual journaling both fun and beneficial to your mental and emotional health. Happy creating!

Conclusion

After a year of turmoil and unsteadiness in our lives, our country, and our world, taking steps to improve and increase your self-care is one thing you can do to reach for better. Compassion fatigue, being overworked and underpaid, and the emotional stress that is added simply because we care about each and every one of our students can take a toll on our capacity to care for ourselves both physically and mentally. Creating space for yourself to breathe and process emotions can improve your interactions with co-workers and students. While we have provided you with a handful of methods to process and begin self-care there are many more available.



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Traci Chun

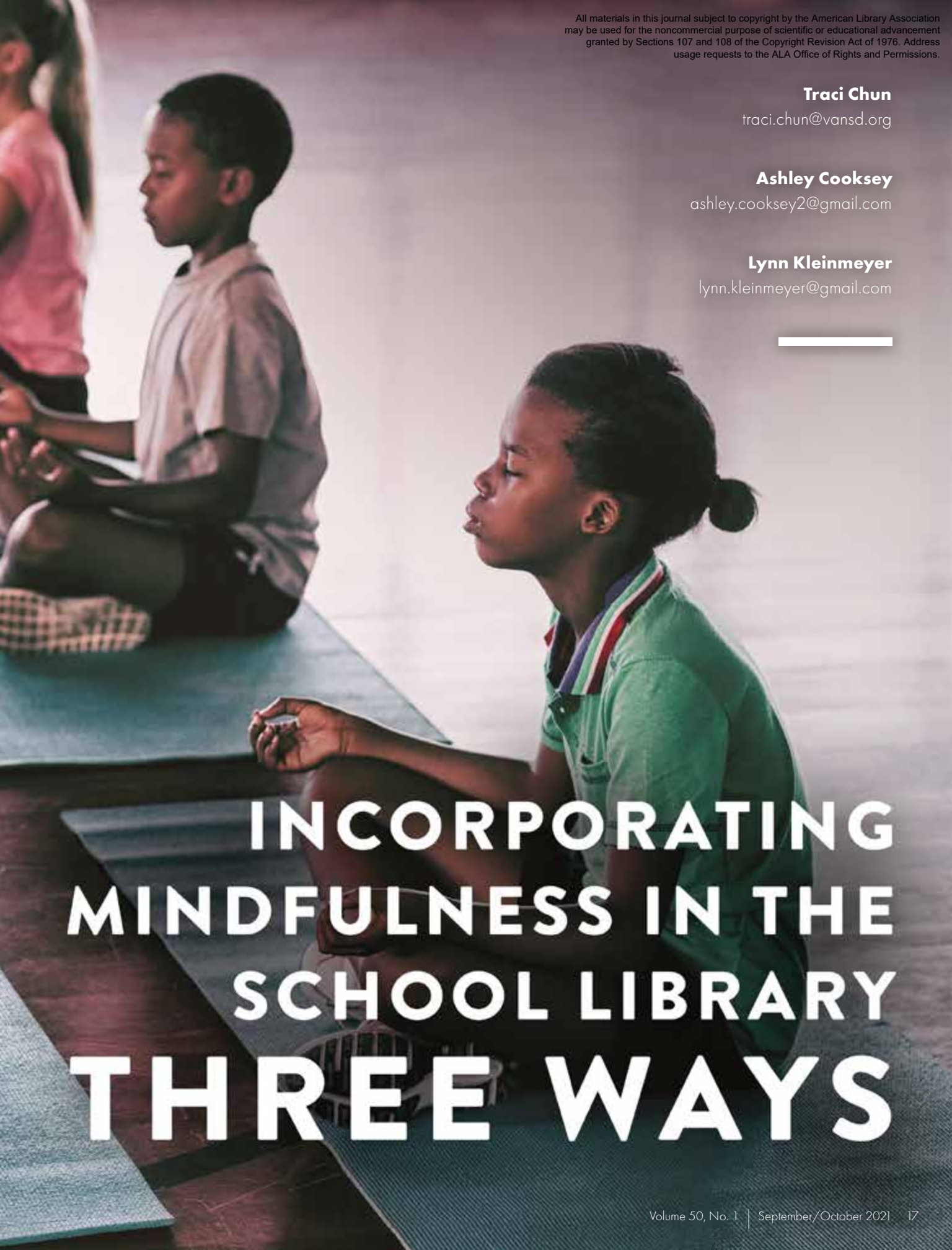
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INCORPORATING MINDFULNESS IN THE SCHOOL LIBRARY THREE WAYS

Mindfulness has been a hot topic recently as many educators were forced to work from home over the past year and a half. With the onset of COVID-19, the entire world was asked to social distance and isolate at home, creating tension in our lives by removing access to our social circles. Our normal shifted and often brought isolation and removed in-person access to our friends and families. As a result of the quarantine and the isolation, attention to mental health grew exponentially. A number of movements have brought attention to mental health awareness, focusing on removing the stigma associated with mental illness. Organizations such as Project Semicolon (<www.facebook.com/projectsemicolon>), The Trevor Project (<www.thetrevorproject.org>), and To Write Love on Her Arms (<<https://twloha.com>>) have been prominent support for people from all walks of life suffering from mental illness. Mental health is also a prominent issue in schools and how we can best support students through education using mindfulness.

Supporting students using mindfulness is a great way to model self-care behaviors, while being a listening ear and a shoulder to lean on. Many times, our students struggle in ways we will never understand. Being mindful of our students' lives can mean that we make personal connections with them and are beacons for inclusion. Training in diversity, belonging, inclusion, and equity helps provide school librarians with insight into microaggressions we may be unaware of.

As school librarians, we have a duty to ensure our students find a safe haven in the school library. Whether that is through our collection or the space itself, it is important to understand the mindful behavior that goes into collection development and space design.

Collection

Mindfulness in a school library is more than just creating a safe place for students (though Lynn shares why being mindful in the design of your space is important later). It is also important to build and curate a collection that provides students with resources that support mental health. The challenge is finding resources that are age-appropriate for your students, how to market those resources, and how to encourage students to be an advocate for their own mental health. Adding materials to your collection that share ideas and techniques around mindfulness and stress relief is a great place to start, but as R. David Lankes stated, "Bad libraries build collections, good libraries build services (of which a collection is only one), great libraries build communities" (2012). You need a quality collection, but it is useless if you don't find a way to connect it to your community. Find the resources to educate students about mindfulness and self-care but be sure you find ways to connect those resources to your community.

One idea for a collection is to create a "self-discovery" section or display. Fill a space in your school library with resources on stress relief, strategies to stay on track, ways to communicate with others, and how to navigate difficult situations. Think

differently about this section than the other sections in your school library; it is special and students may be interested in learning more about the resources you collected but hesitant to check these items out. One option suggested by a public library in Washington state is to have the materials in the section circulated through an honor system. A student does not take the item to the circulation desk for checkout; they borrow it with the understanding that it will be returned. This alone takes the pressure off the student from checking out a resource that may be a self-help guide or a book about learning about oneself that they are embarrassed to have on their account.

As a high school librarian, I (Traci) have created this type of section with the honor checkout system, and remarkably the books do get returned. A few students will check them out at the circulation desk; some just disappear but they find their way back. This system creates a sense of ownership in the collection by the students, and they often spread the word about this special collection and your students who need it will find it. I also collaborate with our school counseling team and our mental health team so they can send students in or even come with them to get materials. A "self-discovery" section allows students to

SUPPORTING STUDENTS USING MINDFULNESS IS A GREAT WAY TO MODEL SELF-CARE BEHAVIORS, WHILE BEING A LISTENING EAR AND A SHOULDER TO LEAN ON.

have access to quality resources that can help them through challenging times.

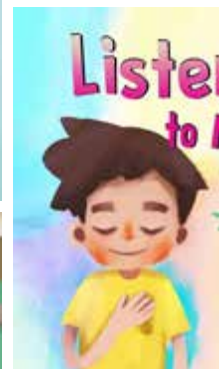
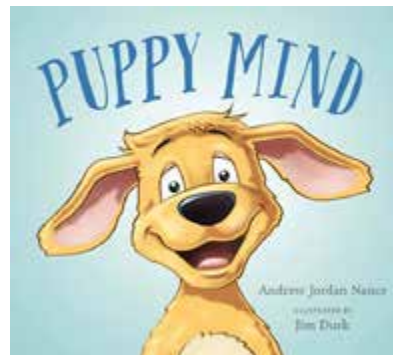
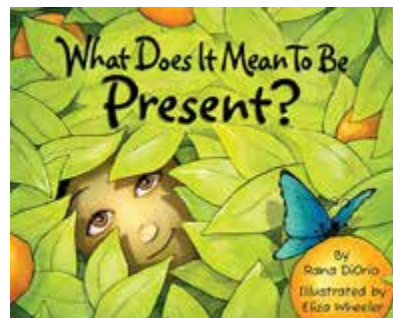
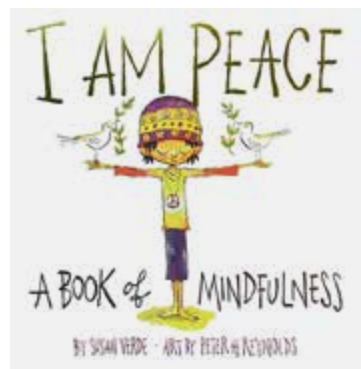
Your collection also should be built not only *for* your community but *by* your community. Start a student library group that gives input on collection development, work with your school counselors and administrators to learn about the greatest mental health needs of your students, and connect with other librarians to learn what they are adding to their collections. Keep an ear to the ground when listening to teachers and colleagues. What are your students struggling with and how can you help? Curating a diverse collection with resources for all students that are easily accessible helps keep your library relevant and, more importantly, helps your students through some of their most challenging days.

Space

School libraries have always been a haven for self-discovery and safe spaces, a calm in the proverbial storm. Mindfulness is about raising awareness, being conscious of the present moment, and engaging in calm retrospection. These factors don't just apply to the resources curated in our collections; they also should be reflected in the physical space itself. The past year has surfaced a need to be especially aware of cognitive overload and mental well-being. Creating a space specifically designated for the exploration or practice of mindfulness can help students.

School librarians should consider the mental impact of their library spaces on their communities. There is a deep connection to learning space design, neuroscience, and well-being. "Each feature of the architectural environment influences certain brain processes such as those involved in stress, emotion, and memory"

START A STUDENT LIBRARY GROUP THAT GIVES INPUT ON COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT, WORK WITH YOUR SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND ADMINISTRATORS TO LEARN ABOUT THE GREATEST MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF YOUR STUDENTS, AND CONNECT WITH OTHER LIBRARIANS TO LEARN WHAT THEY ARE ADDING TO THEIR COLLECTIONS.





ADOPTING A COMMON COLOR SCHEME IN CALMING TONES AND ORGANIZING MATERIALS ARE QUICK WAYS TO HELP REINFORCE MINDFULNESS IN YOUR SPACE.

(Edelstein and Macagno 2012 as referenced in Hare and Dillon 2020, 56). As school librarians, we need to consider the messages (especially unintended) that our spaces may be sending and be mindful that our spaces are not unintentionally providing additional stress or mental fatigue.

Although we should be acutely aware of the sensory experiences within our spaces, one of the most overlooked sources of stress and mental fatigue within educational environments, especially libraries, is that of visual noise. Visual noise refers to the overabundance of visual stimuli that can overwhelm the brain, deplete mental energy, and raise anxiety. Because we want our spaces to be welcoming and inclusive, school librarians often decorate them with bright colors and a multitude of displays, including but not limited

to stuffed animals (often found in elementary settings), posters or other wall art, signage, and furniture. These items often join the books on the shelves and the tools of the trade, such as makerspace items or book carts. In addition, school libraries often become the collection spots for donated or discarded items from various classrooms or educational spaces. When taken as a collective, this can be overwhelming to not only the librarian but also the patrons.

Thinking through this visual lens, school librarians can be mindful of reducing visual noise, thereby creating a more intentional experience. Adopting a common color scheme in calming tones and organizing materials are quick ways to help reinforce mindfulness in your space. An additional solution would be to apply the concept of "addition by subtrac-

tion.” This approach can be applied by reducing the items in the physical space to create mental space. “By removing, or at least minimizing visual noise, the visual system is freed up to concentrate on what’s relevant or important, making it easier for students to focus on the task at hand” (Holmes 2017 as quoted in Hare and Dillon 2020, 56). This would include the removal of furniture, wall decor, and other decorative items to create negative space. This not only supports physical navigation of the space but also promotes the ability for mental navigation.

This addition by subtraction methodology could also be applied to the collection. Oftentimes, school librarians strive to build robust collections with a plethora of choices for readers. However, this can lead to cluttered shelves that leave little room for visual navigation or mental space to process options. By intentionally reducing the number of books on a shelf through the practice of weeding, school librarians can reduce mental distractions that impede the ability to focus and create a calm environment for exploration.

By raising one’s own awareness of the messages being sent while others experience their library space, librarians can be intentional about the impact of the mental and emotional influences of their space and model mindfulness in practice.

Mindful Practice

In addition to being mindful of collection development and spatial design, a school library can provide students a place to experience personal mindful practices. As an elementary school librarian, I (Ashley) often used mindfulness with my students. Offering mindful practices in the school library is one way to model for students how to manage emotions and feelings, even for older students. While not overtly

related to emotions and feelings, creating space for students to become aware of their body positioning and physical well-being and providing them a place to practice mindfulness can increase their ability to manage emotional stress and identify feelings.

One particular practice I brought into the school library was posture practice. Students and educators sit down quite often during the day. Our bodies weren’t designed to hold this position for long periods of time. Throughout the day, we begin to slouch, often looking down at a device or paperwork. Being mindful of posture can improve attention and

blood flow and increase awareness. For younger students, I have them envision a water hose. When the water is turned on and the hose is straight, the water flows freely. If I were to bend or kink the hose, the water flow would decrease. The same effect can be seen in your spine. Sitting postures that allow your spine to lengthen and elongate can improve blood flow and increase neurostimulation. Providing flexible seating arrangements and comfortable seating areas are good options to include for posture practice. I often allowed students to sit or lay on the floor in specific light traffic areas. My one rule was not to be under tables or chairs for safety.

PROVIDING A CREATIVE OUTLET FOR STUDENTS CAN RELIEVE SOME OF THAT STIMULATION, AND IT ALSO PRESENTS AN OUTLET TO MANAGE EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS.



A second opportunity to provide students with a mindful practice is to offer creative outlets. As Lynn mentioned in the "Space" section, students can easily become over-stimulated with the visual aspects of learning. Providing a creative outlet for students can relieve some of that stimulation, and it also presents an outlet to manage emotions and feelings. Coloring pages, word searches, and craft activities are cheap, and sometimes free, activities you can include in your library space. In my library, I kept one shelf dedicated to such exercises.

The topic of what to do with weeded books often appears across our Arkansas listserv and on social media groups. These weeded books can be used in creative mindful practices in school libraries. Allow students to use discarded books for craft projects, blackout poetry, or other artistic endeavors. With mindful creativity, there is no expectation of a grade being assigned. These activities encourage students to explore creative outlets that they can use to support their emotional well-being.

Another way to support students in developing mindful practices is to cultivate spaces for them to practice mindfulness. Creating a quiet space for reflection, studying, or spending time alone when overwhelmed is a perfect way to support students. While many spaces do not offer a specific area for this type of self-reflection, there are ways you can support students who are looking for a quiet space. A former student who suffered from anxiety often came to the school library to complete her work. While I did not have a quiet space for her, I could offer her my desk while I reshelfed books or worked on other things. I had established that relationship with educators in my building, and

they knew I would be more than happy to support this student (and others). Students were not the only ones who took advantage of a quiet library space. Oftentimes, educators would ask to use the space to grade papers, watch professional development videos, or meet with their team.

Adding a curated list of YouTube yoga and meditation videos is another way to support mindful practices. Be sure to vet the videos and watch them first. Creating playlists for students and educators to use demonstrates that you want to support their mental health and well-being.



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Conclusion

Mindfulness extends well beyond meditation. As school librarians, we are called to support our students in any way we can. As students navigate the tough terrain of growing up and learning more about themselves as individuals, we have a duty to be a safe harbor for all students. Creating a mindful collection of materials that supports students through tough times and with difficult topics, assessing the use of mindful design in library spaces, and providing space for mindfulness are all wonderful ways to support the health and healing of our students.



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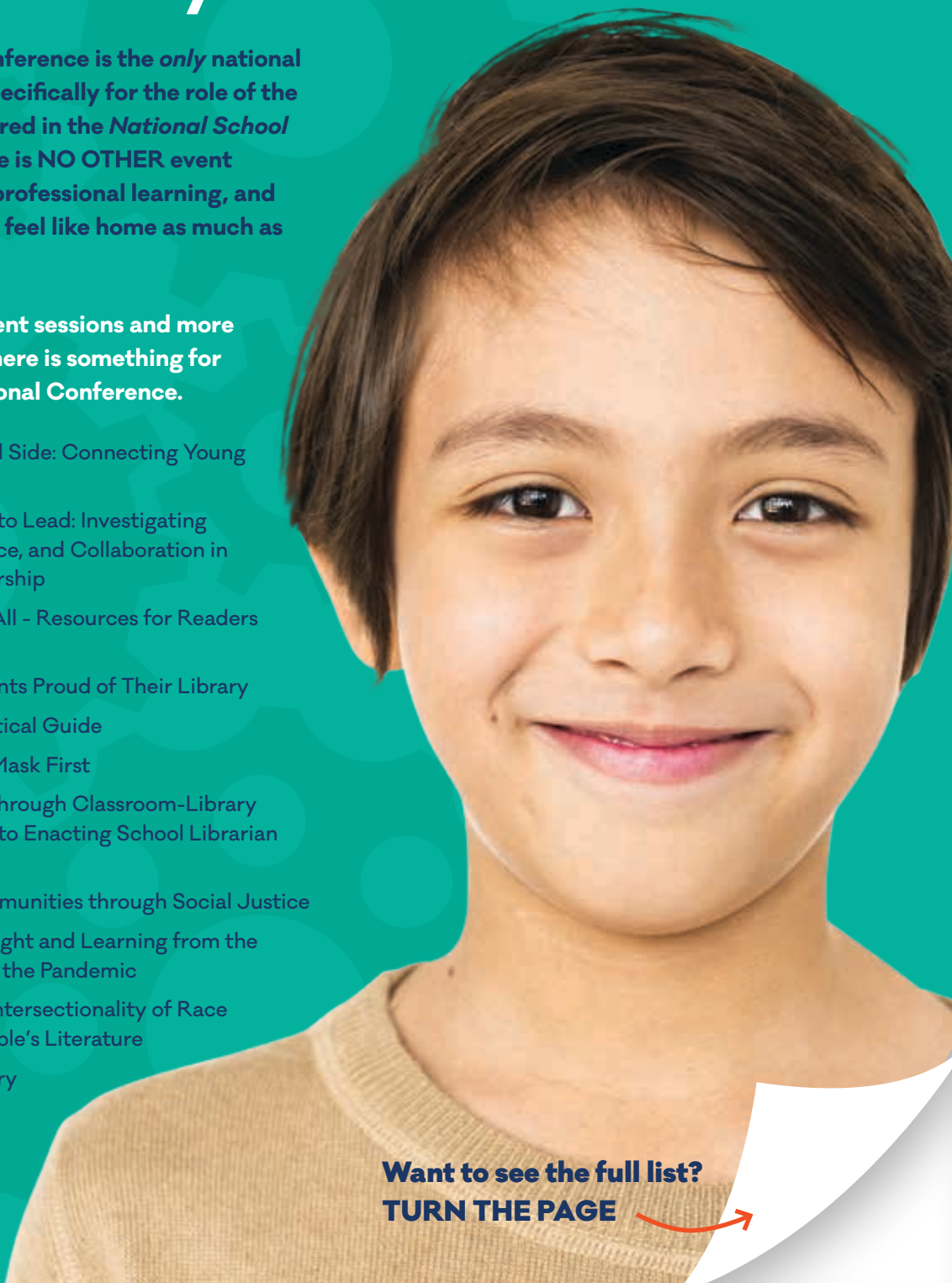
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- Stronger Together: A Celebration of Family and Traditions
- Figuring It Out! Developing Strong Character Leads in Fiction
- The Real Deal: A Conversation with Non Fiction Authors
- Powerful Voices
- Confronting Your Fears
- Finding Your Place and Taking Charge
- A Lens on the Natural World

COLLABORATION

- All Aboard the Book Bus
- Break Out of the Box: Digital Breakouts with Google
- Virtual Library Outreach to Support the Virtual Teaching and Learning Experiences of Faculty and Students: Supporting Teachers and Students in a Local Public School District
- The Library Ecosystem--What's in It for Them?
- Secondary Librarians Use Standards to Collaborate
- Digital Literacy through Digital Wellness: Collaborative Curriculum Development
- Transformative Inquiry: Librarian & Teacher Collaborations
- Conflict Becomes Collaboration: Managing Professional Relationships
- Mentoring School Librarians Matters: Teamwork in Vermont
- Building Alliances with Black Community Service Organizations
- Design Thinking and Young Learners a Perfect Combination!
- Bringing College Information Literacy to High Schools
- Facilitating Student-Directed Research through National History Day
- Supporting Emerging Bilinguals in Your Library
- School and Public Library = Indispensable Partnerships

- The Boldness of Collaboration: A Librarians' Guide to Connections, Creativity, and Community
- School Librarians Lead: Spearheading Collaboration among School Specialists
- Collaboration between Librarians and Principals
- How Librarians Are Using TikTok to Connect with Gen Z Students
- Library Advocacy to Inspire Student & Community Engagement
- Current Trends from the Field
- The School Librarian as a Game Changer: Innovative Strategies to Inspire Teachers and Learners
- Empathy in the Classroom: How a Teacher-Librarian and ELA Teacher Collaborated to Create a Diverse Novel Unit
- Read Romance, Fight the Patriarchy
- COVID Taught Me to Collaborate! Using High Touch Marketing to Elevate Your Practice.
- Core Values Lighting Our Way: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Intellectual Freedom

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

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- Manga in the School Library: What, Why, & How?
- Leveraging Collections to Support Instructional Needs
- Graphic Novels Are for Everyone!
- The Power of Manga + Anime in Our Libraries
- Dual Language Libraries: Philosophy, Collection & Instruction
- How Genrefying Made My Life Easy
- We Need (Neuro)Diverse Books!
- A Shift to Cultural Relevance in the School Library - A Three Prong Approach
- Inclusive Collections by Design
- Books That Are LIT!
- Bigger Is Not Always Better

- Inclusive Collections: A Frank Conversation about Diversity in Library Resources
- Design & Create
- Collaborative Creation and Content Mashup: Bloxels EDU
- When the Library Doors Are Closed: Ways to Connect Students to Library Services When They Are Unable or Resistant to Using the Space
- Arts-Based Practices: Visual Journaling as Pedagogy, Reflection, and Self-Care
- 50+ Makerspaces for the Secondary Library
- Young Game Designers Challenge
- Bento Book Club: An Interactive Reading Experience
- Create and Curate a Digital Library
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- Share Your Story! Getting Started with Professional Writing
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LITERACY

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- Creating a Library Community through Fun and Engaging Programming

*List current as of 7/15/2021 and are subject to change.







MANAGING THE UNPRECEDENTED

HOW SCHOOL LIBRARIANS ROSE TO THE CHALLENGE OF A **TOPSY-TURVY** YEAR

Jennifer Luetkemeyer

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Unprecedented. We have heard that word so many times in the past eighteen months that it has all but lost its meaning. But it's a fitting word for what we experienced from March 2020 until now. In the pages that follow, three school librarians share their perspectives on how they handled such unprecedented times. They speak more often than not of their tireless efforts to support their students, but there is also a vulnerability present that illuminates the struggles they faced on a daily basis.

School librarians (and educators in general) are tough and resilient, but also kind and caring. They are flexible and have the ability to wear SO many hats, but they can only continue to do so if they care for themselves as well as their students. In the vignettes that follow, you'll find information on how one school librarian served (and continues to serve) the unique needs of her BIPOC students. You'll find a raw and personal (and probably familiar and validating) account of the ups and downs of the pandemic. And you'll find ideas for serving your students' social-emotional needs in unprecedented times and beyond.

These stories are proof of what we already knew: there is something for everyone at the school library because of school librarians!



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State University in Boone, North Carolina. She is a member of AASL and is serving on the School Library Research Editorial Board. She is also the treasurer-elect of ALA's Library Research Round Table (LRRT) and is a member of the communications committee for LRRT. She coauthored "Leading with Care: Sustaining Colleagues and Students in Times of Crisis" in the April 2021 issue of *Journal of Curriculum & Pedagogy*, "Building Nurses' Resilience to Trauma through Contemplative Practices" for the December 2020 issue of *Creative Nursing*, and "It's Not What You Think, but How You Think: Cultivating Inquiry in the Digital Age" in the Autumn 2020 issue of *Media Education Research Journal*. She also authored "Leveraging High-Interest Graphic Novels to Address Reading Motivation and Student Engagement" for the February 2021 issue of *Teacher Librarian* and "Thirty Minutes Is a Small Price to Pay: Care, Creativity, and Community-Building" (in preprint) for *Education for Information*.

LEADING EMPOWERING YOUTH

JHENELLE ROBINSON
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As a child, I knew when I got older, I wanted to have a meaningful impact on the lives of others. I thought for a moment that I would pursue medical school and become a doctor, but the blood made me squeamish. I entertained becoming a government official and pursuing a law degree, but I had no interest in studying Latin or reviewing torts. As I weighed my options through the years, the one aspect all my potential career choices shared was I would be of service. I ultimately went on to become a public librarian. Though this role was dynamic and fulfilling, I yearned for the classroom.

As educators, school librarians can transform the library into an oasis where inquiry and scholarship meet virtually and in person. My co-campus librarian, Christina Gavin, and I are tasked with protecting and nourishing the curious and developing minds of our students. To be successful, a school librarian must be highly intelligent academically, emotionally, and socially. We must anticipate the needs of our students and be ready with information. This was never more pertinent than during the height of the Coronavirus pandemic crisis. We discovered so much about ourselves and our students, the main takeaway being we are all resilient.

This role isn't for the faint of heart—you have to become a superhero. Many of us never imagined that we would be faced with such confusion and peril, yet in March 2020, we were thrust into

SCHOOL LIBRARIANS (& EDUCATORS IN GENERAL) ARE TOUGH & RESILIENT, BUT ALSO KIND AND CARING. THEY ARE FLEXIBLE AND HAVE THE ABILITY TO WEAR SO MANY HATS, BUT THEY CAN ONLY CONTINUE TO DO SO IF THEY CARE FOR THEMSELVES AS WELL AS THEIR STUDENTS.

My school library's Instagram account and website offered students ways to engage with me and the school library's resources.

OUT LOUD

THROUGH SCHOOL LIBRARIANSHIP

a world of uncertainty. But we took action.

Though initially scary, in retrospect the crisis was an opportunity for many of us to flex our talents. Many of us adopted multiple hats: technology specialist, educational leader, and unofficial therapist among many other roles. Our digital collections, websites, and social media presences all became more robust to accommodate virtual and hybrid learning.

The schools I serve educate predominantly BIPOC students of various cultural and economic backgrounds. Unfortunately, the digital divide continues to disproportionately affect BIPOC students; however, every effort was made by my school to equip students with the tools needed to provide equitable access. Though awkward and challenging at times, the school community as a whole was patient as we worked to get students the tools and access they needed to continue their education.

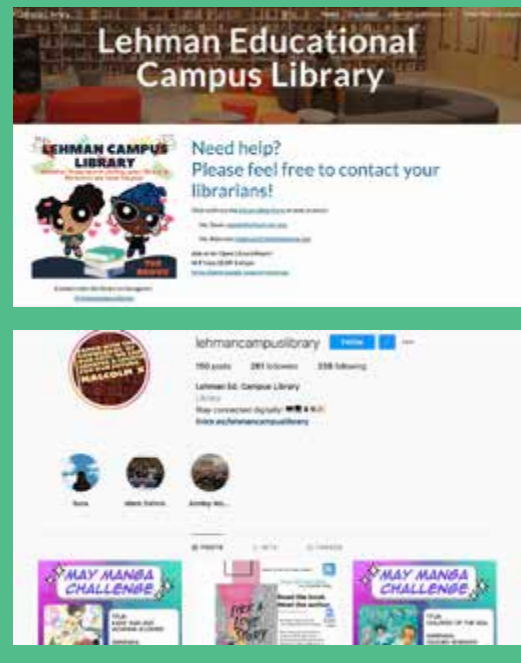
In New York City, there are more than one thousand middle and high schools within the New York City Department of Education, but more than half lack a school library or a certified school librarian. In a 2017 *School Library Worldwide* article Megan Harper asserted, "much research has confirmed that school librarians do positively influence and impact academic achievement. A lesser-known role is that of how a school librarian positively affects students' feelings of being cared for and how thoughtfully designed instruction, collocation of a collection, and the school library facility all contribute to helping students who hurt" (2017). Sadly, in many schools the school

library is erroneously viewed as expendable.

When school librarians were called to step up during school closures, we didn't hesitate. The pandemic sparked the need for school librarians to lead tough and awkward conversations on race, financial inequity, health disparities, and mental health, among other topics. One of the biggest challenges we faced was a rise in misinformation and disinformation. Librarians went into overdrive to combat this troubling trend, continuously vetting and providing timely and accurate resources to our colleagues and students. A school librarian's ability to adapt and empower threads the cape that allows our students to soar.

As school librarians, we are tasked with fostering emotionally intelligent citizens, and we take this duty seriously. Currently, in addition to my virtual librarian duties, I co-moderate an identity club on campus, the Black Student Union (BSU). The Black Student Union provides all students with a safe space to celebrate and acknowledge the contributions of Black people as we muse on current events and the future. Union meetings feature credible multimedia resources including videos, podcasts, and live discussions with experts. It meets virtually weekly on Fridays with approximately ten students and a few faculty members. My co-moderator and I provide prompts to our students that lead to rich, lively, and engaging conversations.

We anticipate this club becoming a major staple of our learning community well beyond this year as



our administration and students have shared with us how much they love our club. Nothing gives us more validation than when a student tells us they now see something differently or that their view has been affirmed after ingesting information we've shared.

Work Cited:

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She previously worked in public libraries as an adult and teen services librarian and is currently working with students in 3K through eighth grades. She was a 2019 ALA Emerging Leader and a 2015 ALA Spectrum Scholar. She has special interests in equity and diversity in school librarianship and disability studies.

BREATHING IN A NEW ATMOSPHERE

KARINA QUILANTAN-GARZA
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Ask any educator and they will tell you that the most popular phrases used over the past year and a half included “synchronous/asynchronous learning,” “remote working,” and “Can you see my screen?” Insurmountable hours behind blue-light and high-glare devices have put physical and emotional strain on teachers, students, and families. Piling new initiatives on top of already heavy workloads caused exhaustion, burnout, high turnover rates, and educational setbacks. Let’s get real: We all considered quitting at one point or another over the past year and a half.

Accelerated learning, remedial intervention, and academic placement for students who fell behind will more than likely take precedence over many academic needs this school year, but we can also take small steps toward prioritizing our students’ emotional health. As a Texas school librarian in the Rio Grande Valley, a predominantly Hispanic region, I have witnessed first-hand how disproportionately affected my students are by state assessments and standards. Large percentages of our students who struggle with English

as a second language often fall below proficiency levels on state exams known as the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness and the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System. Shifting the library’s programming to a digital environment was difficult enough without also considering the social, emotional, and creative needs of my students.

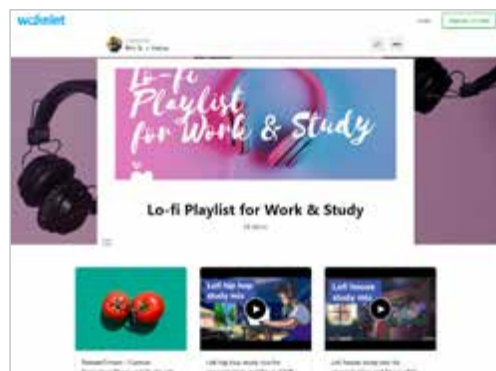
During the 2020–2021 school year, students often voiced their longing for their school experience, friends, and the extracurricular activities that kept them active during the school year. While I am not a mental health professional, more than ten years of experience in education have taught me that attention to students’ holistic well-being impacts their overall academic achievement. The evolution of my school library’s virtual programming reflected my students’ academic needs but lacked opportunities for students to practice coping skills, empathy, community building, and strategies to foster their autonomy.

In collaboration with my campus guidance counselors, and as part of a district-wide event, my school library created opportunities to practice mindfulness and positive

online presence by participating in the 2021 Great Kindness Challenge. The Great Kindness Challenge encourages school communities to practice kind acts daily both in and out of the classroom. Their website, thegreatkindnesschallenge.com, includes free resources and activities that campuses or districts can promote each day of the week, along with fifty-plus social-emotional (SEL) lessons that can be incorporated in the classroom. Due to the success of our school’s participation, our campus is officially a Kindness Certified School, and I was recognized as a Kindness Challenge Ambassador.

Some of the most effective and engaging moments were when students were allowed to share their creativity. Our school library offered students creative outlets by uploading free-for-use coloring pages on Whiteboard.chat so the students and I could color together, using Google Jamboard to complete word search puzzles as a group, creating shared musical projects on Chrome Music Lab, and voting on “This or That” questions for “Fun Friday” question-of-the-week challenges. While these moments seemed to deviate from the academic banter that takes place during the typical school day, it gave our students a relaxed space with hosted activities that aren’t designed for student evaluation.

LET’S GET REAL: WE ALL CONSIDERED QUITTING AT ONE POINT OR ANOTHER OVER THE PAST YEAR AND A HALF.



A few examples of self-help activities I incorporated into my school library activities for 2020–2021.



Other self-help suggestions that I offered students or staff often stemmed from my own personal interests. Listening to instrumental music while I work has increased my productivity. Creating a preferred work environment by adjusting the ambiance is something I love to promote with my campus. I often refer to Wakelet to help me curate 60bpm, lo-fi, and binaural music playlists for study and work. Playlists include a direct link to Tomato-Timers.com, a website designed to include work and stretch break timers inspired by the Pomodoro Technique. This technique helps improve productivity by focusing on a single task within a 25-minute session, which is then followed with a five-minute break. These tips encouraged better work efficiency while simultaneously incorporating opportunities for mental and physical breaks, which in turn reduce the likelihood of burnout or screen fatigue.

My favorite activity, however, has been the creation of our school library's gaming league. The school library hosts e-sport tournaments annually, but remote and hybrid scheduling inspired us to find new ways to invite students to take part in both virtual and physical multiplayer environments. Animal

THE SCHOOL LIBRARY HOSTS E-SPORT TOURNAMENTS ANNUALLY, BUT REMOTE AND HYBRID SCHEDULING INSPIRED US TO FIND NEW WAYS TO INVITE STUDENTS TO TAKE PART IN BOTH VIRTUAL & PHYSICAL MULTIPLAYER ENVIRONMENTS.

Crossing: New Horizons and Magic the Gathering gave our students an outlet to expand their gaming network. Animal Crossing fostered student empathy, financial literacy, and creativity—all necessary skills to succeed in the game. The use of in-game currency, island supplies, and communication with island residents play a role in a larger discussion about how to be resourceful and community leaders. For students who were new to the game, I created a virtual library on my own island for students to visit if they needed supplies, recipes, or items to grow their own islands.

The strategic trading card game Magic the Gathering is another game our school library provides. It has given our students exposure to new vocabulary and mythical lore, engages



them in higher-order thinking, and challenges their decision-making skills. The expansion of our club and its resources was made possible by a generous donation from MagiKids, a non-profit organization that donates Magic the Gathering kits and resources for institutions wanting to form their own student clubs. Both games were chosen based on my personal experience with each game



and student interest. I encourage my fellow school librarians, both novice and experienced gamers, to choose games that reflect their school library's unique interests and vision.

As we move onward and continue redefining our educational landscapes, the rationale for strong SEL programs in the library increases. Our students often turn to library spaces as centers for comfort and reassurance; therefore, our work to advocate for student resilience begins with day-to-day interactions. Your journey will require an abundance of understanding, care, forgiveness, and flexibility, but don't forget to give yourself time to breathe in and out all of the new and exciting possibilities.

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Additional Resources:

- Canva for Educators Application: <www.canva.com/help/article/apply-canva-for-education>.
- "JEMS Library Lo-Fi Playlist for Work and Study": <<https://wke.lt/w/s/2ZHM-k>>.
- MagiKids by Weirdcards: <<https://magikids.org/>>.
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OUR STUDENTS OFTEN TURN TO LIBRARY SPACES AS CENTERS FOR COMFORT & REASSURANCE; THEREFORE, OUR WORK TO ADVOCATE FOR STUDENT RESILIENCE BEGINS WITH DAY-TO-DAY INTERACTIONS.



PUTTING ON YOUR FULL ARMOR

ERIKA LONG

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Wow, we made it through a full year of pandemic librarian-ing! It's definitely one for the history books. After making it through the final weeks of the 2019–2020 school year, we had no idea what lay ahead for us the next fall. Old words and phrases took on deeper meaning as virtual/hybrid/distance learning became the most common terminology in eduspeak.

The school year began with many of us still reeling from racial injustice and calls to action, COVID-19 numbers fluctuating, and an economic crisis that our learners felt even though no child should feel the mental and emotional impact of their family's financial circumstance. Our learners and parents were ready to get to a new normal and truthfully, so were we librarians—even those of us struggling through a little anxiety about returning to buildings. After all, we are warriors and change agents. We wear armor built for this work. Only this time, I wonder if it was as strong as we always thought it was.

Many folks familiar with my brand know my passion for equity, diversity, and inclusion. So, it probably wouldn't be a huge surprise to anyone that last summer I made the intentional decision that I would return to school in August as a different school librarian. The racial turmoil that we fought through last year left me broken, speechless, and in tears for more days than I can count. I was determined I would use those emotions as fuel to continue my work and purpose on a deeper level, with less need for permission from

administration. However, before we were midway through the first quarter, I began to crumble despite regular therapy sessions. It felt like my role as a school librarian was shifting to media specialist—a title I loathe if for no other reason than “librarian” has always fit and what's not broken need not be fixed.

During the third week of school, I shared a vulnerable post on Instagram:

The start of week 3 being back at school and I am not okay. There's a new focus to librarianship. Not seeing kids. Drowning in laptops and hotspots. Providing solutions for teachers who are giving it their all to learn new technologies to provide quality instruction for their students. Six weeks ago I was excited about this school year, but this is a new normal I'm not sure I know how to master...I'm passionate about this work but it doesn't feel the same. (@notyomamaslibrarian 2020)

I was ready to walk away from the school library profession. I quit every day, sometimes multiple times a day. While the global pandemic drew the curtain on the many inequities in our

education system, it brought many districts into the twenty-first century regarding technology. The disadvantage, as we all know, was that teachers were not properly equipped to dive into remote/virtual instruction with no lead time or preparation; the job fell to school librarians. Last year, I—and you—were librarians, IT support, technology integration leaders, school counselors, social workers, equity champions, literacy leaders, collaborators, book and laptop delivery drivers, substitute teachers, social media influencers, webmasters, logistics experts, Title I coordinators, and **insert your other role(s) here**.

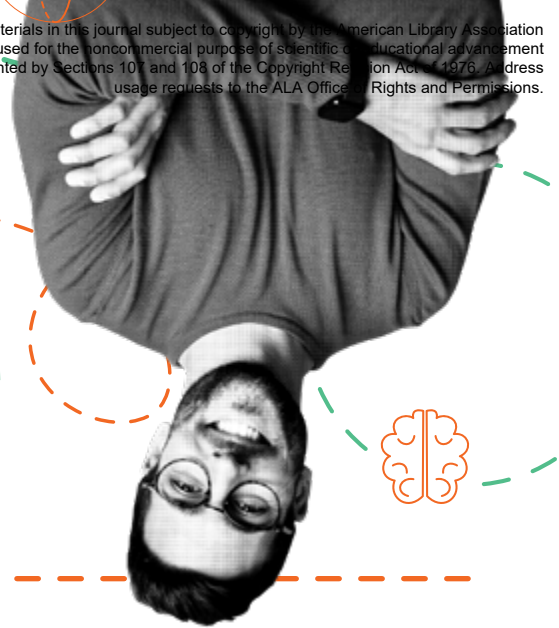
We woke every morning, put on our armor, prepared our mental spaces, and felt ready for whatever the day would throw at us. A routine of sorts: dress, fight, maybe sleep, repeat (180 times). We weren't always successful, but we made it. There were days our impact didn't feel the same as it did in previous years, but we made it. Many times we were approached with an extra task we didn't have the capacity for, but we did it anyway. Because we love our learners and our profession.

With three weeks remaining in the 2020–2021 school year, I ironically

WE WOKE EVERY MORNING, PUT ON OUR ARMOR, PREPARED OUR MENTAL SPACES, & FELT READY FOR WHATEVER THE DAY WOULD THROW AT US... THERE WERE DAYS OUR IMPACT DIDN'T FEEL THE SAME AS IT DID IN PREVIOUS YEARS, BUT WE MADE IT.

I'M DEDICATING TIME FOR SPECIFIC TASKS EACH DAY TO COMPLETE THEM UNINTERRUPTED.

I'M LEANING INTO THE WORDS "NO" AND "I CAN'T RIGHT NOW" TO PROTECT MY PRODUCTIVITY & MENTAL HEALTH.



headed to Instagram for another transparency post:

Three weeks into the school year, I made a very transparent post about how it felt to be a school librarian amid COVID-19. We are three weeks away from our last day of the 2020-21 school year and not much has changed. I am here, but I am not okay. Here's what I know:



This year has been a whirlwind and there are more days I wanted to give up than there were days I felt my impact was deep.



There's no library degree that could prepare us for this work.



I failed to execute in spaces that I least expected yet had the best intentions.



My brand development isn't on track because I allowed being an educator in the COVID era to be the highest priority.

Here's what I'm grateful for:



Though we are still in a pandemic, a break and a breakthrough are soon to come.



Soft skills are as essential as pedagogical knowledge in this field of work.



People who understand your struggle are willing to extend grace.



A supporting cast that understands because they have as big a part in this story as you do.



Self-care days like today. Even when you psych yourself up to believe you can push thru til the end, your body has a defining way of telling you you're wrong. Listen to it.



I may not be okay, but I am here. (@notyomamas librarian 2021)

This school year won't be like the last. We've clearly defined the obstacles and know how we would have done things differently. Now is the time we get to implement those ideas. I'm making a concerted effort to empower staff to own simple technology troubleshooting issues so that I can focus on instruction and collaboration. I'm dedicating time for specific tasks each day to complete them uninterrupted. I'm leaning into the words "no" and "I can't right now" to protect my productivity and mental health. What are you taking with you into this fall?

You made it through a tough year. A new one is here. I hope you are okay. I am grateful you are still here.

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Erika Long (she/her/hers) is a school librarian in Metro Nashville Public Schools in Nashville, Tennessee. She is a member

of AASL and is the secretary/treasurer for the AASL Board of Directors and is a member of the AASL State Level Leaders Task Force. She wrote the article "Making a Mark on White Space: My Experience as a Black School Librarian" for the March/April 2021 issue of *Knowledge Quest* and "Radical Change Changes and Equity Warriors" for the October 2020 issue of *School Library Connection*. She also contributed to the book *Core Values in School Librarianship (Libraries Unlimited 2021)*. Her blog, *Blog, Don't Judge*, is available at blogdontjudge.wordpress.com.



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National School Library of the Year Award

\$10,000

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2020 in the School Library

The Power of Collaboration

Dr. Joel Hoag

hoagjoe@fssd.org

Dinah Wade

wadedin@fssd.org



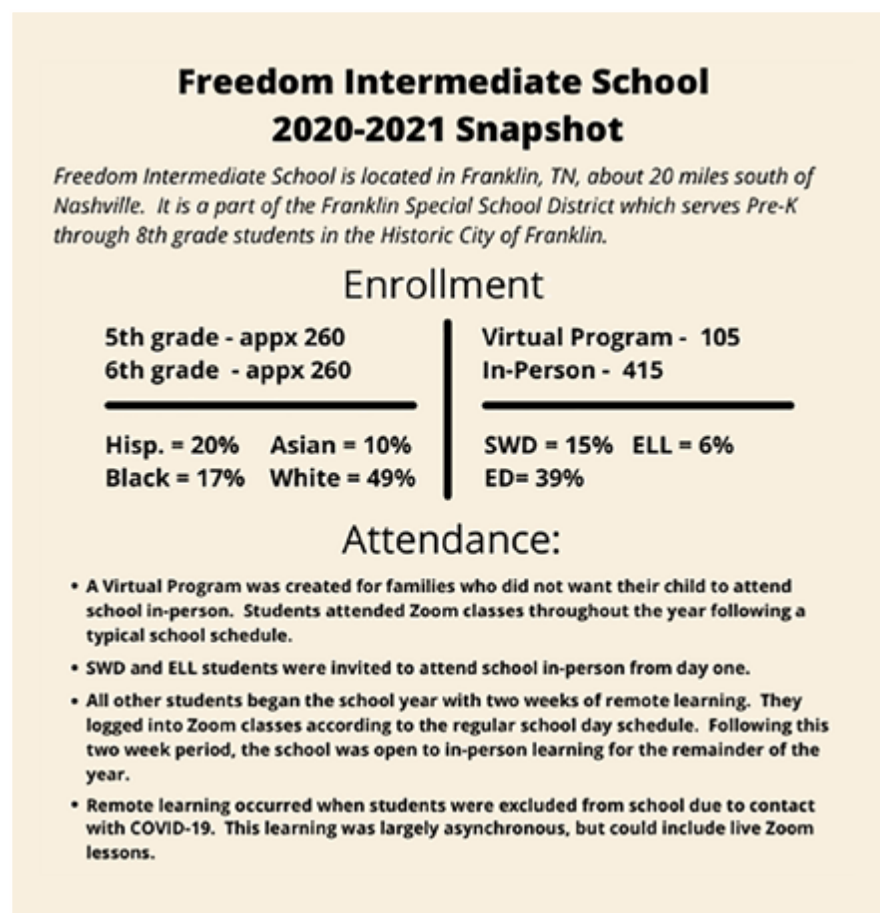
A global pandemic, an economic shutdown, and a swell of racial unrest have been referred to as a “triple trauma” for children. In the midst of these events, there was an unprecedented shuttering of public schools across the country that left many children isolated from their peers and teachers who provide consistency and stability.

In summer 2020 the Franklin Special School District in Franklin, Tennessee, was one of many districts across the nation that had to determine how the global health crisis would affect school reopening and develop a plan for the coming school year. As part of this planning Dinah Wade, librarian, and Joel Hoag, Ed.D., principal at Freedom Intermediate School, began collaborating on how the school library could best support students regardless of what the school year would look like. Andrew Carnegie’s quote, “Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results,” captures what made the 2020–2021 school year a success for the 520 students of this fifth- and sixth-grade school (“Andrew Carnegie Quotes and Sayings” n.d.).

The School Library’s Role in Reopening

When summer arrived Hoag and Wade knew the school library would be vital to the school’s reopening plan. Hoag reviewed and outlined budget items

that wouldn’t be possible due to COVID-19 protocols and directed these funds to the school library, releasing an extra \$1,000 to help build a stronger resource library for virtual learning. The funds allowed Wade to compile an e-book collection for virtual learners.



As guidelines were released from multiple agencies, a comprehensive plan was developed for Freedom Intermediate and the library. Hoag consulted CDC guidelines, school district protocols, and other schools to ensure student safety could be maintained, while Wade researched the recommendations for libraries during COVID-19, such as recommendations regarding disinfecting books versus quarantining books (Bowie 2020).

After completing their research, Hoag and Wade met to discuss their findings and to create a plan for the upcoming school year. They met weekly to discuss any changes that needed to be made and fine-tune the workings of the school library. Hoag's open-door policy made it easy for Wade to present ideas for thought and feedback. "Having a principal who is willing to listen and tailor ideas to best meet the needs of our students is vital to our school and library," Wade said. "Dr. Hoag sees the library as an important resource to our school and works to ensure that I am involved with school decisions."

Hoag had three priorities for Freedom Intermediate's reopening success: virus mitigation, instructional integrity, and creating a culture of resilience. The entire school schedule was impacted by the need to implement new processes to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Many of these processes required a stark transition away from what school typically looked like for students, such as no more community supplies, no grouping of students during classes, and the district requirement of wearing masks at all times.

Knowing that our entire country was living in a time of acute uncertainty, it was critical to make the most of every second with students. There was a looming sense that school could be closed at any moment, so ensuring lessons focused on essential standards and students were being empowered to be successful remote learners were paramount.

As a Title I school, Freedom Intermediate serves an incredibly diverse population with an equally diverse range of life experiences. From students who depended on

The School Librarian's Technology Tasks during 2020–2021

Wade assisted with these technology tasks during the 2020–2021 school year:

- Recorded screencast videos for students and parents on how to use Chromebooks, Google classroom, Kami, etc.
- Met with subject-level PLCs to help plan in-person and virtual instruction
- Co-led technology deployment and return

the district's mobile food delivery program throughout the closure and the summer, to students who spent the closure at their families' beach houses and happily signed up to learn from home through our virtual program in the new year, it was clear

When summer arrived Hoag and Wade knew the school library would be vital to the school's reopening plan.



When asked how COVID-19 affected the school library, an overwhelming number of students noted that, “it didn’t really change it,” with some saying that it was as fun as ever.



that all students would need support, perspective, and encouragement to stay focused on what they were capable of accomplishing.

Wade sees the school library as a hub of learning and strives to be a leader, instructional partner, information specialist, teacher, and program administrator as defined in the AASL *National School Library Standards*. These roles have been especially important during the COVID pandemic. “I work to support teachers by integrating the AASL *National School Library Standards* within their state standards,” said Wade. “I try to find ways to engage students with creating, thinking, growing, and sharing.”

As schools reopened at the beginning of the 2020–2021 school year, many of the circumstances for in-person learning changed. Students had assigned seating, were assigned restroom and locker time, ate lunch in the classroom, had temperature checks, wore masks, and were unable to participate in school-wide in-person activities. Since the school library is a large space, Wade and Hoag agreed that classes could still visit the library for class. Wade ensured that tables and the circulation counter were disinfected between each class and that books were cleaned and quarantined according to best practices before

reshelving (“Cleaning and Disinfecting BTSB Books” 2020).

Hoag and Wade met to discuss how the school library could best be utilized during this learning transition. It was decided that Wade’s technology training would benefit the school as an added resource to help with technology integration and instruction. Wade spent time on phone calls with parents instructing them on the various digital programs, troubleshooting Chromebook issues, assisting teachers with technology, and creating screencast videos to be sent to parents, students, and teachers to assist them with the new technology. “[Wade] kept me informed of changes around the school,” noted Lisa Springman, the school secretary. “She helped with technology issues that arose due to virtual learning, and she was proactive in training teachers and parents with technology.”

Wade and Hoag also worked to make the school library experience as normal as possible while implementing the mitigation processes. With the uncertainty of the pandemic, students and teachers appreciated having a space that was welcoming and reminiscent of previous years. Hoag and Wade worked to ensure students and teachers were able to meet in the library for parent

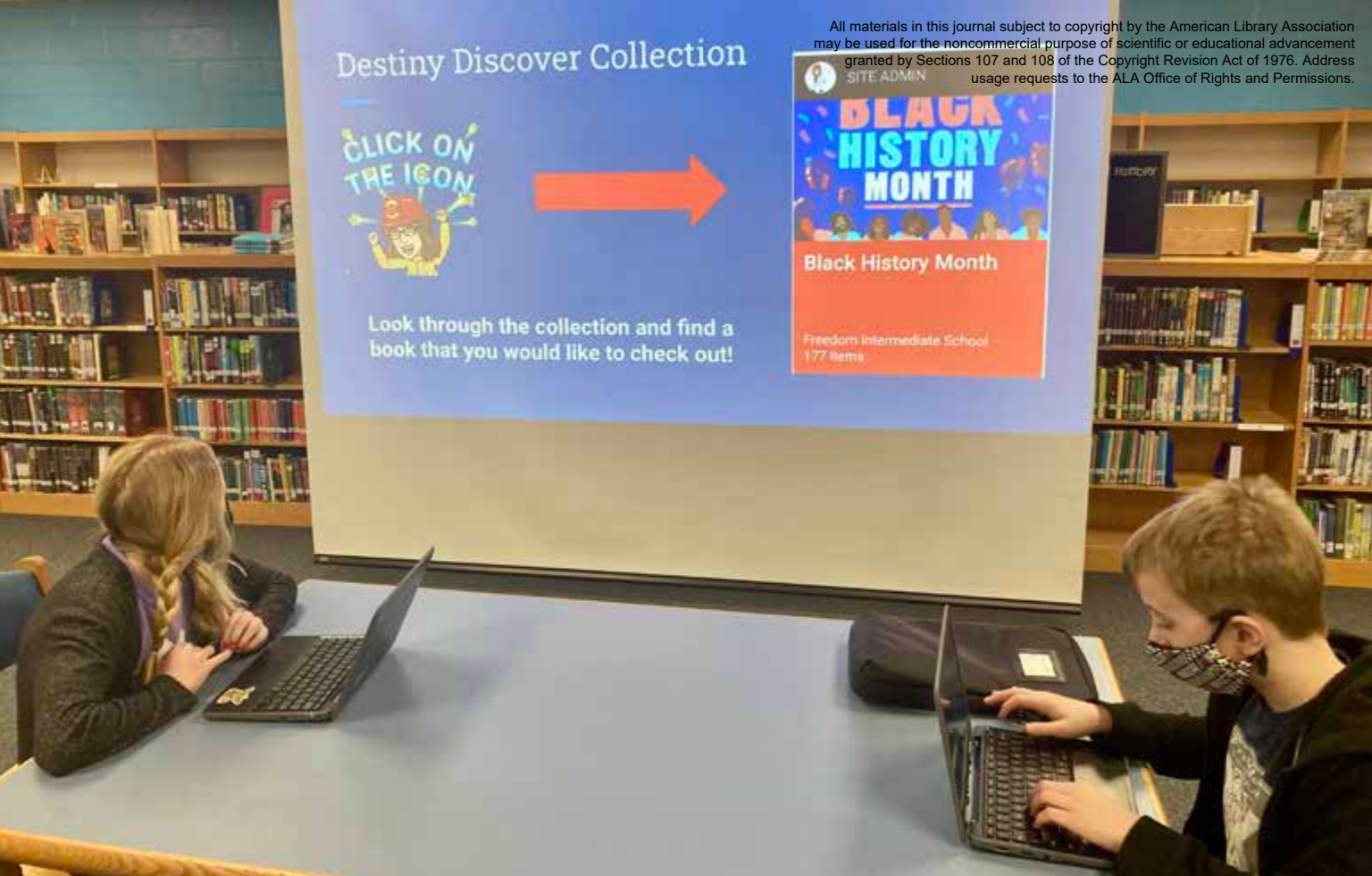
Resumption of Normal School Library Activities

Normal activities in the school library included:

- Regular schedule of ELA classes for library lessons and checkout
- Open checkout throughout each day
- Reading incentive programs for in-person and virtual students
- Reading books from the list of nominated titles from the Volunteer State Book Award program and voting for the winner
- Student library workers

meetings, IEPs, district meetings, and other classes.

The school library also was used for other commonplace activities that could not occur in the regular classroom due to lack of space for social distancing. Because group work and science labs were difficult to complete with the mitigation processes in place, science teachers brought their students to the library



to complete several different labs in the expanded space. The students thrived during these lessons! “The space in the library allowed me to continually follow COVID safety protocols while providing high-quality lab instruction to meet science standards,” noted Dr. Casey Heard, a sixth-grade science teacher in the

school. “Labs would not have been possible without the large space in the library and cooperation of the [school librarian].”

While mitigation protocols prevented some activities from taking place, like collaborative makerspace time and utilizing the LEGO wall, the school library could

host more events with a variety of attendees, allowing it to continue to showcase learning.

At the end of the school year, a survey was sent to students to determine their perceptions of the use of the school library during the past school year. Of those surveyed, 87 percent said they felt safe in the library,

while the remaining 13 percent stated “maybe.” When asked how COVID-19 affected the school library, an overwhelming number of students noted that, “it didn’t really change it,” with some saying that it was as fun as ever. Students did recognize the precautions of cleaning books, wearing masks, and social distancing as they utilized library resources. When asked about their favorite activities, most students indicated the science labs. Analyzing these results validated the collaborative plans put in place to make the year a success.

Addressing Racial Unrest and the Economic Fallout

Not only were students suffering due to the pandemic, they also were affected by the racial unrest in our country. Wade has worked to ensure that the library collection reflects all cultures. Some specific purchases made include the “Rick Riordan Presents” collection, which details the history and mythology of several cultures. Wade also added books with strong lead characters that represent the diversity of the Freedom Intermediate student body. Book displays throughout the school year featured characters who faced adversity, Black History Month selections, and African-American authors, such as Jason Reynolds, Duchess Harris, and Kwame Alexander. In addition, Wade collaborated with the social-emotional learning (SEL) committee to curate lessons for the school’s daily SEL time.

In order to help ease any financial strains on school families, Wade decided to eliminate overdue book fines and did not charge families for lost or damaged books during the pandemic. Federal grants allowed the school district to provide free breakfast and lunch during the summer and school year. Also, fuel

bags (which provide students with extra food at home over the weekend) continued to be provided to students in need every Friday.

School libraries have been instrumental in the navigation of the triple-trauma crisis of 2020–21. COVID-19, national racial strife, and an economic crisis have had a huge impact on many families in the United States. Joel Hoag and Dinah Wade worked together to ensure their students had the mental, physical, and educational resources needed to be successful in the wake of these unprecedented times.

While the triple trauma has impacted all schools, Freedom Intermediate students continue to learn and grow



Dr. Joel Hoag (him/his) is the principal at Freedom Intermediate School in Franklin, Tennessee. He was

named the 2020–2021 Principal of the Year for Franklin Special School District. He is a member of the AASL School Leader Collaborative.



Dinah Wade is the library media specialist at Freedom Intermediate School in Franklin, Tennessee. She is a Google

Level 1 and 2 Certified Educator, Google Certified Trainer, Raspberry Pi Certified Educator, BrainPop Certified Educator, and Code.org Facilitator. She was awarded the 2019 District Teacher of the Year in Franklin and 5–8 Mid Core Cumberland Region Teacher of the Year for Tennessee. She is a member of AASL.

with the support of the school library. The library is vital to the nurturing and growth of students. A strong partnership between the principal and school librarian ensured that students were supported with their need for normalcy, assurance, and growth. Hoag stated, “It’s empowering to know I have a leader in the library who I can rely on to add value in every scenario. Wade’s expertise, knowledge of resources, and ability to research have had outsized positive impacts on every student and family this school year.”

This school year has truly been a crucible experience that demanded more from every educator in the country, and the collaboration and partnerships that have resulted will continue to help students understand that they have a village to support them. In the words of Helen Keller, “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much” (Lash 1997).

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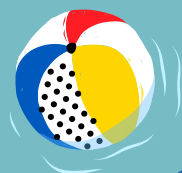
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Pushing Forward while Treading Water

Things You Can Do to
Help Your School in
Times of Uncertainty



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Welcome to year two of the global pandemic. Congratulations! You've accomplished more during the past year and a half than you thought possible. You've innovated, pivoted, adapted, shifted, and transformed. This time has been particularly tough on school librarians, who have worked so hard to develop connections with students and teachers and leverage physical collections. At the same time, the last year and a half was also a period of metamorphosis and reimagining our school libraries.

With new variants of the virus emerging, the coming months and years may be more of a game of whack-a-mole as we conquer some versions of the virus and others pop up. Fortunately, we will be better prepared to adapt the next time. Unfortunately, some experts predict that pandemic-era workarounds may be with us for years (Scudellari 2020). Your interactions with students, teachers, and administrators might be socially distanced off and on for some time, but there are still ripe opportunities to influence teaching and learning.

Many librarians viewed their work performance over the last year and a half through what they *did not* accomplish and not what they *did*. This article's goal is to help you refocus and prioritize impactful activities.

- 1. Trojan Horse your information literacy lessons.** Offer to curate and link digital resources or upload materials for an upcoming unit into classroom courseware. There's something in it for you if you infuse those resources with information or digital literacy.
- 2. Replenish your surge capacity.** Tara Haelle uses the term "surge capacity" to define one's ability to confront an emergency (2020). A pummeling natural disaster, she points out, lasts a few days before rebuilding begins. No wonder we are out of energy, Haelle writes: our emergency has lasted for more than a year. As schools reopen and adopt more virtual practices, carve out time to connect with others, reduce expectations, practice hobbies, exercise, or practice your faith.
- 3. Define success by the impact you make, not by how busy you are, whether for in-person, virtual, or hybrid learning.** Strategically reallocate your energy. What are the influential, urgent, or critical tasks in your building role? Lean into those. Retrain yourself to focus on results, not your to-do list. How might focusing on *less* mean that you actually could do your job better?
- 4. For virtual environments, consider how videoconferencing's default setting to display one's own videostream alongside that of the lesson may negatively impact tweens and adolescents.** In a survey of K–12 educators teaching virtually, some 77 percent required videocameras to remain on (Will 2020). Is there a risk to tweens' and teens' sense of identity to see a perpetual image of themselves during school? Share how students and teachers can "hide self-view."

5. Build in ways to give students agency over their presence in virtual classroom spaces. One teacher allocates each student five “no camera” days, with a caveat that participation is still required (Tolvtvar 2020). Be mindful that for some students, revealing their home to their class may cause embarrassment or even, as in the case of children escaping domestic abuse, dangerous (Barrett-Fox 2020).

6. Install the Unpaywall extension to find open-access copies of scholarly articles. That extension provides access to non-paywalled preprint versions of peer-reviewed studies.

7. Expect tensions between in-school and out-of-school norms for virtual activities. Some school policies mandate students be groomed, be in a private room to learn, or remain

seated at a desk. Open a dialogue about equity and inclusivity of policies like these and how they can unfairly ostracize those in greater need of connection and support.

8. Reconsider punitive overdue policies. Signal student-centered flexibility in chaotic times by adjusting catalog software options to let items auto-renew, let students renew on their own, or abolish fines.

9. Convert online lessons for offline pupils. Offer to modify materials for students who aren’t connected when distance learning is the norm, especially partnering with special educators to keep lessons accessible to those with learning differences.

10. Go spelunking into a database. Explore advanced features, tune into a vendor webinar, or update

an assignment using new tools. You’ll have new ideas you’ll be excited to share.

11. Update your collection and its acquisition policies to reflect a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Diversity audits of your collection can be done remotely and in person and will help order priorities for new acquisitions. If an audit feels overwhelming, focus on recalibrating your collection selection habits so the materials you choose better reflect the richness of a global society and a multicultural community.

12. Remember that parents are watching. Some caregivers can be vocal about the clash of cultures between home and school. Anticipate these conflicts and discuss ways to mediate a new level of parental curricular



observation (Fontichiaro and Stephens 2021).

13. Retool your website. Many library websites were designed as portals to the physical collection. Does your online presence reflect your new reality? What does it look like to have a made-for-virtual hub?

14. Teach students and teachers how to access Google News (<news.google.com>) and the Freedom Forum's collection of Today's Front Pages (<www.freedomforum.org/today-sfrontpages>). Explore multiple perspectives on current events. Show older students how to create news alerts for research topics.

15. Be a parent advocate. Many parents have felt overwhelmed organizing their child's online learning over the past year and a half. Consider being your building's parent liaison by

offering virtual training, posting platform tips in school communications, or sharing engaging screen-free family activities.

16. Check your social media filter bubble and include some new views. Whose voices are being over-represented? Whose views are missing? Seek out points of view or sociocultural perspectives different from your own. How diverse are the authors, librarians, and educators you follow?

17. Curate e-books available for students at home. Create bookshelves of hand-picked titles, experimenting with a free-for-now platform or your public library's subscription e-book service to test demand.

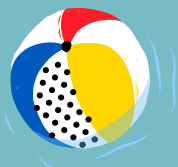
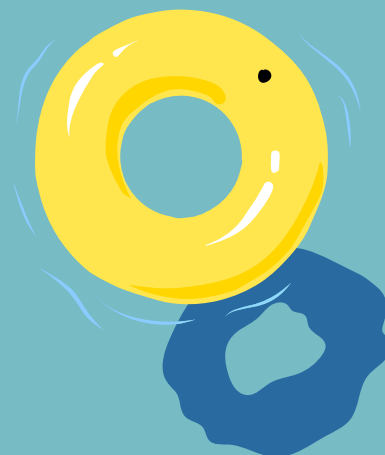
18. Tune into municipal, public library, or school board meetings. Schlepping to a board meeting can be difficult after

a long workday. Now that many meetings are being held virtually, it's easier to listen in on decision-makers.

19. Consider how your school library will address widespread mis- and disinformation. Manipulative and malicious influencers, gullible members of the public, and polarization are beginning to create siloed realities in American life. The Rand Corporation's Media Literacy Standards to Counter Truth Decay (<rand.org/truthdecay>) offer an avenue to advocate for information and digital literacy priorities in your building or district.

20. Weigh how being seat-bound for long periods of time impacts young bodies during distance learning. With online delivery came a new, tacit responsibility for teachers and

Signal student-centered flexibility in chaotic times by adjusting catalog software options to let items auto-renew, let students renew on their own, or abolish fines.



librarians to ensure that student behavior did not detract from parents' need to work. But what does it mean if a second-grader is told they must sit in a chair for an entire morning, when normally they would move from station to station in the physical classroom? Consider sharing a list of quick kinesthetic activities teachers could introduce during transition times.

21. Weed beyond musty books.

Shut down library social media accounts you no longer use. Check for dead links. Clean out your digital files and photo albums. Spring cleaning lifts one's spirits!

22. Ask students what makes them feel better. You may learn about some new resources, trends, and memes while kids can share their passions. With distance learning, a new level of show-and-tell sharing is possible: pet parades, treasured objects, or souvenirs.

23. Offer drop-in times for students to cultivate relationships during remote learning. Create lower-pressure settings for students to touch base with

you. Schedule both one-on-one reader's advisory and peer-led book clubs so students can connect in non-curricular ways.

24. Ask difficult questions about the impact of muting practices in online learning spaces on child development. What does it mean for a student's developing sense of self and self-regulation if a kindergarten student is muted by default?

25. Become expert with any new I:1 technology, especially new products and connectivity devices. Districts are sending home hardware bought with CARES funding, and you can help students and teachers get and stay connected.

26. Learn about "vocational awe" and how it can harm us in LibraryLand. Fobazi Ettarh coined the term "vocational awe" to describe the risks of librarians sacrificing self-advocacy at the altar of libraries' sacred traditions (2018). Is vocational awe limiting your ability to make good decisions?

27. Expand your library's collection with Google Scholar. Google Scholar (scholar.google.com) is a powerful federated search tool to identify intellectual property and scholarly papers. It also often points to open-web copies posted to institutional repositories or author websites. Your collection just got bigger—free!

28. Evaluate your media diet and that of your building. Use media bias charts and tools from AllSides (www.allsides.com/media-bias/media-bias-ratings) or Ad Fontes Media (www.adfontesmedia.com) to assess your media preferences.

29. Challenge the myth of librarian neutrality. Have honest conversations with professional peers about whether your collection should really be "neutral," what that would look like in practice, and our duty of care for our school communities.

30. Realize your own leadership role. Work with local school administration to re-define your role as a school leader and

For many students, the world feels much smaller now. Luckily, digital resources like livecams of remote locales, Google Arts and Culture, and digitized museum collections bring the world to us.

lessen the demands on stretched building leaders. As Ewan McIntosh noted, expanding the traditional notion of leadership fosters the “agile, whole-school, interdisciplinary work that is needed to create the exceptional learning experience our young people deserve” (2021).

31. For virtual instruction, connect using communication tools other than Zoom.

Not every meeting needs to have a video and slide decks. Phone calls can reduce visual overload and promote mental focus. Students are often relieved to have a break from screen time. Can you host radio plays? Record audio-only storytimes? Students can create a podcast from readers’ theater scripts from sites like aaronshelp.com.

32. Acknowledge the effects of a year and a half of cortisol flooding on brain development. The unprecedented societal trauma we lived through has produced excess amounts of cortisol, which has been shown to have negative outcomes for children’s brain development (Carrion, Weems, and Reiss

2007). Practicing self-calming techniques can counter this and help students learn self-regulation.

33. Take it outside. With the virus spreading less rampantly outdoors, there has never been a better time to take a class on an excursion around the campus, a guided story walk, or just close observation of the world around them. Some sunlight will be beneficial, too (Mead 2008).

34. Build in some time for wonder. For many students, the world feels much smaller now. Luckily, digital resources like livecams of remote locales, Google Arts and Culture, and digitized museum collections bring the world to us. One favorite: plug your school’s address into the website “The Wilderness Downtown” (www.thewildernessdowntown.com) using Google Street View imagery.

35. Use pandemic numbers to teach real-life data literacy. Use media-produced charts and graphs, or find tabular data for students to create their own. Talk about what exponential really

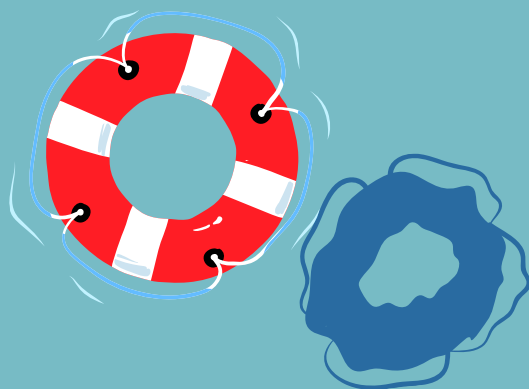
means, how metadata definitions colors how you interpret numerical data, and why numbers across data sources might differ.

36. For remote learning, remember that you are a guest in families’ homes. It’s exhausting to teach online, just as it’s exhausting for learners to have a daily video invasion into their home. Be gentle with families and remember that school has imposed its terms on them.

37. Give everyone the mic. Use virtual sign-ups or online number generators to organize round-robin read-alouds or virtual poetry slams, ways for students to feel forefronted, rather than listening to a talking head in an outdated sit-and-get format.

38. Do one thing you’ve put off. You’ll feel relief and accomplishment.

39. Consider creating co-working opportunities for your teachers and students. Getting things done together can be convivial. Refer to the paid service



Focusmate.com as a potential model that you could replicate safely.

40. Take the lead on student data privacy. No one else on your campus has an explicit commitment to student privacy



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as an ethical practice, but school librarians do in the ALA Code of Ethics (2021). Does your district have a plan for how long student digital work is maintained? Who can create online accounts on behalf of students? A system for evaluating whether websites

have adequate privacy practices? The answer is likely to be no. What are the potential consequences of student data falling into the hands of international companies? Of the international governments controlling those companies?

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Understanding What Makes School Librarian-Teacher Collaboration Successful

Jenna Kammer, Allison Donahay, Matt King, and Heather Koeberl

We completed a meta-analysis examining the strategies that made collaboration successful for three school librarians and their teacher collaborators. The research started after reflecting on conversations we had with other school librarians in the field. We repeatedly heard school librarians in various settings ask, How can we collaborate better? How can I get teachers to collaborate with me? Is collaboration possible with so many constraints? While these questions led to great discussions, we wanted more definitive answers as to what made collaboration work between teachers and school librarians.

Background

To get started, we framed our research in what is already known about theories of school librarian collaboration to improve instruction, and paired these theories with collaboration models from other fields of study. Collaboration in schools is highly contextual and cultural; what may work for one group of collaborators may not work for another due to the unique historical, cultural, interpersonal, and institutional factors in each school. In the field of school librarianship, we have a clearly defined conceptual model, the Teacher and Librarian Collaboration Model (TLC), that describes the working relationship between a school librarian and teacher to improve instruction for students

in their content areas (Montiel-Overall 2005a; 2005b). The model was appropriate for our paper as we examined the impact of collaboration on teaching and learning for teachers, school librarians, and students.

Our research sought to extend the TLC model by examining teacher and school librarian collaboration using factors that influence successful collaboration in organizations. First, we had to identify what we meant by “successful collaboration.” We determined that successful collaboration meant the teacher and school librarian were both satisfied with the collaboration, and they were able to positively impact learning because of their collaboration.

The three studies we examined within this framework were very different but all sought to collaborate with a goal to eventually improve student learning. Matthew King conducted action research in an elementary school to develop collaborative plans with each grade level, with the goal of developing a culture of collaboration (2019). Heather Koeberl collaborated with a history teacher and conducted action research in a middle school to increase engagement using picture books (2019). Allison Donahay collaborated with a teacher in the English language learner program and conducted action research to increase access to the library for English language

learners (2019). Together, these collaborations were examined for similarities and differences.

What We Learned

Using a qualitative meta-analysis approach, we analyzed each of the three action research studies (King 2019; Koeberl 2019; Donahay 2019), as well as narratives from the educators involved in the action research, to find out what made the collaborations successful. First, we looked at what the teachers and school librarians described as leading to their success. Next, we identified specific events during the collaboration that were described positively by the authors of each action research study. Finally, we analyzed the collaboration within the framework of Paul Mattesich and Kristen Johnson’s twenty-two factors supporting successful collaboration in organizations (2018).

We found that teachers and school librarians in these collaborations felt they had mutual respect for each other. They spoke very highly of the collaboration and of all the individuals involved in the collaboration. The teachers and school librarians also were willing to be flexible with their time and were willing to make curricular adaptations. Most of the collaboration teams made time to meet outside of school hours and were willing to change established curriculum

and practices. The collaborations allowed educators to work toward content-area standards and school library standards (AASL 2018).

We also found that each collaboration team described the collaborations as meaningful for educators and students. Descriptions of what made collaboration successful centered around five themes: role of the school librarian, value of relationships, shared knowledge, awareness as a catalyst, and overcoming challenges. The educators felt the collaboration was successful when it increased student achievement and reduced barriers for students to use the school library. To make this happen, the teachers and school librarians spent time learning more about each other's roles and content

areas, including understanding the student perspective prior to the collaboration and finding solutions to common constraints of collaborating in schools.

Implications for Practice

As teachers learn more about the benefits of collaborating with school librarians, the more willing they may be to find time to collaborate. All the teachers in our study described themselves as being transformed after collaborating with the school librarian, as they learned more about what value the library and librarian added to their classes and students. Clear and mutually established goals for collaboration, along with a clear framework to guide the collaboration, were critical to build the

librarian-teacher relationships in this study. For example, King made time to train the teachers in his collaboration on the AASL Standards and the school librarian's role by creating a collaboration template and handout and explaining it to the teachers at the start of the collaboration (2019).

Another implication for practice is that while teachers benefit by learning more about the role of the school librarian, school librarians may benefit by learning more about the content area with which they are collaborating. The school librarians in these collaborations made time to learn more about the teaching strategies used by their collaborators. For example, Donahay read books on sheltered instruction and culturally responsive teaching

Another implication for practice is that while teachers benefit by learning more about the role of the school librarian, school librarians may benefit by learning more about the content area with which they are collaborating.

	"MS. SMITH, WHAT HAPPENED ON 9/11?" SIRIUS, THE HERO DOG OF 9/11 THIS TRUE STORY HAS ALL OF THE 9/11 FACTS IN A COLORFUL CHILD-FRIENDLY 32 PAGE BOOK WITH 25 COLOR PHOTOS USED IN HUNDREDS OF SCHOOLS ACROSS AMERICA SINCE 2009 95% FIVE-STAR RATINGS ON TEACHERSPAYTEACHERS.COM FOR GRADES 3-8, PREVIEW & PURCHASE - \$4.00 PERENNIAL KINDLE BEST-SELLER FOR 9/11 (PATRIOT DAY) PREVIEW & PURCHASE AT KINDLE BOOKS - \$3.99 AUTHOR HANK FELLOWS CITED BY NEW YORK CITY FOR HIS DEVOTION TO THE REMEMBRANCE OF 9/11 HANK@HANKFELLOWS.COM	
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to prepare to increase access to the school library for English language learners (2019). Teacher-librarian collaboration enhances not only the school librarian but the school library as a whole by broadening the reach of many library resources: books, electronic resources, library spaces, and technology. The classroom teacher is the ultimate catalyst for placing library materials and resources in front of students, and this begins with purposeful teacher-librarian collaboration.

Lastly, during collaboration, it is helpful to measure success in some way. For Koeberl (2019) this meant measuring student engagement to see if the collaboration increased engagement in a history class. Other ways to measure success may be pre- and post-student surveys; tracking circulation statistics for a particular subset of library resources (a database used with students, e-book circulations, a specific type of print resource); or student reflections. Donahay

(2019) tracked the circulation of literature in other languages before, during, and after collaboration with the school's English language teacher.

Gathering both quantitative and qualitative data on the success of collaboration can prove useful not only in informing future collaboration but also in advocating with administration for time and resources to collaborate more effectively.



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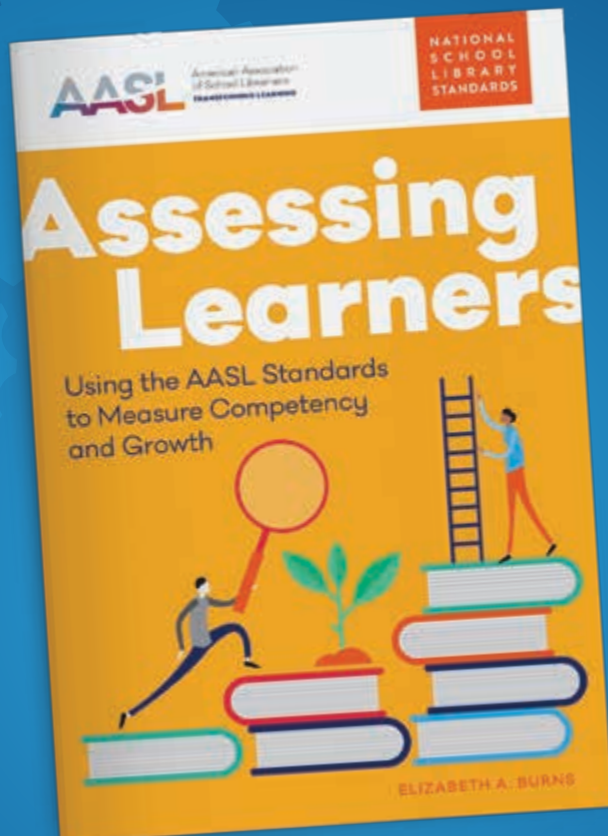


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Because of COVID-19, we've all suffered loneliness and loss of companionship this past year. But it's time to start finding inspiration again in other people and in new animal friends.

Mouse's Last Visit

Dori Hillestad Butler

dhbutler@kidswriter.com

I've been doing virtual author visits since long before anyone ever heard of COVID-19. I love doing them because they give me an opportunity to connect with students I may never meet otherwise. I keep the sessions pretty informal. I do some Q&A, I show the kids around my office, and until March 2021, I always introduced them to my 103-pound dog, Mouse. Fans of my *Buddy Files* and *King & Kayla* series were often delighted to discover that Mouse was real.

On March 11, 2021, I had a virtual visit scheduled with "Mrs. Latek's fantastic first-graders" in Northbrook, Illinois. Unfortunately, two days before the visit, I realized I would have to reschedule. My beloved Mouse was not well, and I needed to take the only appointment our vet had available. Mrs. Latek and I agreed we would move the visit up a

day, which felt bittersweet. You see, Mouse wasn't just unwell; it was time to send him over the Rainbow Bridge. I wasn't ready. I would never be ready. But I really did want to do one last virtual visit with him.

For twelve years, Mouse had been my constant writing companion. Every morning I'd say, "Let's go to work," and he'd follow me to my office, where he'd curl up on his pillow while I wrote about a dog detective, a haunted library, or a dog and cat who write letters to one another. Mouse listened to me read my manuscripts out loud, trying to get the words just right. And he LOVED virtual visits. They were his favorite thing!

Whenever I said, "We're going to meet some kids today," he'd sit up and stare into my computer screen, waiting for them to appear. When they finally did, his tail spun like a

propeller, and he'd often offer our virtual audience a toy. Then he would sit proudly by my side while I talked about my books. I think some of those kids were more excited to meet him than they were to meet me. They would compare the real-life Mouse to Buddy, King, or the fictional Mouse. Sometimes Mouse would show off a couple of his tricks, and at the end of the session, he'd wave good-bye.

But on March 10, 2021, all he could do was lay on the floor while I talked to Mrs. Latek's first-graders

Mouse was a wonderful therapy dog, who inspired many children to become better readers.

by myself, his whole life playing in my head like a movie on fast forward. I told the kids we adopted Mouse because I wanted to start a "Read to a Therapy Dog" program at my local library. I got the idea to write my *Buddy Files* series while I was training him. A therapy dog comes in contact with lots of different people who have a variety of problems. Maybe even mysteries to be solved.

I told them I originally wanted to call that series the *Mouse Files*, but I was afraid readers would think it was about a mouse rather than a dog. So, I changed the main character's name to Buddy and gave him a very large best friend named Mouse.

They wanted to know why we named our dog Mouse. I told them that was my teenagers' idea. My teenagers thought it would be hilarious to have such a large dog named Mouse. I agreed because I knew it would be a great conversation starter when he was a therapy dog.

Mouse was a wonderful therapy dog, who inspired many children to become better readers. He appeared on the local news (twice) and in several author videos produced by Open Road Media.

He was also indirectly responsible for my *Dear Beast* series. After my daughter grew up and moved out, she adopted a cat named Simon. The first time she visited as a cat owner, it was clear that Mouse could smell Simon's scent on her. I started to imagine what Mouse might say to Simon and what Simon would say back. Thus, a new series was born.

When I waved good-bye to Mrs. Latek's first-graders on March 10, I wondered how I would ever talk about my *Buddy Files*, *King & Kayla*, or *Dear Beast* series after Mouse was gone. He was the inspiration behind at least twenty-one books.



It's been such a difficult year. For all of us, not just me. Because of COVID-19, we've all suffered loneliness and loss of companionship this past year. But it's time to start finding inspiration again in other people and in new animal friends.

My husband and I have taken steps in that direction by opening our home to a foster dog. Believe it or not, the dog's name is Buddy! He was found in a field, nearly dead, and taken to an animal shelter where he spent nearly a year getting healthy. He'll remain with us until he finds his forever family. He is not Mouse. He is not Buddy from my books. He is his own dog.

It also feels good to talk about Mouse. And to share my office with a different dog. I am settling in to the new normal, just like the rest of the world.

In May, I had a virtual visit with Xiamen International School in China. This was my fifth visit with this school, but my first without Mouse. It was also my first virtual visit with Buddy in the room. I didn't intend to introduce him, but he climbed into my lap and introduced himself. It felt surprisingly okay. I've learned that I can talk about my

three series, even though Mouse is no longer here. In fact, it feels good to talk about my books. It also feels good to talk about Mouse. And to share my office with a different dog. I am settling in to the new normal, just like the rest of the world.

When I adopted Mouse, I had no idea the effect he would have on my life or my career. I just wanted to help kids become stronger readers. I'm so grateful to Xiamen International School, Mrs. Latek's Fantastic First-Graders, and to all the other students, teachers, and librarians that Mouse and I have had the pleasure of connecting with through the years. You've not only enriched my life, you've also given my dog's life meaning and purpose. And because of you, his memory lives on.

Dori Hillestad Butler is the author of more than 55 books for young readers including the two-time Geisel Honor award-winning *King & Kayla* series, the Edgar award-winning *Buddy Files* series, the *Treasure Troop* series, the *Dear Beast* series, and the *Haunted Library* series. Her books have been named to ALSC Notable, CCBC Choice, Bank Street College Best Book of the Year, Junior Library Guild, Chicago Public Library Best Fiction for Younger Readers, and many state award lists. Dori grew up in southern Minnesota, spent 19 years in Iowa, and now lives in the Seattle area. She loves visiting schools and libraries all over the country.

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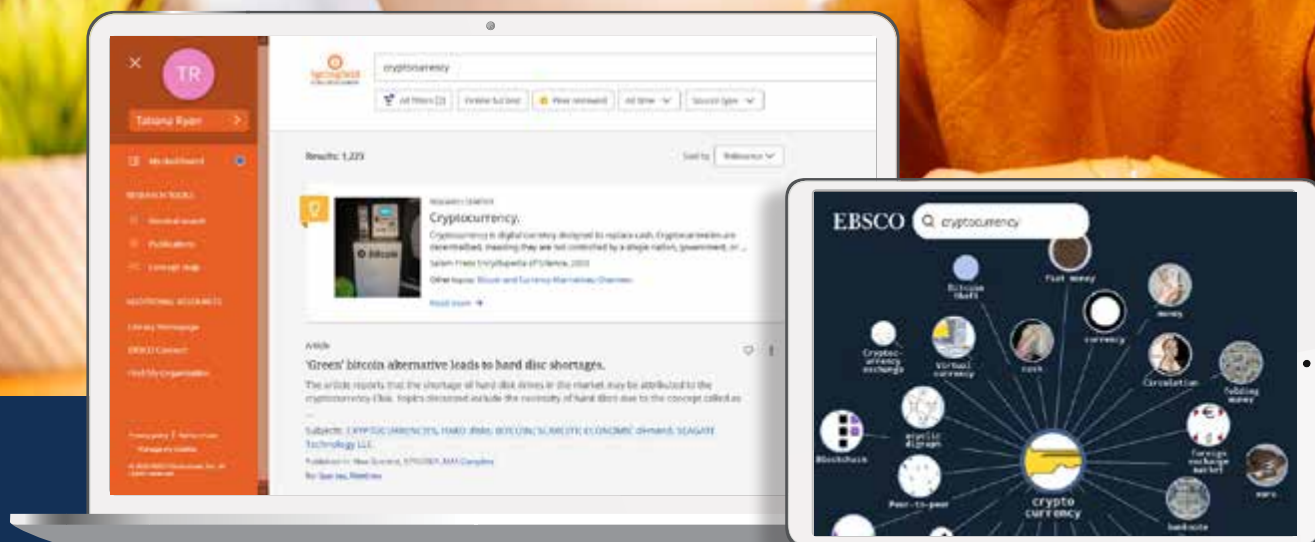
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